

## **Commission members: Proposed congressional map receives favorable reception**

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The response to a proposed map redrawing Maryland's 6th and 8th congressional districts has been largely positive since its unveiling, according to two members of the commission appointed to create a new map.

The proposed map would move all of Frederick County, as well as southern Carroll County and the area around Westminster, into the 6th District, which includes all of western Maryland. The redrawn district would also include northern Montgomery County.

The 8th District would include much of central and western Montgomery County.

The commission had a meeting Tuesday night in Germantown, attended by about 25 people, to get feedback on the proposed map.

Frederick County resident Walter Olson, who co-chairs the committee responsible for coming up with the new map, said he hoped the map was simple enough that it wouldn't leave people confused about what the commission was trying to accomplish.

"You don't have to spend too long with this map to understand what it does," Olson said.

Deborah Lundahl, a Frederick resident who also serves on the commission, said most people she's talked to just want the process to be fair. She thinks they accomplished that.

People have been positive and enthusiastic about the new map, Lundahl said.

The commission made an effort to keep districts compact and keep communities together, she said.

Charles Barkley, a former Montgomery County delegate, studied the various maps of the proposed district in the lobby before Tuesday's hearing started.

Barkley would like to have all of his old legislative district, District 39, in one congressional district. The proposed map has much of District 39 in the 6th District, but Montgomery Village would be in the 8th.

Barkley proposed to the commission that a final version of the map incorporate Montgomery Village into the 6th, and move some of the Carroll County sections into another district.

Carroll is more affiliated with the Baltimore region than Frederick and Montgomery counties are, he said.

Sylvia Darrow, of Potomac, wondered if the 6th District could be dropped down a bit to include more of the Potomac and North Potomac communities.

Those communities have different needs than other 8th District areas such as Chevy Chase and Kensington, Darrow said.

The areas also have more Republicans who vote, which would make the district more balanced, Darrow said.

Janice Ford, of West Friendship in Howard County, said before the hearing that no map would ever be a perfect solution.

Ford described herself as a redistricting activist and loyal Democrat.

She acknowledged that the proposed map could very well cost Democrats a seat in Congress, but that would be the price of a more fair map.

“At some point of time, you have to be on the side of right,” she said.

Above all, the redistricting process has to be transparent and open to the public, she said.

Ford said she has asked her state legislators to accept the proposed map when it comes up for adoption.

Maryland should make changes even if other states don't revise their maps that favor Republicans.

“If it's wrong for Texas, it's wrong for Maryland,” Ford said.

The proposed map was selected through a public process.

On March 1, the commission unanimously selected a map submitted by Stephen Wolf, a national redistricting enthusiast who writes for the liberal organization Daily Kos.

Gov. Larry Hogan (R) issued an executive order in November to form the emergency commission and redraw the map, after a federal court found that the map had been unfairly gerrymandered in favor of the Democrat Party.

A new map had to be based on “traditional criteria for redistricting,” such as geographic contiguity, compactness, and natural boundaries.

The commission could not consider how residents are registered to vote or to which political party they belong.

Each district must include close to 721,000 residents.

The commission will have a second hearing March 20 in Hagerstown.