



The League of Women Voters of Ohio Education Fund imPACT e-newsletter.

The purpose of these monthly emails is to provide League members and our partners with information on the most pressing reform issues affecting Ohioans today.

Want to learn more about the issues, how to vote confidently and how to connect with elected officials? Visit the imPACT website at www.ohioimpact.org for the latest information and resources to---Get Educated. . .Get Involved. . . and Get Results!

Redistricting Reform Would Increase Voter Turnout

We are all frustrated by the lack of progress our elected officials are making on important issues - health care and the economy to name two. What is the solution? Election reform would go a long way in improving how we are represented. Unfortunately it will take reforms in campaign finance, term limits, and election administration as well as in redistricting to make significant changes.

Redistricting reform starts with ending or limiting partisan gerrymandering. A gerrymandered district gives one political party an unnatural advantage in winning that district and makes that district unnaturally uncompetitive. Marc Dunkelman from the Democratic Leadership Council has done a study to explore how partisan redistricting limits the ability of voters to express their policy preference at the national level and how that frustration leads to low voter turnout.

As citizens of the United States we pride ourselves on our democratic form of government and the ability of our citizens to participate in governing themselves. However, at 48.3 percent, the United States' voter participation rate is ranked 139th in the world. Are voters just apathetic, or is something else at play?

This new study shows that voters will turn out to vote in larger numbers when they believe their votes will make a difference. Gerrymandered districts are designed to make certain that votes of citizens in the disfavored political party will not matter by making districts non-competitive. The study looked at the competitiveness of US congressional districts. The number of "safe" or non-competitive seats rose from 281 out of 435 in 1992 to 356 out of 435 in 2002. That means that in 2002 only 62 or 14% of the seats were "in play." Importantly, the study found that on average 30,000 more people voted in districts with competitive races.

One would expect quite a few competitive races in Ohio because Ohio is a "battleground" state, being closely divided between the two major parties. This is not the case. A review of the results of the 2006 congressional races shows that Ohio falls into the pattern of gerrymandered districts in the study. All but 3 of the 18 races were won by a margin of over 12%. Half of the races were

won by margins in excess of 20%. The more competitive races on average generated more voters:

Rank	Winner	Margin of win	Total votes cast
1	Tiberi	14.60	254689
2	LaTourette	18.50	250323
3	Schmidt	1.06	238081
4	Regula	16.68	235122
5	Gillmor	13.70	228357
6	Hobson	21.24	227478
7	Sutton	12.44	221567
8	Pryce	0.48	220602
9	Turner	17.08	218628
10	Wilson	24.16	218476
11	Jordan	39.98	216636
12	Boehner	27.60	214503
13	Ryan	60.50	212294
14	Kaptur	47.26	208999
15	Space	24.12	208973
16	Kucinich	32.82	208432
17	Chabot	4.50	202264
18	Jones	66.88	175973

As we learned in 2005, drawing every district in Ohio to be a competitive district will require some sacrificing of compactness. However, Ohioans deserve better than districts intentionally drawn to be non-competitive. Ohioans deserve a choice at the voting booth.

For more information:

Read a column by David Broder carried by the Dayton Daily News:

http://www.daytondailynews.com/n/content/oh/story/opinions/editorial/2008/06/26/ddn062708broder.html?cxntlid=inform_sr

View the results of the DNC study: <http://www.dlc.org/>