

TO: The Ohio Senate Government Oversight and Reform Committee
FROM: Mary Tuominen
DATE: January 23, 2018
Re: Written Testimony in Opposition to SJR 5 submitted for the January 24, 9:45am hearing of Government Oversight and Reform Committee

Senator Coley and Members of the Committee,

My name is Mary Tuominen. I'm a retired educator. I live in the village of Granville in Licking County and have for nearly 25 years.

I remember the first election in which I voted – the 1972 Presidential election. Richard Nixon vs. George McGovern. If you're my age you will never forget that election. Nixon won by a landslide -- 49 states and over 60% of the popular vote.

I have voted in every election since. General elections and midterm elections and primary elections and special elections. I vote in every election because I believe that our right to vote is the foundation of democracy. In a democracy, it's as close to sacred as you can get. And, this is why I oppose gerrymandering.

Every citizen's vote should count. But, when districts are drawn specifically for the purpose of partisan advantage, democracy is meaningless. Candidates are assured re-election and need not be accountable to voters.

Clearly, the voters of Ohio understand this. In 2015 we voted, by an over 70% majority, in support of Issue 1 -- establishing a non-partisan legislative redistricting plan. Now it's time for the people of Ohio to have our say in creating a non-partisan Congressional redistricting plan.

Where I live, in the eastern section of the 12th Congressional District, over 60 citizen volunteers, including myself, have participated in training to collect signatures for the Fair Districts = Fair Elections congressional redistricting reform initiative. In the last six months these volunteers, members of Indivisible: Ohio 12 East, have collected over 4,000 signatures in support of the Fair Districts initiative. We have collected signatures in primarily rural counties of the state – Licking, Muskingum, Perry, Fairfield, Morgan. We have collected signatures at county fairs and music festivals, at farmer's markets and public libraries, at neighborhood picnics and family gatherings. Folks from all walks of life have signed our initiative – folks who care about democracy, oppose gerrymandering, and support a fully non-partisan Congressional redistricting process as articulated in the Fair Districts = Fair Elections initiative language.

The Fair Districts initiative was months in the making. It is rooted in the citizen initiative process – requiring extensive voter education and support to even get on the ballot for a vote. Therefore, what is the rush in getting a legislative proposal on the May ballot? Especially when volunteers in the Fair Districts = Fair Elections coalition have already gathered half of the signatures needed to place a congressional redistricting reform initiative on the ballot in November – an initiative that uses the language crafted by this very state legislature in 2015 (the

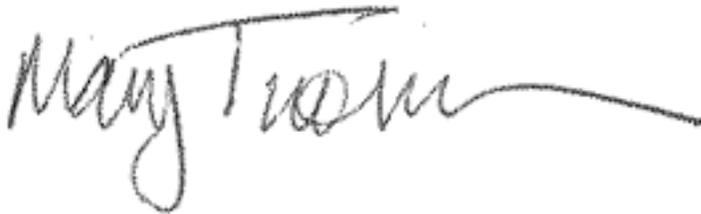
Issue 1 ballot language) to ensure a non-partisan redistricting process that is fully transparent to the public.

In contrast, SJR 5 maintains the legislature's control over the process of redrawing district boundaries. SJR 5 retains the splitting of counties and communities that exists in our currently gerrymandered districts. SJR 5 fails to establish a non-partisan redistricting commission as enacted by Ohio voters in 2015 for the legislative redistricting process.

The citizens of Ohio deserve better than SJR 5. Democracy deserves better than SJR 5. In fact, democracy requires better than SJR 5. Democracy requires competitive elections – which can only occur through districts that are drawn in a fully non-partisan manner that is open and transparent to the public.

Please oppose SJR 5. Instead, support the congressional redistricting process that voters endorsed in 2015 under Issue 1 – which is the language of the Fair Districts = Fair Elections ballot initiative.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mary Tuominen". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

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