

EXHIBIT 2



Opponents of Trump-backed redistricting in Missouri submit a petition to force a public vote

Politics Updated on Dec 10, 2025 11:05 AM EDT — Published on Dec 9, 2025 12:41 PM EDT

JEFFERSON CITY, Mo. (AP) — Opponents of Missouri's new congressional map submitted thousands of petition signatures Tuesday calling for a statewide vote on a redistricting plan backed by President Donald Trump as part of his quest to hold on to a slim Republican majority in next year's elections.

Organizers of the petition drive said they turned in more than 300,000 signatures to the secretary of state's office — well over the roughly 110,000 needed to suspend the new U.S. House districts from taking effect until a referendum election can be held next year.

The signatures still need to be verified by election authorities and Republican Secretary of State Denny Hoskins, who could declare the referendum petition unconstitutional. A legal fight appears likely.

A referendum could create a significant obstacle for Republicans, who hope the new districts could help them win a currently Democratic-held seat in the Kansas City area.

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Republican Attorney General Catherine Hanaway issued a statement saying the new House districts took effect Tuesday and will remain in place unless Hoskins determines the referendum petition is constitutional and contains sufficient signatures. Petition sponsors said the new districts were immediately suspended when they submitted signatures, which is how the secretary of state's office handled things during Missouri's most recent referendum petition in 2017.

Hoskins promised a "slow and steady" review of the signatures, which must equal 5% of the votes cast in the last gubernatorial election in at least six of the state's eight congressional districts. Missouri has more than 6 million residents. Hoskins said election authorities have until July 28 to finish the verification process, and he isn't likely to determine the measure's constitutionality until that's done.

"I'm going to do everything I can to protect Gov. (Mike) Kehoe's Missouri First Map — the map the General Assembly passed," Hoskins told The Associated Press.

That raises the prospect that Missouri congressional candidates might not know with certainty the makeup of their districts when they file for office between Feb. 24 and March 31. A similar scenario existed in 2022, when the governor approved congressional districts based on the census 50 days after candidate filing ended.

Referendum votes in Missouri are automatically set for the upcoming November election, unless lawmakers approve an earlier date. Referendum backers said they are confident they will clear any legal hurdles to holding an election.

Redistricting spreads through states

Redistricting typically happens once a decade, after each census. But the national political parties are engaged in an unusual mid-decade redistricting battle after Trump urged Republican-led states to reshape House voting districts to their advantage. Democrats need a net

gain of just three seats to win control of the chamber, and Trump is trying to avert a historical tendency for the incumbent's party to lose seats in midterm elections.

Texas was the first to respond to Trump's call by passing a congressional map that could help Republicans win five additional seats. The U.S. Supreme Court cleared the way last week for the new districts to be used in the 2026 elections.

Republicans could also gain a total of four seats under new maps passed in Missouri, North Carolina and Ohio. In Indiana, senators are considering a proposal this week that also could help Republicans win two more seats.

Democrats scored a victory in California in November when voters approved a congressional map that could help the party win five additional seats, and new congressional districts imposed by a Utah judge could help them pick up one of the state's four seats.

Utah Republicans scramble to shield House seats

In a special session Tuesday, Utah's Republican-controlled Legislature pushed back the filing deadline for congressional candidates in 2026 to allow more time for a legal challenge of the map ruling.

Judge Dianna Gibson ruled in November that a map proposal advanced by state lawmakers "unduly favors Republicans and disfavors Democrats." She imposed an alternative map that places heavily Democratic Salt Lake County almost entirely within one district rather than dividing it among the four Republican-leaning districts.

Republican state Rep. Karianne Lisonbee said it's "vital" that lawmakers move the candidate filing period from early January to mid-March "to give us some space to work through the courts." Legislative leaders have yet to formally file their appeal to the high court but have asked Gibson to hit pause on implementing the new map, which she declined.

Lawmakers also voted to give the state Supreme Court exclusive jurisdiction on elections and redistricting cases and said they must be expedited.

House and Senate Democrats decried the decisions, saying Republicans were undermining the will of the people, creating confusion in the election process and weakening anti-gerrymandering standards established by Utah voters.

Missouri referendum sparks intense battle

Republicans have tried to thwart Missouri's referendum effort in numerous ways.

Organizations supporting the Republican redistricting attempted to pay people up to \$30,000 to quit gathering petition signatures, according to a lawsuit filed by Advanced Micro Targeting Inc., a company hired by People Not Politicians.

Hoskins, the secretary of state, contends he cannot legally count tens of thousands of signatures gathered before Oct. 14, when he approved the referendum's format.

Hoskins also wrote a ballot summary stating the new map "repeals Missouri's existing gerrymandered congressional plan ... and better reflects statewide voting patterns." That's the opposite of what referendum backers contend it does.

Meanwhile, Hanaway filed a federal lawsuit on behalf of Hoskins and the General Assembly asserting that congressional redistricting legislation cannot be subject to a referendum. Although a federal judge dismissed that suit Monday, the judge said Hoskins has "the power to declare the petition unconstitutional himself," which would likely trigger a new court case.

Missouri's new congressional districts face several legal challenges. On Tuesday, a judge rejected a lawsuit alleging that mid-decade redistricting isn't allowed under the state constitution.

Schoenbaum reported from Salt Lake City.

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