

GERRYMANDERING

Then & Now

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DRAWING ELECTION DISTRICT LINES IS A TWO STEP PROCESS



Reapportionment

The Distribution of "Seats"

Determining how many representatives each state gets based on total population.

 Trigger: The Census Population Count



Redistricting

The Drawing of Lines

Redrawing the actual geographic boundaries of election districts within the state.

 Action: Adjusting Boundaries for Shift

Why It Happens Every 10 Years



Constitutional Mandate

The U.S. Constitution expressly ties reapportionment and redistricting to the decennial Census. This ensures that political boundaries are adjusted regularly to reflect new population data.



Ensuring Equal Representation

The primary goal is to ensure roughly equal population representation across districts. As people move and communities grow or shrink, lines must change to maintain "one person, one vote."

Federal Redistricting Standards

The non-negotiable rules for drawing maps



Population Equality

The Supreme Court's mandate requiring that political districts have nearly identical numbers of residents. For Congressional districts, this standard is incredibly strict.

THE LEGAL MANDATE

"One Person, One Vote"

Districts must be within +/- 1% population deviation.



Federal Voting Rights Act

Prohibits racial discrimination in voting and prevents the "cracking" or "packing" of minority communities to dilute their political voice and representation.

KEY PROTECTION

Prohibits Discrimination

Cannot marginalize minority communities when drawing lines.

Maryland Standards in Law



State Legislative Districts

The Maryland Constitution explicitly requires that state legislative districts must be compact, contiguous, and drawn with due regard for natural boundaries and the boundaries of political subdivisions like cities and counties.



Congressional Districts

Surprisingly, the Maryland Constitution is silent on specific requirements for Congressional districts. This means only federal standards (population equality & VRA) legally apply, leaving room for partisan maneuvering.

What Is Gerrymandering?

Definition:

"The practice of drawing electoral district lines to favor one political party, individual, or group over others, rather than reflecting the voters' will."

Common Manipulation Tactics:



Packing

Concentrating opposing voters into a single district to reduce their influence elsewhere.



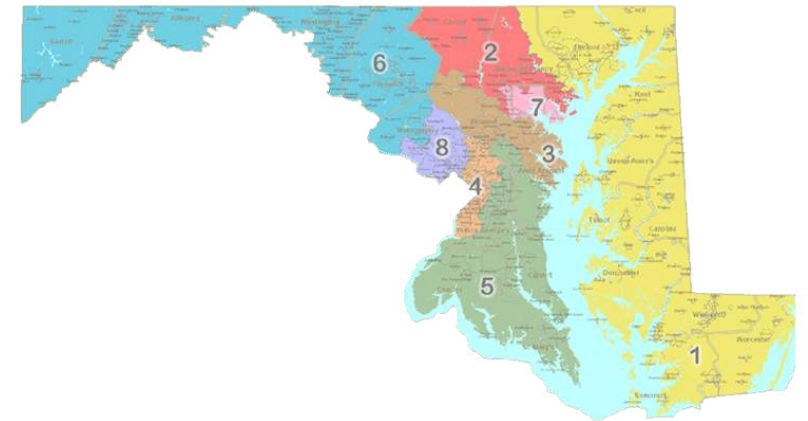
Cracking

Splitting a community across multiple districts to dilute their voting power.



Bleaching

Specific form of packing/cracking focused on diluting racial minority voting strength.



Gerrymandering 101



Where the Term Comes From



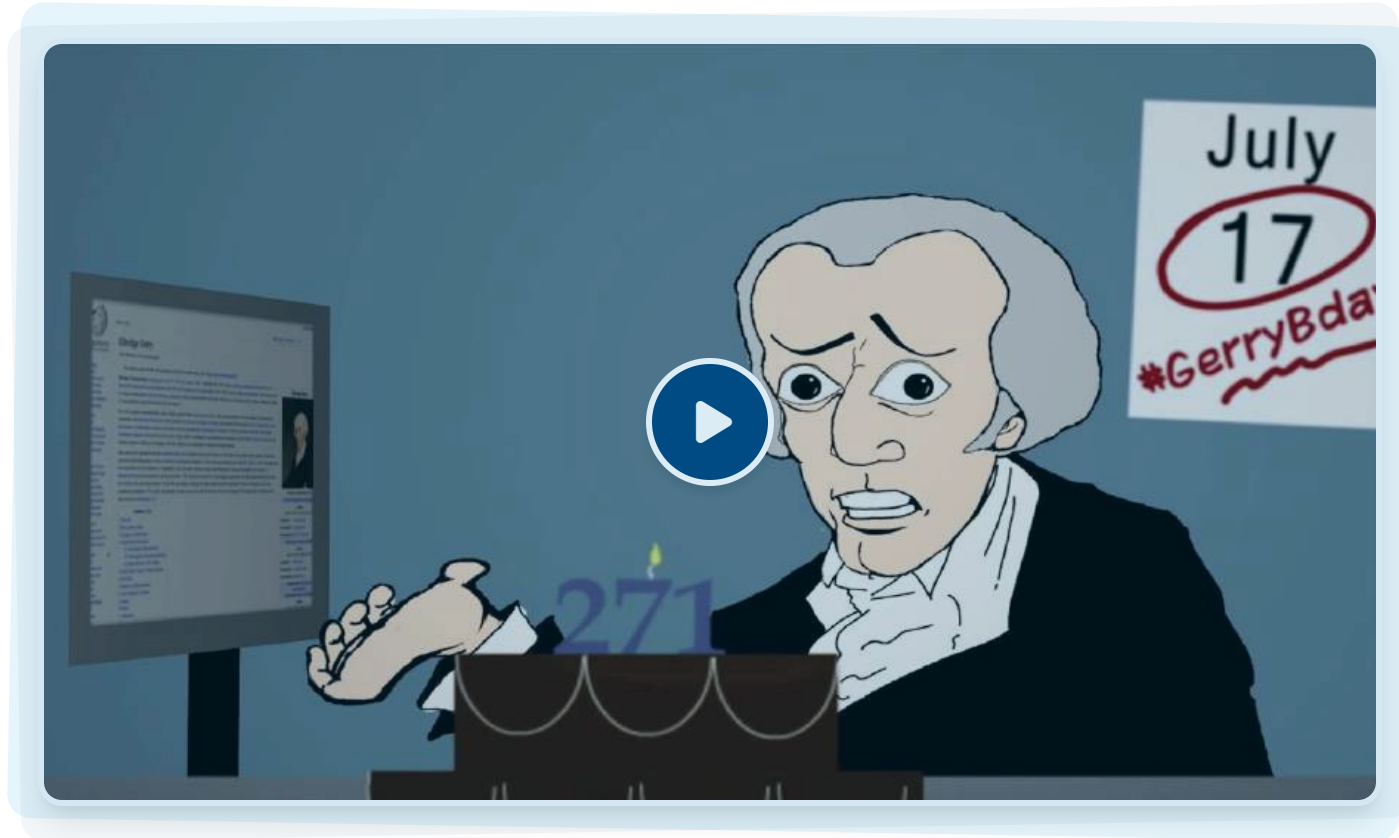
THE "GERRY-MANDER" OF 1812

“*Gerry + Salamander =
Gerrymander*”

