

January 30, 2018

Chairman Coley and Senators on the committee:

When I submitted testimony I did not yet know that negotiations with the Fair District coalition had broken down. Given the way that SJR5 was presented—without bipartisan support and without taking into consideration any of the testimony to the working group—I'm not entirely surprised. Certainly, creating fair district maps that strive to meet a number of standards—integrity of communities, compactness, competitiveness, voting rights standards—is not simple, but the principle of **bipartisanship** is key to finding a fair solution. If one party maintains final control of the process—even via a series of 4 year maps—and if the outcome can continue to create a congressional delegation whose makeup does not even approximately reflect the will of the voters, then obviously the problem of political gerrymandering has not been solved.

The Fair Districts proposal not only states that district lines cannot be drawn to favor one political party over another, it also says that the map should maximize **representational fairness**. Despite the many (exaggerated) protestations to the contrary, not only does the Fair Districts proposal contain a precise definition of what that means and how to measure it—the truth is, we all know it when we see it! When 50 percent of the voters get 25% of the representatives, it does not take a PhD in political science to know that is unfair.

In previous hearings some senators have commented that taking party affiliation into consideration when drawing maps is gerrymandering, but of course we know that is not true. Gerrymandering is specifically when lines are drawn in order to rig the outcome to benefit one political party. Using information about party affiliation and voting patterns in order to attain representational **fairness** is the very **opposite** of gerrymandering.

It would have been wonderful if the majority caucus had been willing to compromise and settle on a genuinely bipartisan or non-partisan solution. But I applaud the minority caucus and the Fair Districts coalition for not agreeing to settle on a “solution” that would have in fact allowed the problem of political gerrymandering in Ohio to continue and be written into our constitution. Unless and until we see bipartisan agreement and coalition buy in, volunteers will push forward with increased energy and enthusiasm to get the Fair Districts proposal on the November ballot.

The media across the state have done an excellent job of explaining the issue to their readers, listeners and viewers. The Ohio public is increasingly aware, interested, and informed, so we have less and less explaining to do as we gather signatures. And, if anyone hasn't heard of gerrymandering, really all you have to say is in a roughly 50/50 state, the party that drew the lines got 12 out of 16 congressional seats, because controlling the redistricting process gives you power over the outcome. Gerrymandering is unfair and leads to many negative outcomes: We all know the list...voter apathy, lack of compromise, non-competitive districts, political extremism, etc. The citizens of Ohio deserve better. It's things like blatant gerrymandering that have made voters so cynical and distrustful of politicians.

Voters are right to wonder, does it really matter if I vote? Will my vote really count? Do those in power even WANT my vote to count? What will your answer be? Will you go another round in the partisan battle to rig outcomes? Or will you take this opportunity to work to create a better, fairer method for redrawing district lines, and in doing so, give a much needed boost to the health and strength of our democratic system?

Sometimes I think that legislators should get out more. We volunteers are out around the state all the time talking with voters across the political spectrum. People want change, They want fair districts and fair elections. They want the way they vote reflected in the number of people elected. They want their legislators to pay attention to their ideas and concerns—gerrymandering discourages that. It's not rocket science. It's a bi-partisan issue that needs a bipartisan solution.

We volunteers are working for a fairer system—not to rig an outcome one way or another. Every time I talk to a voter who probably votes differently from me, I have an opportunity to prove that I am not batting for “my” side only, or against the other side. I'm batting—we're batting—for ALL voters, indeed, for the strength and health of democracy and the American system of government itself. All we are asking is that you join us on that team, the bigger team, the team for fairness, team USA.

Thank you,

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