

The Frederick News-Post

General Assembly unlikely to pass new 6th District congressional map

Samantha Hogan

April 6, 2019

ANNAPOLIS — With just one day left in the 2019 legislative session, it is all but guaranteed that a bill defining new boundaries for the 6th and 8th congressional districts will not pass.

Frederick County was divided in half by the General Assembly in 2011 during statewide redistricting, which broke from historical precedent of keeping western Maryland, Frederick County and Carroll County in the 6th District. Seven residents — including three from Frederick County — sued the state in 2017 for using partisan gerrymandering to dilute Republican votes.

The lawsuit has reached the U.S. Supreme Court twice — the latest trip on March 26 — and a federal panel of judges ordered the state late last year to redraw its 6th District ahead of the 2020 election.

“The voters should get to choose their representatives, not the other way around. So it is just ludicrous that our legislators won’t even allow so much as a public hearing on the governor’s legislation,” Michael Ricci, a spokesman for Gov. Larry Hogan (R) said by email on Friday.

Emergency legislation to define new boundaries for the 6th and 8th congressional districts was submitted on March 28, after the governor-appointed Emergency Commission on 6th District Gerrymandering completed a multi-month process to redraw the map without regard to the voting demographics of western Maryland.

The emergency commission submitted a report on Tuesday to the governor explaining its rationale on how it redrew the 6th District. As proposed the 6th District would encompass western Maryland, Frederick County, southern Carroll County and northwest Montgomery County.

“Last week we submitted to you a map that we are confident achieves much greater compactness and keeps communities together in a far better fashion than the old. At hearings the public expressed thanks for our efforts and found the proposed lines both fairer and more practical than the old,” commission co-chairs Walter Olson (R) and retired Judge Alexander Williams Jr. (D) said in a letter to Hogan at the start of the [report](#).

Bills in the state Senate and House to redefine the 6th and 8th districts were each procedurally assigned to the rules committees. As of Saturday, neither committee had opted to vote on the bills.

Comprehensive nonpartisan redistricting reforms submitted by Hogan at the start of session also laid fallow throughout the 2019 session. The Senate took no substantial steps to advance the reforms, and the House committee assigned to the bills voted against them.

A special session could be called later this year to consider the map again, after the U.S. Supreme Court releases its response to the case.

“This is the professional politicians looking out for themselves while depriving Marylanders of free and fair elections, and it’s gone on for far too long,” Ricci said.