



**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®
OF OHIO**

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**Public Testimony on Congressional Redistricting
Before the State Government and Elections Sub-Committee on Redistricting
(in conjunction with the the Senate Select Committee on Redistricting)
By Beth Taggart, League of Women Voters of Metropolitan Columbus
June 20, 2011**

Good morning. I am Beth Taggart of the League of Women Voters of Metropolitan Columbus. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important issue. Ohio has a long history of drawing Congressional districts to favor the political party in power at that time. The League of Women Voters has a history – almost as long – of favoring redistricting and reapportionment practices that put the citizens at forefront. We believe that voters should pick legislators, not the other way around.

The Metropolitan Columbus League of Women Voters is comprised of women and men from Franklin and neighboring counties. The population of Franklin County is almost 1.2 million people. Each district drawn in 2011 is supposed to contain about 721,000 people, so Franklin County is large enough to hold 1.6 districts. And with the addition of communities that span more than one county – like Dublin, which is located in Franklin, Delaware, and Union counties – it is easy to imagine our metro area comprising no more than two compact, contiguous districts. The city of Columbus, with a population of 787,000, would itself make slightly more than one district. It just makes sense to have existing communities be the building blocks of our congressional districts.

I've attached the maps of the Franklin County's three congressional districts as they are currently drawn: 7, 12, and 15. District 7 is made up of a line of six counties and parts of two more. And when I look at districts 12 and 15, I imagine that there are homes located in one district, surrounded on all sides by neighbors who are in a different district. I don't know who lives in those houses, but it is clear whoever drew these district lines did. District boundaries like these are a hallmark of those whose priority is safe seats for one party or another.

The League Women Voters of Ohio, along with other good government groups, conducted a competition in 2009 based on the same information the legislature used to draw these maps. The contest showed that districts can be drawn to be compact, competitive, respectful of political subdivisions, and fairly represent the political values of the voters of Ohio. A similar competition is being conducted this year, and the public is submitting maps based on the same data that is available to the legislature.

Encouraging informed and active participation in government
Working to increase understanding of major public policy issues
Influencing public policy through education and advocacy

This is not the first time that citizens have been allowed to draw and submit their own maps. But the internet has made the process so much more accessible and manageable. In fact, there's a name for this process of using the imagination and innovation of anyone-who-might-have-a-good-idea to find a solution to a definable problem. It's called "crowd sourcing." You might have heard that businesses are using crowd-sourcing to develop new products, or that researchers are using it to examine huge masses of data. We can, and should, use crowd-sourcing in the redistricting process.

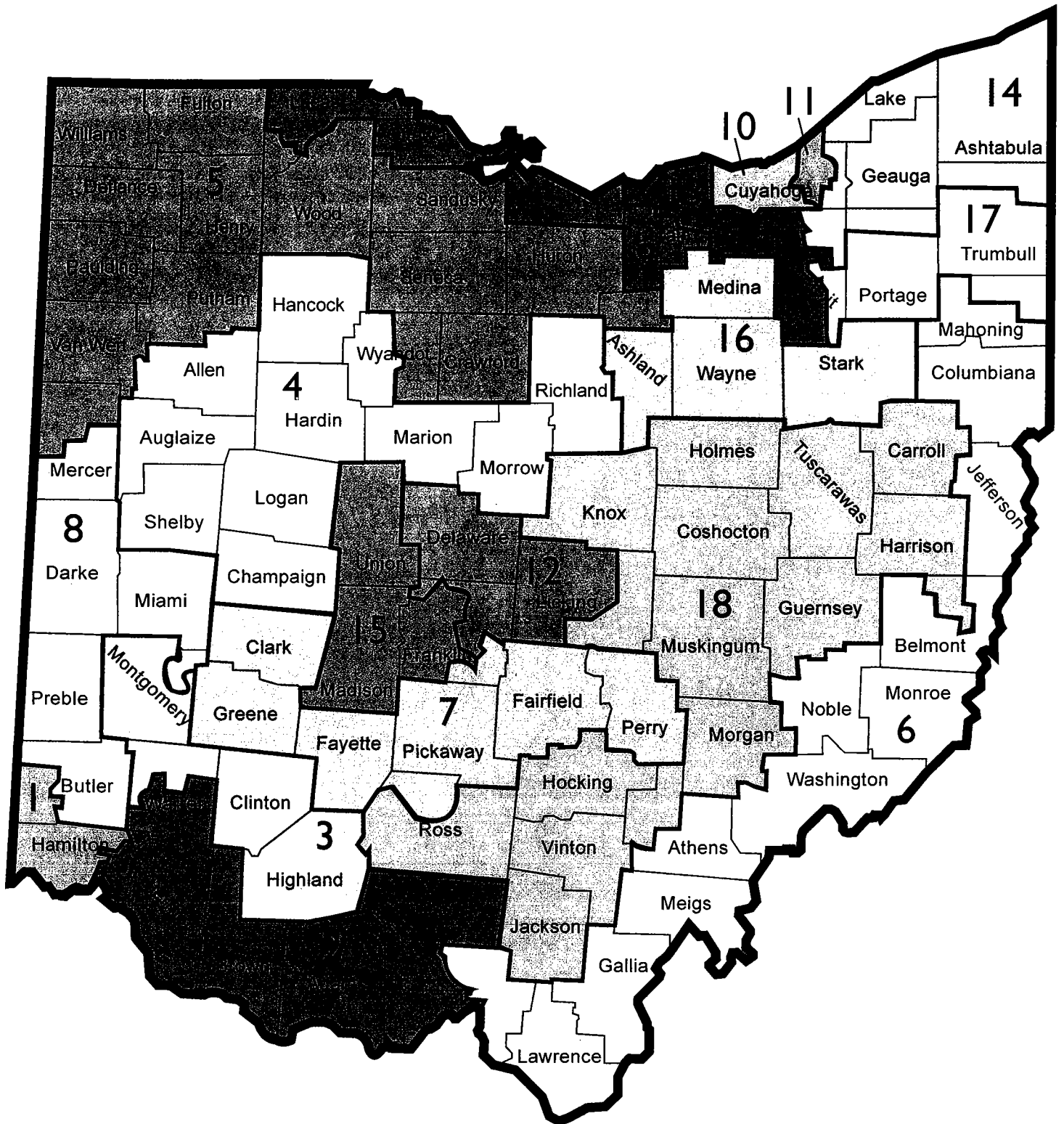
Laws don't have to be changed for the General Assembly to take advantage of the great ideas that people have. You just have to be willing to consider the recommendations that will come through this process and to evaluate them in a way that will enable Ohio voters to choose their legislators, and not the other way around.

