

OAJ's explanation of SJR 5
Proposed constitutional amendment on Congressional redistricting
Appearing on the May 8 primary election ballot
February 14, 2018

Please note that SJR 5, the proposed constitutional amendment, governs Congressional redistricting. A reform of the process of drawing Ohio's state legislative districts was enacted in 2015 when voters overwhelmingly approved a constitutional amendment. That 2015 reform was the basis for discussions on SJR 5.

Note, too, that both the state redistricting reform and the congressional redistricting reform, if approved by voters, won't apply until the 2022 elections following the 2020 census.

The congressional redistricting reform proposal calls for a three-tiered process in which the General Assembly, then the Ohio Redistricting Commission and then the General Assembly once again will attempt to draw a 10-year map.

In the first phase, approval of a map requires a supermajority of both chambers - including the support of 50% of the minority party.

If the legislature is unable to secure a supermajority for a map, then the 7-member Ohio Redistricting Commission would try to draw a 10-year map, but it must gain the support of two minority party members. The Commission is comprised of the Governor, the state auditor, the secretary of state, and four lawmakers, two Republicans and two Democrats, with two being state Representatives and the other two state Senators.

If the Commission fails, the task falls back on the General Assembly. Lawmakers in that case must pass a 10-year map with at least one-third minority party support and must explain how the map complies with various portions of the law, including those limiting the number of splits.

Should lawmakers fail again to craft a 10-year plan, they would then enact a four-year map by a simple majority under new, stricter criteria. Those criteria include that the map:

- May not favor or disfavor a political party or its incumbents.
- Shall not "unduly split governmental units, giving preference to keeping whole in the order named: counties, then townships and municipal corporations."
- Strive for compactness.

If a four-year map is passed, the process would start over from the beginning to create a six-year map to close out that 10-year census period.