



**Testimony on Legislative Redistricting
before the Apportionment Board
By Scott Britton, League of Women Voters of Metropolitan Columbus
August 26, 2011**

Members of the Apportionment Board: My name is Scott Britton, and I am vice president for advocacy for the League of Women Voters of Metropolitan Columbus. I would like to take this opportunity to mark today's 91st anniversary of passage of the Nineteenth Amendment. Today is Women's Equality Day.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify about redistricting and the League's desire for a transparent, nonpartisan process.

Given that we have no maps upon which to comment today, my hope is that you are using these hearings to determine the specific criteria you will use to draw the maps that will govern Ohio politics for the next decade. Will those criteria be business as usual – where party politics dominates? Or will you select objective, nonpartisan criteria? We offer the competition criteria developed by the League and its coalition partners. On Wednesday, the Ohio Campaign for Accountable Redistricting announced the competition winners. The highest-scoring maps offered the following:

- The House map had 25 highly competitive districts as compared to 10 under the current map.
- The Senate map had an equal number of districts that favored Democrats and Republicans, as compared to the current map where 20 of 33 districts favor Republicans.
- The House and Senate maps created 37 county fragments as compared to 68 in the current maps.

We look forward to a similar opportunity to testify before this body once proposed maps are available. In fact, we encourage you to publish the proposed maps on the Internet at least two weeks before you take a vote in order to allow for public input.



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That said, we are grateful for the opportunity to testify before you today as you consider a framework for redrawing legislative districts. Contrary to what you may have heard, the League of Women Voters does not believe that politics should be taken out of politics. We expect that our American system of elections will be rough-and-tumble, that lawmaking will involve intense partisan debate, that issues will be hard-fought on both sides of the aisle. We hope for civility, yes, but we are not so naïve as to think that our government won't get caught up regularly in divisive party battles. In fact, we believe our country is better off for such debate. And because the League is made up of men and women all along the political spectrum, we enjoy such spirited discussion ourselves.

But party politics have no place in the redistricting process. Maps can and should be drawn based on nonpartisan criteria – such as those considered in the League's competition – that preserve county and other governmental boundaries so as to create compact districts that, by and large, are politically balanced and competitive.

It's time to let the voters decide. 61 of our 99 House districts favor Republicans, largely because Republican politicians drew the districts. When Democrats drew the districts, they also distorted the lines so that a majority of districts favored the Democrats. How about creating districts which aren't biased toward one party or the other so that the voters can decide who will be elected?