

A legislative update from
STATE REP. ANITA SOMANI
 HOUSE DISTRICT 11



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From the desk of Rep. Somani

Dear Neighbor,

I hope you all are enjoying this fall season. As we get closer to the election, it is more important than ever to emphasize the need to vote. Although the right to vote is now universal for US citizens, it has not always been this way. In fact, a majority of US citizens have only gotten the right to vote within the last century.

At the beginning of US history, only landowning white men above the age of 21 had this right—a small percentage of our actual population. Then, by the mid-1800s, all white men, regardless of their property-owner status, could vote. After the Civil War, voting rights were established for Black men, but discriminatory voting laws largely barred them from exercising this right until the passage of the Voting Rights Act in 1965. Women in the US finally gained the right to vote in 1920 with the passage of the 19th amendment, although this right mostly only extended to white women. Over the next 3 decades, Native Americans and Asian Americans would fight for and win their right to vote. All of this culminated in the Voting Rights Act in 1965, which made it illegal to intentionally suppress the votes of non-white voters.

History has shown us that the right to vote is not freely given, but rather something that requires decades of organizing and advocacy. Right now, our voting rights are under attack again as Supreme Court decisions like *Shelby County v. Holder* (2013) have gutted the Voting Rights Act and have opened the floodgates of voter suppression. An example of this in Ohio is the fact that our voter registration deadline is far earlier than most states in the country. In 20 states and DC, you can register to vote and vote on Election Day. Ohio also has strict voter ID laws, which have been shown to suppress even more votes.


A democracy only works if all of its citizens make their voices heard. Check your voter registration status [here](#), and remember, Election Day is November 5th!

Happy Voting,

Anita Somani

Anita Somani M.D.
 State Representative
 Ohio House District 11

Register to Vote!
 Make your voice heard



The voter registration deadline in Ohio is fast approaching. In order to vote in this upcoming election, you must be registered by **October 7th**. You can scan the above QR code to register. Once registered, make a plan for how you will vote. You can vote by mail (no ID needed), early vote at your designated polling location, or vote in-person on **November 5th**. In order to be completely prepared for the ballot box, you can view a sample ballot [here](#), so you will be informed on the issues and candidates that you will be voting on this election.



Happy Hispanic Heritage Month! One of the most beautiful things about the US is the diversity of cultures we have here. This month celebrates the cultures and many contributions of Americans whose ancestors came from Mexico, the Caribbean, Spain, and Central and South America. Their achievements have made Ohio and the United States better for us all.

School Funding

Thank you to everyone that came to my and Representative Liston's Town Hall! It was a pleasure to get to speak to everyone personally about the issues affecting them. One issue that was echoed by many at the Town Hall was the rising cost of property taxes and school levies.

Unfortunately, Republicans have been slashing state funds for schools. This puts an incredible burden on local municipalities and their residents to pick up the slack. Meanwhile, they have been pouring funding into school vouchers to send students to private schools; many of which are religious schools. During last year's state budget, they raised the income threshold for the eligibility for these vouchers and allotted nearly \$1 billion to the school voucher program. This is money that is being taken away from our

public schools. With this kind of funding, communities like Dublin and Hilliard would not need to rely so heavily on local tax dollars.

To address this issue, House Democrats have introduced bills like **HB 567**, to cap spending on school vouchers and ensure that state dollars are going to public schools. We are also committed to fully funding the **Fair School Funding Plan**, which was passed into law in 2021. This plan was created with aim to overhaul how Ohio funds public schools to ensure that all students, regardless of school district or zip code, have access to high quality public education. However, to fully realize the goals of this plan, the state must allocate more tax dollars to the program.

Issue 1 Resolution

Yesterday, House Democrats introduced a resolution to express the Ohio House of Representative's support for Issue 1. I have cosponsored this resolution to clarify the true meaning of Issue 1, especially after the approved ballot language is full of misinformation that has the purpose of confusing voters at the ballot box.

Issue 1 is a ballot measure that would overhaul the process by which we draw maps in Ohio. Currently, Ohio's maps are drawn by elected politicians. This has resulted in Ohio being one of the most gerrymandered states in the nation. Our current maps are unconstitutional, and they do not reflect the actual views of Ohio voters.

