**Ohio Redistricting Commission - 8-25-2021 - Zanesville**

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**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [00:00:15] State Senator Vernon Sykes from the Akron area and co-chair of the redistricting commission, I'd like to welcome you all. Thank you so much for this opportunity to get information directly from the public. We also like to thank Ohio University I want you all to know that I'm a proud graduate of Ohio University. And we have the Dean, Miss Hannah Nissan who is here today to give us greetings from Ohio University. Thank you.

**Dean Nissan** [00:00:52] Thank you all for being here. Pleasure. Well, [inaudible, off mic]...OK, I think this is better and these things can be tricky sometimes. So anyway, I am pleased to have you all here. I'm pleased to welcome you all to the Zanesville campus of Ohio University. We are pleased to have the opportunity to host one of the redistricting sessions today. This is an amazing opportunity for the public to offer their thoughts and to engage with this process. And we are pleased to have the opportunity for you all to be here. I thank you all for your presence. And I know you have a lot of work to do, so I'm going to let you get right to it. Thank you again.

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [00:01:46] Thank you, Dean Nissan. I like to call this meeting to order and let you know that those that would like to testify, if you could complete a witness slip in the witness list to right out in the hallway in the front door so that we could have that properly recorded with the staff. Please call the roll.

**Clerk** [00:02:14] Yes, sir. Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes (present), Representative Jay Edwards, co-chair or designee for co-chair Robert Cupp (present), Matt Donahue, designee for Tovernor Mike DeWine (here), State Auditor Keith Faber (present), Chris Oliveti, excuse me, designee for Secretary Frank LeRose (here). Representative Jessica Miranda, designee for leader Emilia Sykes (present). And last but not least, we have Senator Jay Hottinger, designee for President Matt Huffman (present).

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [00:02:53] Quorum being present. We will move forward with the hearing. As you all know, in November 2015, Ohio voters approved the constitutional amendment, which implemented a new General Assembly redistricting process and established the Ohio Redistricting Commission. The commission consists of the governor, the state auditor, the secretary of state, and one commissioner appointed by each of the legislative leaders of the two largest political parties of the Ohio House and the House Senate, four in total, one from each of the caucuses. The commission has until September 1st to pass a plan with the votes of at least two members affiliated with each majority party. If that fails, the commission has until September 15 to pass a plan by majority vote maps that are passed with the votes of two members affiliated with each of the majority parties are valid for 10 years. And those maps that are just a simple majority are valid for two general assemblies, which would be a total of four years. Ohio legislative reapportionment process, as in all states, occurs at the end... It occurs every 10 years, is done in conjunction with the census conducted by the United States Department of Commerce. This last count that we have population for the state of Ohio is 11,799,448 people. That is a 2.3% Growth rate compared to 2010. That means that each of the House districts will have approximately 119,186 people and each Senate district will have 357,559 persons. There is a 5% deviation one way or another, up or down. As you all know, this process can be complicated. There's a lot of rules we've been... Included all of the criteria on the website for this commission. Some of the criteria would be representational fairness, district population requirements and permissible population deviations, rules on how to prioritize splits and political subdivisions and additional district standards regarding favoring or disfavoring political parties and compactness of districts. The board must comply with the Ohio Constitution in addition to all applicable, applicable federal laws, including the Voting Rights Act. We have a website, uh, www.redistricting.Ohio.gov where you can submit written testimony, you can submit maps. This hearing is broadcast through The Ohio Channel and will be recorded. Uh, I want to make an announcement that the official rules of the commission will be considered in tomorrow's meeting in Lima, Ohio. Please forgive me in advance for mispronouncing anyone's name. It's not done on purpose. Because of the time constraints that we have, we'd like to limit the time for each speaker to about four minutes. We found that that's a pretty open and allow you ample opportunity to make your comments. Any questions by any members of the commission? The first witness will be Steven Castro. Come forward and speak into the mic. Thank you.

**Steve Castro** [00:07:14] Good morning, commission members, thank you for this opportunity to speak with you. My name is Steve Castro. I'm a software developer from Reynoldsburg. Today, I want to talk about compact districts. I believe that a district should keep neighbors together. I believe that that's that's how representative democracy is supposed to work. I think it's the reason we have geographic districts instead of at large districts, because I think, you know, when you are near each other, you tend to share similar concerns. So in Reynoldsburg, we just had a lot of flooding. You might have seen it on the news. And that affected a lot of people that live there and some people that work there or have family members there. And the closer you are to that geographic event, the more likely you are to care about it. And so if you have a district that's compacted around geographic locations, I think you're more likely to have people that have shared concerns and better representation. Now, I'm really happy that the Constitution expects compact districts. The language is there for both legislative and congressional districts. Now, I believe that in order to fulfill this constitutional duty, to make compact districts, we need two things. We need to be able to measure how compact a district is. If we don't measure it, then we're kind of just guessing. And if we're expected to create compact districts, we don't really know if we don't measure it. And then the second thing we need is some threshold that says once we've measured it, is this measurement a well-compacted district, good measurement, or is this bad, is very... Too low to be considered anything that's objectively compact. So those are the two things that I think we need. Now, there's there's several popular methods for measuring district compactness, but some of them aren't necessarily as intuitive to the average voter or a legislator. Some of them compare the area to the perimeter of a district and come up with a ratio. Now, if you asked me what's a good ratio between the perimeter of an area, I don't know, you know, like 60, 60, I don't know, like, what's a good one? But there actually is a less common but a different way to measure it that I've found that's been published that I think is extremely intuitive. It's easy to explain, easy to understand. And I would encourage and recommend that this commission consider using this way of measuring it. So in 2010, there were three mathematicians from three different universities who published an award winning method for measuring district compactness. And here's how it works. Take two random places inside of a district. Draw a line connecting the dots and check to see if that line is inside the district, if it is, if the line connecting two dots inside the district, if that line is inside and that's good, that's a sign of a compact district. And if it crosses through some other Ohio district, then that's a sign that you're separating neighbors. And, you know, it might be an indication that the district is a little bit more gerrymandered. Now, if you use a computer to repeat this process, if you use a computer, repeat this process 10,000 times, you come up with a percentage. Now, I have some data. I've only got a minute. So I'm going to try to run through this quickly. Ohio is 97% compact. The county map is 97% compact. We can do compact, highly compact districts. Now, I think anything less than a 50% we can call objectively not compact. The original gerrymander from 1812 Massachusetts Senate district, that was only 44% compact, according to this measure. So 50%, we can call that a red line and we can expect districts to be more compact that now. I'll try to keep this quick, I live in this district, this district, this house district is only 38% compact because so many lines disconnects neighbors from each other. This Senate district that I live in is only 33% compact. These are very poorly compacted districts. And I hope that the Constitution now will and that this commission will give me better districts that keep me closer to my neighbors. So if you're interested in this method, it's called convexity coefficient in a paper called Gerrymandering and Convexity. And I will conclude my comments with four requests. Please choose a measure of compactness in your, in you fulfilling your duty to the Constitution and also please choose a threshold of compactness and communicate these to the public. Number two, please do not include Lake Erie. Lake Erie can artificially increase the compactness of districts and there are no voters that live in water, the measure that I recommended does account for the people who live on the islands of Lake Erie, but the water itself should not be included in the compactness measure. Last two things. If a district falls below some threshold, then please provide reasons why compactness could not be achieved. OK, last thing. When you released the maps to the public, please release the digital shape files. I would like to analyze the them digitally, a screenshot I'm not able to analyze. And I thank you for your time. And I hope to get compact districts.

