NORTH CAROLINA GENERAL ASSEMBLY
PUBLIC HEARING ON REDISTRICTING

TRANSCRIPT OF THE PROCEEDINGS
MAIN HEARING SESSION

In Raleigh, North Carolina
Monday, February 15, 2016
Reported by Robbie W. Worley

Sessions simulcast from the following locations:

North Carolina General Assembly - Legislative Office Building, Room 643 (Wake County)
Central Piedmont Community College (Mecklenburg County)
Fayetteville Technical Community College (Cumberland County)
Cape Fear Community College (New Hanover County)
UNC-Asheville (Buncombe County)
Halifax Community College (Halifax County)

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SEN. RUCHO: I'd like to bring to order the public hearing today on redistricting.
We've got a few items that we'll take care of prior to hearing of the public on this issue, and then I've got a statement that I'll present in a moment. But let's take up a few house items.

Today, we have in Raleigh, Sergeant-at-Arms, and we have them located through all the sites. One of them here we have in the Senate is Hal Roach, Jim Blackburn, Steve McKaig, and Jim Hamilton from the Senate side. Thank you for helping us make this a success.

And then we have, on the House side, Marvin Lee and Reggie Sills. Thank you, folks. We appreciate all of your help in making this -- and there are Sergeant-at-Arms at each of the locations that the moderator may be able to recognize as we proceed forward.

Let's begin, and let's just -- ladies and gentlemen, I'd like to welcome everybody to the public hearing on redistricting. I am Senator Bob Rucho, Senate Chairman of the Joint Select Committee on Congressional Redistricting, and here with me today is House Chairman Rep. David Lewis on my left.

Today's hearing is an effort on part of the Joint Senate Select -- excuse me, the Joint Select Committee on Congressional Redistricting to hear public comments on North Carolina Redistricting -- Congressional Districts in light of the ruling in the Harris versus McCrory, made by the United States District Court for the Middle District of North Carolina.

Along with our sites here in Raleigh, we are also videoconferencing with the sites in Halifax Community College, Central Piedmont Community College, Fayetteville Technical Community College, Cape Fear Community College, UNC Asheville, and I will say to you Guilford Tech Community College is closed today, and therefore, we are not able to have a hearing there today.

If any -- if any of the public would like to submit their comments, I will, as we proceed forward, identify how to do so on the NCLEG website. And if they can -- if members of the public who cannot attend any of the sites are welcome to have the opportunity to submit their comments online at www.ncl.ncleg.net/redistricting through our written comments submission form, which is online. And members of the committee will have an opportunity to review that and review your comments in addition to the public comments today.
And I'd like to take a moment to have each of the moderators to -- at each of the sites, and I'll identify them in rotation, the Senators and Representatives that are present at the site today. And they'll be -- the people that we will recognize will be the members of the committee.

And today, of course, myself, Senator Bob Rucho, Representative David Lewis, Representative Rodney Moore, Representative Jackson, Senator Chad Barefoot, I see Senator Clark, Senator Ford, Senator Blue. I'm trying to make sure I don't miss anybody. Senator Erica Smith-Ingram, Senator Jane Smith, Senator Floyd McKissick, Senator Paul Lowe. And I think I have -- oops, Representative Jordan. Thank you. And Representative Bell. I think I -- and -- and Representative Hanes. Excuse me. Okay. That is our group here in Raleigh.

And the -- I will rotate to the next stop, and that will be at Central Piedmont Community College. Representative Bill Brawley, would you identify the Senators and Representatives there? Can you hear me? Representative Brawley.

REP. BRAWLEY: [break in transmission] Wells, Tarte, and Jackson, and also Representative Fraley. And -- oh, I'm sorry. And Representative Bradford. Curtis represents Lincoln and Iredell. Harrington is Gaston. Wells is Catawba. Tarte, Jackson, Representative Bradford, and myself represent Mecklenburg. And Representative Fraley is also from Iredell.

SEN. RUCHO: Okay.

REP. BRAWLEY: That's all we have, sir.

SEN. RUCHO: Thank you, sir. And be prepared to move forward on your first speaker in a few moments.

REP. BRAWLEY: Representative Bradford, I apologize for my oversight.

SEN. RUCHO: All right. We need to move on to Fayetteville Technical Community College. Senator Jackson, are you there?

SEN. JACKSON: Yes, sir. Good morning, Senator Rucho. I have with myself here Representative John Szoka representing Cumberland County. And that's all our members that we have here.

SEN. RUCHO: Very fine. And then I'll need to be prepared to identify the first person on
because of the inclement weather -- and the policy was if the facility is not open, then the meeting -- then the hearing in the location, and in this case Guilford Technical Community College, is closed, and therefore that hearing in Guilford has been canceled.

All right. Well, we've introduced everyone. Excuse me. Because of the inclement weather across -- at all of the locations, we have extended the sign-up from 10:00 to 11:00 to allow people that may be coming in late due to the inclement weather to have an opportunity to sign up and to be recognized appropriately.

Okay. Now, I would like to thank -- thank all of you, first of all, for taking the time to come and attend and participate in this public hearing at the sites across the state, including here in Raleigh.

As you may be aware, the General Assembly is actively seeking a stay by the U.S. Supreme Court of the lower court ruling in order to avoid the chaos and costliness associated -- associated with an eleventh-hour delay of the election that is already underway.

We continue to believe that the maps that have been upheld by the North Carolina Supreme Court and validated by five of six others that have been reviewed are fair, legal, and constitutional.

We will exercise all avenues of appeal to see that they remain in place. However, because of the compressed timeline imposed upon us by the Court, and in light of our ongoing appeal and request for a stay, we think it's prudent that we -- we think it is a prudent course to open a public comment process in event that the maps need to be redrawn.

In the past -- and if you -- if you were here during the first redistricting cycle, we had many, many public hearings, and a lot of teleconferencing like this. And this is why we decided to come forward with the same way, so that -- and they were an essential part of the Committee activity.

And what we're trying to do is gather the knowledge of the citizens and their views on redistricting, and today, specifically on Congressional maps.

Our public hearing today is, again, an opportunity for us, the members of the Select Committee, to hear from you and hear your opinions.
Now, whether you signed up online in advance or came today to put your name on the list, you’ll have an opportunity to speak for five minutes on whatever idea you may have about Congressional redistricting. However, you choose -- however you choose to spend your five minutes -- and we are here today to hear from you about redistricting -- we are not here to answer any questions, but to listen and learn from your comments and ideas.

As to the rules that we’ll follow in this site and across the -- across the state, I will introduce each speaker, especially in time in Raleigh, and then the moderator from the different cite as we rotate through will introduce that speaker. And I would direct you to the -- if there is any problems, any of the sites, you can go ahead and talk to the staff person there, and they’ll relay it back to us, Representative Lewis and myself, to help you with any problem.

Now, in the -- in the five minutes, we have a staff person there, I believe Sergeant-at-Arms at every location. And who is our Sergeant-at-Arms here in with the yellow and red cards? Okay. There it is.

And what we’ll be doing at that point, when the speaker begins, you’ll have five minutes. The Sergeant-at-Arms will show you a yellow card when you have one minute remaining -- and you see a yellow card there. And then at the end of five minutes when your time is expired, you’ll have a red card. And then you’ll be expected to conclude your -- your -- your comments.

Now, also, in addition to the public comments, we would welcome any written comments you may have in addition to what you present today. You can either have a written comment -- hand a written comment to a staff member, or you can, as I mentioned earlier, get onto the web site, which is ncleg.net/redistricting, and use the written comment submission form if you have thoughts that you wanted to share with this committee. At this time, I’d like to present -- ask for the first speaker to -- to come forward. And in -- we’ll do the first one in Raleigh.

And the first speaker today will be Chris Mansfield. Now, when Chris Mansfield comes up to the microphone in the back of the room, I need you to identify yourself and basically where you reside. And then we will begin the process. Is --

is Chris Mansfield here?

Okay. Yeah, we’ll go -- we will come back -- we’ll call -- see if Jane Pinsky is here?

Ms. Pinsky, if you’ll identify yourself, and then you have five minutes.

MS. JANE PINSKY: Good morning, Chairman Rucho, Chairman Lewis, members of the Committee. My name is Jane Pinsky. I am the Executive Director of the North Carolina Coalition of Lobbying and Government Reform.

The Coalition is approximately ten years old and represents a wide array of partisan and ideological views in the State of North Carolina.

The groups that make up the Coalition range from the John Locke Foundation, to AARP, to the AFL-CIO, to the League of Women Voters.

We are here today to simply say that the problem is not with the districts as they are drawn, but rather with the process that has required you to draw these districts.

We know that drawing districts is not an easy task, and that we have an unfortunate and long history in North Carolina of partisan gerrymandering.

We would encourage you, as you move forward, to look at a number of non-partisan processes and at some of the legislation that has indeed been proposed by members of this body.

Thank you very much.

SEN. RUCHO: Thank you very much. All right. I’m going to go to Central Piedmont Community College, Representative Brawley, for the first speaker there. Representative Brawley?

REP. BRAWLEY: Thank you -- thank you, Senator. The first speaker is Robin Hayes.

SEN. RUCHO: Okay. Would you repeat that, please, Representative Brawley, a little louder?

REP. BRAWLEY: [break in transmission] -- microphones will pick up. That’s a good question. Which way should he look? Look toward the camera right -- look toward that camera.

MR. ROBIN HAYES: Are we ready?

REP. BRAWLEY: Yes.

MR. HAYES: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen. Thank you all for holding this hearing, Representative Brawley. Democrats and Republicans have worked very, very hard to draw a map, regardless of what we all think [break in transmission]
I'm from Concord, North Carolina. I reside in the Eighth District. I'm also a recovering US Congressman. I have been affected by redistricting twice, and I have some knowledge of the process.

What I'd like to emphasize this morning is that there are very clear rules for drawing districts. It's based on a census which occurs every ten years. The most people that we can have involved in the election process is what I think is the most important goal of being involved.

A number of you here are very active in politics at the grassroots level. That's what it takes for the system to work. Everybody involved knows that every ten years, there's the authority of the State [break in transmission] because of the drawing a map. Consequently, you have ten years, ten years -- [break in transmission] you have ten years to organize your precincts and your districts and to make sure that you elect the person that you think is most qualified.

[break in transmission] Democrats some 25 years. The Republicans, some 25 years. The rules haven't changed. You've got to [break in transmission] by the federal government and the Justice Department. They [break in transmission] sign off on the map because they [break in transmission] who want the most people to vote who can [break in transmission] at this point to overturn what the Republicans and the Democrats have put together in the General Assembly, chaos will result.

A similar situation, if my memory is correct, occurred in 1998. A primary in May, and then another Congressional primary in September. 799,000 folks voted in the regular primary. 166,000 voted in the later primary. You want to disenfranchise voters and completely skew the process, then let this judge -- three-judge panel do what they're trying to do.

The system's here. The rules are known. I recommend that the judges stay with the court system, and let the legislature continue with its process. And at the end of the day, the more people participate, the quality of our government will improve, and I recommend that we leave maps as they are now.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

REP. BRAWLEY: Thank you, Mr. Hayes.

SEN. RUCHO: Thank you, Representative Brawley. We'll -- we're going to -- we're going to move on to Fayetteville Technical Community College, and reminding all of our moderators that we're working off the online registration list first.

And so, Senator Brent Jackson, are you there?

SEN. JACKSON: Good morning, Senator Rucho. We have Mr. John Harry was one of our first to sign up online. Mr. Harry?

MR. JOHN HARRY: Yes. Good morning, Chairman. I am John Harry from Hoke County. I would like to talk about historical precedents.

Today the United States celebrates All Presidents Day. And I, among -- among others of faith, celebrate Lent. This past January 18th, we celebrated Martin Luther King Jr., and on December 25th, the symbolic birth of Jesus Christ, both humble men of vision.

Today we are gathered here to give testimony on political philosophy of the judiciary intervention to the State of North Carolina and the US Constitution, as it violates the principle of one person and one vote, principles established by Reynolds v. Sims, Wesberry v. Sanders, 1964, the cornerstone of the Voting Act of 1965.

Prior to the Voting Act of 1965, a man of vision stated, "In the process of gaining our rightful place, we must not be guilty of wrongful deeds. Let us not seek to satisfy our thirst of -- for freedom by drinking from a cup of bitterness and hate," Martin Luther King Jr., 1963.

Another man of vision stated, "Do not judge or you will be judged," Jesus Christ, 2,016 years ago.

Historically, since the mid-1930s, many people believe it is the government's responsibility to reach out for the issues and solutions to all concerning, of course, our respected country. This philosophy is counter to the philosophy of our Constitution, as the issue at hand today will show.

As a selected federal judge has stabbed the citizens of North Carolina in the back with its current ruling on political districting and redistricting of one -- 1st district and 12th district. The judge's lack of respect for the voters of North Carolina, who in 2010, 2012, and 2014 voiced their approval for change from past political gerrymandering of those in control of our
government since Reconstruction.
Constitution did not provide protection for voting. It was a function of the State. This changed for the seceding states between 1865 and 1870 while under the Military Reconstruction Act of 1867 forced the reentering Confederate states to adopt universal male suffrage, which is the cornerstone of the 14th amendment of 1868 [break in transmission] 1870. The 15th Amendment -- excuse me. In 1870.

The 15th Amendment, which provides the right to vote, shall not be denied or abridged on the basis of race, color, or previous condition of servitude, superseded state law.

