

CITIZENS NOT POLITICIANS



FAQ

AMENDMENT BASICS

What is the Citizens Not Politicians (CNP) Amendment and why do we need it?

- **The Citizens Not Politicians Amendment** is a citizen initiative to end gerrymandering. It bans lobbyists and politicians from the redistricting process and instead establishes the Ohio Citizens Redistricting Commission, empowering citizens to draw fair districts using an open and transparent process.
- **We need it because** Ohio is one of the most gerrymandered states in the country, with voting districts drawn to favor political party interests over the needs of our communities.
 - Our current redistricting process was dragged out for over two years, with maps being ruled unconstitutional by the Ohio Supreme Court a whopping SEVEN times (five times for state legislative maps and twice for congressional ones). This ended up costing Ohio taxpayers tens of millions of dollars, but still didn't result in fair, impartial districts.
 - **We need a new process that takes the power to draw district lines out of the hands of self-interested politicians.**

What does the Ohio Citizens Redistricting Commission do?

- **The Ohio Citizens Redistricting Commission will be responsible for** adopting a redistricting plan for the Ohio General Assembly and new districts for the United States House of Representatives.

What other states have citizen drawn maps and how have they worked out?

- **Seven states now have independent citizen commissions:** Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Michigan, Montana, and Washington.
- **[Independent citizens commissions](#) have produced some of the fairest maps in the United States:** Those that have done best have a very clear set of redistricting criteria, explicit transparency requirements, and a review at the end by a third party such as the state Supreme Court. The amendment proposed by *Citizens Not Politicians* includes all of these criteria.
- **We have been lucky to learn from the experience of building and operating commissions in other states, but:** this commission is an Ohio solution to an Ohio problem.

Why not A.I. and computers?

- **It is tempting to take humans out of the equation and leave it up to computers!** But communities end up being too divided if we use this method.

- **There is real value in keeping communities together:** that's why *Citizens Not Politicians* focuses on the human choices rather than simply drawing district lines by the numbers.

If passed, when will this citizen's constitutional amendment take effect? When will the *Ohio Citizens Redistricting Commission* be selected, and when will new maps be in place?

- **The amendment includes a redraw process in 2025 to replace the current Congressional and Statehouse maps.**
 - It specifically states that "the Commission shall be constituted and convened no later than May 16, 2025, and no later than January 16 of every year ending in one for subsequent redistricting cycles."
- **That means new maps for the 2026 elections.** Maps would again be drawn after the new census data comes out in 2031, and then every decade thereafter following the census.

COSTS OF THE COMMISSION

How is the Commission paid for and what will this cost? Does it require the state legislature to provide the funds to run the Commission?

- **Establishing and running the Ohio Citizens Redistricting Commission won't cost much more than the present system we have.**
 - **Bonus:** We won't be paying for millions in taxpayer money for lawyers to litigate and re-litigate gerrymandered maps.
- **The *Citizens Not Politicians* proposal mandates that the state legislature provide adequate funding for**
 - a **Bipartisan Panel**, who's first job is to review applications and select the six first Commission members, and for the
 - **Ohio Citizens Redistricting Commission.**
- **The amendment establishes deadlines for making appropriations for redistricting**, with the amount provided directly tied to previous state operating budget appropriations for redistricting.
 - **It also requires an appropriation for the *Citizens Redistricting Commission* of not less than \$7 million** for redistricting in 2025; that amount will be adjusted for inflation in subsequent redistricting cycles.

FORMATION AND STRUCTURE OF THE COMMISSION

Who will sit on the Ohio Citizens Redistricting Commission?

- **The Commission will consist of fifteen members who are all ordinary citizens** – not elected office holders, not party office holders, not lobbyists, nor their family members. The number of commissioners is designed to ensure geographical and demographic diversity in the Commission.
- **The Commission will be made up of:**
 - Five members affiliated with the First Major Party (currently Republican);
 - Five members affiliated with the Second Major Party (currently Democrat); and
 - Five members who are Independent (or unaffiliated with either of the two major parties)

Are ordinary citizens really qualified to draw maps?