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [00:12:55] Thank you very much. Any questions? Thank you. I'd like to bring your attention to the staff to make sure we get that information about convexity and compactness. We certainly appreciate it. Thank you very much. The next witness is Lauren Schrader .

**Lauren Schrader** [00:13:26] My name is Luanne Schrader.

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [00:13:28] I apologize, thank you.

**Lauren Schrader** [00:13:29] Thank you so much for your time ever doing this. I'm a little nervous. In 2020, I decided to work as an election poll worker my first time ever doing that, and I really enjoyed it. So when the special election came up for Congressional District Number 15 and they sent me an email and asked me if I would like to work again, and I said yes, I was very surprised to learn about how the district has been split up between District 3 and District 15. To give you an example, if you take this piece of paper... Is not a very accurate... And this would be District 3. Well, within District 3, this little square is District 15 and here is District 15. And the rest of it is all District three. And this little dot is where we working, which wasn't even in the congressional district. You had about twenty people show up to vote and out of the twenty people, only eight of them could vote because they were voting... They were living in the right district. We had one man come up who wanted to vote. He lived on the one little street right here where his neighbors to one side and neighbors on the other street on the other side were in District 15. He was in District three. We had one who, if we had a blown up version of District 15, he lived somewhere within there. But his particular address was District three. That's that's just too confusing. That is just not fair for people who want to vote for their own representative to represent their neighborhood. And it's not fair to divide neighbors and neighborhoods up like that. Thank you.

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [00:15:10] Thank you. Next witness is Katy Shanahan here.

**Katy Shanahan** [00:15:21] Good morning, commissioners. My name is Katie Shanahan, and I'm the Ohio State director for All on the Line, a grassroots advocacy organization that is working to restore fairness to our redistricting process and to end gerrymandering. I came up in politics as an organizer. It's how I've spent most of my career. And so I'm going to use one of my favorite campaign slogans that we use to hype our volunteers up to do work, because especially over the last couple of days hearing from all these Ohioans about fair maps, I am fired up and I am ready to go. I am fired up because as you've heard all week, Ohioans, myself included, are frustrated that this process is already failing to meet the demands of our reform measures. These hearings, all scheduled in-person on weekdays during business hours, are inaccessible to too many Ohioans, including the majority of the commissioners who can't even bother to show up in person at these hearings. But I'm ready to go because I know that we Ohioans will still show up and we will still show out for the fair maps that we deserve. I'm fired up because too many Ohio communities, my own included, are a victim of gerrymandering. My Senate district, the 19th includes the entirety of Delaware and Knox counties, two counties that are mostly rural and conservative, but it dips into Franklin County to grab just one House seat, my House seat, one that is overwhelmingly Democratic and urban. By grabbing my House seat the 22nd, my Senate district lines crack me apart from other more similar communities inside Columbus where I actually live, to instead drown my voice into a district where my vote is essentially meaningless. But I'm ready to go because I know that we Ohioans will still show up and we will still show out for the fair maps that we deserve. I'm fired up because Ohioans have been denied real political representation because of our gerrymandered districts. Our districts were drawn behind closed doors in 2011 to gerrymander Ohio's Republicans into supermajorities and seats that they are not winning in votes at the ballot box. But I'm ready to go because I know that we Ohioans will still show up and we will still show out for the fair maps that we deserve. For more than two years, my job has been to organize Ohioans around the issue of redistricting, to educate communities across the state about how we have been negatively impacted by gerrymandering and to equip volunteers, many of whom you've already heard from this week and will continue today and the rest of the week to engage in this important work. In that time, my colleague and I, a humble team of two people, have met and trained more than 3,000 Ohioans about this issue. And I can tell you unequivocally that the people of this state are fired up and they are ready to go for fair maps. All Ohioans, no matter who we are or where we live, from the Ohio River to Lake Erie and from Dayton to Marietta, deserve to live in a state where we as voters choose our leaders and where we as voters can hold them accountable when they step out of line. But for too long, we as voters have been shut out of the political process. Our votes have been diluted and we have been denied real political representation because of our gerrymandered districts. This year we have an opportunity to fix that and to right the ship of our democracy here in Ohio, but only if we take it. And like I've said, we Ohioans are fired up and we are ready to go. The only question that remains today is, are all of you? We need you to meet us halfway. I heard at another hearing that you all aren't here to challenge us and we shouldn't be here to challenge you. But I'm going to respectfully push back on that because we are here to challenge you. We're here to challenge you to meet the demands of this moment. We need you to deliver for the people of Ohio. We need you to deliver us the fair maps that we so desperately need and deserve. We are fired up and we are ready to go and we will continue fighting for the maps that we deserve. Like I said, the only question that remains is, are you fired up? Are you ready to go? Are you ready to give us the fair maps that we deserve? Thank you. Happy to take any questions that you have.

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [00:19:35] Are there questions. Seeing none, thank you very much. [applause] The next witness, the next witness is Steve Blake.

**Steve Blake** [00:20:03] Well, it's kind of a hard act to follow there. Thanks for letting me speak. I didn't really have too much to say. You all should have that map ther. That's what a congressional district used to look like in Ohio. Seven counties, not one of them split up. That's what they used to look like. All I'm asking... You all know what the right thing to do is, that's all I'm asking you. Please do the right thing. Thank you.

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [00:20:38] Thank you very much. [applause] Next witness is Rita Kipp.