In 1812, Massachusetts Governor **Elbridge Gerry** signed a bill redrawing districts to favor his party.

One contorted district north of Boston was said to resemble a **salamander**, birthing the term that now defines political map manipulation.

A Birthday Message from "The Gerry"



Elbridge Gerry (1744-1814)

"He championed American independence, served as Massachusetts governor and was vice president of the United States. But sadly for Elbridge Gerry, now he's known just as the origin of the word."

Common Cause NC
July 17, 2015

[Watch Video](#)

Why Gerrymandering Harms Voters

Q If the public still gets to vote under the new maps, what's the actual harm?

A

The harm is that voters are denied a fair playing field before the first ballot is even cast.

Unfair maps distort election outcomes, making some votes count more than others. The right to vote loses meaning if district lines are drawn to predetermine the result.

 Mid-cycle changes can also weaken communities of color and reduce accountability.

Who Draws the Lines?



Reform Models

- ✓ **Independent Commissions:**
 Citizens draw the lines, minimizing politician influence.
 Examples: CA, AZ, MI
- ✓ **Bipartisan Commissions:**
 Politicians appoint members, but structure ensures balance.
 Examples: CO, WA, NJ, HI, ID
- ✓ **Nonpartisan Agency:**
 Non-political staff draw maps for legislative approval.
 Example: Iowa



Legislative Models

- **Hybrid Systems:** Often use advisory commissions, but the legislature retains final say.
 Examples: Maryland, MO, OH, IL, IN
- **State Legislatures:**
 Politicians draw their own district lines. The most common model.
 Used in ~33 States



NOTE ON MARYLAND

Maryland is considered a hybrid system, where the Governor's advisory commission proposes maps to the Legislature.

LEGAL, BUT NOT A REPRESENTATIVE PROCESS

2001 & 2011 Practice



The Governor's "Advisory" Commission

Designed for control, not compromise.



The Senate President
KEY DEMOCRATIC LEADER



The Speaker of the House
KEY DEMOCRATIC LEADER



2 Democratic Allies
APPOINTED BY GOVERNOR



One Republican
TOKEN MINORITY REPRESENTATION



The Result

The maps were drawn by political insiders deeply invested in the outcome—protecting incumbents and maximizing partisan advantage.



2021 Exception

In 2021, Governor Hogan broke the norm by appointing a **multipartisan citizen commission**. However, the legislature responded by creating a competing insider commission to ensure their map prevailed.

Best Practices for Fair Redistricting

Recommended Standards (Not Legal Requirements)



Aspirational Standards

These criteria go beyond minimum legal requirements. They are used by independent commissions and reform models to ensure maps serve voters, not politicians.



Geometric Standards

Contiguity & Compactness: Districts must be a single connected piece and should not have bizarre, sprawling shapes without justification.



Respect for Boundaries

Maps should follow existing political lines (counties, cities, towns) and natural boundaries (rivers, mountains) to minimize administrative confusion.



Communities of Interest

Populations with shared cultural, historical, or economic interests should be kept intact to ensure their collective voice is represented.



Fairness & Process

Key process requirements include **transparency** (documenting trade-offs) and, in some jurisdictions, **incumbency neutrality** and competitiveness.

CORE PRINCIPLE

“ Transparency & Public Input

*Fair maps require
transparency at each step
of the process.*

A public process builds trust and legitimacy in outcomes. This means open hearings, accessible draft maps, and real opportunities for citizens to comment before lines are finalized.

In the 2011 redistricting process, 174,000 Marylanders needed to change Congressional Districts based on population changes.

How many were actually moved to different districts?

A

~200,000 people

B

~500,000 people

C

~1 million people

D

~1.5 million people

2011: A Map Redrawn for Politics

Population Needs vs. Political Reality

 REQUIRED MOVE

174k

Marylanders needed to change districts based on census population shifts.



 ACTUALLY MOVED

1.5M

Marylanders were reassigned to new districts.

 NEARLY 1/3 OF ALL RESIDENTS

The Political Impact

Representation shifted from 6 Democrats – 2 Republicans to 7 Democrats – 1 Republican.

PRIMARY DRIVER
POLITICS
NOT POPULATION

2015: Governor's Redistricting Reform Commission



FORMATION

Diverse Coalition

Politically balanced group & Included nominees from **LWVMD** and **Common Cause MD** to ensure non-partisan oversight.



STUDY

Best Practices

Commission heard from the people of Maryland & studied models from other states to recommend an **independent citizen commission**.



OUTCOME

Key Recommendations

Emphasized **transparency**, public input, and strict criteria to guard against partisan bias.



Why It Matters

This commission laid the groundwork for future reform proposals, establishing that fair maps require **removing the pen from politicians' hands** and prioritizing voters' interests over partisan gains.

