

MR. CHAIRMAN AND MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE, THANK YOU FOR THE OPPORTUNITY TO TESTIFY HERE TODAY. MY NAME IS MARTIN GOTTLIEB. I LIVE IN KETTERING, IN MONTGOMERY COUNTY. I AM RETIRED, HAVING MADE MY LIVING WRITING FOR THE DAYTON DAILY NEWS EDITORIAL PAGE FOR THE LAST 27-PLUS YEARS, UNTIL THIS SUMMER. MY COMMENTS TODAY IN NO DEGREE REPRESENT THE VIEWS OF THAT NEWSPAPER. NOR AM I REPRESENTING OR SPEAKING FOR ANY OTHER ORGANIZATION.

I AM, HOWEVER, A GREAT ADMIRER OF, ESPECIALLY, THE WORK OF THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF OHIO ON TODAY'S ISSUE. ONE CANNOT SAY ENOUGH ABOUT IT. THE OHIO LEAGUE AND ITS ALLIES HAVE LED THE NATION, PUTTING FORTH AN INGENIOUS, IMPORTANT AND NOVEL APPROACH THAT CUTS THROUGH OLD BROMIDES AND SELF-SERVING ASSERTIONS ABOUT THE DRAWING OF LEGISLATIVE DISTRICTS AND THAT PROMISES TO BRING OHIO MUCH CREDIT NATIONALLY.

AS A POLITICAL JOURNALIST, I USED TO ESPOUSE THOSE BROMIDES FOR DECADES. THE BROMIDE-IN-CHIEF: THERE IS NO APOLITICAL WAY TO DRAW THE MAPS. SOMEBODY HAS TO WIN, AND SOMEBODY HAS TO LOSE. THERE IS NO OBJECTIVE

WAY OF DECIDING WHO. SO THE AUTHORITY MIGHT AS WELL BE PUT IN THE HANDS OF ELECTED OFFICIALS, WHO HAVE TO ULTIMATELY PUT THEIR JUDGEMENTS BEFORE THE PUBLIC.

URNS OUT, THOUGH, THERE IS A FUNDAMENTALLY APOLITICAL WAY. IN THE DAYS OF COMPUTERS WE CAN OPEN THE PROCESS TO PEOPLE WHO REALLY DO NOT AWAKEN AND GO TO SLEEP EVERY DAY WORRYING ABOUT WHICH PARTY WILL CONTROL THE LEGISLATURE. WE CAN CHALLENGE THEM TO PRODUCE BETTER MAPS THAN OTHER PEOPLE, GIVING THEM POINTS FOR DISTRICTS THAT, FOR EXAMPLE, ARE COMPACT, THAT KEEP NATURAL COMMUNITIES INTACT, THAT CAN BE WON BY EITHER PARTY AND THAT, TAKEN AS A WHOLE, ARE LIKELY TO PRODUCE A LEGISLATURE THAT REFLECTS THE POLITICAL NATURE OF THE STATE.

I AM NO EXPERT IN HOW TO DO THAT, AND I AM NOT DEEPLY FAMILIAR WITH THE RESULTS OF THE MOST CURRENT MAP-DRAWING CONTEST IN OHIO. I CANNOT SAY THAT ALL CONTROVERSIES HAVE BEEN RESOLVED OR ALL KINKS ELIMINATED.

AS FOR MONTGOMERY COUNTY, THOUGH, ONE NEED NOT BE

AN EXPERT IN MAP DRAWING TO SEE THAT THERE'S A BETTER, LESS-POLITICAL WAY TO DRAW THE STATE DISTRICTS. WE HAVE ONE SENATE DISTRICT -- THE 6TH -- WHICH ALMOST MAKES A SHAMELESS CIRCLE AROUND DAYTON AND THE INNER TOWNSHIPS IN OBVIOUS SEARCH FOR REPUBLICAN VOTERS. SOME PEOPLE HAVE ATTEMPTED TO JUSTIFY THIS, SAYING THE NORTHERN AND SOUTHERN SUBURBS FORM A NATURAL COMMUNITY OF INTEREST. BUT THE ARRANGEMENT PITS CITY AGAINST SUBURBS, FOSTERS POLARIZATION, AND TYPICALLY MOVES ALL COMPETITION TO THE PRIMARIES. AND IT SIMPLY MAKES A MOCKERY OF COMPACTNESS. EVEN SKEPTICS OF REFORM EMBRACED COMPACTNESS IN 2005 WHEN A BALLOT PROPOSAL THREATENED TO CREATE ELONGATED DISTRICTS IN ORDER TO CREATE COMPETITIVE ONES.

THEN THERE'S THE HOUSE. MONTGOMERY COUNTY IS, AS YOU KNOW, A COMPETITIVE COUNTY. IT HAS GONE NARROWLY DEMOCRATIC IN ALL RECENT PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS, BUT MANY REPUBLICAN CANDIDATES CARRY IT.

DESPITE IT'S BALANCED NATURE, IT DOESN'T HAVE A SINGLE BALANCED HOUSE DISTRICT. ALL FIVE HAVE REMAINED UNEVENTFULLY IN THE HANDS OF ONE PARTY FOR 20 YEARS, EVEN IN THE AGE OF TERM LIMITS: THREE ARE

OVERWHELMINGLY REPUBLICAN AND TWO ARE EVEN MORE OVERWHELMINGLY DEMOCRATIC.

NOW, IT'S TRUE THAT MOST OF THE DEMOCRATIC VOTERS LIVE TOWARD THE CENTER OF THE COUNTY, AND IT'S TRUE THAT FEDERAL LAW REQUIRES MAP DRAWERS NOT TO DIVVY UP BLACK VOTERS IN A WAY THAT HAS THE EFFECT OF MINIMIZING THE NUMBER OF BLACK LEGISLATORS. BUT THERE IS NO MANDATE TO CREATE DISTRICTS THAT ARE 70 OR 80 PERCENT DEMOCRATIC.

IN ADDRESSING THE CURRENT MAPS, THE MAJORITY ON THIS COMMISSION WILL PRESUMABLY WANT TO CHANGE THE 5TH SENATE DISTRICT TO HELP THE REPUBLICAN INCUMBENT WHO WON THE ONLY LOCAL LEGISLATIVE UPSET IN 20 YEARS IN 2010. HOPEFULLY, HOWEVER, THAT WILL NOT BE THE ONLY CHANGE MADE. MONTGOMERY COUNTY IS A POSTER CHILD FOR WHAT'S WRONG WITH THE CURRENT SYSTEM OF MAP-MAKING FROM A NON-PARTISAN PERSPECTIVE. IT NEEDS MAJOR ATTENTION.

THANK YOU.