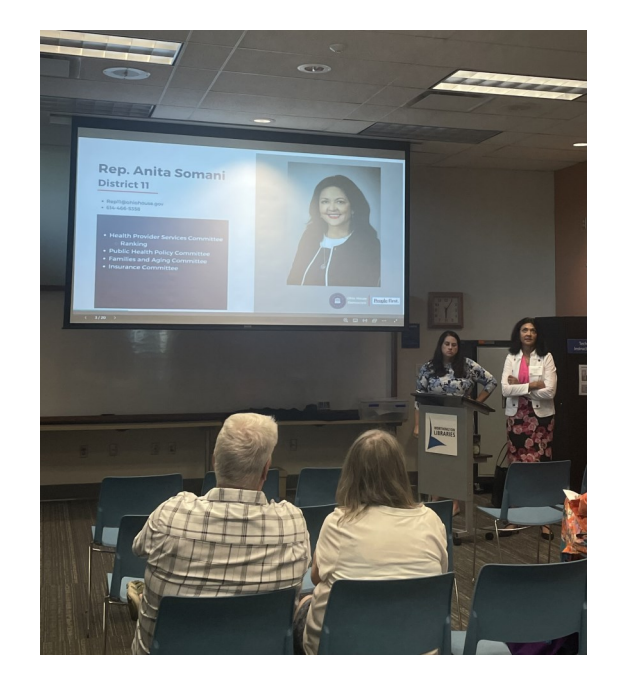
Issue 1 addresses these problems. If it passes, it would create a 15-member Ohio Citizen's Redistricting Commission. This Commission would be made up of Ohio citizens, not politicians, unlike the current system. The entire process would be independent, transparent, and completely nonpartisan. Issue 1 would also make it unconstitutional for district maps to favor one party over another. To learn more about Issue 1, you can visit this [website](#).

In the News

I had the opportunity to be interviewed by Allie Vugrincic at WOSU for their series on the State of Religion. We chatted about my views on religion and politics. There are 4 parts to this series, and I am featured in episode 3. You can listen to all the parts of the series on the Snollygoster podcast. If you would like to read about the series, the link to the article can be found [here](#).



Out and About



Thank you to everyone that came to the Town Hall hosted by me and Representative Liston. I love to speak face-to-face with my constituents, and it's an honor to represent so many people who are engaged in the civic process.



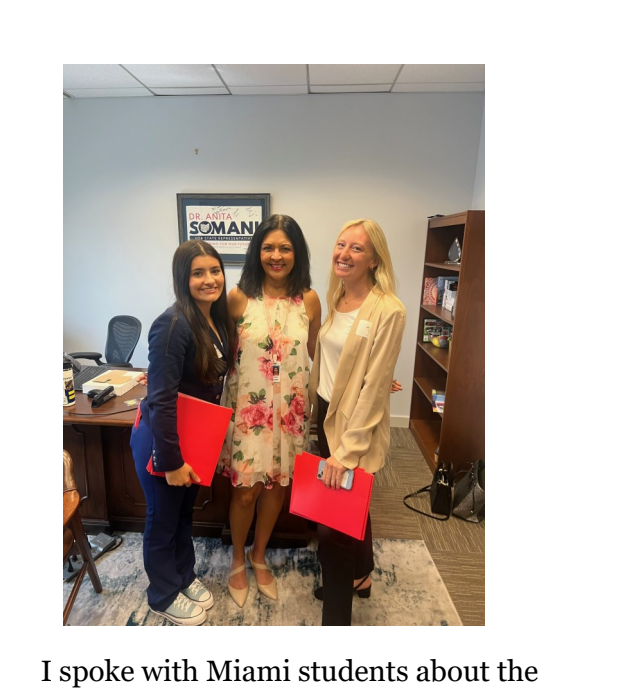
I had the opportunity to be a panelist at the Fight4Her Summit. Getting the chance to talk about the importance of reproductive rights is something I always look forward to.



I got to tour the Soin Medical Center with Rep. Baker and Rep. Lampton to discuss the impact of Health Provider Service Committee legislation on their hospital.



I enjoyed attending the Moon Festival, which is an important harvest festival in Chinese culture.



I spoke with Miami students about the importance of higher education and the opportunities that they've had due to attending Miami. Being a Miami alum myself, it was awesome to speak with current students about ways to support my alma mater.



I was honored to receive the Physician Advocate of the Year award from the Columbus Medical Association