

Testimony
Ohio Redistricting Commission
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Good afternoon Co-chairs Cupp and Sykes and Commission members. Thank you for the opportunity to address the maps that are at the heart of Ohio's decennial redistricting process.

My name is Kathleen Gmeiner. I live with my husband William Todd in House District 17 on the Southwest side of Columbus. I was born and raised in Dayton, Ohio, lived for brief periods in Cincinnati and Toledo, lived outside the state for about 22 years, and have lived in Columbus since returning to Ohio in the year 2000. I am now retired, but my professional career brought me to the Ohio Statehouse on many occasions between 2000 and 2019. Despite the pandemic and my concern for my safety, during the summer and fall of 2020 I helped people register to vote at numerous events in Columbus which I organized together with the League of Women Voters. I will be commenting on the Commission's map and in part contrasting it with aspects of maps proposed by the Democratic Caucus, and maps by Geoff Wise and Pranav Padmanabhan who were jointly awarded first prize in the Fair Districts Legislative Mapping Competition hosted by Fair Districts.

First, however, let me say that my observations of our state and our electoral process is that it is becoming increasingly polarized and less reflective of the desires of the voters at large which is why getting this redistricting process right is so important. In many of Ohio's districts the primary election is the *real* election, because the distribution of voters is not competitive. When elections get settled at the primary, many voters start losing interest in the electoral process. The elected officials become primarily responsive to their political base, not to all their constituents, and the people who vote in the primaries are a much smaller number who may not reflect the mainstream. As a result we are seeing more and more that other than the budget, the legislation that is being introduced and garnering the lion's share of attention of the Ohio General Assembly is not legislation that arises from people's concerns but is legislation that is driven from a national political agenda, such as the recent spate of so-called voter reform legislation.

Now to the maps. The districts that are drawn should be compact, competitive and reflect communities of interest. It should respect governmental boundaries—counties, cities and

townships. The voting pattern of Ohio has been roughly 55% Republican and 45% Democratic, and the Ohio General Assembly should reflect this voting behavior. Unfortunately, the map that has been put forward by the Commission does not meet these standards and it shows in the expected outcome of the House and Senate seats.

Let me start with observations about Franklin County with which I am most familiar. You will note that that the Commission map combines the northwest corner of Franklin County with a large part of Union County to its north and west. The only reason to do this is patently partisan, as this part of northwest Franklin County, held by Republicans in the early part of the last decade, was captured by a Democrat in 2018, who was re-elected in 2020, while Union County has traditionally vote Republican.

As mentioned above, I live in current District 17 much of which is incorporated into the new District 6. The Commission map grabs a densely populated 100 square block area, shaped like a finger, out of the logical boundaries of what should be a compact District 6 and joins it to District 1 to the east. Given the voting propensity of new District 1, this appears to be a classic effort to pack Democratic votes into District 1, that will likely vote Democratic. These become “wasted” Democratic votes. The Commission’s map also creates an oddly shaped District 10 that winds around the southwest and west of the county designed to assure that the district which has been Republican for the last decade remains Republican. The Democratic Caucus plan also appears to cross the southern Franklin County line which should not be necessary but has no obvious intrusions into Franklin County districts such as the 100 square block west side grab in the Commission map. The map drawn by Geoff Wise keeps all districts within the boundaries of Franklin County.

Using the scoring mechanism of Dave’s Redistricting App, the software tool used by the Commission, the Democratic Caucus and the winners of the Fair Districts contest, the Commission map lags behind the other three significantly. Here is the bottom line: in the Commission’s map, there are 56 Republican House seats and 11 seats that lean Republican, while there are 23 Democratic seats with 8 that lean Democratic. Only 1 House seat is really competitive. In the Senate there are 18 Republican seats and 5 that lean Republican and 7 Democratic seats and 1 that leans Democratic. Only 2 Senate seats are truly competitive. That’s a 67%/31% breakout in the House and a 70%/24% breakout in the Senate. Not even close to the 55%/45% Republican/Democratic voting behavior of the state.

