



# Redistricting Forum



## Redrawing the Boundaries: An Ohio Redistricting Discussion

The coming 2010 Census will kick off the next redistricting season, which determines how electoral district lines are drawn and, ultimately, who gets to represent the public in state capitols and Congress. Get a head start in Ohio with these discussions:

✿ **Redistricting 101 with the Brennan Center's Justin Levitt**

The Brennan Center for Justice at New York University School of Law is a non-partisan public policy and law institute that focuses on fundamental issues of democracy and justice.

✿ **Ohio Mapping Project findings with George Mason University's Dr. Michael McDonald**

The United States Elections Project is an information source for the United States electoral system. The mission of the project is to provide timely and accurate election statistics, electoral laws, research reports, and other useful information regarding the United States electoral system.

✿ **Current Redistricting Reform Proposals**

**Monday, March 1, 2010 from 10:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.**

**Auditorium - Downtown Columbus Metropolitan Library**

**95 South Grant Avenue, Columbus OH 43215**

The forum is open to the public, geared in particular toward community leaders, academics, public officials and staff, and concerned citizens.

**The cost is FREE, including a catered lunch.**

**Please RSVP before February 24 by going to**

<http://www.midwestredistricting.org/ohioforum.php>

For questions, please call Leontien Kennedy at 614-221-6077



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## **Martin Gottlieb: Two district-drawing plans have merit**

**Dayton Daily News**

Thursday, February 4, 2010

Remapping Ohio Politics, Chapter 117.

Ohio Democratic Party Chairman Chris Redfern, no friend of the effort to take politics out of the drawing of congressional and legislative districts, says, among other things, that the effort lacks political pizzazz. “You’ll attract about six votes one way or another,” he said. “It’s an issue most Ohioans don’t understand or care to.”

Long experience suggests that’s true.

And yet, really, the issue is pretty simple: If one party can draw the districts, it can maximize its power to a remarkable degree, by concentrating the other party’s reliable voters in a few districts.

If the parties must compromise, that problem is solved. But, still, the parties can collude to make nearly all districts a lock for one party or the other.

However, a way has been found to take the power out of the politicians’ hands, to simply eliminate political motivation in map-drawing.

Last year, Secretary of State Jennifer Brunner sponsored a test contest promoted by a coalition of activists, including the League of Women Voters and Ohio Citizen Action.

Entrants were asked to draw congressional districts for the last decade, under certain rules, using population stats from the 2000 Census. The results were remarkable:

Not only the best entries, but the losing entries had maps that were better than the existing map by any nonpartisan standard. Far more districts were compact (as opposed to gerrymandered), and far more could be won by either party.

The case against reform is dead.

Under Ohio’s current rules, all districts in the state legislature are designed by one party (whichever has two offices out of governor, secretary of state and state auditor after the first election in the decade).

Congressional districts are decided upon the way a law is passed, involving the legislature and the governor.

When last we met, the Republican state Senate had passed a credible reform measure initiated by Sen. Jon Husted, of Kettering. That left the Democratic House and the voters to act. (Reform requires changing the state constitution, which requires a ballot issue.)

Now Democratic leaders of the House have put up a plan. They missed the deadline for getting something on the May ballot, requiring a move to November.

That could doom the whole thing. Partisanship will be at a fever pitch by then; one party is likely to sense victory in races for governor, etc.; that party is unlikely to want reform. If one party turns against it, look out.

What took the Democrats so long is hard to fathom, since they didn’t even have to draw up a plan. They have basically embraced one they were handed by the League and other reformers — all pre-tested and tied in a nice bow — the one used in last year’s contest. But at least there are now two plans in the legislature, and either would be a dramatic improvement.

The Husted plan would have all district shapes determined by a seven-person commission of elected officials. At least two members would have to come from each party. Any plan would need five votes to pass, and two would have to come from each party. That’s all good. But it still allows some leeway for the politicians to coalesce into a bipartisan interest group. The Husted plan does say districts should be compact and competitive, where possible. And it does invite maps from citizens, which could embarrass the politicians into doing right. But it doesn’t offer much of an enforcement mechanism.

The other plan does. It defines competitiveness, compactness and other characteristics in concrete, numerical terms. It invites the public to submit plans in a contest, and it gives points, for example, for every compact district and every competitive one. Between the two plans, that’s the better approach.

Unfortunately, before the Democratic leaders embraced it, they eliminated the congressional element. They have offered no case for that. There is none. They just say that reform will be easier to pass if it isn’t so sweeping. Congressional districts should be added back in. Beyond that, one good compromise would be to create Husted’s commission and have it work under the contest rules.

Reaching that agreement should be the easy part.

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