

Gerrymandering Testimony

Ohio University, Zanesville – August 25, 2021

August 23, 2021

I am Ed Albertson and in 2016, I was the sole Democratic Candidate and nominee for the US House of Representatives for Ohio's 12th Congressional District. I challenged the incumbent, Representative Pat Tiberi, in arguably the second safest Gerrymandered seat of Ohio's Congressional Districts, second only to Former Speaker of the House John Boehner's Congressional seat.

In 2018, I was a Democratic Candidate for that same seat among a field that currently contained 7 Democrats and 6 Republicans, plus at least one Independent candidate.

I have a unique perspective from which I can make a few first-hand observations about the impact of Ohio's current Gerrymandered Congressional Districts.

During the 2016 Congressional District, I never saw Mr. Tiberi at any Candidate forums, parades, fairs, or other public events. There were no opportunities for voters to hear our positions or make the comparisons that arise when candidates are both present in the same place at the same time. There was no political dialogue to be examined and questioned, offering the necessary comparison from which voters can decide for whom to cast their votes. Mr. Tiberi won that race with 66.6% of the vote to my 29.8%.

With Mr. Tiberi's resignation from his Congressional seat mid-term, the 2018 12th Congressional race created an "open" seat, with 13 announced contenders for that seat. Almost immediately the 2018 race had a vibrancy and energy and level of voter engagement that was completely absent in 2016. There were multiple forums, debates, parades and events that draw a high level of voter engagement and encourage a public discussion that benefits candidates and, more importantly, our voters.

By contrast, in 2016 there was an incumbent who was protected from the demands of a competitive race because his voters were pre-selected through the redistricting process that was driven by a process in Ohio that favors the majority party at the time of the Census. When a politician has picked her or his voters prior to an election, the corrosive effect of that process is to suppress the public engagement that is vital to the health of our democracy.

Absent a fair and competitive political environment, we are left with Ohio Congressional Districts that will unfairly deny a healthy and vigorous, public conversation that leads to informed voters making their choices for representation within a Congressional District that supports a fair election process.

The only acceptable solution to our current unfair and unacceptable District maps is to create Districts that are drawn as fairly as possible, to create balance, fair and truly representative Congressional Districts in our great State of Ohio. Our future depends on Fair Districts and Fair Elections.

Thank you.