



Ohio

*Holding Power Accountable*

**Testimony by Mia Lewis, Common Cause Ohio  
Before the Ohio House Government Oversight Committee  
On Senate Bill 258  
November 16, 2021**

Chair Gavarone, Vice Chair O'Brien, Ranking Member Maharath, my name is Mia Lewis and I am the associate director of Common Cause Ohio. Common Cause Ohio has worked on redistricting reform for forty years and we have been looking forward to this year's mapmaking. I am here today to testify in opposition to Senate Bill 258.

Ohio's newly revised Ohio Constitution requires you to do better this year than the Ohio General Assembly did in 2011. Ohioans overwhelmingly pushed back against the very gerrymandered 2011 congressional map and passed Issue 1 of May 2018 by nearly 75% of the vote.

Ohio voters want to participate in meaningful elections, and the best way to ensure meaningful elections is by **keeping communities together**. The Ohio Constitution focuses on **counties** as the building blocks of congressional districts. While counties are not a perfect proxy for communities, the rules against splitting them are meant to ensure that communities are kept together so that the folks we send to Washington truly represent us.

While some splits are permitted under the Ohio Constitution, it doesn't make sense to split counties and divide communities more than necessary. While we recognize that Senate Bill 258 does keep the majority of counties whole, the mapmakers repeatedly and unnecessarily sliced and diced the most **populous** counties. 14 counties are split a total of 17 times. **These county splits impact nearly a third of Ohioans (31.26%)**. The result by design is a map that overtly favors the political party in power.

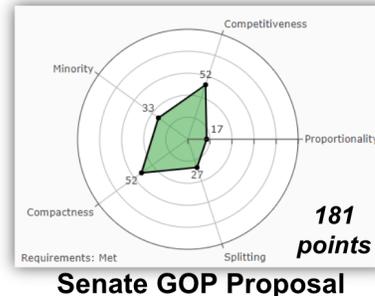
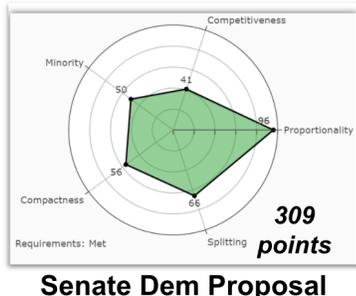
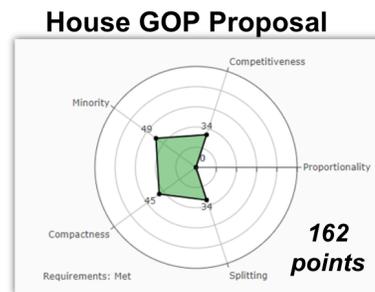
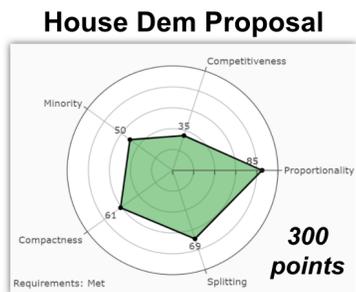
It is clear that the goal for the mapmakers who drew Senate Bill 258 was not compactness. What then were they going for? The answer is for political gain. By splitting the most populous counties more than necessary, Senate Bill 258 achieves the goal of crafting a rigged map that gives a distorted and disproportionate share of districts to the majority party. This is classic

gerrymandering. It can be seen when examining the exact and careful placement of district lines across the state -- the cracking and packing of communities to deny Ohioans a voice.

Fair districts are compact and keep communities together. Fair districts may mean one party is likely to win more seats than another, but only because that's the way the people vote -- not because of overt manipulation or "packing" and "cracking." Fair districts mean that all Ohioans have an equal opportunity to elect a representative of their choosing, regardless of race, ethnicity, or zip code. Senate Bill 258 falls down on all of these fairness measures.

Again, it's not so much that it fails to achieve fairness, but simply that fairness was not the goal. Maps don't magically appear. It takes time, effort, and skill to craft a congressional map such as this one. At every step mapmakers must make decisions: where they choose to place each line affects population, number of splits, etc - and every decision is guided by the mapmaker's end goal. For Senate Bill 258, that goal was a rigged partisan supermajority of congressional seats -- the wishes of the voters of Ohio be damned.