2018: Court Ruling on MD's 6th District

✓ Unconstitutional Gerrymander

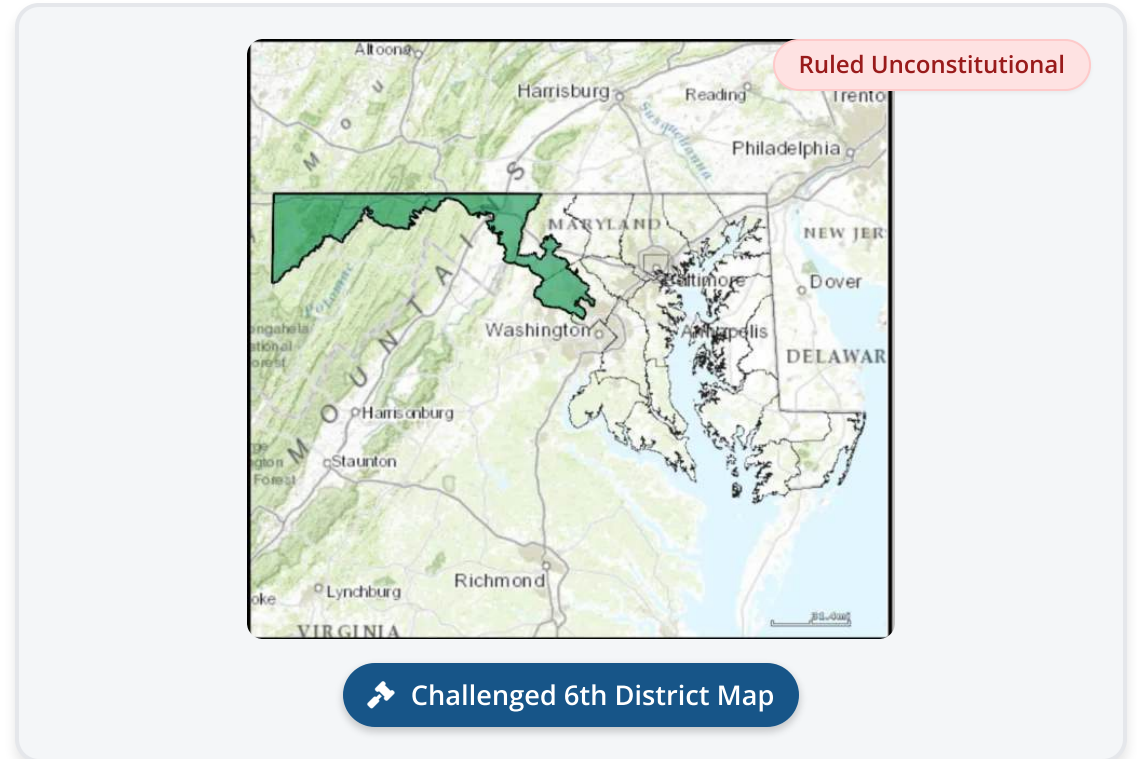
In *Benisek v. Lamone*, a federal court ruled that Maryland's 6th District was an unconstitutional partisan gerrymander, specifically drawn to dilute Republican votes.

✓ Emergency Commission Created

In response, Governor Hogan established an Emergency Commission to draft remedial boundaries, focusing on correcting Districts 6 and 8.

✓ Legal Context

While this ruling was significant, subsequent Supreme Court decisions (*Rucho v. Common Cause*) later limited federal court intervention in partisan gerrymandering cases.



2021–2022: A Tale of Two Maps

Contrasting the Citizens Commission approach with the Legislative outcome



MCRC

CITIZENS COMMISSION

- ✓ **Independent Membership**
Composed entirely of independent citizen members, not politicians.
- ✓ **Process**
Conducted open hearings and drafted maps based on fair, pre-established standards.
- ✓ **Goal**
Prioritized community integrity over partisan advantage.

★ **Standard of Fairness**

VS



LRAC

LEGISLATIVE COMMISSION

- ✗ **Political Control**
Led by legislative leaders with inherent political interests.
- ✗ **Outcome**
Advanced a map designed to maximize partisan seat count.
- 🚫 **Legal Challenge**
Map blocked by state court in March 2022 as an "extreme partisan gerrymander."

