

Ohio Redistricting Commission:

Thank you for this opportunity to speak about the crucial issue of redistricting in Ohio. My name is Linda New. I vote in Ohio House District 7, Ohio Senate District 24 and the 18th Congressional District in Olmsted Falls. I would like to draw your attention to the issue of unfair representation of my neighborhood and of neighborhoods across the state.

Pew Research Center indicates that 42% of voting Ohioans lean toward policies held by Republicans, 40% lean toward policies held by Democrats and 18% have no party affiliation. To ensure fair representation in the Ohio General Assembly, we should see near equal numbers of Democrats and Republicans in our legislature. Instead our Ohio House is 35% Democrat and 65% Republican. Our Ohio Senate consists of 24% Democrats and 76% Republicans. These inaccurate numbers were finagled through unchecked gerrymandering in Ohio. When district lines are drawn with such disregard for communities, cities, counties and interest groups the concerns of half of Ohio constituents are not represented by the legislature who should be working for us.

Because of this misrepresentation in the General Assembly, decisions are being made with little regard to the health and safety of Ohio voters. We see countless examples of this miscarriage of legislative responsibility.

House Bill 6 was steamrolled through the legislature using bribery and coercion with almost no voter support, leaving Ohio with polluting coal mines and outdated nuclear power plants. Right now, 80% of Ohioans do not support HB6.

Our opportunity to build a thriving wind energy sector is being wasted in favor of leaking methane, injection wells, hydraulic fracturing of our shale beds, and dangerous cracker plants in low income areas. All in defiance of proven research demonstrating the urgent need for a just transition to sustainable energy sources.

Even now, bills are being discussed that would allow huge amounts of radioactive fracking waste to be spread on our roads in defiance of ODNR testing results, all for the benefit of a company that looks to profit from the sale.

If the people of Ohio were fairly represented in the General Assembly, addressing these problems of environmental injustice would be the highest priority in our legislature. Instead, the health of our communities is being threatened by legislators who will not be held accountable for their actions due to gerrymandered districts in Ohio.

I want to live in a state where every voice counts.

I ask you to act now to correct this unjust disregard of Ohio's interests. Redistricting must be done transparently, with community input, resulting in an accurate representation of Ohio voters. We all want safe, healthy, thriving communities in our beautiful state. Thank you for your time and consideration of my request.

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