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Vanderwall, Rendon think gerrymandering ruling will go to Supreme Court

Federal court ruling could affect local districts

By Karen Hopper Usher Cadillac News Apr 29, 2019 Updated Apr 29, 2019

CADILLAC – While their districts weren't specifically named in a recent gerrymandering ruling from a federal panel of judges, local legislators think the decision could affect voters here.

But first, it would have to survive a further legal challenge – and Rep. Daire Rendon's gut reaction is that it won't.

"I believe this will go to the Supreme Court and we will get a decision there," she said – and she thinks the Supreme Court will side with those that think Michigan's districts aren't unconstitutionally gerrymandered.



The case, which alleged that state legislative and congressional district lines unfairly benefited Republicans, is “about making a point,” Rendon said — one party thinks the other is walking all over them.

The reality, according to Rendon, who has previously worked on drawing district lines, is that redistricting is difficult and there’s a strict formula for doing it.

“It’s a tough job,” she said. The panel’s ruling, which could mean special elections for state senators in 2020 instead of 2022, could have limited impact, according to Rendon, because districts will soon be redrawn anyway. Michigan voters decided in November 2018 to adopt the “Voters Not Politicians” plan for drawing district lines. And by 2022, new Census information will mean districts could look different than they looked in the middle of the recession, Rendon said.

Sen. Curt VanderWall, who represents Michigan’s 35th state senate district, said he isn’t focusing on the possibility of running for election next year.

“It’s out of my control,” he said — but there is work to do in the district, and that’s where he wants to focus his energy. VanderWall agreed with Rendon that the appeal would probably reach the Supreme Court.

Though neither VanderWall’s senate district, Rendon’s house district nor Rep. Michele Hoitenga’s (R-Manton) house district were included in the case filed by the League of Women Voters, the ruling by the three-judge panel could affect districts in the Cadillac area.

Redrawing lines could mean shifting boundaries into districts that weren’t named in the lawsuit.



VanderWall noted that just 10 Michigan Senate districts were named in the lawsuit.

“It doesn’t take very long to affect all 38,’ when you start messing with those lines, he said.

For Rendon, who lives at the western edge of the 103rd House District, keeping her seat could mean moving to a new house if the lines shift just a few miles, she said.

Rep. Hoitenga declined to comment for this article.

Cadillac’s representative in the U.S. House of Representatives, Rep. John Moolenaar, R-Midland, could be affected by the court ruling. Michigan’s 4th congressional district was among those named in the gerrymandering lawsuit. A representative for the congressman did not respond to a request for comment before deadline.

The court's decision cites testimony that claimed the 4th congressional district's "partisan composition is very unlikely to have occurred by chance."

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