



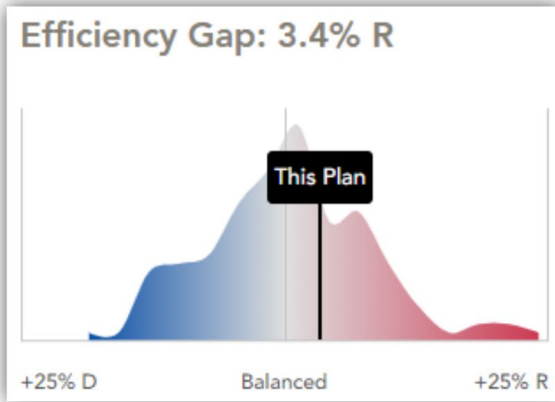
**Opponent Testimony on SB 258—*Establish Congressional Districts***  
**Senate Local Government and Elections Committee**  
**By Jen Miller, League of Women Voters of Ohio**  
**November 9, 2021**

Chair Gavarone, Vice-Chair O'Brien, and Ranking Member Maharath:

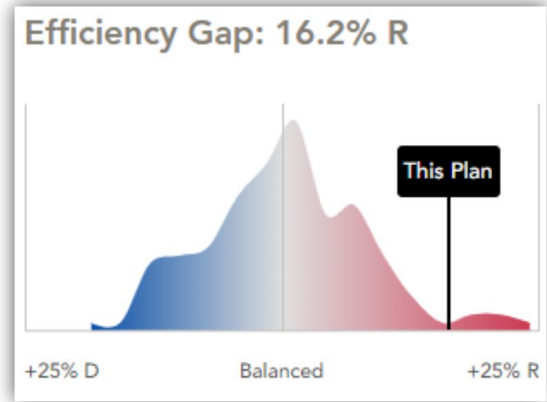
Thank you for allowing me to testify today. I am the Executive Director of the League of Women Voters of Ohio. LWVO was formed in 1920 from the Ohio Woman Suffrage Association, and voters of all ages, races, zip codes, and beliefs are our priority. We seek to ensure that our democratic republic works for all of us, and that is why we have actively opposed gerrymandering for nearly a half century. At the end of this testimony, I've included a timeline of our redistricting work, because I want to make clear that this has been and will remain a priority for LWVO until voters truly have maps that fairly represent them, rather than be rigged for parties or individual candidates.

When politicians manipulate the redistricting process to expand or protect their own power, the power of the people's voices and votes is diminished. One of the means of mathematically measuring gerrymandering - the unduly favoring of one party - is through an analysis called the efficiency gap. Because partisan gerrymandering is always carried out by cracking a party's supporters among many districts, in which their preferred candidates lose by relatively narrow margins; and/or by packing a party's backers in a few districts, in which their preferred candidates win by enormous margins.

Both cracking and packing produce votes that are inefficient in the sense that they do not contribute to a candidate's election. In the case of cracking, all votes cast for the losing candidate are inefficient. In the case of packing, all votes cast for the winning candidate, above the 50% (plus one) threshold needed for victory, are inefficient. The efficiency gap is calculated by taking one party's total inefficient votes in an election, subtracting the other party's total inefficient votes, and dividing by the total number of votes cast.

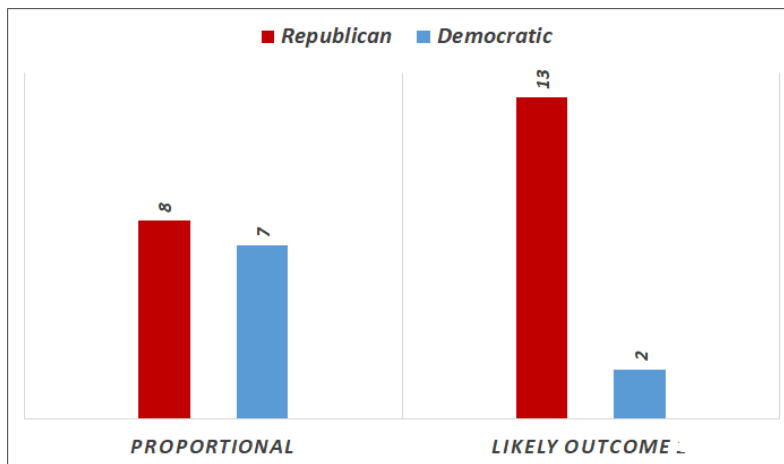


**Sen Dem:** Votes for Republican candidates are expected to be inefficient at a rate **3.4% lower** than votes for Democratic candidates



**Sen GOP:** Votes for Republican candidates are expected to be inefficient at a rate **16.2% lower** than votes for Democratic candidates

