



**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF OHIO**

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**Testimony on HJR 11, Congressional Redistricting  
Before the House Policy and Legislative Oversight Committee  
Presented by Ann Henkener on behalf of the  
League of Women Voters of Ohio  
November 19, 2014**

The League of Women Voters has advocated for redistricting reform for many, many years. Most recently we have supported then Sen. Husted's proposal in 2009 and more recently the bi-partisan LaRose-Sawyer proposal in the last General Assembly. Either of those proposals would have achieved progress in making Ohio's legislature and Congressional delegation more reflective of the political values of Ohio voters. HJR 11 does nothing to advance representational fairness or bi-partisanship and removes valuable protections now enjoyed by voters.

Ohio is a "battleground" state – its voters are roughly divided evenly between the two major political parties. Voters have selected two United States Senators from different political parties. Ohioans routinely select other statewide office holders from both of the major political parties. Single party gerrymandering has produced artificially large majorities for whichever political party held the pen for redistricting the General Assembly districts and Congressional districts.

HJR 11 begins the process of drawing Congressional districts with a bi-partisan joint legislative committee and has a requirement that at least one vote for approval of a plan must come from each major party. The League supports this part of the process. However, if the same political party holds majorities in the Ohio House and Senate, there is little incentive for it to compromise with the minority party, because it can declare impasse and adopt a plan without a single vote from a minority party member. That plan would be in effect for 2 years. It then goes to the voters where the plan drawn by the majority is either approved or disapproved. The only downside for the majority party is that they need to go through the process of drawing another plan. However, it can be very similar, just not identical to the first plan. So with a minimal amount of work, it can adopt another gerrymandered plan that will be in effect for 2 years. This process can continue through the decade.

The proposal also eliminates some of the few protections against majority party overreach. The Congressional plan would no longer be subject to a gubernatorial veto, and not be subject to that minimal amount of minority party control should the governor be from the minority political party. It also deprives citizens of their current rights to initiative and referendum relative to redistricting. Those are currently the most effective ways minority party voters can have a voice in our winner-take-all system.

I urge this Committee and the Ohio House of Representatives to reject this proposal and focus deliberations on a bi-partisan proposal such as the one proposed by Senators LaRose and Sawyer.

*The League of Women Voters of Ohio, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.*