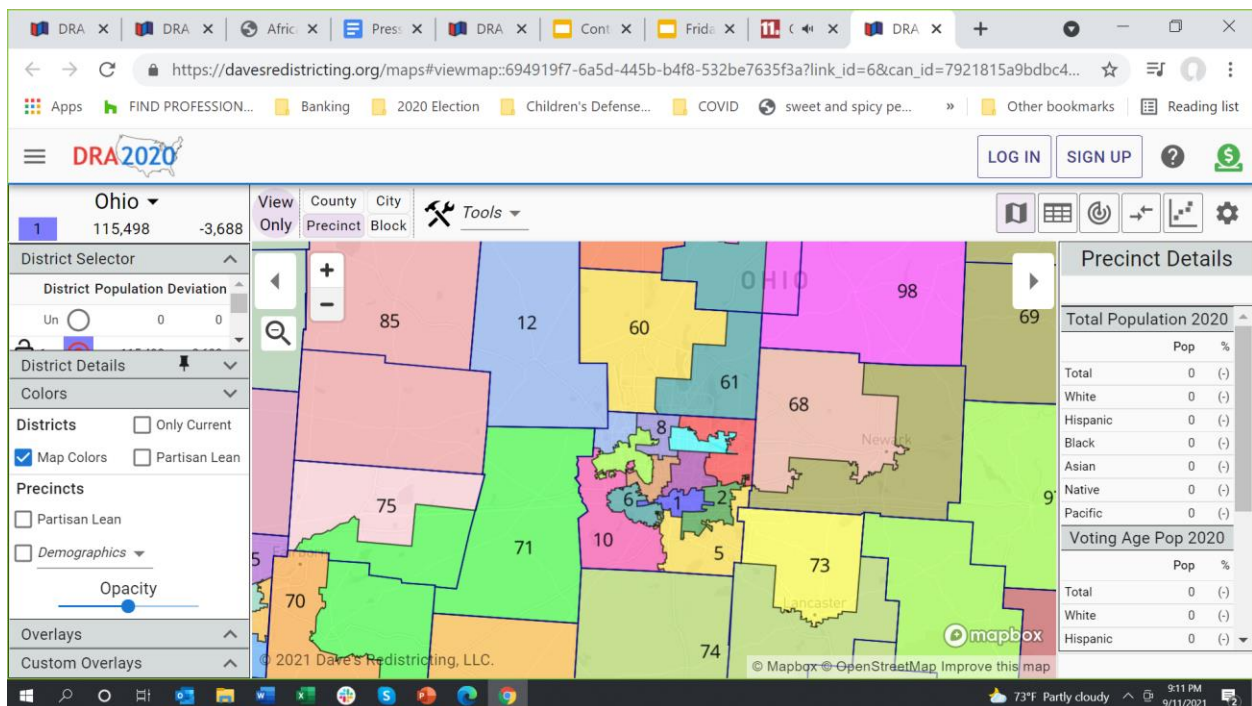
Geoff Wise proposed a map with a 54%/39% breakout in the Senate and a 54%/34% breakout in the House. Pranav Padmanabhan proposed a map with a 58%/33% breakout in the Senate and a 63%/32% breakout in the House. The Wise map shows 12 competitive House seats and 2

competitive Senate seats, while the Padmanabhan map shows 5 competitive House seats and 3 competitive Senate seats. This contrasts to only 2 competitive seats in the Senate and one in the 99 member House in the Commission’s map.

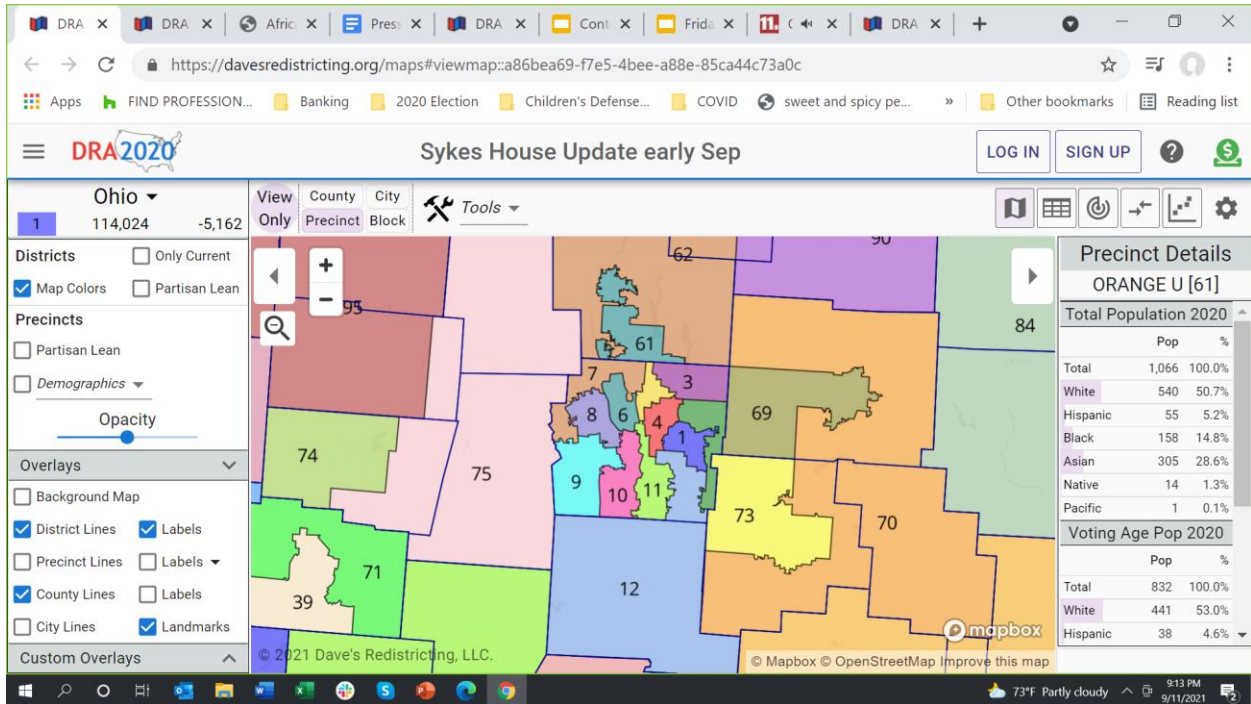
The Wise and Padmanabhan maps are much closer to the states voting behavior. It can be done. The Commission would do well to accept or borrow heavily from them.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

