

Testimony
for Ohio Redistricting Commission
Public Hearing – University of Toledo
Toledo, Ohio – August 26, 2021

by Anesa Miller

I came to Ohio in 1985 from my home state of Kansas. Having lived in Bowling Green, Ohio, for 36 years, and having raised my children there, I now consider it my hometown. I love my neighborhood, my neighbors, and many things about Bowling Green. One of the things that made me very happy was when the BG city government invited residents to take part in a green energy project in support of the brand-new wind turbines that were installed in 2003. For a small extra fee, customers of our public electric utility could buy power from the windmills erected on the southwest side of town. My late husband and I decided that we would pay this cost in light of our concern about global warming and dependence on fossil fuels, so we joined thousands of BG residents in getting our electricity through what's now called the EcoSmart Program.

I recently received a sweet little decal for my front window from the City of Bowling Green as thanks for the 18 years that I've been purchasing clean energy. I was delighted to also learn that, quoting from the BG city website, "in 2017, Bowling Green began receiving power from the largest solar field in Ohio. The 165-acre solar generating facility, constructed on City owned property...consists of more than 85,000 solar panels and utilizes a single axis tracking system that allows the solar field to increase production throughout the day. In an average year, this clean energy site produces an equivalent amount of energy to power approximately 3,000 homes."

Many BG residents, including myself, are very proud of our city's efforts to implement and promote renewable energy. You may have noticed that the weather this summer has displayed many symptoms of a warming planet. Worldwide, July 2021 was the hottest month on record according to the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration. Locally, in Wood County, we experienced an unusual number of intensely heavy downpours that were hard on gardens and roofs: I experienced a nasty roof leak, and the farm garden where I buy my produce saw several patches flood in the spring, resulting in total crop loss. Nationally, as you surely know, the Pacific Northwest underwent an apocalyptic heatwave in late June that contributed to an estimated 600 human deaths. Livestock and wildlife also suffered, including a large number of marine food species. This impacts me directly as my elderly brother has now decided he cannot continue to live in Scapoose, Oregon, which was intolerably hot for weeks on end. He is now coming to live with me in Bowling Green. He may be one of our first climate refugees. But I am prouder than ever that my adopted hometown is a leader in clean and renewable energy.

You may be asking, what does all this have to do with our redistricting process?

Please understand that it came as a slap in the face to many in Bowling Green when our statehouse representative and senator both voted in favor of the notorious HB6 in 2019. This plan subsidized nuclear and coal power plants—and here I quote [cleveland.com](#)—"effectively gutting green-energy mandates." This year, our statehouse representative and senator both voted in favor of SB52 and HB118, which renewable energy companies have stated create an "extra hurdle" for getting new technologies up and running to supply clean power to consumers, while also adding serious disincentives to investment.

How could our public servants ignore the interests that our town, a significant population center in our electoral districts, has nurtured for so many years?

I believe that the current shape of our districts has contributed to an attitude of disregard toward residents' concerns on the part of elected officials who should represent us in Columbus. It is my understanding that genuine political competition for citizens' votes only occurs in primary elections in Ohio's gerrymandered districts, allowing candidates to cater to the ideological positions of the most engaged base voters, and to serve the interests of the most well-heeled donors. As a result, we find ourselves ruled by a supermajority in our statehouse, which is insulated from the wishes of voters outside the base of their primary-level supporters.

In closing, please know that I realize the redistricting process which you are tasked to complete will determine how Bowling Green is represented in Columbus for years into the future. This is why it is important to me to drive 30 miles in the middle of a weekday to take part in this process. I hope to do what I can to see that public participation and transparency are honored as Ohio voters mandated in 2015 and 2018. Our districts must change, not only because populations have changed, but because democracy demands "One person — one vote," including equitable effectiveness of all votes.