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Date: 2025-07-25

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Affirm public info: I agree

Regarding: Congressional

Message:

Testimony of Gary Bledsoe, President, Texas NAACP

Before the Texas Legislature on Redistricting

Chair, Vice-Chair and Members of the Senate Committee and Legislature,

This highly Unusual Mid-Decade redistricting—like every one before it—reminds us of the long, unbroken history of efforts to silence and diminish the political power of Black Texans. We need to remember that this is not just about political parties; it is about the systematic efforts to restrict the influence of people of color in this state.

At this nation's founding, the Constitution enshrined the Three-Fifths Compromise, counting Black people as only three-fifths of a human being for the purpose of legislative representation. But while our bodies were counted to inflate the power of slaveholding states, we had no vote, no real voice, and absolutely no ability to shape who represented us—even at that subhuman level. That compromise dehumanized my ancestors, turning them into tools to strengthen the political interests of those who would keep them in chains, and set the foundation for centuries of racially discriminatory laws and practices.

With this mid-decade redistricting, Texas is moving back to that era and that system. The DOJ letter to Governor Abbott specifically targets 3 of the 4 Districts where African American Voters are able to elect their candidate of choice directly and 1 Latino District where Latinos are able to elect their candidate of choice directly. Importantly, the Fourth African American district has been added for the hearing in Arlington next week so it seems as though they are trying to wipe the slate clean and reinstitute the 3/5s compromise. The 9th, 18th and 30th are not just any districts; these are opportunity seats protected under the law, as confirmed by both the DC Circuit and panels right here in Texas as well as being admitted to by the State of Texas. The 29th is also a protected seat and was originally drawn by a court as was the 30th, 9th and 33rd.

Even today, we hear that this new redistricting is “about party,” but that’s a distraction. The reality is straightforward: the current effort, like so many before

it, is about diluting the votes of Black, Brown, and Asian Texans. The recent moves to target opportunity districts—where Black and Brown voters alone have been able to elect candidates of their choice—follow in that shameful tradition.

Let's be clear: Texas is only 40% white, yet white voters' control nearly three-quarters of our Congressional seats. All our recent population growth, all of it, has been due to minorities, and yet the map makers continue to create districts to limit our influence. Decade after decade, courts find that Texas deliberately draws maps to reduce the power of Black and Brown voters.

The message from history, from the three-fifths clause to present day, is that counting bodies alone does not mean granting people power or voice. Our current process risks repeating those old sins by drawing lines that pack, split, and silence communities of color.

Some important things for you to note:

- Senator Huffman testified under oath that the map was drawn blind to race;
- The map was drawn by individuals from the Governor's own political party who initially foreclosed attempts for minority input in the process and then after they provided limited opportunity, they did not respond to what they heard.
- Huffman said the Attorney General of Texas reviewed the map and ensured the map did not violate the Voting Rights Act or the Constitution.
- Whites are 40% of the Texas population but control 73 percent of its Congressional districts, and if they succeed in eliminating 5 districts targeted (CDs 9, 18, 29, 30 and 33), they will control 87 percent of the districts.
- Since 1980, Texas would have lost seats if the State only used its white population growth to determine the number of seats to which it was entitled. Texas had 24 seats at that time and has 38 now, and all 14 new seats can safely be said to be due to minority population increases.

I am not here to call anyone a racist, but the actions we see are racially discriminatory. At this critical moment, I urge you to reject any plan that diminishes opportunity for our communities. You can stand with Jefferson Davis or you can stand with Abraham Lincoln, the choice is yours. Please uphold the law, honor the legacy of the Voting Rights Act, and let the court decision from El Paso come forward. Do draw maps that fail to recognize the true value and agency of every Texan.

Thank you.

Gary L. Bledsoe, President

