

Testimony to the Ohio Redistricting Commission

By Trevor P. Martin, League of Women Voters of Ohio

October 31, 2025

Co-chairs and members of the Ohio Redistricting Commission. My name is Trevor Martin, and I am the Program Coordinator with the League of Women Voters of Ohio. For over a hundred years, the League has been a nonpartisan, grassroots organization that believes voters should play a critical role in democracy. That is why we advocate for fair redistricting, at all levels of government.

Beginning in early 2021, I travelled throughout Ohio to inform and educate citizens about the Congressional and state legislative redistricting processes. I met with many diverse groups of Ohioans from block clubs and neighborhood associations to government officials, churches, reporters, and civic organizations. In coordination with our larger coalition, I hosted dozens of trainings, both in person and online, teaching hundreds of Ohioans to use open source mapping software to read, analyze, and create proposed district maps.

Much of our redistricting work focuses on identifying communities of interest, which are areas with broadly shared interests and representational needs, including common ethnic, racial, social, cultural, geographic, environmental, socioeconomic, or historical identities or concerns. It is a best practice to try to keep such communities together, and our community mapping program helped us understand how everyday Ohioans identify and define their communities, and therefore how they believe district lines should be drawn.

A congressperson can represent a community far more successfully than they can represent a district of otherwise disconnected places and people knitted together without respect to their backgrounds, values, interests, and experiences. In this proposed map, Ohio's congressional districts are plagued by disparities in health, wealth, and infrastructure and are subject to unnecessary divisions that split small towns, neighborhoods, and schools.

A few examples of these senseless divisions that dilute the political power of communities include:

- In Hamilton County, the suburbs of Cincinnati have been carved from the county and paired with D8, including minority communities in cities like Lockland, Forest Park, Mt. Healthy, and Lincoln Heights. The Village of Indian Hill is split in what appears to be for the purpose of connecting the City of Cincinnati to the neighboring counties of Warren and Clinton. Warren County, one of Ohio's more affluent counties, is paired with Cincinnati, which has a poverty rate five times higher than Warren County. The average household income in Cincinnati is less than half of those who live in Warren County. Thus, any economic policy could potentially benefit half of the district at the expense of the other half.
- The 8th District includes Preble County with no mass transportation system and the suburbs of Cincinnati in Hamilton County where SORTA provides 42,500 rides per day.

- In D9 Perrysburg and Rossford are both split from Wood County and in doing so both of their individual school districts are divided.
- In Mahoning County the city of Austintown is divided in three portions with the majority of the population in District 14 on each end of the city and all of their city school buildings located in District 6 sandwiched between.
- District 7 pairs the bustling suburbs of Cleveland with the village of Loudenville deep in the Mohican wilderness of Ashland County, splitting the city of Wooster in Wayne County in the process.
- The city of Mansfield, seat of Richland County, is split down the middle.
- District 15 splits our state's capital building and downtown area from the rest of the city and dilutes westside Columbus voters by pairing them with faraway Piqua in Miami County.

This is classic gerrymandering, done for the benefit of partisan advantage.

The people of Ohio want and deserve fair and accountable representation, which requires fair maps and a transparent, public process for creating them that includes ample time for meaningful public input and feedback.

It's clear by your actions throughout this process that the politicians on the Ohio Redistricting Commission do not care about voters or good government. They only care about their own power. Giving Ohioans just a few hours to digest this new map and provide the feedback meant to help inform and improve the districts where they live is checking a constitutional box, not actually inviting the citizen participation that makes for a fair map. The public was shut out, the process rigged, and incumbents favored. The resulting Congressional map still doesn't reflect the will of the voters of Ohio.

Republican and Democratic voters feel like their parties sold them out—and they're both right. This sham process and gerrymandered map provide a clear illustration of why letting politicians choose their voters robs us all of real representation. Voters were locked out of power so politicians could lock in theirs.

Zooming out nationally, Americans are watching the race to the bottom by both parties, which is fueling partisan divides and governmental dysfunction. We are pleased that more voters are calling for national anti-gerrymandering legislation, where politicians cannot weaken the voices of the people.

The League of Women Voters of Ohio launched our anti-gerrymandering campaign decades ago. We will continue to fight any politician or party who seeks to serve their short-sighted political interests over the rights of every Ohioan to have quality, unbiased representation. Our resolve remains firm—we will not end this campaign until Ohioans have districts that uphold their Constitutional rights and a congressional delegation that truly serves them.