



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF OHIO
17 South High Street, Suite 650 • Columbus, Ohio 43215
Phone (614) 469-1505 • Fax (614) 469-7918
www.lwvohio.org

August 8, 2013

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Carrie Davis

Phone: 614.469.1505

**Advocates Present a Blueprint for Redistricting Reform
to the Constitutional Modernization Commission**

Columbus – Today, Ann Henkener, Redistricting Specialist for the League of Women Voters of Ohio (LWVO), and Richard Gunther, Professor Emeritus of Political Science from the Ohio State University, presented a blueprint for redistricting reform. Henkener and Gunther were invited to present testimony at this morning's public meeting of the Legislative and Executive Branch Committee of the Constitutional Modernization Commission.

Henkener's testimony explained that there are two main areas to consider when looking at redistricting reform – first, fundamentally change who draws district maps so that it is taken out of the hands of politicians, or, second, change the criteria those districts must meet. "Gerrymandering is effective and intentional," Henkener said, "and it is unrealistic to think that good intentions alone will change that without requiring specific criteria be followed."

Henkener used last year's election results to illustrate what happens when map-makers are not required to follow strict criteria for drawing districts. "The 2012 election results for Ohio's Congressional and state legislative seats were completely predictable based on the way they were gerrymandered," said Henkener. "The maps were drawn to pack as many districts as possible to create Republican or Democrat safe seats, so that in the General Election each party would have a virtually guaranteed win in districts drawn to their advantage. The results matched the predictions perfectly, leaving voters wondering whether they had any say in the results."

Henkener offered specific criteria that could be required for future district map-drawers:

1. **Compactness and keeping political subdivisions together.** One option is minimizing the number of times a county, municipality, township and ward are split.
2. **Competitiveness.** Based on voting trends, draw a certain number of districts that are not heavily stacked in favor of one political party and could be won by any candidate voters choose.
3. **Representational fairness.** The number of seats that lean toward each party should reflect voters' historical preference for that party's candidates.
4. **Transparency and public input.** All meetings and documents should be open to the public, and there should be meaningful opportunity for public input.

Professor Gunther provided an overview of many past attempts at reform and echoed the call for reforms that would prevent gerrymandering and give voters more of say in whom they elect. "We urge this Commission to put a stop to predetermined elections and give the power back to the voters," Gunther said. "It is a political reality that whichever party is in power will draw districts to their advantage unless the Ohio Constitutional expressly requires them to draw fair districts."

Ms. Henkener's and Mr. Gunther's Testimony and Attachments are available here:

<http://www.lwvohio.org/site.cfm/Advocacy/Redistricting.cfm>

###