

Redistricting Testimony

Thank you Mr. Cupps, Mr. Sykes and the full Redistricting Committee. My name is Connie Crockett, a resident of Yellow Springs in nearby Greene County. I am a Program Officer with the Charles F. Kettering Foundation here in Dayton, **learning with people from around the world who are seeking ways to make democracy work** as it should. I am a patriotic Democrat who was raised by Republican parents.

The Depression and WWII taught my parents that pulling alongside their fellow citizens, Americans working together could do great things. Visiting the Capitol at an early age, they **showed me democracy as a fair and equal contest between competing ideals**. What I hold in common with my parents and employer is a **deep respect for the citizens role in democracy**.

I have always taken voting seriously and **have served as a precinct and state committeewoman, election judge and on my small-town council**, where there is no distance between the people and their government. Holding office in a small town, speaking daily with constituents in the produce aisle or at the Post Office...well, other than being a Mom, was the most satisfying work of my life. I took a Masters in Public Administration from the University of Dayton with a goal of working on behalf of local government and perhaps running for higher office one day.

With that background, I would like to speak to you today as a former politician, one who has experienced running in three counties in a district drawn to elect a Republican.

I was a candidate for the state legislature in 2006 and 2008. Given the way the old 84th district was drawn, **I knew the odds were nearly impossible, but I wanted to offer voters a choice on the ballot, if nothing else**. My gerrymandered district covered rural parts of Greene and Clark and all of Madison County, minus almost every town of significant size. That's a shame, because for those of us living in **small towns, larger towns are functionally necessary**. They are places where we shop, work, and maybe even meet a husband. ☺

Statehouse districts should not be made up of **small towns patched together** with other small towns, because there may be **nothing to bring that assortment into coherence**. In fact, some small towns insist on seeing nearby towns as their competition. In Greene County, my town is a college town with lots of residents who work at Wright State, Wright Pat, or the city of Dayton. It is my belief that **Statehouse districts should connect small towns to major employment centers**. That said, **the 73 District should include larger towns such as Springfield, Fairborn, Beavercreek and or Xenia**.

When I ran, the district neighboring my own was compact district. A candidate for that seat could easily stop home if needed. Running in the old 84th district, **I loved getting to better know people in rural Clark, Greene and Madison Counties**, but the last time we pulled up campaign signs, we **drove over 1000 miles to do so**.

As a former Republican governor once said privately, "Jesus Christ himself could not have won the 84th district as a Democrat".

In every area of life, Americans are demanding to see themselves represented by race, gender, and identity, while a cursory look at the statehouse makeup reveals less than full representation. For example, although **our state is majority female, men hold 71% of the seats.** I know that's not a perfect through line, as women are sometimes reluctant to run, but that **distortion alone reveals systemic flaws** that have led to voter discontent.

Many Ohioans simply don't see themselves represented, and you may count me among them.

Something personal that I'm sure committee members will have experienced: you're out campaigning and meet a voter who grasps your hand tightly, looks you in the eye, and says, "Please help us". **A voter offers you their faith** in those moments, and a deep-down **belief that their vote truly matters.** When that happened to me, I felt in awe of that simple faith and honesty.

Ohio voters are not always aware that gerrymandered districts result in pre-determined winners.

Knowing (as I certainly did) that the district, as drawn, would assure the election of my opponent, **made me feel complicit in a kind of charade.** Election results should not be pre-determined! **Playing a part in an electoral charade was a sickening experience and it soured me to politics.**

Of course, **I do not speak before you today to protest the outcome** of these long-ago elections, **but the process** by which:

- **Ruling parties choose their voters,**
- **and those voters have little actual choice as to who will serve them in the Statehouse.**
- **Thus, our current system is not American democracy as a fair and equal contest between competing ideals.**

This is my testimony and I thank you for your attention.

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