

Ohio will use congressional map previously ruled unconstitutional again in 2024, as court dismisses legal challenges

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COLUMBUS, Ohio — Ohio will use the same congressional districts in 2024 that it used last year, as the Ohio Supreme Court on Thursday granted the dismissal of two legal challenges to the map the court previously deemed to be unconstitutionally gerrymandered in favor of Republicans.

The plaintiffs in the lawsuits, which include the National Democratic Redistricting Committee, the League of Women Voters of Ohio, and the A. Philip Randolph Institute of Ohio, [had sought the dismissal of their own cases](#), saying they don't want voters to be in limbo ahead of the 2024 election.

They also fear that if the current map is thrown out, Ohio Republicans – who dominate the redistricting process – would draw an even more GOP-friendly map than the current one, under which Republicans hold 10 seats and Democrats hold five.

In addition, redistricting critics said they wanted to drop the lawsuits in order to focus on passing a proposed [overhaul of Ohio's current system](#), which would put redistricting in the hands of a 15-member commission made up of Republicans, Democrats, and independents from around the state.

The Ohio Supreme Court, which Republicans hold a 4-3 majority on, dismissed the cases without comment.

Regardless of the dismissals, Ohio's congressional map will still have to be redrawn after the 2024 general election, as the Ohio Constitution only allows maps passed with one-party support to last for four years. If maps were passed last year with bipartisan support, they would have remained in place for 10 years.

Even though the current congressional map was deemed unconstitutional, Ohio ended up using it for last year's elections because [Republicans effectively ran out the clock](#) by refusing the court's order to pass a more Democratic-friendly map. With the retirement of Republican Chief Justice Maureen O'Connor, the pivotal swing vote against the map, the court was considered to be more likely to find the map constitutional.

Earlier this summer, the U.S. Supreme Court vacated the Ohio Supreme Court's ruling that the map was unconstitutional, but it also ruled -- [in a different case out of North Carolina](#) -- against a legal theory that Ohio Republicans used to justify ignoring the state Supreme Court's order to draw a new map. The Ohio Supreme Court [indicated last month](#) that it would rule again on the constitutionality of the state's congressional map, giving the two sides in the case until later this month to file arguments and counter-arguments.

Secretary of State Frank LaRose, a 2024 Republican U.S. Senate candidate who voted for the congressional map as a member of the Ohio Redistricting Commission, said in a statement that it is "oddly convenient" that the left-leaning groups who filed the court challenges "now suddenly consider the map to be constitutional.

"They've wasted taxpayer dollars, confused Ohio voters and abused Ohio's election officials by forcing a bifurcated primary election last year," LaRose continued, referring to how last year's legislative primaries were held in August because the fight over Ohio House and Senate maps dragged on past the state's May primary. "Now they're trying to game the outcome again by withdrawing their frivolous lawsuits in hopes of keeping a map they've for months decried as unconstitutional. The hypocrisy of these folks knows no end."

A spokesman for Senate President Matt Huffman, a Lima Republican who played a leading role in drafting the congressional map, also ridiculed the plaintiffs' decision to end their litigation.

"We hope our colleagues on the other side of aisle reject orders from Eric Holder's NDRC and big Washington, D.C., liberal law firms, rejoin good faith negotiations in the future and give the process approved by the voters a chance to work," said the spokesman, John Fortney, in a statement.

Neither of the two lawsuits involves Ohio's state legislative district lines, which the Ohio Supreme Court also found to be unconstitutional last year. The Ohio Redistricting Commission is [set to meet on Sept. 13](#) to begin drawing new Ohio House and Senate maps for next year, though [LaRose has warned](#) they only have until nine days after that to pass a final map, given administrative deadlines and a likely court challenge.