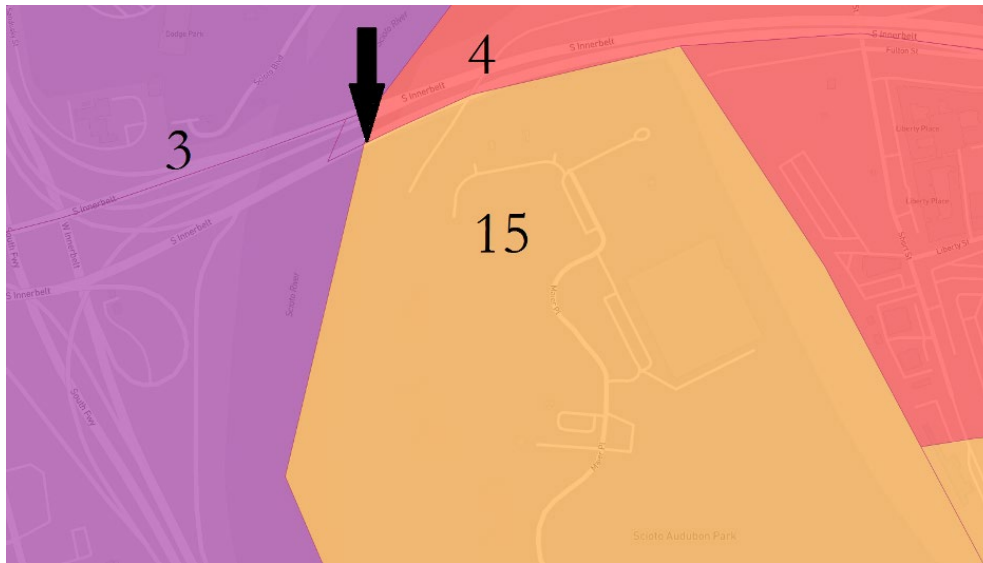
The proposed map is far from proportional as well. Given that Ohio statewide vote totals slightly favor Republican candidates, we should see a Republican slight advantage in the allocation of seats. But this map clearly unduly favors Republican politicians. The Senate GOP proposal includes two highly competitive districts. With a slight Republican advantage of +1.62% and +1.24% they are placed in the Republican column.



### Senate GOP Proposal

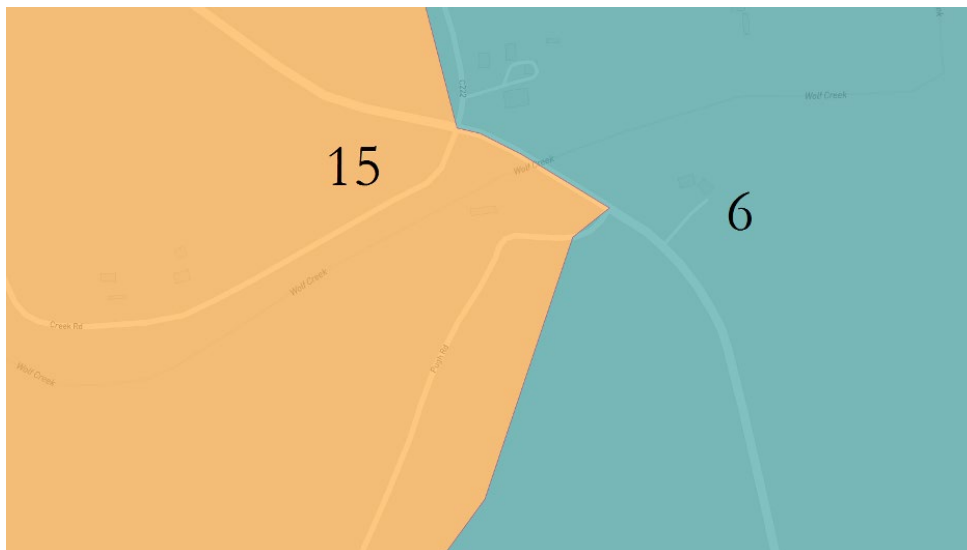
Yesterday my colleague Catherine Turcer of Common Cause Ohio testified to the inappropriate splitting of counties and communities in the proposed map. In the interest of time, I will not reiterate those points, though I want this committee to know that LWVO firmly agrees with her that this map is full of inappropriate slicing and dicing of communities. To demonstrate this point, I will zoom into a few spots on the map. With this map, a blue heron could land in the northwest corner of the park with one foot in the 15th district, one in the 4th, and its beak could reach out and spear some lunch in the 3rd.

### Scioto Audubon Park



Palmer Township in Washington County has 550 people, but is split into two different Congressional Districts. The Census reports that repair work is the most prevalent occupation in Palmer, which is far different economically than Columbus' German Village that is also in the same district.

