

Written Testimony of Judith C. Saltzman of Solon, Ohio  
Submitted to the Ohio Redistricting Commission  
September 13, 2021

I start by thanking the Redistricting Commissioners for considering my testimony, and reminding the Commission that the citizens of Ohio have twice voted for election districts that fairly represent them. Ohio is widely viewed as one of the most gerrymandered states in the nation, and the mandate from the voters is to redesign districts that reflect the whole electorate, without gerrymandering designed to dilute the voting power of the party that is not in power.

I live in Solon, Ohio, 44139, as indicated in the title to this written testimony. The proposed electoral districts that incorporate Solon are contorted, divide our city from ourselves and our natural neighbors with common interests, and, in a “string bean” move, tie us to communities far to the south and west of us with which we have no affinity or connection.

Starting with the **Senate** map, Solon, which generally votes democratic in statewide and national elections, has been grouped with communities that are far from us, not connected to us in any organic or functional way, and generally vote Republican. The result, of course is to dilute the democratic vote of Solon, and disenfranchise our citizens.

The communities we are proposed to be grouped with, mainly Republican, include Sagamore Hills, Walton Hills, Walton Hills, Valley View, Independence, Cuyahoga Heights, Boston Township, Richfield, Bath, Copley, Norton, Barberton, and New Franklin. I haven’t even been to some of these places. I don’t shop there, see a doctor there, get my hair done there. My kids did not go to school there. They are foreign turf, and do not reflect the values and dynamics of Solon. Communities with which Solon has great cultural and political affinity — such as Beachwood and Shaker Heights, are split off from us. This is gerrymandering at its worst, as it will deprive the citizens of Solon of the ability to elect a democratic state senator, as would likely be the wish of Solon residents.

The **House** proposed map is similarly troubling, actually worse, as it actually divides Solon in half. Half of Solon is proposed to be grouped in District 23, with mainly republican communities to the East of us, while the other half (District 22) is grouped with cities to the west and south of us, including Walton Hills, Valley View, Independence, Cuyahoga Heights, Brooklyn Heights, Broadview Heights, and Brecksville. With the possible exception of Brecksville, these are all Republican communities. Splitting democratic Solon and combining it with these cities, with which we share neither culture nor politics, is an attempt to dilute the democratic vote of Solon.

I call this latter grouping the “wrap-around string bean” gerrymander because the proposed District wraps around communities, such as Shaker Heights and Beachwood, democratic communities with which we share interests and values.

It is possible to do this better — and more fairly, as the electorate has demanded. I have seen the Ohio Citizens Redistricting Map, and I support it. I encourage the Redistricting Commission to take a good hard look at it and do the same. Our Democracy depends (among other things) upon fair elections and (at least) two viable political parties. Without democratic representatives and senators, there are no checks on Republicans, and vice versa. The untrammelled extremism that this kind of gerrymandering fosters is not good for anyone — not even for the Republican party. Win with reason, not with gerrymandering!

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

/s/ Judith C. Saltzman  
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