

Testimony for the Redistricting Commission
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U.S. Congressional District 14
Ohio Senate District 27
Ohio House District 38

I am testifying on the proposed district maps submitted by the Ohio redistricting commission. I am highly disappointed that they do not follow the Ohio Constitution by not favoring one political party over another. They clearly continue the practice of gerrymandering and promote a Republican supermajority in the Ohio House and Senate. In doing so, they keep political power in the hands of the party currently in control rather than returning it to the people of Ohio. This is a well-established practice in Ohio. However, this time it goes against the Ohio Constitution based on changes overwhelmingly supported by Ohio voters.

Fair districts are possible with a fair and transparent process. The commission adopted maps created by the Republican Party behind closed doors. That is not a transparent process. I would like to see integration of concepts from the Fair Districts State Legislative Mapping Competition. This competition asked members of the public to submit maps. These maps were then scored based on the principles laid out in the Ohio Constitution: fairness in proportionality in representation, competitiveness of districts, minority representation, compactness, and limiting splitting political subdivisions. This process showed that fair maps are possible.

I live in Sagamore Hills, a township in northern Summit County that is just over the Cuyahoga River from Cuyahoga County. The township is located about halfway between Cleveland and Akron. I feel attachment to both of those cities and their nearby suburbs. My current political districts connect me to places that are not part of my daily life, including locations in Stark, Wayne, Lake, Geauga, and Ashtabula counties. A small part of the districts reach into Summit and Cuyahoga counties. By living in remote corners of the districts, I feel distanced from my legislators.

In contrast, the senate and house districts proposed by competition winner Geoff Wise exactly match my sense of community. His map proposals also align well with all of the criteria, especially proportionality. I appreciate how he was able to create maps that achieve the criteria and match my lived experience.

My request is that you abandon the non-proportionate maps created by the Republican Party and start over using the winning maps created through the non-partisan Fair Districts State Legislative Mapping Competition. In doing so, you would create trust the process of redistricting by carrying out the expectations of the 70 percent of Ohioans who voted for a fair redistricting process in 2018. This commission is going to have to rise above self-interest and do what is right for the principles of our country.

Sincerely,

Jennie Vasarhelyi