**Ohio Redistricting Commission - 8-26-2021 - Lima**

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**Co-Chair, House Speaker Robert Cupp** [00:00:03] Good morning, everyone. Welcome to the Lima Regional Hearing Redistricting Commission. Before we begin our official business. I'd like to thank Ohio State University's Lima Campus for offering their facilities here today so that we can have a great hearing. And we'd like to hear at this time from Dean Rehner, Dean of the OSU Regional Campus. There we are. You want to... got your own? You got your own microphone.

**Dean Tim Rehner** [00:00:39] I think we'll have to share this one. Good morning. I'm Tim Rehner. I get to be the dean of Ohio State Lima. And I'm delighted that on a beautiful day like this that I could welcome you to campus. I hope you'll come back. It's a pleasure for us to host this Ohio Redistricting Commission meeting. I'm glad that you all could be a part of that. The model of Ohio State - gonna keep this up - is education for citizenship. This process of speaking and listening is essential to how we do business and how we build consensus. And I trust that that will be the outcome of this meeting, that there will be greater understanding that will carry us further towards sharing our communities in positive ways. So welcome to Ohio State, Lima. Delighted you're here and hope you'll come back. You all are always welcome. You all are welcome too. Thanks for being here.

**Co-Chair, House Speaker Robert Cupp** [00:01:36] Thank you, Dean Raynor. And thank you for being the host of our hearing today. We appreciate it very much. At this time, we will call the Lima Regional hearing of the Ohio Redistricting Commission to order. As people arrive and would like to testify, if you haven't done so already, we'd ask that you please fill out a witness slip that is on the table at the entrance there and provide them to our staff here. And so we can make sure that everybody that wants to provide testimony can do so. We will now have the roll call and during the roll call, please state your name and the office you represent if you are present as a designee. So I'll ask the roll call now be called.

**Clerk** [00:02:26] Co-Chair Sykes (present), Co-Chair Cupp (here), Governor Mike DeWine's designee Matt Donahue (present), Auditor Keith Faber (here), Secretary of State Frank LaRose, Leader Emilia Sykes (here) and President Matt Huffman (here). The roll call is complete.

**Co-Chair, House Speaker Robert Cupp** [00:02:47] Thank you. At this time, just a little overview of the commission. In November 2015, Ohio voters approved a constitutional amendment which implemented a new General Assembly redistricting process and established the Ohio Redistricting Commission. The commission consists of the governor, the auditor of state, the secretary of state and one commissioner appointed by each of the legislative leaders of the two largest political parties of the Ohio House and the Senate. So that's four total, one from each caucus. The commission has until September 1, 2021 to pass a plan with a vote of at least two members affiliated with each major party if that fails. The commission has until September 15, 2021 to pass a plan by a majority vote for members. Maps that are passed with the votes of two members affiliated with each major party are valid for 10 years. Maps passed by majority vote are valid for two general elections or four years. Ohio's legislative reapportionment process, as in all states, occurs in years ending in one, such as 2021, which are also the years in which the federal census figures are released by the US Department of Commerce. The census figures released this year indicate that Ohio has a population of 11,799,448 people, a two point three percent growth from 2010. Under Article 11 of the Ohio Constitution, each of the 99 districts should contain 119,186 persons and each of the 33 Senate districts should contain 357,559 persons allowing for a deviation of 5% up or down. Anyone who has researched or undertaken the drawing of legislative districts knows this process involves far more than putting roughly the same number of people in each district. Article 11 contains specific rules governing the construction of these districts, including several layers of sometimes complex requirements, including district population requirements and permissible population deviations, rules, and how to prioritize splits of political subdivisions - counties, municipalities and townships - where necessary. Additional district standards regarding favoring or disfavoring political parties and compactness of districts. The board must comply, the commission must comply with the Ohio Constitution in addition to all applicable federal laws, including the Voting Rights Act. Because these hearings are held for the purpose of receiving your input in the process, we're not going to go over all the details in the law, which are quite extensive. However, we encourage you to visit the commission website at www.redistricting.ohio.gov, which provides additional information on the redistricting process under Article 11. Excuse me. The purpose of today's hearing is to gather information, comments and input regarding the upcoming reconfiguration of the House and Senate district lines. Under a new congressional redistricting process adopted by voters in 2018, the Ohio legislature has the first opportunity to draw congressional lines through enactment of a bill which would be signed by the governor. If it cannot do so, the process falls to the Ohio Redistricting Commission. Therefore, we ask all witnesses today to limit comments and testimony to the most immediate task of the Ohio Redistricting Commission, which is the adoption of Ohio House and Ohio Senate districts. We're here to listen today. We're not here to debate you or one another. We're here to get input from Ohioans on the state legislative redistricting process and how it impacts your communities and your representation in the Ohio General Assembly. And today, we do have a limited amount of time for the hearing and we want to give everyone the opportunity to offer their input. We're scheduled here for three hours. So we ask witnesses to limit your testimony, in the interest of time and out of courtesy for other persons who wish to address the panel and about four minutes or so would probably be appropriate in order to give everybody the opportunity to be heard. A few other items before we begin. These proceedings will be recorded by the Ohio Channel so that the commission in its deliberation may consider things said here today. It creates a record and an archive. So please speak clearly and loudly enough for the panel and the audience to hear. And we do have again ask you to limit your remarks to four minutes or so. And we do have a process for the staff to notify you when you have one minute remaining. [laughter] So I think you got everyone's attention. If you have written testimony, please submit a copy to our staff so it can be included in the official record of the proceedings. Members of the public who cannot attend in person may also submit testimony on the commission website. All right. So we're ready to begin with our public testimony. And we'll begin with our first witness here today, and that is Mindy Hedges. And if you would, come to the microphone and clearly state your name for the record.

