

Testimony to the Ohio Redistricting Commission
By Kyle Herman of Stow, OH
September 13, 2021

I join my fellow Ohioans in objection to the gerrymandered maps that the Ohio Redistricting Commission [presented on Thursday, September 9](#), and to refute the flawed arguments made in favor of rigged districts.

As I [wrote in my previous testimony](#), which I [delivered during a public hearing](#) in which the majority of commissioners who voted to advance the gerrymandered maps were not present, I am a former history and civics teacher, and it's hard to teach when our system of government doesn't work the way it's supposed to. The arguments in favor of gerrymandering are prime examples of how far some Ohio policymakers and citizens are willing to ignore basic civics and Ohio law in attempt to maximize partisan power. The three most prominent arguments in support of [the gerrymandered maps](#) are easily refuted:

- 1) *"Elections have consequences, and since Republicans won the previous elections, they should gerrymander districts for future elections."* Apparently it needs to be said: The reason Republicans have *supermajorities* in the Ohio legislature, despite barely winning 50% of votes, *IS BECAUSE THE MAPS WERE ALREADY RIGGED TO GIVE THEM SUPERMAJORITIES*. Since the previous round of redistricting, Ohioans have passed constitutional referendums that require fair maps that don't give a partisan advantage.
- 2) *"Other states gerrymander too, so Republicans should gerrymander Ohio because we think the 'other side' would do it if the shoe was on the other foot."* Some states have laws that are supposed to require fair maps, while other states do not. The fact that other states (which happen to be disproportionately Republican) engage in gerrymandering is not an excuse for the Ohio Redistricting Commission to enact a partisan gerrymander in violation of the Ohio Constitution and basic democratic norms. The blue and red states attempting to maximize partisan gerrymandering in order to offset each other are engaging in a form of mutual assured destruction with representative democracy itself at stake. Ohioans voted overwhelmingly—by more than 70%—for Ohio to have fair districts instead.
- 3) *"We aren't a democracy, we're a republic—so Republicans should ignore democratic rules and norms in order to consolidate one-party rule undemocratically through gerrymandering."* The United States is by definition a [democratic republic](#) because we're ruled by representatives, and those representatives *ARE SUPPOSED TO BE* elected by the people they're supposed to represent, according to our Constitution. It is therefore appropriate to refer to the United States as either a "democracy" or a "republic." The U.S. used to pride itself as a leader of democracies on the world stage, but we do risk losing our status as a democracy if partisan gerrymandering continues rig elections and sow distrust toward government. In recent years, the [Economist's Global Democracy Index](#) downgraded the United States from a "full democracy" to a "flawed democracy," and one of the major flaws is gerrymandering.

Since the majority of the commissioners who voted to advance maps in violation of the Ohio Constitution were not present at the hearing in which I spoke, I'm asking you to [read](#) or [watch](#) my previous testimony (<https://redistricting.ohio.gov/assets/organizations/redistricting-commission/events/commission-meeting-a-kron-13/kyle-herman.pdf>). I'm asking you again to uphold the letter and spirit of the law by working toward a bipartisan agreement on fair maps.