

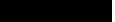


Date: 2025-08-05
First Name: Karie
Last Name: Winfree
Title: N/A
Organization: Self
Address: 
City: Austin
State: TX
Zipcode: 
Phone: 

Affirm public info: I agree

Regarding: Congressional

Message:
Chairperson, Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today on a matter that strikes at the very heart of our democracy: the right of the people to fair and equal representation. I strongly oppose the redistricting plan enacted in Texas—an effort that not only disenfranchises voters but undermines the foundational principles of representative government.

I. The Legal Framework: Equal Representation Under Attack

At its core, redistricting must adhere to two guiding legal principles: equal population and non-discrimination. The Fourteenth Amendment's Equal Protection Clause and Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act (VRA) prohibit district lines that dilute the voting power of racial or language minority groups. The Texas redistricting maps, as currently drawn, fail these tests:

Despite a disproportionate increase in the Latino, Black, and Asian American populations, the new maps reduce the number of districts in which these communities have a fair opportunity to elect candidates of their choice. In places like Harris County and the Rio Grande Valley, the redistricting effort fractures cohesive minority communities into separate districts—a classic form of racial gerrymandering. Legal challenges have already been filed alleging that these maps violate Section 2 of the VRA, which requires that minority voters have an equal opportunity to participate in the political process and elect representatives of their choice. The Supreme Court's recent decisions have weakened some enforcement mechanisms of the Voting Rights Act, but they have NOT invalidated its core protections. What Texas has done is walk right up to the line—and arguably far past it—of constitutionality.

II. The Civil Reality: Voter Suppression by Design

Beyond the legal violations, what Texas has done is an affront to democratic values. This is state-sponsored voter suppression, plain and simple.

Redistricting is supposed to reflect demographic change, not defy it. Over 95% of Texas's population growth in the last decade came from communities of color—yet those communities have been systematically denied commensurate political power. Instead, the new maps shore up political control for incumbents and diminish the political voice of millions of voters.

This is not just a policy disagreement—it is an attack on civil rights.

Gerrymandering isolates minority communities, creating political isolation and policy neglect. It disempowers new and younger voters who are more racially diverse and politically engaged. It leads to uncompetitive elections, where politicians choose their voters instead of voters choosing their representatives.

III. Moral and Democratic Consequences: Tyranny in Modern Form

Let us be clear about what is at stake. This is not merely a matter of district lines or political gamesmanship—it is a battle over whether democracy still lives in Texas. When those in power manipulate electoral maps to entrench themselves, it is tyranny dressed in legislative clothing. It is no different in moral consequence than literacy tests, poll taxes, or other historical methods of disenfranchisement. It is oppression through legal means.

The people of Texas—especially those who have built the state's economy, raised its families, and sustained its civic institutions—deserve a government that reflects and respects them. When the redistricting process excludes them, it tells them their voices do not matter. And when a state government repeatedly enacts laws and policies that suppress turnout and representation, it forfeits its moral legitimacy.

IV. What Must Be Done

Reinstate and strengthen the Voting Rights Act, including the preclearance provisions that once stopped discriminatory maps before they could do harm. Pass the Freedom to Vote Act, which sets national standards for fair redistricting and public transparency. Support the creation of independent redistricting commissions in every state to replace partisan-controlled processes. Investigate and hold accountable those who deliberately manipulate maps for racial or partisan gain.

This country is not a true democracy if its electoral maps are designed to silence the people rather than reflect them. The redistricting effort in Texas is not only a legal failure—it is a moral betrayal of our shared promise: government of the people, by the people, for the people. I ask this Committee to stand with the disenfranchised, with the voiceless, and with the future of our democracy. The nation is watching.

Thank you.

