

Public Comments October 19, 2021
Nonpartisan Independent Council Fair Districting Commission

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Greetings from League of Women Voters. In our October 5, public comments, we described our interest in the Commission's redistricting process, citing our redistricting expertise, and we conveyed our criteria for fair and legal redistricting as an independent assessment. From our observation the Commission is providing exemplary service to the citizens of Summit County in the decennial redistricting process that produces a fair and legal representational map. Your adherence to Ohio's Sunshine Laws and efforts to enhance the laws with best practices is appreciated and noted. You have thoroughly researched and addressed 2020 Census data and Charter requirements for drawing districts with special attention to minority representation which League heartily supports.

The legal deadline to approve the draft map is December 28, 2021. The Commission has intimated that unless there are objections to the draft map they are ready to approve it. We have reviewed the draft map proposal and monitored public outreach efforts to encourage engagement. We ask the Commission to consider the following points before approving the map:

1. In the Principles cited in the Charter that guide map drawing there are three broadly defined variances beyond the list of specific criteria. Because these variances can create map boundaries that seem questionable, we recommend a descriptive narrative for each district that can explain factors that influence the boundaries. For example, we understand that the small blue spot of District 8 that appears to be a gerrymander into District 7, actually is a part of Coventry Township and should be included in District 8. A brief explanation should eliminate any cause for question.
2. October 12th and October 17th Akron Beacon Journal coverage of the Commission's current activity is helpful. The Commission's public feedback link is in both editions. The October 17th editorial shows the draft map in the online edition only and there is no published link to the map or the Commission's website in the online or hard copy editions. There remains a gap in how the public can access the draft map.

With regard to these points and given that the deadline to approve the map is late December, we ask the following:

- Delay approval of the map for at least two more weeks; and
- provide weekly media releases in various publications that inform the public of the feedback link and provide direct links to the maps; include the Commission website address; and
- consider developing a new webpage link that shows a side-by-side display of the current map and draft map; and
- consider narrative descriptors be added to each district that explain necessary variances.

Thank you for your service in this important duty. Your time, effort and talent are very much appreciated.