**Hedges** [00:09:06] Co-Chair Senator Sykes well... My name is Mindy Hedges. Co-chair Senator Sykes and House Speaker Cupp and members of the newly formed Ohio Redistricting Commission, Governor Mike DeWine, excuse me, and his representative, House Minority Leader, Emilia Sykes, Secretary of State Frank LaRose, Senator President Matt Huffman and Auditor Keith Faber. Thank you for allowing me to testify today. I've always been an unusual addition to my rural area. I'm like a Green Acres story. New Yorker marries Ohio farmer, living in a very rural Ohio area, in a rapidly growing, very wealthy Ohio county. Sounds like a possible start to a new TV show. But there are grave issues here, just like there are around our state because of how we are district. My area is governed by those who are concerned with money and major population growth areas, not farming communities. They don't understand, nor do they consider when they vote, any issues the rural areas have or how the residents are going through the many changes in our economic and social culture. Consideration has not been given to problems in our area, like Internet services, which are very spotty and inconsistent. Our emergency services, our aid for senior living alone or potential lack of water sources or farm subsidies during COVID. Or varied electric services. That's just to name a few. We are... We are isolated in our area, just as we are isolated from our representation. We don't feel as if we have any representation because our district is so gerrymandered. It appears as if both our Ohio House and Senate representatives are more concerned with how much money they can collect for their next election, not what their constituents want or need. They don't meet with us. They don't communicate with us. They don't... they turn down requests for town halls. There are...They are no longer elected by their constituents, but rather, they're selected... They've selected their constituents in such a way that they know for sure that they'll never lose. This is not the way democracy is supposed to work. That doesn't help the entire district, but rather benefits our wealthier and more populated areas. Most of Ohio's districts were artfully designed in the same manner. They no longer have to be competitive nor compliant to their constituents, nor serve the people of their districts. They're mutually inclusive to the representatives' needs and not the citizens of their communities. Years ago, not many average Ohioans knew what gerrymandering was or thought much about the redistricting process. Then Ohioans realized that this system no longer represented their needs or concerns. A few years ago, Ohioans voted by over 70 percent to redistrict Ohio. Now your constituents are paying attention. In 2021, citizens are taking part in mapmaking to produce fair maps drawn in accordance with the new redistricting rules. It will no longer be possible to pretend what the legislature comes up with are the best or only maps possible, unless you take into account all the maps that consider communities as well as demographics. These new maps must be taken into account as the amendment to our Ohio Constitution now says. Ohio citizens will be watching carefully what those changes with redrawing the district lines will be doing. To help advance our concerns, many of us will be submitting maps that take into account the issues I mentioned above for my rural area, as well as all the other community and demographic issues and priority each area considers important. There are considerable opportunities the commission will have in order to have these maps approach the best Ohio can be. Please do this in a professional, nonpartisan and most advantageous way for Ohio to build even better communities. This is how Ohio will grow and not shrink as it has done over the past 10 years. Ohio has lost one congressional seat because of shrinking population. People are leaving in part because of the partisan way Ohio is gerrymandered. Let's fix this together now. I ask you to consider my testimony to ensure fair maps are drawn to include all mapping submitted to the commission as a whole unit. Thank you for your time and consideration of my request, and I'll take any questions you have. I want to star in my show,

**Co-Chair, House Speaker Robert Cupp** [00:13:52] Thank you very much for your testimony. Are there any questions for the witness? [applause] Well, thank you. The next witness is Barbra Gant. From East Liberty. I think there's one Honda plant in East Liberty. [inaudible]

**Gant** [00:14:36] Before I begin, I want to draw attention to the fact that this is a... Fair districts is a very important issue for many of us. As you can see by our t-shirts, our signs are, our buttons. And I want to thank you for allowing me to speak today. This will be fairly short. My name is Barara J. Gant. I vote in the 4th Congressional District, the 85th State of Ohio House District and the 12th Ohio Senate District in rural Logan County. I live halfway between Bellefontaine and Marysville. I would like to draw your attention to the issue of gerrymandering. In my county, all of our districts at both the federal congressional and state district levels have been effectively drawn to favor the current incumbent members of one political party. This effectively means that the legislators are choosing their voters instead of voters choosing their legislators. Also, the districts drawn to make this happen cut off neighbors from one another in strange ways and combine parts of the state that are far from each other and may have little in common. I'm going to make a couple of remarks here that pertain to our federal House district, only because, I have a feeling that this still could come back to this commission to work on. Some relevant facts are that Congressional District 4 is a nationally recognized demonstration of gerrymandering meant to elect the same person over and over. The duck-shaped district is a huge challenge to cover in relating to voters and is designed to discourage challengers. It is particularly outrageous to me that the bill of the duck includes a couple of correctional facilities with about three thousand persons to pad the population of this district. But the persons used in this way cannot even vote because of their incarceration. Well, this district links our county with parts of counties three hours away, it cuts us off from our neighboring Hardin County with us...With which our county shares a lot of common interests and in fact, even some organizational structures. Our state and house...our state House and Senate districts also carve out the three northwest, or northeast townships of our county, and put them with somebody else for reasons that are unexplained. The consequences of not fixing the problem encourage, and I've run into this over and over again, discouragement of voting as many potential voters feel there's no point to do so because the result of their vote is predetermined. Also, great potential leaders choose not to run for these offices because the deck is stacked against them. A point has been made that gerrymandering results in the election of extremists. And without without offense to anyone who may be present. I find that the districts I live in illustrate this. I ask you to hold to the guidelines of the redistricting process as set forth in 2015 and 2018 and assure the counties and communities are kept together to the greatest extent possible and that gerrymandering is avoided. Thank you for your time and consideration of my request. [applause]

**Co-Chair, House Speaker Robert Cupp** [00:18:14] Thank you for your testimony. Are there any questions for the witness? Hearing none. Thank you very much. Our next witness is Scott Greeneth. I know you're correct me when you come to the podium, so, Scott, please, going up from Arlington, Ohio. [inaudible] OK. Seth, I have that wrong. All right, well, we will move on, the next witness is Ann Shroyer. Ann would you please come forward. Ann is from Westerville, Ohio.

**Shroyer** [00:19:18] Hello. Thank you, commission members, for the opportunity to speak today in Lima. My name is Ann Shroyer. I live in Westerville, Ohio. I vote in the 68th state legislative districts, 19th state Senate and the 12th Congressional District, all of which are classically gerrymandered. I live in the north part of Westerville, which has been attached to blocks of mostly rural parts of the state just to kind of divide us from the rest of our city. Westerville has a population of about 40,000,, excuse me, 41,000 people. And yet we have two different state senators, two different state legislators, even though we are only 12.7 square miles. So the importance of fairly drawn districts cannot be overstated, which I'm sure most of us agree. When district lines are drawn to give extreme advantage to one party or the other than the true constituents of that legislator are the large donors and lobbyists who donate and bribe with enough money to bend the ear and get the attention of elected officials. It should be the residents of a district who have the attention of their elected officials, not groups looking to profit from our tax dollars and state laws. Obviously, lines need to be drawn and someone will be in a different district from a neighbor. But sometimes the slicing and dicing of these communities borders on kirigami. I currently live in Westerville. We have no commission hearings there. So I came here to Lima because I grew up in Wapak. So Wapak[oneta] the city... With the city limits are in the 82nd state legislative district, which might seem contiguous, but all around it are in the 84th. The pool I swam in for high school just to the east of town is in the 84th. The pool the kids swim in now is in the 82nd, in town. St. Joseph's Catholic Church is in the 82nd near downtown. St. Joseph Cemetery is in the 84th. You can attend church and then once you die you go to a different state legislative district. [laughter] So St. Mary's, where I used to water ski and my dad fishes, is in the 82nd, Grand Lake St. Mary's is in the 84th. So there's just like this nice little hug around St. Mary's and Wapak, for some reason. The gerrymandering of this area doesn't even make much political sense. This broader region is predominantly farmland and conservative. So maybe this area was sliced and diced just for sport or practice for the main event of slicing and dicing of cities in Ohio. And we all know we've mentioned the glory that is Ohio's 4th Congressional District, a duck shaped blight on democracy. And how in heavens is it that my in-laws in Avon Lake are less than an eighth of... or excuse me, less than a mile from being in the same district as my parents in Wapakoneta? One hundred and fifty seven miles apart, I've done the drive. It's almost three hours. And there is no rationale for this other than pure greed and the desire to focus on wealthy donors and lobbyists and getting their bidding done in the Congress and at the state level, of course. Not helping actual Ohioans in these ridiculously drawn districts, these unfairly drawn, excuse me, these are unfairly drawn lines leave voters with no real representation. For example, 90% of Ohioans, including 87% of gun owners in Ohio, approve of universal background checks. Yet, this gerrymandered state legislature has made no movement on passing it, even after the Dayton shooting, because the majority have major donors in the gun lobby. Columbus, Ohio, has had 135 homicides this year, most of them by firearm. And many of those guns can be purchased with no background check at the perpetual gun show on the West Side. The legislature did pass the Stand Your Ground, kill-at-will bill last Christmas, at the height of COVID deaths in the state, the priority was to protect shooters. The only proponent testimony given at the hearing was from a gun lobbying group. So these gun lobbying groups pay a lot of money directly and through independent expenditures to our lawmakers and get their bills passed while mothers mourn their dead children. Mothers are shot and killed with their infant children by domestic abusers. And yet Ayisha's law never made it out of committee in the Senate. And a mother mourns her daughter, who died by gun suicide less than an hour after purchasing that gun, despite attempts by family because we can't pass [inaudible] in this state. Maybe have more mothers had a huge budget for donating to campaigns, we could save lives with common sense legislation that the majority of Ohioans want, or maybe fair districts would give mothers a voice at the Statehouse. Mothers will continue to show up and we will demand that we have fair districts to elect lawmakers motivated by their voters who are hurting and not lobbying groups. We demand fair districts so legislators are responsive to voters, can pass legislation that saves lives, including the 929 Ohioans who die by gun suicide every year. We demand there is a transparent and fair process for drawing new lines. Gerrymandering is killing Ohioans. Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak. [applause]

