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Redistricting debate resumes as voting starts

USA TODAY NETWORK

The South Carolina Senate passed a second reading of a bill to establish new Congressional lines in the state, but the bill will not be finalized until after early voting starts.

State Sen. Shane Massey, R-Edgefield, made a motion to take a second vote on a redistricting bill in the afternoon on Saturday, May 23, and the vote passed 27-17. At Massey's request, the Senate will reconvene at 11 a.m. on Tuesday, May 26, the first day of early voting.

Prior to Massey's motion, senators expected to have a long day of debates on Saturday, and expected to be back at the statehouse on Sunday, May 24 for more discussions. Massey's move makes it so the Senate will not meet in-person until after early voting starts, which could flip some Republican senators against the measure.

Sen. Larry Grooms, R-Berkeley, has been a proponent of the redistricting bill,

but he told reporters on Friday, May 22 that he doesn't support redrawing congressional lines after early voting starts — and he expects some other Republicans feel the same.

"There are other members like me who are very supportive of this legislation, but not very supportive of passing this legislation after tens of thousands of South Carolinians have already cast votes in-person," Grooms said on May 22.

Some Republican lawmakers pushed for redistricting efforts at the urging of President Donald Trump, who has called for legislatures to redraw their congressional maps to favor Republican candidates since last summer. The South Carolina push was propelled by a recent U.S. Supreme Court decision that undermined protections on minority voting districts by deeming Louisiana's congressional map unconstitutional.

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Senators and journalists look at different maps showing districts before special session discussions regarding the redrawing of South Carolina's congressional districts at the Statehouse in Columbia, South Carolina. The far right map shows the current districts.

WAR IN MIDDLE EAST

TRUMP IN NO HURRY FOR DEAL WITH IRAN



MAJID-ASGARIPOUR, WEST ASIA NEWS AGENCY VIA REUTERS

Vessels in the Strait of Hormuz are visible from the beach in Bandar Abbas, Iran, on Friday.

Blockade to continue until agreement is signed, president says

HUMEYRA PAMUK AND ASIF SHAHZAD
Reuters

WASHINGTON — President Donald Trump said Sunday he told his representatives not to rush into any deal with Iran, as his administration played down hopes of an imminent breakthrough in the 3-month-old war that had been raised a day earlier.

The U.S. blockade on Iranian ships in the Strait of Hormuz would "remain in full force and effect until an agreement is reached, certified, and signed," Trump wrote on Truth Social. "Both sides must take their time and get it right," he added.

There was no immediate response from Iran's government. But Tasnim news agency, which is linked to Iran's Revolutionary Guards, said the U.S. was still obstructing parts of a potential deal, including Tehran's demand for the release of frozen funds.

A day earlier, Trump said Washington and Iran had "largely negotiated" a memorandum of understanding on a peace deal that would reopen the Strait of Hormuz, which before the conflict carried one-fifth

of global oil and liquefied natural gas shipments.

The two sides remain at odds on several difficult issues, such as Iran's nuclear ambitions, Israel's war in Lebanon with the Iranian-backed Hezbollah militia and Tehran's demands for the lifting of sanctions and the release of tens of billions of dollars of Iranian oil revenues frozen in foreign banks.

A senior Trump administration official told reporters an agreement would not be signed Sunday, saying that the Iranian system did not move fast enough. But he outlined what he said were the latest contours of what was being negotiated.

The official, speaking on the condition of anonymity, said Iran agreed "in principle" to open the Strait of Hormuz, in exchange for the United States lifting its naval blockade, and to dispose of Tehran's highly enriched uranium.

He said the U.S. understood Iran's Supreme Leader Ayatollah Mojtaba Khamenei had endorsed the broad template of the deal.

There was no immediate confirmation from Iran or elaboration on what an "in principle" agreement meant.

The U.S. official said Washington envisioned first reopening the strait and lifting the U.S. naval blockade. Negotiating the details of the nuclear measures would take more time, he said.

He pushed back on suggestions that Iran has not accepted disposing of its stockpiled enriched uranium. "It's a question about how," the official said.

Iranian sources told Reuters that in future stages, "feasible formulas" could be found to resolve the dispute over its highly enriched uranium stockpile, including diluting the material under the supervision of the U.N. nuclear watchdog.

Iran has long denied U.S. and Israeli accusations that it is pursuing nuclear weapons and says it has a right to enrich uranium for civilian purposes, although the purity it has achieved far exceeds that needed for power generation.

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