**Rita Kipp** [00:21:01] Thank you, Co-Chair Sykes and the committee who showed up this morning. My name is Rita Kipp and I live in Granville, that's Ohio Senate District 31, House District 71 and the 12th Congressional District. I'm also the president of the League of Women Voters of Licking County. The league is a nonpartisan organization that never endorses candidates or a particular party, but does carry out education and advocacy on issues after careful study of each one. I want to focus on the way gerrymandering makes leading a nonpartisan organization more difficult. The partisan divide has grown wider and deeper in recent decades, becoming a chasm. This limits our ability to govern and to respond to crises as we've seen when facing a global pandemic. Correspondingly, as that chasm has widened, the ground for nonpartisan action has shrunk. In the eyes of some skeptics, it no longer exists. On a Facebook page for the Granville area Folks, I posted a notice about the Fair District Speaker's bureau inviting civic organizations and other groups looking for speakers to contact us. Some liked my posting, of course, but a number expressed skepticism, sarcasm and even anger. One disgruntled man wrote. Just stop with the fair bullshit. I suppose he couldn't imagine district boundaries drawn without partisan considerations, couldn't imagine that the interests of good government might motivate the process, for example, putting legislators closer to their constituents so that people could more easily reach their representatives. Partisan lenses distort how we understand so many things and what we accept as true and possible. The different media we consume are certainly the largest driver of polarization, but gerrymandering also plays a part. When the outcomes of the general election are predictable, then the primary becomes the only race that matters. Primary candidates can cater to the extremes within their party without having to answer in a general election to moderates from both parties. We now understand what it means when an incumbent faces the threat of being primaried. In gerrymandered environments, the primaries push each party farther toward its extreme. I don't know how we can fix the media. But polarization is a big problem that was decades in the making. Pushing back on it can take many forms and pushing back within the work of the statehouse would surely send a powerful message. What if bridging the partisan chasm started here in Ohio with fair districting? What if Ohio's new political maps, enhanced representation and grouped communities together that shared common interests? What if it were patently clear not only to Ohio voters, but anyone from outside who cared to look that gaining partisan advantage was not part of this process? Ohio voters want redistricting to be fair, that is nonpartisan, the redistricting commission and legislature have the opportunity now to defy the skeptics and live up to the ideals that voters have twice endorsed by wide margins. If you have a fair district sign out there, please hold it up now for a photo op. Thank you.

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [00:25:26] Thank you. Are there any questions? Thank you so much, really appreciate it. [applause] The next witness is Laura Joseph.

**Laura Joseph** [00:26:01] Good morning, good morning, everyone, and thank you for hosting this meeting. My name is Laura Joseph and I'm following up in Rita's footsteps because I am also from Granville, also represented by the 12th Congressional District, the 31st Ohio Senate District and the 71st Ohio House District. I'm also a member of the League of Women Voters. So fair representation and eliminating gerrymandering have been concerns of mine for a long time. And as we know, the corrosive effects of gerrymandering and allowing politicians to pick their constituents as opposed to the other way around have been with us since the early eighteen hundreds when famous Senator Elbridge Gerry famously presided over creation of Senate backed maps that resembled a salamander. But the practice has unfortunately endured into the present, and its negative impacts have sadly been accentuated by partisanship and sophisticated software. So those negative impacts are here today with us in Ohio, and they've led to things like distorted non-compact districts that make it awkward, if not onerous for constituents and their representatives to meet and to galvanize overshared communities of interest, which usually have nothing to do with party. Since the last redistricting exercise, my own congressional district, the 12th, has included portions of no fewer than seven counties stretching from urban areas of Franklin County to very rural ones in Muskingum and Richland, and resembling a seahorse very much akin to Gerry's salamander. Prior to that, it was a much more compact district comprised of portions of just three counties- Licking, Franklin and Delaware, and this district shared characteristics being suburban and peri-urban, sharing the challenges and opportunities of rapid economic growth, urbanization and a lot of social transitions. So I believe that my community would be better represented if our district were more compact and focused primarily on interests like this and other community interests again, which supersede party lines. Similarly, I think the new procedure for nesting three Ohio House districts into an Ohio Senate district will contribute to this kind of compactness at the state level. We also see a lack of representational fairness in elections that rely on congressional and state districts, so despite Ohio being somewhat equal in terms of partisan affiliation - 45% Democrat, 55% Republican. The districts drawn in 2011 virtually guarantee that seventy five percent of those districts will go to Republicans and 25 to Democrats. My own district, the 12th, was far more competitive prior to 2011 and forced candidates to work harder to win over voters and to keep their support after the election. This is not the case today in terms of how district lines have been strategically drawn. So, as my colleague Rita mentioned, in situations like this, the primary becomes the only important race, leading to extreme candidates, leading to an inability to compromise in policymaking. Elected officials lack accountability to a considerable portions of their constituents because their reelection does not rely on them, and it creates a sense of disenfranchisement for those who feel that their votes are diluted by rigged elections or big districts. Happily, as you know, Ohioans have voted overwhelmingly for reforms with over 70 %and in all 88 counties for the reforms that we're talking about here today. The new laws provide guidance on drawing districts that are practical building whenever possible, an existing township and county lines, limiting splits of counties, emphasizing compactness and contiguousness, and also representing or emphasizing representational fairness, transparency. Thank you again for this hearing. Bipartisan buy in and a commitment that district shall not be drawn to favor or disfavor political parties. I believe these reforms will improve public discourse and governance both in my own districts and across Ohio. So, ladies and gentlemen, if the redistricting commission and the General Assembly follow the new laws and commit to redistricting both by the letter and the spirit of those laws, then the new state and congressional maps will lead to better governance. They'll foster more competitive elections, more positive interaction between elected officials and their constituents, better collaboration in policymaking and restored faith to represent and advocate for their constituents. Thank you very much. [applause]

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [00:30:37] Are there any questions? Becky, thank you very much. This time, we'd like to recognize the state legislators that are here today, if you could rise and at this time to be recognized. Representative Brigid Kelly is here for sure. Are there any other state senators or state representatives here? Well, thank you for your attendance. Certainly appreciate it. [applause] The next witness is Barbara Lechner.

**Barbara Lechner** [00:31:23] My name is Barbara Lechter and I'm a researcher, I have a Ph.D., and so I'm interested in all of the science and I appreciate your being here to talk to... Let us talk to you. But I noticed that four of you do not have masks on, and it's offensive to me because of my granddaughter's expecting next month and I want to be able to be around her and see her. [applause] So now I get to the nitty gritty in registered voters in Ohio. There are 1.9 Million Republicans, which is 54 percent and 1.6 Million Democrats, which is 46 percent. But now the members of the House, there are 25 Republicans, which is 75% and eight Democrats to make thirty three. The members of the Ohio Senate, there are 65 Republicans and 35 Democrats. So we don't have that representation of fifty four percent and forty six percent in either the House or the Senate. So that makes me suspicious about how come that didn't happen. It took three... Three fifths vote of both the Senate and the House to override the veto of Senate Bill 22, which took away the governor's ability to make House... To make health orders such as the mask mandate. 23 Republicans in the Senate and 62 Republicans in the House voted to override that. So the governor has no right to issue a mandate for the state. Dr. Bruce Vanderhoff, a chief medical director of the Department of Health, who eventually replaced Dr. Amy Acton on 8-16-21, and twenty four city and county health departments, opposed Senate Bill 22, which... They eventually voted... Anyway, Acton worried when she left office that she might be forced to sign health orders that violated her Hippocratic Oath to do no harm. Her resignation came nearly one month after the Ohio House passed an amendment that would limit any order she issued in just the last 14 days. With any extension of that order needing to pass through a bi-partisan committee of five representatives and five senators. So we lost Dr. Acton, so because of...the oversupply of Republicans in the House and Senate. Anyway, there are about a 1,093 school districts in Ohio, and I think that maybe we're talking about community of interests. I think that those school districts ought to be taken to consideration when you when you divide up the state into the ninety nine House districts and thirty three Senate districts. So do everything you can to keep the school districts compact because there's very few other things. And the other thing I wanted to mention is that 90 percent or over of the prisons in Ohio are in Republican districts... In the state, the congressional districts. I was talk about the state districts before, but it just seems like there was just a lot of stuff going on that didn't make sense. Thank you. [applause].