**Co-Chair, House Speaker Robert Cupp** [00:24:04] Thank you for your testimony. Are there questions for the witness from the members of the commission? Thank you. Thanks. Next witness then is David Smith, David O. Smith from Lima.

**Smith** [00:24:35] OK, David Smith, 515 West Ashwood Avenue, Lima, Ohio. Um, I didn't know about this until last night I decided to attend. I appreciate the opportunity to speak. I don't have anything real flowery, just some simple observations. We're here to talk about redistricting, ending gerrymandering. Just because this past practice or the way we've always done something does not make it right. Until about 100 years ago, women could not vote, that was not right. We still do not have equal pay for equal work. This is not right. Until about 160 years ago, we had slavery. It wasn't right. [applause] There is no excuse for districts like the duck or the snake. Remember, absolute power corrupts absolutely. Do the right thing. Thanks. [applause]

**Co-Chair, House Speaker Robert Cupp** [00:25:46] Any questions for the witness? Thank you. Next witness then is [applause] Shannon Freshour from Marysville.

**Freshour** [00:26:07] Hello, thank you for having me. My name is Shannon Freshour. I was the Democratic nominee to represent the 4th District in the last cycle. A task that I took on knowing full well that I would lose because of the extraordinary gerrymandering, which during the the campaign, was ruled unconstitutional at the Federal Court of Appeals level before the Supreme Court ruled that partisan gerrymandering was legal. What I learned from that experience was a couple of things. It's... You can't... People here talk about gerrymandering from the voter's perspective, but also there's not a... There's no possibility that a leader, a representative, can represent 14 noncontiguous parts of 14 noncontiguous counties adequately. If you have a, if you have a district that has 5, 10 [inaudible] in it, in one county, you're going to ignore them because they aren't valuable to you. And that's wrong. That means that people are not getting equal representation in this state. That is absolutely abhorrent. The other thing that it causes is corruption. We have a state that went in 2011... When the last time we did this, we were, we ranked 12, in corrupt.. In state corruption. Today, we rank first. The former speaker of the State House was arrested by the FBI in a $61 million dollar bribery scandal to help get other state legislators elected. $61 Million dollars. He's on.... he's about to be on trial. He got reelected because that gerrymandered district that he was in, he wasn't gonna lose. As the gentleman before me said, absolute power corrupts absolutely. Gerrymandering allows for absolute power. Last night, David Pepper spoke in Cincinnati and ask you all where the meetings, where the private meetings. And then a journalist, I think, from the Capital Journal asked all of your spokesmen to confirm it. And most of you said there were no meetings. Leader Sykes said she talks about gerrymandering all the time. Because she does and she should. And that's what you should talk about, because this is the most important thing. And the only member to even say that there were meetings that were public was Auditor Faber, so I'm just curious who you were meeting with at this point, if there are private meetings. There's not a meeting in Ohio. I live in the second largest county in Ohio. I'm sorry, the second fastest-growing county in Ohio. We don't have a meeting. The largest city in Ohio doesn't get a redistricting hearing. This process is gerrymandered to represent the places where you all have your power bases. [applause] You can't do this legitimately and expect the people to to take it seriously. The reason that the... the reason that the people rose up and passed a constitutional amendment is because it was so absurd the last time you tried to do it this way. Focus on doing your job. You have a gig, this is a gig, you guys are in the gig economy. You have a job where you come, and you are a contract employee where you serve us. And that is your job. I knew that when I signed up as a candidate that if I was to be elected, I would... It would be a gig job. It is a gig job for every person who gets elected. Because you are service employees. You're basically the waitstaff of the public service industry. And you haven't figured that out yet. Because now you believe that you are all-powerful because you've rigged the system. So I hope that you take this seriously. I hope that you actually take your your... Oath to the Constitution and to the, to the Ohioans here and across the state seriously. Thank you. [applause]

**Co-Chair, House Speaker Robert Cupp** [00:30:10] Are there questions for the witness? All right, thank you very much. I understand that, Seth. Gweneth, I'm not sure I'm pronouncing that right...[inaudible] Scott from Arlington, which I can't read, can't read this very well. but we're glad you're here and you have the microphone.

**Greenerth [?]** [00:30:34] Yeah, and I'll make sure I actually have it up here so you can hear me. All right. So I do... I come from the Senate District 1, House district 83 and also US House District 5 there. And just briefly on my background, that relates to this is, I've worked with the polls for multiple times. I appreciate the job you've done, Mr. LaRose [?], many regards to that. And, and when I hear that, you know, the experiences I've had there help inform, what I'm going to say here, too. And so first off, I think what I will reflect is what I've heard from other people too, this room really doesn't reflect what Ohio looks like because you have indeed gerrymandered the process of fixing gerrymandering. And it's ridiculous. This is not Ohio represented in here. And I and thankfully, I've got flexibility with my work, except for my 10 o'clock call I just had. So I was able to make it here and be here for the rest of the day now. So and there was nothing holding you back from approaching this differently, because this process is not just about census data, it's about how you approach the data, alright? So that... I'm really disappointed that you were not... way ahead in allowing more flexibility with these meetings, many more meetings. So what we have we've got areas where we have districts that go down, squeeze down to only three miles wide. That would be district, House District 82. Half a mile wide, House District 46. That goes from practically Lake Erie down to Perrysburg. And it goes down to literally half a mile wide, just to accommodate gerrymandering. And then also right where we are now in Senate District 12, we're if to go west from here or east from here, we're out of District 12 right away. It's ridiculous. So when we look at this problem, I like to think of the fact of... Imagine if you look at the map of the United States and we had to give up Dayton to Indiana because somebody thought that was politically expedient. You know, it's ridiculous. Or to give up Cincinnati to Kentucky because again, up to Lebanon, maybe. So it is really disgusting to see what we have and what I'm afraid you all are heading right to again, because your actions so far don't really speak very well. So the good thing is you've heard some good advice. I believe it was yesterday the very first person who spoke, Steve Castro. I really appreciate what he had to say about compact districts and giving you ideas on how to measure where you would look at a district and say, hey, if we go from one side to the other of that district, drawing a line at any random point we should stay in the district. Districts that are a half mile wide aren't going to allow for that because it's, you know, it's like the snake and all these other terms you've given to our districts in Ohio. So you've been given that information. And I'd like to throw one more at you. There's a 14-year-old kid in middle school who took on with his other peers, his school project, to look at gerrymandering, and he ended up winning a national award for a STEM competition. And so I will gladly, when I submit my written comments, submit a link to that fact of what he did. He just simply wrote an algorithm that came up with districts, in his case, articles that have public access to show Alabama, where it looks just like minor little deviations from the outside. But it's basically a large blob. Anybody would say, that's my neighborhood, that's where I live. And to be very clear. So thankfully, that kid won a $10,000 prize at 14 years old for looking at this. So my summary is this. Do you want to see the most extreme member of a party get elected? And I want to be clear. I mean, any party. I don't care what side you represent, Green Party, Libertarian, whatever. If you want to see that, just let it the way it is. If not, get to work on this and get it done. Because as a seasoned poll worker, I've been up well before sunrise and worked well past sunset for many elections, large and small ones, so that we can have free and fair elections for all. I expect the same effort from every single one of you to get this done and make sure that it is done regardless of your party or political affiliation. [applause]