1871, the -- excuse me. The Enforcement Act law, which violated the principle -- excuse me. Provided for federal election oversight. [break in transmission] Supreme Court ruling since struck down state laws which violated the principle of the 15th Amendment.


Voting Act of 1965, Section 2, 4, and 5 of the act are of relevance here today. Wake County, North Carolina, in January 23rd, 1967, a declaratory judgment as Wake and the State of North Carolina under Section 5 was not a covered jurisdiction, but a partially covered jurisdiction, just like it is today. In June 25th, 2013, the United States Supreme Court ruled under Shelby v. Holder, 133 Supreme Court 2612, ruled Section 4B unconstitutional, which is the preclearance rule -- preclearance, excuse me.

Section 5, briefly, was designed to ensure that voting changes and [unintelligible] jurisdictions could not be implemented until a favorable determination had been attained. Section 4 had established a formula -- formula for -- for determining cause, setting a precedent that the philosophy of law is of importance, which I, among others, worry the Democrat party, through the voters of North Carolina, Africans, Latinos, Caucasian and others, remove them from control of the North Carolina state government, which I may say practices various district modifications of their own since Reconstruction. The current Republican program has legal precedents under current state and federal law to establish political districts.

In closing, others will talk about voters defranchised. And if the current decision is not overturned, as thousands of voters have already voted by absentee ballot and -- and in particular our military serving abroad and the elderly, the high cost of redistricting will not affect only the second and -- 1st and 2nd [sic] District, but will generate the requirement that all present districts undergo reconstruction. Thank you.

SEN. JACKSON: Thank you, Mr. Harry.

SEN. RUCHO: Thank you, Senator Jackson.

And we -- we -- to give everybody an opportunity to speak, we must stay within the five-minute limit, please.

All right. Going to Cape Fear Community College, Representative Davis, your first person on the online registration list, please.

REP. DAVIS: Yes, sir, Senator Rucho.

Our first speaker will be Ms. Helen Pannullo.

MS. HELEN PANNULLO: Good morning. My name is Helen Pannullo, and I am the Chairman of the North Carolina 7th Congressional District Republican Party.

First, I want to extend our sympathy to the family of Justice Scalia on his untimely passing. He is in our thoughts and our prayers.

I want to thank the General Assembly -- I want to thank the General Assembly for their outreach to the community on this most critical decision by the three-judge panel of the federal court, that being the 1st and 12th Congressional District are unconstitutional.

I would like to note that while -- while the panel's finding on the 1st District was unanimous, there was a two-to-one vote that the 12th was unconstitutional.

The requirement to draw the 1st and the 12th by February 19th, just four days from today, is an impossible task. One has to wonder why the Court imposed such an unreasonable deadline given the complexity of the task to draw the 13 -- 13 districts in 2001 in order to meet federal requirements, and the amount of time that was provided for review in the State, also, the amount of time that is necessary for the required federal
review and preapproval by the US Department of Justice. I should note that this preapproval was granted in 2011 when the department was headed by Attorney General Eric Holder. So here we are with a Congressional district map, drawn, as they have been in the past, by the political party with the majority of members in the NC House and Senate in the year following the census.

This Republican majority was elected in 2010 in districts established by the Democrats after the 2000 census. The 2011 district map was then pre-cleared by a Democrat-controlled and many say ultra-liberal US Department of Justice. Yet in spite of this, various individuals and organizations have waged an all-out campaign of legal challenges that abuse and confuse the voters, regardless of their political affiliation.

What concerns me is that the redrawing of the 1st and the 12th could have a ripple effect throughout the state, potentially changing boundaries of all 13 Congressional districts.

The 7th District has boundaries with five other Congressional districts. Those districts, in turn, have boundaries with five other districts.

Again, one has to wonder if the change is really about drawing all 13 districts, not just the 1st and the 12th. So the impact of [unreadable] have far greater ramifications that two Congressional districts.

The federal ruling has created chaos in our primary election. Voting has already begun, with thousands of voters requesting and receiving absentee ballots. Many have already submitted their votes.

Delaying the Congressional primary will cause unprecedented voter confusion, will actually disenfranchise voters across the state, probably in greater numbers than those voters who are purported to be disenfranchised in this court case. And if a separate Congressional primary election is required to be held in the summer, history has shown that dramatically fewer voters turn out for second primaries, again depriving voters of an orderly and timely primary process.

I believe the Congressional districts are fair and legal. I am opposed to redrawing them. However, if the courts prevail in this case, I believe the redrawing of Congressional districts should be done in a timely manner by the General Assembly, not under an artificially short two-week period before the court steps in to draw the districts.

Voters have made their preference for Republicans clearly known. It is a current 10-3 partisan split with Congressional delegation is the fair result of voters’ decision to elect Republicans. Any new map should keep the precincts and counties whole as much as possible. And due to the declining influence of our rural community, the smaller counties should not be split.

Thank you again for this public hearing and the opportunity to speak.

SEN. RUCHO: Thank you in Cape Fear. Moving on to UNC-Asheville, Representative McGrady, your first person on the online list.

REP. McGRADY: Our first speaker is Bob Penland.

And for the speakers that are in the front of the room, we’ve got a member of the Sergeant-at-Arms staff, and he will have cards that will indicate when you get to your time limit and one minute before that time limit.

Mr. Penland, all you need to do is press the button.

MR. BOB PENLAND: My name is Bob Penland.

I live in Candler, North Carolina. I’m a retired military person. And I’m here for my very first time at a public hearing to speak out. And I think I’m speaking on behalf of thousands of other people across this state just like myself.

We voted in 2010, 2012 to change the legislative body over to control of the Republicans, and I think that they did a very good job on drawing the redistricting. Redistricting was approved by the Justice Department, which I note was controlled at that time by Eric Holder, who is not [break in transmission].

Article 1, Section 4, of our US Constitution gives the right to the legislators to draw district lines for Congressional elections. I think our current lines are fair and equitable. I think that we should leave them like they are. Speaking as a retired military person, I wonder how many thousands of ballots have already been mailed and voted, and you are going to throw those people away, and they are the ones that are protecting the rights of the people sitting in this room, giving them the right to vote for whomever they choose.

So I think our section -- our
Congressional boundaries should remain the same.
Thank you.

SEN. RUCHO: Okay, thank you -- thank you very much. Moving on to Halifax Community College. Representative Stam, your first person on the online registration list.

REP. STAM: Yes, sir. We would call up Ophelia Gould-Faison. And on deck, Ronnie Reeves.

If you would state your name for the record and -- come right here, Ms. Faison.

MS. OPHELIA GOULD-FAISON: Good morning. My name is Ophelia Gould-Faison. I'm a resident here of Halifax County, Congressional District Number 1, served by the Honorable G.K. Butterfield.

First of all, I have a concern about the short notice of this hearing. Getting public input. I don't know -- I'm concerned that this representation has not been fulfilled for our area of eastern North Carolina because of the weather.

Congressional district has been redrawn, and it's been redrawn through racial lines. It's a form of gerrymandering. As we can see, if you look at the map, it's drawn oddly-shaped, which groups blacks in one district, and making it so that other races, Caucasians, are voted, and it -- and it helps the -- excuse me. It helps to elect the legislators. And this redrawing has done just that.

Let's not forget, it's always a good time to do what is right. And the concern about the election that's going forth now, the early voting, the absentee ballot, sometimes we do have to step back and look at the importance of even though people have already started -- are voting through absentee ballot, we -- it would behoove us to do what is right, and if necessary, start this election process over again.

Thank you. Thank you for your time.

REP. STAM: Senator Rucho, may I announce that since the beginning, we've been joined by Senator Don Davis, who came all the way from Snow Hill and passed nine accidents on the way.

Can we have another one from here, or do we do --

SEN. RUCHO: No, we're going to -- we're going to rotate back through the cycle. Okay?

Thank you. We'll be back with you.

Back in Raleigh -- and again, I will say I see Senator Woodward is here, Representative Michaux, and Representative Harrison I saw a few moments ago, just to let you know that we did have a few more members attend.

Okay. Our next person is Linda Harper.

Linda Harper.

Okay. Linda Harper is not in this room.

Brian Irving is the next speaker. Is Brian Irving here? Okay.

Dennis Burns? Not here.

Brian Fitzsimmons? If you'll go up to the microphone and identify yourself.

MR. BRIAN FITZSIMMONS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My name is Brian Fitzsimmons. I am the Chair of the Wake County Democratic Party. I am a constituent of Senator Barefoot's and Representative Jackson, and my Congressman is Representative Holding in District 13.

It was -- I was interested to hear, Senator, you bring up the idea of chaos and costliness. This is -- this is what you did. This is what is happening. This is the chaos and costliness. The -- the responsibility for that falls directly on this body. So the chaos and costliness that is going on right now is of your own doing.

You tried to fix a problem that did not exist. Congressional Districts 1 and 12 had elected African American candidates without the redistricting process of putting predominately African American voter rolls into each of those districts.

This plan does nothing more than segregate African American voters into Districts 1 and 12. North Carolina has a long history of political gerrymandering. It was wrong when the Democrats did it. It's wrong when the Republicans do it. It doesn't make it any better or any less -- less bad because one party is in power.

One of our prior speakers talked about the 7th Congressional district having five county -- or five Congressional districts border it. That in and of itself is -- is an example of why this gerrymandering process is as wrong as it is.

I urge you -- I urge you to look at this in the -- with the right set of glasses. To look at it and do the right thing, the right thing being drawing these districts the way that they should have been drawn in the first place.

Thank you.

SEN. RUCHO: Thank you very much. Moving again -- reminding folks that because of the
inclement weather, Guilford Tech Community College is -- cancelled the hearing today. But those individuals that might want to can still use the NCLEG website to put their comments forward. And, members of the committee, I will say to you that we're getting a number of comments online. They will be sent to you so that you can have them well in advance, so you'll have a chance to review the written comments in addition to what you're hearing today.

We're going to go to Representative Brawley at Central Piedmont Community College. Representative Brawley, the next person on your online registration list. Representative Brawley? Representative Brawley at Central Piedmont Community College.

REP. BRAWLEY: Yeah. Senator, we have Gene Millsaps. Can y'all hear us?

SEN. RUUCHO: Yes, sir, now we can.

REP. BRAWLEY: Okay. Good deal. Thank you.

MR. GENE MILLSAPS: Thank you for this opportunity. I am Gene Millsaps with the [unintelligible] of Iredell County. I rise to support the correction of the current Congressional district plan to bring fair representation to North Carolina citizens.

With regard to the election timeline, it is unfortunate that some courts have upheld the current plan, but is fine to make corrections. The fact that some absentee ballots have been requested and submitted does not outweigh the damage done by holding a third election on an unconstitutional map.

Ensuring our elections are constitutional should be the primary goal. Certainly, it is one worth dealing with -- dealing with a few administrative problems.

If the Republican majority had not abruptly and unnecessarily moved up the election, primary election a few months ago, then candidate filing would not even be closed yet.

With regard to openness and transparency, this redistricting plan [break in transmission]. Our voters need to have faith in the process and in their government.

These public hearings are extremely important. They were announced after 5:00 p.m. this past Friday, and scheduled for 10:00 a.m. the following Monday morning. This procedure may not be a good faith effort to collect feedback, but we'll make the best of it.

Any consultants involved in the drawing of these maps should be made available in committee meetings so that the public may have a full understanding of his or her role and the intent in creating these maps.

The map drawing process should be a public record. As a result, any plan should be drawn at the General Assembly on State equipment and computer so that the public that the public may view what -- may view the background and thinking behind that plan.

Republican leadership should disclose every cent of taxpayer money that has been spent on consultants to draw the maps and outside attorneys for their advice on the updated plans.

I urge the General Assembly to unpack the improperly packed 1st and 12th Districts, and restore fair representation to the citizens of the adjacent districts.

Thank you.

AUDIENCE MEMBER: Here, here.

(Applause.)

REP. BRAWLEY: I have already said there will be no shout-outs in this.

SEN. RUUCHO: Thank you.

REP. BRAWLEY: There will be no demonstrations. This is not a sporting event.

SEN. RUUCHO: Moving on to the next speaker, we're going to do so that we can make sure we give everybody an opportunity. We'll be at Fayetteville Tech. I've got -- Senator Jackson, your next person on your online registration list.

SEN. JACKSON: Thank you, Senator Rucho.

We have Jerry Rinehold is our second person to sign up online. Jerry?

MR. JERRY RINEHOLD: Mr. Chairman, good morning. My name is Jerry Rinehold, 516 Deerpeth Drive, Fayetteville, North Carolina, 28311. I am a resident of Cumberland County and have also served as a Cumberland County election precinct [break in transmission]. I'm in the 4th Congressional District.

Thank you for hosting this public comment period to permit citizens to [break in transmission] to the Joint Select Committee on Congressional Redistricting.

I recommend that the entire March 15th North Carolina primary proceed as scheduled to
will have the potential to disenfranchise the military and civilians who are defending this nation overseas so that we have free and open elections.

The North Carolina State Board of Elections [break in transmission] absentee voter file reported that 1,660 of the 15,811 North Carolina voters requesting absentee ballots are military and civilian overseas voters. Cumberland County is represented with 101 of those voters.

I certainly hope the United States Supreme Court permits the election to proceed -- to proceed without disenfranchisement of our military and civilian overseas voters.

Thank you.

SEN. RUCHO: Thank you very much. Moving on to Cape Fear Community College, Representative Davis, your next person on your list.

