

Redistricting Commission
Zanesville, OH
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Co-Chair Cupp and Co-Chair Sykes, members of the Ohio Redistricting Commission, thank you for allowing me to submit testimony asking for a transparent process and ultimately, fair state legislative and congressional maps. My name is Jamie Shumaker and I have lived in Galloway, Ohio for two decades. I am married and have two wonderful children who are very active in the community in which we live in. I have worked for the City of Columbus Public Health for nineteen years in the WIC department but, the last nine years I have had the honor of being the president of AFSCME Local 2191 who represents Columbus Public Health employees. As commissioners you have an incredibly important job in front of you. How you decide to draw our maps through this process will have far reaching consequences for at least the next decade. You must make sure this process is fair, as non-partisan as possible, and that we end up with maps that more closely resemble the political makeup of Ohio.

Ohioans have overwhelmingly shown they want fairer districts with the passage of 2 redistricting reform constitutional amendments in 2015 and 2018. In fact, these issues received over 70% approval and received a majority of votes in every county. Voters know that in order for our democracy to survive and thrive, we need to even the playing field. Having districts that heavily favor one party over the other breeds extreme candidates and eventually, extreme elected officials and extreme policies. If you know a district leans 75% democratic, and if you can just win the primary you will sail to victory during the General Election, you will undoubtedly campaign in a manner that ONLY caters to Democrats. Why waste time trying to get Republican votes, when you know you do not need them to win?

Gerrymandered districts lead to voter apathy and decreases turnout. Take that same district I was just talking about and think about how the Republican voters feel. They only make up 25% of the total votes in the district. They know that no matter what, no matter how talented their candidate is, the Republican has no chance of winning in the General Election. So, what do they do? They probably stay home as they understand the math- their vote simply does not matter in that race. Illogical districts just add to the anger and to the feeling that the system is rigged.

You all have an amazing chance to tell Ohio voters that their voices do matter. You have a chance to cut out some of the extremism that has swept our state. You have the chance to make sure main stream issues that every day Ohioans actually care about – health care, education funding, and infrastructure, can again become the focus of the legislature. You all hold the power to create a better, more inclusive and compassionate Ohio- by drawing fair and competitive districts. It's a big responsibility.

Co-Chair Cupp, Co-Chair Sykes, and members of the redistricting commission, thank you again for letting me testify today. I am here as a wife, mother, local union president, and citizen to ask that you please let common sense prevail when drawing these maps. Don't let partisan politics drive the process. Think of our kids future and the kind of state we want to work, live and raise a family. Thank you.