

Testimony of Susan Fudurich (Allegheny Regional Hearing)

I am a 20-year resident of Beaver County and former small business owner. I have voted in almost every election in which I have been eligible. I am in the 17th Congressional district.

Three years ago, I attended a presentation by Fair Districts PA about the extent of gerrymandering in Pennsylvania and the real damage that results. I learned that gerrymandering has become increasingly sophisticated, enabling the carving of districts with surgical precision so that legislators choose their voters instead of the other way around. Proof of this was the Turzai data map and analysis provided by reporters and good-government groups.

Like most people, I knew that gerrymandering had always existed. I sort of shrugged at the behavior for a few reasons-- 1. I know that the temptation to gain advantage is not easily ignored-- certainly when there are minimal to no prohibitions against it, and 2. I really didn't think it was done to a degree that made certain legislators unbeatable. I don't shrug with indifference anymore.

I am angry that certain voices are intentionally marginalized. I want a commitment from the House State Government Committee to disavow the interests of political parties, incumbents and candidates in drawing the new Congressional map, and instead crowd-source ideas that keep citizens' interests at the forefront.

Tonight (August 18) I attended another Fair Districts PA presentation – a Statewide Mapping Conversation conducted via Zoom to hear from winning mappers who drew maps to specifications included in HB 22 currently sitting in the State Government Committee awaiting a vote.

This gathering of more than 100 people is a model for how the General Assembly should approach the task.

We were presented several maps and heard from mappers their thoughts on what the trade-offs were in maximizing various criteria. Then we broke into smaller groups aligning with where we reside, and we gave feed-back. Everyone in my break-out group, including the mapper whose map we examined agreed that the conversation was valuable for both mapper and viewers.

In order to best take advantage of the collective good ideas of Pennsylvanians, I ask that the committee:

1. Begin with a blank map. Do not use existing district cores as a basis for the new map.
2. Do not construct districts around the home addresses of incumbents.
3. Adhere to requirements as prescribed by legal precedent and applicable federal laws.
4. Consider regional similarities as the basis for district cores.
5. Publish all data being used by your mapper and announce the criteria by which the map is to be drawn. I suggest limiting political bias, and prioritizing competitiveness where possible.
6. Please make all citizen maps and comments easily accessed by the public on the redistricting website. The ability to create tags and search by key words is a must.

7. Allow adequate time for citizen review and critique of the preliminary map and provide explanation for any deviations from stated criteria.
8. Allow adequate time for citizen review and critique of any revised map.

I do not want to see the Congressional map decided by litigation. Please approach this important task in good faith, and with full transparency.