REP. DAVIS: Thank you, Senator Rucho.

The next person on the list to speak with be Bob Williams.

While he's coming forward, I'd like to say, sir, that Senator Louis Pate drove all the way down from Wayne County to be with us and is here now, sir.

SEN. RUCHO: Thank you.

MR. BOB WILLIAMS: Good morning, and thank you for allowing the public the opportunity to speak about the plans to redraw the Congressional districts based on the ruling of the United States District Court for the Middle District of North Carolina, Congressional Districts 1 and 12 are unconstitutional.

I'm Bob Williams. I'm a member of the Onslow Board of Education. I'm also -- a member at large for both the 3rd Congressional District and the NCLP Executive Committees.

I'm speaking here today on behalf on behalf of my Republican affiliations and not my non-partisan affiliation with the Board of Education.

But I would like to say this. Redistricting, no matter what has happened, creates chaos. We recently went through a redistricting process in Onslow County school districts. But after the redistricting, we had very, very few, if any, comments or concerns after it happened.

Well, less than a month ago, before the primary election, the Congressional races are being thrown into a turmoil. Candidates and voters are...
facing the likelihood that they may have wasted much of their time and money preparing for the primary election.

Today, State Senator Dan Blue, who represents 14th [break in transmission] Senate District, in 1991, he was elected as the first black Speaker of the House. Both the Senate and the House began plans in 1991 to redraw the state Congressional districts.

If you go back and you look at what Congressional districts were up until about 1991, you will see that they were fairly steady. They were fairly compact. And there was very, very little turmoil within that process.

Why was that? The majority of the people who were voting during that time were Democrats. Very few Republican input. And there's wherein the problem started.

In 1991, the Democrats, who were the majority parties in both chambers of the legislature, and they were responsible for drawing both the 1st and the 12th Districts. Under the Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act, the preclearance, as we've already from previous testimony, the two districts were drawn in such a matter that they included larger numbers of voting age populations who were black. They also happened to be Democrats.

The redrawing of the two districts resulted in litigation that lasted almost 10 years. Republicans, members of the legislature, and others filed lawsuits against that. For 25 years we've been fighting this problem, and today it has become an issue because the courts have ruled against what happened in 2011. The Republicans gained a majority in the legislature, and the districts with -- were redrawn during -- after the 2010 federal census. A lawsuit was brought against the legislature that contends District 1 and 12 redrawn in 2011 were drawn with race as the primary motivation, and not political party demographics.

I would invite you to go back and take a look at the map that you can do. Go and do a search online for the legislature, North Carolina legislature and redistricting. You'll find under Wikipedia different maps that are in there that goes all the way back to 1973. 1973 to 2011, you'll see the different changes in the maps. You can see that the changes in the maps were clearly motivated by the changing of parties, Republican influence within that. And the Democrats enhanced measures to prohibit the Republicans from gaining control over those areas where mapping and redistricting were constantly.

While I'm not surprised that we're holding a public hearing to discuss the same two Congressional districts almost five years after the Republican majority voted in 2010 -- excuse me, '11, when they used almost the identical methodology in 1991.

I'm not a fan of gerrymandering districts for any reason. But it has been the practice of political parties to redraw districts in favor of whoever is the majority party. Race should not play any part in the political considerations for redrawing our districts.

The color of our skin should not predetermine what political party we belong to or for whom we vote. The only race we should be considering is the human race, as ability to think and reason allows us to make educated decisions regarding the issues and candidates who best represents our beliefs and interests.

Have a good day, and thank you for the opportunity to speak.

SEN. RUOCHO: Thank you very much. Moving on to UNC-Asheville. Representative McGrady, your next speaker.

REP. MCGRADY: Our next speaker is Thomas Keith Thompson.

MR. THOMAS KEITH THOMPSON: Yes. My name is Thomas Keith Thompson. I live in Woodson. I am a small business owner, a father or two. I spent 10 years as a Board of Elections Precinct Clerk and judge, and my son is a North Carolina voter and current US Coast Guard active-duty member.

The North Carolina General Assembly is constituted to represent the people. Elections have consequences, and so do US District Court rulings. You need to comply with this decision, and quit pretending that it does not exist.

The lines of districts should allow and encourage representation. They should not be a shopping expedition for elected officials to control the people.

Even in the west, at the edge of districts, you have created chaos by the way you originally drew these lines. In the 2012 election, there were 25 separate ballots at Buncombe County's
Crossroads Assembly precinct, splitting one precinct by Congressional and North Carolina House and Senate districts. 600 precincts statewide have the same problem.

A decent respect for the opinions of mankind demand more compact districts that honor communities of interest and compact geographic boundaries, not exploit geographical information systems and demographic software that create an advantage aimed to disenfranchise voters.

Stop pretending this ruling doesn't apply to you, and redraw the districts in a fair and reasonable manner. The eyes of the world are upon you. It is always the right time to do the right thing. Thank you very much.

SEN. RUCHO: All right. Thank you.

Moving on to Halifax Community College. Representative Stam, your next speaker.

Representative Stam at Halifax Community College.

MR. GARY GRANT: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. My name is Gary Grant, and I come from the historic community of Tillery Farms, a resettlement community out of the New Deal era of the 1930s and '40s.

I am here in Halifax County. I am a registered and participating Democrat. And I speak not just for me, but for many other citizens who are not able to make it here today because of the fact that, one, we did not have ample notification.

Two, how dare you endanger our lives on the icy roads out here, and then make light of it because Senator Davis got here after seeing a number of accidents. And I saw a number of accidents on my way. If you were truly concerned about this, you would have delayed these hearings until our roads had thawed so that we would be able to have more people present to address you.

You've known for more than a week that you were going to have to do something, and yet we find out on Sunday that there is a meeting here on Monday.

You have produced no maps for alternatives that we would have the opportunity to see, so how do we know that you won't come back with something just as crazy as what you have done already? How can citizens make intelligent comments on something that we have not seen? How do we know that you won't produce the same kind of crazy maps again?

I've been trying to figure out what rural eastern North Carolina has in common with the urban areas of Durham, other than the fact that we are majority black. And as we signed in today, we were asked what was our race. And I'm wondering if that will have some impact on how are comments are viewed that this hearing was predominantly spoken to by black people here in the 1st Congressional district.

What you are doing is not legislative leadership, among other things that you've been doing for many of the years that you've been there. I consider the hearings a joke. And they make no sense. And that we will still be in the dark when the hearings are over. The voters here will not know anything any more than what they've already seen.

Many citizens spoke against this district when it was drawn in the first place. We traveled all across the eastern North Carolina to make comments on something that we have not seen? How can citizens make intelligent comments when we all ought to be able to just make these comments in our certain districts and then be able to go home or go back to our work or whatever it is that we need to get done today. And we also, here in this county, need to get home before the rain that's falling out here freezes on the road again.

Holding hearings in this manner is ridiculous. It's wrong. Redo the district lines.
and do the right thing. I guess that's all that I have to say. It's a mess. You made it. Clean it up. Thank you.

SEN. RUCHO: Thank you very much. Moving back to Raleigh, our next speaker will be Rev. Dr. Earl Johnson. Dr. Johnson, are you here?

REV. DR. EARL JOHNSON: Yes.

SEN. RUCHO: Okay.

REV. DR. EARL JOHNSON: Thank you for an opportunity this morning. Federal judges have ruled two of North Carolina's 13 Congressional Districts are racial gerrymanders. I believe they are talking about District 1 and 12, unlawfully tacking African Americans within their boundaries and whitening the surrounding areas all for political gain.

This was drafted by the Republican-led North Carolina General Assembly in 2011. These maps aggressively segregate voters and undermine the development of multiracial coalitions. They also -- these maps are the most cynical kind of politics. They meticulously divide the state into racial lines, dividing communities that have a proven record of working together towards common goals.

The Voting Rights Act was established to protect minority voters. These maps not only undermine that intent, they effectively marginalize minority voters. When redistricting processes are controlled by legislatures, then political concerns will play a role.

This plan, however, is more than just partisan politics. This plan segregates African American voters rather than building African Americans into the fabric of North Carolina. When you segregate the electorate by race, you change the politics of the state for the worse.

District 1 and District 12 had both historically elected African Americans by comfortable margins. There was no legal justification for increasing the African American percentage in those districts by 50 percent. And it is clear that packing black voters into these districts was the primary goal of the plan, meaning that race was the most important factor in the creation.

These districts move us back to a day of segregation that most of us thought we had already moved away from. In fact, some claim that we were living in a post-racial generation.

The next -- the net result of this redistricting plan is that it does not improve African American election prospects at all, because they are already winning. What it does is minimizes the influence of African Americans in surrounding districts.

The gerrymandering in the 1st and 12th Congressional Districts are symptoms of a bigger problem, and that is simply that we are a broken redistricting process. Ideally, districts are supposed to be a compact [break in transmission] with as few counties and precincts split as possible and keeping communities of interest whole. What plagues us is partisan gerrymandering. And as a member of -- on the board of Common Cause, we push for this.

Ultimately, districts are drawn to the advantage of a party that is in power. And all too often, the impact on me as an African American is that we have districts that either allow one party to take my vote for granted or another party to write my vote off. And I can tell you now, I would rather have a party to take my vote for granted than to have one to take it off altogether.

And that's wrong. We need districts that don't marginalize anyone's vote regardless of their race. As former Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor once noted, "Racial gerrymandering bears an uncomfortable resemblance to political apartheid." And that is what we are experiencing today.

Thank you on behalf of Common Cause and on behalf of ECJ Ministries.

SEN. RUCHO: Thank you very much. Moving to Central Piedmont, Representative Brawley, next speaker.

REP. BRAWLEY: Can you hear me, Senator?

SEN. RUCHO: Yes, sir.

REP. BRAWLEY: Okay. Mr. Clarence Leverette is recognized for five minutes. Sir, you have the floor. If you'd come up between the microphones and camera [break in transmission]. Thank you, sir.

MR. CLARENCE LEVERETTE: Okay. Good morning. My name is Clarence Leverette. I am the present -- president of the African American Caucus in Iredell County. And it seems that most of my talking points have already been expressed.

But I do want to just throw out or present a few ideas, first being people all will
agree that voters should be able to choose their elected officials. But here in North Carolina, it seems that the legislators have divided, because of this redistricting, they’ve divided our state in order to choose the voters rather than it be the other way around.

I have heard earlier -- earlier, they have meticulously divided our state along racial lines. And it divides our communities as well. And the Voting Rights Act was established to protect minority voters. And of course, as I stand here, I’m sure you have no problem understanding what -- where my focus is, being African American.

When redistricting processes are controlled by the legislature, there is obviously a tendency for political concerns to be addressed or to be observed. This plan further segregates the African American voters, rather than building the African American -- African American into the fabric of the -- the country itself and North Carolina in particular.

So when you segregate the electorate by race, which should not be, but you change the politics of the state for the worse. These districts move us back to a day of segregation that most of us thought we’d moved away from.

And we all understand that the party that’s representing the majority is the one that is responsible for redistricting the -- doing the redistricting.

But someone made a comment earlier that when the Democrats were in office and they drew -- drew the districts, back in 1991, that from that point on, up until very recently, we never really had a problem when -- especially to this magnitude.

Of course, after the 2010 election -- census, rather, and the 2011 redistricting, there has been a grassroots of concern. And while I don’t attribute any kind of moral turpitude into how the legislature did the redistricting, when you look at the results, then there is a cause for concern.

From an African American’s perspective, we have lost because we’ve been packed, as they -- as they say, have been packed into these districts, 1 and 2. It doesn’t allow the African American communities that are in the surrounding areas to be able to represent their voice or express their voice.

Thank you very much.

SEN. RUCHO: Thank you very much. Moving on to Fayetteville Tech, Representative -- excuse me, Senator Jackson. Sorry, Senator Jackson?

MR. HOWARD MENDELSON: My name is Howard Mendelson. I’m from Moore County. And I’d like to express my opinions today on support for the current districting of maps that was conducted and approved in 2011.

I feel at this time that the -- that the maps were approved by the General Assembly through due process, and that the -- further approved by the Department of Justice. And we have to take into consideration the fact that they did that at that time.

We’ve gone through the 2012 and the 2014 elections. There has been no concern as far as voiced through lawsuits or any attempt to change redistricting. Now, this is the first time that the GOP has had an opportunity to redistrict districts in the State of North Carolina since the '90s. And the Democrats are now in attempt to do this [break in transmission] into the process in an effort to sway the outcome of the elections [break in transmission] as far as by causing a delay in -- into our process of having our primaries, and also possibly with an attempt to change the outcome of the election in favor of the Democrat party.

The late submission here for this lawsuit and further being joined by the Department of Justice put more chaos into the whole process. The State has spent a lot of money and a lot of time to get these early balloting done. And now we have people that are in the military that are out of state right now serving their country that are forced now to go through this process and it will possible -- their outcome in doubt as to whether they’ll be accepted or not.

I think now that the -- the district -- the Department of Justice entering into this lawsuit is a further indication of an attempt by the Democratic Party to further skew the outcome of any election attempts.

There’s no question that North Carolina is a state that is going to be at the -- at the crux of the next Presidential election. This is the first time in the history since the end of the Civil War that North Carolina has voted for Republicans, and it has done so by the will of the people.

There have been attempts to say that we
are trying to become a segregationist society, which is not true. [break in transmission] attempted to allow everyone the opportunity to vote, and they have the right to choose who they select.