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [00:34:44] Any questions? Thank you very much. The next witness is Steve Coleman.

**Steve Kullman** [00:35:09] Good morning, Mr. Chairman and members of the panel. My name is Steve Kullman. I'm a union member of the American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees affiliated with the AFL-CIO. I have lived here in Muskingum County for 41 years. My wife Jill and I have been married forty five years and our active foster parents for 38 years. I have been employed by the State of Ohio Department of Natural Resources for 43 years and have served as a volunteer poll worker since 2006. Ohioans believe in fair play. They are tired of powerful elected officials rigging the game in favor of themselves. That's why Ohio voters across the political spectrum passed two separate redistricting reform measures in 2015 and 2018 to ensure a more fair and transparent redistricting process. Legislatures... Legislators have a constitutional obligation to uphold the spirit of those reforms by drawing fair maps in an open and transparent process. The most basic requirement of a true democracy is that citizens have the ability to choose their elected leaders by voting. Instead, gerrymandering allows politicians to choose their voters. Giving legislators power over drawing their own districts and congressional maps creates a type of engineered chaos and a conflict that turns democracy courtesy, civility and decency on its head. Politicians should not accept gerrymandering as a means to redraw the sidelines because they want to step out of bounds to retain their power. By creating safe districts, Gerrymandering increases partisanship the elected officials need only to appeal to the narrow base and can ignore significant demographic portions of his or her district. And if the elected official dares to compromise, the party leaders can primary that elected official for being insufficiently partisan. Wouldn't it be better to have a process that incentivizes decent compromise and civility instead of bullying and rudeness, the end result of this gerrymandering leaves us with our voices muted, our rights watered down, and our underserved communities and schools are left out and lacking of the services and opportunities that we pay our fair share taxes for. At our local level, our school districts and many of our communities in urban areas are split between various state, legislative and congressional districts. You all have the power to hold up to the spirit of the amendments that we passed. Please do all you can to draw fair maps, reach common sense compromise and show Ohioans here real leadership. In closing, we ask for fair districts and the deals founded and our democracy. Thank you. [applause]

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [00:38:35] Questions? Thank you very much. Next witness is Edward Albertson.

**Ed Albertson** [00:39:03] Well, the group couldn't see him from back there. Can I take this off? Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good mornin. Commissioners, Good morning and thanks for listening to us this morning. I'll be fairly brief. Sorry, I was a little late. I didn't get to see what the rules were, but I think my comments are short enough. I'm Ed Albertsen and and I wrote him down so I can make it more clear. In 2016, I was the sole Democratic candidate nominee for the House of Representatives for Ohio's 12th District... Congressional District. I challenged at that time the incumbent, Pat Tiberi, in arguably the second safest gerrymandering seat in the state of Ohio. As I understood it then, it was second only to the former speaker of the House, John Boehner's seat in Congress. In 2018, I was a Democratic candidate for that same seat, but this time it was among a field that consisted of about seven Democrats, six Republicans, and to my best recollection, I think one independent candidate. So I think I have a unique perspective that I can offer to you. Some firsthand observations about the impact of Ohio's current gerrymandered congressional district during the 2016 congressional district campaign, I never saw Mr. Tiberi, but one time and that was at a Gulf Country club in Delaware County that I just happened to be at. He was there and we both had an opportunity to speak. One time, though, the entire campaign I saw Mr. Tiberi. I never saw him at any parades. We never had any forums at which he attended. Fortunately, the League of Women Voters, by their their rules, if there's a Democratic candidate with Republican declines, they cannot have the debate, as I understand it. But at that time, a young man named Jay Baumeister was running as a as a write-in Republican candidate. And Jay showed up at some of those forums so that we could actually have a debate. And we also became good friends. And there were some things that we agreed on. And I thought, wow, this is great. That happened about twice, though, the entire campaign cycle. Like I said, I never saw Pat at a parade. I didn't see him show up at any of the forums that I showed up at that he was invited to where both of us could have been. So I got the sense that he felt pretty comfortable in his seat. There were no political dialogs for representing our policies. And I really think that's what the political process is about. Come up with ideas, see what the voters want and try and deliver on that. But he didn't have to. And as a result of that, Mr. Tiberi won that race. You could look it up with a 66.6 Percent of the vote to my 29.8 Percent. Now, I'm sure some of that was he's a skilled campaigner. He was well-funded. He had a war chest of about, if I remember correctly. Sixteen million dollars million was barely in the thousands, not because I was a terrible candidate, but it was representative of the way the district was gerrymandered. The Democrats really didn't have a chance to support and voice in a way where they felt it was worthy because Tiberi had won... That was his 17th year in office. He had won several campaigns. So there's a lot of feeling, I think, in the 12th Congressional District. If you look at it on the map, it's right there in the center. It covers seven counties, but it looks like a snake running through the middle of Ohio. And I just felt like he just didn't have to worry about it. Now, interestingly, he resigned from Congress in time for the 2018 campaign. And I remember our campaign manager, Vicki Fogerty, saying, oh, they're going to come out of the woodwork now because it's an open seat. And by the way, I'm not a professional politician, so I was learning a lot from friends, neighbors and other politically connected people that were telling me these are things that you need to do. I never expected that that many candidates. And here's what happened in 2018. We had forums, we had parades, Democrats, Republicans saw each other talk with each other. The League of Women Voters held a couple of forums that everybody could share their opinions. So voter engagement that I had not seen in 2016 was there in 2018. 2016 had an incumbent who was protected from the demands of a competitive race because his voters were preselected through the redistricting process. That was driven by a process in Ohio that favors the majority party at the time of census. When a politician has picked her or his voters in 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, vigorous public conversation that leads to informed voters making their choices for representing 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 for the opportunity to speak. If you have any questions, I probably have 20 seconds to answer.

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [00:44:15] Any questions? [applause] Thank you very much. Thank you very much. The next witness is Pamela Conrad. Pamela Conrad. Good morning.

