

Amended Senate Joint Resolution 1, which I sponsored with Senator Sawyer, will change the way we draw legislative district maps for the General Assembly and Congressional districts. The current process for drawing legislative districts is unsustainable because it fails to meet the expectations of Ohioans. For years, an ever growing number of citizens have been calling for reform to what is effectively a winner-take-all methodology for crafting districts. The time has come for us to hear their voices and act. While there is no perfect solution, nor is there a magic formula which will yield the district lines which everyone will find acceptable, the resolution instead creates a system which will compel statesmen and women to work together to draw fair and straightforward district maps which don't disproportionately benefit one party or another.

Last General Assembly, a bipartisan group of legislators came together to reform the way we draw our district lines. After working diligently with my colleagues for many months, the Senate voted 32-1 on a bipartisan set of reforms. We were able to pass SJR 5 out of the Senate during the 129<sup>th</sup> General Assembly, but the job is not finished.

SJR 1 creates a seven-member Ohio Redistricting Commission that consists of the Governor, Auditor of State, Secretary of State, and one person each appointed from the Speaker and Minority Leader in the House and the President and Minority Leader in the Senate. At the Commission's first meeting, the members will convene to select co-chairpersons, one of whom must be a member of the minority party. The reforms in this resolution provide that no appointed member of the Commission may be a current member of the General Assembly. This resolution requires all of the Commission's meetings to be open to the public and broadcast by electronic means.

This commission would be responsible for both state and federal legislative districts. A super majority vote, with at least one minority vote, is required to pass a map. The resolution requires that standards must be adhered to for compactness, contiguity, while maintaining "communities of interest" and abiding by all state and federal requirements, such as the Voting Rights Act. It prohibits any individual district from being drawn primarily with the intent to favor or disfavor a political party. These reforms eliminate a current requirement that district boundaries established in a prior redistricting be adopted to the extent that they are reasonably consistent with the redistricting requirements. This resolution requires the population of each House district to be substantially equal to the ratio of representation in the House of Representatives; and that the population of each Senate District be substantially equal to the ratio of representation the Senate. Because this process requires compromise and consensus, we took great pains to avoid a formulaic and one size fits all approach to redistricting.

Amended SJR1 was unanimously recommended for passage by the Senate Government Oversight and Reform Committee on July 26, 2013 by a vote of 10 to 0.

Now is the time to take up the matter of redistricting. The closer we get to 2021 and the closer we get to the statewide elections which precede the next census, the more difficult it will become to enact real, bipartisan reform on redistricting. It is important that we debate and discuss this important issue and then it is crucial that we act to legislatively refer a constitutional amendment which creates a fair and bipartisan redistricting process well in advance of the next decennial census and subsequent round of redistricting.