

Public Testimony on Congressional redistricting
Before the State Government and Elections, Sub-Committee on Redistricting
(In conjunction with the Senate Select Committee on Redistricting)
By Penny Jeffrey, League of Women Voters Cleveland Area
June 21, 2011

Good morning. I am Penny Jeffrey, President of the League of Women Voters Cleveland Area, along with my colleague, Carol Gibson, Co-President LWV Cuyahoga Area. Thank you for the opportunity to provide public testimony on this important issue. It is crucial to also have input from the public after you have selected a proposed map so that you can have the benefit of the public's input on your specific proposal.

The political system of the United States is a representative democracy. The idea of representation is that we select leaders who share our political values and trust them to act on those political values. Often Ohio's Congressional delegation does not fully reflect the political values of Ohio voters. For example, in 2006, 53% of the voters selected democratic candidates, but the Democratic Party counted for only 39% of Ohio's Congressional delegation. Fair and impartial redistricting would have about an even number of districts that favored each political party. I am concerned when I read newspaper articles speculating on how the Ohio legislature is going to leave only three or four of the districts "winnable" by the Democrats, the current minority party. A Congressional delegation gerrymandered to produce a 12 to 4 split between the parties does not fairly represent Ohio voters.

Fair redistricting would reflect districts that are compact, competitive, and respectful of political subdivisions. Based on the 2010 census, Cuyahoga County contained about 1.2 million people. Each newly draw Congressional district should contain about 721,000 people. Therefore Cuyahoga County should contain one whole district plus a little over half of another district. Currently Cuyahoga County contains two whole districts, the 10th and 11th. It also contains parts of the 13th and 14th districts. Efforts should be made to keep all of Cuyahoga County in 2 or 3 districts, rather than 4.

The League of Women Voters of Ohio conducted a competition in 2009 based on the same information the legislature used to draw the current maps. Numerous

maps were drawn with near equal population in the districts and only divided seven or eight counties. The current state map has 44 county splits. In the competition, about half of the districts were competitive, and weren't drawn to artificially produce Congressional delegations favoring only one political party. 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. More information about the competition is at www.drawthelineohio.org. Congressional maps will be available August 21. I urge you to carefully review those maps and approve districts that are representationally fair, more competitive, compact, and respectfully of county and city boundaries. Ohio has an opportunity to lead the country in drawing districts so that the voters choose the candidates, instead of the candidates choosing the voters.

Thank you for your attention.