MARYLAND STATEWIDE QUESTION 3

November 3, 2026 General Election | Nonpartisan explanatory guide | Updated October 22, 2026

Official ballot identification

Question 3 — Constitutional Amendment — Election Districts – General Assembly and Representatives in Congress. Chapter 881 of the 2026 legislative session; amends Article III of the Maryland Constitution. The State Board webpage uses a slightly different short title ("Electoral Districts – General Assembly and Congressional Representatives"). The certified ballot title is reproduced here. [1][2]

Ballot choice: "For the Constitutional Amendment" or "Against the Constitutional Amendment." The measure would clarify that Article III, Section 4 standards apply to state legislative districts only; permit the General Assembly to give the Supreme Court of Maryland original jurisdiction over congressional-map review; and state that the Maryland Constitution supplies no criteria for congressional district boundaries. [1][2]

What current law means

Article III, Section 4 sets standards for legislative districts: contiguous territory, compact shape, substantially equal population, and due regard for natural and political-subdivision boundaries. Although its wording addresses legislative districts, a 2022 Maryland circuit court ruling applied these protections to congressional maps and rejected a congressional plan. Challenges to a congressional map in state court ordinarily begin in circuit court. Federal constitutional and statutory requirements also apply. [3][4]

If voters vote AGAINST (disapprove)

The proposed amendment would not become part of the Maryland Constitution. The existing constitutional text and the 2022 court interpretation applying state districting standards to congressional maps would remain relevant, subject to future court rulings. Compactness, contiguity and respect for boundaries would therefore continue to constrain congressional mapmaking under that interpretation. Challenges in state court would continue to start in circuit court under current procedures. Rejection would **not** prohibit all future redistricting or prevent legislation otherwise allowed by law. [3][4]

If voters vote FOR (approve)

Article III, Section 4 standards would expressly apply only to state Senate and House of Delegates districts, not congressional districts. A new provision would state that nothing elsewhere in the Maryland Constitution, including its Declaration of Rights, supplies applicable congressional boundary criteria. The General Assembly could authorize direct review of congressional maps by the Supreme Court of Maryland. Federal rules would remain binding, including population equality and applicable federal voting-rights protections. The amendment itself would **not** enact a new map or change the 2026 congressional ballot. New boundaries would require separate action and could face legal challenges. [2][3][4]

What has changed nationally under President Trump?

In 2025 President Trump publicly encouraged Republican-led Texas to undertake mid-decade congressional redistricting aimed at increasing Republican U.S. House seats. Texas adopted new lines, followed by redistricting efforts in other states. Democratic-led California responded with a competing map initiative. These were **state-level redistricting actions**, not a single federal law requiring states to redraw districts. Federal court rulings and litigation have shaped which maps may be used. [5][6]

As of late September 2026, reporting identified new maps being used in Alabama, California, Florida, Louisiana, North Carolina, Ohio, Tennessee, Texas and Utah; Missouri was ordered to use its prior map. The report said most of those new maps were designed to favor Republicans, while California and Utah changes could benefit Democrats. Map designs do not guarantee election results. [5]

Potential effects on the Democratic and Republican parties

Democratic Party: Because Democrats control Maryland state government, approval could give Democratic lawmakers more flexibility to draw congressional boundaries without the state constitutional criteria applied in 2022. Supporters, including Gov. Wes Moore, frame this as a response to Republican-led mid-decade redistricting elsewhere. A future Democratic-drawn map might seek additional Democratic-leaning districts, but approval guarantees no seats. Rejection retains the existing judicially recognized constraints on any such plan. [3][7]

Republican Party: Approval could remove state-law district-shape and boundary protections Republicans have used in challenging Democratic-drawn maps, potentially allowing maps less favorable to Republican candidates. Rejection preserves those state-law arguments and review pathways. Conversely, a future Republican-controlled Maryland legislature could also benefit from the flexibility created by approval; the amendment is not party-specific. Federal protections and litigation remain possible regardless of outcome. [3][4]

Why reasonable voters disagree

Supporters argue Maryland should retain the ability to respond to partisan map changes in other states and that national standards are needed. **Opponents argue** eliminating state constitutional mapmaking criteria increases opportunities for partisan gerrymandering and reduces judicially enforceable safeguards. These are competing policy arguments, not predetermined election outcomes. [7][8]

Legal and timing notes

Question 3 faced litigation over ballot language and placement. On September 3, 2026, the Supreme Court of Maryland allowed the question to appear and directed revised wording. The ballot wording should not be confused with the earlier draft summary. The question concerns **congressional** maps, not Baltimore County Council boundaries or the state legislative district standards that would remain in place. [2][9]

Sources and further reading

[1] Maryland State Board of Elections, 2026 ballot questions — https://www.elections.state.md.us/elections/2026/ballot_questions.html

[2] Show Up Maryland, certified ballot wording, Question 3 — https://showupmd.org/ballot-questions/statewide-3/

[3] Maryland Matters, Question 3 voter guide — https://marylandmatters.org/voter-guides/ballot-measures/question-3-electoral-districts-general-assembly-and-congressional-representatives/

[4] Maryland Question 3, ballot text and legislative summary — https://www.marylandquestion3.com/text

[5] Washington Post/AP, state redistricting status, Sept. 28, 2026 — https://www.washingtonpost.com/politics/2026/09/28/redistricting-congress-trump-gerrymandering-midterm/fd6db522-bb68-11f1-81fc-9b76f8343b6c_story.html

[6] MultiState, state redistricting litigation overview — https://www.multistate.us/insider/2026/3/9/state-redistricting-legal-challenges-intensify-ahead-of-2026-elections

[7] Maryland Governor, HB 2100 signing announcement — https://governor.maryland.gov/news/press-releases/governor-moore-signs-legislation-put-redistricting-constitutional-amendment-november-ballot

[8] The Baltimore Banner, 2026 statewide ballot guide — https://www.thebanner.com/voter-guide/2026/maryland/maryland-statewide-ballot-questions-BDW65V7PDBBLLLCHGSTJ34S24U/

[9] Supreme Court of Maryland, Question 3 order — https://www.mdcourts.gov/data/opinions/coa/2026/22a26pc.pdf

Prepared for public voter education. This guide describes legal changes and potential political implications without endorsing a vote.