

Issue 1 in Ohio

Adam McClure*

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On Saturday, October 5, 2024, I was looking at the sample ballot that I will be receiving when voting. After looking at the candidates, I decided to look at the issues, starting with Issue 1: the issue whose description takes up an entire page on the sample ballot and will redistrict the state. So, I asked about it in the following post with plans to also do my own research on the topic and later posted that I was going to write this article.^{1 2} The promotional material on the topic that I was seeing online, however, was contradictory. How exactly does voting "yes" supposedly ban gerrymandering, but voting no also supposedly bans gerrymandering? The truth is that the issue whose original proposal was created by the progressivist organization @CitizenMapsOH is intended to repeal articles XI and XIX and to enact article XX of the Constitution of the State of Ohio. A majority yes vote will be necessary for the amendment to pass. I also decided to see what people on X were saying about issue 1 to see if I could find any posts that tell us to vote yes since my previous searches consisted of posts that were saying to vote against the issue, according to the viewpoints of the Right. Here are some of the results. This video is from Ohio Citizen Action (@OHIOcitizenact), a progressivist organization that advocates for abortion, contraception, and in vitro fertilization among other issues according to the interpretations and viewpoints of the Left.³ The following video was published by a supporter of the issue: <https://x.com/RachelCoyleOhio/status/1842929407717150838>. And the following is a video that is against the passing of the issue: <https://x.com/MamaButterBean/status/1842735560311316826>. However, I decided that the best way to present the counterargument that one should vote against the issue was to simply discuss the text of the certified notes as they are written. To avoid having to type out an entire page of text, I found it on its corresponding article on Ballotpedia⁴ which was "quoted verbatim from the original source" as mentioned in the footnotes. The only adjustments that I made was that I bolded and italicized the portions of the text that I said in the post will be included here and that contribute to my personal doubts regarding this issue that led to the writing of both the posts and this article.

*adam@adam-mcclure.com

¹<https://x.com/adammcc642/status/1842823817950831028>

²<https://x.com/adammcc642/status/1843017000114671911>

³<https://x.com/OHIOcitizenact/status/1833599137721290922>

⁴[https://ballotpedia.org/Ohio_Issue_1,_Establish_the_Citizens_Redistricting_Commission_Initiative_\(2024\)](https://ballotpedia.org/Ohio_Issue_1,_Establish_the_Citizens_Redistricting_Commission_Initiative_(2024))

Issue 1

To create an appointed redistricting commission not elected by or subject to removal by the voters of the state

Proposed Constitutional Amendment

Proposed by Initiative Petition

To repeal Sections 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 10 of Article XI, Repeal sections 1, 2 and 3 of Article XIX,

And enact Sections 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11 and 12 of Article XX of the Constitution of the State of Ohio

A majority yes vote is necessary for the amendment to pass.

The proposed amendment would:

1. Repeal constitutional protections against gerrymandering approved by nearly three-quarters of Ohio electors participating in the statewide elections of 2015 and 2018, and eliminate the longstanding ability of Ohio citizens to hold their representatives accountable for establishing fair state legislative and congressional districts.
2. Establish a new taxpayer-funded commission of appointees required to gerrymander the boundaries of state legislative and congressional districts to favor either of the two largest political parties in the state of Ohio, according to a formula based on partisan outcomes as the dominant factor, so that:
 - A. Each district shall contain single-member districts that are geographically contiguous, but state legislative and congressional districts will no longer be required to be compact; and
 - B. Counties, townships and cities throughout Ohio can be split and divided across multiple districts, and preserving communities of interest will be secondary to the formula that is based on partisan political outcomes.
3. Require that a majority of the partisan commission members belong to the state's two largest political parties.
4. Prevent a commission member from being removed, except by a vote of their fellow commission members, even for incapacity, willful neglect of duty or gross misconduct.
5. Prohibit any citizen from filing a lawsuit challenging a redistricting plan in any court, except if the lawsuit challenges the proportionality standard applied by the commission, requirements pertaining to an incumbent elected official's residence, or the expiration of certain senators' terms, and then only before the Ohio Supreme Court.
6. Create the following process for appointing commission mem-

bers: Four partisan appointees on the Ohio Ballot Board will choose a panel of 4 partisan retired judges (2 affiliated with the first major political party and 2 affiliated with the second major political party). Provide that the 4 legislative appointees of the Ohio Ballot Board would be responsible for appointing the panel members as follows: the Ballot Board legislative appointees affiliated with the same major political party would select 8 applicants and present those to the Ballot Board legislative appointees affiliated with the other major political party, who would then select 2 persons from the 8 for appointment to the panel, resulting in 4 panel appointees. The panel would then hire a private professional search firm to help them choose 6 of the 15 individuals on the commission. The panel will choose those 6 individuals by initially creating a pool of 90 individuals (30 from the first major political party, 30 from the second major political party, and 30 from neither the first nor second major political parties). The panel of 4 partisan retired judges will create a portal for public comment on the applicants and will conduct and publicly broadcast interviews with each applicant in the pool. The panel will then narrow the pool of 90 individuals down to 45 (15 from the first major political party; 15 from the second major political party; and 15 from neither the first nor second major political parties). Randomly, by draw, the 4 partisan retired judges will then blindly select 6 names out of the pool of 45 to be members of the commission (2 from the first major political party; 2 from the second major political party; and 2 from neither the first nor second major political parties). The 6 randomly drawn individuals will then review the applications of the remaining 39 individuals not randomly drawn and select the final 9 individuals to serve with them on the commission, the majority of which shall be from the first and the second major political parties (3 from the first major political party, 3 from the second major political party, and 3 from neither the first nor second major political parties).

