

8-Points for Redistricting Reform
The League of Women Voters of Ohio
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The League of Women Voters of Ohio has long advocated for the use of a bipartisan process and nonpartisan criteria in determining Ohio's electoral districts for state and national representatives. 2007 offers a new opportunity for redistricting reform. The League of Women Voters of Ohio reaffirms its criteria for electoral districts and the process used to define them.

Background

Issues

Ohio has a long history of partisan gerrymandering; that is, carving out legislative districts with safe seats that protect incumbents *and* certain districts for each party. The party in control of drawing district lines, whether for state or national seats, designs the districts to maximize the number of safe seats for its party.¹ It also provides a few safe seats for the opposition party by drawing a small number of districts that highly concentrate the opposition party's voters. The Voting Rights Act has been used to concentrate minority voters into a small number of districts, as well.

Consequences of Gerrymandering

Ohio has one of the largest disconnects—nationwide--between how we vote and who gets elected. An oft-cited statistic about the effect of Ohio's gerrymandered electoral districts is that even though more than half (53%) of Ohioans' votes in the 2006 U.S. congressional races went to Democratic candidates, only about one-third (39%) of the seats went to Democrats and almost two-thirds (61 %) went to Republicans.

As a result of gerrymandering, the state legislature and national congressional delegation do not proportionally reflect the political affiliations of Ohio voters. The only real choice voters have in gerrymandered districts is a choice between their party's candidates in the primary elections. With gerrymandered "safe seats" throughout the state, only voters of the majority party in the district really have the opportunity to determine who is elected. Other voters in the district have, literally, no chance of electing a representative.

Eight Criteria for Redistricting Reform

1. **The redistricting process must be transparent to the public, and the public must have meaningful involvement.**
 - Meetings of the group(s) responsible for redistricting must be subject to Ohio's Sunshine law. Records of the group(s) must be subject to Ohio's Open Records law.
 - The data needed to draw the maps should be publicly available on a website.
 - Maps must be accepted from anyone who wishes to submit one and must be fairly considered and judged by consistent criteria.
 - A narrative should accompany the map selected justifying why it was selected.
2. **A bipartisan commission comprised of an odd number of members should determine U.S. congressional and state legislative district lines.**
3. **Districts *must* comply with relevant portions of the U.S. and Ohio constitutions, all applicable state and federal laws--including the national Voting Rights Act protecting minority representation--and precedents such as "one person, one vote."** The Voting Rights Act must not be used to marginalize minority voters by over-packing them into one district.
4. **Districts *must* be contiguous and bounded by a single non-intersecting line.**
5. **Districts *must not* be drawn to purposefully advantage any political party or any incumbent.**

6. **Two primary values should be maximized in drawing district lines: compactness and competition.**
 - Compact districts permit persons in communities of interest to have the same representative.
 - Competitive districts ensure that voters have a choice between different political ideologies.
7. **Local political boundaries should be respected.** That is, counties, municipalities and townships should be represented by the same person to the extent possible.
8. **Discretion in the redistricting process must be minimized.** Although it is nearly impossible to take the politics out of the redistricting process, non-discretionary criteria will limit partisan manipulation.

ⁱ Current process

The lines for both Ohio's legislative districts and its national congressional districts are redrawn every 10 years following the census. The five-member bipartisan Apportionment Board draws boundaries for Ohio house and senate seats. Its members are the Ohio Governor, Auditor, Secretary of State and a member representing each of the two major political parties. Therefore, the political affiliations of the Governor, Auditor and Secretary of State determine which party will be favored in the redistricting process for the Ohio legislature.

In contrast, the lines for U.S. house are drawn by the Ohio legislature. Therefore, the political composition of the Ohio house and senate determine which party will be favored in drawing district lines for U.S. congressional seats.