

Good morning,

My name is Lucy Bishop, and I am a first-year student at Columbus State Community College, as well as a life-long resident of Columbus, Ohio. I am also a Redistricting Fellow with Campus Vote Project, an organization that is empowering college students to have a voice in their state's redistricting process. I am here to ask that you keep campus communities throughout Ohio together during the redistricting process.

Students on college campuses have many things in common. They share a college president, a mascot, sports teams, professors, and academic and athletic facilities. Students come together for events, form new relationships, and build a community. Even the most diverse campuses come together in school spirit, as they share a living and learning space. Out of all of these commonalities, however, there is one major thing many campuses don't share: representation in government.

Far too many campuses are being split between two or more districts, whether at the State or National level. The redistricting process has been taken over in Ohio by partisan agendas. Due to this focus on party affiliation, communities are being split up without consideration as to how such a division would have negative consequences. Gerrymandering is happening in all kinds of communities, with campuses being a major victim.

For example, the largest university in Ohio and one of the largest in the country is The Ohio State University. OSU is known for its school spirit, beautiful campus, and students from all 50 states and hundreds of countries. It has highly ranked educational programs, and people from all over the world move to Columbus just to attend. Ohio State is a huge asset to the State of Ohio. Many graduates stay in Ohio, and make up much of the workforce in various fields throughout the state. Despite the campus being of such importance, OSU does not share representatives. While Ohio's 3rd Congressional District represents a majority of the campus, Ohio's 12th and 15th Congressional Districts represent areas of it as well. The campus is also split in half between State Senate Districts 15 and 19, and is split in half between primarily State House Districts 18 and 22, with a small portion represented by State House District 25.

This is not simply an issue with large campuses, such as Ohio State's 1,600 acres. Xavier University, for example, is a much smaller school located in Cincinnati, OH. Xavier has a total of over 5,000 undergraduates, with a campus size of 175 acres, a tenth of OSU's. Despite its size, the campus is split up between Ohio's 1st and 2nd Congressional Districts, and State House Districts 31 and 33. Other schools such as the University of Cincinnati, Case Western Reserve University in Cleveland, and Cleveland State University face the same problem. It is not an isolated issue.

Divided campuses bring major issues for a school. When a school, especially a public institution, has an issue they need to bring to the government's attention, it is hard to know who to turn to. A school may be sent back and forth between representatives, or have issues when a small section of their student population is not within a certain representative's limits. It is much more efficient to have one specific person to turn to in all houses rather than the confusion and time it takes to address multiple representatives.

One of the largest issues due to a divided campus is the dilution of a campus' voting power. Split campuses make it much harder for students to become politically active in their community with the support of other young voters. On some of these campuses, a dorm that is only a five minute walk from another is in a completely separate district. So political activist groups with students from both dorms will have completely different ballots, despite being located so close to each other and housing students from the same university. Students who switch dorms may find themselves confused, as they are going to a different polling location and living in different districts. Community is such a major part of college life; yet students who are around the same age, live in the same area and use the same resources are voting for different people.

Campus communities must be kept together at all levels of government. Students need to be accurately represented, not split up between districts. Gerrymandering enables the government to dilute a campus' collective voice, affecting their say in how their community is run, and taking away their ability to play a role in important decisions that affect them. In so many cases, keeping a campus together involves moving a district line only a couple streets down. Young college voices are just as important as others, and must be treated as such.