**Co-Chair, House Speaker Robert Cupp** [00:34:50] Thank you. Thank you, Scott. I'm not sure we've clarified your pronunciation of your name, Scott Greenerth that's OK. Just just beat it for the record again. You've got it, Scott Greenerth. Thanks, Scott. Any questions for Scott? Right. Next witness is Robert. Um, maybe Koon? from Lima, all right, very good.

**Koon** [00:35:21] My name is Robert Koon. I live in Lima, I'm president of the Local 1002, which is the union for the city employees. I would like to ask all of you if you commit on the record to end gerrymandering. If you look at, I know we're not talking about the congressional districts, but if you look at our district. If you were to start in the most western, northern tip of Bluffton, and you would drive south through Lima, go all the way down to Urbana, all the way up to... Sorry, I got to look, it's... yeah. Then to Sandusky and then over to Elyria. That's 232 miles. When you have other districts, there are only 66 miles wide. And that's at its widest. In the last 24 years, 8 elections, the presidential elections has been split 4 Republican, 4 Democratic. Please explain how the current layout of Ohio representatives for the congressional is 11 Republicans and 3 Democrats. That's almost a four to one margin. Also with... it's a two to one margin for our state representatives. How can you explain that it's that big of a discrepancy, Republicans versus Democrat, but the presidential elections would go basically even split? Finally, I mean, I'd like to say, Bob, you're from Lima, Matt, you're from Lima. I really want to trust that you guys are going to do the right thing. I grew up in this town, you guys grew up in this town, we don't... We're not extremists. We're not one way or the other. We're a little bit of everything. But the way that the thing, everything is destroyed now, it only promotes one thing to get extremes on one end or the other. So please just do your job, do it correctly. And I'd like to hear if any of you would like to commit to ending gerrymandering. Thank you. [applause]

**Co-Chair, House Speaker Robert Cupp** [00:37:52] Thank you. We are here to listen today, so we appreciate your, input and your... your challenge, I guess, to us to do the right thing. So I have questions for the witness. OK. Thank you. Next witness is Karen Vroman. From Bluffton.

**Vroman** [00:38:26] I may not be nearly as eloquent as the folks that have gone before me, and I will probably cut back some of the comments that I have that people have already said my name is Karen Vroman and I'm a resident of Bluffton, Ohio, in Allen County. And I've been so for the past 16 years. I'm also a lifelong resident of the state of Ohio. I've raised 5 children who also continue to reside in Ohio, and I have 14 grandchildren, James Howenstein, my husband has been a lifelong resident of Bluffton and Allen County, and he too has 4 grown children. Both of us have worked in state government for decades and we have stood as staunch advocates and staff for the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, an organization that represents over 100,000 working men and women in the state of Ohio. And as such, I will be testifying today in the favor of fair districts. And as an organization, the members that we represent fall about a third, a third, a third, a third. A third D, a third R and a third independent. My husband and I often joke with friends and associates that we live in the district for which is by the snake on the lake. And we have embraced the situation here in Ohio with a sense of humor. But it's well known that Ohio is a gerrymandered state. According to the New York Times magazine, many political scientists consider the House maps in Republican controlled states like North Carolina, Michigan, Ohio and Texas to have the most pronounced partisan slants. We are here today because everyone in this room is committed to changing that. We have amended the Constitution twice to represent Ohio accurately to the electorate. Voters should be able to select the people that represent us in all levels of government. And in turn, those that represent us should be accountable and willing to represent a diverse, unique and collective electorate. Our district should not be manipulated by crafty politicians and computer modeling software that ensures outcomes specific to groups and to individuals. We should not live in an area where decades and decades go by, where someone from the opposing party has never been able to gain a congressional seat. Again, folks, partisan manipulating of the boundaries of our electoral districts for the express purpose of skewing the outcomes of elections is just wrong and it corrupts our democracy. We have an Ohio delegation that, my numbers may be a little off, it has 4 Democrats and 12 Republicans. A recent article actually dated yesterday in the Columbus Dispatch indicates that Republicans have a supermajority in the House and the Senate and control 75% of the state Senate seats, even though Ohio consistently votes 55-45% for statewide republican candidates. Now Jim and myself live in a community, and it's a rural community, where we love our neighbors and friends. However, most likely our interests will not align with the majority of those neighbors and friends. And we accept that. What we don't accept is that our representatives have been choosing who represent us and not the voters. We have... We have had our voices stolen through this gerrymandering process, and we believe, and this is was proven in Pennsylvania, that if we redo the lines in Ohio a million different ways, none would be more optimal for the Republican Party than the current one that we have today. And this needs to change. Democracy functions on compromise when you intend... Intentionally destroy the ability to compromise and the will to compromise through gerrymandering and pandering to fringe elements, you're destroying democracy at its heart. And folks, we're seeing that happen every day in the United States today. We need to be committed to doing this right. Thank you. [applause]

**Co-Chair, House Speaker Robert Cupp** [00:42:26] Thank you for your testimony. So there's any questions for the witness. All right. Next is Chuck Shierloh here from Lima. Chuck?

**Shierloh** [00:42:54] My name is Chuck Shierloh and I have lived in Lima since 1975. On November 27, The Ohio State University will play Michigan in a football game. Let's make believe Ohio State scores three touchdowns and three PATs. And Michigan, scores two touchdowns and two PATs. The score will be 21-14. Let's make believe football games are scored like districts are gerrymandered. The score could be 7-28 or 19-3, whatever a group of people decides the score should be. In our last election for U.S. Congress, Ohio voted 43% Democrat, 57% Republican, but our representation in Congress in the US is and five percent Republican and 25 percent Democrat. I sincerely believe that the election results should. Be the same as election vote should not be this glaring discrepancy between the way the votes came out and the way that seats were awarded. I believe the constitutional scholars have concluded that House districts be the US or state, should represent individual communities. In order for a representative to represent a community, he must be of that community. Now, as an example, and you've heard before for many people how the 4th Congressional District goes from Cleveland to Toledo to Columbus to Indiana. A congressional district must be compact and contiguous, our 4th Congressional District, among others, are neither compact or contiguous. I think we all know why districts are drawn as they are drawn. A congressional district map should not look like a Jackson Pollock drawing, it should look like a figure from a 10th grade geometry textbook. Congressional maps must be drawn. Contiguous and compact to represent voters. I thank you for your time. [applause]

**Co-Chair, House Speaker Robert Cupp** [00:45:35] Next witness is Lisa Robeson. From Bluffton, Ohio.

**Robeson** [00:45:50] Co-Chair Cupp and co-chair Sykes, thank you so much for traveling here today to hear our voices. My name is Lisa Robeson and I live in Bluffton, Statehouse District 4. I'm here today because I have worked long and hard to have a full voice in my legislature. I know what it's like to not have a voice in the legislature. For 15 years, I was a resident of Washington, D.C. I'm going to have to take my mask off because it's fogging my glasses and I can't read. [laughter] Sorry.

