

Renee Westermeyer

Pronouns: She, her, hers

Springboro, Ohio

House District #62, Scott Lipps

Senate District # 7, Steve Wilson

Redistricting Hearing: Washington Township Recreation Center, Dayton Ohio

9/12/2021

Maps area funny things. When you think about it, the lines are totally arbitrary. They are created by humans and used by architects, developers, planners and most importantly those in power to claim their territory, divide land and ultimately people. Throughout history, those with the most power over a project, city, state or country are the map drawers. That is until our nation declared it's independence and created a democracy for the people. Not kings, not presidents or governors, not just the wealthy, not just one race or ethnicity, not for red or blue, but the people. Yes, in our democracy we do elect representatives as our voice and they in turn are designated as map drawers. That is how our country expanded its map, by creating first territories then eventually state lines. All this was done by those the people elected as their representatives. I must add that even though the founders of our democracy envisioned it as so, our representational government has not always been truly as such for all ethnicities, races, or genders. But thankfully, throughout our state and country's history there have been great improvements to make it as close as possible to our constitution's objectives of inclusion and fairness for all voters. That is until 2011 in Ohio.

Ohio is a purple state. I know looking at the historical breakdown of party in the state leadership as well as the house and senate, it is hard to see that. But if you consider the federal elections results, it is a much deeper picture. And in fact, Ohio's voting population today is broken down to roughly 54% republican and 45% democrat¹. We voted for a senator from each major party and have voted for both parties in presidential elections.

For several years preceding 2011 there was a shift in the voters' wishes and the traditional hold the republicans had on state leadership came to an end. By 2009, republicans had lost the governor's seat and the house to the democrats. The majority of voters in the state were not happy with their representation and voted them out. That is exactly how democracy is suppose to work.

Then in 2011 republicans had regained control of the governorship, house and senate. That was the voters will at that time. And again, that is how democracy works. But that year happened to be a map making year and this time those that held the majority decided to go rogue. They chose to use the redistricting as a tool to cement their power in future elections instead of creating a map that represented Ohioans fairly. They purposely took away the voice of thousands of voters by making it impossible to vote out representatives that no longer listened to them. The voters were not satisfied with this back-room power grab. Twice since then we the people of Ohio have overwhelmingly voted to end gerrymandering and unfair districts.

But yet, here we are again in 2021. Republicans on the redistricting commission seem to have ignored the voters' wishes for fair maps as well as those maps drawn by scholars and other experts and presented us with Senator Huffman's House and Senate maps that are skewed even further in their favor than it is currently. Their maps increase the already skewed Republican super majority in the house to 67% as well as maintain a 75% control of the Senateⁱⁱ. They once again have sliced much of Dayton and surrounding communities into rural areas to take away our voting voice. And my senate district 7 still goes from the northern Warren County line with a sliver all the way down to the Ohio River that breaks apart communities near Cincinnati.

And you may think that skewed house and senate seats don't affect the statewide races, but they do. Traditionally, statewide seats like Secretary of State and Governor are won by people that have come up through the ranks of district elected positions. Their name recognition and political connections gains them an advantage over other candidates that have been basically gerrymandered out of the system.

Ohio voters, the commission's guidelines and our constitution demand a more representational, fair and competitive breakdown of districts. A map that is a closer reflection of the 54% Republican and 45% Democrat split of voters and one that is not so heavily skewed that it is impossible to vote out someone that is not doing the peoples work. Maps like the Ohio Citizens' Redistricting Commission has proposed. A group comprised of community leaders, scholars, and students. Their Unity Mapsⁱⁱⁱ create a more equal playing field with a 55R-44D split in the House and a 18R-15D split in the Senate. In reducing a super majority to a simple majority, it leads to less gridlock and more cooperation and compromise. That is really all that Ohio voters want. A state government that is accountable to all its citizens not just a few.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration.

Any Questions?