- The most important part of redistricting is a commitment to drawing fair districts that focus on keeping communities together and a commitment to learning.
- It is much easier to draw district lines that are fair than it is to gerrymander! We trust that everyday people will do a better job representing the people of Ohio than politicians who are far more interested in rigging maps for their own re-election.
- **The Ohio Citizens Redistricting Commission will provide resources to help citizen Commissioners.** They will retain staff, professionals, and consultants through a public application process. These experts will help the Commission with the technical aspects of map-drawing. Staff will include an executive director, legal counsel, and one or more demographers with district mapping experience.

Who is eligible/ineligible to sit on the Commission?

- **To be eligible to serve, a commissioner must be**
 - a resident of Ohio who has continuously resided in the state during the current year and immediately preceding six years
 - registered to vote at the time of application.
- **An applicant is ineligible if, in the current or prior six years, they or their immediate family members were:**
 - elected or were appointed to serve in public office,
 - campaigned for public office,
 - registered as a lobbyist,
 - served as an officer, paid consultant or contractor of a campaign committee, political action committee or political party, or,
 - served as a staff member, paid consultant or contractor for an elected official or candidate for public office.

How is political party affiliation determined?

- **Party affiliation is determined based on**
 - the applicant's voting record in party primaries
 - various other relevant factors including, but not limited to
 - political contributions
 - campaign activities
 - other reliable indications of partisan affiliation.

How are "Independents" defined? And what if someone doesn't vote in party primaries or switches between party primaries often?

- **Independents could be anyone who doesn't:**
 - vote in partisan primaries
 - consider themselves to be members of either of the two major political parties: Commissioners could be a member of a third party or unaffiliated altogether.
- **The vast majority of Ohioans could be considered to be "independents":** most Ohioans do not vote in primaries.
 - **But an applicant who has** voted in two consecutive even-year primary elections for the same political party in the six years immediately preceding the application deadline will be presumed to be affiliated with that party
 - unless relevant factors—such as political contributions and campaign activities—demonstrate otherwise.

How does someone apply to be on the Ohio Citizens Redistricting Commission?

- **There will be an open application process for appointment to the Commission:**
 - **A bipartisan panel of retired judges will review applications.** The Ohio Department of Administrative Services, will provide assistance and may engage a professional

search firm to solicit applications for the Commission, screen and provide information about applicants, check references, and otherwise facilitate the application review and interview process.

Commissioners cannot be current politicians, but can they run for office after serving on the Commission once maps are drawn?

- **Commissioners will be ineligible to hold elective or appointive state office in Ohio for six years** following the certification of the redistricting plan for the general assembly (Ohio House and Senate maps).

What are Commissioners paid?

- **Commissioners will be compensated \$125 per day**, plus reimbursement for reasonable expenses at the rate set by the United States Internal Revenue Service
 - They will be paid for each day attending commission meetings or otherwise carrying out the responsibilities of the commission.
 - This amount will be adjusted for inflation annually beginning in 2025.
 - This is similar to the way members of other Ohio commissions are compensated.

Who selects the first members of the Commission, and how are those people selected?

- **The first members of the Commission will be chosen by a Bipartisan Screening Panel made up of** four Ohio retired judges—two affiliated with the First Major Political Party and two affiliated with the Second Major Political Party.
- **These four retired judges will be selected by** the four legislative appointees of the Ohio Ballot Board in the following manner:
 - **The Ballot Board legislative appointees affiliated with the first and second Major Political Parties will each select eight applicants**, and present those eight to the Ballot Board legislative appointees affiliated with the other Major Political Party.
 - **This means**
 1. The biggest political party (in this case, the Republicans) selects a pool of eight candidates from which the second party (the Democrats) select two
 2. Then the Democrats select a pool of 8 candidates, and the Republicans pick two from that pool
- **Retired judges applying to serve on the Panel** must complete a form that requires submission of sufficient information to enable Ballot Board members to assess the judge's qualifications and ability to be impartial and competent.
 - **A retired judge must attest that the judge:**
 - has had no known communication material to redistricting matters with anyone ineligible to serve on the Commission during the sixty days prior to the submission of the application
 - is and will continue to be free from conflicts of interest

How will the Ohio Citizens Redistricting Commission members be selected?

