



## Voters Suggest Tweaks to Proposed Congressional Districts

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There was mostly praise, but a few gripes, at the first public hearing Tuesday night on a proposal to redraw borders of the 6<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Congressional districts.

A new map released this month from a gubernatorial redistricting commission shifts parts of the existing 8<sup>th</sup> District into the 6<sup>th</sup> District by placing all of Frederick County and part of Carroll County in the 6<sup>th</sup>. Previously, Frederick had been split between the two districts.

The proposal also moves parts of the existing 6<sup>th</sup> District in Montgomery County into the 8<sup>th</sup>. Gaithersburg, Montgomery Village, Travilah and North Potomac would be placed in the 8<sup>th</sup> District. Darnestown, Germantown, Clarksburg and Damascus would be placed in the 6<sup>th</sup>.

A federal court last year that mandated Maryland redraw the 6<sup>th</sup> District in time for the 2020 elections after hearing claims that gerrymandering favored Democrats.

David Trone was elected last fall to the 6<sup>th</sup> District seat in Congress. Jamie Raskin started his second term representing the 8<sup>th</sup> District in January. Both are Democrats.

Committee chairman Walter Olson, a Frederick County Republican, explained at a meeting in Germantown that the commission considered 20 possible map rewrites provided by the state Department of Planning and decided on one that changes the boundary between the two districts from what was a "very jagged line" to a straighter one that keeps communities together.

For the most part, residents said they approved of the new map, but wanted minor changes.

Sylvia Darrow, of Potomac, said under the new map she would be in the more-Democratic 8<sup>th</sup> District. Darrow also said she was concerned that the redrawing of the map would disrupt some communities in the 6<sup>th</sup> District and possibly alter where students attended school.

"Would it be possible to include a little bit of Rockville and North Potomac?" she asked.

Committee members said that they can't take political makeup into considerations in redrawing lines.

Charles Barkley, a former state delegate who represented Montgomery Village, said he too approved of the map but wanted Montgomery Village to remain in the 6<sup>th</sup> District. He also said he didn't like the fact that Carroll County was being incorporated into the 6<sup>th</sup>.

"Carroll County is really close to what's happening in Baltimore," he said.

Committee member Luis T. Gutierrez Jr., a Montgomery Democrat, said after the hearing that he understood the concerns over Carroll County but that “to unsplit it would have set off a chain reaction” of having to redraw all of Maryland’s eight congressional districts extensively. The governor’s order, he said, was to redraw only the two covering central and western Maryland.

“Since this map was really only gonna be for one election before all eight get redone regardless [during the next census], we wanted to stick most closely to the matter of the lawsuit of the 6th and the 8th, and that meant leaving Carroll the way it was,” he said.

The commission, he said, will hold one more public hearing next week in Hagerstown before meeting for a final time to adopt any changes to the map.

“I think it was positive feedback on the whole. There’s recognition that it’s difficult to make a perfect map. People would have appreciated more time in the process, and I understand that,” he said.

The ultimate decision, Gutierrez said, rests with the Supreme Court, which is expected to decide this spring whether Maryland and North Carolina must redraw their districts before 2020.