

Statement of Mark and Karen Griffiths, North Ridgeville, OH

The Ohio Redistricting Commission

August 23, 2021

We thank the members of the Commission for the opportunity to submit testimony at this hearing.

We live in Congressional district 7 which includes all or part of 10 counties:

Ashland, Coshocton, Holmes, and Knox counties and parts of Huron, Lorain, Medina, Richland, Stark, and Tuscarawas counties. This district is represented by Congressman Bob Gibbs.

In March, 2017, my wife Karen and I were invited to travel from our home in North Ridgeville to meet with Congressman Gibbs at his Canton office to discuss issues related to the Affordable Care Act. We joined 28 other people at this meeting. As we introduced ourselves, Mr. Gibbs stated that Karen and I had traveled the furthest to this meeting and joked (accurately) that we had paid a toll on the turnpike to get there. We traveled 67 miles to get to this meeting. Unfortunately, the meeting was not at his other District office in Ashland which is “only” 45 miles from our home. Compare this distance from my home to other Representatives’ offices:

<b><u>Representative</u></b>	<b><u>Distance</u></b>
Marcy Kaptur	13 miles
Anthony Gonzalez	9 miles
Marcia Fudge	29 miles
Dave Joyce	38 miles
Jim Jordan	43 miles

This strange Congressional District alignment is due to gerrymandering. That is the drawing of Congressional boundaries to achieve a political advantage rather than ensuring representation of consolidated geographical areas.

How can anyone reasonably believe that this district allows for fair representation and accountability to voters? This example helps explain why Ohio is one of the most gerrymandered states in the country.

We collected hundreds of signatures on the Fair Districts-Fair Election Petition effort a couple of years ago. This effort allowed us to speak to hundreds of voters on this topic. Getting the petition signed was not a hard sell. Voters understand that because of gerrymandering, their votes often do not count and that the gridlock in Washington is, in large part, a result of partisan gerrymandering.

Specifically, we recommend that Northern Lorain County be combined with other northern urban/suburban areas of the State. This alignment would represent a greater community of interest than the current urban/suburban/rural makeup of current Congressional District 7.

In 2019, a three judge federal panel ruled the following:

Performing our analysis district by district, we conclude that the 2012 map dilutes the votes of Democratic voters by packing and cracking them into districts that are so skewed toward one party that the electoral outcome is predetermined. We conclude that the map unconstitutionally burdens associational rights by making it more difficult for voters and certain organizations to advance their aims, be they pro-Democratic or prodemocracy. We conclude that by creating such a map, the State exceeded its powers under Article I of the Constitution. Accordingly, we declare Ohio's 2012 map an unconstitutional partisan gerrymander.

It is our expectation that the shameful process used to create district maps after the last census will not be repeated this time. We urge you to draw maps that are on their face fair, reflect a community of interests and are geographically compact.