



INDEPENDENT.  
NONPARTISAN.  
NONPROFIT.

The premier site for  
news about Maryland  
government and politics.

## Hogan's Redistricting Commission Announces Members

Bennett Leckrone

April 15, 2021

Members of a nonpartisan redistricting commission created by Gov. Lawrence J. Hogan Jr. (R) have been finalized. Photo by Danielle E. Gaines.

Gov. Lawrence J. Hogan Jr.'s redistricting commission — tasked with making recommendations on congressional and legislative maps that he will submit to the General Assembly — finalized its membership Thursday.

Hogan (R) named retired federal judge Alexander Williams (D), Howard Community College President Kathleen Hetherington (I), and Walter Olson (R), senior fellow at the Cato Institute's Robert A. Levy Center for Constitutional Studies in Washington, D.C. as the Maryland Citizens Redistricting Commission's co-chairs in January.

Since then, the multi-partisan trio has been reviewing Marylanders' applications to be on the commission. On Thursday, they announced the remaining six members of the commission. All told, the commission will consist of three Republicans, three Democrats and three nonaffiliated voters. The new members include:

- Kimberly Rose Cummings (R), of Dorchester County,
- Mary G. Clawson (R), of Anne Arundel County,
- Cheryl R. Brooks (D), of Baltimore County,
- William Tipper Thomas, III (D), of Baltimore City,
- Jay V. Amin (I), of Anne Arundel County, and
- Jonathan Fusfield (I), of Montgomery County.

Olson is from Frederick County; Williams is from Prince George's County; and Hetherington is from Howard County.

Olson told *Maryland Matters* Thursday that he and his fellow co-chairs reviewed roughly 400 applications, although the total number of submissions is likely higher, since incomplete applications didn't advance to the co-chairs.

With the lengthy application review process out of the way, the redistricting commission's work will begin. The panel will conduct public hearings in the coming months to iron out their

recommendations to Hogan. They'll aim to recommend geographically compact districts that aren't meant to favor any political party over another, and are compliant with the U.S. Constitution and federal voting rights laws.

Hogan's executive order that created the commission also requires that, to the extent possible, state legislative maps should be divided into single-member districts. Olson said those are still the "marching orders" as the commission looks to make recommendations.

Exactly when those public meetings will take place, along with how they will be conducted, are still up in the air. Olson said the full nine-member commission will soon decide the schedule for meetings. The commission was originally intended to travel the state, and while Olson still hopes to eventually conduct in-person regional meetings, he said the first meetings will likely be remote.

"We probably will still be in a phase of doing Zoom hearings for a while, but we don't want that to keep us from doing hearings with a regional emphasis," he said.

The advisory commission is Hogan's latest attempt to reform the state's redistricting process, which was recently cited as overly partisan by the nonprofit group RepresentUs. The commission's final recommendations, and Hogan's proposed maps, will ultimately be subject to approval from the majority-Democratic state legislature.

For legislative maps, the governor submits a proposal during a legislative session and the legislature has 45 days to make their own changes. If lawmakers don't make changes to the map, it automatically becomes law.

Hogan's attempts to introduce a nonpartisan redistricting process into the state have failed repeatedly during his tenure as governor, and his creation of the Maryland Citizens Redistricting Commission on the eve of the 2021 legislative session drew criticism from some Democratic lawmakers, who characterized timing of the announcement as "tone-deaf."

Whether or not the congressional redistricting process will soon be changed by Congress remains to be seen: An omnibus election reform bill Rep. John P. Sarbanes' (D-Md.), the For the People Act, would overhaul congressional redistricting and ban partisan gerrymandering. That reform package would also require states to use bipartisan, independent commissions to draw congressional districts.

Olson encouraged Marylanders to participate in the hearings, and encouraged the use of online redistricting tools. Websites like Districtr allow the public free access to redistricting data and information about gerrymandering.

"We are really looking for public input," Olson said. "Everything is going to be different because of the switch to online hearings. We hope that the audience can be bigger."

The U.S. Census Bureau was originally set to deliver redistricting data to states by March 31, but pandemic-related delays forced officials to push back that data release until September 30. That will likely mean a serious time crunch for state legislatures across the country with the 2022 elections fast approaching.