

Testimony Concerning the State Legislative Districts Propose in September 2023 Debbie Dalke Bowling Green Wood County

Thank you, Senator Hicks-Hudson, for giving voters the opportunity to provide input on the latest round of legislative maps. As you know, the process for drawing districts is embedded in the Ohio Constitution. The redistricting guidelines specify how the maps should be drawn. Districts must be compact, contiguous, and minimize the splitting of counties, cities, and townships. I viewed the maps proposed by McColley, and in my opinion, some of the districts violate the criteria.

Regarding the proposed maps for the House of Representatives: The population of Wood County now exceeds the limit for a House district, which means that all of Wood County cannot be in the same district. To resolve this, McColley carved off a chuck of northeast Wood County for placement in a different district. That section of Wood County was combined with a strip of western Lucas County and a slice of eastern Ottawa County (House District 44). There are several problems with the composition of this district. Ottawa County has only 40,000 people, well below the size limit for a State House District. Did the mapmakers attempt to keep this county intact, as required by the constitution? In addition, the segment of northeast Wood County is not connected to the segment of western Lucas County, so this map violates the requirement that districts be contiguous, and it is not compact. I question whether the voters in these disparate regions have issues in common. Without similar priorities, the needs of some communities may be overlooked.

Regarding the proposed maps for the Senate: My senate district is District 2, which consists of all of Wood, Ottawa, and Erie Counties, a strip of Lucas County, and two peculiar bites out of Huron County. Those bits come from the far northwest corner and the far northeast corner of Huron County. What could be the logic behind that? What do two communities at opposite ends of a county have in common? A small county might need to be split to meet the district population size requirement. However, why wasn't a more cohesive segment selected for removal, one that would have allowed the voters to be a united voice for their needs?

Many citizens want districts to be drawn in a manner that preserves communities of interest. This allows us to advocate for our needs more effectively. Although I live in Bowling Green, I frequently travel to

Toledo for goods and services that I cannot get at home. When my mother-in-law suffered a near fatal stroke, the emergency room in Bowling Green sent her to Toledo for treatment. This clearly shows how important Toledo is to my quality of life. Residents of Bowling Green could be better advocates for Toledo if they were in the same Ohio senate district or the same congressional district.

We are here today because in April of last year, the Ohio Supreme Court declared the existing redistricting plan unconstitutional. The Redistricting Commission took almost a year and a half to present a new plan, and then allowed citizens only a few days to evaluate it. The maps we had access to had low resolution, and some voters would not be able to determine which districts they were in. How can voters provide meaningful feedback to the Commission without sufficient time and precise information? Citizens of Ohio deserve better.