

Good afternoon. My name is Charles Jacobs. I live in Cincinnati in Ohio state-house district 27, senate district 7, and U.S. house district 2. Thank you for the opportunity to address this forum today.

I've had the chance to examine analysis provided by Dave's Redistricting of the map proposed by this commission and compare it to analysis of maps submitted by three others that were selected by Fair Districts Ohio as their competition winners. (Submissions from Pranav Padmanabhan, Geoff Wise, and Paul Nieves.) The analysis numerically scores each proposed map on five dimensions—competitiveness, proportionality, splitting, compactness, and minority representation. Scores can range from 0 to 100, where a higher number is better. With regard to the House, all four maps scored 100 on splitting. The three maps selected by Fair Districts Ohio are superior to the Commission-proposed map on all other dimensions, with combined incremental scores ranging from +43 to +55 points, mostly on the dimensions of compactness and proportionality, with moderate improvement in minority representation as well. Competitiveness appears to be harder to improve without a decrease in compactness, but all three winners managed to do so.

With regard to the senate, the map submitted by Pranav Padmanabhan achieved a 35-point gain in proportionality and a 23 point gain in compactness, while only differing from the Commission-supplied map by 1 or 2 points on the other dimensions.

It's important to note that these other maps were completed in the same timeframe with most likely far fewer resources than the Commission has. Based on the analysis of these maps, it's clear that, had the Commission been so inclined, and with minimal additional effort, they could have produced a much fairer set of maps. Perhaps this was merely an oversight on their part, having not put sufficient thought into the process. Or, more worryingly, perhaps they put a great deal of thought into it, and this is what they intended to achieve. If so, I don't expect that any appeal to be less partisan for the sole purpose of being fair and honest will have any impact. Instead, I wish to convey why I think that the members of the Commission should realize that it is in their own self-interest to be fair to *all* Ohio voters, not just those of their own party.

Let me begin by reminding everyone that the ability for every individual to be able to voice their informed political desires is the defining attribute of a functioning democracy. Given the logistical impossibility of soliciting and considering every individual opinion on all matters, the framers of the U.S. Constitution devised the structure of representative democracy that we have today—dividing the states into districts, and electing representatives to voice the majority opinion of those districts. Faith in that structure, as well as the other institutions of representative government, is what ensures continuity of our republic. Manipulation of district boundaries to achieve partisan political objectives undermines the structure of, and therefore ultimately the confidence in, the election process, and, in turn, democracy itself.

Alienating the members of an opposing party may quell their influence in the short run, but it engenders distrust and animosity that ultimately weakens the ability of elected officials to work together. Rather than two parties with different points of view working jointly to solve the significant issues that affect everyone, it splits the state into competing factions, where success for one party means beating the other. Ultimately everyone loses.

Gerrymandering also weakens the party in power. It undermines the party's legitimacy by making a majority win the political (and moral) equivalent of a participation trophy. In addition, it erodes the party from within. Campaigning is not just a way for candidates to espouse their views. The public's response to the campaign helps shape a candidate's positions. With gerrymandering, district definitions ensure the winner is from a particular party. Competition shifts to the primary process, where success is no longer based on what the broader constituent base wants, but rather what helps that candidate stand out within their own party. This favors extreme points of view, driving the collective set of elected representatives farther and farther from the middle and splitting the country into evermore factious camps. In the end, the democratic process and the people suffer.

It's easy to think that American democracy has been around forever, and that it will somehow always survive; but let me put things into perspective. I'm 61 years old. That means I've been alive for approximately one-quarter of the time that this country has existed. America isn't that old. It's still a relatively young experiment in representative government—a model for the world, emulated by our allies and intimidating to our enemies. Despite recent partisanship, the mechanisms of its design have served it well over the years. Let's not undermine them any further. If people—all people—don't feel that their voice is heard through the voting process, democracy as we know it will not survive in America.

Thank you for letting me voice my opinion today.