When we look at Senate Bill 258 as a whole, we can see that the imperative of reaching a rigged partisan outcome has created a map that performs extraordinarily poorly on the "good redistricting" measures scored in Dave's Redistricting App such as compactness, splits, minority representation, and proportionality. Senate Bill 258 scores 181 points; the House GOP map (HB 479) scores 162. On the other hand, the House Democratic map scores 300, and the Senate Democratic map scores 309.



What are some of the components of that appalling total score for Senate Bill 238? One measure, already mentioned here, is the number of county and municipality splits.

## Splitting

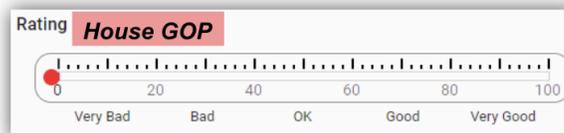
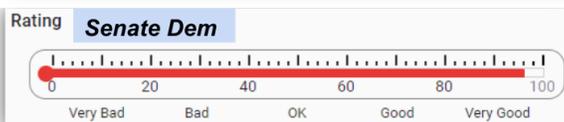
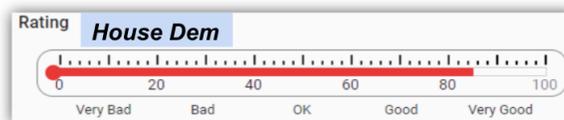
*Splitting measures the degree to which the districts don't split the counties (and vice versa)*

	House Dem	Senate Dem	House GOP	Senate GOP
<b># of Counties split</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>14</b>
<b># of times counties are split</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>% of people in Ohio affected by splits</b>	<b>11.06%</b>	<b>12.69%</b>	<b>24.93%</b>	<b>31.26%</b>
<b># of precincts also split</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>50</b>

On the measure of proportionality, Senate Bill 258 is shocking. This is the scale that shows to what degree the map reflects how Ohioans have actually voted in statewide elections.

To be clear, this is not a Republican vs Democratic issue. This is about all Ohioans. We deserve a Congressional district map that gives us all, regardless of which party we support, the opportunity to elect candidates who represent us.

## PROPORTIONALITY



**Recommendations:** We strongly urge you to oppose any Congressional map, including Senate Bill 258, which:

1. Fails to keep counties, municipalities, and communities whole unless absolutely necessary; and/or
2. Does not fairly and proportionally represent the partisan makeup of Ohio; and/or
3. Includes districts which are not compact.

