



Speakers support proposed new Sixth Congressional District, but want more changes

Dave McMillion

March 20, 2019

Speakers at a local hearing Wednesday night supported a new proposed map of Maryland's Sixth Congressional District, but said they want more of Carroll County in it.

About 25 people attended a hearing at Hagerstown Community College's Kepler Theater on the proposed map drawn up by an emergency nonpartisan commission.

The map was developed following a decision in the case of *Benisek v. Lamone*. The complaint was brought to challenge the current boundaries, alleging they were skewed to give Democrats an advantage. The boundaries were drawn during former Gov. Martin O'Malley's administration.

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. The U.S. Supreme Court is to hear arguments in the case on March 26.

The proposed new map brings all of Frederick County, part of Carroll County and a portion of Montgomery County back into the district.

During Wednesday's hearing, Washington County Republican Central Committee Chairman Jerry DeWolf thanked Gov. Larry Hogan "for being on the right side of this."

Hogan announced the creation of the emergency nonpartisan commission to draw a new map. He also helped file a friend of the court brief with the U.S. Supreme Court. Hogan argued in the brief that gerrymandered districts promote political extremes.

DeWolf said he would like to see more of Carroll County and less of Montgomery County included in the Sixth District. He added that local residents don't want to be represented "by another Montgomery County millionaire."

Hagerstown-area resident Matt Breeding, who is also a member of the county Republican Central Committee, said he thinks all of Carroll County should be included in the district. He said the proposed map still looks like it has been gerrymandered.

Tim Ganley of Middletown, Md., also supported having all of Carroll County in the district.

He criticized the fact that only two public hearings were held on the proposed map. Wednesday's hearing was the second after an initial one on March 12 in Germantown.

"It's a disservice to all the voters," said Ganley, adding that people might have had to travel up to an hour to get to one of the hearings.

In response to calls for the map to be further adjusted, the co-chair of the commission said that is crossing into a difficult area. When changes are made to one district, it sets off adjustments that have to be made elsewhere, said commission co-chair Walter Olson.

That "creates new problems. These are hard things to justify," Olson said.

He has said that the commission will consider any public input on the map before it sends the proposal to Hogan. Hogan will incorporate the map into a bill to be sent to the Maryland General Assembly.

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