

Ohio Holds Public Redistricting Competition

Mar 20, 2009

Wayne Hanson

Government Technology

"We must strive in 2009 to ensure that future votes are cast after a redistricting process that is based on the best methods to ensure fair and equitable representation." -- Ohio Secretary of State Jennifer Brunner (pictured)

Redistricting has long been a highly political and always rancorous process that has the potential to empower one political party at the expense of another. Can opening the process to the public make it objective and fair? Ohio is about to find out.

Ohio residents are invited to participate in the Ohio Redistricting Competition, the goal of which is to demonstrate that an open process based on objective criteria can produce fair legislative districts in Ohio.

Ohio Redistricting Competition partners include Former Republican State Representative Joan Lawrence, Linda Lalley of the League of Women Voters of Ohio, State Representative Dan Stewart, Ohio Citizen Action, and Common Cause Ohio. They were joined today by Ohio Secretary of State Jennifer Brunner in announcing timelines and logistics for the historic contest. The competition will begin on April 6, 2009, and the winners will be announced on May 11, 2009.

"The Ohio Redistricting Competition demonstrates our shared commitment to bipartisan solutions for Ohio's challenges. Just as we worked in 2008 to ensure that every vote was counted, we must strive in 2009 to ensure that future votes are cast after a redistricting process that is based on the best methods to ensure fair and equitable representation," Secretary of State Jennifer Brunner said.

Redistricting Logistics

- Dr. Mark Salling of Cleveland State University has agreed to serve as the project manager for the Ohio Redistricting Competition. Salling's role includes crafting the technical user's manual, holding training, creating the database for redistricting, and scoring the plans submitted.
- ArcGIS and the Redistricting add-on have been selected as the mapping software for the competition.
- The Ohio State University has graciously agreed to provide access to ArcGIS and Redistricting software through a secure online link. Redistricting contestants will have free access to this software, along with training prior to the competition. IT professionals at Cleveland State University and The Ohio State University are currently finalizing technical testing for this feature.
- The Ohio Secretary of State's Office will host www.ohioredistricting.org, an online gateway to learn about the competition, sign up to compete and offer feedback on the scoring criteria. The soft launch of the site this weekend precedes a feature-rich rollout over the next two weeks.

- Competition partners have released specific rules for the competition, including eligibility standards, scoring criteria, and overall scoring formula. These items are available in the Ohio Redistricting Competition Rules Manual at www.ohio-redistricting.org.