🚫 **Ruled Unconstitutional**

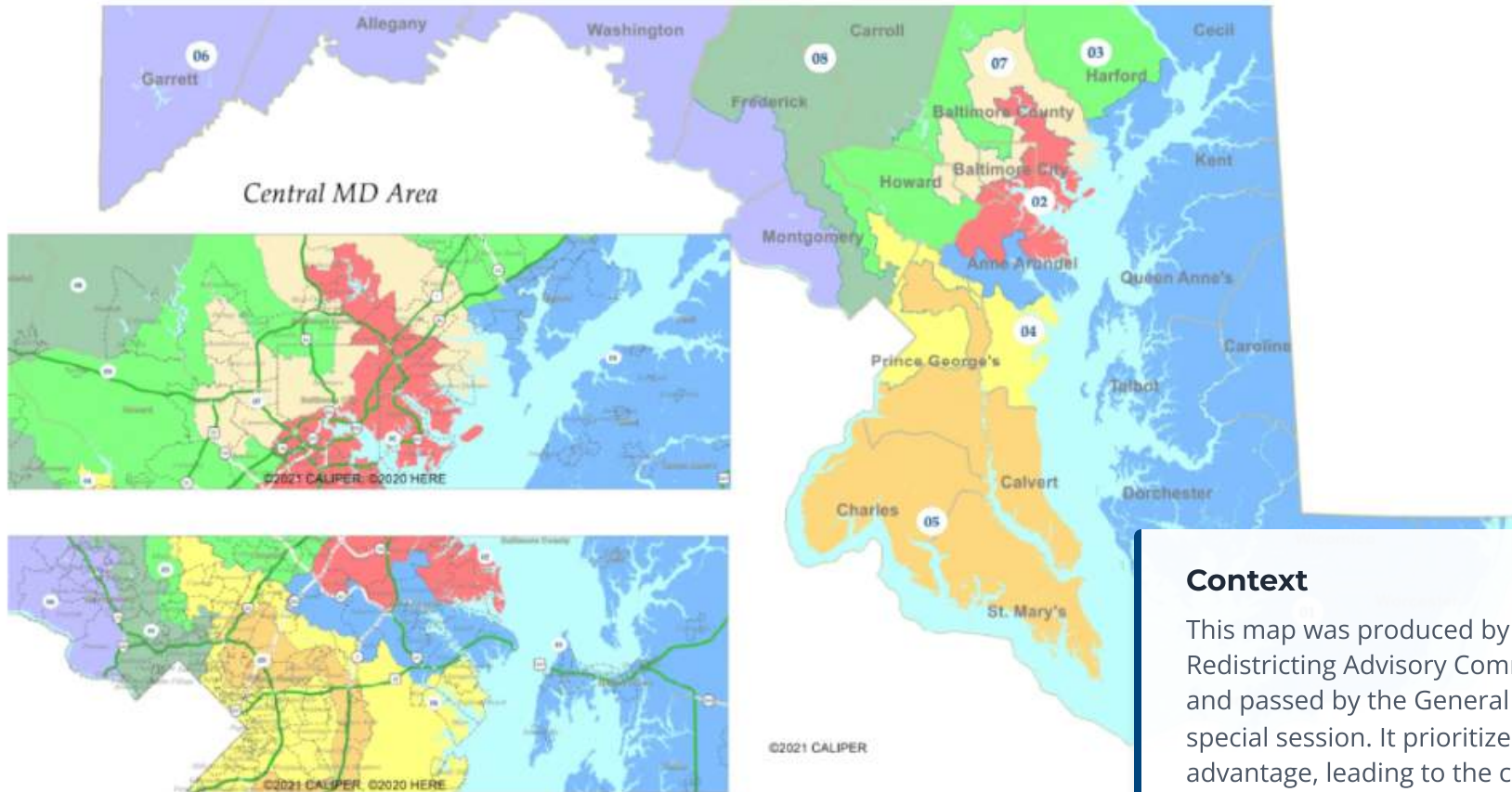
The 2021 Legislative Proposal

Map enacted by the General Assembly in December 2021 (Later overturned)

LEGISLATIVE PROPOSAL

LRAC Final Map

Dec 2021 Session



Context

This map was produced by the Legislative Redistricting Advisory Commission (LRAC) and passed by the General Assembly in a special session. It prioritized partisan advantage, leading to the court challenge.

Maryland Department Of Legislative Services

A Violation of Rights



UNCONSTITUTIONAL

“*The Plan is an outlier and a product of extreme partisan gerrymandering.*”

Senior Judge Lynne A. Battaglia

CIRCUIT COURT FOR ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY • MARCH 25, 2022

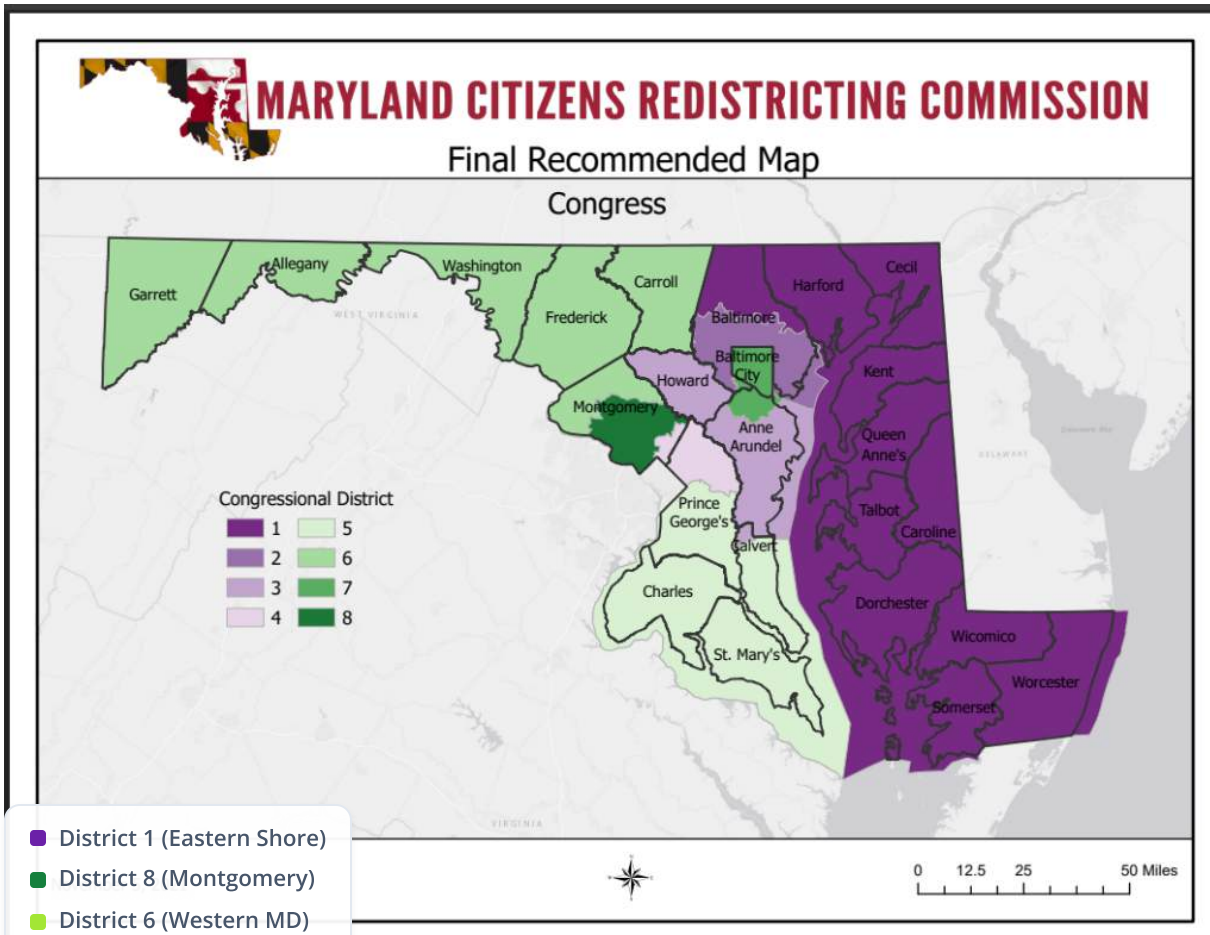
***The Ruling:** The court found that "partisanship was a predominant intent" in drawing the maps, subordinating traditional constitutional requirements like compactness and respect for political boundaries.*

MCRC Final Recommended Map

Proposal by the Maryland Citizens Redistricting Commission (Nov 2021)

OFFICIAL PROPOSAL

Nov 5, 2021



COMPACTNESS



Geographic Integrity

Districts are noticeably more compact and contiguous compared to the legislative maps. Note how District 1 (purple) respects the Eastern Shore boundary without crossing the Bay unnecessarily.

FAIRNESS



Partisan Balance

Created more competitive districts rather than safe seats. The map would likely have produced a more representative split reflecting Maryland's actual voting patterns (~6D-2R or 5D-3R).

