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Regarding: Congressional



Senator Lois Kolkhorst
Senate District 18
TEXAS CAPITOL

Subject: Proposed Congressional Redistricting

Dear Senator Kolkhorst,

My name is Deirdre Jean-Baptiste; and I live in Richmond, Fort Bend County, Texas. I am submitting this testimony to strongly oppose Governor Abbott's mid-decade redistricting efforts because TEXAS' redistricting isn't needed at this time.

What is needed but previously denied by the governor months ago is the need for almost 800,000 people to have a voice—to have representation (due to an open seat left by Sylvester Turner), yet the governor postponed the special election ensuring Republicans would be able to pass various legislation.

"We the People" is such an important part of our U.S. Constitution's preamble signifying that *the power of the United States government originates from its CITIZENS*. Yet instead of working for WE THE PEOPLE, some leaders divide us using partisan politics instead of working *together* to ensure **ALL** of WE THE PEOPLE will be supported.

As a Texan, I believe our districts must fairly represent the people who live in them. Communities of color make up nearly 60% of our state, yet only 34% of our congressional delegation reflects that diversity. Texas has a long history of intentional discrimination in redistricting—violating the Voting Rights Act or discriminating against voters of color in every decade for the past 50 years.

The current maps adopted in 2021—still under federal court review—ignored racial data and reduced the number of majority-minority districts, even though population growth in our state was overwhelmingly driven by communities of color. Now, these mid-decade changes threaten to dismantle coalition districts like **CD 9, CD 18, CD 29, and CD 33**, which have empowered Black, Latino, and Asian American voters to elect candidates of their choice.

Across Texas, many people are already struggling to afford healthcare coverage. The recently passed **Tax Bill**, approved by the narrowest of margins, threatens to remove even more people from Medicaid rolls. Texas already has the highest rate of uninsured residents in the nation. If our communities in Houston and the DFW area had adequate representation, this harmful bill might not have passed. Instead, the state has shamefully chosen to **"pack and crack"** communities of color, diluting our collective voice in Congress.

I respectfully urge this committee to:

1. **Reject any mid-decade redistricting efforts** and wait until the **2030 Census numbers** are released before drawing any new maps.
2. **Stop dismantling coalition districts** that reflect the multiracial, diverse communities of Texas.
3. **Ensure transparency and meaningful public participation.** If any new maps are proposed, the public must have the chance to review them and testify again before any vote is taken.

Fair maps are essential to a fair democracy. Our communities deserve representation that serves the people, not political or partisan interests.

In reference to the special election November 4th which will give almost 800,000 citizens a voice again, that should be the focus in addition to other Texas issues; and Governor Abbott should therefore oppose any redistricting plan that marginalizes minority communities.

DON'T MESS WITH TEXAS! Stand firm Governor Abbott et al. You will have TEXAS' support as you demonstrate that you as well as Texas cannot and will not be bullied or bought; and that you work for no one person or people but "WE THE PEOPLE", whether you assumed your position with or without our votes.

Thank you for your time and for considering my written testimony.

Deirdre Jean-Baptiste