**Pamela Conrad** [00:44:52] Good morning. Speaker Sykes, members of the commission. Good morning, my name is Pamela Contran. I live in the 18th Ohio House District, the 15th Ohio Senate District and the 15th Congressional District. I'm here today because there were no hearings scheduled in Columbus. I'd like to share my personal firsthand experience with how gerrymandering discourages people from voting for 50 years as a member of the League of Women Voters, I have volunteered on dozens of voter registration drives and get out the vote efforts for both partisan and nonpartisan efforts. I've talked to voters at county fairs, beauty pageants, city parks, food banks, parades, festivals, rec centers, farmer's markets, factory gates and women's shelters. I've talked with hundreds, probably thousands of Ohioans to encourage them to register and vote. But too frequently we encounter people who are eligible to vote but don't vote. They give a variety of reasons. But the single most depressing reason I hear is I'm not going to vote because my vote doesn't matter here. I'm a Republican and this district is rigged for a Democrat or I'm a Democrat and this district is rigged for Republicans. So why bother? This reason for not voting is extremely depressing to me because it's the one reason I have no answer for. I can't refute their logic. Their district may indeed be rigged. Districts drawn by favoritism are a toxic influence on voter participation. If people think their district is rigged, they may not vote in other races on the ballot. They may not vote at all. They may not vote in the next election either. Then a vicious cycle begins. If Republicans stop voting in Democratic districts and Democrats stop voting in Republican districts, then the voting statistics become skewed and the district looks even more lopsided than it actually is. Then good candidates stop filing to run for office. Witness the gentleman had just talked a few minutes ago. Then the quality of representation itself falls, even the quality of the representatives whose races are easy. It's a well-established fact that fair competition in business or politics on a level playing field helps raise product quality and customer satisfaction. And the lack of competition makes a company or a legislature mediocre, unpopular and out of touch with its constituents and unresponsive, maybe even corrupt. Gerrymandering turns off voters. Nothing will erode our democracy faster than citizens believing their votes don't matter. I ask you to be faithful to the Ohio Constitution and unselfishly draw fair and competitive districts for the sake of our democracy. Thank you.

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [00:48:41] [applause] Thank you very much. The next witness is Caroline Cook.

**Caroline Cook** [00:48:57] First, I'd like to thank the members of the commission for the opportunity to testify today, having tried to draw a redistricting map. I appreciate the difficult task you have before you. As a retired teacher who taught American history and civics, I am committed to the democratic process. I believe that our nation is best governed when we have the active involvement of informed citizens and voters have faith their vote counts. Citizens want to be assured that their representatives are aware of their concerns and are working together to find solutions to their problems. Although I'm wearing a Poor People's Campaign shirt today and I'm the central Ohio chair, I also belong to several other organizations, including the League of Women Voters, and participated in getting signatures to put fair districts on the ballot. The majority of Ohio voters, 71 percent, clearly demand an end to gerrymandering and increase transparency in the once every 10 year process of drawing the maps. The citizens of Ohio are counting on you to draw fair maps to avoid cracking and packing along party lines, to create compact and orderly districts, no snakes or ducks, and to consider the areas of interest that need to be represented. As a teacher, I have to explain gerrymandering to my students. It was difficult for them to understand. Once they did, these idealistic soon to be voters were angry about the manipulation that took place by party leaders, often out of sight. Partisan manipulation discourages its citizens from becoming part of the democratic process. Why vote if you're a Republican in your district gerrymandered to always elect a Democrat or a Democrat in a district gerrymandered to elect a Republican? Gerrymandering brings out the worst in both parties. It increases partisanship and encourages representatives to campaign on extreme partisan issues instead of truly representing local and regional needs that most often cross party lines. A good example of the needs of smaller cities in rural areas is for public transportation to the larger cities like Cleveland, Columbus and Dayton. The city I live in, Newark, has no public transportation to Columbus, and that is where the major health care facilities are located, as well as some of the better paying jobs. When districts are drawn to create shapes like House District 71 and Senate districts 31, my districts, it makes it impossible for our elected officials to focus on regional issues like public transportation in more rural areas because the districts are not compact and the constituents do not have the same point of view. I trust that you care as much as I do about keeping our democracy healthy and encouraging our citizens to vote and express their needs to their representatives. A healthy democracy requires citizens to trust their leaders and be open and honest, not manipulating the maps. We need competitive districts where voters believe that their candidate has a chance of winning the election if they have good... Have proposed good policies that meet the needs of constituents. Ohio is not a partisan state. We have one senator from each party. We chose President Obama and President Trump. Elections are close in Ohio, but our Ohio legislature does not represent the state, with both houses currently having large Republican majorities. It's only my opinion, but in the past year, we have seen measures proposed that can only be described as pandering to the most extreme views of the Republican Party. The more moderate voices in both parties have been left on the sidelines, and cooperation... Cooperation and compromise has been lost. We need to get this back through, making our representatives accountable to voters, and that can only take place if we have a fair district map. Thank you for listening. [applause]

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [00:53:18] Thank you very much. Next, we have two witnesses, Linda and Raymond Feigner. Next, we would have Karen Seamer. Yes. John Halaiko.

**John Halaiko** [00:54:26] Co-Chair Sykes and members of the Ohio Redistricting Commission, thank you for this opportunity to speak and testify today. My name is John Michael Halaiko and I am a retired educator with over 40 years of teaching, administrating and coaching experience and one of the most economically disadvantaged districts in the state of Ohio, New Lexington City schools. My wife Janie and I currently reside in Pickerington Ohio. I have lived and voted in Ohio my entire life. I am here to testify against unfair redistricting processes and procedures. I do not want to see a repeat of the 2011 gerrymandering process which led to the incumbents choosing their voters. This is the antithesis of the democratic process. The voters must choose their elected officials. All elected officials must answer this question. Are we a democracy or are we not? I am opposed to voter manipulation of any kind by any elected official, regardless of party affiliation. A truly fair process and redistricting must include the following six components one. Decisions must be made in public to actual consideration of maps and input provided by the public. Three, a fair opportunity for the public to review proposed maps. Four, public access to actual redistricting data, including political indexes, the number of districts favoring each party compactness measures, number of splits and any other data supporting an individual plan. Five, use of nonpartisan redistricting criteria such as compactness, minimizing splits of governmental units, maximizing politically balanced districts. And balancing the number of districts which favor each party. Finally, six identification of the factors which are used to evaluate each plan. Advancements in technology make public access to data and all meetings a straightforward process, all media available should be used to make sure the public knows what is happening in the redistricting process every minute. No decisions should be made in secret. The redistricting process is a public process. Districts should never be drawn or redrawn to provide easy reelections for incumbents, increased campaign contributions to elected officials, or to ensure that a party can stay in power for decades ahead. The people of the state of Ohio do not want democracy to be made a sham of because decisions are made in secret. The redistricting process must be a transparent process based on all the items I listed. The elected officials must always remember that they work for the people. Reference material for my testimony was taken from the Ohio Redistricting Transparency Report. By Jim Slagle, manager, Ohio Campaign for Accountable Redistricting and was a program of the League of Women Voters and Ohio Citizen Action, the date on that was December 12th, 2011. Thank you for this opportunity.

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [00:58:49] Thank you very much. Any questions? [applause] Thank you, sir. The next witness is Sabrina King.

