



**OHIO:**

# How Distorted Districts Lead to Distorted Laws

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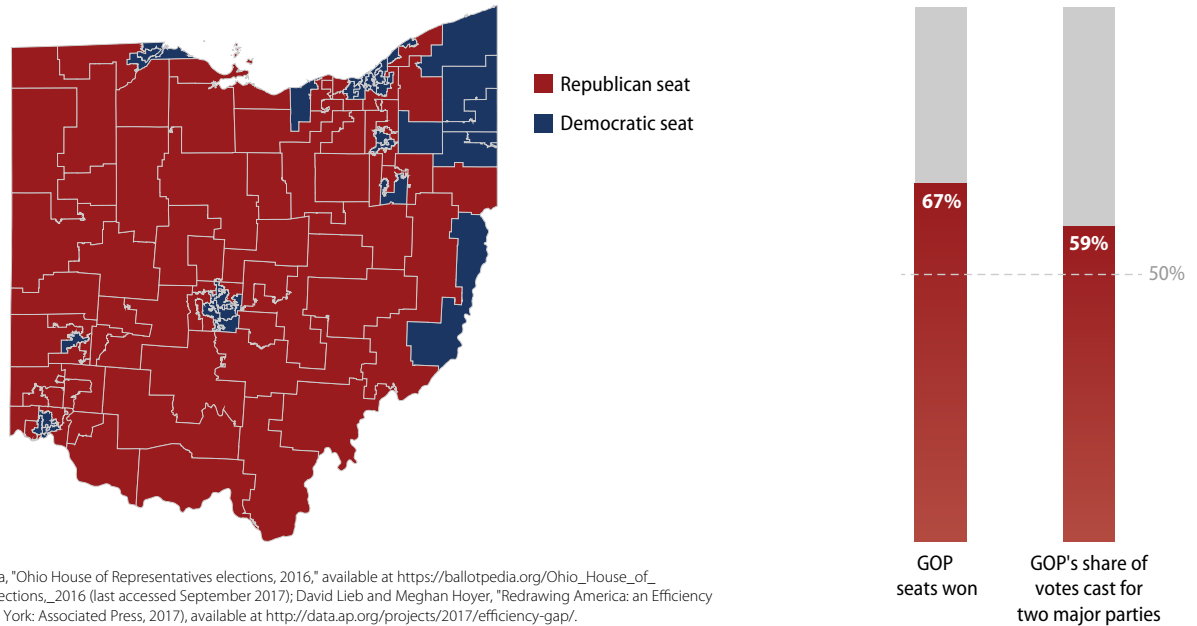
The principle of “one person, one vote” requires states to redraw their election districts every 10 years in order to account for changes in population.<sup>1</sup> In most states, legislators can manipulate district boundaries to benefit their own political party.<sup>2</sup> This manipulation, called gerrymandering, weakens voters’ ability to affect election outcomes and exercise accountability over government. Distorted election districts lead to skewed representation and legislators who are less responsive to the will of the voters.

A commission chosen by four elected Republican officials and one Democrat redrew Ohio’s election districts in 2011.<sup>3</sup> In the following year, the election saw Democrats winning the aggregate popular vote for the state House and Senate but Republicans securing majorities in both chambers.<sup>4</sup> The Legislature—insulated from accountability through gerrymandering—is still considering bills to reverse the expansion:

- **Medicaid expansion:** Nearly two-thirds of Ohio residents favor expanding Medicaid under the Affordable Care Act, but the state Legislature passed a bill earlier this year to halt the governor’s expansion.<sup>5</sup> More than 700,000 low-income people gained access to health care insurance through Ohio’s Medicaid expansion.<sup>6</sup>
- **Civil rights:** The vast majority of Ohioans also support civil rights laws that protect LGBT people from discrimination,<sup>7</sup> yet the Legislature has repeatedly refused to take up the issue.<sup>8</sup>
- **Tax fairness:** A 2015 poll found that 61 percent of Ohio voters support raising taxes on the wealthy in order to lower them for others,<sup>9</sup> but recent tax cuts disproportionately benefit the wealthy.<sup>10</sup>
- **Minimum wage:** An even larger majority—75 percent—wants an increase in the minimum wage.<sup>11</sup> This did not stop the gerrymandered Legislature from passing a bill to prohibit local increases in the minimum wage.<sup>12</sup>
- **Gun violence prevention:** Ohio voters overwhelmingly support universal background checks for gun purchases—83 percent, according to a 2013 poll.<sup>13</sup> However, legislators rejected a bill requiring background checks and instituting other gun violence prevention measures.<sup>14</sup>

**FIGURE 7**  
**Distorted districts in Ohio**

Fifty-nine percent of voters chose Republican candidates for the Ohio House of Representatives in 2016, but the GOP secured a supermajority of seats



