

MontCo lawmakers oppose redistricting plan

By: [Rachel Baye](#) | 10/11/11 8:05 PM

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County's minorities would be underrepresented, they say

Montgomery County's Democratic lawmakers on Tuesday came out against Maryland Gov. Martin O'Malley's proposal for redrawing the state's congressional districts, saying the map would alienate the county's minority voters.

The plan divides Montgomery into three congressional districts, splitting up the county's major minority populations and diluting their influence, said the County Council members and state delegates who gathered in Rockville to speak out against the proposed map.

"The census data clearly shows that there's been an extraordinary growth of our minority populations," said Maryland Del. Ana Sol Gutierrez. "They have a right to more equitable representation. That's what this exercise every 10 years is about."

The new map, drawn to give Maryland Democrats an extra congressional seat, is expected to cost Rep. Donna Edwards her seat by shifting her district out of Montgomery County and into Anne Arundel County, reducing the number of eligible black voters in her district.

But black voters aren't the only ones who would see changes. In Montgomery -- where the majority of residents are members of minority demographics -- historically black, Asian and Hispanic neighborhoods have been split between districts, diluting their influence, officials said.

"Each minority group that experienced an increase in population is effectively being split among the three new districts in Montgomery County, making them statistical minority groups in those districts in a majority-minority county," Edwards told the Associated Press.

Pointing to significant growth in the county's Hispanic population over the last decade, Councilwoman Nancy Navarro, D-Eastern County, warned that the proposed districts would lead to underrepresentation, especially as minority populations continue to grow.

And because one of the districts encompassing Montgomery would extend south from the northwest Baltimore suburbs, cultural differences also would be a problem, Gutierrez said. "It makes no sense."