COMMUNITY

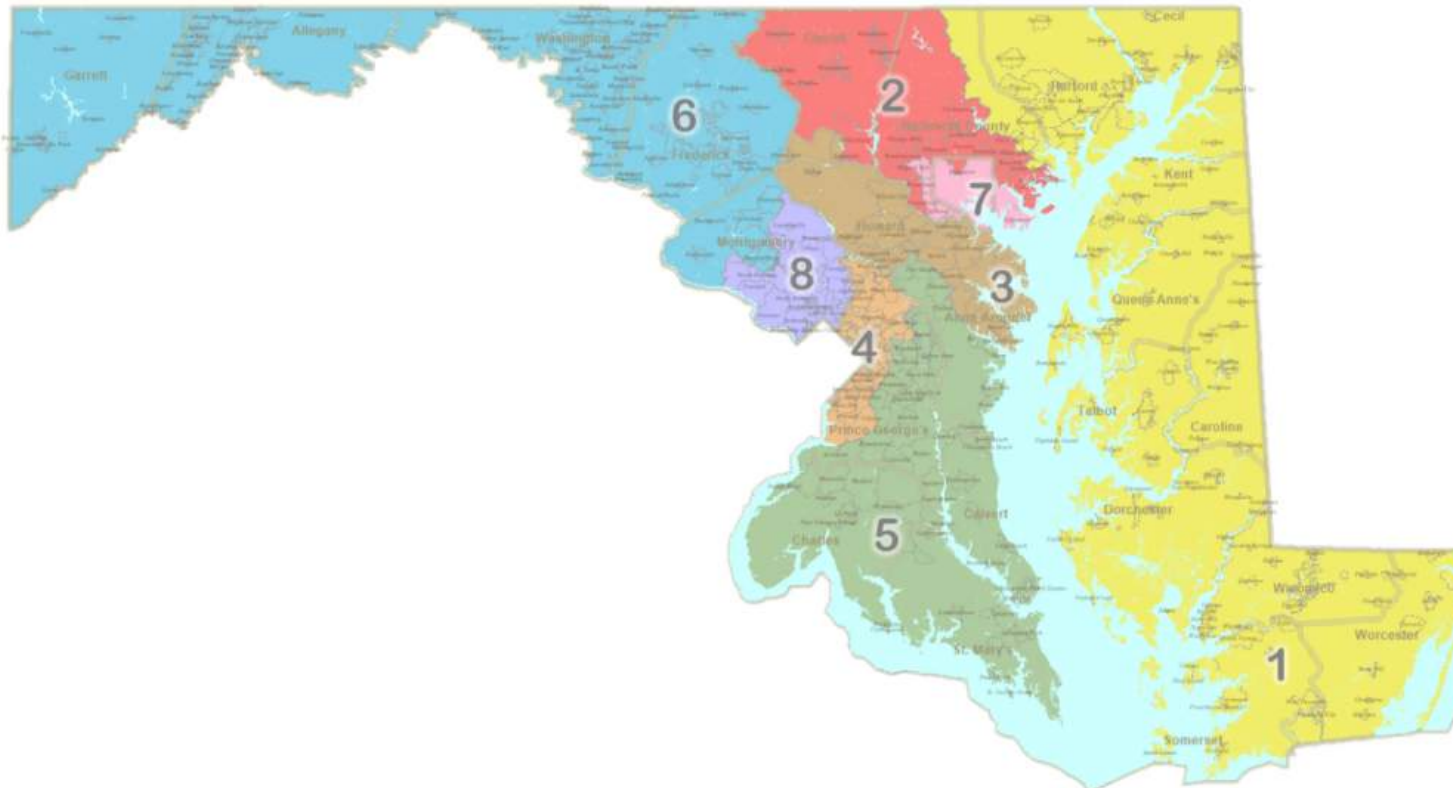


Communities of Interest

Kept major jurisdictions more intact. Western Maryland (green) and the Baltimore metropolitan area show significantly fewer splits than the 2011 gerrymandered map.

Final 2022 Outcome (SB 1012)

The Settlement Map Adopted April 2022



SOURCE
Maryland General Assembly

SPLIT OUTCOME

Maintained 7D-1R Split

While the partisan breakdown remained consistent, the map showed significantly more restraint than previous proposals.

COMMUNITY IMPACT

Eastern Shore Integrity

District 1 kept communities like the Eastern Shore more intact, respecting natural boundaries and communities of interest.

✓ Resolution

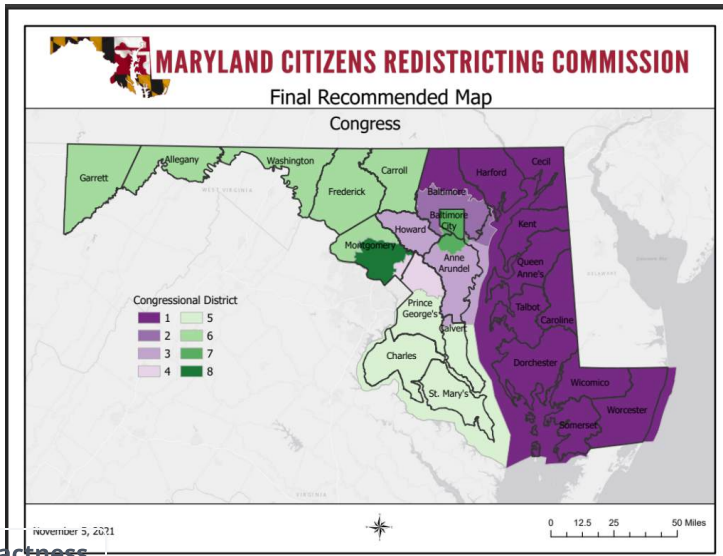
This map resolved the legal challenges for the 2022 cycle, replacing the unconstitutional legislative proposal.

