

Blessing, Heather

From: KATHLEEN HELBLING <kandpinohio@embarqmail.com>
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To: Testimony
Subject: University of Toledo August 26, 2021

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My name is Paul Helbling and I am a retired educator. I was born and raised in Coshocton, Ohio. I am a veteran and former member of the International Voluntary Service of which I served two years in Viet Nam working in agriculture development. I have lived/worked in Hawaii for 9 years and Arizona for 18years before returning to Ohio in 1999 to take a position with Penta Career Center.

I mention these experiences because I have always had a global view of my country and the politics that shaped its involvement in the world.

It was when I was confronted with the question, why are two already elected politicians (Kaptur and Kucinich) running against each other in a primary election for the same seat?

In my search to answer that question I was introduced to partisan gerrymandering. I also saw this partisan gerrymandering as a threat to our democracy and all that I held sacred about my country.

I came to the conclusion that power and control as a result of partisan gerrymandering spelled dictator trends against our democracy and needed to be addressed.

In my correspondence with my three representatives and looking at the way their districts have been drawn, I can only conclude that I, as an American citizen, have been disenfranchise by partisan gerrymandering. My vote and voice does not count because my representatives have been gerrymandered into safe districts and therefore no need to engage with voters with different visions for our communities or the need to run robust campaigns.

Through the efforts of many Ohioans, you, who are members of the Ohio Redistricting Committee, has an opportunity of a life time. An opportunity to redraw Ohio House and Senate District so those running for office must campaign to engage with voters on the issues of their communities and engage with their opponent in an election. Let us bring back energy and the spirit of democracy into our election cycles.

I encourage you to embrace the spirit of the reforms approved by the voters of Ohio in 2015 and 2018. If not for me and if not for you, then do it for the well fare of our grandchildren, great grandchildren and beyond. For what this commission recommends for the next ten years will affect generations of Ohioans. I ask you to set a national example of drawing non-partisan districts for all Ohioans.

I remind you that both redistricting reform initiatives passed overwhelmingly with over 70% of the vote and in all 88 counties in Ohio. These are the people of Ohio demanding fair districts for themselves and their communities.

Peace, Paul Helbling
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