

As a long-time resident of Ohio and someone with a political science background, I approached the current redistricting process with great cynicism. I had no doubt that Ohio Republicans would assume that by following the redistricting rules as mandated by the majority of Ohio voters, they would ultimately face more political risk in future elections.

Therefore, I'm convinced that the Republicans decided early on that they would aim for a four year map, despite their protestations to the contrary, because that's the only way they could bulldoze their own rigged map through the commission voting process. Even though so many other citizen maps were superior than the map presented by the GOP, the GOP map has been judged by experts and citizens, as well as the media, as even **more** gerrymandered than the present map.

There's a reason Ohioans worked hard for redistricting reform: they thought the present maps and process were unfair and unrepresentative of the true political picture of Ohio. Republicans know this but are so accustomed to working with disregard for the majority of Ohioans, whether D or R, that they felt they could do it again this time.

They may well pass this abominable four year Republican map, just so they can continue to rig the next few elections in their favor. But as other testifiers have pointed out, there will be lawsuits against their partisan map, and possibly against the way the majority has compromised the redistricting process itself.

Despite the dramatic "woe is me" of Republicans about the late Census, many preparations for this process could have, and **should** have, been made starting in the spring of this year. Those early preparations and the need for them were explained clearly by our citizen representatives months ago, but the Governor refused to acknowledge them, stalling even the beginning of the process until after the late Census results were released. Therefore, Republicans have no one but themselves to blame for at least some of the strategic difficulties of the current process. But of course, a compressed and accelerated redistricting process works in the majority's favor by disallowing adequate voter evaluation and negotiation re. maps submitted as well as sufficient media coverage to inform interested citizens of the ongoing process in time for them to prepare testimony and be heard.

The Commission has witnessed and hopefully read some magnificent testimony defending fair districting. Testimony has even been given by several described

conservatives who have **also** criticized the current maps and the fact that so many Ohioans have no representative voice in their state. Fair is fair, they say. Citizen testimony has often been detail-specific when criticizing the Republican map w/re to its violations of the voter mandate. The same testimony has almost unanimously denounced the GOP map as unconstitutional on both state and federal levels as well as not conforming to other citizen mandated strictures.

I believe that Republican members do assume that their own citizen mandate is out here in Ohio somewhere and merely not speaking up. They believe that testifiers are "only" activists. But I have seen too many citizens come out for this and bravely speak up and I know that these are the many voices you have ignored for so long. They are **not** just "activists." The fact that you expect that to be the case only verifies that you have depended on an apathetic, under-informed voting base for your voting power for far too long. That's not something to brag about.

We have presented to the Commission top-notch maps produced by citizens and experts alike . . . maps that conform much more closely to those citizen and constitutional strictures. The presenters of these maps admit that Republicans still maintain a majority, even by using their citizen maps. Unbelievably, Republicans have shown us with their own map that merely maintaining a political majority is not enough: they must have as much as they can grab through rigged maps.

I must ask member LaRose why he defends the Ohio voting process as "fair" when it is so obviously rigged right out of the chute. In fact, one young Muslim woman, still in high school, testified that her college boards began the political questioning with a question on Ohio gerrymandering. Yes, Republican gerrymandering in Ohio is just **that** notorious.

The choice is yours, Republican Commission members: pass that unacceptable GOP map on Wednesday just to get four more years of maintaining your majority and political power . . . or show us a much improved GOP map that at least **pretends** to be more fair than the one you have already shoved at us. What you decide will determine how you are portrayed in the media and I assure you, the media will be harsh if you bulldoze this through.

And that will just be the beginning of Republicans' troubles in Ohio. As someone famous once called it, we will be "making good trouble" and plenty of **that** about

a hyper-partisan Republican process that has once again kneecapped fair representation in Ohio!