Visual Comparison: Recommended vs. Final

Contrasting the Citizens Commission Proposal with the Final Settlement Map

MCRC Proposal (Nov 2021)

CITIZEN DRAWN



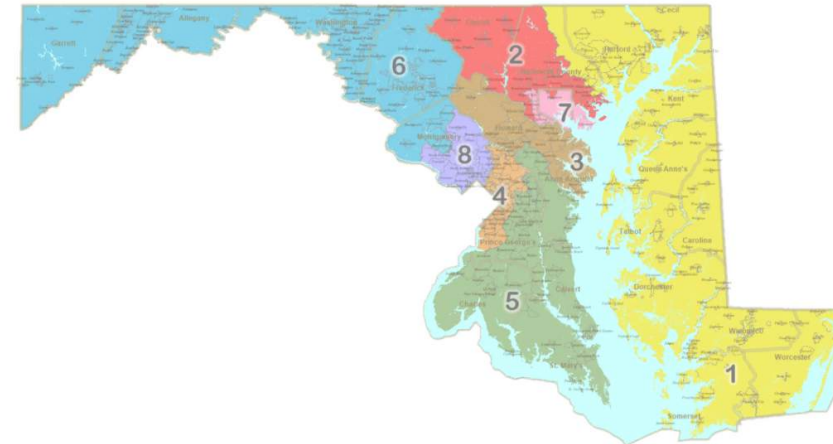
Focus: Compactness

Priority:

Community Integrity

Final Settlement (SB 1012)

COURT SETTLEMENT



Focus: Status Quo

Priority:

Incumbent Protection

VS


KEY DIFFERENCE



The MCRC map prioritized **geometric compactness** and keeping counties whole (see Western MD), while the final settlement map made compromises to protect incumbents, though it was still a significant improvement over the unconstitutional legislative proposal.

The "Mid-Decade" Trend (2025–2026)

 **Historic Surge: 6 States Enacted**

 **The Catalyst: Texas (July 2025)**
 Triggered the "chain reaction" by redrawing maps mid-cycle to gain **+5 Republican seats** without new Census data.

The "Tit-for-Tat" Dynamic

GOP GAINS

Texas, Missouri, NC, Ohio

+9 Seats

Net Advantage

DEM RESPONSE

California (Prop 50)

+5 Seats

Counter-Balance

Legal & Voter Pushback

Indiana Precedent: GOP legislature voted down own map (Dec 2025) citing public trust.

Court Battles: Texas & Utah maps under Supreme Court review.

State-by-State Status (Jan 2026)		
State	Status	Political Impact
Texas	Enacted (Aug 2025)	+5 Republican
California	Enacted (Nov 2025)	+5 Democratic
Ohio	Enacted (Oct 2025)	+2 Republican
North Carolina	Enacted (Oct 2025)	+1 Republican
Missouri	Enacted (Sept 2025)	+1 Republican
Maryland	Commission Active	Targeting MD-01 (1 GOP)
Virginia	Proposal Pending	Targeting 3-4 GOP

4 Active / 6 Enacted

A Historic Surge
 Before 2025, only **2 states** conducted voluntary mid-decade redistricting since 1970.

300% INCREASE

Maryland's 2025 Response



GRAC Reconstituted

Governor Wes Moore reconstituted the commission in Nov 2025 to consider mid-cycle map changes. The deadline for public map submissions was set for January 13, 2026.



Meeting Transparency Gap

As of Jan 13, 2026, the commission has held **7 total meetings**, but only **5 were public sessions**. Senate President Bill Ferguson and others have criticized the lack of open deliberations.



The "Unpublicized" Dec 18 Vote

The pivotal 3-2 vote to proceed with redrawing maps occurred during an unannounced "**closed-door session**" on Dec 18, 2025. Critics have labeled the process a "farce" due to this lack of public notice.

The 5 Members of the GRAC

Governor's Redistricting Advisory Commission & The Dec 18 Vote Split

✓ Voted to Proceed

3 Votes



COMMISSION CHAIR

Angela Alsobrooks

D

Primary advocate for redraw to "counter national GOP efforts."



SPEAKER OF THE HOUSE

Joseline Peña-Melnyk

D

Newly sworn-in; supports commission's mid-cycle goals.



FORMER ATTORNEY GENERAL

Brian Frosh

D

Provides legal/VRA compliance perspective for the majority.

VS

✗ The Opposition

2 Votes



SENATE PRESIDENT

Bill Ferguson

D

Opposes direction; voted against the "closed-door" decision.

PROMINENT CRITIC



MAYOR OF CUMBERLAND

Raymond Morriss

R

Sole Republican; bipartisan voice dissenting alongside Ferguson.

⚠ **Key Conflict:** Both members publicly criticized the **unannounced nature** of the Dec 18 vote.

The Current Debate in Maryland

Should Maryland redraw maps mid-decade to respond to national politics?



Proponents

ADVOCATES FOR NEW MAPS



National Context

Response to partisan "arms race" (Texas, NC).



Strategic Targeting

Target District 1 (sole GOP seat) to maximize power.



Political Necessity

Vital for 2026 Influence.

Focus: Strategy

VS



Opponents (3 Camps)

BROAD COALITION AGAINST CHANGE



Senate Pres. Bill Ferguson

BREAKING PARTY RANKS

In his **Oct 28, 2025 Letter**, Ferguson articulated a strategic case against mid-cycle redistricting:

"Legal risks are too high... and the certainty of our existing map would be undermined."

1. The "Holdout":

MD holding map prevents GOP (55 seats) from redrawing.

2. Legal Risk:

7-1 map "certainty evaporates"; cites 2022 court precedent.

3. Values:

Changing rules for "political winds" breaks trust.

4. Public Priorities:

Voters want affordability, not map battles.



Non-Partisan

LWV/Common Cause: "Disturbed" by closed meetings; demand "Fairness Criteria".

GOP Leadership

Buckel/Hershey: *Fair Districts Act*, call GRAC a "farce".

The Civil Rights Risk of Mid-Cycle Redistricting

“Mid-decade redistricting poses a unique threat to communities of color, who often bear the brunt of tactical shifts designed for partisan gain. We must ensure that voters choose their representatives, rather than politicians choosing their voters under the guise of 'rebalancing' the map.”

FERGUSON'S ARGUMENT

"Constitutional Hypocrisy"

"It is inherently contradictory to condemn shifting voters based on race while simultaneously supporting tactical shifting..."

Undermining stability for partisan gain endangers the legal foundations used to fight racial discrimination.

THE "ILLINOIS WARNING"

Diluting Black Voting Power

Precedent: Illinois Black Caucus rejected national redistricting pushes because they rely on "cracking" or "packing".

