



April 5, 2021

To: Governor Mike DeWine, Auditor Keith Faber, Secretary of State Frank LaRose, House Senate President Matt Huffman, Senate Minority Leader Kenny Yuko, Speaker Bob Cupp, House Minority Leader Emilia Sykes, Members of the Ohio General Assembly

CC: Ohio Legislative Correspondents Association

RE: Redistricting Process & Timeline

For decades, Fair Districts Ohio has worked for fair legislative maps and transparent redistricting processes on behalf of our members and Ohio voters. We acknowledge that the delay in the decennial Census data puts a strain on all stakeholders, but we also acknowledge that better data will ultimately make better maps.

Given that this is a once-in-a-decade opportunity for fair, voter-focused districts, transparency and public input should not be limited because of changes to the census timeline. The people of Ohio want fair maps, as evidenced by the broad support that the redistricting reforms passed in 2015 and 2018 by over 70% of voters and overwhelmingly in all 88 counties.

**We call on Ohio map-makers to:**

- Explore holding a June Primary. Voters, candidates, local governments, and elections officials should have ample notice of a change in the election calendar. A later primary date would create more time for mapmaking, but the date should consider the needs of key stakeholders such as local school districts that may have levies, operational needs from elections officials, etc.
- Distribute budgeted funds to Ohio House and Senate caucuses for planning and research
- Direct the Legislative Service Commission to establish a website where the public can read up on the process, follow hearings/testimony, access population and geographical data, and submit maps for consideration through a web portal.
- Finalize and announce the legislative appointments for the Ohio Redistricting Commission

- Appropriate adequate funds so that Ohio's 88 Boards of Elections are able to prepare for the primary. Election officials will need to place voters into the correct districts and educate voters about their new districts.
- Hold accessible public hearings before the decennial Census data is received to hear from political science, mapping, data, legal, and voting rights experts, as well as from members of the public. Issues to explore include but are not limited to:
  - Setting an adjusted map-making timeline without cutting public input, for example by: increasing the budget for Ohio University's contract; layering the Congressional and Statehouse mapmaking (rather than doing them successively), and providing additional training/support to BOEs.
  - Maximizing public participation by providing the public with the necessary electoral, population and geographic data to allow them to effectively propose and evaluate districts/maps.
  - Meeting legal requirements, including but not limited to:
    - The federal Voting Rights Act
    - Equal Population
    - 2015 and 2018 redistricting amendments to the Ohio Constitution
- Provide ample opportunity through public hearings for Ohioans to weigh in about the importance of fair maps, how they define their communities, and why keeping their communities together is important.
- Commit to providing ample opportunity for public comment after maps are proposed as well.

Ohioans in every corner of the state -- indeed, in all 88 counties -- voted *twice* to end partisan gerrymandering. Work must begin now to make sure that the redistricting processes for state legislative and US congressional maps live up to the full promise and potential of the 2015 and 2018 redistricting reforms.

We look forward to working with all of you.

Sincerely,

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