

Ohio Redistricting Commission, during sparsely attended hearing, considers adding fourth public meeting

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COLUMBUS, Ohio — The Ohio Redistricting Commission held its first public-comment hearing Friday on [a Republican-authored proposal to redraw the state's legislative district lines](#).

However, not many members of the public showed up to comment during the two-hour-long hearing at Deer Creek State Park, about 30 miles south of Columbus.

The seven-member commission heard testimony from half a dozen people – most of whom were liberal critics of the proposed Republican redistricting plan who testified during the last redistricting cycle.

The proposal being considered would, as written, [create more GOP-leaning House and Senate districts than are in place under the current maps](#), which were repeatedly found by the Ohio Supreme Court to be unconstitutionally gerrymandered in favor of Republicans.

“Because of foot dragging, backroom mapmaking and repeated redraws, many Ohioans are so frustrated, they’ve frankly given up on you,” said Catherine Turcer, executive director of Common Cause Ohio “They don’t believe that you’ll listen to them.”

House Minority Leader Allison Russo, a Democratic commission member from suburban Columbus, apologized to Carol Griffith, a member of the public who said she had to miss a doctor’s appointment to testify at the hearing.

“At the end of the day, it is the public that gets shortchanged – not only by perceiving this as a rigged process, but the hurried nature of the process that forces these public hearings to be compressed in a small number of days, at, very frankly, inconvenient hours when most people are working during the day,” Russo said.

Besides Friday’s hearing, two other redistricting hearings are scheduled for Monday, Sept. 25 at Punderson Manor Lodge & Conference Center in Geauga County; and Tuesday, Sept. 26 at the Senate Finance Committee room at the Ohio Statehouse in Columbus. Both are slated to begin at 10 a.m.

Senate Majority Floor Leader Rob McColley, a Republican commission member from Northwest Ohio, previously defended the locations, saying Geauga County could see changes to its legislative districts under the proposed maps, and that Deer Creek State Park is located between Cincinnati, Columbus and Dayton.

Russo and Senate Minority Leader Nickie Antonio of Lakewood, the other Democrat on the commission, proposed adding an additional hearing early next week. They said a hearing should be scheduled around 5 p.m. to accommodate people who work during the day, and they said an additional meeting would accommodate Jewish Ohioans who observe Yom Kippur on Monday.

McColley said the commission members should first work to find a meeting venue and check their schedules before setting a date, time and place for a fourth meeting. He also noted that Gov. Mike DeWine, a Republican commission member who tested positive for COVID-19 earlier this week, may not be able to attend any meetings early next week.

"We're trying to balance seven schedules here," McColley said.