 **Risk: Minority communities as "pawns"**

Maryland VRA Context

Mid-cycle redistricting risks a **"legal catastrophe"** that could invite courts to strike down the recently passed Maryland Voting Rights Act protections.

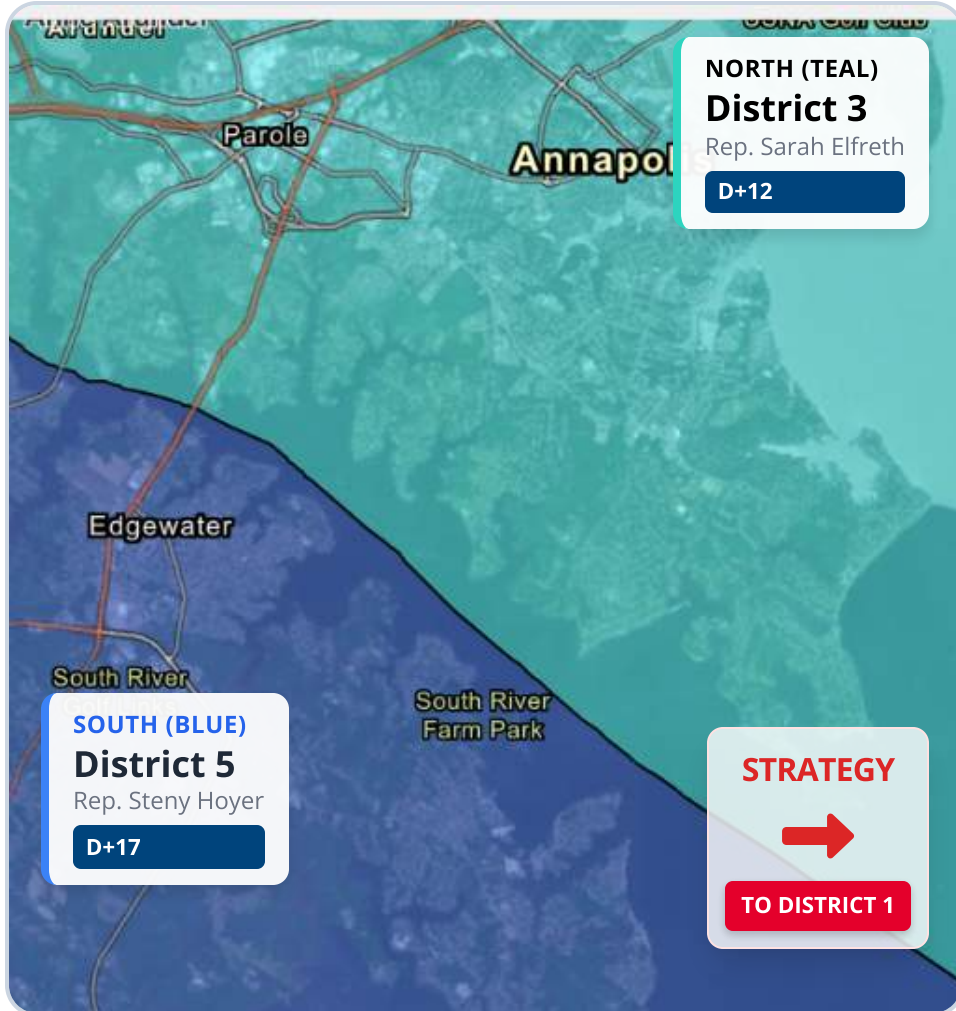
LWV Position: Guarding Communities

We oppose "counter-gerrymandering" that treats communities of color as movable assets.

 **Redistricting must be once-per-decade.**

The Edgewater Boundary – A Strategic "Split"

Anne Arundel County: Where Community Lines Meet Political Strategy



NORTH OF RIVER

District 3

Urban/Suburban mix (Annapolis, Howard Co).

SOUTH OF RIVER

District 5

Diverse suburban/rural mix (Southern MD).



Strategic Value: The "Export" Theory

Edgewater is a **"swing-weight" suburban area**. Moving these Democratic-leaning precincts into the neighboring **1st District** is a primary strategy discussed to make the GOP-held seat competitive.



Community Impact

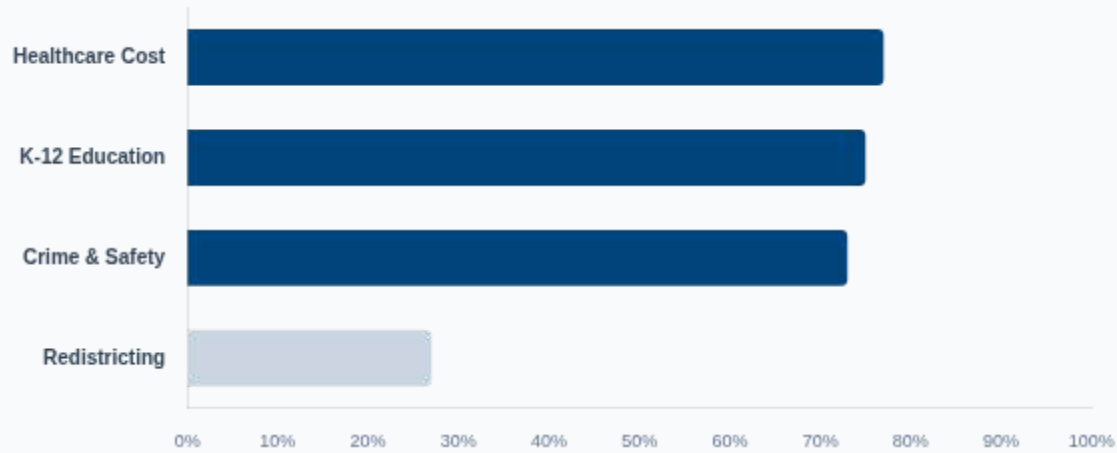
Any mid-decade redraw risks splitting the Edgewater-Mayo peninsula's **"community of interest,"** potentially separating local schools and businesses into different federal representation.

