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Md. Citizens Redistricting Commission Brings on National Election Law Expert as Consultant

Bennett Leckrone

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The Maryland Citizens Redistricting Commission is bringing on Nathaniel Persily, a nationally recognized expert on redistricting, to help draw up their congressional and legislative maps.

Commission Co-chair Walter Olson, a senior fellow at Cato Institute's Robert A. Levy Center for Constitutional Studies, announced at a Wednesday night meeting that Persily would serve as the panel's adviser. He called Persily an "eminent" figure in the field of redistricting.

Persily, the James B. McClatchy Professor of Law at Stanford Law School, previously served as a court-appointed expert for the redrawing of Maryland's legislative plan in 2002. He has also been appointed by courts to help redraw legislative or congressional districts in Connecticut, Georgia, New York and North Carolina.

Persily will serve as the commission's chief map-drawer and resident redistricting expert, and will use the panel's input to craft congressional and legislative maps.

Persily is advising commissions across the country as part of the current round of redistricting — including the Prince George's County Redistricting Commission. His role will be paid, Department of Planning spokeswoman Kristin Fleckenstein said in an email, but an exact funding figure wasn't immediately available Wednesday night.

The multi-partisan Maryland Citizens Redistricting Commission was created by Gov. Lawrence J. Hogan Jr. (R) to draw up congressional and legislative maps that he will propose to the General Assembly. Lawmakers will have the final say over what the state's next set of maps look like, and Democrats hold a veto-proof majority in both the House of Delegates and the Senate.

House Speaker Adrienne A. Jones (D-Baltimore County) and Senate President Bill Ferguson (D-Baltimore City) announced their own bipartisan redistricting commission earlier this summer. That commission is chaired by former Department of Legislative Services Executive Director Karl Aro, who was appointed alongside Persily to redraw the state's legislative maps after a 2002 lawsuit overturned the state's legislative map.

Both of the commissions are planning to hold public hearings after Census redistricting data is adjusted to comply with Maryland law by having incarcerated individuals reallocated to their last known address. Fleckenstein said at the meeting that the data is expected to be ready next week.