

What is the competition?

The goal of the Ohio Redistricting Competition is to demonstrate that an open process based on objective criteria can produce fair legislative districts in Ohio. During the competition, it is our belief that a robust public conversation about the process can occur, leading to the development of the best possible redistricting recommendations for consideration by the Ohio General Assembly.

The Ohio Redistricting Competition represents the culmination of over nine months of planning amongst the League of Women Voters of Ohio (LWVO), Ohio Citizen Action, Common Cause, Ohio Secretary of State Jennifer Brunner, Former State Representative Joan Lawrence, and State Representative Dan Stewart.

What criteria will be used?

In crafting proposed redistricting criteria, competition partners paid special attention to the need for balance between traditional redistricting principles long recognized by courts and modern redistricting principles that can help achieve fairer districts in Ohio. In the competition, these principles will be applied in a quantifiable manner to each proposed congressional plan. To that end, the following criteria were proposed:

Compactness. Sometimes referred to as the “look” of a district, compactness assures that bizarrely-shaped legislative districts are minimized. This measure helps promote fair representation within a district.

Communities of Interest. Counties, municipalities, and other government boundaries give Ohioans a sense of place and shared interests. This measure seeks to minimize counties divided between districts, while opening a dialogue about the role of municipal, township and other community divisions given the rapid growth of suburban and exurban communities in Ohio.

Competitiveness. Our democracy thrives when the marketplace of ideas is truly competitive, especially on Election Day. This measure seeks to maximize the number of legislative districts that could be won by either party, providing Ohioans with a stronger voice in choosing their representatives.

Representational Fairness. The counterbalance for competitiveness is assuring that a final redistricting plan does not unfairly bias one party over another. This measure seeks to minimize this outcome by comparing the partisan bias of legislative districts to the real world voting history of Ohioans.

Before a plan can be considered, three legal thresholds must be met:

Population equality. Federal case law requires that districts be as equal in population as possible.

Contiguity. All districts must be contiguous, meaning that every part of a district must be reachable from every other part without crossing the district's borders. "Point contiguity" or "touch-point contiguity" are not permitted.

National Voting Rights Act. All plans must provide for at least one majority-minority congressional district, in keeping with federal law and case law.

How will plans be scored?

Each plan can earn up to 75 total points – 25 points for the most compact, 25 points for the most preservation of communities of interest, 12.5 points for the most competitiveness, and 12.5 points for the most representational fairness. Plans will be scored and rank-ordered for these criteria. All plans will be ranked based on their total points and the top 25% plans will qualify as competition winners. However, any plan that scores in the lowest 25% of a category will be disqualified.

Additional details regarding the mechanics of the competition will be released the week of March 16, 2009.

Who is administering the competition?

The organizations requested that the office of the Ohio Secretary of State administer the competition. The office is, in turn, finalizing a contract with an independent consultant to develop materials, provide technical training, and conduct all plan scoring. This will provide an additional layer of confidence in the competition.