

EXHIBIT SS

Subject:

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This is a good read of how we got to where we ended up...

Josh Kurtz – Sources: Congressional delegation Dems eye Bartlett as redistricting target

Rep. Steny Hoyer (D), the dean of the Maryland Congressional delegation and the No. 2 Democrat in the House of Representatives, is a wily legislative veteran, a master of the deal, and used to getting his way.

Rep. Donna Edwards (D), a fiery liberal with three years of Congressional experience under her belt, is known more for her political passion than her insider prowess.

But Edwards appears to be trumping Hoyer, according to multiple sources, when it comes to convincing their Democratic colleagues in the delegation which of the state's Republican-held seats to target in the upcoming redistricting process. And for now, at least, it looks as if a consensus is forming that they ought to go after Rep. Roscoe Bartlett (R) rather than Rep. Andy Harris (R).

Gov. Martin O'Malley (D) recently appointed a redistricting commission to help state lawmakers draft new Congressional and General Assembly maps. The governor and legislative leaders will have plenty of say over how the state's new boundaries will look.

But when it comes to Congressional lines, which will likely be adopted in a special legislative session that will convene in mid-October, the six Democrats in Maryland's House delegation will be accorded much sway.

And at the moment, sources say, despite Hoyer's plea to make the 1st District more Democratic to pave the way for a comeback for former Rep. Frank Kratovil (D), the delegation – with Edwards as one of the prime advocates – is close to signing off on a map that would instead give Democrats at least a 50-50 chance of capturing Bartlett's district in the near future.

In Annapolis and in Washington in recent months, it's become accepted wisdom that Maryland Democrats, under pressure from national party leaders looking for the two dozen seats they need to retake the House in 2012, will attempt to move the delegation to a 7-1 seat Democratic advantage, up from the current 6-2.

The question for Democrats has been whether to go after Bartlett in the Western Maryland-based 6th District, or whether to go after Harris' Eastern Shore-based 1st District seat.

Both districts are Republican strongholds as currently drawn. Both gave Barack Obama just 40 percent of the vote in the 2008 White House

election as he was racking up 62 percent statewide. But with clever manipulating, Democrats figure they have a decent shot of stealing one of the Republican seats, with minimal risk to their incumbents.

Hoyer has urged his colleagues to facilitate a comeback for Kratovil, who held the 1st District seat before being ousted by Harris in 2010 - and who, by the way, is an old family friend of Hoyer's. The minority whip argued that Kratovil was a talented member who took some tough votes for the Democrats - including supporting the cap-and-trade bill - and deserved a chance to represent a friendlier district.

But Edwards made the case, according to sources, that Kratovil's 2008 win was a fluke - and that even bringing the 1st District across the Bay Bridge into Prince George's County or Baltimore City might not provide enough Democrats for Kratovil to win. She also argued that that adding African-American voters into an Eastern Shore district was the wrong thing to do, especially with the city losing one-twentieth of its population over the past decade. And she pointed out that Kratovil's voting record may not have been sufficiently progressive - he voted against health care reform, for example - to captivate base Democratic voters.

Edwards has apparently been working with a redistricting expert as the delegation has been deliberating the redraw. She also is reportedly willing to take on deep Republican territory in Anne Arundel County (while keeping turf in Prince George's and Montgomery counties) to help the Democratic cause. It's easy to be magnanimous when you won your last election with 83 percent of the vote.

So for now, the fragile consensus in the delegation seems to be to draw a new 6th District that runs roughly from Rockville to Oakland, a driving distance of about 170 miles. The 1st District would then take in all of the Eastern Shore and extend into conservative Carroll County, all but guaranteeing Harris a safe seat for the next decade.

A new 6th District would present a golden opportunity for some Democrat - presumably state Senate Majority Leader Rob Garagiola - to run and win. Democratic leaders feel that if they set up a tough general election, Bartlett, who will be 86 on Election Day 2012, and last faced a tough Democrat in 1992, will choose to retire. And they believe that Maryland Republican Chairman Alex Mooney, at this point the nominal frontrunner in any GOP primary to replace Bartlett, is beatable.

Even if they fall short in 2012, Democrats believe that with the cities of Frederick and Hagerstown trending slowly their way, a "Western Maryland" district anchored by Rockville and Gaithersburg is gettable sooner rather than later. And there's precedent for it: after all, the district that the Byrons - Goodloe and Beverly - represented from the early 1970's to the early 1990's was not dissimilar.

A decade ago, Democratic leaders hotly debated whether to split Montgomery County roughly the same way, to create opportunities for Mark Shriver, the protégé of then-Maryland House Speaker Casper Taylor (D), and Chris Van Hollen, the protégé of state Senate President Mike Miller (D).

Ultimately, then-Gov. Parris Glendening (D) chose instead to create a Democratic-leaning district based in Baltimore County, a reward for term-limited County Executive Dutch Ruppersberger (D). Shriver and Van Hollen had a dramatic showdown in the principal Montgomery County district - with Van Hollen pulling the upset.

If a new 6th District is created, it'll be interesting to see whether any name Democrats besides Garagiola take a shot at it - though no names have circulated at present. It'll also be very interesting to see how Bartlett, who just announced his intention to seek re-election last week, will react. As of March 31, he had \$247,000 in his campaign account.

As for Kratovil, with the option of running for his old seat cut off, he'll have to decide whether he wants to run for something else in the near future - like attorney general or comptroller. There's also the possibility that he could be tapped to be Maryland's next U.S. Attorney, assuming there's a second Obama administration.

Nothing is written in stone until the legislature passes a bill and O'Malley has signed it. Even then, the Congressional map could be subject to a legal challenge.

But for now, at least, it looks as if Donna Edwards has outmaneuvered Steny Hoyer - and that Frank Kratovil, as a result, may be the odd man out.