



## Md. Citizens Redistricting Commission Finalizes Congressional, Legislative Maps

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The Maryland Citizens Redistricting Commission, created by Gov. Lawrence J. Hogan Jr. (R) to draw up maps that he will propose to the General Assembly, finalized its redistricting proposals at a Wednesday evening meeting.

Commission members voted 8-1 to approve of congressional maps and unanimously to approve legislative maps at the meeting. Those maps, which are available [online](#), are vastly different from the state's current configuration because commissioners started from scratch and didn't use existing districts to begin with.

Commission members weren't allowed to consider partisan district makeup when creating the maps, but their congressional maps received high marks for partisan fairness from the [Princeton Gerrymandering Project](#). The congressional map creates six Democratic and two Republican districts as opposed to the current 7-1 configuration, according to the Princeton Gerrymandering Project's Redistricting Report Card. That report also rated the commission's state senate maps highly in October, although panelists have since made changes to the legislative map and the group hasn't reviewed the finalized version yet.

The commission is composed of three Republicans, three Democrats and three unaffiliated voters, and has been conducting public hearings on redistricting since June. Hogan has said he will submit the commission's maps to the General Assembly, where Democrats hold a veto-proof majority in both the House of Delegates and the Senate. Lawmakers have formed their [own redistricting panel](#), the Legislative Redistricting Advisory Commission, to conduct public hearings and draw up congressional and legislative maps.

Here are a few takeaways from the Maryland Citizens Redistricting Commission's final redistricting proposal:

**County splits are minimized compared with current congressional maps**

Keeping communities and neighborhoods intact was a common ask from residents throughout the commission's public hearings, and commissioners said Wednesday evening that they tried to minimize county splits as much as possible in their proposed maps.

Under the state's current congressional maps, Baltimore City is split between the 2nd, 3rd and 7th Districts. The city would be contained within a single congressional district alongside portions of northern Anne Arundel County in the commission's proposed maps.

Commission member William Thomas (D), a Baltimore City resident, was the only commission member to vote against the congressional proposal. Thomas said he was "disappointed" that he received little feedback on the congressional maps from city residents, and added that he couldn't be sure the map accurately reflected what Baltimore residents want in their congressional configuration. He said he would've preferred an east-west split for Baltimore in the commission's maps

Anne Arundel County, currently split between four congressional districts, would also be kept more intact: Aside from neighborhoods included in a district with Baltimore City, the county is contained within a single district with all of Howard County and a small portion of northern Calvert County in the proposed maps.

Baltimore County, which is also split between four congressional districts in current maps, would be split between two districts from north to south. The northern portions of the county are included with the Eastern Shore in the 1st District, and the southern half of the county has its own self-contained district.

Northern portions of Montgomery County are kept in a district with Western Maryland, although that district would include all of Frederick and Carroll counties. Most of Montgomery County would include a self-contained district extending from Germantown to east of Aspen Hill. The eastern portion of the county, including Silver Spring and White Oak, would be included in a district with northern Prince George's county.

Roughly the southern half of Prince George's County is included in a district with Charles, St. Mary's and Calvert counties.

### **The legislative map includes both single- and multi-member delegate districts**

In his executive order creating the commission earlier this year, Hogan said single-member delegate districts should be used in the map "to the extent possible." After weeks of debate, panelists decided to use a mix of single- and multi-member districts based on population density.

Eighteen of 47 state Senate districts contain three-member delegate districts in the Maryland Citizens Redistricting Commission's proposed maps.

The commission's proposed delegate map generally includes multi-member House districts in counties with a population density of more than 2,000 per square mile, commission Co-Chair Walter Olson (R) previously said.

There are various exceptions to the use of multi-member districts in the commission's map: Single-member districts are used as required by the federal Voting Rights Act to ensure representation of people of color, and 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 House districts are also 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 a previous email from Maryland Department of Planning Public Affairs Director Kristin R. Fleckenstein.

The Maryland constitution allows state delegate districts with between one and three members, and the state currently uses a mix of 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 legislative maps. Single-member districts are generally used in more rural or geographically large districts or when required by the Voting Rights Act. They are also sometimes used in current maps when a portion of a Senate district crosses county lines.

Proponents of single-member districts who testified during the Maryland Citizens Redistricting Commission's three rounds of public hearings said they make it easier for political newcomers to challenge incumbents and create more specialized local representation, while proponents of multi-member districts have said they offer voters broader representation and helped the Maryland General Assembly outpace other states in terms of gender and racial diversity.

### **The MCRC maps are highly unlikely to be enacted**

The General Assembly, where Democrats hold a veto-proof majority in both the House of Delegates and the Senate, will have the final say over redistricting in Maryland. Legislative leaders created their own commission, the bipartisan Legislative Redistricting Advisory Commission, to draw up their own set of congressional and legislative maps.

The legislative commission includes four Democratic and two Republican legislative leaders and is chaired by Karl Aro, the former director of the nonpartisan Department of Legislative Services. That panel kicked off its public hearings in September, but hasn't produced congressional or legislative maps for public comment yet.

Hogan said last week that he would oppose maps from the General Assembly that "don't follow what the Citizens Redistricting Commission has come up with." The governor 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.

Lawmakers are planning a special session in December to tackle congressional redistricting. The Legislative Redistricting Advisory Commission is set to wrap up its hearings this month before recommending maps to the General Assembly.