**Co-Chair, House Speaker Robert Cupp** [00:46:29] You notice that I do that too.

**Robeson** [00:46:33] I was a resident of Washington, D.C. As a resident of the district, I could vote at the local level, but I had no voting representation in Congress. My delegate to the US Congress, Eleanor Holmes Norton, spoke powerfully on the behalf of the American citizens of the district. But because she has no vote in Congress, she has... Her voice and mine can be ignored. When I moved to Allen County 27 years ago, I was so thrilled to have a representative at the state and federal level. I called my state rep about issues like school funding. I met with Mike Oxley, but as I got more involved, I realized that changes that are broadly supported were not happening because of gerrymandering. So, for example, when I first moved here, our school funding system was declared unconstitutional. That's how long ago it's been. And I contacted my elected officials. But 27 years later, we we still haven't reached a resolution. Speaker Cupp, you probably don't remember this, but I was in line with you for the Martin Luther King dinner, and I told you how much I appreciated your bill. I'm sure you don't remember that, but I thought I would say it.

**Co-Chair, House Speaker Robert Cupp** [00:47:51] Actually, we did pass that this

**Robeson** [00:47:54] The House did. Did the Senate pass it?

**Co-Chair, House Speaker Robert Cupp** [00:47:56] Yes it did, it's in the budget, both House and Senate passed school funding reform.

**Robeson** [00:48:00] Sorry, I have --

**Co-Chair, House Speaker Robert Cupp** [00:48:03] I just want to let you know there's a little good news too. [laughter]

**Robeson** [00:48:07] Thank you. But we still have issues here in Ohio, so I realize I've collected signatures at farmers markets, colleagues, houses for the ballot initiatives at Square Fair in Lima, in sunshine and in rain. And I would like you to know that of the more two-- more than 200 conversations I had with people on the 20-- signing the 2018 ballot initiative, I met one person, one, who said she liked the system the way it was. If they listen to the explanation of the system, they signed the petition. I'm here today, Speaker Cupp and Representative Sykes, to ask that Ohio's districts are drawn fairly. Without regard to political party. Because we're in the fourth district, even though we're here to talk about the statehouse level, we are part of Ohio, U.S. House District 4, which is the elephant in the room -- that's a pun. [laughter] Four years ago, I was part of a group that hosted a town hall with Jim Jordan, 250-- publicly announced, 250 people from across the district came some, like Barb, as far away as three hours. We filled the Lima Convention Center. Since then, Congressman Jordan has not had one publicly announced town hall, [applause]. the only way I know that he's speaking to employees at SumiRiko in Bluffton right now is that employees at the plant have emailed some of us to tell us where and when. That's the only way we can talk to our representative. That's not right. I ask you to honor not just the letter of the new constitutional policies, but the spirit. Thank you for your time. [applause]

**Co-Chair, House Speaker Robert Cupp** [00:50:18] Thank you. Are there questions for the witness. I don't think we see any questions, so the next witness is Jeffrey Sites from Lima. Jeff.

**Sites** [00:50:44] I'll take my glasses off because I can't read with my glasses on. Um. Co-chair Cupp, co-chair Sykes, thank you for allowing me to speak today, honored committee members. My name is Jeff Sites. I reside at 109 Wynwood Court here in Lima. Um, I am a Lima native, a veteran. I work in warehousing and I am a candidate for Congress for the Ohio 4th. I want to start by welcome you to the duck or as I call it, the dragon, because our current rep spews fire of hate and fear. There's no better place to talk about redistricting than right here. We are notorious, a poster child for gerrymandering, a national joke. Except for those who live here, the joke's getting old. As a candidate, I've had the opportunity to talk to folks from Wapakoneta, to Elyria, from all walks of life with all sorts of politics. And the word that comes up most is frustrated. Frustrated we have to watch cable news to hear from our congressman. Frustrated we can't get our questions answered. Can't get the basic constituent services our tax dollars pay for. Frustrated, we have crooks running the legislator-- legislature unopposed. And frustrated we can't do much about it. The government is failing us. The government is selling us out. And our district lines are so rigged, we, the voters, feel powerless to stop it. No wonder Ohio's got such a problem with corruption, as we've heard today. We don't expect politicians to serve us out of the goodness of their hearts. We expect politicians to do their jobs because we, the voter, will fire you. We voters are chosen to suit the politicians instead excuse me... When voters are chosen to suit the politicians instead the other way around, the system breaks down. I'm advocating for fair districts as a Democrat and a believer of democracy, but fair districts is also about taking power from politicians and giving it back to voters. Ohio made it clear at the ballot box, we want this. I urge this panel to listen to us, the voters, and take this gerrymandering seriously. Not only do I need to know that we're taking this seriously and progressing at a good pace, so I know where to go to beat Jim Jordan. Thank you. [applause].

[00:53:39] Any questions for the witness? Thank you. Thank you. Next witness is Judith Hoffman from Fostoria. Judith?

**Hoffman** [00:54:17] Thank you, co-chair speaker Cupp and Senator Sykes and to the rest of the members of this commission for the opportunity to share my thoughts with you as you begin the task of redrawing Ohio's House and Senate district maps, which has been entrusted to you. My name is Judith Hoffman. I live in Fostoria, Ohio, Seneca County. Ohio House District 88, Ohio Senate District 26 and the 4th Congressional District. I made this trip here today because I believe this opportunity to stop gerrymandering and to create fair districts is critical to the future of our country's democracy as well as the future of Ohio. Since 2012, I have been keenly aware of the unfairness of the current district maps and the resulting apathy of those who represent me, their unwillingness to listen to the voices other than those of big business and special interest groups, as well as their voting records, which reveal a lack of compassion and unwillingness to work for the common good of all. In 2015 and 2018, I worked hard to help get signatures for petitions to put the issue of district reform on the ballot and the election results in those years indicated my experiences with elected representatives was echoed by over 70 percent of the voters in our state. I ask each of you on this commission to follow the approved process, in spite of the timeline pressures, which could be an argument for streamlining and shortcutting the job you have been asked to do. The process is more important to many of us than the timeline. That process calls for complete transparency, resisting partisan pressuring and putting aside partisan favoritism. I do appreciate these 10 public hearings that have been scheduled for this week and the opportunity for input from voters. However, the process calls for the public to have the opportunity to easily weigh in on any new maps you create or propose before they are delivered to the General Assembly. These pre-map drawing hearings cannot be a substitute for the three required hearings for the recommended Ohio legislator... Legislature maps and the two required hearings for the recommended congressional map. Furthermore, I asked that you schedule those hearings at three different locations around the state on various days and times of the week to make it possible for those who could not easily take off from work to be present. My final request is for you to strongly consider providing the opportunity for virtual testimony for at least one of those hearings, for the sake of those who are not able to travel longer distances and for those of those who those who have illnesses and handicaps and cannot attend an in-person hearing. I thank you all for listening. Thank you to those of you who are here today on the panel that are the commission who have taken that off... Oath to serve on this commission with the utmost integrity and for your willingness to accept the responsibility that that entails. Know that I and many others are depending on the seven of you to serve us and The State of Ohio well, thank you. [applause]

**Co-Chair, House Speaker Robert Cupp** [00:58:21] Any questions? All right. Next witness is Robert...Immke? And if you're from Elida. Oh.