And then I believe now that the current redistricting is accomplished through the due process as prescribed by law through the General Assembly, and further because of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 was approved by the Department of Justice.

Any attempts now to change that will be to go against the will of the people in this state. And it would throw everything into -- into a chaotic situation. And would be unfair and costly to the people of North Carolina.

Thank you for this opportunity to speak.

SEN. RUCHARO: Thank you very much. Moving on to Cape Fear Community College. I've got Representative Davis.

REP. DAVIS: Mr. Chairman, our next speaker will be Susan Bulluck, who is recognized to speak for up to five minutes.

MS. SUSAN BULLUCK: Thank you, Senator Rucho, Committee members, ladies and gentlemen and representatives from coastal counties. I live at 102 Tanbridge Road in Wilmington. I am in the Jones district Congressionally. I have had the opportunity to be in both Rouzer's district and in Jones's district. I moved my residence one place or the other, and that is a symptom of the problem.

I act as a campaign consultant and have worked in probably 55 to 60 of our counties. I work out of this state most of the time because I don't wish to foul my nest, because every election has at least half of the folks in opposition. If you are a winner, that's wonderful. If you are not, then you live with your neighbors who may have angst.

I'm here to tell you that I've been in those rooms, smoke-filled in the past, maybe vapor-filled now, where the decisions are made about which block goes in which district. The fact is that that occurred, yes, late in the '80s, and both parties are equally guilty of the matching of voters to the particular district.

The fact is that it changed dramatically with the input and the technology changes of the '80s and '90s. I own programs that were designed...
make our redistricting process better by making it as non-partisan as we reasonably can. To do that, we need to create a non-partisan redistricting commission along the lines of ones that are already functioning successfully in some of our sister states, in order to assure that the process is ultimately accountable to the people through our elected representatives. The General Assembly could retain a legislative veto power over the commission's work.

Here are a few reasons why we should change the way we've been doing redistricting in North Carolina. A partisan process where whichever party happens to be in control after the decennial census uses its leverage to draw lines to its advantage undermines the democratic process. When the party in power manipulates boundaries to give itself an edge, the end result is elected officials who don't necessarily represent the true preference of the majority. That is not good.

Second, districts drawn to assure that one party has the advantage contribute to governmental gridlock. The essence of lawmaking is compromise. No two of us citizens have the same opinion on every issue, so it's always necessary for there to be some give and take when it comes to legislating.

But when too many officeholders represent districts drawn to be safe, the incentive for compromise is greatly reduced. And nowadays, the safe district effect is compounded by an incumbent's reasonable concern that he or she may face a primary challenger. It seems fair to assume that we can all agree that at present, gridlock at the Congressional level is a serious problem. It's not an easy problem to resolve, but reducing the number of safe districts would surely have some favorable impact by increasing the incentive to compromise.

Third, when district lines are not drawn according to any sort of geographic logic whatsoever, citizens naturally have a hard time keeping track of what district they're in and who represents them. Does anyone think that's a good thing?

A quick personal example of just how bad things are. A year or so ago I was attempting to communicate with my Congressman via a website. I was pretty certain I knew who my Congressman was following our latest redistricting, but when I logged on through the website, the official US Capitol website to which I was linked, told me I was in someone else's district.

Long story short, after thorough research which I had to initiate, it was firmly established that the US Capitol website was wrong. If they can't even keep it straight, with all their hardware and software, what chance does the average person have?

Fourth and finally, the spectacle of partisan gerrymandering breeds cynicism in citizens. When people see their legislators treat governing as a sort of game, where every ten years the winners rig the rules so they'll have a better chance of being winners the next time around, this does not build confidence or trust in the whole business.

In contrast, if the new non-partisan redistricting process were put into place for North Carolina, that step could signal to all citizens that we care about fairness, that we care to make democracy function as democracy.

I respectfully urge you legislators to consider what a significant contribution would be made to government of, by, and for the people of North Carolina if you will take a step in the direction of redistricting reform.

Thank you.

SEN. RUCHO: Thank you very much. Moving on to Halifax Community College, Representative Stam.

REP. STAM: Our next speaker is Rev. C.E. McCollum. Rev. McCollum?

REV. C.E. MCCOLLUM: I want to say good morning to all who have assembled for this hearing. I am Rev. C.E. McCollum, the president of the Roanoke Valley Southern Christian Leadership Conference.

When I looked at your racial gerrymandering, I would never have thought that in the 21st Century, we'd be facing the 20th Century issues. I would have thought that we could get beyond racism and the design of how we stack and pack our racial groupings to the advantage of others.

It has often taken the guiding hand of the federal courts to rule over the question of constitutionality of the different states. Federal judges have no dogs in this fight. They're appointed for life, and they are not supposed to be
affected by political pressures or to rule one over
another. They are authors of -- they are -- the
authors of our Constitution gave them this
appointment for life.

The Voting -- the Voting Rights Act was
established to protect minority voters. These maps
not only undermine the intent, but they effectively
marginalize minority voters. This act from the
Republicans stems from the Supreme Court ruling in
a five-four-four -- five-to-four vote, the final
chief sections of -- of Section 4 and 5 of the
Voting Rights Act was unconstitutional.

Two hours after ruling by the Court, the
Attorney General in the State of Texas authorized
the voter ID law that the Justice Department had
previously blocked as a civil rights violation.

According to the Brennan Center for Justice at New
York University School of Law, 22 states passed new
voting restrictions in time for the 2014 mid-term
election. And here we are in 2016 facing the same
problem.

States with Republican majorities in the
statehouse are closing polling locations, chipping
away at early voting, redrawing district lines to
dilute the voting power in the communities of

color.

They took the case of Alabama to destroy
those four and five sections of the voting law by
saying that cities, counties, and states with a
documented history of discrimination had to
preclear any changes in their voting law even by
the United States Department of Justice or a
federal judge in Washington, D.C. The goal was to
prevent these jurisdictions from discriminating
again.

What the Supreme Court did not emphasize
was that any of these jurisdictions could be
exempted from requirement upon proving they no
longer practice racial discrimination. And for us,
this is nothing new. The people who are trying to
hijack our democracy are the same descendants of
those who tried to exercise our right to vote by
any means necessary.

Thank you.

SEN. RUCHO: Thank you very much.

Returning to Raleigh, we have J.C. Wright. J.C.
Wright? Please identify yourself as you begin your
presentation.

MR. J.C. WRIGHT: Hello. My name is J.C.
Wright. First of all, I would like to say thank

you very much to Senator Rucho, Representative
Lewis, and distinguished members of the North
Carolina legislature. Thank you for allowing us to
comment on such an important part of our democratic
process.

Little bit about myself. I'm a lifelong
North Carolina resident, born and raised in
Asheville. Attended UNC-Asheville. Glad to see
that they're participating in this process as well.

Moved to Raleigh about three years ago.

I have always been very interested in
politics. And I -- I will say that I was a little
disappointed when I did my research and found out
that North Carolina ties with Maryland as the most
gerrymandered state in the United States of
America.

Looking at a report that was done by The
Washington Post dated March 15th, 2014, you can see
that three of the North Carolina districts were
highlighted there, including the two in question,
the 1st and 12th of North Carolina.

Gerrymandering, obviously, is one of the
things that comes along with winning elections. As
William L. Macy once said, "To the victor belongs
the spoils." And the problem with that is that we

are a country of the people, by the people, for the
people.

And -- and when you get so involved in
playing the -- the political game, the Republican
versus Democrat, the only people that lose are your
voters and your citizens. And then we're not
happy, and -- and you guys keep -- keep bickering
about, you know, who's going to get this bloc and
that bloc.

I -- I look around and -- and I see, you
know, a fair amount of people, but I see a lot of
people that are not be represented fairly. And I
think that there is a movement in this country to
start recognizing equality and to start making sure
that everybody that is entitled to have a voice,
has a voice, and not a diluted voice, not one that
is taken away from them.

There are very -- there's a lot of
different alternatives to how redistricting can be
done. And in this day and age with the advent of
technology and computers, it has become far too
easy to disenfranchise particular blocs of voters.

Taking away the political aspect of it --
'cause I'm sorry, it's a little like the fox
guarding the hen house -- having non-partisan
redistricting would benefit the citizens, in my opinion. There’s a lot of different methods that can be done short of split-line method. You know, compactness, optimization methods that can be done. And I really, really hope that — you know, I understand the Republicans in the room, you guys didn’t have a -- full control of North Carolina for over 100 years, and -- and I know it would be hard to give that up. But I -- I really hope that you will do what is right for the citizens of this state, and will consider, especially considering that our unaffiliated bloc, which is third right now and is growing very rapidly and is going to put the Republicans into third place soon, that you will do something that will benefit us going into the next century by making it non-partisan, making it where we don’t have to have this same fight where federal courts are now having to make us look foolish in front of the rest of the country because we’re being racist. Shame on us. Okay? Thank you very much for your time.

SEN. RUCHO: Thank you. Moving -- just reminding everybody that we did, due to the fact that Guilford Tech was closed today, that meeting started. And here in 204 years later, it’s still with us. It’s unethical. It’s immoral. It’s dishonest. And it’s entirely legal. But it is immoral and unethical and dishonest. And it robs people of their right to participate in all of our democracy.

The promise of democracy is that every single one of us should, every single day, have a chance to participate in the future of our country. By rigging votes, which is what gerrymandering does, by rigging votes, you’re taking that opportunity away from vast parts of the population of this country.

This is not enough. You, the General Assembly has the most restrictive voting rights act in the state, and with help of the American Legislative Exchange Council, with the help of the Pope brothers and Art Pope, is endeavoring to take over the entire country, the entire United States. Right now, you’re being very successful at doing that.

Hell, if I look at legislators in this room, everybody has a -- a pin on their lapel, maybe two pins, one of the American flag and one with a North Carolina flag or a seal of the State of North Carolina. And I presume that you wear those to present your patriotism.

What is patriotic about rigging elections so that you can hold power? What is it about that -- what is that -- what does that say about your patriotism, if the only way you think you can run a state, that you can lead a state, is by cheating people out of their right to vote?

Once you’re elected, you all become “honorable” forever. And the honorable thing to do in this state, in North Carolina, is to create an independent redistricting system, whether it’s by legislation or it’s by amend -- Constitutional amendment. We need to have that, and we’re going to get that one way or another.

Now, I urge you, the legislature, to pass that, to -- to start talking about it again. To my knowledge -- my initial knowledge was that that -- that a bill toward that end came up, I think in the 2007, 2008, 2009 General Assembly when Thom Tillis was involved.

And Thom Tillis afterwards said -- and after the Republicans took over the General Assembly or took over the House, said that he put...
sen. rucho: thank you.

rep. brawley: thank you, mr. taylor.

sen. rucho: moving on to fayetteville tech, senator jackson, next speaker. senator jackson?

sen. jackson: senator rucho?

sen. rucho: yes, sir. next speaker, please.

sen. jackson: okay. we're good to go with mr. jimmy buxton.

sen. rucho: okay. thank you.

mr. jimmy buxton: i am jimmy buxton, president of the fayetteville branch naacp.

i came here to speak in regard to a letter that was written by bob hall from democracy north carolina. however, that letter has already been read. and i'd like to concur with whatever was said in that letter.

i also like to concur on what the gentleman from halifax, who live in the district that's being affected by this redistricting, everything he said, i agree with. i don't want to take up much time because the fact -- i know there are others.

one thing that has been said that really struck my mind, north carolina has one of the most restrictive voting rights laws in this nation, and that needs to end. the three judges who came out and said that this -- the redistricting was wrong has made it clear that you must redraw those district lines. there's no if's, and's about it.

now, the one thing about the military that's overseas already that have sent in their ballots, the gentleman's already stated, it's very easy for every one of those ballots that have been sent in to be mailed back to them once the district lines have been drawn and the right lines are -- have been come out and that everybody knows, so forth. those ballots can be mailed right back to those in the military. it's very easy. that's not a big issue.

thank you for my comment -- for allowing me to comment. i do not, as i said, want to take up time with things that have been said so far that [break in transmission] i agree with. thank you.

sen. rucho: thank you very much. moving to cape fear community college, representative davis. next speaker, please.

rep. davis: mr. chairman, our next speaker will be ruth howard chambers, who is recognized to speak for five minutes.

ms. ruth howard chambers: good morning.

i -- i -- i want to concur with much of what has been said, in particular the brother from halifax county, where my ancestors are from, warren county, and up in littleton.

i looked at the map and i read in the newspaper about this redistricting, and that's when i began to pay attention to it. and as he said, it looks like a clown shoe. it snakes throughout. it
was born in 1843 before slavery was ended. And I grew up in Washington, D.C. But my father went there to get a better job, and that's where I went to school during segregation. Had a good school. But they sent my home to North Carolina every summer to be with our grandparents. So we worked in tobacco. And always wanted to live here. This was a place I've always wanted to be.

When it was time to go home, I didn't want to go home. I wanted to stay here. I never came to live here until eight years ago, after living in New York City for 40 years. And I taught in the public schools of New York City. And the kids laughed at me and said I had a Southern accent because I held onto whatever piece of it I could.

But when I got here, my next-door neighbor, who is my good friend now -- I depend on them. But I knew when I went in his house, his politics, because I saw a picture of him with the first Bush who was president. But it didn't matter, and it doesn't matter. He called me a Yankee, and I'm not a Yankee.

