

My name is Kathy Bultema. I live in Ohio House District 7, Ohio Senate district 24 and US Congressional District 16. I have lived in Ohio most of my life. I am writing this testimony to share my frustration with the current gerrymandered maps and my hope that the legislature will create fair maps that the majority of voters demanded in 2015 and 2018.

My awareness of gerrymandering began on October 17, 2017, the date of the Las Vegas shooting. My brother and sister-in-law were there, in Las Vegas, and typically stay at the hotel where the mass murder occurred. They also enjoy country music and I feared that they may be among the 60 killed, or the 411 injured by the shooter, or the 396 injured in the ensuing panic. The killer used a bump stock, a device that transforms a gun into an automatic weapon. The bump stock enabled the killer to injure or kill 471 people in 10 minutes. Following this most horrific of all mass murders to date, many states moved to make bump stocks illegal. I hoped that Ohio would be among them. But did legislators in Ohio work to make bump stocks illegal? No, they did not.

Then came the Parkland mass murder of 17 young students, the Virginia Beach mass shooting of 12 innocent people and the El Paso shooting where 23 were murdered in a Walmart – all executed with semi-automatic weapons. There was public outcry and various states, including Florida, moved forward with modest gun safety measures. But did the Ohio legislature move forward in any way to make Ohioans safer? No, they did not.

The day following the El Paso shooting, Dayton's Oregon district became the next mass shooting headline. In the Ohio town I called home for nearly a decade, 9 people were killed in less than 30 seconds. I thought that if a mass shooting occurred on Ohio soil, surely Ohio legislators would finally respond to the overwhelming call to "Do Something." But did Ohio legislators do "anything" to reduce gun violence? No, they did not.

How could they ignore the collective will of Ohioans on this issue - where more than 90% support background checks (87% of gunowners), 60% oppose concealed carried weapons in public places, 74% support red flag laws and so on. Aren't they elected to represent their constituents? These majority opinions cross party lines and include gun owners.

And that is how I found out about gerrymandering. All the people I asked about gun laws ranging from deeply conservative gun owners to political moderates and far left progressives all said they were for universal background checks and eliminating bump stocks and other sensible measures. Who are these people who legislators say are against these things? Poll after poll shows they are not the majority. Yet this fringe group not only blocks any progress towards gun safety but succeeds in weakening gun laws, such as rolling back prohibitions on guns in sensitive areas like daycares and on college campuses (in 2016), and passing a Stand Your Ground law that gives people a license to kill even if they could safely walk away from a confrontation (in 2020).

When districts are so gerrymandered that the incumbent is guaranteed re-election, responsiveness to constituents becomes unnecessary. And that is why reasonable gun safety laws cannot pass in Ohio despite the will of the majority.

Unfortunately, what has happened around gun safety in Ohio happens on many other issues where Ohioan's opinions and concerns are ignored. And so, I plead, end gerrymandering and restore democracy in Ohio. We citizens of this wonderful state, deserve to be heard and to have a say in the laws that are passed through the proper and rightful election of our representatives.