**Sabrina King** [00:59:19] Good morning, thank you for this opportunity to speak. I am a lifelong central Ohio resident, retired high school teacher, in addition to caring about the academic progress of my students. I was concerned for their health and welfare. Therefore, I am deeply troubled by the recent dramatic increase in gun violence in central Ohio communities. Earlier this summer, Columbus recorded to one hundredth homicide death. Incidents this year have included three mass shootings. The city is on pace to shatter last year's record number of homicides. And according to a Spectrum News One report by Lydia Taylor, youth under the age of 21 accounted for 25 percent of homicides through May. Tragically, there appears to be no end in sight. And yet, in spite of overwhelming support for common sense gun regulations following the 2019 Dayton mass shooting that killed nine people and injured an additional 17, Governor DeWine took our state in the exact opposite direction when he signed into law Ohio's Stand Your Ground bill in January of this year. In 2018, Ohio Republicans came away with seventy five percent of the congressional delegation and 63 percent of the legislative seats in spite of winning just 52 percent of the congressional vote and May 2019, a trio of judges ruled that Ohio's current congressional map had been drawn to favor a Republican majority. Because of our gerrymandered districts, no legislative action has been taken to thwart the gun violence that is tearing apart local communities and killing so many of our fellow Ohioans. Failure to enact gun legislation is just one way in which gerrymandering affects the daily lives of all Ohioans. Everything from school funding to public health measures are affected by the actions and votes of a legislature that does not reflect the wishes of the majority of Ohio's citizens. For this reason, Ohio's new House districts must be drawn and a fair, transparent, accessible nonpartisan way through a process that embraces public input. Thank you. [applause]

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [01:01:28] Thank you. Our next witness is Jamie Shoemaker. Jeff Wensing.

**Jeff Wensing** [01:02:12] Good morning, everybody. Cochair Cupp and Sykes, members of the Ohio Redistricting Committee. My name is Jeff Wensing, I am a high school math teacher from Parma. And it's also my privilege to serve as the vice president of the Ohio Education Association. On behalf of our 120,000 members. Thank you for the opportunity to testify about the important task of creating new legislative districts for the General Assembly. There is a well-known saying that all politics is local. I've experienced this from dealing with issues as a teacher and a union leader in my local school district. We would try to address problems through organizing work on behalf of our endorsed candidates for school board and work with the community to pass levies. Were we always successful? No, but there was a sense of community and common interest even when we lost. We felt our voice had been heard. For the past few years, I've served as vice president of OEA. As I talk to members around the state, they don't always feel heard or respected by their legislators. Admittedly, comparing a single school district to a House or Senate district is not an apples to apples comparison. The size of the districts dictate that they include several districts and can span several counties. However, we often see that communities are needlessly split among several different legislative districts or areas can be carved out of one district to be a sliver and another. When this happens, the voice of the community and its citizens is diluted. I've spoken with members who feel like their communities are an afterthought or an inconvenience when talking to their legislators. I've also spoken to those who never receive any response at all. Obviously, there are great legislators on both sides of the aisle, those who will listen to and respect the concerns of their constituents, even when they disagree. However, officials can be less than responsive if they're in a district drawn expressly so they don't have to worry about a competitive election. Citizens feel frustrated about a government that is less responsive to their needs than it should be. That was a driving force behind the push for and passage of redistricting reform, manipulating districts through partisan gerrymandering is fundamentally undemocratic. The voters have demanded that our leaders do better. And it starts with you and the work of this commission. I urge you to live up to the spirit of redistricting... Redistricting reform, as passed by the voters of Ohio. Districts should be drawn that keep community interests together. They should be compact and make sense. They should pass what is called the eye test. Most importantly, partisan advantage should be put aside. This commission needs to work together in a bipartisan fashion to deliver fair districts. That's what we voted for and have every right to expect from our leaders. Thank you for your time and your service to the citizens of Ohio. And I'm happy to answer questions you may have.

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [01:05:48] Are there any questions? Thank you very much. Thank you. [applause] The next witness is Matthew Smith. Matthew Smith. Mark Fluarty? Susan Haas.

**Susan Haas** [01:06:46] Good morning. Co-chair Sykes, Commissioners, thank you for the opportunity to testify here today. My name is Susan Haas. I'm a resident of Eastern Licking County, just over the county line from here, just over the state Senate line, just over the statehouse district line. County lines are county lines. But the reality is that my community is so connected to Muskingum County and so disconnected from Licking that even our county governments recognize it. My school district is in Muskingum County. If I want covid statistics for my zip code, I go to the Muskingum County Health Department and there wasn't a recycling bin within 10 miles of me until I contacted the Licking County Solid Waste District. Now, in 2017, I collected signatures for the Fair District Ballot Initiative, and people from all walks of life signed my petitions. People who identified themselves as Republicans, Democrats, Independents and at least one libertarian. I watched their hands as they signed. I saw manicured nails. I saw heavy calluses from years of labor. I saw expensive jewelry. I saw mechanics' grime. Over 600 people signed my petitions who really only had one thing in common other than being registered Ohio voters. Every one of them wanted an end to gerrymandering. Now, I did most of this canvasing in the three counties nearest my home - Licking Muskingum and Perry. Conservative counties overall. Strongly Republican leaning, largely rural and working class. In both 2015 and 18, these counties voted in favor of the anti-gerrymandering amendments by a margin of two to one. By a margin, in fact, larger than the margin of victory of any statewide official the following November. People want fair districts more than they want Governor DeWine, Auditor Faber or Secretary LaRose. Now, all the major population centers in Lincoln County are drawn into District 71. Senator Hottinger knows this very well. While the remainder of Licking County gets stuck on to Perry and Coshocton counties to create District 72, some very narrow borders. So the district is contiguous, but not by much. The nearest part... Population centers to any part of House District 72 and Licking County are Newark in District 71 and Zanesville in District 93. Last year, I saw two dramatically different Ohio House elections in Licking county. District 71 has been historically represented by a moderate Republican. But the bitter, expensive and narrowly decided Republican primary last year became a contest of which candidate could espouse the most extreme positions. By contrast, District 70 to where I live had been represented by an individual, that it was pretty much common knowledge that unless something really bizarre happened, there was not a lot of point to challenging him in the general election. So when something kind of bizarre happened and he got arrested, there was no one on the ballot to oppose him. I worked on one of the write in candidates campaigns for House District 72 last year. That's when another effect of gerrymandering became clear. Almost everyone I knew well enough to tap as a volunteer lives in either District seventy one or ninety three. Now, not every district will be competitive for both major parties, no matter how the lines are drawn. But a healthy democracy depends on primary elections, where candidates appeal to the broadest range of their party supporters, not just the extremists, and general elections that are a forum for ideas that could benefit all the district's residents. Districts where people with common interests share a common representative. That's what we voted for in 2015. That's what we voted for in 2018, and that's what we demand now.

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [01:10:49] Thank you. Thank you. Are there any questions? [applause] Thank you very much. The next witness is Alannah Glickman.