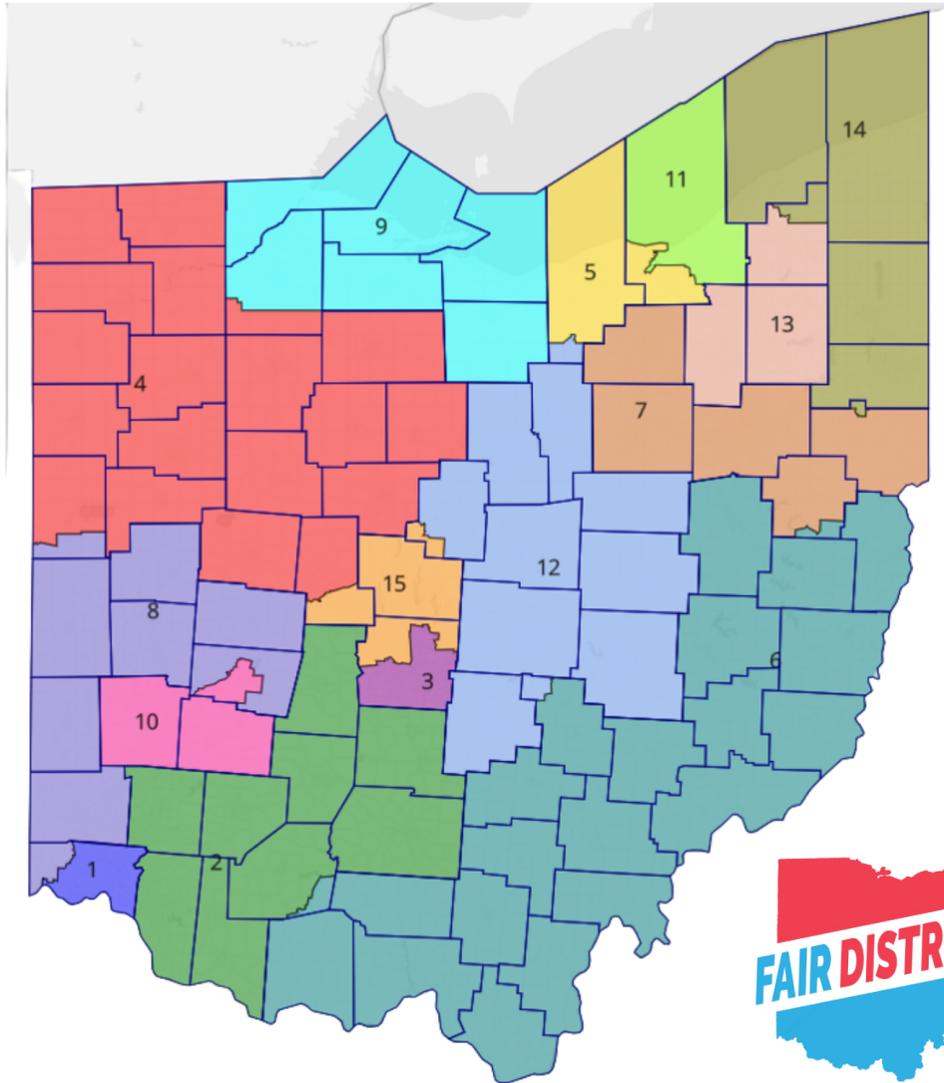
Drawing maps that keep communities together goes hand in hand with drawing maps that do not unduly favor one political party. If you choose a congressional district plan that unnecessarily divides counties and communities, you are also choosing to purposefully rig the result of elections to maintain power for the majority party. Do not deny millions of Ohio voters the opportunity to cast a meaningful vote. ALL Ohio voters deserve to have their voices heard; district lines should not be manipulated to favor the majority party or the political party in power.

It is also important to note that maps that fulfill both the letter and the spirit of the constitutional criteria and manage to minimize splits and protect communities are not an unattainable holy grail. Included in my testimony are three examples of maps which do just that. Each of these maps only split Franklin County and Hamilton County once. In addition, each also results in a more proportional 8R/7D partisan split, abides by all the requirements in the Ohio Constitution, and has a population variance well within what is allowed. Each of these maps also score higher in Dave's Redistricting App than SB 258. Thank you very much for this opportunity to testify.

# Fair Districts Mapping Competition

## 1st Place Map by John Hagner of Yellow Springs

	<i>JOHN HAGNER</i>	<i>CURRENT CONGRESSIONAL</i>
<i>LIKELY D/R SPLIT</i>	7 Rep / 7 Dem / 1 Competitive	12 Rep / 4 Dem
<i>COUNTY SPLITS</i>	14 counties split 14 times	23 counties split 32 times
<i>COMPACTNESS</i>	74 out of 100	18 out of 100
<i>OVERALL SCORE</i>	351	121