- **Step 1: Bipartisan Screening Panel creates pool of 90 applicants**
 - **Determined by majority vote, the applicants collectively form a geographically and demographically representative cross-section of Ohio:**
 - 30 affiliated with the First Major Party
 - 30 affiliated with the Second Major Party
 - 30 Independents
- **Step 2: Panel creates process for public comment and broadcast**
 - **The panel:**
 - provides a portal for public comments on the applicants in the pool
 - set up publicly broadcast interviews by the Panel of the 90 applicants.

- **Step 3: Panel narrows pool from 90 to 45 finalists**
 - **The finalists again form a geographically and demographically representative cross-section of Ohio:**
 - 15 affiliated with the First Major Party
 - 15 affiliated with the Second Major Party
 - 15 Independents
- **Step 4: Finalists drawn randomly in public meeting**
 - **The Panel randomly draw six names from the finalists to be on the Commission during a public meeting:**
 - two affiliated with the First Major Party
 - two affiliated with the Second Major Party
 - two Independents or unaffiliated
- **Step 5: Those first 6 members choose the remaining 9 members to complete the Commission in public meeting**
 - **At the next public meeting, the six members chosen in Step 4 will choose nine additional people to complete the Commission:**
 - two affiliated with the First Major Party
 - two affiliated with the Second Major Party
 - two Independents or unaffiliated
 - **These new members will be chosen through a majority vote, and requires:**
 - at least one vote from a Commission member affiliated with each Major Party and one Independent or unaffiliated member.
 - choice to be based on the strength of their applications and with the goal that the final commission reflect the geographic and demographic diversity of Ohio

COMMISSION RULES AND PROCEDURES

Is there a procedure to challenge a sitting Commission member?

- **Yes.**
 - **A commissioner may be removed only by the members of the Citizens Redistricting Commission, only for cause, only after:**
 - notice
 - a public hearing,
 - an opportunity for members of the public to comment.
- **Cause for removal could include:**
 - failure to disclose requested information during application process;
 - willful neglect of duty or gross misconduct or malfeasance in office;
 - incapacity or inability to perform his or her duties; or behavior involving moral turpitude; or,
 - other acts that undermine the public's trust in the commission and the redistricting process.

How are decisions made on the Ohio Citizens Redistricting Commission?

- **For meetings and for decision-making:** nine Commissioners must be present to constitute a quorum.
 - All acts of the Commission must be in public meetings.
- **All decisions require an affirmative vote of at least nine members, including:**
 - two affiliated with the First Major Party
 - two affiliated with the Second Major Party
 - two Independents or unaffiliated with either major political party.

Will hearings be accessible and transparent? Will public participation be encouraged?

- **Yes, the hearings will be accessible and transparent.**

- The Commission must conduct hearings in a manner that invites broad public participation throughout the state.
 - This must also include: the use of technology to broadcast Commission meetings and facilitate public participation.
- Yes, public participation will be encouraged.
 - Prior to the release of a draft redistricting plan, the Commission will be required to hold at least five public hearings to gather public input.
 - At least one hearing shall be held in each of five geographic regions of the state (NE, SE, NW, SW, and Central).
 - After release of a draft redistricting plan, the Commission will hold at least five additional public hearings across the five geographic regions to receive public comment on the proposed districts.
 - If the redistricting plan is revised in any way, the Commission must hold at least two more public hearings to receive public comment on the revised plan before taking a final vote.

Will census and voting data, block assignments, and mapping analysis be provided to the public?

- Yes.
 - The Citizens Not Politicians amendment provides that the Commission make census and voting data broadly accessible to the public
 - It also requires the Ohio Secretary of State to collect the precinct boundaries used in any statewide election and make this information publicly available in a manner suitable for analysis for redistricting purposes.

Are there deadlines to produce and adopt a proposed redistricting plan?

- Yes.
 - To produce maps:
 - **2026 maps:** The amendment requires that the Commission adopt maps no later than September 19, 2025, and
 - **After 2026:** No later than July 15 of each year following the decennial census thereafter.
 - To adopt proposed redistricting plan:
 - **Deadline to make public:** at least three days prior to adoption
 - Also, within three days after adoption, the Commission must release a public report about the new districts.
 - The report must provide the basis of the Commission's decisions and how it considered and incorporated public comments.

How is a redistricting plan or map passed? What if one or more members of the Commission tries to delay and run out the clock?

