



November 18, 2021

The Honorable Mike DeWine
77 South High Street
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Dear Governor DeWine:

We, the Fair Districts Ohio Coalition, made up of Common Cause Ohio, League of Women Voters of Ohio, ACLU of Ohio, Ohio Council of Churches, Faith in Public Life, and other groups, are calling upon you to veto Substitute Senate Bill 258. The Congressional map presented by the bill is a classic gerrymander that slices and dices communities in order to achieve a rigged outcome benefitting one political party. It is the exact opposite of what voters demanded and won through the redistricting reforms put in place by the constitutional amendment that passed overwhelmingly in May of 2018.

At the time, you spoke about the newly enacted redistricting process: ***“The rules are pretty clear -- the voters said that the redistricting process should be done in a bipartisan way and when I am governor there will be an expectation that the new district maps honor the voters' wishes.”***

We couldn't agree more. The rules are clear as to both the process for creating Congressional districts and the criteria with which the map must comply. Substitute Senate Bill 258 does not measure up, and it is now your duty to veto.

Our coalition is committed to fair congressional districts. We have done everything in our power to encourage the Ohio Redistricting Commission and the Ohio General Assembly to uphold the will of the voters and comply with the new redistricting rules in the Ohio Constitution. More than 8,000 Fair Districts advocates put up 15,000 yard signs and sent more than 50,000 postcards urging mapmakers to craft districts that keep communities together. Hundreds testified, attended hearings, and submitted written testimony urging an end to gerrymandering. Over 80 volunteers were trained on mapping software and hosted dozens of community

mapping sessions throughout the state resulting in hundreds of community maps. Proving that compact, fair, and responsive maps could be created, the Fair Districts coalition hosted a congressional mapping competition, and the top winning maps were submitted to both the Ohio Redistricting Commission and the state legislature.

There have been dozens of editorials urging the mapmakers to focus on the voters. Despite all this public pressure, and the mandate that voters in all 88 counties created with the passage of the ballot initiative in 2018, the map and the process have failed to uphold either the letter or the spirit of the Ohio Constitution. You now have an opportunity to keep your promise to Ohio voters by exercising your veto power on SB 258.

The Ohio Constitution prohibits a four-year map that “unduly favors or disfavors one political party or incumbent.” Senate Bill 258 clearly violates this prohibition. This proposed map achieves its rigged outcome by dividing communities, especially minority neighborhoods, in order to deprive them of their political power. It is less proportional and competitive than the other maps presented to the House and Senate committees, as measured by standard tools of analysis such as Dave’s Redistricting App. The map also received an “F” grade from the Princeton Gerrymandering Project. Equally clear is the fact that Senate Bill 258 was not in any way created through a bipartisan process, and as such, it needs and deserves your veto.

In a state with a 54R/46D split in statewide elections over the last ten years, Senate Bill 258 assures a minimum of 11 Republican seats, with a most likely result of 12 Republican and 3 Democratic seats. Cuyahoga County and Hamilton County are unnecessarily divided into three districts; Cincinnati is locked within an openly gerrymandered district in an unmistakable effort to dilute the urban vote.

Voters expected better. This is the ballot language in May 2018:

To amend the version of Section 1 of Article XI that is scheduled to take effect January 1, 2021, and to enact Sections 1, 2, and 3 of Article XIX of the Constitution of the State of Ohio to establish a process for congressional redistricting. A majority yes vote is necessary for the amendment to pass. The proposed amendment would:

- *End the partisan process for drawing congressional districts, and replace it with a process with the goals of promoting bipartisanship, keeping local communities together, and having district boundaries that are more compact.*
- *Ensure a transparent process by requiring public hearings and allowing public submission of proposed plans.*

- *Require the General Assembly or the Ohio Redistricting Commission to adopt new congressional districts by a bipartisan vote for the plan to be effective for the full 10-year period.*
- *Require that if a plan is adopted by the General Assembly without significant bipartisan support, it cannot be effective for the entire 10-year period and must comply with explicit antigerrymandering requirements.*

If passed, the amendment will become effective immediately.]

Our coalition watched with dismay this week as an entirely new map was introduced as a substitute for SB 258, and then rushed at breakneck speed through both Senate and House committees, without a proper opportunity for the public to weigh in. Now this rigged map is already heading to your desk, more than a week before the stipulated deadline. We are counting on you to honor your promise, respect the will of the people of Ohio, and uphold the Ohio Constitution by vetoing Substitute Senate Bill 258.

No matter what happens next, it is your duty to uphold the Ohio Constitution, honor the will of the people, and veto this bill.

Thank you for standing up for Ohio voters and our democracy.

Sincerely,



Jen Miller, League of Women Voters of Ohio



Catherine Turcer, Common Cause Ohio

cc: Ohio General Assembly and Ohio Legislative Correspondents Association