



OP-ED Submitted by: Carol Gibson, Co-President, LWV Cuyahoga Area
Also writing for Cleveland Area and Shaker Heights Leagues

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Within the past weeks we have seen why we must reform our redistricting process. Politicians drew new congressional and state legislative districts behind closed doors for political advantage, to be unveiled only days before they were adopted. Public input was ignored and the only input which was truly considered came from other politicians.

New congressional districts zigzag across the state in such a fashion that the border of one Columbus-area district is now 933 miles long, which is farther than the distance from Columbus to New Orleans! Counties and cities are sliced and diced to such an extent that one Toledo City Council district is now part of three different congressional districts.

Most distressing is that the new districts will give voters a smaller voice in future elections. Eighty percent of the districts are one-sided in favor of the Democratic Party or Republican Party. Because of this, instead of elections being decided by the voters, the outcome of the elections in most of our new congressional and state legislative districts can be accurately predicted for the next decade. This will make it difficult, if not impossible, for the public to hold our officials accountable.

The current redistricting process is so bad, that as Secretary of State Husted and other state officials voted for the new legislative districts, they admitted the process was in dire need of reform.

For decades, the League of Women Voters of Ohio has advocated for redistricting reform. While we are pleased that multiple state officials are endorsing reform, the question is whether these words will lead to action.

The League of Women Voters of Ohio was a leading participant in a recently completed redistricting competition which allowed private citizens to draw congressional and state legislative districts using the same data and legal requirements used by the public officials. The districts drawn by the private citizens were so superior to the districts we ended up with that the public officials should be embarrassed. Go to www.drawthelineohio.org to see for yourself.

Recently, Ohioans for Fair Districts launched a petition drive to collect signatures to put a referendum on the 2012 ballot to overturn House Bill 319, the newly passed congressional redistricting plan. Regardless of the success or failure of this effort, the real solution must be reform of the entire process.

If there is to be reform, we need to act now before this issue again fades away. The three Leagues of Women Voters in Cuyahoga County--Cuyahoga Area, Cleveland Area, and Shaker Heights—urge you to contact your state legislators and demand they back a constitutional amendment which will stop politicians from going into the backrooms to create new districts for their own political advantage.

Carol Gibson and Susan Gray, Co-Presidents, LWV Cuyahoga Area
Penny Jeffrey, President, LWV Cleveland Area
Linda Lissauer, President, LWV Shaker Heights

Contact:

lwwcuyareapresidentgibson@gmail.com / 216.932.8733