

Michael Ahern's Testimony
Before the Ohio Redistricting Commission
09/09/2021

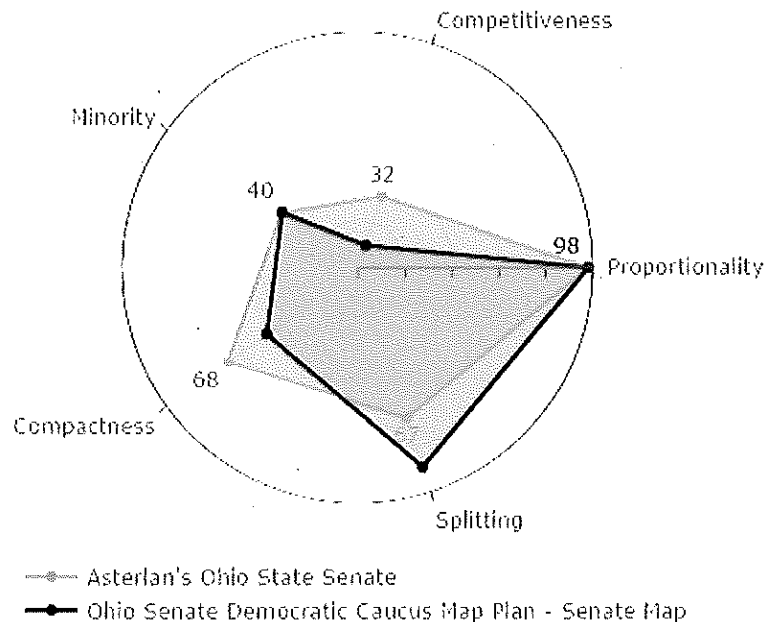
Good morning, Co-Chairs Huffman and Sykes and members of the Redistricting Commission.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony. This morning you are meeting to begin getting down to brass tacks in a public forum to consider and eventually approve State House and Senate Districts - hopefully that are compact, represent communities of interest, are competitive and that do not favor or disfavor any political Party. That's a tall order and a complex task - but as the map presented at your last hearing shows - it can be largely accomplished. Below are a few analysis of the District map submitted at the last Commission hearing comparing that map to others uploaded to the Dave's Redistricting website. As you know, the website is a great resource for developing and analyzing District maps and contains a lot of good information for mapmakers to consider. Before I get into my opinions on the analysis below, I'd like to ask and emphasize to the Commission that it is extremely important to me and thousands of Ohio voters that the Commission fulfill its responsibility under the Redistricting Reforms to provide the public not only with maps being considered, but also the underlying data and tools being used to develop those maps. This includes public access to the partisan indexing, demographic data, algorithms and assumptions used in the development of each map you will be considering as you move through your deliberative process. As a registered voter, I need access to this information to make additional informed comments in future hearings. As a member of this Commission, providing this information is a requirement and obligation you hold through the oath you took as a member of the Commission.

Now to my comments on the previously presented map:

Dave's Redistricting provides analysis of submitted maps in five of major categories: Compactness, proportionality, splitting, minority representation and competitiveness. As an independent, my natural inclination is to have the Commission weigh competitiveness as a significant factor to consider. But, in listening to the excellent testimony provided by other citizens throughout the state, I have heard and agree that compactness and minimizing splits are also important factors because community representation is so important to effective representative democracy. As shown below, the map presented during the last hearing shows that drawing a largely compact, minimally split map is achievable.

Ratings: Ohio Senate Democratic Caucus Map Plan - Senate Map



I'd like to see more competitiveness in the final approved map and I look forward to reviewing other maps being considered by the Commission.

In summary, I would like to note my concern that the Commission is not working as a whole to develop maps but instead is only considering maps drawn and submitted by political party staff and their consultants. This is not what the redistricting reforms intended or direct and it undermines the dedication of thousands of Ohio pollworkers who strive to implement free, fair and nonpartisan elections in Ohio. This Commission is an important part of the larger elections process in Ohio and needs to be equally nonpartisan in its consideration and approval of district maps in Ohio. The voters have demanded it and the State Constitution requires it.

