

# money in politics

a project of Ohio Citizen Action

**Testimony by Catherine Turcer, Ohio Citizen Action**  
Before the Ohio House State Government and Elections Subcommittee on Redistricting  
and the Ohio Senate Select Committee on Redistricting  
July 20, 2011

Good morning. My name is Catherine Turcer and I am the director of Ohio Citizen Action's Money in Politics Project. Founded in 1975, Ohio Citizen Action has 80,000 members.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify at this public hearing. Although district lines are only redrawn every ten years, redistricting can profoundly impact elections. The partisan manipulation of district lines is the manipulation of voters. Historically, redistricting took place out of the public eye and I welcome a more transparent process. I appreciate the number of public hearings you have set up and thanks for "taking the show on the road." These hearings can kick-start a meaningful dialogue with public.

During 2001, former Secretary of State J. Kenneth Blackwell made census data available to the public and encouraged map-making but few participated because of the difficulty with the software. There have been dramatic changes in the past ten years. Computer software is much friendlier and map-making easier to navigate. The League of Women Voters of Ohio, Ohio Citizen Action, the Midwest Democracy Network and twenty other groups have joined forces to hold a 2011 Redistricting Competition. The goal of the Competition is to encourage citizens to create fair maps and to encourage participation in the official redistricting process.

Plans will be scored based on objective nonpartisan criteria in each of the following four areas:

- Preserving county boundaries
- Compactness
- Competitiveness
- Representational Fairness

Additional information about the competition is available at [www.drawthelineohio.org](http://www.drawthelineohio.org).

Of course, this public hearing is just the beginning of what we hope will be a truly open process. While I encourage you to honor minority districting and the Voting Rights Act and balance compactness and competition, these values should not remain abstractions. Instead I strongly urge to consider maps created by members of the public. I also urge your committee to publish the redistricting plans that you are considering on the web two weeks prior to voting or finalizing them. Those two weeks will provide an opportunity to truly lift the veil of secrecy that typically enshrouds the redistricting process.

Redistricting in 2011 can truly be different and I thank you again for requesting public input in this process.