

SB258 Testimony  
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Good morning members of the Senate Local Government and Elections Committee. My name is Michael Ahern. I live in Blacklick Ohio. I am registered as an unaffiliated voter and I have been to all but two of the legislative hearings related to redistricting, and all but three of the those of the Redistricting Commission. I am here this morning as an opponent to the Congressional District map embodied in amended SB258, even as revised.

Throughout history, small groups of men, mostly white men, have politically carved land up to ensure control of the greater mass of people they ruled over; from Kings and their Courts to the Allied powers that carved up Europe after world war I and the middle east after world war II. This map, and its counterpart in the House follow in this tradition. A handful of white men, carving up Ohio in order to maintain power. Diluting the voting power of minority communities in the Cincinnati area, packing registered voters of the democratic party and those who naturally reside in democratic leaning communities like Franklin County into districts politically authored to ensure continued dominance of the Republican Party.

This is not what our Founding Fathers envisioned - it is what they fought against. The tyranny of King George and his court has been replaced by the tyranny of a few partisan actors who are choosing their voters through this process rather than, as the Constitution, court precedence and American ideals demand, one person, one vote; the voice of the people through true representative democracy. Anyone on this committee who votes to approve SB258 actively mocks their title as "Legislator" in this body.

The map embodied by SB258 is a gerrymanderd map drawn by a gerrymandered State legislature to ensure that the Republican Party maintains power at the Statehouse and in the battle to control the U.S. House of Representatives. In this case, this map was drawn as directed by two white men, from the same area of the state who holds the two most

powerful positions in the legislature. Rather than looking to ensure Ohio communities are fairly represented as demanded by the 2018 redistricting reforms, this map seeks overwhelmingly to represent political power - the power of the Republican Party in Ohio and Congress. This, to the detriment of my community, my family and for some, relegating them to taxation without true representation.

George Washington, the legitimate icon of all the hopes of representative democracy that the United States Constitution embodies stated in his farewell address on September 19, 1796:

“However [political parties] may now and then answer popular ends, they are likely in the course of time and things, to become potent engines, by which cunning, ambitious, and unprincipled men will be enabled to subvert the power of the people and to usurp for themselves the reins of government, destroying afterwards the very engines which have lifted them to unjust dominion.”

With passage of this map, you will have achieved the prescient words of George Washington and consigned yourselves to the long list of cunning, ambitious and unprincipled people in power.

My only hope, as an unaffiliated voter who has voted for republicans and democrats in the past, is now to rely on the fidelity of the Ohio Supreme Court to their Constitutional obligation to strike down the final version of the map you are considering in this committee. Members of this Committee and the companion House Committee who vote for a final, heavily gerrymandered version of this map will forever be known as weak people with weak ideas who cheated because they could to usurp for themselves the reins of government.