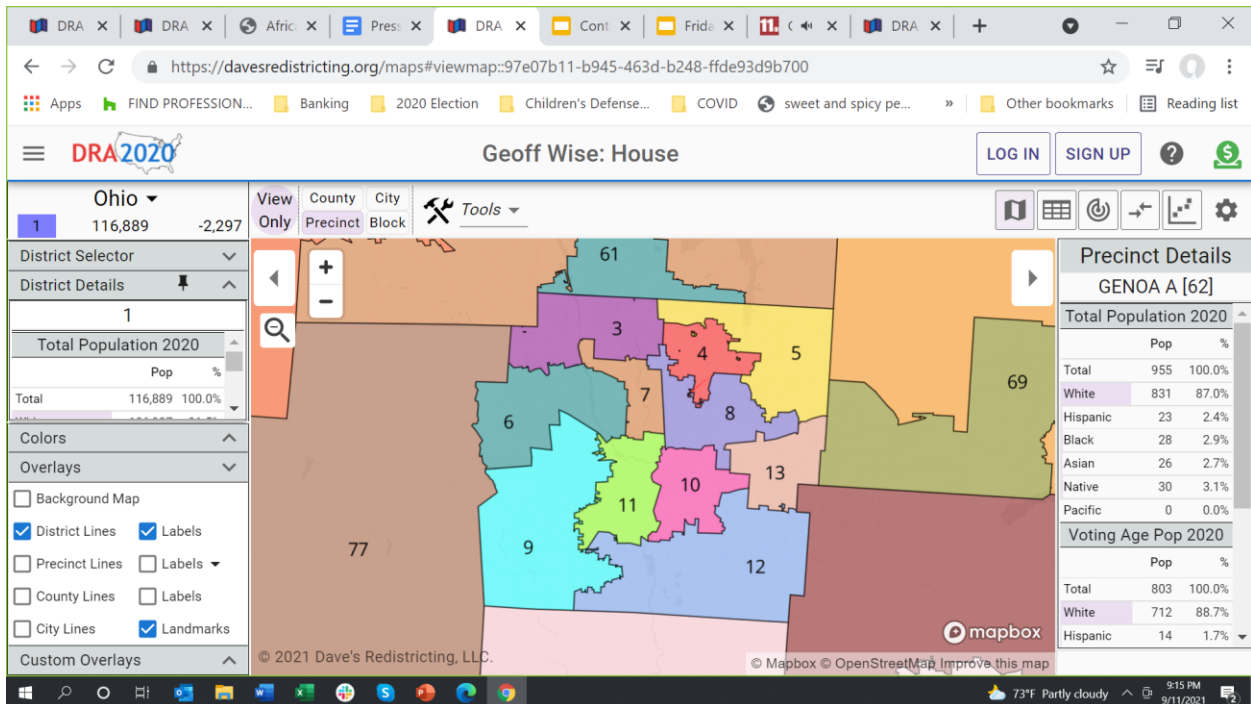
Commission Map—Franklin County



Democratic Caucus Map – Franklin County



Geoff Wise Map – Franklin County



Pranav Padmanabhan – Franklin County

