I am opposed to SJR5, and I encourage my state senator, Bill Coley, and the committee to oppose this resolution. Gerrymandering is a serious issue, and it undermines the democratic principle of one person one vote. The results for Ohio, a state with just slightly more Republicans than Democrats, should be reflected in its elections. Gerrymandering distorts this and makes the resulting government unrepresentative of the people. This proposed resolution does NOT make the process transparent, and it encourages deals behind closed doors. It does NOT address the issues that make Ohio unrepresentative now, and it undermines the rights of the public to advance their own solution. I urge my senator and the committee to reject this resolution.

I share the view of the editorial in the Cleveland Plain Dealer (http://www.cleveland.com/opinion/index.ssf/2018/01/blatantly\_skewed\_ohio\_gop\_cong.html)

**Blatantly skewed Ohio GOP congressional redistricting "reform" plan belongs in the trash: editorial**

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**By**[**Editorial Board**](http://connect.cleveland.com/staff/neomgeditorial/posts.html)

Senate Joint Resolution 5, the proposal from state Senate Republicans for [a new approach to congressional redistricting in Ohio](http://www.cleveland.com/metro/index.ssf/2018/01/ohio_republicans_propose_chang.html), makes a mockery of the word "reform." Unless it gets a bipartisan rewrite, SJR 5 belongs in a Statehouse wastebasket.

The proposal would be a finalist were there an Academy Award for cynicism.

First, with a chance that a Democrat might be elected governor this fall, it proposes to leave Ohio's governor, whoever she or he is, on the sidelines, eliminating a potential check on out-of-control gerrymanders that favor one party.

And as state Sen. Vernon Sykes, a black Akron Democrat, observed, SJR 5 also would give Republicans a lever to try to split Democrats based on race by allowing - at least as the state legislature currently is constituted - a redistricting plan to pass with only the votes of Democrats of color. "It divides the minority party along racial lines -- it's distasteful," Sykes said on cleveland.com.

Third, SJR 5 would make it easier for the GOP to dilute Democratic voting strength. That's because the proposal would permit populous (i.e., typically Democratic) Ohio counties to be more readily split among congressional districts than less populous counties, thus dividing Democrats and making it easier for Republicans to win.

The fourth piece of cynicism: GOP lawmakers are moving at breakneck speed because they want to get their redistricting proposal on the May primary ballot to try to keep a competing citizen-initiated idea from prevailing. Should voters approve the GOP "reform" in May, that might put the kibosh on the far more credible[Fair Districts = Fair Elections](https://www.fairdistrictsohio.org/) citizen redistricting reform that's likely headed for November's ballot.

Currently, the General Assembly redraws congressional districts after each federal census. This redistricting plan, or remap, is written as a bill, which must pass Ohio's House and Senate before it reaches the governor.

In 2011, Republican Gov. John Kasich signed[today's rigged districts](http://www.cleveland.com/opinion/index.ssf/2011/12/an_ohio_redistricting_post-mor.html)into law. But late in 2015, Kasich had a seeming change of heart: "I support redistricting reform dramatically," he [told](http://www.dispatch.com/content/stories/local/2015/12/26/end-gerrymandering-kasich-says.html)The Columbus Dispatch. "We carve these safe districts, and then when you're in a safe district you have to watch your extremes, and you keep moving to the extremes."

In a makeshift way, the Ohio General Assembly was fairly reasonable when it redrew Ohio's congressional districts after the 1980 and 1990 censuses; a Democratic Ohio House and Republican state Senate balanced each other. That changed with one-party rule of both chambers. After 2010's census, the GOP-crafted 2011 redistricting drew 16 Ohio congressional districts that elected 12 Republicans to the U.S. House, but just four Democrats - in a state that twice backed Democrat Barack Obama for president.

Given the GOP's advantages, the inevitable question is why Republicans would want to (appear to) "reform" a mechanism that's worked so well - for them. The easy answer is that they want it to continue working for them by trying to pre-empt alternatives.

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