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Regarding: Congressional



*Sent via email*

Senate Special Committee on Congressional Redistricting  
Texas Senate  
Sam Houston Building  
201 E. 14<sup>th</sup> Street, Room 445  
Austin, TX 78701

Re: National Urban League Opposition to Texas Congressional Redistricting Plan

The National Urban League, the Austin Area Urban League, and the Houston Area Urban League submit this letter for the record to express our opposition to the revised congressional redistricting plan proposed during the special legislative session of the 89<sup>th</sup> Texas legislature that began on July 21, 2025. The congressional maps released on July 30, 2025, perpetuate Texas's shameful legacy of using the redistricting process to dilute Black political power.

Federal courts have consistently found that Texas electoral maps violate the Voting Rights Act. After the 2010 Census, Texas gained four congressional seats to represent the influx of four million new residents. Even though the population increase was due almost entirely to people of color, the Texas legislature passed a map designed to protect White conservative incumbents while reducing the number of districts where people of color had meaningful input.<sup>1</sup> Black and Latino voters sued the state under Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act for intentional discrimination.<sup>2</sup> The case dragged on for seven years, with several districts under scrutiny for being drawn with “impermissible intent to dilute minority voting strength.”<sup>3</sup> One of the biggest miscarriages of justice is that, while these maps were being challenged in court, elections continued to be held using them – effectively stealing representation from the very communities that these seats were intended to serve.

Between the 2010 and 2020 Decennial Census, Non-Hispanic Blacks made up almost 12% of the population and accounted for almost 14% of the population growth, compared to less than 5% for the Non-Hispanic Whites.<sup>4</sup> Yet, the Texas legislature

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<sup>1</sup> Alexa Ura & Jim Malewitz, *Federal court invalidates part of Texas congressional map*, TEX. TRIBUNE (Aug. 15, 2017), <https://www.texastribune.org/2017/08/15/federal-court-invalidates-part-texas-congressional-map/>.

<sup>2</sup> *Abbott v. Perez* 585 U.S. (2018)

<sup>3</sup> *Perez v. Abbott* 267 F.Supp.3d 750 (W.D. Tex. 2017)

<sup>4</sup> Dr. Lloyd B. Potter, *Data & Trends: The Changing Landscape of Texas Demographics*, Texas Demographic Center (Feb. 26, 2024) [https://demographics.texas.gov/Resources/TDC/Presentations/a1202677-9bd3-4e29-9a55-1afef1c922a7/20240224\\_DataTrendsTheChangingLandscape.pdf](https://demographics.texas.gov/Resources/TDC/Presentations/a1202677-9bd3-4e29-9a55-1afef1c922a7/20240224_DataTrendsTheChangingLandscape.pdf).

passed congressional and state legislative maps that significantly underrepresented the state's rapidly growing Black, Latino, and Asian populations by "cracking" — splitting among several districts to weaken their collective influence — or "packing" them into a few districts.<sup>5</sup> Using "surgical precision" to limit the concentration of Black and Hispanic voters, mapmakers engineered districts where the outcome would be determined by White voters.<sup>6</sup> The final 2021 map included 23 majority White districts, 8 districts with no majority population, and 7 majority Hispanic districts.<sup>7</sup>

The Texas legislature continues to harm Black communities by using racial gerrymandering to dilute our voting power and limit our ability to elect candidates of our choice. Texas has the largest Black population of any U.S. state, ranking first overall in total Black population.<sup>8</sup> Yet, Texas does not have a single majority Black district.<sup>9</sup>

Redistricting that intentionally dilutes the voting power of Black communities violates Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which prohibits voting practices that result in a denial or abridgment of the right to vote on account of race or color.<sup>10</sup> As the Supreme Court reaffirmed in *Allen v. Milligan*, states must comply with the Voting Rights Act and ensure that communities of color are not deprived of fair and adequate representation by offering protections against racially discriminatory maps and requiring states to create additional majority-Black districts when warranted.<sup>11</sup> Yet, the congressional map released on July 30, 2025, is designed to only give people of color a meaningful voice in 8 out of the 38 congressional districts, and notably draws Congresswoman Jasmine Crockett out of her own district.<sup>12</sup> While some of the seats in the new map were drawn to give some representation to the Hispanic community; it was nonetheless done in an intentionally partisan fashion. This further dilutes the voice of the people of Texas by choosing their representation versus allowing them to do so at the ballot box.