## Endnotes

- 1 *Reynolds v. Sims*, 377 U.S. 533 (1964).
- 2 Christopher Ingraham, "This is actually what America would look like without gerrymandering," *The Washington Post*, January 13, 2016, available at [https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2016/01/13/this-is-actually-what-america-would-look-like-without-gerrymandering/?utm\\_term=.8d2318ba5cbf](https://www.washingtonpost.com/news/wonk/wp/2016/01/13/this-is-actually-what-america-would-look-like-without-gerrymandering/?utm_term=.8d2318ba5cbf).
- 3 Aaron Marshall, "Redistricting Gets Rolling In Ohio With Republicans Holding the Pen," *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, August 6, 2011, available at [http://www.cleveland.com/open/index.ssf/2011/08/redistricting\\_gets\\_rolling\\_in.html](http://www.cleveland.com/open/index.ssf/2011/08/redistricting_gets_rolling_in.html).
- 4 Stephen Wolf, "One key reason why Republicans dominate in state legislatures: They drew most of the districts," *Daily Kos*, November 26, 2016, available at <https://www.dailykos.com/stories/2016/11/26/1599841/-One-key-reason-why-Republicans-so-dominant-in-state-legislatures-They-drew-most-of-the-districts>.
- 5 Voice of the People and University of Maryland Program for Public Consultation, "Americans on Fixing U.S. Poverty Programs" (2017), available at [http://vop.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Medicaid\\_Expansion\\_Quaire.pdf](http://vop.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/04/Medicaid_Expansion_Quaire.pdf).
- 6 *Ibid.*
- 7 Daniel Cox, Juhem Navarro-Rivera, and Robert P. Jones, "The 2013 Ohio Values Survey" (Washington: Public Religion Research Institute, 2013), available at <https://www.prrri.org/research/2013-ohio-values-survey/#.VaQh-fIViko>; Equality Ohio, "Anti-Discrimination Legislation Introduced in the Ohio House and Senate with Bi-Partisan Support," Press release, May 10, 2013, available at <http://www.equalityohio.org/anti-discrimination-legislation-introduced-in-the-ohio-house-and-senate-with-bi-partisan-support/>.
- 8 American Civil Liberties Union of Ohio, "LGBT Rights Legislation, HB 163—Equal Housing and Employment Act (2013-2014)," available at <http://www.acluohio.org/archives/legislation/2013-2014-hb-163> (last accessed September 2017); Joshua Lim, "Lawmakers unwilling to move LGBT anti-discrimination bill," *WCPO Cincinnati*, May 10, 2016, available at <http://www.wcpo.com/news/political/ohio-state-government-news/lawmakers-reluctant-to-move-lgbt-anti-discrimination-bill>.
- 9 Quinnipiac University Poll, "Florida, Ohio, Pennsylvania Voters Back Limits On Coal 2-1, Quinnipiac University Swing State Poll Finds; Voters In Each State Oppose Iran Nuke Deal 2-1," August 24, 2015, available at <https://poll.qu.edu/ohio/release-detail?ReleaseID=2272>.
- 10 Zach Schiller, "Ohio's recent tax changes reward the well-to-do" (Columbus, Ohio: Policy Matters Ohio, 2015), available at <http://www.policymattersohio.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/08/082515-ITEP-Kasich-era-tax-changes-Amy%E2%80%99s-MacBook-Air-2s-conflicted-copy-2015-08-241.pdf>.
- 11 Public Policy Polling, "Brown Early Favorite; Kasich Down with GOP, up with Dems," Press release, July 29, 2016, available at [http://www.publicpolicypolling.com/pdf/2015/PPP\\_Release\\_OH\\_72916.pdf](http://www.publicpolicypolling.com/pdf/2015/PPP_Release_OH_72916.pdf).
- 12 Jeremy Pelzer, "Gov. John Kasich signs bill blocking Cleveland's \$15 minimum wage proposal," *The Plain Dealer*, December 19, 2016, available at [http://www.cleveland.com/open/index.ssf/2016/12/gov\\_john\\_kasich\\_signs\\_bill\\_blo.html](http://www.cleveland.com/open/index.ssf/2016/12/gov_john_kasich_signs_bill_blo.html).
- 13 Mayors Against Illegal Guns, "New Poll Finds 83 Percent in Ohio Favor Mandatory Background Checks for All Gun Buyers," Press release, March 5, 2013, available at [http://libcloud.s3.amazonaws.com/9/8d/0/1406/OH\\_MAIG\\_Release\\_030513.pdf](http://libcloud.s3.amazonaws.com/9/8d/0/1406/OH_MAIG_Release_030513.pdf).
- 14 Mark Ferenchik, "Bills stymied that aim to reduce Ohio kids' accidental shootings," *The Columbus Dispatch*, October 15, 2016, available at <http://www.dispatch.com/content/stories/local/2016/10/16/1-gun-laws-efforts-to-prevent-accidental-shootings-involving-juveniles-prove-difficult.html>.