**Immke** [00:58:50] Bob, do you know who I am?

**Co-Chair, House Speaker Robert Cupp** [00:58:52] You may proceed, I do. [laughter]

**Immke** [00:58:54] Matt, do you know who I am? Matt Huffman, do you know I am.

**Co-Chair, House Speaker Robert Cupp** [00:59:01] Yes, Mr. Chairman.

**Immke** [00:59:04] Yes, thank you, Vernon. I ran against these two guys. We could have been buddies down at the statehouse. Coulda done lunch. All right. I was just a factory worker down at the Honda plant, and they called me up and said, will you run against Matt Huffman back in 2011? He made some poor choices. In 2011, he was on the realignment committee. Staged in a hotel suite. Planning this map we have with no other than John Boehner. How could you take the crying? At the end of that month, Matt emerged and said the map was fair and balanced. He signed off on the mistake on the lake and our very own duck. And many other disassociated districts. He did a favor for 12 Ohio congressmen from Ohio and gave 4 Democrat Congressman the crumbs. During that year, he also had on the ballot an issue that would weaken public employee unions. Thank... Thank you, Jesus. that this was soundly defeated. So Matt doesn't have much of a record to go on. Now he's back in the same place. We're allowing him to shape our congressional maps. This favor to Jim Jordan in the 4th Congressional District has cost us jobs, jobs and more jobs. You see, Jim Jordan will not bring any back... Back any federal money back into this district. And he's proud of that. They call it pork, but it's federal dollars, we've paid into, dearly. You learn that political trick from no other than John Boehner, who, absolutely, quit politics after confessing his moral soul to the pope. So 12 years of Jim Jordan in scandals, OSU, and January 6th have put us in a bind. Just to keep what we have. The loss of citizens, according to the census here in Ohio, in our district, because they couldn't find jobs just to sustain themselves. This does not concern that ill-suited wonderboy. Did you get that, ill-suited? [laughter] OK, we've seen him in congressional hearings and on Fox News blathering about semantics and we think, couldn't he be spending his time bringing in industry and commerce to the district? Whether it's farmers or small business in the community. We are severely struggling here in the 4th congressional district to keep our young people in the area near our families after we've worked so diligently to educate them and raise them properly. Well, more than... More than tired majority rule at the expense of our livelihood from our state and US representatives. Thank you. [applause]

**Co-Chair, House Speaker Robert Cupp** [01:02:38] Our next witness is David Notman, Columbus, Ohio, if I've mispronounced that I'd ask you to state your name for the record, please.

**Notham** [01:03:07] I am Dave Notman of Columbus, Ohio. Our existing district map is unacceptable, wildly gerrymandered districts undermine the legitimacy of our elections. And without legitimate elections, what do we have left? Nothing but the appearance of a democracy. So without a process to draw districts, we'll get a repeat of what we have rubber stamped by a commission that is itself biased in its composition. So how do we measure gerrymandering objectively, one simple way would be to measure the length of each district's boundaries and calculate the area within... Identify gerrymandered districts with the ratio of area to border length. Using a measure of compactness like this will not eliminate gerrymanders, but it will make them more difficult. So I would like to propose a process. First commit to a 30% reduction in the number of district border miles in the state, reject any plans that do not meet this objective. Secondly, portions of a district border that coincide with Ohio's borders should be considered nondiscretionary and do not count when calculating a district's boundary length. So the process begins with one party. They propose a district and the length of the discretionary borders that propose district are counted against that party's total. Now, the remaining... The other party... proposes a second district to the... If the two districts abutt then that portion that is common isn't counted against the second party's allocation of district miles. So you continue in this fashion alternately creating... proposing districts. And when you're done, you look at the total number of district miles proposed by each party. And if they're wildly out of balance, then you start over. Now, you repeat the whole process again, this time with the other part making the first district. And in the end, you choose the plan that has the fewest discretionary border miles. Now, again, this isn't going to eliminate gerrymandering, but it's going to make it a heck of a lot more difficult. And just to give you an example of of one of the effects that our gerrymandering has, I worked as a precinct official in the recent primary for Steve Stivers' district, and we had a steady stream of people coming in wanting to vote. They saw the yard signs in their neighbor's yard, but they were in the 12th district, not the 15th, because the borders of Stivers diverse district are wildly gerrymandered. So you need to make districts that are compact, contiguous and closer to the electorate. Thank you. [applause]

**Co-Chair, House Speaker Robert Cupp** [01:07:34] The questions for the witness seem none. Thank you, David. Next witness then is George Marsh from Tiffin, Ohio George.

**Marsh** [01:08:12] Thank you to all of you who have come here representing our government. Thank you very much. This is a very serious matter, fairness. But it strikes me that fairness is something which stands, in some contrast, conceptually, to the concept of power. Power's great, isn't it? As long as the power satisfies you and those that you represent. I have a few thoughts on power, what is power for? Is it to keep, and to accumulate more? Or is it to share with the less powerful? People with no power or very little. So we get into matters of ethics rather than simple power. Is power meant to ignore real, serious human needs while satisfying greed? Whether the greed is personal, or maybe corporate. Profit. What will benefit the next quarter or the next two quarters, in the corporate balance sheet, is that what's power..what power is for? And what a state will legislate so that power can be kept and expanded? Is power for.. Is power sought to honor a dream of past racial homogeneity in our state. Or is power to be used to respect and encourage the reality of racial diversity? Please think about these things when you speak about fairness. [applause].

**Co-Chair, House Speaker Robert Cupp** [01:10:46] Questions for the witness? No questions, the the next witness is Phil Along from Celina and he has submitted a written only testimony. Which will be, of course, posted online. Next witness is Mary Stoneburner from Marion in Ohio. Mary from Marion.