And I think we need to stop with it. We need to stop with the division, and we need to stop with the partisan politics, Democrats and Republicans. Yes, I live in Wilmington, and Wilmington is a small county, and it was divided by these redistricting lines. We need to stop. And my time is up.

And I want to say I felt ashamed of North Carolina when that man got on and started, before Scalia's body was in the grave, talking politics and attaching it to the passing of this man, and did not even allow time for the family to mourn.

It's a shame. Some of this stuff in North Carolina makes me sorry I'm here, but I ain't going nowhere. This is home.

SEN. RUCHO: Thank you very much. Moving on to UNC-Asheville, Representative McGrady, next speaker.

REP. MCGRADY: We've been joined by Representative Brian Turner from this area. And our next speaker is Annie Buckner.

MS. ANNIE BUCKNER: My name is Annie Buckner. I'm a proud citizen of western North Carolina. I am also the political action chair of the Asheville-Buncombe NAACP.
road to destruction, that we should stay on course, particularly when we know better. It calls into consideration ethical inequity.

I had a thought that if we were on an airplane and we were -- the plane had already taken off, and the pilots realized that there was only enough fuel, for whatever reason, to possibly, slightly possibly assure a successful flight, should the pilot continue that flight, or should the pilot turn around and make sure that the plane is properly serviced so that the safety of the passengers would be the top priority?

This issue of redistricting [unintelligible] pockets African Americans and creates racial despair. This has been recognized by Justice to the point that a moratorium has been placed on the fast-approaching election so that it is taken serious and something is done about this.

This neatly boils down to ethics, and at best, questions lawmakers’ enthusiasm with regards to human rights and assuring fairness to all members of our society regardless of color or political orientation. Black people of color represent a group of individuals that have historically not been given fair access to the same kinds of opportunities and access to many of the same kinds of enjoyment as white counterparts. Black people of color represents a group -- I’m sorry.

Someone mentioned that -- someone mentioned the Emancipation Proclamation this morning. And if you go back to 1863 through 1865, it should be incumbent upon all legislators to acknowledge that while much of this may not have to do with racism and socialism, it does have to do with -- with fairness.

The right -- the right time to do the right thing is always right. And quite frankly, it is egregious that some of our lawmakers think that it is okay to move forward in a situation that denies an individual a constitutional right in the best interest of time.

Thank you for your time this morning listening to me. And I would ask that the lawmakers take time and look at this issue and do what is right for all people. Thank you.

SEN. RUCHO: Thank you very much. Moving back to Raleigh. I have Steve Raugh. Is Mr. Raugh here? Okay. I have Dallas Woodhouse.

MR. DALLAS WOODHOUSE: Thank you, Senator Rucho, and thank you, Committee. I am Dallas Woodhouse of Raleigh, North Carolina. And I am executive director of the North Carolina Republican Party and today will state out the position of our party.

Number one, I want to say that we continue to believe these districts were drawn fair and legal, in accordance with both the -- the existing state and federal statutes, as well as the state and federal constitutions.

But of course, the courts have not made this easier since you have originally drawn these lines. They have changed the rules and the precedents, not during the game, but after it has been completed and the score has been submitted. That has made the task of this committee and of future redistricting efforts extremely difficult.

Until we return to the days of bright line rules, especially with aspects of the Voting Rights Act, this is going to continue to be a difficult process at all.

You know, I’m not one likely to quote Bill Clinton, but in this case, I will say that I do feel your pain on the committee.

But again, we believe these districts are fair and legal, but this committee has to prepare for the possibility of new districts being drawn. Here is our position on what we believe should be taken into consideration in the drawing of new districts.

Partisan considerations. Partisan considerations are the precedents of multiple Court findings. They have been in place for many, many years across every state. And courts hold that partisan voting behavior can be taken into account. We believe that a 10-3 map, or at least the possibility of one, is the appropriate outcome after Republicans won elections and have continued to do so. I realize that doesn’t make everybody happy, but this process will not make everybody happy.

Should you continue to -- to draw the districts, we think that we should look to try to keep precincts and counties whole to the largest degree possible. And especially in our rural counties, which of course have declining influence across the state, it is extremely important to try to keep those rural and small counties completely whole. The Graham Counties, the Hyde Counties, we shouldn’t be dividing them up.
And finally, let's dispense of this issue of the appropriate amount of racial consideration. Let us draw districts without any consideration of race whatsoever. Let's make completely colorblind district drawing. That is the position of the Republican Party. I would love to know the position of the Democrat Party. Are they for drawing completely colorblind districts that take no racial considerations into account whatsoever. That is our position. As Justice Roberts said in a famous education hearing, court decision, the way to stop judging people on race is to stop judging people on race. And we are for that 100 percent. I thank you for your time and your effort on what has been made a very, very difficult process. And on behalf of the North Carolina Republican Party, we wish you the best of luck. Thank you.

SEN. RUCHO: Central Piedmont Community College, Representative Brawley.

REP. BRAWLEY: Thank you, Senator. Mr. Scott Huffman.

MR. SCOTT HUFFMAN: Thank you. Thanks, everyone, for showing up today. I'm originally from Spencer, North Carolina. I served in the US Navy for eight years. After my service, I returned home to the great State of North Carolina. North Carolina is my home. I live in Charlotte. I have a successful 20-year business called Charlotte Internet. I have a family. I have three children. And I'm the geek you call when you can't figure out what's going on with your computer.

I am very concerned, as a Navy veteran, as a former Navy veteran, that my service was in vain because my vote is not fairly represented, as well as 34,000 African Americans who were moved out of District 8, into District 12. District 8, in my opinion, was fairly represented. It was fairly moderate. Congressman -- Representative Hayes currently chaired [sic] that district, and it was formerly chaired by Larry Kissell, and who was formerly chaired by Representative Hayes, who is here this morning. I even voted for you, Representative Hayes.

As a former veteran, I'm concerned that 34,000 Americans -- I mean, excuse me -- 34,000 African Americans, as well as myself, are not being represented. They were forced out of District 8, into District 12 for the wrong reasons. It is your duty as our elected officials to represent the people. The Courts have found the current district unconstitutional. You must fix this. In my opinion, as a former veteran, the districts should be redrawn to fairly represent the people of North Carolina. No excuses. No delay. The people deserve a fair electoral process. Their votes matter. Every vote matters.

Again, as a former veteran, I took the oath to protect this great nation, to serve. I urge you who are serving now in Raleigh to fix this. It is your constitutional duty to do so. All North Carolina -- all North Carolina voters matter. All elections should be fair. Going forward, we can fix this. We have the time to fix this.

As a former veteran, I -- I hope and expect you to form an independent commission. That way we can establish fair districts. That way everybody's vote counts. Right now, without further delay, the districts should be redrawn. The people deserve a fair electoral process. The current, upcoming primary should be delayed, but we have the time to fix this. You can fix this in Raleigh. That's why we voted for you. That's why you're there.

Earlier, they said that we should have colorblind districts. Well, here is a good representation of what the colorblind districts will look like. This shows independently drawn districts in North Carolina. And people deserve a right to vote. They deserve fair elections.

They want money out of politics. They want our representatives to represent the people and not somebody who's going to cover their campaign finances to get them elected.

Thank you very much, everybody.

REP. BRAWLEY: Mr. Huffman, thank you for your service.

MR. SCOTT HUFFMAN: Thank you, sir.

SEN. RUCHO: Yes, sir. Representative Brawley, would you ask that gentleman to be to give that map to the -- one of the staff people so that it can be included as part of the record. Okay?

Okay. Moving on to Fayetteville, Senator Brent Jackson.

SEN. JACKSON: Senator Rucho, we have Ms. Queen Degraff -- [break in transmission]
MS. QUEEN DEGRAFF: I think much of what I was going to say has already been said. But what I do want to say is that two years ago, I celebrated 50 years in the civil rights and voting rights movement. And I'm just appalled and astounded that in 2016, that I am still addressing the same issues that I fought for and went to jail for over 50 years ago. And that we really can do better.

This is a -- as several people have pointed out, it's a clear case of what has historically been called gerrymandering, clearly drawing lines to put a certain group into a disadvantaged voting pattern. And we need to do better, and we need to make sure that the people we elect to office do what we feel is just and fair for all citizens. Thank you.

SEN. RUCHO: Thank you very much. Moving to Cape Fear Community College, Representative Davis.

REP. DAVIS: [break in transmission] will be Jim Kistner, who is recognized to speak for up to five minutes.

MR. JIM KISTNER: Good morning, everybody. My name is Jim Kistner. I'm a US Army veteran, but you don't need to thank me for my service. I did it willingly. I'm a resident of Wilmington, North Carolina. Registered voter here.

So considering the evidence presented in the recent Congressional redistricting lawsuit, Judge Roger Gregory wrote, quote, "There's strong evidence that race was the only non-negotiable criteria in redrawing those boundaries." He went on to say and conclude, "Traditional redistricting principles were subordinated to race." In other words, race plays a major role in how these lines were drawn.

From my perspective, and I think from the perspective of anyone that loves this democracy, this is absolutely unacceptable. Free and fair elections are the bedrock of American democracy. Cynical efforts to undermine the voting process and manipulate voting outcomes should be seen for what they are: violations of the fundamental principles of our nation and our state.

Instead of feeling shame and apologizing for their actions, Senator Bob Rucho and Representative David Lewis, the two Republican politicians who led the redistricting effort, responded by saying, "We are surprised and disappointed by the trial court's eleventh-hour decision that throws an election already underway into turmoil."

Surprised and disappointed? Turmoil?

Let's be clear. If turmoil results from this effort, it is a result of actions -- their actions. It was their manipulation of the Congressional boundaries that brought this issue to federal court in the first place.

So what's to be done now? Even without being forced by the Court, the morally right thing to do would be to leave racism and cynical political manipulation outside the drawing, and redraw Congressional boundaries so they are fair and equitable to all individuals and groups in the state. That should happen immediately. One person, one vote. It's that simple. As one of the earlier speakers said, it's a mess. You made it. Clean it up.

Beyond that, I fully endorse the proposal and -- proposal that's been mentioned by a number of speakers this morning, that North Carolina adopt an independent, non-partisan redistricting process, one that gets every voter and all groups an equal voice in the state and national elections. To protect our democracy and prevent -- prevent future turmoil, let's adopt an independent, non-partisan redistricting process. Let's do that sooner rather than later.

I really appreciate having had the opportunity to speak. Thank you very much.

SEN. RUCHO: Thank you. Moving on to UNC-Asheville, Representative McGrady.

REP. MCGRADY: Our next speaker is Jim McGlynn.

MR. JIM MCGLYNN: Thank you. The voting district lines in North Carolina give an unfair advantage to Republican candidates in state elections. In 2011, the voting districts were designed in such a way that they were Republican-dominated. Excuse me.

One example of how they were able to offset Democrat votes is in the 11th District, in which I vote. It has been represented by Republican Patrick McHenry since 2005. So it has been a pretty solid Republican stronghold that...
stretches all the way from Hendersonville to Bessemer City near Charlotte.

In 2011, this district was redrawn to take the more liberal voters in Asheville out of the 10th District and put them in this heavily Republican 11th District. This ensured that both the 10th and the 11th District were predominately Republican.

My 11th District that they designed has the shape of a big tennis shoe. And it has a mushroom growing out of the toe of the tennis shoe. And this mushroom encompasses Asheville. Any Democrat that runs against a Republican candidate in these districts has an artificially-designed Republican Party majority to overcome.

It's a problem. This type of gerrymandering is a direct attack on democracy, which depends on fair elections. It violates the Voting Rights Act of 1965 that makes it illegal to weaken the voting power of racial or ethnic groups. It discourages candidates in the minority party from running. It discourages voters from voting because they don't think their vote will make any difference. The obvious solution to this problem is to take the job of drawing these voting districts away from partisan legislatures and have them drawn by an independent agent on the basis of population density and natural population groups, with no weight given to political party affiliations. If this would happen, it would restore our faith in fair elections, which is so important in a democracy. Thank you.

SEN. RUCHO: Thank you. Moving on to Halifax, Representative Stam?

REP. STAM: Chairman Rucho, we have no additional speakers at Halifax, but we're watching the proceedings with great interest.

SEN. RUCHO: Very fine. We're going -- now, if you find that you have a speaker, then just let me know, and we'll fit you back into the rotation. Thank you. All right. Moving on back to Raleigh. And next person on the list is -- I believe it's Helen Tenney, T-e-n-n-e-y. Is Helen Tenney here? No. Okay. Next person is Terry Schmidt. Terry Schmidt? Terry Schmidt? No Terry Schmidt. Then we have Joyce Cotton. Joyce Cotton? P.J. Gentry? P.J. Gentry? James Womack? Mr. Womack, come forward and identify yourself, please.

MR. JAMES WOMACK: Senator Rucho, representative Lewis, members of the legislature, thank you so much for letting me speak today. My name is James Womack. I'm from Lee County. I am politically active in state and local politics. I believe the Congressional districts as they're drawn represent a fair and legal representation and apportionment of the voters in North Carolina. And I believe that they are absolutely consistent with the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and all the subsequent amendments and changes up through 2006.

I do not believe these districts should be redrawn simply because of a lower federal court ruling that believes that two of the districts are racially gerrymandered. Instead, I am hopeful that the US Supreme Court will weigh in, accept this case, and evaluate the districts in a prompt fashion, and that they will validate the districts as fulfilling the spirit and the intent of the VRA.

