



Maryland launches citizens commission for redistricting reform

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Maryland Gov. Larry Hogan is hoping to take the politics out of the redrawing of political districts by creating a nonpartisan citizens commission to set legislative and congressional boundaries for the 2022 elections.

Redistricting has been an issue for the Republican Hogan since he entered office in 2015, and he has tried to introduce reforms through the Democratic-majority General Assembly without success.

“Nowhere has gerrymandering been allowed to run more rampant than here in the state of Maryland,” said Hogan, announcing the establishment of the Citizens Redistricting Commission.

Gerrymandering is the centuries-old practice of one party drawing political boundaries to concentrate its voters in a district to gain an advantage or to disadvantage opponents.

“This commission is the first of its kind in the history of our state,” Hogan said.

The commission will be made up of three Republicans, three Democrats and three independents. Hogan named three co-chairs of the commission — Retired federal judge Alexander Williams; Dr. Kathleen Hetherington, president of Howard Community College; and Walter Olson, senior fellow at the Cato Institute’s Robert Levy Center for Constitutional Studies.

The other six commission members will be chosen from applications submitted by citizens.

“This time we want to make sure that the people of Maryland are actually the ones drawing these lines and not the politicians or the party bosses,” Hogan said.

The governor said the citizens commission would establish political districts that are fair, comply with the Constitution and the 1965 Voting Rights Act, respect natural boundaries and geography, and do not take into account citizens’ party affiliation.

To buttress his call for reform, Hogan pointed out that registered Democrats outnumber registered Republicans 2 to 1 in Maryland, but on Capitol Hill, in the House of Representatives, Maryland Democrats outnumber Republicans 7 to 1.