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## Maryland Redistricting Commission to Hold First Meeting May 5

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The Maryland Citizens Redistricting Commission will hold its first meeting next Wednesday at 7 p.m.

The redistricting commission is tasked with making recommendations on congressional and legislative maps to Gov. Lawrence J. Hogan Jr. (R), which he will submit to the General Assembly. The introductory meeting comes after commission co-chairs announced the panel's full membership in mid April.

The virtual meeting will be open to the public. People who want to watch the meeting can join from computer, tablet, or smartphone by going to: [global.gotomeeting.com/join/558394869](https://global.gotomeeting.com/join/558394869). Members of the public can also dial in by calling 1-872-240-3311. The access code is 558-394-869.

Commission members will aim to recommend geographically compact districts that aren't designed to favor any political party over another, and are compliant with the U.S. Constitution and federal voting rights laws. Hogan's executive order also requires commission members to look at creating single-member legislative districts, and commission Co-chair Walter Olson (R) previously *told Maryland Matters* that those are still the "marching orders."

While the commission's first meeting will be remote, Olson hopes to eventually conduct in-person regional meetings if it's safe to do so.

"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," Olson previously said.

The commission members are:

- Olson, a senior fellow at the Cato Institute's Robert A. Levy Center for Constitutional Studies in Washington, D.C.;
- Co-chair Alexander Williams (D), a retired federal judge;
- Co-chair Kathleen Hetherington (I), the president of Howard Community College;
- 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.

In addition to the longstanding challenge of holding public meetings amid a pandemic, members of the redistricting commission are also faced with a lack of Census data. While Census Bureau officials released their first round of population data earlier this week, more granular redistricting data won't be available to states until Aug. 16.

Even then, some states might be faced with a longer wait for specific results: Census Bureau officials noted in a release that "most states lack the capacity or resources to tabulate the data from these summary files on their own," and tabulated data will be available by Sept. 30.

And once Maryland officials receive that data, the Maryland Department of Planning (MDP) will need to adjust it to comply with Maryland law and have incarcerated individuals reallocated to their last known address, according to the Maryland Department of Planning. State officials estimate that process will take at least an additional 30 days.

Census officials originally hoped to get redistricting data to states by March 31, but those plans were delayed by the COVID-19 pandemic. Maryland will keep its eight seats in the House of Representatives in the next round of redistricting, according to the initial data release.

“It’s going to mean that we get hard, usable numbers months later than we would have hoped,” Olson told *Maryland Matters* after the data was released. He added that working around the Census data delay will be among the commission’s top agenda items.

“The goal is to get as much work as we can done, including many hearings, before the Census Bureau comes through,” Olson said.