

Missouri's stack of redistricting lawsuits expected to grow over whether new map is in effect

St. Louis Public Radio | By Jason Rosenbaum

Published Dec. 16, 2025 at 5:00 a.m. CST



Brian Munoz / St. Louis Public Radio

Josiah Zimmer, 29, of St. Louis' Tower Grove East neighborhood, joins thousands in protesting the Missouri legislature's efforts to redraw congressional maps in favor of Republicans and change the initiative petition process on Sept. 10 at the state Capitol in Jefferson City.

Missouri's morass of congressional redistricting litigation is likely to grow soon, thanks to a dispute over whether the submission of referendum signatures froze a map lawmakers passed in September.

That's because Missouri's secretary of state and attorney declared that a map lawmakers passed earlier this year took effect last Thursday – which backers of a referendum seeking to repeal that plan are strongly disputing.

And the conflict over whether new congressional lines are in effect sparked an unusual fight in federal court in which Missouri's solicitor general is asking a judge to sanction attorneys for how they're representing the campaign to place Missouri's new map up for a statewide vote.

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. GOP states like Texas and North Carolina passed new GOP-friendly maps this year, while California voters approved a more Democratic-leaning map in November.

Since lawmakers passed the map in a special session, redistricting foes and proponents unleashed a number of lawsuits around whether the proposal can go into effect. That includes litigation over whether Gov. Mike Kehoe could call the redistricting special session, the legality of redrawing districting in the middle of the decade and the possibility that the plan violated compactness and contiguity standards.

And a referendum campaign over the new lines prompted even more litigation, including Attorney General Catherine Hanaway's lawsuit in federal court over whether a statewide vote on the proposal violates the U.S. Constitution.

Hanaway's suit over the referendum, which U.S. District Judge Zachary Bluestone dismissed last week, is at the heart of the dispute over whether the new map is in effect or frozen.

Representatives and attorneys for People Not Politicians, the group backing the referendum, say the submission of signatures last week stopped the new congressional map from being active. They pointed to Missouri Constitution language and prior court decisions, as well as how then-Secretary of State Jay Ashcroft prevented right to work from going into effect after unions submitted signatures to put it up for a statewide vote.

"The reality is more than enough adequate signatures have been turned in," said People Not Politicians Executive Director Richard von Glahn. "The law is suspended until there is either an issuance of a certificate of sufficiency or insufficiency, either one of those things the Secretary of State has the power to do. And at that point, there will either be an election or potentially litigation."

Bluestone dismissed the lawsuit, in part because he noted that Hoskins could block the referendum from going to voters and then spark a state lawsuit over whether he made the correct call. But that's not what Hoskins did on Tuesday after People Not Politicians turned in its signatures.

Instead, Hoskins said he was going to let the state's election officials start verifying signatures, while taking the position that the map was in effect until he made a final decision sometime in the summer of 2026. Hanaway then declared Thursday that the map had gone into effect.

"The Court also held that the State has not yet suffered any injury because House Bill 1 and the Missouri FIRST Map will go into effect on December 11 and not be frozen unless and until the Secretary of State certifies the referendum," Hanaway's office said in a statement.

Von Glahn said Hanaway and Hoskins are mischaracterizing Bluestone's decision.

He said if state officials "actually take steps to try to implement this law illegally – yeah, there will be a lawsuit."

"The point here is that the secretary of state must act," von Glahn said. "He has to issue a certificate of sufficiency or insufficiency, and until that point, the law is suspended."

Whether the map is in effect has enormous ramifications for Missouri's 2026 midterm elections.

If Hoskins doesn't make a decision on the referendum until next summer, the map getting frozen due to the submission of signatures would make it unlikely that the new lines would go into effect next year. The deadline to verify signatures is roughly a week before the 2026 primary elections, and there's U.S. Supreme Court precedent against changing district lines close to when people vote.



Robert Cohen / St. Louis Post-Dispatch

Missouri Solicitor Louis Capozzi demanded that attorney Chuck Hatfield, shown in 2024, make a statement to the media that the state's new congressional map went into effect on Dec. 11. In response, Hatfield and fellow attorney Jessica Amunson wrote that "our position has always been — and remains — that People Not Politicians' ('PNP') submission of signatures on December 9 prevents [the new map] from going into effect on December 11 unless the Secretary of State issues a formal determination that the petition is insufficient. "

Solicitor general seeks sanctions

The contentions from People Not Politicians officials about the status of Missouri's new congressional map prompted the state's solicitor general to seek sanctions against the group's attorneys – and, potentially, to try to reopen the dismissed federal case.