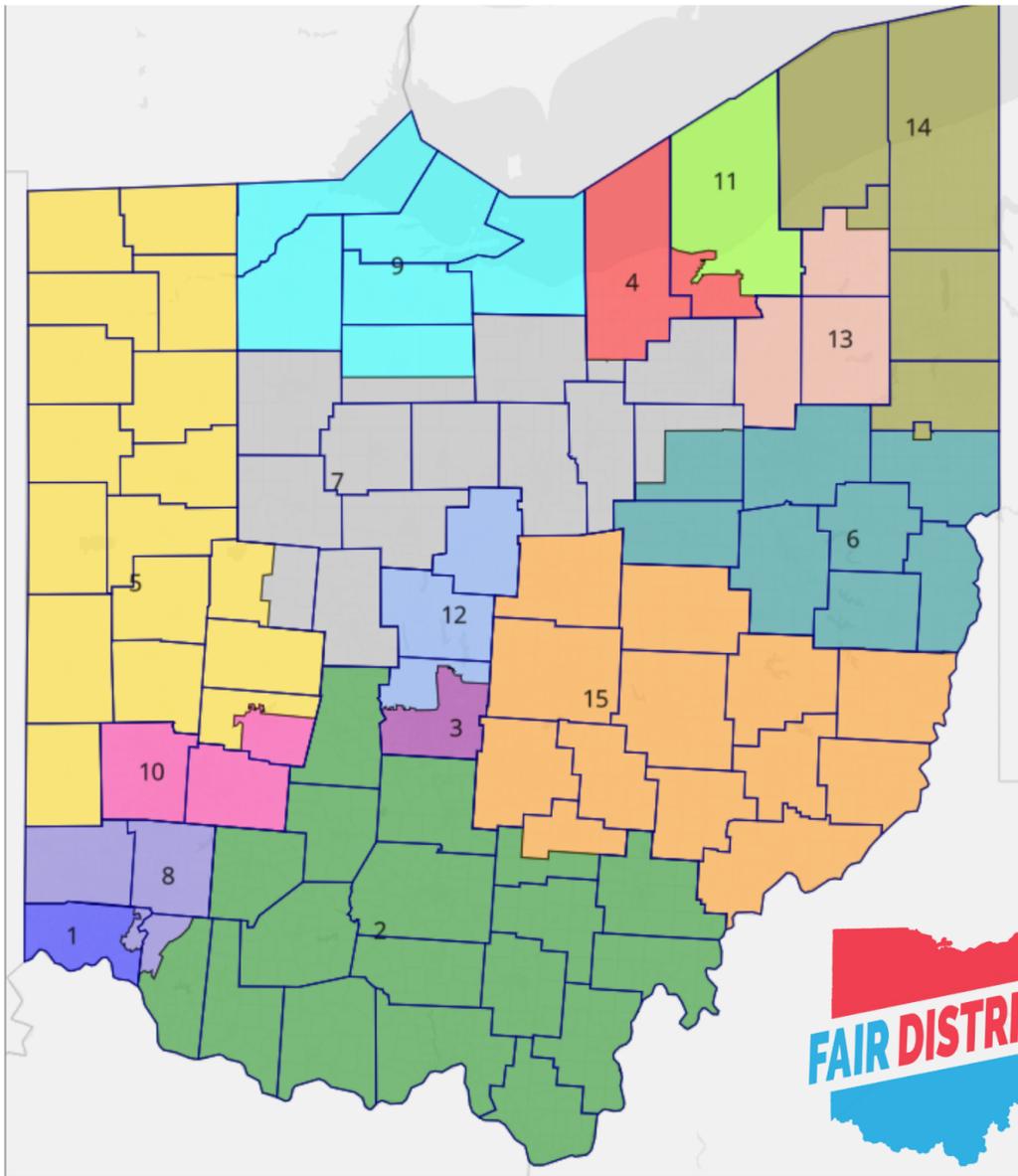


[Hagner map in Dave's Redistricting App](#)

# Fair Districts Mapping Competition

## 2nd Place Map by Paul Nieves

	<i>PAUL NIEVES</i>	<i>CURRENT CONGRESSIONAL</i>
<i>LIKELY D/R SPLIT</i>	7 Rep / 7 Dem / 1 Competitive	12 Rep / 4 Dem
<i>COUNTY SPLITS</i>	12 counties split 12 times	23 counties split 32 times
<i>COMPACTNESS</i>	77 out of 100	18 out of 100
<i>OVERALL SCORE</i>	346	121

