

TESTIMONY OF:

Pastor Hank Osmundson, Executive Director
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IN SUPPORT OF:

New and Equitable Voting District Maps
Ohio Redistricting Commission

To the Honorable Members of the Ohio Redistricting Commission:

My name is Pastor Hank Osmundson and I serve as the Executive Director of Unitarian Universalist Justice Ohio. I am writing to you on behalf of UUJO, which has members from across the state of Ohio, to ask that you commit due diligence and fairness when redrawing the electoral maps to comply with the order from the Ohio Supreme Court. The citizens of Ohio overwhelmingly decided to entrust their leaders with drawing district maps that reflect their voting patterns and trends. The expectation was that the leaders tasked with this duty would abide by their mandate. Instead, maps were drawn that did not comply with the will of the voters, and the Ohio Supreme Court agreed. You have been given the opportunity to redraw maps that show the voters of Ohio that you care about their will and are willing to listen to their voices.

The consolidation of power in the hands of one party, one person, one ideal is antithetical to American democracy. Democracy works when debate is vibrant and healthy. We are a country that was founded on the principle that our government was for, of, and by the people. When district maps are drawn in such a way that they manage to ensure that only some voices are heeded, then our democracy breaks. Gerrymandering voting districts only serves to tell voters that elected officials care only for the votes of the people who can be relied upon to keep them in power. It undermines faith in our democratic system and does more to divide than unite. Much like a chorus is enhanced by the blending of voices, so is democracy enhanced by the blending of ideas, people, values, and hopes. Unfair districts only serve to cause discordance, or ensure that the voices of one group are forever amplified above all others.

Not only did the people of Ohio give lawmakers a mandate to ensure districts reflect their voting trends, but they also had faith that their leaders would follow that mandate. This means that no party should have an unfair advantage or possess a supermajority of seats. Districts that seek to preserve continuity of county lines, communities, and cities help everyone move forward together. An overwhelming majority of Ohio voters told you that they wanted a path into the future that is equitable; not one that seeks to preserve the status quo.

The right to self-governance and self-determination through representation is probably as close to sacred as one can get in civic American life. Going to the ballot box is a privilege and has

meaning when one knows that their vote matters. When districts are unfairly drawn to prioritize power over people, it diminishes the sanctity of voting and erodes faith in democracy. Representation and justice for all means for all. Please show the voters of Ohio that you value all of them; create a map that they asked you to create and ensure that Ohio becomes a more vibrant democracy and an example to others in our country.

With hope,
Pastor Hank Osmundson, M.Div.
Unitarian Universalist Justice Ohio