### Palmer Township



Bottom line: these jagged lines and split-up communities can be found throughout this map,

without any good public policy justification. It would be incredibly difficult to create a map that truly serves the people of Ohio if this is our starting place. Instead, I encourage you to consider starting with one of the maps from our Fair Districts Ohio Competition. Once we pick a better foundation for mapmaking, we can deliberately go through district by district, line by line, to create districts that honor both the letter and spirit of the 2018 Constitutional Amendment that passed by nearly 75% of the vote.

Thank you for your time today. You can reach me at [director@lwvohio.org](mailto:director@lwvohio.org) or 614-563-9543.



# Ohio Redistricting Reform History

**1967**

Ohio Constitutional amendment adopted authorizing the Apportionment Board to draw boundaries for Ohio House and Senate districts. The amendment did not address congressional districts and they continued to be drawn by the Ohio General Assembly.

**1981**

The Democrats performed the second partisan gerrymander. The League of Women Voters of Ohio supported an Ohio Constitutional amendment that provided for competition between redistricting plans and required approval of the plan that provided for the most compact districts. The Ohio Republican Party supported the amendment; the Democrats opposed it. The amendment failed, getting only 42% of the vote.

**1999**

The League of Women Voters of Ohio attempted, but failed, to place a redistricting reform amendment on the ballot. The proposal used a mathematical formula to assure compact districts.

**2005**

Reform Ohio Now (RON) placed a redistricting initiative on the ballot, along with three other election reform redistricting initiatives. Under the plans could be submitted by the public and the plan that created the most competitive districts would be chosen. Neither state party supported the initiative. The proposal received 30% of the vote.

**2009-2010**

The Republican-controlled Senate and Democrat-controlled House each passed a redistricting initiative, mirroring HJR 13 and the House version establishing a public competition. The two resolutions could not be reconciled, and no proposal passed both chambers.

**2012**

Representatives of the League of Women Voters of Ohio, Common Cause Ohio and others filed a petition to place redistricting reform on the ballot. Under the proposal an independent commission would ensure districts were compact, competitive and reflective of the political values of voters. The initiative failed, getting 37% of the vote.

**2014**

The Constitutional Modernization Commission couldn't reach consensus. During the lame duck session, Rep. Vern Sykes (D) and Rep. Matt Huffman (R) negotiated a compromise plan for redistricting the General Assembly that overwhelmingly passed both the Ohio House and Senate. It required a full 10 year district plan, tightened requirements for keeping political subdivisions together, stated districts could not be drawn for partisan gain, and required more transparency and public input.

**2017**

The Fair Districts campaign launched a petition initiative to apply the rules from Issue 1 in 2015 -- a bipartisan commission protecting communities and limiting partisan gerrymandering -- to congressional redistricting, attempting to place it on the November 2018 ballot. The legislature created a bipartisan working group to study congressional redistricting.

**1971**

The Democrats controlled the Apportionment Board and performed the first partisan gerrymander under the new amendment.

**1991**

The Republicans controlled the Apportionment Board and performed the third partisan gerrymander under the 1967 amendment.

**2001**

The Republicans performed the fourth partisan gerrymander under the 1967 amendment.

**2006**

A Republican legislator introduced a redistricting reform initiative, HJR 13. It emphasized compactness of districts and keeping communities together. The resolution narrowly failed to receive the required 60% vote from both the House and Senate to be placed on the ballot.

**2011**

The Republicans performed the fifth partisan gerrymander. Concurrently, the Ohio Campaign for Accountable Redistricting led by the League of Women Voters of Ohio and Ohio Citizen Action, held a competition in which citizens could draw maps. Those maps were more compact, more competitive, fairer to both political parties and respected county and municipal boundaries. All were better than the ones adopted. OCAR also issued a "Transparency Report" showing that maps were drawn in secret to the specifications of politicians.

**2013**

Although Joint Resolutions were introduced in the legislature, the focus of redistricting reform turned to the Ohio Constitutional Modernization Commission.

**2015**

The legislature's plan was issue 1 on the November ballot and passed by 71.5%. The League, Common Cause and others began work on adding Congressional redistricting to the reform agenda.

**2018**

Grassroots work of petitioner signature collectors precipitated negotiations between legislators and the Fair Districts campaign, leading to the passage of SJR 5, which put congressional redistricting reform on the May ballot as Issue 1. It would create a 3-step process to ensure bipartisan support for a 10-year plan or a temporary partisan plan that must comply with strict anti-gerrymandering rules.

\* From 1978 through 2001, there was a proposed redistricting reform constitutional amendment introduced in each General Assembly Session — none passed.