



## **New Md. 6th Congressional District could look a lot like old one**

Dave McMillion

March 13, 2019

A commission dealing with the controversial layout of Maryland's Sixth Congressional District has proposed a new map that brings all of Frederick County, part of Carroll County and a portion of Montgomery County back into the district.

Walter Olson, a co-chair of the commission, said Wednesday that he believes the new map is a more fair reflection of the Western Maryland region and returns the district close to how it looked for decades.

The public can weigh in on the proposed new map.

The first of two public hearings on the map was held Tuesday night at the BlackRock Center for the Arts in Germantown. The second public hearing will be held Wednesday at 7 p.m. at Hagerstown Community College's Kepler Theater.

Olson said about 40 people attended the hearing in Germantown and there was not a lot of public comment.

Olson said the commission will consider any public input on the map before it is sent to Gov. Larry Hogan.

The state was faced with having to come up with a new map following a decision in the case of *Benisek v. Lamone*, which alleges 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, the boundaries were redrawn to favor Democrats. A Democrat, John Delaney, was subsequently elected to the Sixth District seat in the U.S. House of Representatives.

The seat is now held by U.S. Rep. David Trone, D-Md.

The current map was invalidated in a federal court ruling, which also ordered Maryland to draw a new map by March 7 to be used in the 2020 election.

Maryland Attorney General Brian Frosh appealed the federal court ruling, which sent the case back to the U.S. Supreme Court. Arguments in the appeal were heard last year.

Hogan announced the creation of an emergency nonpartisan commission to redraw boundaries for the district.

Washington County Republican Central Committee Chairman Jerry DeWolf said this week that he is encouraged by the new map, although he is disappointed that more of Carroll County and less of Montgomery County was included in it.

“Certainly I feel this is a step in the right direction, especially by bringing all of Frederick County back into the district. In 2011, when the gerrymander was enacted, it was the first time since the 1840s that all of Frederick County wasn’t together in a congressional district. Why is it OK to split Carroll County but not Frederick County?” DeWolf said.

The emergency commission shifted territory between the 6th and 8th Congressional Districts to make the new map “as reasonable as possible,” Olson said.

Olson said not all of Carroll County was included in the 6th District map because it would have overly disturbed the 1st Congressional District, which is adjacent.

Hogan joined with former California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger to file an amicus curiae, or friend of the court, brief with the U.S. Supreme Court in support of the plaintiffs in *Benisek v. Lamone*.

Hogan and Schwarzenegger argued in their brief that gerrymandered districts promote political extremes in both parties and drown out the voices of moderate voters, according to a news release from Hogan’s office.

“Free and fair elections are the very foundation of our democracy, and it’s past time for leaders on both sides of the aisle to put an end to the disgraceful practice of partisan gerrymandering,” Hogan said in the release.

“The first three words of our constitution are ‘We the People’ — not ‘We the Politicians.’ For 200 years, politicians have used the scam of partisan gerrymandering to put their own interests above the interests of the people, and it’s time for change,” Schwarzenegger said in the release.

After the emergency commission turns the map over to Hogan, the governor will incorporate it into a bill to send to the Maryland General Assembly, Olson said. The legislature might be able to consider it in April, he said.

Olson said its hard to tell how all of the particulars will shake out after the U.S. Supreme Court considers the appeal.