If for whatever reason, these districts must be -- must be redrawn, then I recommend several important safeguards and principles be applied.

Number one, I say keep the counties, especially the smaller counties, whole as much as possible. In all cases, keep the precincts as whole as the smallest nondivisible political boundary.

To the extent possible -- this is number two. To the extent possible, please keep the counties aligned of their current Congressional districts. In other words, do not completely redraw all Congressional districts in the state, forgetting the previous alignments. These relationships have been developing for decades, and -- particularly the representatives that are there now, you know, should not be forced to have to go back and re-strategize how they -- they go about campaigning in those districts.

If possible, completely remove the race demographic in the spreadsheets and databases being used to initially redraw these districts. When the lines have been redrawn, then simply apply the race demographic to test the -- the -- to test for race and the degree of racial distribution. Even the 1st and the 12th Districts have been -- even if or ensure the 1st and 12th Districts are racially unpacked and even if Democratic affiliation stays the same or goes up.

Again, I think the 1st and the 12th were
the focus of the -- of the problem. And if you
unpack them to some degree for race, that doesn't
mean that the demographic for party would
necessarily change. I think you just simply take
race out of the equation, and then -- and then redo
it based on party, you'll end up with -- with
similar results, and I think that would meet the
constitutional test.

I would also suggest that you take this
opportunity for two other things, since -- since we
may be forced to go back and revisit the districts.
Include the affiliated political party in all data
sets, and make sure to optimize all districts to
sustain at least an R+6 voting pattern or better in
at least 10 of the 13 districts.

Again, maintain an R+6 or better. Right
now, I think it's R+11 or better. But I would at
least -- if you're forced to unpack them and you
don't have any other choice, at least maintain an
R+6 so that you're not penalized politically for
the racial unpacking that's done.

And if -- and if possible, use this
opportunity to completely redraw the 4th District,
as well. It's a -- it's -- and make it a
diminished Democrat stronghold, something you
know, less than a D+3, so it can be a competitive
race. As it -- right now, it's an uncompetitive
race, and it's not even a target for the Voter
Rights Act.

It's a consequence of -- of -- of
redrawing those boundaries for other purposes. So
again, make the 4th District something that's less
than a D+3. Right now, I think it's a D+20 or
thereabouts.

Finally, let's use this opportunity to
start the conversation about bailing out of the
Voting Rights Act altogether. I strongly believe
we should stop using race for any political
purpose. Thank you. The VRA required we use race
d as a demographic to test the amount of racial
dilution in the drawing of boundaries. Thus race
was used initially by Democrats to gerrymander the
1st and the 12th Districts, which have always
looked strange the way they are today. I think
it's high time we bailed on the VRA. It seems we
meet the legal obligations or the legal
requirements to bail out.

Thank you very much for my time.

SEN. RUCHO: Thank you. Moving on to
Central Piedmont, Representative Brawley, next
speaker.

REP. BRAWLEY: Thank you, Senator. Brian
Kasher.

MR. BRIAN KASHER: Thank you for the
opportunity, as a voter and taxpayer citizen of
North Carolina, to provide input into correcting
the unconstitutional North Carolina approach to
defining voting districts, the very root of our
democratic republic.

There are viable solutions available that
can result in fair, unbiased election districts
that generally serve to keeping natural communities
together. However, those of you in power must
decide to adopt the system, and not succumb to the
temptation of abusing your sworn oath to defend our
Constitution.

Adopting another system that inherently
advantages those in sitting power would be an open
act of defiance against the federal courts, our
Constitution, an act against democracy witnessed by
the world.

The 1st and 12th Districts of North
Carolina are within the topmost gerrymandered
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Adopting another system that inherently
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the world.

The 1st and 12th Districts of North
Carolina are within the topmost gerrymandered
voting districts in the United States, while North
Carolina itself is one of the most gerrymandered
states.

I use the term "gerrymander" to represent
the acts of politicians intentionally manipulating
voting districts to thwart viable challengers. The
act of gerrymandering is done, for example, by
splitting communities, packing partisans, and by
politicians picking who their voters will be, while
intentionally diluting the vote of potential
opponents.

This is not democracy in action. This is
democracy being stolen. United States voters have
the right to democratically elect their
representatives. However, North Carolina voters do
not need to travel to Russia, China, North Korea,
or Iran to find a full-blown attack on the American
way of constitutional government.

In North Carolina, the people have been
systematically denied the true power of democratic
vote by our own General Assembly's gerrymandering.
And I'm not going to point a finger at either
party. I love you all. I really do. Okay?

As a citizen of North Carolina, I can
testify with no uncertainty that the General
Assembly has provided no substantive information
whatevour to comment on at this hearing.
All I can testify to is the General Assembly’s past actions that have resulted in the State of North Carolina becoming a spectacle of anti-democratic practices to the world, and a loser in federal court after spending countless dollars, tax dollars, to defend the General Assembly’s unconstitutional desires and practices.

The General Assembly has had a week to share the redrawn voting maps developed by Tom Hofeller behind closed doors and without public input, but instead has moved forward with no transparency or disclosure to the public.

In the absence of data, mapping, or direction from the General Assembly to comment on, I offer the following solution to the current unconstitutional gerrymandered approach to Congressional districting.

Optimally -- optimally, compact equal population Congressional, Senate, and House districts have been generated by unbiased algorithm based on census blocks the smallest geographics of the Census Bureau.

The existing maps below and the data they were derived from -- there’s nice maps in the written version -- are available at bdistricting.com/2010/nc. That’s b-d-i-s-t-r-i-c-t-i-n-g.com/2010/nc. You can see both the gerrymandered districts and the homogenous districts.

It is your duty as public servants, sworn under oath to the people of North Carolina, to resolve this matter consistent with the Constitution and the authorities thereof, which do, by the way, include the Courts.

The problem of the mess is a result of the General Assembly’s own gerrymandering ways. When a citizen is found to have stolen a loaf of bread, the remedy for this is not at the convenience of the perpetrator. Y’all created this Congressional constitutional mess and should stop trying to pass the buck at the expense of the voters.

In conclusion, for those who are believers, Paul told us at 13:1, “Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established.” The authorities that exist have been established by God. It’s not limited to just the General Assembly. Under this simple biblical doctrine, you are compelled to comply with the federal court and remedy the unconstitutional voting districts the General Assembly itself has created.

You have been caught with the hot potato. You might not have started it, but you’ve got the hot potato. Please stop blaming and passing the buck. You’ve been caught.

Thank you all very much for what you do. Love you all. And I hope we come through this as a stronger state. God bless America.

REP. BRAWLEY: Mr. Kasher, would you like to submit that for the record?

SET. RUCHO: Thank you. Members of the Committee and the satellite sites, Representative Lewis is the Chairman of the -- of the House -- Representative Lewis is the House Chairman, and he will take over at the podium for the time being.

Thank you.

REP. LEWIS: We’ll return to Raleigh.

The next speaker that registered -- the Chair apologizes. We’ll go to Fayetteville Technical Community College. The Chair recognizes Senator Brent Jackson to introduce the next presenter.

SEN. JACKSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman Lewis. We have Mr. Richard Button.

MR. RICHARD BUTTON: I have to pass.

SEN. JACKSON: He has -- he has passed, so if -- if it pleases the Chairman, I’d like to move on to the next person.

REP. LEWIS: Please do.

SEN. JACKSON: We have Ms. Gloria -- I can’t pronounce her last name -- but for Ms. Stackhouse. And I apologize.

MS. GLORIA STACKHOUSE: My name is Gloria Stackhouse.

SEN. JACKSON: Please go. And state your name, again, for the record.

MS. GLORIA STACKHOUSE: My name is Gloria Stackhouse, and I am a voting resident of Cumberland County.

And this morning I’ve sat, and I’ve listened to voters express their concern about the Court’s decision of the 1st and 12th Districts and how they have and will continue to disenfranchise the voters if they’re changed.
our state in order to choose their voters.

"Racial gerrymandering -- these maps are
the most cynical kind of politics. They seriously
divide the state along racial lines, dividing
communities that have a proven record working
together towards common goals.

"The Voting Rights Act was established to
protect minority voters. These maps not only
undermine the intent, they effectively marginalize
minority voters.

"When redistricting processes are
controlled by Legislators, then political concerns
will pay a -- play a role. This plan, however, is
more than just partisan politics. The plan
segregates African Americans rather than building
African Americans into the fabric of North
Carolina.

"When you segregate the electorate by
race and change -- when you segregate the
electorate by race, you change the politics of the
State for the worse.

"District 1 and District 12 have both
historically elected African Americans by
comfortable margins. There are -- there was a
legal justification for increasing the African
American percentage in these districts of 50
percent, and it is still that packing black vote --
voters into these districts was the primary goal of
the plan.

"We knew that race was the important
factor in this creation. These districts were
moved back -- these districts move us back to a day
of segregation that most of us thought we had moved
away from."

And as one of the other -- the lady
pointed out earlier, you know, we're right back
fighting for rights to vote were fought were many
years ago, that blood was shed. And I'm a young
voter. I don't remember any time of -- of slavery,
but I remember segregation. I grew up in
segregation.

So having said that, the -- the district,
now we, you know, find ourselves moving back to a
day of segregation. The net result of this
redistricting plan is that it doesn't improve
African American elections because they were always
winning. What it does, it minimizes the influence
of African Americans in surrounding districts.

In the Supreme Court ruling regarding
redistricting in Alabama, the Court found Alabama's
plans were illegal because they misapplied the
Voting Rights Act and used race as a primary
consideration, rather than looking at the
percentages of votes needed to elect the minority
candidate or candidate of choice.

The North Carolina plans follow that
exact same flawed thinking. In fact that some
absentee ballots have been requested and -- and
submitted not overweighted the damage done by
holding a third election on an unconstitutional
map, ensuring our elections are constitutional
should be primary goal. Certainly, it is one worth
[break in transmission].

And as closing, I would like to say that
the judge has ruled these Congressional districts
be redrawn immediately. That's why we're calling
on our lawmakers to stop making excuses, follow the
order, and redraw the maps. I urge you to
immediately redraw the maps. Thank you for
allowing me to speak.

REP. LEWIS: Thank you. At this time
we'll move to Cape Fear Community College and
Representative Ted Davis. Representative Davis, if
you'd present your next speaker.

REP. DAVIS: Mr. Chairman, our next
speaker will be Mr. Eric Edgerton.

MR. ERIC EDGERTON: Senators and
Representatives, thank you for the opportunity to
speak. I am Eric Edgerton. I am a resident of
Brunswick County, and I'm in the 7th Congressional
District.

This three-judge federal court has ruled
that redistricting done a few years ago is
unconstitutional for two districts, and has ordered
those two districts, 1 and 12, to be redrawn.

The current boundaries are fair, in
accordance with the laws, Voter Rights Act, case
law approved by the United -- the North Carolina
Supreme Court and US Department of Justice.

The request for a redraw within two weeks
is unrealistic, as the primary election is
currently underway and thousands have already
requested and received their absentee ballots.

Now, this redistricting will affect more
districts, and the new primary will be required.
And that's going to cost the state an additional
eight to ten million dollars. Plus, it's going to
cost more for each county to mobilize their
election boards. This is going to be very, very
expensive.
But there's more to it than just the dollar. When we look back at 1998 primary election, we found we had almost 800,000 ballots on May 5th. Then they had a second primary on September 15th, and 161,000 people showed up. That's 80 percent reduction. And what that happens is people are ready for an election. All of a sudden now they got to go back and do it again. And that's really a disenfranchisement.

I think if redistricting is required, the precincts and smaller counties should be kept whole, as breaking these things up could have detrimental effects in those counties.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak.

REP. LEWIS: Thank you. At this time we'll move to UNC-Asheville site and Representative Chuck McGrady to present your next speaker.

REP. MCGRADY: Mr. -- Mr. Charles Edwards. Then I'll move on to Janet Burhoe-Jones.

UNIDENTIFIED: Charles Edwards is here.

REP. MCGRADY: Mr. Edwards, go -- go right ahead.

MR. CHARLES EDWARDS: Okay. Thank you. Thank you for the opportunity. I'm Charles Edwards in Buncombe County.

I want to start and just offer, today, a little story. I ferried voters in the last general election, just shut-ins who have difficulty going to the polls otherwise.

One of the ladies -- one of the people that I picked up was an 82-year-old African American lady. Before we took off for the polls, I had an opportunity to chat with her a bit.

I'm -- something that came up during her discussion was her brothers' service in World War II, and she showed me the pictures of these two brothers. And of course, being in the Army in World War II, they served in segregated units.

They and this lady endured decades of segregation after World War II. But she was determined to go and vote. Her legs were bandaged and she had trouble walking, but as I say, she insisted on going.

She could have voted at the curb. When we arrived, we pulled up and I told her that there were provisions that she could vote at the curb and not endure the pain and difficulty of going inside to vote. But she insisted on it. So I and another gentleman, holding her by her arms, helped her walk into the voting location.

Now, I just want to say that this was a revelation to me. This was -- affected me deeply. And all I could think of, that these are the people, her brothers now dead and this elderly lady, who the North Carolina legislature has been doing its best to disenfranchise.

This conclusion is only strengthened by seeing the enactment of voter ID laws that are based on cynical and bogus claims of voter fraud, claims that everybody involved knows are lies.

I suggest that this debate about the districts is not just a political issue, but it's a moral and ethical issue. I think that the North Carolina legislature should be ashamed, deeply ashamed for these acts. And I urge that the legislature not dawdle, and purge this shame, and redraw the maps in conformance with the Court decision.

