

August 23, 2011
Public Testimony before the Ohio Apportionment Board
Ohio Senate and House Redistricting
Cleveland State University, Cleveland, Ohio

Good morning. I am Carol Gibson, Co-President of the Cuyahoga Area League of Women Voters. Thank you for the opportunity to provide public testimony on the issue of drawing new Ohio Senate and House districts.

Redistricting is an issue that goes to the heart of our democratic system of government because representative democracy depends on voters choosing their elected officials. When, instead, officials choose their voters by creating districts that strongly favor one political party, our system does not work as intended.

What is at stake when it comes to how political district lines are drawn is whether voters choose our leaders or leaders choose the voters. At the most basic level, redistricting must support the constitutional principle of “one person, one vote.”

Ultimately, the redistricting process determines:

- How a voter’s community is defined
- Who a voter has the opportunity to vote for
- What kinds of policies and issues get debated
- What happens to voter tax dollars and
- How the complex set of challenges we face are handled (or not)

To ensure the most democratic outcome for the current redistricting process, the League of Women Voters recommends the formation of districts that are compact, competitive, contiguous, and of similar population numbers. In Cuyahoga County, diversity also needs to be a considered factor. Any stranger to our region looking at a map of the current districts in Cuyahoga County could see a problem in the U shape of Ohio Senate district 24 that sweeps around three edges of the county. Such partisan gerrymandering needs to be set aside.

August 21 was the deadline for submissions to the League’s contest to design new Senate and House district maps. The maps most supportive of democracy will be well-publicized around the state, and they will be sent to the Apportionment Board to aid and encourage your work.

Voters are finding it harder than ever to think of their votes as important in these recessionary and bitterly partisan times. If the Apportionment Board rose to this occasion by actually creating manifestly doable fair districts, Ohio would immediately become famous for achieving a home run for democracy. You have within your power the ability to give Ohioans a lift by creating districts that make sense. You *can* do it; put Ohio on the map for fairness.

Thank you.