

§ 30-399. Establishment of districts by the Supreme Court of Virginia

A. In the event the Commission fails to submit a plan for districts by the deadline set forth in subsection A or B of § 30-397, or the General Assembly fails to adopt a plan for districts by the deadline set forth in subsection C or D of § 30-398, the Supreme Court of Virginia (the Court) shall be responsible for establishing the districts.

B. The Court shall, not later than March 1 of a year ending in one, enact rules and procedures as may be necessary for implementing the requirements of Article II, Section 6-A of the Constitution of Virginia, empowering the Court to establish congressional or state legislative districts as provided for in that section. In enacting such rules and procedures, the Court shall follow the provisions of this section.

C. Public participation in the Court's redistricting deliberations shall be permitted. Such public participation may be through briefings, written submissions, hearings in open court, or any other means as may be prescribed by the Court.

D. The Division of Legislative Services shall make available staff support and technical assistance to the Court to perform those duties as may be requested or assigned to it by the Court.

E. Any plan for congressional or state legislative districts established by the Court shall adhere to the standards and criteria for districts set forth in Article II, Section 6 of the Constitution of Virginia and § 24.2-304.04.

F. The Court shall appoint two special masters to assist the Court in the establishment of districts. The two special masters shall work together to develop any plan to be submitted to the Court for its consideration.

Within one week of the Commission's failure to submit plans or the General Assembly's failure to adopt plans, the leaders in the House of Delegates having the highest and next highest number of members in the House of Delegates and the leaders in the Senate of Virginia having the highest and next highest number of members in the Senate of Virginia shall each submit to the Court a list of three or more nominees, along with a brief biography and resume for each nominee, including the nominee's particular expertise or experience relevant to redistricting. The Court shall then select, by a majority vote, one special master from the lists submitted by the legislative leaders of the political party having the highest number of members in their respective chambers and one special master from the lists submitted by the legislative leaders of the political party having the next highest number of members in their respective chambers. The persons appointed to serve as special masters shall have the requisite qualifications and experience to serve as a special master and shall have no conflicts of interest. In making its appointments, the Court shall consider any relevant redistricting experience in the Commonwealth and any practical or academic experience in the field of redistricting. The Court shall be reimbursed by the Commonwealth for all costs, including fees and expenses, related to the appointment or work of the special master from funds appropriated for this purpose.

G. Any justice who is a parent, spouse, child, sibling, parent-in-law, child-in-law, or sibling-in-law of, or a cohabitating member of a household with, a member of the Congress of the United States or of the General Assembly shall recuse himself from any decision made pursuant to this section, and no senior justice designated pursuant to § 17.1-302 shall be assigned to the case or matter to serve in his place.

2020, Sp. Sess. I, c. 56;2022, Sp. Sess. I, c. 1.

The chapters of the acts of assembly referenced in the historical citation at the end of this section(s) may not constitute a comprehensive list of such chapters and may exclude chapters whose provisions have expired.