

Tom Letson
State Representative
64th Ohio House District



Jennifer Garrison
State Representative
93rd Ohio House District

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Sponsor Testimony
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Chairman Stewart, Vice Chair Okey, Ranking Member Mecklenborg, ladies and gentlemen of the committee, I would like to thank you for having Representative Garrison and I here today to give sponsor testimony for House Joint Resolution 15, or the House Reapportionment Reform Plan.

The House Reapportionment Reform Plan would amend the Ohio Constitution to revise the process of apportioning the state for General Assembly districts. We believe that this plan will create accountable and competitive elections and make the process of reapportionment more open and transparent while continuing to protect Ohio's communities and the voting rights of minorities.

In order to demonstrate this to you, please allow me to take you through the reapportionment process that this legislation proposes.

The Ohio Apportionment Board will administer an open public competition for drawing legislative districts. The Board would retain its current membership and all meetings would be to the public.

The steps of administering the competition are as follows:

1. The Apportionment Board sets the calendar of the competition and releases the most current census data and political data that utilizes the three most competitive statewide races of the last ten years (including Presidential and Senate races). The average of the political data will determine that Statewide Partisan Index. At the same time the Board will provide the public with the necessary means to participate in the competition such as online software, etc.
2. The Apportionment Board collects all eligible plans. In order to be eligible all plans must be submitted by an Ohio resident (who may only submit one House and one Senate plan), must draw 99 House seats and 33 Senate seats, must be contiguous, must be within 5% of population averages, match the same seat allocations as the Statewide Partisan Index, and must follow all other rules and guidelines; including federal rules and protection of minority voting rights.
3. Once all eligible plans have been submitted they will be ranked first on representational fairness, which measures the balance of partisanship through competitive ranges. Therefore the plans that rank highest will have districts that "mirror" each other in terms of partisan breakdown.
4. The remaining plans will then be ranked by political competitiveness, defined as the plans with the most seats in the 50-51% partisan index range.

5. The remaining plans will then be ranked by political subdivisions. The plans with the least amount of divided political subdivisions will be ranked highest.
6. The final remaining plans will be then be ranked on compactness, defined by the area of each district divided by its perimeter. The highest rank plan in this category will then win the competition.
7. Upon final selection of the House plan, the Board will conduct the same competition of the senate, with the caveat that each Senate district be composed of three contiguous House districts.

The House Reapportionment Reform Plan takes the politics out of the reapportionment process by providing specific criteria for how district lines are to be drawn. This in turn makes each district more competitive. Having competitive districts is unarguably fair for the citizens of Ohio, who should be reassured that when they elect a person to represent them that person will be responsive to their issues and needs.

This plan also increases transparency in the reapportionment process to an unprecedented level. Sunlight is the best disinfectant. By making this process open to the public and allowing Ohioans to actively participate we will ensure that political gamesmanship is severely limited when redrawing the maps. Again, this is only fair to the citizens of Ohio who should not have to leave the decision-making to three members of the Apportionment Board who act behind closed doors. It is time that this process comes out into the open.

The final point I would like to make about the House Reapportionment Reform Plan is that it protects Ohio's communities by penalizing plans that break them apart. It also ensures that Ohio's minorities are protected by requiring that plans follow federal minority rights guidelines.

Chairman Stewart, Vice Chair Okey, Ranking Member Mecklenborg, ladies and gentlemen of the committee, thank you again for having us here today in order to offer sponsor testimony for House Joint Resolution 15, the House Reapportionment Reform Plan. I urge you to strongly consider this plan in order to ensure that all Ohioans can be confident that their elected officials' main goal is to serve and protect their constituents.

We would be happy to answer any questions you may have at this time.



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