**Stoneburner** [01:11:33] Hello, my name is Mary Stoneburner, yes, I'm from Marion, Ohio. I thank the co-chairs for the opportunity to be here and the entire commission for your being here and giving us the opportunity to speak. And so, I, my notes are a little bit disjointed, tried to sort of think about and react to several things I've been hearing. I know gerrymandering is a, is a dirty word and nobody likes it. At the same time, I think we have to think about all the ramifications of elections. And so what came to my mind, it at one point was listening in listening, was that, I'm not sure if you're aware, but the most, perhaps the most gerrymandered state in the Union is the State of Maryland with seven Democrat and one Republican districts. And the districts are drawn with the snakes and spider shapes. The governor of Maryland has in recent years asked Eric Holder for help in redistricting. As you may remember, Eric Holder is a champion of eliminating gerrymandering and, you know, has set up a commission to sort of try to do that, I guess, a lobbying group or something. Well, the Democrats in Maryland are pushing to have that ratio moved to eight to nothing. The governor has reached out to Mr. Holder for help and has received none. And I think the point I'm trying to make is that it really kind of depends on who, who holds the the power, as some of you have pointed out, in terms of what what people are going to decide to do. So it seems that when Democrats are in charge, they want none of the bipartisanship that they claim to support. There have recently been five political statewide races, governor, attorney general, secretary of state, auditor, and president. Republicans won them all. Ohio is dominated by Republicans and this fact should be reflected in the redistricting. It's it seems an obvious point. If you look up the 2020 Ohio presidential map, you'll see 81 red counties and seven blue. The reality is Ohio is more Republican than it was in 2010. Ohio is losing one seat in light of the preponderance of Republican voters in the state. The redistricting should result in 13 Republican seats and two Democrat seats in Congress. And I just have one other thing to add, and that is some of you have mentioned some speakers have mentioned this today. I do hope that the commission will open up this debate so that this public comment session, so that it goes beyond this one week. The only thing I've heard about is this week. And I find it odd that, as someone has pointed out, you know, it's the meetings are at times when most voters can't be here. You know, I happen to be a retired teacher so I can be here. And I talked to a number of people who would have been here except for their work. So I really encourage some evening times and also some locations that are not just, you know, college university campuses. I think there are other places that we could hold these sorts of commission meetings. So thank you very much for your time. [applause]

**Co-Chair, House Speaker Robert Cupp** [01:15:00] Thank you. Are there questions for the witness? There are none. Thank you. Next witness is Regina Freeman from Lima.

**Freeman** [01:15:34] So good morning to all of you and thank you for hosting such an event as this so that we can share our views about redistricting here in Ohio. Thank you to Representative Sykes and Mr. Cupp. Appreciate this very much. My name is Regina Freeman. I live in Lima, Ohio. I live outside of the city in Allen County. I retired a year ago from the Ohio Civil Rights Commission with 13, 14 years under my belt, looking and investigating cases of discrimination. So with those things in mind, I tend to look beyond what I see and wonder how we got where we are and how it could persist for so long where we are. I must say that I am totally unhappy with how things have been going in Ohio. I'm originally from Indiana and I lived up near Lake Michigan and it was always a very, very, really wonderful place to be because there were people from everywhere that came and lived there and were able to thrive there and, you know, do very, very well. Moving to Ohio has not been that kind of feeling that I've had. Redistricting is something that could be the best thing that could happen to a community like ours. When I saw that, we were contiguously there with places like Urbana. And this kind of thing, I'm like, how does that you know, how does that complete a picture of community? What are we looking at here? And this has gone on for so long and it's time for it to stop. My father and mother used to talk about casting our pearls before swine, and it took a long time for me to understand what that biblical message meant. But what it means is we love to talk about, you know, giving us voice, about the the utmost unfairness, undemocratic process I've ever seen in my life that is happening here in Ohio. And it's great for us to be able to talk about this. But you all know what's going on. You all know how it's affected people. And today you get a chance to hear from these people. And I am just amazed at their breadth of knowledge, the ways they're trying to make this happen for this community. It is so amazing. We ought to give ourselves a hand and I should be very proud of yourself for doing this. I didn't know that there were these pockets of concerns that existed in this area because I reckon our district to an excavator that's, you know, fully lifted. I'm not... I don't know how to even figure this out, but contiguity and putting things very simple, a very simple process that has been made a mockery of. I don't even know how... Maybe we're not talking about politicians as much as we're talking about mathematicians and people who have a geometrical outlook on life and how to get what they want. It really is very, very difficult to comprehend. But what I ask you is that I'm sure that this even cost has an economic impact when it comes to ballot drawing and things of that nature. We need to have our voices heard. There is no way... And we believe in democracy. We believe in a democracy that's a fair representation of all people, everybody. We are not adverse to Republicans, but we are adverse to people that do not represent any of my feelings, any of my wishes. Our school boards, what have you. We need a fair, fair chance to cast our votes. And we do not need to see the democracy that United States has worked so hard to overcome and try to be a part of. We don't need to see it destroyed by not having a voice and we haven't had a voice for so long in this community. I thank you for our time to speak. I don't have all my notes because I thought this was hastily put together. And so because of that, I wasn't able to prepare the way I would have liked to. But I think you have a job to do and we expect you to do the hard thing and take care of this problem once and for all. Do the right thing for the people. [applause]

**Co-Chair, House Speaker Robert Cupp** [01:20:11] Thank you for your testimony is there are other questions for the witness? I would just add, if you want to extend your remarks, you can submit them online. There is a way to do that. So next witness is Jen Miller from Columbus, Ohio. We would ask all of you who are not from Allen County to purchase at least something while you're here, I believe a little extra money out of your visit.

**Miller** [01:20:52] Thank you. Co-Chairs the commission, by the way, I almost grew up in Bluffton because my father and mother almost bought the bakery in Bluffton and they didn't get the price they wanted, so they bought the one in Shelby, Ohio. So I am the I'm a proud daughter of Ohio. Growing up in Shelby, Ohio. My both my grandfathers worked in agriculture out of Clyde. My daughter today lives in Wapakoneta. So I feel as though I am kind of home. I'm here on behalf of the League of Women Voters of Ohio. We were founded in 1920 from the Women's Suffrage Association. Our first victory was in 1894 when we were able to get women the right to vote for school board races. As the 19th Amendment was being ratified, we transformed from the Ohio Women's Suffrage Association to the League of Women Voters. There were several organizations that brought that about, including nurses, teachers, business women, news reporters, the Federation of Colored Women's Clubs, the DAR, that... The Council of Jewish Women, so many with the idea that it was important for every voter to have the right to vote and to have the information that they needed to be informed and active citizens. We are fiercely nonpartisan. We do not endorse candidates or parties. Individuals in public leadership roles like myself do not make political contributions. We leave our party beliefs at the door. I think one of the best examples of that is actually in our voter guide. So in 2015 and 2018, you all know that we are instrumental in getting those reforms passed. But in our voter guide vote411.org, we simply just put the pros and cons of these initiatives because we really work to be nonpartisan for the people. My organization is not spiritual, but I am it's not religious, but I am, and I feel called by a higher power to be a humble servant of the people, regardless of race, creed, age, gender, education, zip code, income. I believe, as does my organization, that every Ohioan deserves maps that fairly represent them and are not rigged for either... For any party or individual candidate. Our work for fair Maps is now almost half a century long. We've opposed the maps that were manipulated to favor both the Democratic and Republican parties. Because maps that are rigged distort and pollute our democracy. Gerrymandering fuels polarization and government dysfunction, and when we lost at the ballot box in 2012, we realized that the people of Ohio didn't understand gerrymandering. So we trained hundreds of volunteers for a volunteer speakers bureau and they went to churches and Rotary Clubs, school classrooms, social clubs, just to help people understand what it was. And then we got out our clipboards. And in 2015 and 2018, we were collecting enough signatures that we were doing the impossible, which is as volunteers, we were going to get on the ballot. But instead we knew that it would be better to work with all of you. And so we worked with the Ohio General Assembly, the Republican Party, the Democratic Party and other nonpartisan groups to bring reform to the ballot. And I'm going to go a little bit longer because I think I'm the last one. Initiatives that passed by 72 and 75 percent of the vote in all 88 counties. So let us be clear that Ohioans of all stripes from Lake Erie to the Ohio River, when a public, transparent process that results in maps that honor local government subdivisions and a roughly proportional to how the statewide votes are cast. Ohioans want maps that serve and represent them and not the selfish, short-sighted interests of parties or individual candidates. The letter and spirit of these reforms are about compromise, bipartisanship, transparency, public input, dialog, best practices. These hearings should have started months ago. We started asking for them in April. [applause] Decisions about the data should have been made through a public debate. Instead, the public has had no input on or insight into how the data has been cleaned, verified or presented. We've had no input on the partisan indexing, which is a political decision and I would argue absolutely violates the letter of the spirit of these reforms, but possibly violates the letter of them. Well before the data was received, you should have been asking for input from the public and experts on how to measure and define things like equal population, minority representation, representational fairness and other issues. [applause] But I'll be clear and I'll be quick. The people of Ohio have given all of us a mandate. Yours is in the Ohio constitution. Mine is not. But we feel that mandate too, to make sure that partisan and racial gerrymandering finally end in Ohio once and for all. We will use every tool in our toolbox. From these hearings, to our map contest, to the courts and the ballot box, again, if we must. We haven't been here for 50 years to stop now. A lot of folks here are too shy to testify. So I'm going to do something we don't do in the statehouse. Look at this crowd. Let's make sure they all know what you stand for. Hold up your signs. We are asking for fair districts now, nearly every hearing thus far has been full, despite short notice and being during business hours. Those rooms have been full of league members, supporters, allies, friends, even people I consider family. We ask you to put democracy first. We ask you to put Ohio first, and we stand ready to work with you. Thank you. [applause]

