



October 28, 2021

TO: Ohio General Assembly
FROM: Fair Districts Ohio
CC: Governor DeWine, Secretary LaRose, Auditor Faber, and Statehouse Press Corps
RE: Congressional Redistricting

Our coalition worked directly with lawmakers to craft Congressional redistricting reforms that 75% of voters approved in May 2018. The Ohio Constitution now requires a multi-step process, encompassing efforts by the Ohio Redistricting Commission as well as the General Assembly to draw new congressional district maps. Now that the Redistricting Commission has announced that it will not succeed in passing a map, the process returns to the legislature. It is our firm hope that the General Assembly works in a transparent fashion that will ultimately bring an end to gerrymandering in Ohio.

During this final stage, we urge you to take several specific steps to ensure transparent, bipartisan mapmaking in which the public is engaged and the resulting maps truly serve voters.

1. Schedule field hearings for the public as soon as possible. The public hearings in August were focused only on state legislative mapmaking and were only held before the Ohio Redistricting Commission. Additional hearings for the general public are required to cover congressional maps. Twenty-four hour notices are simply not adequate for meeting notifications, especially if lawmakers want the general public and experts to provide substantive feedback. Additionally, these hearings should be held in locations and at times that are accessible to the general public.
2. Consider maps submitted by the public. The Ohio Constitution required the State of Ohio to establish a mechanism for Ohioans to submit their own congressional district plans. As of now, over sixty congressional maps have been submitted for consideration by the public, including three from the Fair Districts Ohio coalition. The Ohio General Assembly should formally consider these maps, and give these mapmakers ample time to testify. The public submissions provide lawmakers a unique and meaningful opportunity to hear directly from Ohioans about how to construct each district.

3. Invite testimony from diverse academics and experts. This is the first time for Ohio to implement new Constitutional requirements for congressional redistricting. Hearing from experts about these new reforms, the Voting Rights Act, and other criteria that would be helpful for legislators and the general public alike.
4. Publish a clear process for decision-making, and full schedule for the month of November that details all public hearings and joint committee meetings. By getting started at the beginning of the month and setting out a clear plan, there will be time to appropriately study and discuss each congressional district through a public, bipartisan process. Such deliberation is required for successfully crafting a map that abides by the Ohio Constitution and federal law, while keeping communities together and lifting up the voice of every Ohio voter in a meaningful and productive way.

Ohio voters are counting on you to follow the spirit and letter of the new redistricting reforms placed in the Ohio Constitution and to end gerrymandering in Ohio once and for all. We stand ready and eager to assist you.

Sincerely,



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