

Redistricting Testimony: Youngstown State University, August 23, 2021

Carol Canavan, LWV of Canton

Thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony today on redistricting. My name is Carol Canavan and I live in Stark County. I have been a member of the LWV for more than a decade and have participated in the efforts to let Ohio Voters speak about their desire to have fair maps.

I live in the 50th State House district. My home is in Plain Township, North Canton Schools and by one street – the 50th district. I always think of myself as a North Canton resident, primarily because that is where my children went to school, I vote for school levies and go to a church right in the heart of this community. The 50th includes a large part of Stark County that is more rural as well as the communities of Louisville, Alliance and Hartville. I have communicated with my Representative by e-mail, but I have not met him.

On the Congressional side and prior to the redistricting done in 2011 I knew who my congressman was. When I first moved to North Canton, I had the task of visiting our congressman Ralph Regula at his farm in Navarre. We needed him to expedite passport applications so that a group of Stark County students and their teachers could visit Russia under a program initiated by the Diebold company. I was impressed by the accessibility of the congressman and his genuine interest in the project the students were involved in.

After 2011 I was amazed that Stark County was chopped up into three different congressional districts – as well as three different state house districts. I talked to people who had no idea what district they were in and no idea where to reach their representative.

The LWV is known for offering non-partisan candidate forums but it is difficult to get candidates to agree to participate when they are traveling from the Cleveland suburbs to speak to a small section of their district. Other candidates seem to not see any interest in holding town halls because their seats are safe. Candidates of the opposing party have difficulty securing sufficient funding and support to mount a strong campaign – especially in light of the extreme unlikelihood of success in a district arranged to support one party. This leaves voters feeling that their voices cannot be heard. That leads to apathy and worse.

Once when helping register voters at KSU Stark I talked to a young man who told me flat out that he wasn't registered to vote and had no intention of registering. I asked him why and he told me that it didn't matter, "they don't care what I think. My vote won't change anything." To me that is the saddest statement of our younger generation. When we take away the hope of our youth that they can have an impact on their future by participating in our democratic system, we are really chipping away at the bedrock of our democracy.

In 2015 and again in 2018 over 70% of Ohio Voters – in all 88 counties voted to have legislation passed that would demand fair districts to be drawn as the decennial census figures are released. That time is now! We know that the census was delayed by covid, however, that is not an excuse to give up on what the voters of Ohio have demanded. I urge you to move with due haste to develop maps that will allow voters to regain their trust in our government.

Thank you for the opportunity to offer my testimony.

Carol Canavan

North Canton