ⁱ Based on presidential election results in 2016 and 2020

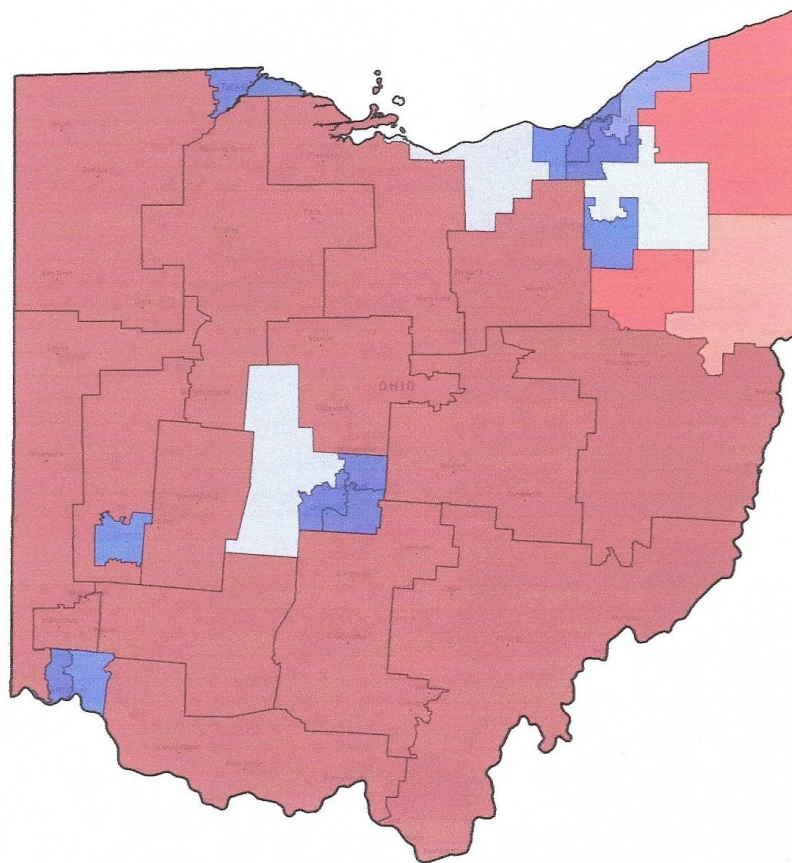
ⁱⁱ Based on analysis by Dave's Redistricting App as quoted in 'An insult to democracy': Ohio Republicans' redistricting Plan panned soon after release. By Jessie Balmert, The Columbus Dispatch

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://ohredistrict.org>, Official Report to the Ohio Redistricting Commission.

PROPOSED STATE LEGISLATIVE UNITY MAPS

OHIO STATE SENATE

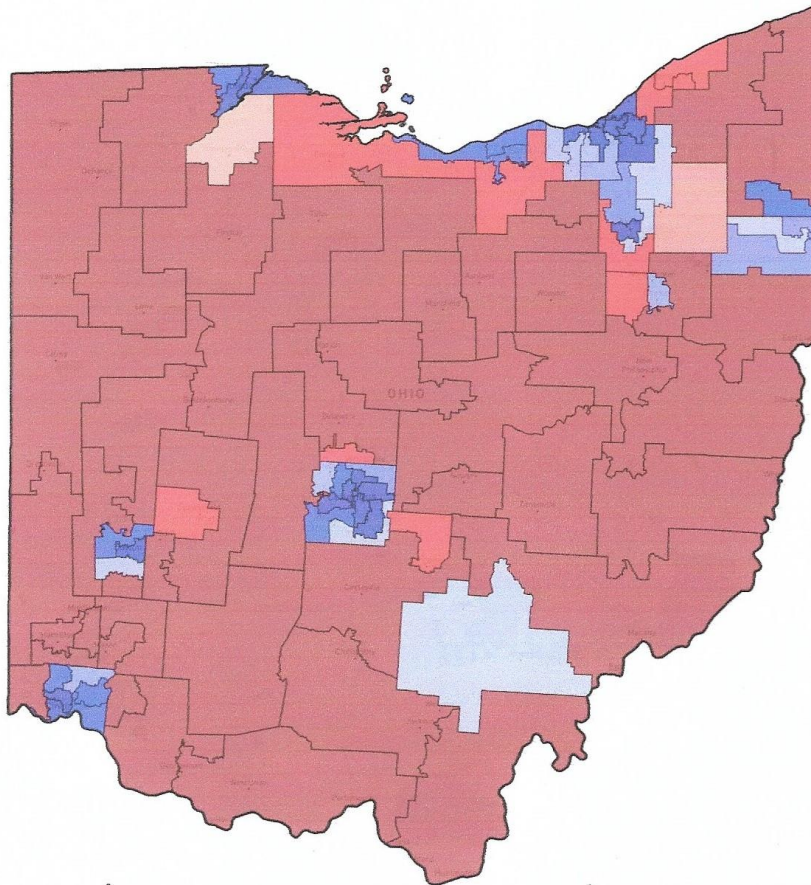
The following map meets all of the relevant constitutional requirements. Those requirements include provisions that dictate how or if a political subdivision (including counties, townships, and municipalities) is allowed to be split apart and that require representational fairness in the proportion of seats likely to go to each major political party based on statewide state and federal partisan elections in the last decade.



Key	
Dark Blue	Likely Democratic (60%+)
Light Blue	Lean Democratic (53-59%)
Pale Blue	Democratic Tossup (50-52%)
Pale Red	Republican Tossup (50-52%)
Light Red	Lean Republican (53-59%)
Dark Red	Likely Republican (60%+)

PROPOSED STATE LEGISLATIVE UNITY MAPS OHIO HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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