

“We Will Terminate Gerrymandering,” Say Schwarzenegger And Hogan

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Maryland Governor Larry Hogan joined anti-gerrymandering advocate and former California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger outside the Supreme Court Tuesday morning, vowing to terminate partisan gerrymandering.

The two stood on the high court’s steps with hundreds of activists awaiting oral arguments for gerrymandering cases in North Carolina and Maryland. In the Maryland case, the justices will hear arguments on whether or not Democratic lawmakers acted unconstitutionally in redrawing the 6th congressional district in the western part of the state to favor their party in 2011. Prior to the 2012 congressional election, Republican Roscoe Bartlett represented the district for 20 years. Bartlett lost his congressional seat after the district was redrawn.

“Unfortunately those who have the power in Maryland have given us the distinction of having the most gerrymandered districts in America,” said Hogan prior to entering the high court.

Hogan — who is weighing a potential presidential bid — slammed Maryland legislators for inaction on his proposal for a non-partisan redistricting coalition to oversee state and federal redistricting efforts.

“Our legislature has refused for four years in a row to not even bring this up for a vote on the floor of our legislature,” said Hogan.

A [2017 Goucher Poll](#) found that 73 percent of the 776 Marylanders interviewed wanted to see an independent commission draw the congressional districts rather than state elected officials.

Crystal Peters, who drove two hours from Baltimore County to stand with the League of Women Voters in front of the court, said the issue is important for all Americans.

“Gerrymandering is a problem nationally, so it doesn’t matter to me if it affects me personally,” said Peters. “I’m more interested in seeing that all voting is fair across the nation.”

Options At The State Level

In January, Hogan created a nine-person Emergency Redistricting Commission to redraw the 6th congressional district. The commission has multiple drafts for the new congressional district, should the high court find Maryland’s current map illegal.

One of the main questions conservative justices, like Justice Neil Gorsuch, asked was why should the court weigh into this if there are public and ballot initiatives. Walter Olson, the co-chair of the commission, addressed that question when speaking to media outside the court.

“Maryland doesn’t have strong public initiatives,” said Olson. “The referendum process is too weak because the legislature has to do something [enact legislation].”

Olson said he is hopeful the high court will rule on the case, and that it will not be sent back to Maryland’s lower court for a third time. He said he’s optimistic that the map models the commission has created are along the lines of the lower court’s specifications: compactness, continuity, along natural boundaries and not along partisan lines.

The emergency commission is set to vote on the final map Wednesday. The map will then be sent to Hogan’s desk, and forwarded to the legislature. The General Assembly has less than 10 days left in session to vote on a new district map. They also could return over the summer for a special legislative session.

Olson says legislators will either have to vote on the commission’s final map model or be subject to the high court’s final ruling.

“It’s important to give them [legislators] a clear chance,” said Olson. “To give them one outcome and encourage fair voting.”

The Supreme Court is expected to give their final ruling in June.