States across the country have successfully adopted effective strategies to draw fair congressional maps. If the Texas legislature wanted to ensure fair representation in their congressional delegation, there are several approaches we would recommend pursuing, including:

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<sup>5</sup> Elivia Limon, *Gov. Greg Abbott signs off on Texas's new political maps, which protect GOP majorities while diluting voices of voters of color*, TEX. TRIBUNE (Oct. 25, 2021), <https://www.texastribune.org/2021/10/15/texas-redistricting-dallas-fort-worth/>.

<sup>6</sup> *Id.*

<sup>7</sup> James Barragan, Abby Livingston, Carla Astudillo, *Texas reduces Black and Hispanic majority congressional districts in proposed map, despite people of color fueling population growth*, TEX. TRIBUNE (Sept. 27, 2021), <https://www.texastribune.org/2021/09/24/texas-congressional-redistricting/>.

<sup>8</sup> *Id.* at 5.

<sup>9</sup> *Id.* at 1.

<sup>10</sup> Voting Rights Act of 1965, Pub. L. No. 89-110, 79 Stat. 445.

<sup>11</sup> *Allen v. Michigan* 599 U.S. \_\_ (2023)

<sup>12</sup> Mike Lillis, *Democrats accuse GOP of racism in proposed Texas map*, THE HILL (July 31, 2025), <https://thehill.com/homenews/house/5430614-democrats-texas-house-map/>.

1. **Establishing an Independent Redistricting Commission (IRCs):** Several states, including California, Michigan, and Colorado have successfully created and implemented IRCs. Texas should follow this model and move redistricting authority away from partisan legislators and into the hands of an independent, nonpartisan redistricting commission. IRCs reduce the ability to implement racial and partisan gerrymandered maps and help ensure that the maps reflect communities' shared interests, not political advantage. It is also important to select commission members from nonpartisan community-based organizations that represent a diverse cross section of voting member representation.
2. **Passing State-Level Voting Rights Protections:** In the absence of full federal Voting Rights Act protections (gutted by *Shelby County v. Holder*, 2013), Texas should pass a state-level Voting Rights Act — similar to those in New York, Virginia, and California — that requires racial impact analyses of proposed maps and prevents the adoption of any district plan that dilutes the voting strength of communities of color.
3. **Mandating Transparency and Public Input:** Lawmakers must require public hearings throughout the redistricting process and publish proposed maps in advance, with clear explanations of criteria used in a timely manner, without exclusion, secrecy and under nonpartisanship. In 2021, Texas redistricting hearings were limited and inaccessible to many communities. Future processes must be open, inclusive, and data-driven, with meaningful opportunities for public comment from Black and other marginalized communities.
4. **Using Race-Conscious and Community-Focused Criteria:** Lawmakers must adopt redistricting criteria that prioritize maintaining “communities of interest” — including historically marginalized Black neighborhoods — rather than splitting them to preserve incumbency or partisan advantage. This also includes compliance with the Voting Rights Act to ensure districts where Black voters can elect candidates of their choice.
5. **Holding Mapmakers and Legislators Accountable:** The Texas legislature should create enforcement mechanisms with penalties for those who push for racially, ethnically, or partisan gerrymandered maps, and allow for expedited court review when discriminatory maps are challenged.

For the reasons discussed, the National Urban League, the Austin Area Urban League, and the Houston Area Urban League strongly oppose the revised congressional redistricting plan. We urge the Texas legislature to consider implementing the recommended strategies above that will properly allocate political power among all

Texans. The number of people in our communities experiencing pain is at an all-time high and the focus should not be on increasing partisan power, but rather, expanding our people powered democracy.

Sincerely,

National Urban League  
Austin Area Urban League  
Houston Area Urban League