

Ohio Redistricting Reform History

1967

An Ohio Constitutional amendment was adopted, authorizing the Apportionment Board to draw boundaries for Ohio House and Senate districts. The amendment did not address Congressional Districts and they continued to be drawn by the Ohio General Assembly.

1981

The Democrats continued to control the Apportionment Board and performed the second Partisan gerrymander. The League of Women Voters of Ohio supported an Ohio Constitutional amendment that provided for competition between redistricting plans and required the Commission to select that plan that provided for the most compact districts. The Ohio Republican Party also supported the amendment; the Democrats opposed it. The amendment failed, getting only 42% of the vote.

1999

The League of Women Voters of Ohio attempted, but failed, to get signatures sufficient to place a redistricting reform amendment on the ballot. The proposed amendment emphasized compactness of districts, and used a mathematical formula to assure compact districts.

2005

A group called Reform Ohio Now (RON) obtained enough signatures to place a redistricting initiative on the ballot, along with three other election reform initiatives. Under the redistricting initiative, a bipartisan commission would do the redistricting; plans could be submitted by the public and the plan that created the most competitive districts would be chosen. The Ohio Republican Party opposed the initiative. The Ohio Democratic Party did not endorse the amendment. Some county Democratic Party organizations supported it while others opposed it. Opponents of RON produced a map which they claimed was competitive, but which did not retain community of interest. The voters rejected the redistricting reform proposal by a 70% vote.

2009

The Republican controlled state Senate passed SJR 5, which was very similar to HJR 13 from 2006. SJR 5 emphasized compactness and keeping communities together. Competitiveness was also to be a consideration, but was secondary to compactness and keeping communities together.

2011

The Republicans controlled the Apportionment Board and performed the fifth partisan gerrymander. Concurrently, the Ohio Campaign for Accountable Redistricting led by the League of Women Voters of Ohio and Ohio Citizen Action, held a competition in which citizens could draw maps. Ordinary citizens drew maps that were more compact, more competitive, fairer to both political parties and respected county and municipal boundaries. All of the maps submitted were better than the ones drawn by the Apportionment Board and the legislature on the four good government criteria. OCAR also issued a "Transparency Report" which showed that maps were drawn in secret to the specifications of politicians rather than the public.

2013

Although Joint Resolutions were introduced in the legislature, the focus of redistricting reform turned to the Ohio Constitutional Modernization Commission which heard testimony from interested stakeholders.

1971

The Democrats controlled the Apportionment Board and performed the first partisan gerrymander under the new amendment.

1991

The Republicans controlled the Apportionment Board and performed the third partisan gerrymander under the 1967 amendment.

2001

The Republicans controlled the Apportionment Board and performed the fourth partisan gerrymander under the 1967 amendment.

2006

A Republican legislator introduced a redistricting reform initiative, HJR. 13, in May 2006. HJR 13 differed from the 2005 RON proposal in a number of ways. Primarily, it emphasized compactness of districts and keeping communities together. In order to be placed on the ballot, the resolution needed to pass both the Ohio House and Senate by a 60% margin. It did not receive the required number of votes.

2010

The Democrats controlled state House passed HJR 15. It would reform the redistricting process by establishing a public competition for redrawing district lines based on objective criteria – compactness, preservation of county and municipal boundaries, competitiveness, and reflecting the relative strength of the two major parties with voters. The House and Senate were unable to reconcile SJR 5 and HJR 15 and agree on a single bill.

2012

Representatives of the League of Women Voters of Ohio, Common Cause Ohio and other good government groups and interested individuals filed a petition to place redistricting reform on the ballot. With the help of other groups such as organized labor, sufficient signatures were gathered to place the initiative onto the November ballot. The initiative failed, getting 37% of the vote.

2014

The Constitutional Modernization Commission continued its work throughout the year but couldn't come to a final resolution. In December, during the lame duck session, Rep. Vern Sykes (D) and Rep. Matt Huffman (R) negotiated a compromise reform plan for redistricting the General Assembly that overwhelmingly passed both the Ohio House and Senate. The proposed Constitutional Amendment will be presented to the voters in November of 2015.

***From 1978 through 2001, there was a proposed redistricting reform constitutional amendment introduced in each General Assembly Session — none passed.**