

Ohio Campaign for Accountable Redistricting

*A project of the League of Women Voters of Ohio Education Fund and Ohio Citizen Action
Supported by the Joyce Foundation and Midwest Democracy Network*



Testimony of Jim Slagle Before the Ohio Apportionment Board – Regional Hearings Aug. 25, 2011

The League of Women Voters of Ohio Education Fund, the Midwest Democracy Network, and Ohio Citizen Action released the winning maps from the Ohio Redistricting Competition on Aug. 24, 2011.

The competition, which was launched on July 19, allows private citizens the opportunity to draw district lines for the Ohio House and Senate, using publicly available software and the same population and voting data that is being used by Ohio public officials.

The competition required participants to design state legislative districts which comply with all federal and state legal requirements. The maps were scored based on objective nonpartisan criteria which used mathematical formulas to measure the degree to which the districts respected county boundaries, were compact, balanced, and did not favor either political party.

The Competition demonstrated that private citizens were able to design districts that are more politically balanced than our current districts and that are still more compact and split fewer counties than our current districts. Each of the winning maps scored higher than the maps of our current districts.

High Scoring Plans

1st Place – Mike Fortner, Illinois State Representative (Dist. 95 – R), former mayor of West Chicago, also an Associate Professor of Physics at Northern Illinois University, West Chicago, Illinois.

- House map had 25 highly competitive districts as compared to ten under the current map.
- Senate map had an equal number of districts which favored Democrats and Republicans, as compared to the current map where 20 of 33 districts favor Republicans.
- House and Senate maps created 37 county fragments as compared to 68 in the current maps.

2nd Place – Tim Clarke, attorney, Avon Lake

- Senate map had 14 competitive districts as compared with nine under the current map;
- House map had 22 highly competitive districts as compared to ten under the current map
- House and Senate maps were more compact and had fewer county splits than the current maps.

Fortner's and Clarke's maps remain available for public review at www.drawthelineohio.org. The League of Women Voters, Ohio Citizens Action, and the other competition partners are urging the Apportionment Board to consider these nonpartisan maps rather than maps drawn in the political backrooms and either adopt or improve upon these maps.

85 E. Gay St., #713, Columbus, Ohio 43215; 614-221-6077
E-mail: jslagle@ohiocitizen.org
www.drawthelineohio.org

Production of maps

We also urge the Apportionment Board to produce any maps they intend to consider by September 12 to allow time for public review and scrutiny. We specifically request that we be provided with a block equivalency file for any map which may be considered by the Apportionment Board so that the maps may be evaluated. A block equivalency file is a simple two column file which identifies the district to which each census block would be assigned. Failure to provide this information in a timely manner will prevent the public from having a meaningful opportunity to thoroughly evaluate proposed plans.

Competition Background

This year's competition was patterned after a similar redistricting competition which the League of Women Voters, Ohio Citizen Action, and others sponsored with the Ohio Secretary of State in 2009. The 2009 competition also produced plans which were markedly better than those currently in use.

Competition Advisors: Dan Tokaji, Election Law @ Moritz at the Ohio State University; Stephen Brooks, Bliss Institute at the University of Akron; Sam Gresham, Common Cause/Ohio; Meg Flack, League of Women Voters of Ohio/Education Fund; Catherine Turcer, Ohio Citizen Action; Jocelyn Travis, NAACP; and Kellye Pinkleton, former director of the Voting Rights Institute.

Co-sponsors of the competition include Common Cause of Ohio, Ohio Votes, Kid's Voting Central Ohio, Progress Ohio, Ohio NOW Education and Legal Fund, No Labels, Organize Ohio, NAACP, Hocking-Athens-Perry Community Action, Miami Valley Voter Protection Coalition, Clean Fuels Ohio, ACLU, Ohio Center for Progressive Leadership, The Cleveland Coalition, Ohio Environmental Council, Applied Information Resources, Ohio Voice, Ohio Association of Non-Profit Organizations, NARAL Pro-Choice Ohio, American Association of University Women, The CHANGE Agency, LULAC – Ohio, and America Votes - Ohio.

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Instructions for Access to High Scoring State Legislative Maps

On Aug. 24, 2011, the Ohio Campaign for Accountable Redistricting announced that Mike Fortner and Tim Clarke submitted the highest scoring state legislative maps, based on nonpartisan objective criteria. Full information regarding their plans is available to the public at www.drawthelineohio.org.

To Obtain a Static Copy of Maps and Basic Information

Go to: <http://drawthelinemidwest.org/ohio/legislativewinners/> for a copy of Ohio House and Senate maps, as well as demographic and political information regarding each proposed district.

To Obtain Complete Plan Information – including legal description

Go to: <https://districtbuilder.drawthelineohio.org/> for full access to the maps down to the census block level, including the ability to export a legal description of the proposed districts by means of a block index file. The site also contains webinar training and a user guide which will assist in taking advantage of all the tools on the site. Users also have the ability to create their own maps, using parts or all of the Fortner or Clarke maps if they wish.

1. At the District Builders Sign in page, either log in or enter as a guest.
2. At the Choose a plan page, select the district layer (Senate or House).
3. Choose a plan type by clicking on Shared. This will cause a list of all of the House or Senate plans which have been shared to appear. The Fortner and Clarke plans are named –
 - a. mf competition house
 - b. mf competition senate
 - c. tim clarke SH
 - d. tim Clarke Sen
4. Click on the plan you wish to see and click on View Plan.
5. A map of Ohio of the plan will appear with a stats panel on the right. Editing tools allow you to zoom in down to the census block level. You may set various reference layers to compare the map with county lines, municipal or township boundaries, or the contours of other plans. The stats panel on the right shows population, contiguity, and compactness, and can be changed to show VRA and political index data. Many other tools are available to explore as you wish.
6. To export a plan and save it to your own computer, press the Share tab at the top and click the download button. This will generate a block equivalency file which specifies the district for every census block in Ohio.