



PEOPLE NOT
POLITICIANS

MISSOURI REDISTRICTING FOES MAY HAVE DEALT BIG BLOW TO TRUMP-BACKED CONGRESSIONAL MAP

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President Donald Trump's push to get Missouri to send another Republican to the U.S. House during the 2026 midterm elections is facing a major challenge after opponents submitted more than 305,000 signatures Tuesday to place the state's new map up for a statewide vote.

And while Secretary of State Denny Hoskins could try to block the referendum later, some legal experts don't expect that move to succeed in court – which could prevent the new Trump-friendly map from going into effect in time for the midterms. And redistricting opponents are strongly disputing Hoskins' contention that the map can go into effect on Thursday.

Earlier this year, Trump pressured Missouri Republicans to redraw their congressional lines to transform Democratic Congressman Emanuel Cleaver's Kansas City-based district into a GOP-leaning seat. It's part of a national push from Trump to prevent Republicans from losing their slim majority in the U.S. House next year.

But because there weren't enough votes in the state legislature to make the map go into effect right away, opponents of the new map launched a referendum campaign to place the

plan up for a statewide vote. A group called People Not Politicians turned in almost triple the number of signatures required to Hoskins on Tuesday.

During a press conference after turning in the petitions, Richard von Glahn of People Not Politicians said the new congressional map is now on hold pending the referendum.

“Our democracy belongs to us, not to politicians, and we’re going to have the final say,” von Glahn said.

Hoskins said that signatures collected before Oct. 14 won’t count toward the final tally. But even if a court rules that Hoskins is correct on that point, it is unlikely that will prevent referendum proponents from reaching the necessary signature thresholds in six out of eight congressional districts.

“I am very confident that we are going to have a sufficient number of signatures on the ballot,” von Glahn said. **Hoskins could try to block referendum**

In an interview on Tuesday, Hoskins said that Missouri’s elections officials will have until late July to determine whether there are enough signatures for the plan to go on the ballot in November.

But he pointed to a statement from Attorney General Catherine Hanaway saying that the map can go into effect on Thursday.

“The map will not be frozen until I certify the referendum,” Hoskins said.

Hanaway’s office said the interpretation that the map can go into effect on Thursday stems from a federal case around whether the referendum violated the Missouri and federal constitution. Judge Zachary Bluestone said that the case wasn’t ready for consideration because People Not Politicians hadn’t turned in signatures and added that the case didn’t belong in federal court.

In a statement, Hanaway’s office said the state had not “suffered any injury because House Bill 1 and the Missouri FIRST Map will go into effect on Dec. 11 and not be frozen unless and until the Secretary of State certifies the referendum.” It went on to say that People Not Politicians agreed in “that state law compels this conclusion, and the court based its dismissal ruling on this concession.”

"The Attorney General looks forward to an orderly review process to determine whether the proposed referendum can qualify for a vote," Hanaway's office concluded. "Nothing in the Court's holding prevents the State from re-filing its suit if and when the proposed referendum qualifies for a vote."

But Chuck Hatfield, an attorney for People Not Politicians, strongly disputed Hanaway's statement.

Hatfield said People Not Politicians agreed that Hoskins had the ability to potentially block the referendum – not that the map wasn't frozen as soon as signatures were turned in. He pointed to how Secretary of State Jay Ashcroft froze Missouri's right to work law in 2017 after opponents of the measure turned in signatures.

"These politicians are in a full blown tantrum trying anything they can do to stop this," Hatfield said. "I'm not surprised they've made up yet another incorrect reason to try and stop the will of the people on this. But they're wrong. And if they persist in that position we will end up in court again."

Could Hoskins block the referendum in the future?

Bluestone did say that Hoskins could potentially rule that the referendum can't go forward. Hoskins said he would make that determination after election officials verify the signatures in late July.

"Post submission review would be after the local election authorities and county clerks have submitted their verification of signatures back to me for certification," Hoskins said.

"Once that happens, I will take a look at it. I've not made any decisions, but one thing's for sure, I'm going to follow the state law. I'm going to follow the Missouri Constitution, and we'll go from there."

Legal experts questioned whether Hoskins' efforts to block the referendum would succeed.

For one thing, the Missouri Constitution explicitly excludes bills that go into effect immediately upon the governor's signature and appropriations bills from a referendum.

Those exceptions do not include congressional redistricting legislation. And there's historical precedence — Missourians voted on a congressional map in 1922.

"I think what is important here is that the secretary of state should do the job of that office, which is to process that paperwork, allow the local election authorities to validate signatures and voters should get the final say," von Glahn said.

Washington University School of Law professor Travis Crum said while it's likely Hoskins will try to revive Hanaway's arguments when rejecting the referendum, he doesn't expect them to find much favor with Missouri's judges.

"[Hanaway's] lawsuit was never about winning in federal court, but in trying to delegitimize the referendum and deter voters from signing it," Crum said.

Because Hoskins isn't going to decide on the referendum's status on the November 2026 ballot until July, there won't be any way for the legislature to move it before the state filing deadline ends on March 31.

Hatfield agreed that if a court finds that Hoskins and Hanaway are wrong that the map wasn't frozen as soon as People Not Politicians turned in their signatures, then there's no way for the map to go into effect during the 2026 election cycle.

"If it turns out that they're going to make us go to court on every single step of this process, I guess that's what we'll do," he said. **Referendum enthusiasm**

Backers of the referendum say they found plenty of voter enthusiasm to push back against Trump's plan.

People Not Politicians also received a big financial boost from a number of groups aligned with Democrats, as well as logistical support from the Democratic National Committee. They also received significant help from the Missouri AFL-CIO, whose members gathered signatures to place the referendum up for a vote.

Republicans sought to dissuade people from signing the petition through mass text messages, though those missives didn't specify they were talking about the redistricting referendum petition.

And Hanaway sent out tweets alleging that a signature gathering firm out of Texas was using immigrants without legal status for the referendum campaign – which that firm’s president strongly denied. Hanaway even tweeted she was referring the matter to ICE, which a spokeswoman for People Not Politicians contended was an example of “political thuggery.”

Elizabeth Franklin, a volunteer who helped gather petition signatures said Tuesday that efforts to delegitimize the referendum campaign clearly failed.

“Folks were interested to hear about this constitutionally allowed referendum,” Franklin said. “And for those that were unaware, I found most were really interested in supporting their right to vote on these new maps.”

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