Thank you very much for the opportunity to speak.

REP. LEWIS: Thank you. At this time, we're going to return to the Raleigh site. Dennis Dixon? Is Dennis Dixon here? Sydney Dunston? Is Sydney Dunston here? Jay DeLancy? Mr. DeLancy, you have five minutes, sir.

MR. JAY DELANCY: Thank you, Representative Lewis and Senator Rucho. I wanted to start, first off, by congratulating both of you and your whole committee. Y'all have done fabulously hard work in making this -- this whole thing happen.

This redistricting, drawing these lines originally is hard work. Congratulations to that. Congratulations for organizing these short-notice hearings, too, that you were forced upon -- that were forced upon you by the Courts. And congratulations to your IT staff that somehow pulled this together and -- involving these community colleges.

Now, we're a non-partisan organization, but we have a deep passion for the Constitution. And I think that's at -- that is what is at stake here today.

And first off, the urgency of these hearings, it smells a lot like a cynical judicial joke. Never mind that tens of thousands of ballots have already been mailed out across the state, never mind that the Board of Elections have already received 7,000 or a little over 7,000 of them back,
and never mind that this election is already underway. No, these three activist judges, they want chaos in North Carolina’s elections.

Now, contrary to the earlier rant’s we’ve heard, this is not your fault, gentlemen, ladies, and the committee. This is not your fault. This is the fault of the sore losers. I’m sorry. It’s more than 100 years there was no problem of more than 100 years of Democrat gerrymandering. No problem with that.

No problem with creating the 1st and 12th District, the clown-foot district. I think that was created in 1990s, back when the Democrats had control of the legislature. And no problem again in 2000, when the Democrats maintained their -- their single-party rule in this state for more than 100 years. It was no problem.

The only time it became a problem was despite all that rigging, that the Republicans somehow managed to win in 2010. Now, it’s a problem. Oh, big problem.

Now, we see activist groups like represented here today with their scripted speeches all across the state. We see them -- Democracy NC and Common Cause out there with the usual talking points. They’re turning this into a propaganda moment to create so-called non-partisan redistricting commissions.

Well, I have bad news for you, we do not have gods living among us, so don’t drink that Kool-Aid. What I mean is there are -- just as there are no unicorns, there are no truly non-partisan people in our society. And so our Founding Fathers understood that. It’s called the sinful nature of man. They understood that, and so what they did was created a system whereby citizens could watch their government, keep an eye on them, and when one side got out of hand, the other side could watch them and make them fix it. That’s called citizen accountability. They designed this system that way.

And to the extent that we can hold on to that constitutional framework, we’re going to have a free country and we’re going to have citizen accountability. It’s when we deviate from that constitutional framework that we start losing the rights of citizens to be heard and the rights of citizens to -- to have any influence at all on their government.

So this smells a lot like -- this whole stink we’re hearing today smells a lot like judicial disenfranchisement, intended to bully North Carolina into either postponing the elections or into creating some sort of unelectable, unaccountable so-called non-partisan redistricting commission.

Please do not buckle to this judicial tyranny. I ask you to charge ahead with the March primaries. The truth will win out, and your position will be vindicated. Thank you.

REP. LEWIS: Thank you. We’re going to return to Fayetteville Technical Community College and Senator Brent Jackson. Senator Jackson, would you introduce the next speaker?

SEN. JACKSON: [break in transmission]

REP. LEWIS: Senator Jackson at Fayetteville Technical Community College, are you there, sir?

REP. LEWIS: Members, we’re going to, instead, to Central Piedmont Community College. Representative Brawley, are you there, sir? The chair has called -- Senator Jackson, can you -- can you hear me? Members, the Chair is going to ask --

SEN. JACKSON: We can’t hear you on this end, and I have 24 people remaining to speak.
You know, a lot of my friends and a lot of Millennials, I think, in general, don't really identify with parties so much anymore. Independents are an ever-expanding -- unaffiliated voters are an ever-expanding demographic.

But I think what a lot of people that I talk to worry about is the districts in this state aren't really competitive. I think for people who are interested in politics, we don't necessarily want districts drawn one way or the other. We want them drawn competitively so we actually can have some interesting races.

I -- I think the last point that was made is fair. Democrats were guilty of this, just as Republicans were. But that doesn't really make it right one way or the other.

You know, we have 13 Congressional districts in this state, and only three of them are Democratic -- or held by Democrats. So there's 10 held by Republicans, 3 by Democrats.

That just doesn't really add up when you consider we're about a 50/50 split, you know, liberal/conservative. We went for Obama in 2008. We went for Mitt Romney in 2012. It's a pretty even split, so you would think the Congressional districts would match that.

But I think -- you know, where I disagree with the last speaker is I do think an independent -- something that is independent and that is bipartisan would help us break a lot of this gridlock and just get some competitive elections or people who are actually interested in politics. So that's what I want.

REP. BRAWLEY: Thank you, sir.

REP. LEWIS: Thank you. We're going to move now to UNC-Asheville, Representative Chuck McGrady. Representative McGrady, do you have a presenter?

REP. MCGRADY: Our next speaker is Janet Burhoe-Jones.

MS. JANET BURHOE-JONES: After 140 years, Republicans achieved historic victories in North Carolina in 2010. Since 2010, liberal activists in the North Carolina Democratic Party have attempted to achieve through the courts what they could not at the ballot box.

North Carolina Democrats are disenfranchising military and elderly and the poor who have already cast ballots.

The endless string of court litigations and has been. Yancey County still has more registered voters than it does citizens. Another county in North Carolina, the same way. To say there is no voter fraud is absolutely absurd.

I've talked to judges who have worked inside the polls, and had a male come in saying he was a female of the opposite race, and she could absolutely do nothing about it. She had to let him vote.

That goes on all the time all across the state. And the county party has to report it to the Board of Elections. And up until 2010, they were run by Democrats, and did not report it. So to say there's no voter fraud today, we're all perfect in North Carolina, [break in transmission] and that's the truth as I see it.

So I am for the current lines as they are drawn. I have heard nothing stated by the other party, other speakers proving any racial bias whatsoever. I've heard nothing about voter changes in those districts, voter results. So to me there's no reason not to leave it the way it is. And to disenfranchise the military and the poor and people who have already sent in absentee ballots and sent them out needing to be
announced its decision on February 5th, ten days ago, and you could have prepared some proposed maps for the public to see. You have state-of-the-art technology. Maps can be prepared on demand. Without having draft maps, there is really nothing for the public to respond to or have input.

"I ask that you engage in this process in good faith. In drawing Rucho-Lewis Congress 3, in 2011, not only did you decide to use race as the predominate factor in drawing Districts 1 and 12, but you knowingly and incorrectly interpreted the law by insisting that each of these districts contain African American populations exceeding 50 percent."

"It is my opinion that you were fully aware that you were incorrectly applying the law. In a disingenuous way you used a flawed interpretation of the Voting Rights Act for your own partisan political advantage."

"As a result of your overreach in drawing these maps, you have devised a system that guarantees the election of 10 Republican Congressmen out of 13."

"North Carolina's voter registration between Democrats and Republicans is 4.6 million voters. Democrats are two million of the 4.6 million voters, or 43 percent. Yet, Democrats only get the opportunity to elect Democratic Congressmen in three districts, 23 percent out of 13 districts. A fair plan should result in Democrats having the ability to elect at least five or six of the 13 Congressmen."

"Your strategy worked and it worked in Virginia and Alabama and elsewhere. The United States Supreme Court has made it clear in identical cases that race cannot be the predominate factor in drawing districts. Legislatures are required to protect minority communities from racially polarized voting practices by not submerging them into districts where they have no opportunity to elect a representative of their choice."

"In some districts, it may require 47 percent to protect the African American community from voter discrimination. In other districts, it may require less than 47 percent because of coalition politics, where white voters are likely to form coalitions with the African American community."

"All that said, the General Assembly must now get ready to comply with the mandate of a
unanimous District Court, and I urge you to act
with expediency.

"The Court’s decision will not be
overturned by the United States Supreme Court.
Citizens must not be required in a district that
has been determined to be unconstitutional. The
1st District is unconstitutional. You drew it that
way.

"You are responsible for correcting your
actions. It is imperative that Congressional
district elections be delayed until May 24 of 2016,
the date of the second primary. By fixing the new
date on the second primary date, it will not result
in excessive costs for this delayed election. The
fact that a few absentee ballots have been cast
pales in comparison to the damage to our democracy
by requiring voters to cast ballots in an
unconstitutional district.

"Another option would be to delay all
primary elections until May 24th to allow every
race, state and federal, to be decided on the same
date.

"Now, what is the remedy? The remedy is
for the General Assembly to draw a Congressional
map that protects African American communities from
voter dilution; a map where each district is
approximately the same, identical size and
population; a map that recognizes the interests of
the Democratic Party as well as the Republican
party; a map that does not unnecessarily divide
counties of voting districts -- voting districts
within counties; and a map that attempts to connect
communities of interest.

"I urge you to get on with the business
of complying with the decision of the federal
District Court. Do not waste additional time and
resources in delaying the inevitable. The Hon.
G.K. Butterfield."

REP. LEWIS: We move now to Central
Piedmont Community College. Representative
Brawley, are you there, sir, with your next
speaker?

REP. BRAWLEY: Yes, sir. Thank you, Mr.
Chairman. Jacob Rivett. You are recognized for
five minutes, sir.

MR. JACOB RIVETT: I’d like to thank
everyone here for allowing me to speak next. I’ll
be brief.

My name is Jacob Rivett, and yes, that
does sound like a frog, and I live here in
Charlotte. I’m a healthcare work, a Millennial,
and newly politically engaged citizen.

I’m not -- I’m not -- I’m not proud to
be -- excuse me. I’m not proud to be admitting
that last part, but politics, up until this year,
gave me very little hope for my voice. [break in
transmission]

We’re gathered here today to hear about
redistricting. But what we need to remember is,
this is about democracy. You’re commenting on the
values North Carolina voters feel their vote holds,
and determines how active they are politically.
What this is not about are the candidates, the
campaigns, the Republican Party, the Democratic
Party, or protecting incumbents.

As American -- as American citizens, we
want to know that our votes count. That’s what
democracy is all about, giving everyone a
meaningful voice in a system that governs them.
Yes -- yet, voters are disenfranchised because
district maps are drawn to reduce political
competition, whether it’s for Democrats or
Republicans.

If I’m a Republican voter in a district
that’s statistically mapped to contain mostly
Democrats, then my vote now holds far less value.
And we wonder why so many citizens are not
participating in the process.

Let’s be clear. North Carolina’s
districts are some of the most gerrymandered in the
nation. And for that reason, they do not represent
a true example of democracy.

As long as these maps are drawn by party,
some level of gerrymandering will find its way into
the process. Even if a bipartisan committee were
used, gerrymandering will prevail, because just as
we’ve heard today, much of the concern stays
focused on the party, not the voters. Currently,
parties come first, not democracy. We must change
this. Our votes must be heard.

I challenge our elected representatives
to look closer at new technology that allow us to
automate redistricting in a truly impartial manner.
Sophisticated and comprehensive, algorithmic
approaches exist across this country, and North
Carolina can shine a progressive beacon by using
this method to redraw our maps.

By taking people with their own agendas
out of the redistricting process, we can put power
back into the hands of voters. Thank you.
REP. BRAWLEY: Thank you, sir.

REP. LEWIS: Thank you, sir. At this time, we’re going to move to Fayetteville Technical Community College. We experienced some technical difficulties a while ago. Senator Jackson, can you hear me? And I hope I can hear you?

SEN. JACKSON: Yes, sir, Chairman Lewis.

REP. LEWIS: I can hear you. Can you hear me?

REP. LEWIS: I can, sir. Would you ask the gentleman whose remarks we missed before to please deliver those remarks again?

SEN. JACKSON: Absolutely. That was Mr. Tim D’Annunzio. Tim.

MR. TIM D’ANNUNZIO: Thank you. I’m a businessman from Hoke County. I’m a father. I’m a veteran. And I’m also a candidate for the 2nd District -- in the 2nd District.

I came here today to offer some recommendations. As I said earlier, the -- as the process played out [break in transmission] I saw an agenda unfolding that I thought it was just too obviously politically -- politically driven, agenda-driven -- and agenda-driven that I -- that I had to point it out.

And so it’s a typical political [break in transmission] on the left that when they’ve lost at the ballot box and they’ve lost in -- in other means, they -- they eventually result to crisis and creating a crisis, agitating a crowd, in this case using race.

I would like to also go back and say that I believe that the districts are constitutional. And just as the Supreme Court in North Carolina affirmed, and the Justice Department affirmed, and I also believe that there’s no other Justice Department in history that is as racially sensitive or as sensitive to racial issues as the Obama administration’s Justice Department. And that in itself is a validation of the Congressional districts.

But the obvious agenda at hand here is to remove the right or the authority to redistrict, as has always been the case, from the legislature, and put it into the hands of -- of an independent committee.

And it’s only an agenda now because after so many years of the legislature being -- being in the hands of the -- the Democrat party and their using it to their advantage, now all of a sudden they are up at arms. And of course, as the process played out, we see it end where it is, in this crisis and chaos that’s created for this specific reason.

My remarks are also to that point and are -- are that if -- if we are forced to -- into the worst of all situations and have to redraw the maps and my -- my recommendation is to limit the amount of chaos that’s created on March 15th by only affecting as few districts as possible.

