

News From The States

EVENING WRAP

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By [Kate Queram](#)

I wrote a whole rambling paragraph about Christmas and the meaning of time, at which point it occurred to me that I could, sometimes, use a map to get through my own thoughts. Fortunately, I have some maps today! Unfortunately, they are gerrymandered and terrible, but they did, at least, get me through this paragraph.



The Big Takeaway

U.S. District Judge Steve Jones vowed Wednesday to decide “very quickly” whether Georgia lawmakers complied with an order to un-gerrymander state legislative and congressional maps, which in court time means “in about a month,” [per the Georgia Recorder](#). Specifically, before Jan. 25, when election officials will begin preparing for the 2024 presidential election.



Redistricting never ends.
(Photo by Ross Williams/Georgia Recorder)

It's a tight timeframe for a complicated case that began more than two years ago, when the GOP-majority General Assembly redrew the state's congressional and legislative districts without accounting for massive population growth among Black voters, a violation of federal law. Jones tossed those maps in October and ordered lawmakers to redraw them to include a total of eight new majority-Black districts — two for the state Senate, five for the state House, and one for Congress.

The resulting congressional map, approved [earlier this month](#), creates a new majority-Black district west of Atlanta. But it also reconfigures the boundaries of a northern Atlanta district represented by a Democrat, transforming the area from two-thirds minority to two-thirds white. Attorneys for the plaintiffs argued Wednesday that those changes violated the court order by diluting Black, Latino *and* Asian voting power, effectively flipping a reliably blue district to a likely Republican stronghold.

But Jones rejected most of that argument, noting that the original complaint, along with his order, focused solely on harm to Black voters. The scope is narrow, he said. And so is the timeframe to approve or reject the maps.



*This flag is in Michigan.
(Photo by Susan Demas/Michigan Advance)*

At least two members of Michigan’s redistricting commission no longer live in Michigan, which is legally fine — they each “maintain a domicile” in the state — but doesn’t make for great optics. One of those members [resigned Wednesday](#) after registering to vote in Illinois, where he’d lived for the past year. The other remains in California, where he’s been since February 2022, [the Michigan Advance reported](#).

A member of [the panel](#) broached the topic at a meeting last week, noting that the situation could cause problems in [an ongoing lawsuit](#) challenging the constitutionality of legislative boundaries approved by the commission during the 2020 redistricting cycle.

“We are in the middle of litigation in the Agee case, and we could potentially have an order as soon as next week,” said Rebecca Szetela, one of the board’s five nonpartisan commissioners. “And if that is going to be the case and we have two vacant positions, I would like to see those positions filled by people who are actually residing in the state of Michigan.”

The chatter apparently caught the ear of state Rep. Ann Bollin, who was not

psyched to learn that Michigan's redistricting process is decided, in part, by people who have left Michigan and thus do not have to suffer the consequences of their own redistricting decisions.

"By living in other states, these individuals have removed themselves from the consequences of any decisions they make as members of the commission," Bollin, a Republican, [wrote in a letter](#) to Secretary of State Jocelyn Benson.

"Both commissioners have maintained their voter registration in our state despite residing in other states, paying taxes in other states, and – in the case of one individual – switching their driver's license to another state. This raises concerns about whether these individuals are maintaining their status as members of the commission simply to collect a paycheck."



*I bet redistricting money has maps on it.
(Photo by Getty Images)*

The Illinois defector resigned two days later, which did little to mollify Bollin. First of all, it was "long overdue." Second, why are we allowing people to do this?

"His prolonged absence from Michigan while collecting pay as a member of the redistricting commission is unacceptable," she said. "This situation has

exemplified a lack of accountability and a disregard for the responsibilities tied to this crucial role.”

Officials in Nebraska were eager to take on some extra responsibility Wednesday by weighing in on the Colorado Supreme Court’s decision to remove Donald Trump from the state’s primary ballot, even though the ruling does not affect anyone in Nebraska or have any legal bearing on what will happen in Nebraska. Actually, it’s totally irrelevant to Nebraska, which is exactly why Nebraska Secretary of State Bob Evnen issued [a press release](#) about it, [per the Nebraska Examiner](#).



*This was also not in Nebraska, which is maybe why it did not come up in the Nebraska press release, IDK.
(Photo by Win McNamee/Getty Images)*

“The decision of the Colorado Supreme Court has no binding legal effect on the State of Nebraska,” wrote Evnen, an attorney. “The Colorado Supreme Court may control what happens on the Colorado ballot, but it has no legal control over what happens on the Nebraska ballot.”

Nebraska won’t even unveil its primary ballot until the end of February, Evnen said. But also, just in case anyone was *wondering*, Evnen has some *thoughts* about the ruling.

“The majority opinion ... to keep Donald Trump’s name off of the Republican Presidential primary ballot is not persuasive in my view,” he said. “I hope that the U.S. Supreme Court takes up this matter and decides it with all due speed.”