Thank you.

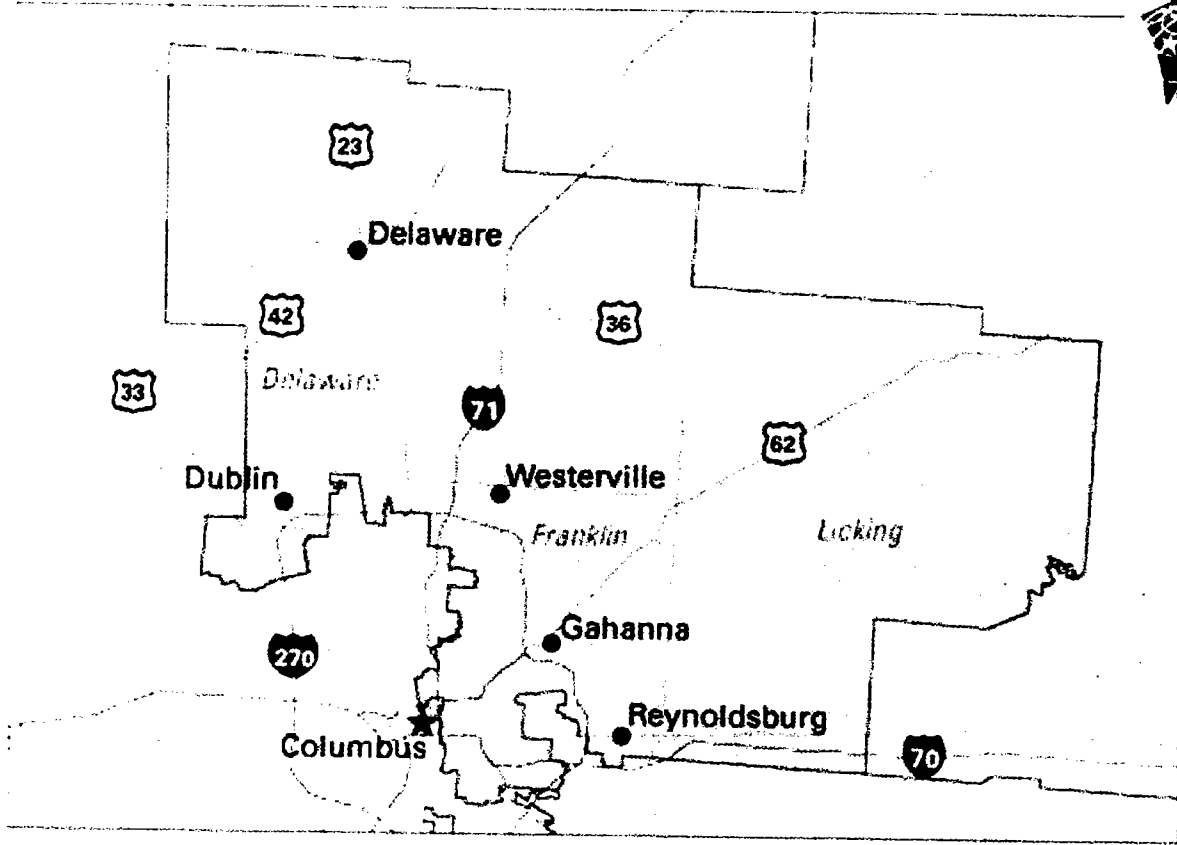


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Ohio Congressional Districts



Congressional District 12



Congressional District 15

