



News > Local

Plan swaps Ohio for McLean in 8th Senate District

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By Steve Vied, Messenger-Inquirer

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The Kentucky Senate's 8th District, comprising Daviess County and McLean County, will be made up of Daviess County and Ohio County under a redistricting proposal that was passed by the Senate State and Local Government Committee Wednesday.

If the proposal becomes law, it would mean that 8th District Sen. Joe Bowen, an Owensboro Republican, will see the district he represents enlarged significantly in size and population.

"Actually, it amounts to a function of math," Bowen said from Frankfort, where the legislature is meeting. "I had to add population, and Ohio County fit into the equation. It also puts the rest of precincts together. It is a complex puzzle, with one move affecting another."

Under the Senate proposal, the current 6th District of Hopkins, Muhlenberg and Ohio counties, currently represented by Sen. Jerry Rhoads of Madisonville, will be changed to contain Henderson, Webster, McLean and Hopkins counties.

Under the plan, Muhlenberg will leave the 6th and join a new 27th District with Todd, Logan, Simpson and Allen counties. Butler County is now in the 32nd District with Warren County. Under the proposal, Warren would be the only county in the 32nd District.

Meanwhile, the current 5th District of Breckinridge, Grayson, Hancock, Hart, Larue and Meade counties would stay the same except that Butler County would be added and Larue would leave for the 9th District.

Bowen said the 8th District needed to have 114,191 in population, give or take 5 percent. According to the 2010 U.S. Census numbers, Daviess County's population was 96,656, while McLean County's was 9,531. Ohio County's 2010 population was 23,842. The new 8th District would have 120,498, up from 106,187 in the current district.

In square miles, Daviess (458) and McLean (252) total 710, but Daviess and Ohio (587) total 1,045.

"I'll be honored to represent the good folks of Ohio County, and I'll work hard for them," Bowen said. "I'll miss McLean County because I've developed a lot of good relationships there. I'm excited because I know a lot of people in Ohio County."

Messages seeking comment from Rhoads and McLean County Judge-Executive Kelly Thurman were not returned Wednesday afternoon. Ohio County Judge-Executive David Johnston was unavailable.

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