

## **General Election 2024: Ohio Issue 1: Proposed Amendment to Replace the Current Politician-Run Redistricting Process**

Summary by the League of Women Voters of Ohio

A "yes" vote supports amending the Ohio Constitution to:

- Create the Ohio Citizens Redistricting Commission, composed of 15 Ohio citizens, to replace the current 7-person redistricting commission, composed of 3 elected statewide officials and 4 state legislators or their representatives;
- Assign the commission responsibility for drawing district lines for the Ohio House of Representatives, the Ohio Senate, and the Ohio seats in the U.S. House of Representatives;
- Provide that the commission is balanced with 5 members who are affiliated with each of the state's two major political parties and 5 members who are independents;
- Provide that the members of the commission be chosen through a bipartisan process that uses the services of 4 retired court of appeals judges and in which applicants determined to be qualified to serve on the commission (by the retired judges) are identified and ultimately selected through a largely random process;
- Require that commission members have shown an ability to conduct the redistricting process with integrity and fairness and do not have any conflicts of interest;
- Prohibit service on the commission by the following persons and their immediate family members:
  - Persons who are currently serving or have recently served in (or candidates for) federal, state, or local offices;
  - Persons who have or are currently serving or recently served as staff members, paid consultants, or contractors for any elected official or candidate for any federal, state, or local office;
  - Persons who are currently serving or have served as officers, paid consultants, or contractors to any political party, political action committee, or campaign committee;
  - Persons who are currently or have recently been registered lobbyists or legislative agents in Ohio;
- Provide that each redistricting plan contain single-member districts that are geographically congruent, that comply with federal law, and that preserve communities of interest;
- Define communities of interest as communities of people with broadly shared interests and representational needs, including counties, municipal corporations, townships, and school districts;

## Issue 1 Summary by the League of Women Voters of Ohio, continued

- Ban partisan gerrymandering and the adoption of plans that favor or disfavor a political party by requiring that the statewide proportion of districts in a redistricting plan that favors each political party shall correspond closely to statewide partisan preferences of Ohio voters;
- Provide that no redistricting plan shall be drawn with consideration of the place of residence of any incumbent elected official or any candidate for state or congressional office;
- Require that the commission operate in a transparent public way, that all its deliberations and actions be in public meetings, and that its actions require an affirmative vote of at least 9 of 15 members;
- Require holding 5 public hearings throughout the state prior to the adoption of draft redistricting plans, 5 public hearings after the adoption of draft redistricting plans, and 2 public hearings after the adoption of final redistricting plans;
- Require the General Assembly to appropriate not less than \$7 million in 2025 for expenses of the commission with an additional appropriation for legal expenses;
- Require that redistricting plans adopted by the commission be used for the 2026, 2028, and 2030 elections, and that district lines be re-drawn every 10 years thereafter based on U.S. Census data;
- Replace the redistricting plans adopted for the 2022 and 2024 elections;
- Continue to give the Ohio Supreme Court original and exclusive jurisdiction to resolve disputes concerning compliance of redistricting plans with the proportionality and incumbency protection requirements;
- Provide procedures for removal for cause of commissioners and for the filling of any commissioner vacancy; and
- Create a procedure for resolving any impasse or stalemates in determining which redistricting plans to approve by having members of the commission rank their favored plans and vote preferentially until adoption of a plan by a majority vote.

A "no" vote opposes amending the Ohio Constitution to create a new redistricting commission. This, then, allows the current procedures for redistricting state and congressional seats to remain in effect.

## What Issue 1 proponents and opponents say

### Supporters say:

- The amendment creates a new independent body, the Ohio Citizens Redistricting Commission, to draw district lines for the General Assembly and the Ohio seats in the U.S. House of Representatives.
- The 15-member commission is balanced with 5 members affiliated with each of the state's major political parties and 5 members who are independents.
- The amendment creates a bipartisan process for selecting commission members.
- The amendment removes politicians and political influence from the redistricting process by prohibiting elected officials, candidates, their staffs, political organizations, lobbyists, and immediate family members of these groups from serving on the commission.
- The amendment prohibits partisan gerrymandering of the General Assembly and the Ohio seats in the U.S. House of Representatives.
- The amendment requires that each redistricting plan contain geographically congruent districts that comply with federal law and preserve communities of interest.
- The amendment defines communities of interest to include counties, municipal corporations, townships, and school districts as well as communities of people with broadly shared interests and representational needs.
- The amendment prevents incumbency protection by barring any redistricting plan from considering the place of residence of any incumbent elected official or any candidate for state or congressional office.
- The amendment creates an open and transparent process by requiring that all commission deliberations and actions be in public meetings, and that actions by the commission require an affirmative vote of at least 9 of 15 members.
- The amendment creates a process to resolve any impasse so that the General Assembly cannot adopt its own redistricting plans.

### Opponents say:

- The amendment creates a redistricting commission to replace the constitutional amendments approved by Ohio voters in 2015 and 2018.
- The amendment removes elected statewide officeholders and state legislators from the process of drawing district lines for the General Assembly and for the Ohio seats in the U.S. House of Representatives.
- The amendment creates a non-elected commission.
- The amendment adopts procedures for selecting the members of the commission that are complex.
- The amendment permits the commission to hire consultants to assist in the drawing of districts.

## What Issue 1 proponents and opponents say, continued

### (Opponents say, continued)

- The amendment limits the right of Ohio citizens to freely express their views on redistricting to members of the commission and the commission staff.
- The amendment promises to end partisan gerrymandering but requires that the statewide proportion of districts that favor each political party correspond closely to statewide partisan preferences of Ohio voters.
- The amendment does not require districts to be compact.
- The amendment does not sufficiently respect the need to draw district lines that do not split counties, municipal corporations, townships, and school districts.
- The amendment does not permit members of the commission to be removed by the General Assembly.
- The amendment abolishes the historic tradition of having elected officials draw congressional and state legislative districts – elected officials who are directly accountable to Ohio voters.
- The amendment seeks to make significant changes in redistricting but ignores the reality that redistricting is inherently political and that one cannot take politics out of politics.