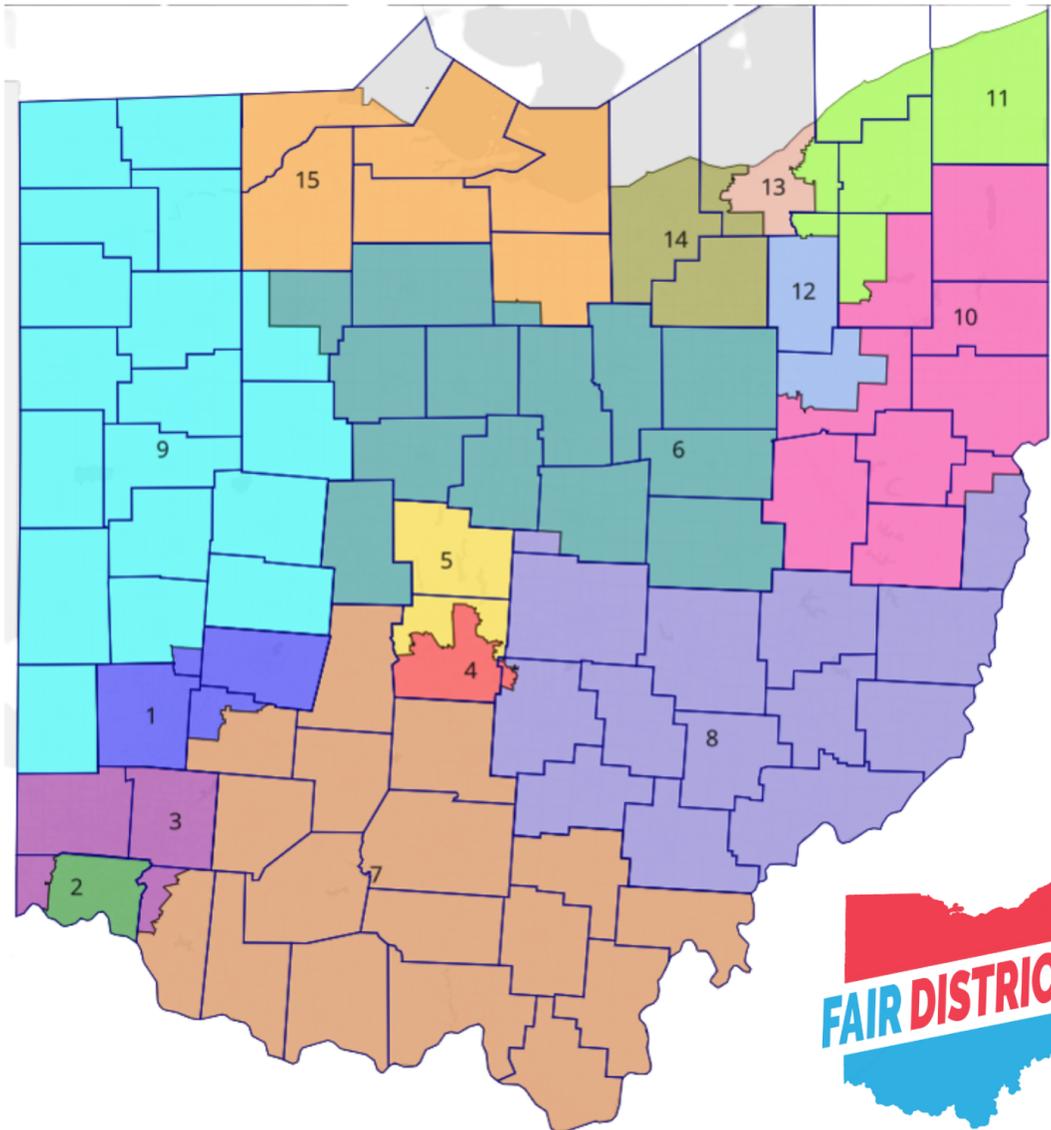


[Nieves map in Dave's Redistricting](#)

# Fair Districts Mapping Competition

## 3rd Place Map by Riley Jones of Loveland

	<i>RILEY JONES</i>	<i>CURRENT CONGRESSIONAL</i>
<i>LIKELY D/R SPLIT</i>	7 Rep / 5 Dem / 3 Competitive	12 Rep / 4 Dem
<i>COUNTY SPLITS</i>	14 counties split 15 times	23 counties split 32 times
<i>COMPACTNESS</i>	70 out of 100	18 out of 100
<i>OVERALL SCORE</i>	325	121



[Jones map in Dave's Redistricting](#)