

Redistricting Commission

David McElfresh

153 N. 39th St.

Newark, OH 43055-1464

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Co-chairs Sykes and Cupp, members of the redistricting commission, my name is Dave McElfresh and I live in Newark. I am a firefighter by trade and a labor leader when I am not in the firehouse. I've lived in Newark for 54 years and served in the fire department for 33 years. I live in Senate District 31 and House District 71, and I also live in Congressional District 12 and even my 3 year old grandson can draw better lines than those in this district. The gerrymandering needs to stop. The districts need to be fairly drawn and representative of communities. People need to feel and know their vote counts and matters. The districts should not be drawn for either political party, but instead representative of the communities they serve. Voters in Ohio have demanded fair districts twice in the last decade- 2015 and 2018.

Because of the extreme gerrymandering over the last 2 decades, not only my voice, but the voice of many is not heard. Poverty and homelessness continues to grow. Funding of education, infrastructure, housing, and public service and public safety has continually been cut, or not adequately funded. Meanwhile the income inequality has grown exponentially. The rich are getting extremely richer as the middle class continues to shrink. Something in our democracy isn't working and I believe the first step in fixing it is drawing fairer districts. Politicians in Columbus and in D.C. are not listening to us anymore. They are simply taking orders from the special interests that pay for their campaigns and the extreme party loyalists that vote in primaries.

The redistricting process needs to be fair and representative of the community. The current districts do not give everyone a voice, and are clearly drawn for one political party to dominate, leaving the voice of "We the People" silenced in many cases. With fairer districts in place, elected leaders will have to again learn how to compromise. Right now, "compromise" is a dirty word in politics! Through compromise comes progress. The injection of "fairness" might be a shock to the political system and it may take some time to get used to. But I can guarantee Ohio will be better off for it. Be the leaders that we know you can be. Let Ohio lead the way in a more fair redistricting process.

We must get back to a Government of We the People, by the People, and for the People. Not a Government that only works for special interests, big business, and big money. Fair districts are an important step towards reaching this Constitutional promise. Do the right thing. Thank you for your time.