**Co-Chair, House Speaker Robert Cupp** [01:27:23] And are there questions for the witness. Are there questions for the witness. Hearing none, next witness is Gene Redinger, I believe, from Bryan, Ohio.

**Redinger** [01:28:06] Everybody, there's my name is Gene Redinger, and there's absolutely no way that I can follow that up, like I'm here to remind you that Ohioans, Republicans and Democrats voted for fair maps. This isn't a debate. It is the law. Its... People have already declared that they don't want to live in political fiefdoms ruled by a specific party. These are Ohioans that made this choice. I'm surprised that the vast majority of us here understand how to follow the basic rules that are set, and yet we have a few that just don't understand how to follow the rules. And I don't get it. Like, we're all adults, we should be able to follow the rules. And yet some people just refuse. I have a couple of personal stories, my wife and I met at Four County Career Center a decade ago, and that... If the... If that area, if that a governmental unit, wasn't together, I'm not sure that we would have met. It's interesting how the media markets are so split here in Ohio. And even in my district up north, I live pretty far in northwest Ohio. So it was kind of a long drive out here. And even the closer drive for me wouldn't have been that much closer. It was about a 15 minute difference, really, in driving. So it's just interesting how these governmental units are all set up. As I said, we deserve a fair split. We voted on it. The vast majority of Ohioans voted on it and we deserve it. So that's all I really have to say. Thanks. [applause]

**Co-Chair, House Speaker Robert Cupp** [01:29:54] Are there... That's all of the witness slips we have, are there any other individuals here that want to testify today? All right, if not, I would remind you that you can still submit written testimony through the website for this hearing and it will be posted on the commission website and distributed to all of the commissioners. I do want to recognize another member of the General Assembly is here, Kenny Yuko, the minority leader in the Ohio Senate. [applause] I should let Matt do the introductions. He's here from Cleveland today. And welcome, welcome to Western Ohio. Before we adjourn this morning, I'd like to thank Ohio State University's Lima campus for hosting us here today, making very nice accommodations to have a great hearing. And thanks to Dr. Tim Rehner, the dean and director of the climate campus, and Mr. Brian Albright, assistant dean of student and community engagement, for their help in getting this set up. Is there any further business come before the regional hearing today? Representative Sykes, Leader Sykes.

**Minority Leader Rep. Emilia Sykes** [01:31:37] Thank you, Mr. Chair, this question is for the co-chairs. We are rounding out our road show. Tomorrow will be our final day. Next week is the September 1st deadline where we are supposed to have approved maps. Um, I would just like us to perhaps take some time to talk about what we plan to do in terms of introducing a map that, uh, folks can communicate and respond to, whether that will be a full commission map, the majority or minority caucuses or party representation can offer them or the co-chairs offer them. Uh, I think it would be helpful for us as we navigate the remainder of this process and these deadlines to start that discussion. [applause]

**Co-Chair, House Speaker Robert Cupp** [01:32:35] One of the things we are still working on is the the rules for the commission and we're trying to reach a bipartisan consensus on that, but I don't think we're quite there yet. But hopefully in the next few days.

**Co-Chair, Sen. Vernon Sykes** [01:32:54] Yesterday, uh, Mr. Chairman, if I may, (you may.) Uh, yesterday I announced that we were supposed to, uh, handle rules... rules today, and, uh, I think this is important and really important for this commission, particularly because of the vote by the people of the state. That really, they're insisting on fairness and openness, and I think it's important for us to have more public discussion about what's going on.It's just is extremely important. [applause] I don't believe this should be handled as we as we do the budget with the conference committee report that comes out just enough time to just announce what the results are. I think it's important that we have public discussion about dealing with the actual maps or some maps that are being considered. And I believe that it's important for us to do that. And what the holdup with the rules is really on when and how we're going to have maps, disclosed, maps being reviewed or considered by this body. And I think it's important for us as soon as possible, Mr.Co-Chair, to make a determination so we can resolve not only just the rules and have a meeting to do that, but have a meeting where we will accept the consideration and consider actual maps.

**Co-Chair, House Speaker Robert Cupp** [01:34:44] As as Mr. Co-chairman, as you know, we've had a discussion about this and we're very open to doing that and concluding something that we can agree to in the next few days so we can do that sort of thing. So we be very happy to continue working with you in a very engaged manner here in the next few days. Any further matters come before the commission.

**Regina Freeman** [01:35:23] May I ask a question? After you all have come to a... [inaudible] submit this to Congress for consideration, will there be another rebut, another public hearing or something else if this one is not passed or are you just going to submit something by September 1st, and we should just sit back and wait and see what that is? What happens now?

**Co-Chair, House Speaker Robert Cupp** [01:35:47] The constitutional requirement is for at least three hearings on maps that are presented before by September 1st, and if.. If the commission doesn't agree on a map by then for the commission to propose, then there is a requirement of one additional hearing for a map that would only require a majority vote. I think most of us are committed to having multiple hearings on maps, regardless of whether the September 1st deadline can be met. You know, the census data was to be available in April, it was available just a week or so ago. So it makes it very difficult to sort of vet all of these rules and have the things that you're asking for to be done in such a short order. And that's kind of what the complication here is, that we're trying to work our way through that.

**Co-Chair, Sen. Vernon Sykes** [01:36:47] So, Mr. Chairman, if I could just reiterate to make sure it's clear that we plan on having multiple hearings on any proposed map, regardless of when that map is introduced. [applause]

**Co-Chair, House Speaker Robert Cupp** [01:37:04] All right, anything else from the members here or what? All right, well, we'll be happy to entertain those here after we adjourn. Hearing nothing from the members of the commission. This hearing is adjourned.