Also not affecting Nebraska: [The naughty and the nice: Home-state holiday decor bedecks congressional offices ...](#) [Democratic candidate withdraws from Alabama’s 2nd Congressional District race ...](#) [GOP Senate leader sues Arizona governor over agency nominations ...](#) [2024 Idaho legislative session kicks off Jan. 8 ...](#) [Federal judge suspends new Minnesota campaign finance law set to take effect Jan. 1 ...](#) [Missouri House Democrats vote to expel state Rep. Sarah Unsicker from the caucus ...](#) [Two tribal redistricting maps introduced in North Dakota; judge’s maps criticized ...](#) [Senate panel can’t decide best way to reform R.I.’s voting system in primaries ...](#) [South Carolina could sell Bull Street buildings after state agencies move. Would taxpayers benefit? ...](#) [Texas Gov. Greg Abbott and AG Ken Paxton promised retribution for votes they didn’t like. Here’s who they are targeting. ...](#) [Washington watchdog dismisses complaints against Ferguson in handling of campaign donations](#)



Also Trending

A family who left Missouri after lawmakers [banned gender-affirming care](#) for minors are hoping that Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine will “trust the science” and veto a similar ban in their now-home state, [the Ohio Capital Journal reported](#).

“I really felt like Ohio was better than this,” said Nick Zingarelli. “I believe that the people that live in Ohio are better than this. I believe that this is not something that Ohioans want.”



If only that mattered.
(Photo by Greg LaRose/Louisiana Illuminator)

[House Bill 68](#), approved last week by lawmakers, would prohibit doctors from providing gender-affirming care, including puberty blockers and hormone therapy, to trans youth. (It would also prevent trans athletes from participating in women's sports.) DeWine received the bill Monday and has until Dec. 29 to veto or sign it. Honestly, it doesn't really matter what he does – Republicans have the votes to override a veto, so it will likely become a law either way.

It's precisely the situation the Zingarelli family hoped to avoid when they moved to Cincinnati in the spring of 2022. They'd lived there before relocating to Missouri, and thought of it as "a more moderate and more politically reasonable place."

"We really did believe that moving back here that we would not encounter the same level of political aggression that existed in Missouri," Zingarelli said.

...I do not understand this, probably because I am entirely too familiar with Ohio and with the politics of red states generally. Ohio is not moderate. Ohio is a place where lawmakers will [try to convince voters](#) to vote for a policy to discount the meaning of their votes. Ohio is a place that [bans abortion](#) after six weeks of

pregnancy, even if that means [10-year-old rape survivors](#) have to leave the state to terminate their pregnancies. Ohio is [basically Florida](#), with slightly less humidity and a more reticent governor.

Which is disappointing, for me and for America and especially for Zingarelli, who now understands all too well the reality of red-state politics.

“It’s clear that there is a disconnect between what Ohioans want and what our elected representatives are pushing forward,” he said.

The line is dead: [Alabama boards to develop training for school staff on hydrocortisone injections](#) ... [Alaska’s Division of Public Assistance makes progress on food stamp backlog](#) ... [Be aware during the holidays: A new COVID variant, JN.1, is spreading rapidly in US and elsewhere](#) ... [Kansas governor not drawn to horse-trade compromise on school choice to win Medicaid expansion](#) ... [Louisiana Gov.-elect Jeff Landry says Medicaid work requirements, copayments are under consideration](#) ... [Mississippi state Rep. Kevin Felsher wins national award for mental health work](#) ... [‘Not alone’: Missourians experiencing infertility say insurance is a major hurdle to care](#) ... [Nebraska proponents of providing medigap coverage for those under 65 with disabilities will try again](#) ... [North Dakota abortion ban challenged, with focus on medical exception](#) ... [Federal agency asks Ohio Gov. Mike DeWine to improve child Medicaid enrollment](#) ... [Report ranks South Carolina worst in the nation in nursing home inspectors](#) ... [Texas Medical Board remains silent on abortion laws, despite calls for more guidance](#) ... [As new nursing program launches at West Virginia State U, health care officials turn eye to retaining workers](#)



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One Last Thing

Missouri House Speaker Dean Plocher took over another lawmaker's office, built a butler's pantry and then filled it with beer, wine and liquor, [the Missouri Independent reported](#). The drink den was part of a \$60,000 renovation that included \$29,000 for furnishings like a black leather sofa (\$8,600) and two walnut trash cans (at \$385, easily the most outrageous expenditure).

Plocher declined to answer "specific" questions about the renovation, but it didn't go over well with other lawmakers, who noted that the Capitol is so short on office space that one legislator is currently working out of what used to be a vault.

"We had a member that had an office on the fourth floor that was so small, the legislative assistant can't get to behind her desk without closing the door of the closet," said Rep. Deb Lavender, a Manchester Democrat. "So with such a serious lack of space in the Capitol, I'm not sure we should be spending the public's money to build a bar across the House Lounge from the speaker's office."

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