



MARYLAND MATTERS

Maryland Citizens Redistricting Commission Delegate Map Available For Public Comment

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The Maryland Citizens Redistricting Commission released a draft delegate district map with both single- and multi-member districts last week, but panelists want more public input before deciding what configuration to use in their legislative map proposals.

Commission members have been debating for weeks whether to draw multi-member districts, but agreed at a work session last Thursday to make a delegate map available for public comment that uses multi-member districts in certain areas based on population density.

In his executive order creating the commission earlier this year, Gov. Lawrence J. Hogan Jr. (R) required that panelists use single-member districts “to the extent possible” in their proposed maps. The General Assembly will have the final say over the state’s next set of electoral maps, but Hogan is required to present a proposal to the legislature.

Hogan can veto congressional maps, but Democrats hold a veto-proof majority in both the House of Delegates and Senate and easily overrode his vetoes on several measures during the 2021 legislative session.

The commission — which includes three Republicans, three Democrats and three unaffiliated Maryland registered voters — is tasked with drawing both congressional and state legislative maps for Hogan to propose to the General Assembly.

Co-Chair Kathleen Hetherington (I), who previously favored using only single-member districts, said last week that she felt Maryland might not be ready for a full shift to single-member districts. She also said the public needs to see a draft delegate map before they comment on whether single- or multi-member districts should be used in their communities.

The draft delegate map generally splits state Senate districts into multi-member sub-districts for House delegates in counties with a population density of more than 2,000 per square mile, commission Co-Chair Walter Olson (R) said.

However, there are various exceptions to the use of multi-member districts. For instance, a Senate district of fewer than 500 people per square mile that is in a county with a population density of more than 2,000 per square mile will have single-member House districts. That exclusion would affect the Agricultural Reserve in northern Montgomery County, which would include single-member districts.

Single member districts also would be used in all districts that cross county lines except District 39, which crosses from Prince George's County into Charles County, because the population on the Charles County side of the district is too low to "make up the core of a single-member district," according to an email from Maryland Department of Planning Public Affairs Director Kristin R. Fleckenstein.

Single-member districts also are used as required by the federal Voting Rights Act to boost representation of people of color.

The Maryland Citizens Redistricting Commission is set to take testimony on the draft House map at its next virtual public hearing on Wednesday at 6 p.m.

To see the interactive draft congressional and legislative maps proposed by the commission, click [here](#).

The Maryland constitution allows state delegate districts with between one and three members, and the state currently uses a hybrid model with both single- and multi-member districts.

Delegate districts must be nested within state Senate districts in Maryland, with three delegates per Senate district. Potential configurations include three single-member delegate districts within a Senate district; one single-member delegate district and a two-member delegate district; and one three-delegate district. Multi-member districts are more widely used than single-member districts statewide in current maps.

Under the state's current system, single-member districts are generally used in geographically large and more rural districts or when required by the Voting Rights Act to ensure representation of people of color. For instance, Gloria Aparicio Blackwell, the panel's adviser on Latino issues, has urged commission members to retain the single-member District 47B, currently the state's lone majority-Latino district, in Prince George's County.

Single-member districts are also sometimes used when a portion of a Senate district crosses county lines.

Eighteen of 47 Senate districts contain three-member delegate districts in the commission's draft maps. Single-member delegate districts largely are maintained when Senate districts cross county

boundaries and in areas required by the Voting Rights Act, including across the line between Prince George's and Montgomery counties, where District 47B is currently located.

Proponents of single-member districts have told the commission that they make it easier for political newcomers to challenge incumbents and also give voters a single point of contact in the House of Delegates, making lawmakers more accessible and accountable.

Proponents of multi-member districts testified at previous commission hearings that having multiple delegates gives voters access to legislators with different areas of expertise and broader representation. They also argue that the state's current mix of single- and multi-member districts resulted in the Maryland General Assembly outpacing other states in terms of gender and racial representation.

Commission members produced congressional and state Senate maps well before the kickoff of their third round of public hearings in early October, but have been stalled over the issue of single- and multi- member districts for weeks.

Legislative leaders convened their own commission, the bipartisan Legislative Redistricting Advisory Commission (LRAC), to conduct public hearings and draw their own draft congressional and legislative maps for the General Assembly.