



## Larry Hogan announces citizens commission to redraw ‘gerrymandered’ Maryland districts

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Maryland Gov. Larry Hogan announced a citizens commission to redraw the state's legislative and congressional districts in an attempt to reduce the amount of gerrymandering that the governor said has led to decades of unequal representation.

Congressional and legislative districts are redrawn every 10 years after the completion of the census. It's up to states to decide how districts are drawn, as federal laws since 1929 stipulate only that districts must be continuous. States typically have additional stipulations regarding compactness, equivalent population sizes, partisan competitiveness, and preserving county unity, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures.

"Nowhere has gerrymandering been allowed to run more rampant than here in the state of Maryland, where decades of unfair redistricting and the drawing of legislative and congressional districts have made a mockery of the electoral system," Hogan said at a Tuesday press conference. "Maryland's citizens have been deprived of the ability to participate, and it has embarrassed our state, with the unfortunate distinction of being the worst, most gerrymandered, most unfair districts in America."

Gerrymandering is regularly derided as a Republican tactic, as when Pennsylvania's Supreme Court ordered that the state's districts be redrawn in 2018, but Maryland presents an example of gerrymandering that has given Democrats an edge — a federal judge once described Maryland's 6th District as "a broken-winged pterodactyl, lying prostrate across the center of the state," according to WAMU.

Former Gov. Martin O'Malley conceded as much when he testified, "It was my intent to create a district where the people would be more likely to elect a Democrat than a Republican."

"These absurdly drawn districts are the direct result of a blatantly obvious scheme where one party rigs the system to concentrate one party's voters as much as possible while segregating another party's voters into a larger number of districts so that they can continue to win comfortably," Hogan said.

The commission will include three Republicans, three Democrats, and three independents and will be co-chaired by former U.S. Judge Alexander Williams, Cato Institute senior fellow Walter Olson, and Howard Community College President Kathleen Hetherington. The goal of the commission will be to draw maps that "respect natural boundaries and geographic integrity," "don't take into account citizens' party affiliation or voting history," and comply with applicable state and federal laws.

"Annapolis power brokers need not apply," tweeted the governor's communications director, Mike Ricci.

Representatives and candidates for the Maryland General Assembly or Congress, individuals affiliated with or employed by political parties and committees, legislative staff, and registered lobbyists will not be able to participate on the commission.