**Alannah Glickman** [01:11:09] Thank you, can you can you hear me through my masks, OK? Thank you, Co-chair Sykes and the other commission members and their representatives for allowing me the opportunity to testify today. I'm really grateful for this opportunity to participate in direct democracy. It's no secret that... I'm a resident of Jersey Township in Licking County. So it's no secret that Ohio's congressional and state legislative district maps are gerrymandered. For too long, politicians have rigged Ohio's electoral maps to preserve political power and silence the voice of our communities. Because of these maps, our legislators often fail to respond to Ohio voters' views on pressing issues like renewable energy and the fight against climate change. Fortunately, in 2015 and 2018, Ohio voters decisively rejected partisan gerrymandering. And it's a huge honor to be in the same space as people who worked so hard on those campaigns. Ohioans voted for two redistricting reform measures that will help guide the drawing of Ohio's new legislative and congressional districts. Defending Ohio's democracy also means establishing and protecting fair representation and fair maps for Ohio. Simply put, a healthy democracy with fair maps empowers voters. So, as I said, I live in Jersey Township on a farm. This is a pretty rural area and it's predominantly Republican and that's great. What doesn't make sense about Ohio's current maps is that we're also lumped in with less rural areas like the city of Newark and more liberal towns that have different priorities like Granville. And this is diluting the vote of the residents of those communities to be all clumped in together. In addition, I'm really concerned about the inclusivity of this participation process. The opportunity for virtual testimony would be a lot safer for parents with young children like myself, and it would be very helpful to have more time options that would allow individuals who work on weekdays to attend. Overall, we need maps that represent all of us here in Ohio, ones that reflect our partisan makeup and ones that are responsive to all of us. Thanks. [applause]

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [01:13:26] Any questions? Thank you. Next witness is Sandra Feher.

**Sandra Feher** [01:13:49] Good morning, commissioners. My name is Sandra Feher. I'm a concerned Ohioan mother and community volunteer. I waited 10 years, then had to drive 90 minutes for this hearing because this commission decided not to allow testimony in Columbus, our state capital and largest gerrymandered city in the state. We've lived in Dublin since 1993. We remain in Dublin today. And one thing that has is considering other options is we're stuck in a district with horrendous partisan gerrymandering because we live on the Union County line. That leaves us unrepresented in district 86, focused on Marysville and rural communities. I'm here because we need a fair map for Dublin that gives us a real shot at actually electing our candidates as one community instead of representatives who choose their voters in three separate districts. This intentionally undermines our political power guaranteed by the Constitution. Living in Ohio today is exhausting. Our rep supports whatever her party puts forward, and they've held the gerrymandered majority for 10 years. Our representative actually told us and constituent meetings that she was elected and that means her constituents support her views. Never mind the House Bill 6 money she has in her coffers or that only forty two percent of the voters voted in her race in 2018. The only time our Ohio 86 representative is in Dublin area is for an election or a school opening. In our first constituent meeting in 2019, she threatened to end our meeting as soon as we told her that we oppose the abortion ban she was cosponsoring. In another meeting, we told her that the ectopic pregnancy transplant bill with penalties including abortion, murder charges she supported, was based on a procedure that does not exist. She scoffed and said that she interpreted it differently. Gerrymandering has impacted us by clarifying dangerous nonsense into laws. Gerrymandering leads to representatives who are unaccountable and only focused on pleasing their primary voters and donors because their district is in the bag for them. We are one Dublin community, not three. Our school district is the 10th largest in the state, with neighborhoods spanning three counties united by common priorities, goals and activities. 40 percent of Dublin schools families live outside the city limits in neighborhoods that border the line. There are two elementary schools, a middle school and a high school in Union County. The city of Dublin is larger than both Marysville and Delaware. Yet 6,000 Dublin City Schools voters are crammed in the district eighty six in Union County and four precincts are broken off into district sixty seven in Delaware County. Dublin City Schools are where most of our tax money goes, but Marysville, Delaware and voters from other rural communities set the policies that impact our daily lives. Approximately 25 percent of Dublin schools reside in Union County, where we make up less than 20 percent of the county's voters, but a much higher percentage of tax revenues. Yet policies in my district eighty six do not focus on us. We essentially have taxation without representation and union in Delaware County. Voices diluted intentionally for ten years. Dublin is not a suburb of Delaware or Marysville. It's a suburb of Columbus. Delaware and Union County are the fastest growing counties in Ohio thanks to thriving Dublin neighborhoods. But this growth has pulled away from our community. Dublin is home to a large immigrant community, 20 percent of our total, which is also split into three districts. Current maps split our neighborhoods by house and street. It was not this way when we moved in. We are the second house on our street as a Delaware/Union County line. We're in district eighty six. The house two up from ours is in district sixty seven. And it's like this in many neighborhoods throughout our community. Dublin neighborhoods are confused about who their representative is because there are three of them. When we organize for elections, we have states... Slates for three candidates. Our community functions as one. Delaware and Marysville do not share needs and concerns with Dublin.Neighbors split into eighty six and sixty seven have the same priorities as their neighbors in district twenty one. In our daily lives we do not divide by county. Our policies shouldn't either. It's unreasonable for a suburb of fifty thousand to be cracked into three state districts. Our voices in Dublin have been intentionally silenced by throwing us in with rural counties, using geography instead of community. We ask you to put our community back together in the statehouse, unite the Dublin City School community in one district. Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [01:18:13] Thank you. [applause] Any questions? Thank you very much. Ladies and gentlemen, we're down to our last witness was Karen Seamer.

**Karen Semer** [01:18:48] May I remove this, OK? Good morning. My name is Karen Semer. I'm a lifelong Ohioan, I was born in Akron, Ohio, have engineering degrees from Cleveland State University and the Ohio State University. And I had a 30 year career working for the Newark Air Force Base, where I calibrated equipment standards. I know Senator Hottinger been there. Maybe some of you have have been. And I learned the important of importance of measurement. So there is an entire field of operations, research and management science, which can solve complex problems with many constraints, creating maps is one of those such problems. Some of these mathematical tools have been used in the creation of district maps, including gerrymandered maps. There's also a field of computational mathematics and quantitative analysis which can provide objective and practical standards, algorithmic tests, if you will, for identifying gerrymandered maps. A friend of mine recently sent me an article from Technology Review of August of this year, which describes some of the algorithmic tests for identifying gerrymandered maps. My message simply is measurement. Please use objective measures for gerrymandering during the process of and after you've identified these maps, measurement is important. I strongly encourage the redistricting commission to make use of algorithmic tests before finalizing the maps. Thank you for your time and attention. [applause]

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [01:20:46] Thank you very much. We have received an additional witness, Luanne Hendricks.