7. Require the affirmative votes of 9 of 15 members of the appointed commission to create legislative and congressional districts. If the commission is not able to determine a plan by September 19, 2025, or July 15 of every year ending in one, the following impasse procedure will be used: for any plan at an impasse, each commissioner shall have 3 days to submit no more than one proposed redistricting plan to be subject to a commission vote through a ranked-choice selection process, with the goal of having a majority of the commission members rank one of those plans first. If a majority cannot be obtained, the plan with the highest number of points in the ranked-choice process is eliminated, and the process is repeated until a plan receives a majority of first-place rankings. If the ranked-choice process ends in a tie for the highest point total, the tie shall be broken

through a random process.

8. Limit the right of Ohio citizens to freely express their opinions to members of the commission or to commission staff regarding the redistricting process or proposed redistricting plans, other than through designated meetings, hearings and an online public portal, and would forbid communication with the commission members and staff outside those contexts.

9. Require the commission to immediately create new legislative and congressional districts in 2025 to replace the most recent districts adopted by the citizens of Ohio through their elected representatives.

10. Impose new taxpayer-funded costs on the State of Ohio to pay the commission members, the commission staff and appointed special masters, professionals, and private consultants that the commission is required to hire; and an unlimited amount for legal expenses incurred by the commission in any related litigation.

If approved, the amendment will be effective 30 days after the election.

SHALL THE AMENDMENT BE APPROVED?

Many of these paragraphs, such as the sixth and seventh, consist primarily of the bureaucratic process of creating the new districts.

Paragraph 6 requires the process of selecting partisan appointees who select partisan judges who select partisan applicants who create a series of panels from a pool of partisan applicants who hire a private search firm to appoint more partisan members to the commission by creating a pool of 90 individuals that consists of 30 Democrats, Republicans and Independents in each group, and eventually reducing it down to a group of 45 people that consists of 15 people from each group and then to 6 individuals with 3 from each group who then review the 39 partisan individuals who were not selected for the group of 5 who then select 9 individuals to serve on the commission with them, with three Democrats, 3 Republicans and 3 Independents.

Paragraph 7 requires the affirmative vote of 9 of 15 members of the commission to create new districts by September 19, 2025 and afterwards on every July 15 of every year that ends with a one and, if an impasse is to occur, that each appointed commissioner has three days to submit plans that they vote on through a ranked-choice process until a plan receives a majority of first-place rankings unless there is a tie in which a random process will be used to break the tie.

However, there are the bolded and italicized sections that I wish to paraphrase below:

Paragraph 1 *abolishes all protections against gerrymandering* that we currently have along with the process of holding our representatives accountable for establishing legislative and congressional districts.

Paragraph 2 *requires the use of gerrymandering* in the creation of new districts as based on "partisan outcomes".

Paragraph 4 states that the unelected commissioners will be paid by us but will never be subject to removal by us, but exclusively by the other commissioners. This includes cases of *incapacity, willful neglect of duty or gross misconduct*.

Paragraph 5 states that *we are prohibited from filing a lawsuit to challenge any aspect of the redistricting plan in any court* unless it is to challenge the proportionality standard, requirements pertaining to the residence of an incumbent official or the expiration of the term of a senator if and only if it is brought before the Supreme Court of Ohio.

Paragraph 8 *restricts our right to freely express our opinions* to members of the commission or to commission staff regarding the redistricting process or proposed plans outside of designated meetings, hearings and an online public portal and to forbid communication with the commission members and staff outside those contexts.

Paragraph 10 *imposes new taxpayer-funded costs* to pay the commission members, the commission staff, the appointed special masters, professionals, and private consultants along with an unlimited amount of the taxpayer's money to pay for their legal expenses incurred in any litigation.

I was thinking that this article was ready to publish after writing this section, but then I decided to know who the organization had proposed would appoint the initial appointees, and from there, I found that, despite being called "Citizens Not Politicians", the initial group who would appoint the first group of appointees is the Ohio General Assembly, or... the politicians, as Article XX, Section 2 B 1 states:

The four members of the Ohio ballot board who were appointed by members of *the general assembly* shall convene to oversee selection of the bipartisan screening panel. All administrative and operational support for this selection shall be provided by the Department of Administrative Services.

Even worse is the fact that the appointees and the bureaucratic nightmare that would occur throughout the formation process aren't even accountable to the general assembly that appointed them in the first place!

Citizens Not Politicians presented the issue as giving Power to the People, but if they wanted "Power to the People", they would have made it so that the people of the state would be able to remove the commissioners for any possible gross misconduct or willful neglect of duty since they were talking about being able to vote out the members of the general assembly in the promotional videos. Why the double standard?

If Issue 1 will pass in November, we will be paying for the creation of a new commission, but they will be appointing themselves, will be accountable to nobody but themselves, and will not be able to be removed by anybody but themselves. How corrupt and inefficient will a commission be when it can simply

ignore the citizens of this state and when they are making decisions knowing well that they can do whatever they want, whenever they want, and however they want without having to worry about the possibility of facing removal.

Is this the future that we want for our state? Because this is not what I want to see for Ohio, hence one of the multiple reasons that I decided to get more involved in politics and more willing to discuss my religious and political beliefs. I will be discussing the other reasons for both why I'm getting involved in politics and the reasons as to why I have these political views in my upcoming articles.

Godspeed.