

Maryland Legislative Redistricting Advisory Commission Holds First Statewide Virtual Hearing

Posted by [Zach Hill](#) On 10/08/2021

ANNAPOLIS, Md. — The Maryland Legislative Redistricting Advisory Commission, comprised mostly of Maryland General Assembly members, held its first statewide virtual hearing on Oct. 5. The topics for discussion included how the census data has affected redistricting.

"We all understand that the population increases, but it does not do so evenly. Some areas gain. Some areas lose. It is a matter of not only if you gain or lose, but its relationship to every other area," Karl Aro, Head of Legislative Redistricting Advisory Commission, said.

Before listening to any testimonies, the commission mentioned their optimal population for each district(noted below). The population may look different from the census data because Maryland must account for prisoners.

Also, they displayed how central and Southern Maryland presented the largest population based on the most recent census data.

The first testimonial came from the League of Women Voters, and they applauded the commission's efforts to hear the public and the state redistricting process. But, they suggested they should release draft maps for public comment before the General Assembly votes on them.

"When people see a draft map, they are much more likely to focus on the boundaries and react with specific feedback," Jacqueline Coolidge of the League of Women Voters told the panel.

Then, a representative of the 23 Chapter Delta Sigma Theta sorority mentioned how the commission needs to provide reasoning behind the changes in their draft maps for transparency.

As the meeting went on, the only other suggestion for the panel was to change the time of the hearings to enable more citizen attendance. Overall, everyone wants transparency, with hopes of deterring the commission from gerrymandering and other underhanded tactics, something historically observed in Maryland.

Currently, the commission is looking to hold another meeting on Oct. 28 for Southern Maryland redistricting, but they will not hold another statewide meeting until Nov. 15, 2021.

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