

Gerrymandering in Ohio: A threat to our democracy and our future

By Melinda Zemper

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today.

Now that the 2020 census data has been returned, you have the opportunity to create new districts that better reflect the political preferences of Ohio voters. Please create fair districts that allow voters to select our legislators, rather than “safe” districts that allow legislators to choose their voters.

The Republican Party has held a political party trifecta in Ohio for **23 years out of the last 30**—dominating the governor’s seat, the Senate and the House. As our state district maps have become “safer” for Republicans, our state legislature has become more radical.

What have Ohioans received lately during those 23 years? A pandemic response that was initially lauded nationwide for its compassionate common sense—but was stopped in its tracks due to pressure by selfish citizens and far-right legislators more concerned about their personal rights to NOT wear a mask than they were about being good neighbors and doing their part to save the lives of innocent babies, the sick and the elderly. Ohio has now documented more than 20,000 fatalities from COVID-19 when we had the keys in our hands last spring to flatten the curve.

What else has happened during the Republican trifecta of power in Ohio? Legislators have added clauses to voting legislation that make it more difficult for minorities and the working poor to vote; lawmakers have passed gun laws that expand concealed carry rights versus legislation that will help stem gun violence; and legislators passed HB 6, a nuclear energy buyout law that is not only a billion dollar tax on Ohioans to prop up nuclear power and quash green energy solutions, but the focus of a \$61 million bribery and fraud case conducted by the FBI.

This all comes at a time when the entire world is urgently concerned about the harmful effects of pollution and our warming world. Majority Ohio legislators are burying their heads in the sand by refusing to acknowledge the urgency to act to mitigate climate change and take advantage of the chance to create many, many thousands of green, sustainable energy manufacturing jobs that could help ensure a more comfortable future for our children and grandchildren.

When one political party rules with impunity, democracy suffers. So does creativity and innovation.

Creating fair voting districts for Ohioans—and fair Congressional districts—will help ensure that we get the smartest, most creative lawmakers on board—no matter their political party.

I ask you today to create voting districts that reflect the geography, political and racial makeup of the people who live here. We need fair districts that encourage voters to participate in our system—not suppress them or prevent them from voting. When more people are empowered to participate in the political process, we'll have a stronger representative democracy and better chance for unity.

I urge other Ohioans to educate themselves about these issues, study the maps and weigh in about redistricting, too. Thank you.

23 years out of the last 30. Ballotpedia. Undated.