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California's Newsom Calls Special Redistricting Election

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California Governor Gavin Newsom has signed legislation authorizing a special election in November to determine whether the state will adopt new congressional district maps. The plan temporarily suspends the independent Citizens Redistricting Commission and allows maps drawn by the Legislature to be used through 2030.

The measure, part of a package referred to as the Election Rigging Response Act, includes a constitutional amendment (ACA 8) and related bills outlining the election process and funding. If approved, the maps would remain in effect until the next scheduled redistricting cycle, when responsibility would return to the commission.

Supporters of the initiative argue that the change is a direct response to new maps in Texas that are projected to provide Republicans with additional congressional seats. California's proposal could provide Democrats with up to five more seats in the U.S. House.

Polling data indicates a divided electorate. Surveys conducted in August by the Los Angeles Times and the Berkeley Institute of Governmental Studies show support for the measure between 46 and 48 percent, opposition between 32 and 36 percent, and around 20 percent undecided.

The decision has drawn criticism from opponents, including former Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, who has advocated for the state's independent redistricting system since its creation. He stated that suspending the commission undermines the principle of nonpartisan map drawing.

The legislation sets rules for election administration, including ballot language and funding for county officials. If approved by voters, the maps would be used in congressional elections beginning in 2026.

California's action follows similar moves in other states. Texas, Indiana, Maryland, and New York have recently passed new congressional maps projected to benefit the dominant party in each state. Nationally, both Republican- and Democratic-led legislatures are pursuing redistricting changes, altering the balance of House representation ahead of the next midterm elections.

The outcome of California's November vote will determine whether the state's congressional boundaries remain under legislative control until 2030 or return to the independent commission without changes.