Actual map visualization of the South River boundary splitting the 21037 zip code

Maryland Public Sentiment on Redistricting

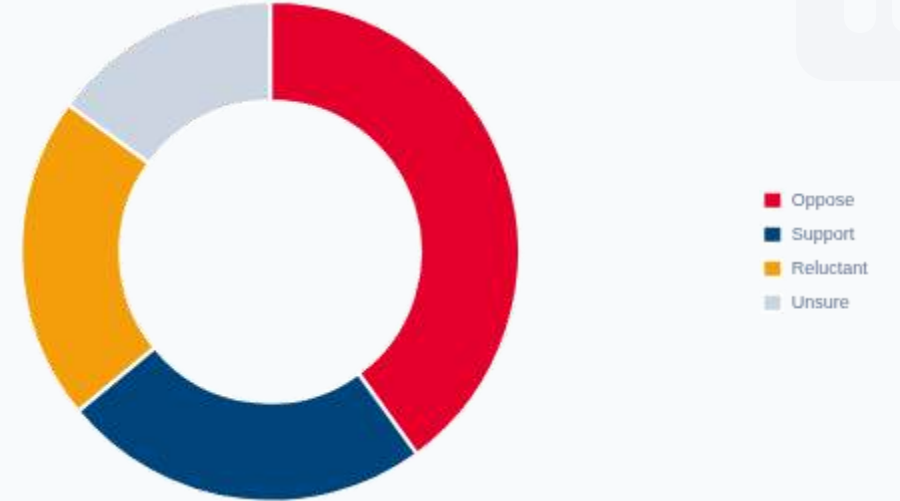
Voters prioritize kitchen-table issues over partisan map-drawing

The Voter Priority Gap



Only 27% consider redistricting a "high priority"

Support for Mid-Decade Move



Perception of Fairness

28%

Believe current maps are "Fair"

81%

Agree partisan gerrymandering is a "Major Problem"

The Preferred Solution

Marylanders overwhelmingly prefer a non-partisan, independent commission over the current GRAC system of elected officials drawing lines.

63%

SUPPORT INDEPENDENT COMMISSION

2026 Election Timeline Complications

Mid-Cycle Changes Risk Administrative Chaos & Delays



WHY THESE DATES MIGHT CHANGE

FEB 24, 2026

Candidate Filing Deadline

The immediate bottleneck. Candidates cannot file without finalized district lines.

JUNE 23, 2026

Primary Election Day

At risk of postponement. In 2022, courts moved the primary to July due to map delays.

NOV 3, 2026

General Election

The constitutional endpoint that compresses the entire schedule.



Legal Bottlenecks

Mid-decade maps face immediate court challenges. If litigation isn't resolved by mid-February, the General Assembly or courts may be forced to delay the filing deadline.



The "Hoyer Factor"

Rep. Steny Hoyer's retirement makes District 5 an open seat. Redrawing this district mid-cycle adds significant urgency and complexity for potential candidates.



Administrative Hurdles

The State Board of Elections requires time to update precinct data and notify voters. Rushed maps increase the risk of errors and voter confusion.

2026 Legislative Bills in Play

Key legislation as General Assembly convenes on Jan 14, 2026

<p>HB 56 PRE-FILED</p> <p>Redistricting Convention Del. Bouchat (R)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 188-member elected body Single-member districts Removes Governor power 	<p>SB 104 PRE-FILED</p> <p>Fair Districts Act Sen. Hershey (R) + 12 others</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Independent Commission Single-member districts Supreme Court backup 	<p>TBD PENDING</p> <p>"Emergency" Map Bill Gov. Moore / GRAC</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Output of Jan 15 meeting Urgent timeline Ferguson "holdout" risk 	<p>TBD ANTICIPATED</p> <p>Filing Deadline Extension Admin / Companion Bill</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Moves Feb 24 deadline Allow data updates Prevent "chaos"
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MARYLAND VRA CONTEXT

Ferguson's "Shield" Argument:

"Passing a VRA and then immediately engaging in tactical partisan shifting would be legally and morally inconsistent."

SESSION CARRYOVER IMPACT

Bill	Short Title	Main Objective	Key Controversy
HB 56	Redistricting Convention	Voter-elected map body	Ends multi-member districts
SB 104	Fair Districts Act	Independent Commission	Takes power from Gen. Assembly
Map	2026 Map Bill (GRAC)	Counter national GOP	Legal risk & time constraints

Critical Deadlines for Map Implementation

Compressed legislative window threatens June 23 Primary stability

- JAN 14**
SESSION START

General Assembly Convenes
90-day session begins. First opportunity to introduce GRAC map.
- LATE JAN**
URGENT WINDOW

The "Pass or Fail" Window
Map must pass House & Senate to allow SBE processing time.
- FEB 02**
EMERGENCY

Emergency Deadline Extension
Must pass legislation to push filing deadline if no map exists.
- FEB 24**
DROP DEAD

Candidate Filing Deadline
Final filing day. Without map or extension, election enters "legal limbo."
- MAR-APR**
COURTS

The Litigation Period
Supreme Court must rule by mid-April to hold June primary.
- MAY 04**
LOGISTICS

Ballot Printing Deadline
SBE begins printing/coding for overseas (UOCAVA) voters.

🗳️ Required Actions Matrix		
Milestone	Date	Action Needed
Session Start	Jan 14	Bill Introduction
Filing Date	Feb 24	MOVE TO MARCH
Legal Review	Feb-Mar	Rule by April
Ballot Prep	May 04	Final Map in System
Primary Day	Jun 23	POSSIBLE DELAY

⚠️ Risk Assessment

Sen. Ferguson warns this timeline is "administratively impossible" without chaos. Any delay past Feb 2 risks a court-ordered election postponement similar to 2022.

LWV Maryland Position & Actions

(2025–2026)



United Against Mid-Cycle Changes

LWV stands with coalition partners like **Common Cause** and **Fair Maps Maryland** in opposing mid-cycle redistricting driven by partisan motives. We affirm that maps should align with the decennial Census to ensure stability and trust.



Shared Demand for Transparency

We echo the "Fairness Criteria" championed by non-partisan advocates. Any process must ensure meaningful public input, avoid closed-door votes, and strictly adhere to the Voting Rights Act to protect communities of interest.



Call to Action

Join the movement: submit public comments, testify at hearings, and amplify the voices of our non-partisan coalition. Together, we must defend fair representation against "legal risks" and political expediency.

Source: LWV Mid-Cycle Redistricting Action Kit (2025) & Coalition Statements



Questions?

We welcome your questions about Maryland redistricting and the current debate.
