

As a Maryland independent voter who leans democratic, I am deeply concerned about the decision to prioritize redistricting at a time when so many Maryland residents are struggling with immediate and serious challenges that require attention.

Healthcare workers are losing jobs, disability services are facing cuts and instability, housing costs continue to rise, and families across our state are struggling with the impact of economic uncertainty and policy changes. Many of these issues may be connected to broader federal changes, but Maryland residents need to see our state leadership actively responding to the challenges affecting our communities right now, as other states have done to protect their constituents.

It is difficult to understand why redistricting is the issue that requires a special session while so many Marylanders are asking for action on issues that directly affect their ability to live, work, and access essential services. In a state with a Democratic supermajority, voters should expect leadership that is focused on protecting residents and addressing their needs, not only responding when political power is at stake.

This process does not make me feel more confident that my elected officials are listening to their constituents. Instead, it creates the impression that maintaining political advantage may be taking priority over addressing the concerns of Maryland voters.

A large number of Maryland voters identify as independent, unaffiliated, or not fully aligned with either party's ideology. Yet many of us feel like we have lost our voice in a system where political decisions continue to reinforce one dominant perspective. Rather than empowering more Marylanders through reforms such as open primaries or other efforts to increase voter participation and representation, we risk further limiting the influence of voters who do not fit neatly into one political category.

I am also concerned about the similarity between what many people are frustrated about at the federal level and what is now happening at the state level. Many voters are alarmed when political power is used in ways that appear designed to maintain control rather than build trust. Replicating those same approaches in Maryland is not the answer. We should expect better from our state leadership. Unfortunately, history has taught me that many of the actions of the current administration, seem to focus instead on what they want, and not what the constituents have asked for.

I am concerned that attempts to redraw districts for a specific political outcome may have unintended consequences. Instead of achieving the intended result, these actions could further divide voters and create more frustration among communities that already feel unheard by their representatives.

Democracy requires more than winning elections. It requires earning the trust of the people who are represented. Maryland should be a leader in creating a system where voters have meaningful choices, where independent voices matter, and where decisions are made based on the needs of residents rather than the preservation of political advantage.

At a time when many people are fearful about the direction of our country, the answer should not be for Maryland to adopt the same patterns that have caused so much distrust. We should hold ourselves to a higher standard. We should prioritize fair representation, accountability, and the voices of all Maryland voters.

Thank you,
Ashley Johnson
Bethesda, MD