

Blessing, Heather

From: Ruth Hardy <dingbat9@hotmail.com>
Sent: Monday, August 23, 2021 7:54 PM
To: Testimony
Subject: Testimony for 8/24/2021 at UC

To the Co-Chairs, Sen. Matt Huffman, Sen. Vernon Sykes, and all the committee:
Thank you for allowing me to speak to you. My name Ruth Hardy and I vote in House District 27 & Senate District 7 in Anderson Township.

When district lines are drawn to entrench the majority party's political power, candidates skew to the more extreme positions to avoid being "primaried" by a vociferous fringe sector of the party – and it can happen on both sides. That's why I was among the many who carried petitions in 2015 and 2018 to amend the Constitution to create more fair districts. As you know, those initiatives passed with over 70% approval from the electorate, yet the legislature did an end run, and instead of an independent, nonpartisan commission, they took the process into their own hands.

I take citizenship seriously and have been active in civic engagement that supports our democracy for over 30 years. I have contacted my Ohio legislators on many issues over the years through phone calls, letters, emails, and constituent visits; worked at the polls, written letters to the editor, volunteered on issues committees and put together numerous non-partisan candidates' forums over the years. And yet, because of gerrymandering, my voice is not heard, and my vote doesn't matter. Because my state senator and representative both know that there's a thumb on the scale which will ensure their re-election, their only real obstacle is the possibility of being "primaried", so partisan concerns usually take precedence over critical district issues. What matters most to my community is routinely dismissed in favor of the concerns of the most extreme voices in my very gerrymandered district.

When districts are drawn to provide better representation for both sides of the political and ideological aisle, legislators can broaden their view, rather than just seeing through a single lens and developing blind spots that just get bigger and bigger.

Lacking the safeguards an independent citizen commission would bring to map drawing, this commission must be super vigilant to eschew partisan bias, and work diligently to ensure fairness, because the commission consists of a 71/29% split while representing an electorate that votes a 55/45% split statewide. The commission must provide a transparent & bipartisan mapmaking process that adheres to the guidelines spelled out in the initiatives and requires districts to be drawn that: 1. Are compact and contiguous 2. Have boundaries created using county, municipal, or township lines 3. Neither favor nor disfavor any party, and 4. Honor the voters' intent to create fair districts. The process must also include: 1. Accessible public input into the mapmaking process, and 2. Public hearings after maps are introduced, including timely notice

In 2015, Senators Huffman and Sykes promoted redistricting reform at a voter forum in Anderson Township. Please do not forget the values you so eloquently espoused at that forum.
Thank you for the opportunity to voice my concerns.

Sent from [Mail](#) for Windows