

## Public will get to propose 6th Congressional District lines to commission online

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The public will have the opportunity to help redraw the contorted lines of Maryland's gerrymandered 6th Congressional District, the Governor's Emergency Redistricting Commission announced at its organizational meeting Friday in Annapolis, just hours before the Supreme Court agreed to consider the case from Maryland.

The Supreme Court's decision to review an appeals court's order to redraw the lines of the 6th CD because it is unconstitutional could make the work of the governor's commission irrelevant if the high court decides to reverse the lower court order. But the commission plans to press ahead with hearings and redrawing the lines of the 6th and adjacent districts.

Secretary Robert McCord of the Maryland Department of Planning discussed a website the department is developing that will enable the public to provide input into the redistricting process. He said the new website should be up and running this week.

"The public can create accounts and submit plans electronically. It's a 21st century way to do it," McCord said.

The public can use the state's Maptitude redistricting software, which will be preloaded with current district data, or their own software. The commission will also accept hard-copy plans from the public for review.

"I'm trying to make it so the public has multiple ways to get it to you," said McCord.

McCord gave the commission a draft hard-copy of what the website might look like.

The commission also set up a public hearing schedule to gather input on the redistricting process. The first public hearing will be held at 7 p.m., Jan. 14, in Frederick. Other public hearings will take place Jan. 31 in Montgomery County and Feb. 6 in western Maryland.

The commission will reconvene in Annapolis for a workshop at 10 a.m. Feb. 20. The meeting will be video and audio live-streamed at [www.governor.maryland.gov](http://www.governor.maryland.gov).

In his executive order, Gov. Hogan gave the emergency commission a deadline of March 4 to present a new plan and map for the 6th Congressional District for a public comment period that will run until March 26. The final map and report are due to the governor by April 2. The governor will submit the new district plan to the 2019 Maryland General Assembly as emergency legislation.

The Emergency Commission on Sixth Congressional District Gerrymandering is made up of three Democrats, three Republicans and three unaffiliated voters. Hogan created the commission to comply with a federal appeals court order requiring Maryland to draw new boundaries for the

6th Congressional District, which currently encompasses all of Garrett, Allegany and Washington counties as well as portions of Montgomery and Frederick counties.

The deadline for that court order has been delayed until July 1 pending a ruling by the Supreme Court.

“The governor has made it clear he wants a fair and independent job by all of us here,” said retired U.S. District Court Judge Alexander Williams Jr., co-chair of the commission, along with Walter Olson, a senior fellow at the Cato Institute in Washington, D.C. “We want to draw lines the whole country can look at. It’s a model for other states to adopt,” said Williams.