

# Fair Congressional Districts for Ohio:

## Why We Can't Afford to Wait



In 2015, Ohio voters overwhelmingly approved state ballot Issue 1 to reform state redistricting, which was placed on the ballot by the legislature. The 2015 bipartisan redistricting reform measure created a fairer and more transparent process for drawing state legislative districts, but it did not include U.S. Congressional districts. Issue 1 won by a landslide 71.5% of the vote, winning by a wide majority in all of Ohio's 88 counties.

Since then the Fair Districts = Fair Elections Coalition, led by the League of Women Voters of Ohio and Common Cause Ohio, has been urging the state legislature to finish the job and place Fair Districts reform for Congressional districts before voters.

Ohio's current winner-take-all method of Congressional district drawing leaves one political party in charge of mapmaking – that means district lines are manipulated to marginalize the other party and create elections where one party is virtually guaranteed to win more seats. It also creates uncompetitive districts that protect incumbents of both political parties rather than giving the voters a meaningful vote on who represents them.

Despite voters' overwhelming passage of state reform in 2015, and our persistent lobbying, the legislature has refused to act on any of the Congressional fair districts reform proposals submitted in 2015, 2016, or 2017. While we continue to support efforts to pass reform in the legislature, we will carefully scrutinize any proposal to ensure it includes these essential protections:

1. The process should be transparent and allow public input on proposed maps before a vote.
2. Bipartisan support must be required for a map to be enacted, with no mono-partisan "out," and should permit fair representation of voters from both parties.
3. No plan shall favor or disfavor a political party or candidate.
4. Use big building blocks like counties and cities to keep communities together and make districts more compact

Until the legislature passes a proposal to put meaningful reform before voters, we will continue moving forward with a citizen initiative in order to make sure reform is enacted before the next time Congressional districts are redrawn.

Recognizing that we cannot wait indefinitely, in October 2016 the Fair Districts = Fair Elections Coalition put forward a reform proposal that could be placed before voters if the legislature doesn't act. We invited public comment on our proposal and made improvements based on public input, before finalizing the language that is now our citizen initiative, Fair Congressional Districts for Ohio. In May 2017, the Ohio Attorney General and Ballot Board certified our citizen initiative to begin collecting petition signatures to place it on the ballot.

**The Fair Congressional Districts for Ohio proposal** – You can read the full text at [www.fairdistrictsohio.org](http://www.fairdistrictsohio.org).

- **Congressional districts will be drawn by a bipartisan body** – the Ohio Redistricting Commission – the same body that will draw state legislative districts under the new rules approved by voters in 2015. This prevents one political party from rigging districts in its favor by requiring both parties to agree to a map.
- **Maps cannot be drawn to favor or disfavor a political party or candidate.** This prevents [gerrymandering](#), "sweetheart deals" or guaranteed "safe seats" favoring a party or candidate.
- **Districts must keep communities together and be compact.** This prevents oddly-shaped districts that carve up communities. Maps must minimize the splitting of counties, municipalities, and townships.
- **The district map-drawing process must be open, transparent, and accountable** to the public. The Commission must release proposed district maps for public testimony and accept public submissions.

## **Support for Congressional Redistricting reform:**

"If there is one silver bullet that could fix American democracy, it's getting rid of gerrymandering – the now commonplace practice of drawing electoral districts in a distorted way for partisan gain. It's also one of a dwindling number of issues that principled citizens – Democrat and Republican – should be able to agree on. Indeed, polls confirm that an overwhelming majority of Americans of all stripes oppose gerrymandering." - Washington Post, op-ed, [Gerrymandering Is the Biggest Obstacle to Genuine Democracy in the United States. So Why Isn't Anyone 'Protesting?'](#), February 10, 2017

"Ohioans of every political stripe should embrace this opportunity to slay the gerrymander and end rigged elections." - [Columbus Dispatch editorial](#), April 30, 2017

"Regardless of your party affiliation or sympathies, allowing legislative or congressional districts to be controlled by any political party simply isn't right. Ohioans have changed that for General Assembly districts. It's time to move on to congressional seats." - [Marietta Times editorial](#), June 9, 2017

"We encourage citizens to support not only the efforts to get the redistricting measure on the ballot but to vote for it once they're in the voting booth. If we want to start chipping away at the problems of our nation, if we truly wish to, as the saying goes, 'drain the swamp,' fair legislative districts is a fantastic place to start." - [Ashtabula Star Beacon editorial](#), May 31, 2017

"Ohioans are done waiting to put an end to a hyper-partisan mapmaking system that feeds political extremism, gridlock and bitter divisiveness in Washington... Fair Districts = Fair Elections aims for bipartisan, transparent map-drawing to end gerrymandering in Ohio's U.S. House races. This group has shown great patience, hoping that the legislature would do the right thing and take up reform. Instead, the legislature has punted with years of endless study and squabbling." - Columbus Dispatch, [Lawmakers Should Reform Redistricting](#), January 8, 2017

"While it would be best for the legislature to act in a bipartisan way on congressional redistricting, as it did with a constitutional amendment on legislative redistricting put on the ballot and overwhelmingly approved by voters in 2015, [Ohio Senate President] Obhof's comments mean a proposal backed principally by Common Cause Ohio and the League of Women Voters is the remaining way forward." - Akron Beacon Journal, [New Face, Same Statehouse Opposition to Redistricting Reform](#), January 4, 2017



### **How can you help?**

- Sign up for email updates at [www.fairdistrictsohio.org](http://www.fairdistrictsohio.org) or get mobile updates by texting DISTRICT to 864237. Please note your mobile carrier rates may apply.
- Volunteer to help collect petition signatures to put Fair Districts on the ballot. Sign up and find petition locations near you at [www.fairdistrictsohio.org/petitions](http://www.fairdistrictsohio.org/petitions).
- Donate! Checks can be made out to "Fair Congressional Districts for Ohio" and mailed to Fair Congressional Districts for Ohio, c/o League of Women Voters of Ohio, 17 S. High St. Suite 650, Columbus, OH 43215.
- Recruit support! Ask community leaders and organizations to endorse Fair Congressional Districts for Ohio.
- Spread the word! Share with your friends on social media and ask them to get involved too. Write letters to the editor of your local paper. Ask allied groups to endorse Fair Districts for Congress Too.

Find us at [www.fairdistrictsohio.org](http://www.fairdistrictsohio.org)



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