- Unlike the current process, there is no option to stonewall the process: The incentives of the Commission are aligned to reach consensus.
- There doesn't need to be consensus among the Citizens Redistricting Commission to pass new districts.
 - Like all decisions made by the Commission, there only need to be nine in agreement, including two affiliated with the First Major Party, two affiliated with the Second Major Party, and two Independents or unaffiliated.
 - If there is no agreement, then there is a ranked choice voting process for selecting a map.

What happens if there is an impasse, litigation, and the courts have to get involved?

- **A case may be filed in the Ohio Supreme Court by any Ohio elector within 10 days of the Commission issuing its final report.** If more than one case is filed, they must be consolidated and only the Commission will have standing to respond to any challenges.
- **Special Masters:** The bipartisan Panel will create a pool of at least six potential demographers, often called “Special Masters.”
 - The Ohio Supreme Court will then select two from this pool by unanimous vote.
 - If the Court fails to make such selections, the administrative director of the Court will randomly select two from the pool.
- **The two Special Masters will review the record before the Commission and hold a public hearing:** after which they must issue a report.
 - If a person who filed a challenge or the Commission disagrees with the report of the Special Masters, they may file objections with the Court.
 - After a public hearing on the objections and a review of the record before the Commission, the Ohio Supreme Court will rule whether the Commission abused its discretion in determining that the adopted plan complies with the criteria set forth in the Amendment.
- **If the Court determines that the Commission abused its discretion:** the Commission will make adjustments to the plan and submit the revised plan to the Special Masters.
- **If the Court, in consultation with the Special Masters, concludes that the Commission has failed to remedy the plan:** the Court can then order the Special Masters to make the minimal adjustments necessary to bring the plan into compliance.
 - The changes made by the Special Masters are not reviewable by the Court.

MAPPING CRITERIA

What are the mapping criteria?

- **First and foremost, each proposed plan must :**
 - contain single-member districts that are geographically contiguous (meaning unbroken)
 - comply with the United States Constitution and federal laws, including the Voting Rights Act of 1965 which prohibits racial gerrymandering.
- **Following that, in order of priority, districts must:**
 - be reasonably equal population based on the most recent federal decennial census,
 - ensure opportunities for racial, ethnic, and language minorities to elect candidates of their choice, and
 - preserve Communities of Interest to the extent practicable.

How are “Communities of Interest” recognized/defined?

- **A Community of Interest (COI) is:** an area with recognized communities of people with broadly shared interests and representational needs, including those that arise from common ethnic, racial, social, cultural, geographic, environmental, socioeconomic, or historic identities or concerns.
- **A community of interest is:** a neighborhood, community, or group of people who have common policy concerns and would benefit from being maintained in a single district.
 - Counties, municipal corporations, townships, and school districts may constitute a Community of Interest but the Communities of Interest are based on testimony.
 - The record before the Commission needs to clearly and convincingly demonstrate that Ohioans consider Communities of Interest as such.
- **When considering which overlapping Communities of Interest to preserve:** the Commission must give greater consideration to those communities whose representational needs will be most benefited from the community’s inclusion in a single district.
 - Under no circumstance shall a Community of Interest be defined based on a shared political identity or common relationships with political parties or political candidates.

What about incumbency?

- The Commission is prohibited from considering the place of residence of an incumbent elected official or candidate.

What about partisan gerrymandering?

- The amendment includes a metric for identifying gerrymandering, proportionality or representational fairness.
 - The amendment requires the districts to “closely correspond” to the statewide partisan preferences, ensuring:
 - the maps don’t unduly favor one political party over others.
- **Some districts will lean towards one major political party; others will lean to the other:** The goal of matching the statewide voting preference provides a benchmark but maps won’t have to be perfectly aligned with the statewide voting patterns.
 - The amendment provides a deviation of three percentage points.

Will this split up communities to achieve some sort of weird partisan fairness goal?

- No.
 - Unfairly split communities are what we have now when politicians draw lines to pick voters to protect themselves.
 - The Citizens Not Politicians Amendment gets politicians out of the process, so we have fair maps that empower voters.

Does this mean every district is required to match the statewide vote split?

- No.
 - This means that the maps in their entirety should reflect and “closely correspond” to the statewide partisan preference of our voters.

[*Adapted from Common Cause Ohio](#)

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