**Luanne Hendricks** [01:21:08] Good morning, co-chair Sykes and commission members, thank you for allowing me to speak to you. My name is Luanne Hendricks and I live in House District 19, Senate District three, Congressional District 12 in the city of Westerville. I would like to draw your attention to the issue of school districts being divided by...Ohio House and Senate district lines. I belong to a group called Sustainable Westerville that considers its community to be the Westerville City School District, also becoming known as the Greater Westerville area. The school district is currently split by Senate districts 3, 15 and 19 and House districts 19, 22, 25 and 68. Given that district drawing rules currently prioritize keeping counties whole, it is perhaps understandable that the parts of the school district in Franklin County are in different districts than those in Delaware County. However, there is no clear reason why the portion of the school district in Franklin County needs to be split into three different Senate districts and three different House districts. The vast majority of the school district is in House District 19 and Senate District three. However, several neighborhoods in the south portion of the school district are in House districts 22 and 25 and Senate districts 15 and 19. And our organization drew a community map. This was submitted and you can see in the south portion that there are a number of different districts. Why is this important? Just for simplicity, it would make more sense for all neighborhoods in the Franklin County, part of the school district, to be included in the same House and Senate district. It would make it easier for House and Senate Representatives to concentrate energy on the school district related needs of their constituents. If they represented fewer school districts, it would make it easier for teachers to help their students understand who their representatives are. More importantly, in Westerville, there is a need to foster a sense of commonality and inclusion in the student body. Having listened to discussions among community groups which include Westerville for Racial Equity, Inclusion and Social Engagement and Sustainable Westerville, I have learned that there are students and residents that feel excluded from membership in the community. This is especially true for those living in the southern parts of the district that are less affluent, more diverse and more split up into different legislative districts. Having different representatives from everyone else in your school might make it difficult to participate equally in civic class discussions and be one more reason to feel different, excluded and unimportant. Sustainable Westerville created a community map of the Westerville School District. A teacher who helped create this map was later sought out by a school colleague who lives in the south part of the district and saw this map on our Facebook page. She thanked the teacher for including her neighborhood, explaining that she and her family frequently feel excluded from the community, seeing her neighborhood included in our map made her feel valued and part of our community. School districts are one of the most important parts of the social fabric of the community. I ask you to consider keeping school districts whole when drawing Ohio House and Senate district lines. Thank you for your time and consideration of my request. [applause]

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [01:24:40] Thank you very much. Thank you very much. At this time, is there anyone else who would like to testify today? Would you please complete a witness, if you may come forward? Is there anyone else who would like to speak today?

**Jaquelyn Byrd** [01:25:13] My apologies for not having a prepared statement. I had a death in the family this weekend and that's taken up some time. But thank you for the opportunity to speak today

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [01:25:24] Ms. Jacqueline Byrd? (Yes, sir.) Yes. If you could speak directly to the microphone.

**Jaquelyn Byrd** [01:25:30] Yes, sir. Thank you for the opportunity to be here today, as you've heard from others today. I, too, am the victim of gerrymandering. I live in Ohio House district 22, an Ohio Senate district ninety nine. The Senate district is mostly north of Columbus, running generally from Delaware in the west to Danville in the east, except for a very contorted little finger that dips down into Columbus where I live. The House district generally runs from North Columbus, cut through the center of the city and down through the southern part of the city, effectively cutting the city and its various neighborhoods in half. I can leave my house and walk a couple of streets over and be in another Senate district. I can get in my car and drive in the opposite direction only five minutes and be in a different Senate district. In my car, I can cross three Ohio Senate districts in about 20 minutes, depending on the traffic. A somewhat similar situation exists for the House district. My Senate district is mostly rural, while the contorted finger dipping into North Columbus, where I live, is very urban. I am certain the people of Danville have issues that need to be addressed by their representatives and senators, but I doubt they are the same as those of a decidedly urban section of Columbus where I live. This clearly was an attempt at cracking as the district is mostly rural, we don't see much of our senator in this small finger of his district. We're an afterthought. This is taxation without representation. Remember that one? I can give similar examples for the other districts as well as my congressional district. But I think you get the point. Gerrymandering is wrong. It was always wrong. When I was working, if my staff ever said to me, well, we've always done it this way, they knew they'd be in trouble because that is a lousy reason for anything. Gerrymandering is wrong because it undermines our democracy. Full dominance by one party is not a democracy, for just one example that exists in the world today. China calls itself the republic, the People's Republic of China. Does anyone believe it is a true republic? This isn't just politics. You're messing with our way of life. Gerrymandering is one of the weapons that will destroy democracy if continued. Please adhere to the spirit and intent of this law and quit trying to wiggle around the letter of the law. As elected officials, you were given a public trust. Please don't blow it. Thank you. [applause]

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [01:28:09] Thank you very much. Albert Zakany.

**Albert Zakany** [01:28:28] Thank you, Zakany, there's an N instead of an R. Welcome commission to Zanesville. We don't see very many people around here, we're a small community. And I've been... I'm retired, I started a business here with my brother about 41 years ago, sold it. I've been a lifelong resident of Zanesville, dealt with the public, what I think most typifies this region and much of Ohio, and for that matter, our country is a sense of fairness. And I think that's all we're asking for today. I think many learned and studied and research information has been presented. And I'm just talking off, you know, my experiences. I live in congressional 12, house ninety seven, which seems fine. It's all contiguous and square. And then I live in Senate... Ohio Senate 20 and my sister lives on a farm in Ashville. And I didn't realize we were in the same district. It conveniently cuts out areas like Roseville and Crooksville, which we have a lot in common with. However, it's the Zanesville... Cambridge is on the east. Reynoldsburg and the outskirts of Reynoldsburg and Pickerington are on the west, it dips down, it includes Millersport, but not Thorville. Circleville is split in half. So this, frankly, as you can see on our maps, is an embarrassment. So all I'm asking for me and for our constituents here is just a sense of fairness. By looking at the maps, you can understand what we're asking for. Thank you. [applause]

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [01:30:47] Thank you very much. I believe this is the last witness, George Concar

**George Concar** [01:31:08] I thank you for giving me the opportunity to speak. I was a math teacher here in the area for a total of 45 years between public school and here at OUZ. And as such, I know a little bit about statistics and map drawing and so on. If you look at our districts in this state, they're laughable. The only word that you think of when you see those is cheat. One party, and it's wrong, no matter who doesn't, they've put these districts in to cheat. You want to get everybody you want in one, and that makes the ideas of that party, whichever one it is, so fixed that they don't have to be legitimate. You can get... go to Ohio State, get a political science club, throw in a few math majors, give them a map, give them a calculator. Here's the population we need in a group. They could come up with groups that were more contiguous and made more sense. And all it would cost the state was for beer, pizza and pop. [laughter] This shouldn't be a hard idea, there should be nothing in voting records when picking districts, nothing. That shouldn't even come into it. Picking a district so that some incumbent stays in a district shouldn't be part of this. You were working for the people, the people need to be represented. In a light group, in a neighborhood group. Yes, some districts are going to have to be bigger. Southeastern Ohio doesn't have as much population that can't be helped. But make it logical. Make it real. Don't cheat. Thank you very much. [applause]

**Co-Chair Senator Vernon Sykes** [01:33:10] Thank you. Ladies and gentlemen, I want to thank you all for the testimonies and also those who were just here today in the audience. Certainly appreciate your attendance and participation. This is the fifth of 10 initial hearings. We are still moving around the state. Uh, and there will be additional hearings, especially when we have actual maps to be considered by the commission. Are tehre any comments that any of the commissioners would like to make at this time? hearing none, the meeting is now adjourned.