In court documents filed late on Friday, Missouri Solicitor General Louis Capozzi wrote that People Not Politicians attorneys "admitted that the mere submission of referendum signatures does not freeze a duly enacted state law." He pointed to numerous points in the transcript of the Nov. 25 hearing to come to that conclusion.

He went on to say that People Not Politicians officials "have aggressively and repeatedly communicated the opposite position to the media." Capozzi cited von Glahn's statements to the Missouri Independent and People Not Politicians attorney Chuck Hatfield's comments to St. Louis Public Radio.

"Lawyers ... in this Court should not be permitted to make concessions to help obtain a legal victory, and then immediately turn around and contradict those concessions in public," Capozzi said. "Such conduct is dishonorable and unethical. Missouri respectfully requests this Court impose appropriate sanctions on Defendants' Counsel, including admonishing Defendants' Counsel, vacating the Court's dismissal order, reopening the case, striking Defendants' motion to dismiss, and any other sanction this Court deems warranted in its sound discretion."

Capozzi's filing included a letter sent to Hatfield and fellow People Not Politicians attorney Jessica Amundson demanding that they "immediately issue a public statement confirming your concession to the Court that HB 1 is in effect unless and until the Secretary certifies the referendum." Hatfield and Amundson in their own letter refused to retract their statements and contended that Capozzi was mischaracterizing their comments during the hearing.

"We take our duty of candor to the Court extremely seriously and we hope that you do too," the two attorneys wrote in a letter to Capozzi. "Therefore, we respectfully suggest that you may want to evaluate your own duties in light of your repeated representations to the Court about the harm that Plaintiffs would face from PNP's submission of signatures by December 11, 2025."

As of Monday, Bluestone hadn't ruled on Capozzi's request for sanctions. And von Glahn added it's "an amazing thing to get an instruction from a government official telling me what I must say and who I must say it to."

"I believe I still live in the United States of America, and that I still have a first amendment that protects my speech and my government cannot compel me what to say and who to say it to," von Glahn said. "So, it is an aggressive escalation from the attorney general against the rights of Missourians to engage freely in the political process."

Send questions and comments about this story to feedback@stlpublicradio.org.

Got a news tip? Send it to Jason Rosenbaum.

Tags

Government, Politics & Issues

Louis Capozzi

Chuck Hatfield

2026 Missouri elections

Missouri redistricting

Top Stories

Catherine Hanaway



Jason Rosenbaum

Jason is the politics correspondent for St. Louis Public Radio.

[See stories by Jason Rosenbaum](#)

Latest Stories



Government, Politics & Issues

Missouri lawmakers will weigh cutting taxes under a tight 2026 budget this session



Government, Politics & Issues

Plan to revitalize north city neighborhoods aims to reverse more than just tornado damage



Government, Politics & Issues

Squabble over right to appoint next St. Louis sheriff remains on hold



Economy & Business

Good showing during U.S. skating championships could help St. Louis land other big events

Related Content



St. Louis-based 1st Congressional District could be next battleground of Voting Rights Act

Dec. 15, 2025



Health insurance subsidy expiration will be 'devastating,' Durbin says day after vote

Dec. 12, 2025



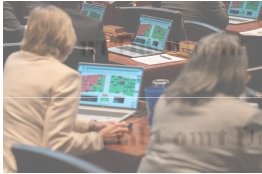
Judge freezes case over whether Hoskins can deny some redistricting referendum signatures

Dec. 12, 2025



Redistricting in Indiana was supposed to be a slam dunk. It has proven anything but

Dec. 10, 2025



Judge rules Missouri lawmakers can do mid-decade congressional redistricting

Dec. 9, 2025



Missouri redistricting foes may have dealt big blow to Trump-backed congressional map

Dec. 9, 2025



Missouri secretary of state challenged on handling of congressional redistricting referendum

Dec. 9, 2025

St. Louis Public Radio

Stay Connected


 — <https://twitter.com/stlpublicradio>

 — <https://www.instagram.com/stlpublicradio/>

 — <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCBzLTcsoKJZOox0APfW8g1g>

 — <https://bsky.app/profile/stlpublicradio.bsky.social>

 — <https://www.facebook.com/stlpublicradio>

 — <https://www.tiktok.com/@stlpublicradio>

© 2026 St. Louis Public Radio

About Us — <https://www.stlpr.org/about>

Careers — <https://www.stlpr.org/careers>

Contact Us — <https://www.stlpr.org/contact>

Donate — <https://stlpr.org/donate>

Newsletters — <https://www.stlpr.org/enewsletter>

Privacy Policy — <https://www.stlpr.org/privacy-policy>

Public File — <https://www.stlpr.org/public-file>



St. Louis Public Radio is a listener-supported service of the University of Missouri–St. Louis.