

**PROPONENT TESTIMONY OF:
SHANNON M. FRESHOUR**

**IN SUPPORT OF:
FAIR MAPS
OHIO REDISTRICTING COMMISSION**

Marysville, Ohio, August 23, 2021 - I am submitting testimony in support of a fair redistricting process which allows for the voters' best interest to be the sole determining factor of our legislative maps. As an Ohioan, a voter, and a former candidate, I want our legislative maps to follow the rules established in response to the extremely partisan process of 2011, which resulted in some of the most gerrymandered districts in America.

The 2011 maps made it extremely difficult to near impossible for residents of Ohio to get the best representatives possible. I campaigned for Congress in one of the most gerrymandered districts in America, one a Federal Appeals Court ruled Unconstitutional prior to the U.S. Supreme Court's ruling in *Rucho v. Common Cause*.

As a candidate, I continuously traveled the 4th Congressional District for nearly 18 months, slowing only for COVID. From this experience, I realize it is a farce to pretend one representative can adequately and effectively represent barely contiguous counties or worse portions of counties with incredibly diverse communities with individualized local needs, economies, geographical concerns, and identities.

The residents of Ohio, the employers of every elected representative in our State, deserve the best services. Under our present gerrymandering system, Ohioans are treated as irrelevant entities, not employers.

When traversing, "The Duck," as the 4th CD is often referred for its absurd shape, it is impossible to go from the furthest point East to West or North to South and stay within the District's lines. It makes serving all your constituents equally nearly impossible. That is in no small part because travel time between the locations can be hours long, so it limits the amount of time you can spend with your constituents and the number of events you can attend.

Another failure of the gerrymandering system is that it hinders the ability of government leaders at various levels local, county, state, and federal from developing the best most effective systems of

assisting residents in need. When representation of counties and communities is split, it makes coordinating assistance much more cumbersome and allows for much more ball dropping and politics to interfere in the process.

Because districts are so hacked-up, constituents residing in counties with only a few precincts can easily be ignored in favor of counties with larger resident/voter populations. That is unequal representation, where residence determines the value of your vote, and it is simply wrong in a democratic representative society.

Because legislators picked their voters in 2011, large portions of our state's voters are seen as irrelevant to any policy discussion. It makes our state legislature, and thus our state laws, tilt dangerously toward extremism. In the middle of this mass-killing pandemic that has taken the lives of over 20,000 Ohioans in the last 18 months, bills are being put forward to eliminate ALL vaccine requirements from COVID to measles for example.

Gerrymandering, regardless of party benefitting, is and allows anti-democratic extremism to flourish.

My experience running as a candidate allowed to have a unique insight into how gerrymandering harms voters and communities, however, the biggest issue with extreme partisan gerrymandering is that it breeds corruption. Ensuring you or your party cannot lose an election, makes it much easier to commit public corruption without fear of voter retribution.

In 2014, Ohio ranked 12th in corruption according to a study published in the Public Administration Review journal. In 2021, and tens of millions of dollars in bribes and many arrests later, Ohio now ranks number 1 in corruption.

Being the Number 1 in College Bowl Championship is fantastic, being the most corrupt state in the Union unconscionable and unacceptable.

It happens because those in power believe they have so rigged the system that laws and ethics no longer apply to them. It is just a grifting machine to personally enhance their wealth at the expense of Ohio's residents. We deserve better. We deserve to pick our representatives, not be picked by them.

Thank you for your consideration.

Shannon Freshour