



*Voted Michigan's Best Capitol Coverage
Six Years Running!*

Michigan's Independent Source of News & Information

Didn't Get On the Redistricting Commission? Draw A Map

Ultimately, only 13 Michigan voters will be selected to serve on the new Redistricting Commission being formed this year in the runup to the 2021 redistricting process. But for the thousands who won't be selected through the mostly random process, Secretary of State Jocelyn **BENSON** has a message: Stay involved.

Speaking with reporters after a Michigan State University (MSU) Institute of Public Policy and Social Research (IPPSR) presentation, Benson encouraged Michigan residents to offer the Commission their input on what state House, state Senate and Congressional districts should look like.

Maybe that's drawing a map. Maybe that's only making suggestions as to which communities should stay in the same state House district, for example. Either way, the input will help alleviate a concern Benson has once the Commission gets rolling later this year -- that the same special interests and political parties that have historically influenced the Legislature to draw its maps will influence this Commission.

Citizens created the Redistricting Commission through the Voters Not Politicians initiative and Benson wants to keep the Commission at its "citizen" roots.

"The more citizens' voices are engaged every step of this process, the best chance we have in ensuring that it is citizen led," she said.

Already, the Department of State has processed 1,000 applications for the 13-member commission. Altogether 6,000 applications have been received, but Department officials say some of those have not been notarized and are incomplete applications.

The number is more than Benson expected. She's pulling in additional staff to go through them all. The deadline for submissions is June 1.

Another item on Benson's wish list is a more guaranteed funding source for the commission, whose members make \$40,000 a year under the law. As part of the Fiscal Year (FY) 2020 process, the Legislature attempted to move the commission into the auspices of the Legislature, as opposed to the Secretary of State. An earlier version of the budget cut \$4.62 million out of various Department of State line items to pay the redistricting commission (See ["AG, SOS, Civil Rights Get 10% Administrative Cut In Senate Budget," 4/24/19](#)).

Under the new constitutional amendment, the commission would have four Republicans, four Democrats and five non-affiliated members. During the IPPSR briefing, an attendee asked Benson what would prevent an applicant from misrepresenting his or her party affiliation to secretly tilt the scales for one particular party.

Benson said once the field of candidates is whittled down to 200, the names will be publicly available and each legislative caucus leader is allowed to strike up to five names. She's hopeful those being honest are disqualified at that time. Otherwise, the office is looking into other options that can be taken against individuals who signed a notarized statement for not being truthful.

Asked if she would seek to prosecute individuals for perjury, Benson responded, "We are looking into and considering all opportunities we have at our disposal to ensure the sanctity and integrity of the process. We're hopeful the transparency and the veto should solve it, but we're keeping open other avenues."

Reprinted with express written permission.