



**STATE REPRESENTATIVE MIKE CURTIN**  
17<sup>th</sup> House District

HJR 2 – Congressional Redistricting  
Sponsor Testimony  
House Government Oversight and Accountability Committee  
Nov. 15, 2016  
Reps. Kathleen Clyde and Mike Curtin

Chairman Blessing, Vice Chairman Rezabek, Members of the Committee:

Thank you for this opportunity to present sponsor testimony on House Joint Resolution 2, the latest in a long line of bipartisan efforts to end the practice of partisan gerrymandering of Ohio's congressional districts.

On Nov. 3, 2015, Ohioans voted overwhelmingly in favor of State Issue 1 – to end the partisan gerrymandering of state legislative districts, beginning with the election of 2022.

State Issue 1 was placed on the ballot by overwhelming agreement of both houses of this legislature – an 81-7 vote of the Ohio House, and a 28-1 vote of the Ohio Senate. These votes took place in December 2014, demonstrating that good things – sometimes even excellent things -- can happen during lame-duck sessions.

Ohio's voters rewarded this display of statesmanship and bipartisanship, with more than 7 in 10 of them (71.5%) choosing to amend the Ohio Constitution to assure that state legislative districts in the future will be drawn in a manner that respects neighborhoods, communities and the people who live in them. State Issue 1 was approved by wide margins in all of Ohio's 88 counties.

But, as you know, State Issue 1 was half a loaf. It did not address the gerrymandering of Ohio's 16 congressional districts.

Those districts, as the attached map vividly illustrates, are more misshapen and twisted than at any time in Ohio's history. They do not respect neighborhoods or the people who live in them. Our current congressional districts are as hyper-gerrymandered as any congressional districts in the nation. They invite voter cynicism and disgust. None of us takes pride in this.

We can fix this. We have the template. We only need the political will. If we present this or a similar plan to the voters, it almost certainly would be received as enthusiastically as was State Issue 1.

HJR 2 is modeled after State Issue 1. By the way, so is Senate Joint Resolution 2, now pending in the Ohio Senate, and sponsored by Sens. Frank La Rose and Tom Sawyer. These two resolutions would be easily reconcilable.

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The principles of State Issue 1 are the same principles within HJR 2. First and foremost, communities should not be shattered and fragmented. In our current congressional map, there are 54 splits of county boundaries. Seven counties are even split among three or more districts. Some districts needlessly and flagrantly stretch for hundreds of miles.

The 15<sup>th</sup> District, in which we sit, includes voters in 12 counties and stretches from Clinton County in the west to Athens and Morgan counties in the east.

HJR 2 incorporates most of the same criteria, and much of the same language, as Issue 1. It calls for compactness and minimizing the splits of counties and other governmental jurisdictions.

It requires that a congressional map cannot be drawn to favor or disfavor a political party. It requires mapmakers to respect, as much as possible, the territorial integrity of counties, cities and townships.

It charges the bipartisan Ohio Redistricting Commission, already authorized by State Issue 1 to draw state legislative districts, with the additional task of drawing Ohio's congressional districts.

Mr. Chairman, we are just over 3 years away from the 2020 federal census. One likely result of that census is that Ohio, because of its stagnant population, will lose one of its 16 congressional seats. In the 2022 elections, we'll have only 15 seats to fill.

In the interest of fairness to all, it would be ideal for the 2022 congressional map to be drawn based on objective, nonpartisan criteria.

Failure to act in the near future increases the likelihood that reform will be pushed off until 2032 – a decade and a half away. Mr. Chairman, members of the committee, we all should be embarrassed by such a prospect.

In the interest of the committee's time, Mr. Chairman, we won't delve into more detail. Should you grant another hearing or two, allowing for proponent and opponent testimony, we are sure there would be witnesses more than happy to provide as much detail as you desire.

However, we'd be happy to answer any questions committee members might have today. And, once again, thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on HJR 2.

