

Good afternoon Members of the Ohio Redistricting Commission.

I am happy that this government process is one that involves the public and provides an opportunity to speak about the process of what it means to have a fair process for compiling districts in the best interests of the voters.

I'm Pierrette "Petee" Talley and I'm a registered voter in the 9th Congressional district. I am also the convener of the Ohio Coalition on Black Civic Participation/Ohio Unity Coalition where we work to register voters and prepare them to vote so their voice can be heard in our democracy.

I grew up in Toledo, went to school here, and raised my family here. I went off to pursue my career choice as a Union activist, and advocate for workers in Lansing, MI and Columbus, OH; but when I retired, I returned back to NW Ohio where I was always represented in my voting life by the Congressperson, of the 9th Congressional District. My first vote for who I wanted to represent me in Congress was in 1976, 2 years after passage of the 26th amendment that lowered the voting age from 21 to 18 years of age.

From that time, there have only been 3 people elected to represent the people of NW Ohio. Thomas Ludlow Ashley was the first member of congress I voted for in 1976. He served 13 terms in Congress after winning office in 1954 after beating an independent incumbent by 4,000 votes in a 3-way race. He was pro-civil rights, anti-poverty and a big proponent of housing which is likely why blacks in Toledo, continued to vote to send him to Congress. You see black voters wanted to elect someone who represented their interest in the US Congress and certainly Ashley was that guy.

In the '80s, when the nation saw the emergence of the "Regan Democrats", that movement was felt in the 9th congressional district and Ashley was swept out of office by Republican Ed Weber in 1980. Weber's tenure in Congress was short-lived once the people of the 9th Congressional District understood that Weber was not a true representative of their interest as manufacturing and glass workers and that was most definitely true of the black working class of the people of the 9th congressional district.

I live in a great working-class neighborhood. I grew in the central city. For the most part, the 9th congressional district has always been compacted in the city of Toledo, the district's largest city of roughly 300,000 plus. But following the 2010 census; redistricting extended this district all the way to the west side of Cleveland including residents from all or part of ten (10) cities.

I strongly believe that representatives in congress should be elected by communities of interests. NW Ohio continues to be a strong hub of automotive and parts manufacturing, and because of that, many blacks in Toledo have been able to earn a decent living, affording them greater opportunity to realize the American dream; but more importantly, they have continued to elect a representative in Congress who has been willing to fight on behalf of those constituents who make up a good portion of the district.

But what happens when people from other parts of the district whose interests differ? As these congressional districts have morphed into broken cities or counties further from each other and not really reflective of similar populations, it makes it harder for elected representatives to fairly represent their constituents. The voters should have a shot at sending who they collectively believe can represent their interest to the halls of government and it should not be based on districts that pull in certain people and leave out others. That is why the

next drawing of the maps should embody the principles of Communities of Interest, because Communities matter. Toledo has become the 4th largest populous city in the state of Ohio and to have splits that put neighbors on opposite sides of the street in the same block into two different districts where political ideology differs vastly, can only be summed up as pure partisanship. That's not what we should aspire to in our state.

I humbly request that this body considers maps that are fair and a true representation of all Ohioans and how we live and vote.

Thank you.

Pierrette "Petee" Talley
Ohio's 9th Congressional District