

# Redistricting amendment backers restart legal process over petition language mishap

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COLUMBUS, Ohio — After [getting cleared to begin collecting voter signatures earlier this month](#), backers of an Ohio redistricting reform amendment are restarting the legal process to place their measure on the November 2024 ballot.

The reason? Citizens Not Politicians, the group backing the redistricting amendment, said Wednesday they noticed a typo in the language summarizing the amendment's effects that voters will see when considering whether to sign petitions the group must circulate to qualify for the ballot.

Specifically, the summary said that if voters approve the amendment, a newly created citizens' redistricting commission would have until Sept. 15, 2025, to approve new political maps. But the amendment language says the deadline is actually Sept. 19, 2025. Attorney General Dave Yost, who approved the summary as accurate on Oct. 2, was among those who didn't notice the error.

Restarting the process likely will delay the group from collecting hundreds of thousands of mandatory voter signatures by about a month, and prevent them from gathering signatures on Election Day on Nov. 7, which would have been a target-rich environment for finding registered voters.

On the other hand, leaving the discrepancy hypothetically could have opened the group to a legal challenge.

"This minor setback will slightly delay the start of signature gathering but changes nothing about the substance of the amendment, our resolve to end gerrymandering in Ohio, or our ability to get it done," Chris Davey, a spokesperson for Citizens Not Politicians, said in a statement.

Even with the delay, Citizens Not Politicians still should be on track to collect mandated voter signatures — at least 413,000 from registered voters in 44 of Ohio's 88 counties before — before a legal deadline in July. Groups, when aiming to place a

ballot measure on a November election, generally aim to clear the state approval process and begin collecting signatures by around January.

The group said in a letter to Yost on Wednesday it plans to fix the date in the summary and submit otherwise identical new language to Yost's office "in the next few days."

To do that, they also must first collect 1,000 voter signatures with their new summary language. They then must again get approval from Yost, and after that, a new approval from the Ohio Ballot Board, chaired by Secretary of State Frank LaRose. Each official will have 10 days to act, under a legal timeline laid out in the state constitution.

Yost and the Ballot Board already have approved the language, and the change Citizens not Politicians says it will make to the resubmitted proposal is not substantive.

Still, the typo issue is the latest legal hiccup facing the redistricting effort. They submitted their first petition summary to Yost on Aug. 14. Yost rejected the summary twice before eventually approving it on Oct. 2.

The proposed constitutional amendment would create a 15-member Ohio Citizens Redistricting Commission made up equally of Democrats, Republicans and voters who are not affiliated with any party. It would replace a seven-member panel of elected officials who oversee the process.

In addition to removing current politicians from the redistricting process, former politicians, political party officials and lobbyists would also be barred from sitting on the commission. The proposal would require fair and impartial districts by making it unconstitutional to draw voting districts that discriminate against or favor any political party or politician. It also would require the commission to operate under an open and independent process.

Many Democrats, meanwhile, have signaled support for the proposal, although the campaign describes itself as nonpartisan.

Republicans, who control the state's redistricting process thanks to their victories in the 2022 election, are likely to oppose the amendment, arguing that the commission wouldn't truly remove politics from the redistricting process, which must occur at least every decade to reflect population changes. They already began rallying around a message that Ohio's redistricting process works as is after the commission's two Democrats joined Republicans recently in approving bipartisan state legislative maps.

Ohio used its current redistricting system, approved by voters in 2015 and 2018, for the first time last year, leading to a dysfunctional process that saw the Ohio Supreme Court reject numerous sets of maps as illegally gerrymandered in favor of Republicans, and Republicans in turn eventually ignoring the court's orders. Maureen O'Connor, [a Republican former Ohio Supreme Court justice who's now a leader in the redistricting amendment campaign](#), was a key swing vote in rejecting the maps.