

September 12, 2021

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Testimony Opposed to the Ohio Assembly Maps Proposed by the Commission on September 9, 2021

Ohio Co-Chair Cupp, Co-Chair Sykes, Ohio Redistricting Commission Members:

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony. My name is Lynn Buffington. I live in Beavercreek in Greene County. I vote in the 73rd Ohio House district and the 10th Senate district. I am here to talk about the draft maps submitted for the Ohio General Assembly districts. I am deeply disappointed in the Ohio Assembly maps that five of the seven of you voted to support last Thursday. I am glad that the 2015 redistricting reform process includes the chance for you to put forward new maps in the next few days. I urge you to adopt one of the sets of General Assembly maps that were the two top winners in the non-partisan contest held by the respected Fair Districts Coalition. The winning maps do extraordinarily better than yours, at meeting the criteria Ohioans overwhelmingly supported in the 2015 constitutional amendment to reform redistricting. It would be unconscionable for the commission to adopt the poor draft maps that five of you supported last week, when, especially since there are now readily available maps that are so clearly superior in meeting the constitutional criteria.

Your draft maps fall very short in the area of representational fairness, also called proportionality. As amended in 2015, Article 11, Section 6 B of the Ohio Constitution reads "The statewide proportion of districts whose voters, based on statewide state and federal partisan general election results during the last ten years, favor each political party shall correspond closely to the statewide preferences of the voters of Ohio." Here are the statewide preferences of the voters over the last ten years: 46% Democratic and 54% Republican. However, the predicted outcome from your draft maps for the 99 Ohio House seats is only 32% Democratic instead of the 46% that would be proportional, while the predicted outcome would be 68% Republican instead of proportional 54%! For the 33 Ohio Senate seats, the predicted outcome from the draft maps is 30% Democratic instead of the proportional 45%, while the predicted outcome would be 70% Republican instead of the proportional 55%.

In addition to your draft maps falling so short in meeting the constitutional standards, there are other reasons that Ohioans do not want your draft maps. Ohioans want a ten year map, not a four year map. As you know only too well, if the two Democrats on the Commission do not support the map, the map will only stand for four years. Again, the excellent, non-partisan maps resulting from the Fair Districts contest show that there is

absolutely no reason to settle for a four year map. You are all elected officials and Ohioans expect you to compromise and do this job right the first time!

In addition to expecting you to adhere to the constitutional criteria and to giving us a ten year map, Ohioans want you to be good stewards of our taxpayer moneys. If your current draft maps become your official maps, then lawsuits will almost certainly follow. Good stewards do not waste taxpayer money by making decisions that result in unnecessary legal fees.

I would like to describe one reason why I care so much about this once every ten year redistricting. Gerrymandering is a big problem for me and the majority of Ohioans because it causes the General Assembly to do a poor job of representing us. A specific example is background checks of gun sales. Polling shows that the vast majority, 90%, of Ohioans support background checks for all gun sales. In other words, Ohioans, of both major political parties support closing the loopholes that allow far too many gun sales to occur without background checks. However, the General Assembly repeatedly has refused to close the background check loopholes. In large part, this is because of gerrymandering.

It is well known that gerrymandering creates districts that are safe for one political party in the general election. Thus the election outcome is determined by the outcome of the primary. In non-presidential years, the voter turnout in Ohio primaries is sadly quite low, so that in a gerrymandered district, the election outcome is almost always determined by only about 15% of the voters. In my district, in 2018, it was only 14% of the voters who determined the winner to represent me in the Ohio House (the 73rd district).

I truly believe that because my two legislators are in safe districts, when I contact them, they do not feel a need to be responsive to my opinion because I am not in their political party and thus do not vote in the primaries that choose the winner in my district.

In closing, I urge you to fulfill the promise afforded all Ohioans by the 2015 redistricting reform, - to give us maps that meet the constitutional criteria including proportionality, that are ten year (not four year) maps, and to avoid wasting taxpayer money by choosing maps that will result in lawsuits. Please, throw out your draft maps and adopt one of the two contest winners.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify and for your work on behalf of Ohio.

Lynn Buffington