

AIR TIME

An Update On Redistricting Reform

by Bill Woods for StreetVibes, 2017

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Applied Information Resources is a non-profit, public policy research and community information organization dedicated to:

- Citizen education on public issues.
- Assisting human service organizations in evaluating their programs, and
- Providing the best possible information to decision makers responding to changing human and urban needs.

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A real grassroots initiative is underway in Ohio. A campaign to establish a new process for drawing Congressional district lines every ten years has attracted the support of citizen activists throughout the state. Veteran reformers are amazed by the number of volunteers involved and the number of signatures already collected to get the reform proposal on the ballot.

After working behind the scenes for more than a year, the reform groups that comprise the Fair Districts Equal Elections Coalition decided this spring to go public with their proposal. They had already produced a plan for Congressional redistricting reform, and after determining the Ohio General Assembly

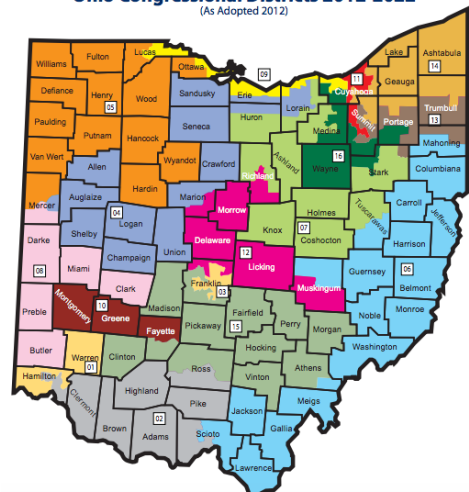
would not put it on the ballot, they drafted a citizen initiative to amend the State's Constitution. Faced with revising the summary of the proposal this May for Attorney General Mike DeWine, the Coalition was ready to begin collecting signatures by June.

Between June and early July, the initiative campaign really took off. Utilizing only unpaid citizen volunteers,

proposed amendment for the ballot (ten percent of the votes cast in the last gubernatorial election). It also includes signature gathering in all eighty-eight Ohio counties, and the involvement of over 2,400 volunteers. "This is incredible," declared Carrie Davis of the Ohio League of Women Voters. "Historically, Ohio initiatives have gathered from 5 to 20 percent of their signatures

o v e r 100,000 valid signatures were collected. This total amounts to a p p r o x i m a t e l y one-third of the 305,591 signatures needed to qualify the

Ohio Congressional Districts 2012-2022 (As Adopted 2012)



Update On Redistricting Reform

(Continued from page 1)

using volunteers, having to rely on paid circulators to collect the rest." Since the goal is to place the proposal on the November 2018 ballot, the Coalition has more than ten months to collect the rest of the signatures from the pool of registered Ohio voters.

What has stimulated this impressive volunteer participation

by citizens throughout Ohio? When asked this question, Catherine Turcer of Common Cause/Ohio pointed to two factors. "The extreme gerrymandering carried out by the Republicans in 2011," noted Turcer, "made average people much more aware of this unfair process. When given the chance to fix the boundaries for state legislators, 71 percent of the voters favored the reform amendment in 2015."

Collecting signatures and educating the public about the need for redistricting reform will continue in the coming months. In

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Turcer's second reason focused on the current political climate. "Many citizen activists are quite unsettled by what is now going on in Washington, D.C. They are looking for something positive to do," she said, "and working to bring about a process that will provide Ohioans with fair Congressional districts fills that bill."

Cincinnati, to pick up or drop off a petition, call the League of Women Voters (513- 281-8683) or Applied Information Resources (513-381-4994). To get an overview of how the campaign is going, go to fairdistricts.org.

Why Redistricting Matters

The way district lines are redrawn dictates who comprises a Congressional district. District lines determine how communities are represented, in whole or in part, and whether neighbors vote in the same races and are represented by the same Congressperson. District lines can influence who can win the next election and, therefore, who holds political power. In the past twenty years, there have been significant efforts to

repair the redistricting process. "While the vast majority of states continue to use the state legislature for drawing districts, there is a growing trend for states to use alternative approaches to map drawing. Citizen-driven ballot initiatives sparked redistricting reform in Arizona in 2000 and in California in 2008 and 2010. Since then, New York in 2014 and Ohio in 2015 also have adopt-

ed various types of reforms." "[Who Draws the Maps? Legislative and Congressional Redistricting,](#) Brennan Center for Justice (April 14, 2017).

Preview of Upcoming Community Issues Forums



The forums are held in the Christ Church Cathedral's third floor Forum Room, unless otherwise noted, and they are generally held twice a month on Thursdays at noon. They are free and open to all.

Thursday , September 21 2017 Mayor John Cranley will make his case for reelection to this office. "

Thursday , September 28 Council member Yvette Simpson will explain why she has the necessary credentials to replace the current Mayor.

Thursday , October 12. New City of Cincinnati Council Candidates.

Thursday , October 19th. New City of Cincinnati Council Candidates. con't.

Thursday , October 26th State and local Ballot Issues

Thursday , November 9 TBD

Thursday , November 30 TBD

Thursday , December 14th. TBD

Come join us for these Forums, and do bring a friend. Lunch can be purchased for \$6.50, or you can bring a brown bag. Parking is available in the garage of the building across the street from the Cathedral on 4th Street between Broadway and Sycamore. For video clips of past Forums, go to www.airinc.org.

CONTRIBUTIONS HELP AIR, INC. WITH COMMUNITY WORK

AIR depends on individual contributions to support our work. We are a charitable 501(c (3) organization and your contributions help fund such projects as campaign finance reform, political reform and studies in racism and homelessness in Cincinnati. We invite you to assist us as AIR takes on community issues and challenges.

\$500 \$100 \$50 \$25

Make your tax-deductible checks **payable to: AIR, Inc.** and send to:

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