



Late Maryland General Assembly bill proposes a new congressional district map

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Annapolis — Almost anything can happen in the waning weeks of the Maryland General Assembly. On Thursday, the minority leaders in both the House and Senate won approval to introduce a late bill to adopt new maps for Congressional Districts 6 and 8.

If passed, the legislation would adopt the new district maps drawn by an emergency redistricting commission. Gov. Larry Hogan appointed the commission in December in response to a lawsuit over the District 6 map now pending before the U.S. Supreme Court, which heard arguments this week.

After the filing deadline, legislators must vote to suspend the rules to let new legislation be introduced.

The House of Delegates voted 136-1 to allow House Minority Leader Nic Kipke, R-Anne Arundel, to introduce the House version, which has been referred to the House Rules and Executive Nominations Committee. In the Senate, the vote to let Minority Leader J.B. Jennings, R-Baltimore/Harford, introduce a bill was unanimous.

Both were introduced on behalf of the Hogan administration.

Hogan formed the commission in response to a federal court ruling in the case of *Benisek v. Lamone* in November, requiring the state to redraw the district boundaries.

The lawsuit alleges that the current boundaries, drawn during former Gov. Martin O'Malley's administration, were skewed to give Democrats an advantage in a congressional district long held by Republican Roscoe Bartlett. Democrat John Delaney was subsequently elected to the Sixth District seat in the U.S. House of Representatives.

The federal court invalidated the map and ordered Maryland to draw a new map by March 7 to be used in the 2020 election. Maryland Attorney General Brian Frosh appealed the ruling to the U.S. Supreme Court.

The proposed map brings all of Frederick County, part of Carroll County and part of Montgomery County back into the district. Some of those areas are currently in the Eighth District

During a recent hearing in Hagerstown, commission co-chairman Walter Olson said Hogan was planning to incorporate the map into a bill to send the General Assembly.

“The bill strictly deals with the census tracts,” Jennings told Senate colleagues Thursday. “There’s nothing political about it. It’s just working through the process.”

Kipke noted that the November ruling found the map to be unconstitutional, “which should be no surprise to most of us in the room.” He said the bill was late because the commission was conducting hearings on the proposed map.