And in this case, if there are two districts that have been deemed unconstitutional, that it could only affect -- it should only affect two other districts adjoining it a -- at a minimum.

And then my -- my following recommendation, if that is the worst case and -- and we are stuck with that, is to allow the other districts’ elections to move forward as scheduled on March 15th.

And that’s it, and thank you for the opportunity to speak.
result of the redistricting that has been done, that has obviously forced a lot of people to become disenfranchised with their votes in this state, particularly the ones that have been cited by the federal courts in Districts 1 and District 12.

To me, those are egregious examples of gerrymandering. Gerrymandering has been explained in detail and I won’t go into it anymore, but right know we know what it — how it’s done and why it’s done.

I talked to one of the previous speakers, and she said to me this is nothing more than a -- a case of retribution that is being exacted upon this state by the people in power who were out of power for so many years. And they were pummeled by the stick of gerrymandering by the Democrat party, and now they’ve got the stick, and it’s time for them to exact their revenge.

And guess what? We all know that’s the case. We all know what’s going on and we all know why it’s going on.

Gerrymandering is a great American tradition. It’s been going on, as people have said, for hundreds of years. So why should it stop now? We got beat up, we have the scars to prove it, if you’re a Republican. And if you’re a Democrat, we don’t want any more of it.

There are people in -- who are running for President today who are calling for a revolution. We’re seeing a kind of politics going on in 2016 that’s unlike anything most of us have ever seen in our lives, and most of us have been around for a while. Well, maybe the time has come for a revolution in the way we redistrict our state.

There have been many calls for independent voter commissions. It’s happening in a few states right now. It’s ultimately going to happen. It’s going to happen because it’s the only fair way for this issue to be resolved.

We have partisanship rampant in America, and it’s only getting worse regardless of which side of the aisle you are on. Hopefully, we have a moderate core of Americans who want to have their voices heard, who are not extremely left, who are not extremely right, who are willing to bring people into that word that’s become a dirty word in America these days. That word is compromise.

We can compromise in this country. We are capable of it. But we have to be willing to let the old ways go away and start with new ways.

You know, James Madison said in the Federalist Papers, if men were angels, government would not be necessary.

Well, we’re not angels, and we’ve got the institutions to prove it. But we can rise above the partisanship. We can admit when we’ve made some mistakes. We can say, you know what, let’s leave those old politics behind us, and let’s start something new. And independent voter commissions are the way to do it. It just takes the willpower to do it. And I believe this state has the willpower to do it. Thank you.

REP. LEWIS: At this time, we’ll move to UNC-Asheville, Representative Chuck McGrady, Representative McGrady, who’s your next presenter?

REP. MCGRADY: Our next speaker is Frank Burrell. He doesn’t appear to be here. The next speaker is Aiden Carson. The next speaker then is Doug Campbell.

MR. DOUG CAMPBELL: Good afternoon. I’m Doug Campbell, resident of Buncombe County. Honorable Senators and Representatives, thank you for the opportunity to address you on the important issue of North Carolina voting districts.

In 1964, the US Supreme Court ruled in Reynolds v. Sims that, quote, “An individual’s right to vote for state legislators is unconstitutionally impaired when its weight is in a substantial fashion diluted when compared with votes of citizens living in other parts of the state.” end quote.

This ruling underscored the American principles of equal representation and one person, one vote. Any reasonable person looking at a map of the 2011 North Carolina Congressional districts would quickly conclude that those principles were sorely overlooked in its creation.

Redrawing the 1st and 12th Districts would be an important first step in improving the representation in our state. However, we have a long way to go before achieving one person, one vote.

In the 2012 election, according to North Carolina State Board of Election figures, only 49 percent, less than a majority, of the votes cast in the US House races were for Republican candidates. Yet, 69 percent of the Representatives were Republican. Some would call that expertly crafted
transformation of minority voters into a party of power. Others would call it a subversion of the will of the people. But whether it favors Republicans or Democrats, it's the result of a morally bankrupt distorting process that has been going on for far too long.

I urge you to take -- to make total redistricting of our state -- the independent, non-partisan commission a top priority in the next session. Every North Carolinian deserves his or her vote to count equally. When less than half of our voters send over two-thirds of our representatives to Congress, that is not equal representation. That is not one person, one vote. And that is not democracy. Thank you.

Rep. Lewis: Thank you. Move on -- now, we're going to turn to the Wake County site.

Denise Rentz? Denise Rentz? Welcome, ma'am. You have the floor for up to five minutes.

Ms. Denise Rentz: Thank you. My name is Denise Rentz. I am a soccer mom. I am a PTA volunteer. And I am not a political operative, but I do participate in politics as a volunteer on the county level and as a representative of my county to the district committee for the GOP.

I -- like I said, I'm not a political operative. I am the person that carries the signs and hands out the posters and makes phone calls. I come today to support the districts as they are currently drawn. I think the effort to force redistricting in the middle of an election is irresponsible. So many people have already said that our voters are becoming disenfranchised. You know, it's hard to get people out to the polls, and I work hard to get them there. And if we have to delay this election, it just makes that job harder. And we want everyone to be able to vote.

Republicans have argued that they followed the law in creating these districts. The US Justice Department, whose leadership was approved by our Democrat President Barack Obama, found that the maps did not hurt the ability of minorities to elect the candidates of choice in the districts being challenged, and they were precleared under this procedure.

Democrat voters and others challenged the 2011 boundaries. Argued that the 30 legislative and Congressional districts were designed to weaken the overall influence of black voters in North Carolina. I disagree.

Redistricting is not new. Gerrymandering is not new. We are not here to debate whether gerrymandering is right or wrong. I think we can all agree that the process has flaws. We're here to determine the impact of changing these districts in this election right now.

It is important to note that Attorney General Roy Cooper and likely Democrat nominee for Governor won all 13 of these Congressional districts. Not one of the 10 Republican-held Congressional districts have a majority of registered Republican voters. So when the GOP candidate must create a coalition of Republicans, Democrats, and unaffiliated voters to win, it's all about messaging.

The Courts have allowed political parties to draw districts for political advantage and prohibit racial gerrymandering. Is this fair? Maybe not. But it is the law, and it's been utilized by both parties. You cannot change the rules in the middle of an election.

So the question is were these districts drawn to suppress the African American vote? What was the motivation? Do we need proof that the Legislature was politically motivated and not racially motivated when drawing these lines? How do we know?

I just want to throw out there that our elected chairman of our North Carolina GOP is an African American man. I was at the convention where he was elected, and I can guarantee that there were a lot of old white guys there who voted for him. I doubt that this is racially motivated.

I'd also like to draw your attention with someone you may be familiar with, Dr. Ada Fisher. Dr. Fisher is one of two representatives that represent North Carolina Republican Party at the national level. Dr. Fisher is black, she's Jewish, and she's a woman. You cannot get more minority than that. I take umbrage when people say that as a Republican, I am a racist.

The election process started months ago. Thousands of absentee ballots have been distributed to voters who are filling them out and returning them. Hundreds of those ballots have already been voted and returned. The primary election date for hundreds of offices and thousands of candidates is just days away.

We've relied on the existing districts for two election cycles. I urge the leaders to
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| 1 | make every effort to carry on with elections as they have been started, and address redistricting laws and gerrymandering at a more appropriate time and in a way that will not cause more voters to give up on our process. But should the districts be redrawn, I agree with many of the other speakers today that we need to try to keep our smaller counties intact wherever possible. As a campaign volunteer, I know it's really hard for people to figure out where they're supposed to vote. And it's important that we try to keep these areas intact. The counties, the precincts, they shouldn't be split. And there should never be a racial consideration when drawing these lines. This shouldn't be taken into account. I thank you for your time today. |
| 2 | REP. LEWIS: Thank you. At this time, we'll return to Central Piedmont Community College and Representative Brawley. Representative Brawley, could you present your next speaker? |
| 3 | REP. BRAWLEY: Yes. Ms. Laura McKennon. |
| 4 | MS. LAURA MCKENNON: Hi, my name is Laura McKennon, and I want to thank not the legislature, but I want to thank my daughter, who’s been in this meeting. She’s 10 years old and she’s a future voter. I am saying -- I am speaking today not only for my own interests, but for her interests. And I want to thank Gray for being so patient with this. I’ve been a Mecklenburg County voter since 1988. That was my first primary that I ever voted in. And I would challenge anybody in North Carolina, or in Mecklenburg to surpass my participation because I checked my voter registration and looked, and I -- I participated in 46 different elections. I am definitely an active voter. And I thought as I’ve listened to everybody else here, that maybe I should take some of you back a little bit. Maybe back -- let’s just take 20 years back. You know, 20 years ago, 1996, Independence Day was going to be the biggest film. Madeleine Albright was going to be our Secretary of State. AOL was the biggest website. Only 20 million Americans had access to the Internet. That’s pretty big. Well, let’s talk about what’s going on in our voting, our Congressional. There’s been a lot of talk about all the other things with the Voting Rights Act and the different things. Today is | 1 | about our Congressional districts, so let’s talk about it. So were we so gerrymandered that we didn’t have equal representation? In 1996, we had six Democrats and six Republicans. Oh, wow. In 1998, we had six Democrats and six Republicans. In 2000, it swapped a little bit. Oh, wow, Democrats only had five representation -- Representatives in Congress. Republicans had seven. And in 2001, one year after having that two-person majority from a Congressional district, Senator Rucho, you submitted some information about redistricting. And in one of your pieces for independent redistricting, your bills said “geographically compact and contiguous.” That was Senator Rucho’s proposal for redistricting. So let’s go back. What happened the next year. So after that, it went back to a little bit more even: six Democrats, seven Republicans. 2004, six Democrats, seven Republicans. Are you noticing a pattern? 2006, seven Democrats, six Republicans. So in 2007, Robert Pittenger submitted a bill to our legislature, and his legislature [sic] for independent redistricting had several goals. Let | 1 | me read a couple of them. A goal of compactness and a goal of one person, one vote. That was in 2007. I don’t know exactly what has happened to our legislature to go back from those, but might it have had something to do with our 2008 election, where instead of relatively equal, President Barack Obama had the biggest turnout of Democrats in North Carolina, and our red state, traditionally, went purple. And in that case, there was only three legislators different. So eight Republicans -- sorry, Eight Democrats and five Republicans. So we know, of course, that we’re going to have districting. What happened in -- in 2008 before that. Oh, wow, we bounced back and there was one different between our legislative representatives, and of course, we got up to today. Well, I am in the 9th Congressional district. And if you don’t think that race has played a part in how that has been drawn, I would suggest that you go and look at some of the district -- the information for districting, because it’s so important on race. And there’s a mitten in the 9th District, where I happen to live, and that mitten is | 140 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 |
MR. ERIC MARTIN: Yes, sir, Chairman Lewis. We have Mr. Jason Freedman -- Freeman. He might
have left one us, so I'll move on to the next one.

Mr. Eric Martin?

MR. ERIC MARTIN: Yes, sir.

SEN. JACKSON: Okay. We have Eric with us.

MR. ERIC MARTIN: Thank you, sir. My name is Eric Martin, a resident, voter of Cumberland County.

Ladies and gentlemen, I'll speak plainly. Here we go again. We're in the midst of an election process and the government is demanding that we jump through our backsides to change a fundamental aspect of the ongoing process, thereby undermining the process while it is functioning. Instead of requiring that an adjudication be addressed over a fair, decent, and reasonable timeline, such would no constituency will be unfairly dealt with. This requirement of redrawing districts right now is abusive, especially towards our military service members whose service allows us all to sit here safely and complain about deficiencies in our governance without fear of reprisal.

How, when, and why you do something is often as important as what you do. I'll say also that my comments may seem idealistic, but this should remind all of the reality that allows a lack of fairness to be inserted in our process.

The government at all levels and its agencies are always quick to demand adherence to deadlines and suspense dates from the voters and the citizens. Yet when exercising their functions, the agencies often seem to ignore any principle of timely and fair schedule and action. Here it is again, that a branch of government has apparently ignored the ongoing process of free and fair elections of voting that should be steadily be improving in our state and nation. This is hypocrisy and inconsistency, which is another example of the basis for great frustration seen throughout the electorate during ongoing campaigns for elected offices.

If this is a purposeful attempt to undermine our voting process, then that is despicable. As a retired military service member, I am deeply disappointed that this sort of suspect action could be possibly representative of a nation which I defended for decades.

Redrawing voting districts is obviously needed at times. But this suspect attempt at demanding redrawing is being done unfairly, without appropriate -- appropriate timeline requirements. I am deeply disappointed that this may be another example of politics infringing upon any sustainment of integrity in our systems.

If redrawing voting districts is needed now and reform of the system is needed, which it may very well be, then do it in a reasonable, fair, and thoughtful manner for the purpose of improving [break in transmission] for everyone instead of during an election, which perpetuates the sickness of dishonest and selfish political leveraging that has infected our society and system of governance on all sides. Thank you.

REP. LEWIS: Thank you. Members, we're now going to go to Cape Fear Community College. The Chair is going to yield the chair to Senator Rucho.

REP. DAVIS: Mr. Chairman, our next speaker will be Steven Donatone.

MR. STEVEN DONATONE: Thank you. My name is Steve Donatone. I'm a registered Independent voter, resident of Hampstead.

The issue at hand goes well beyond two districts. Gerrymandering is a national problem,
and has results in the intense polarizations we see in the various states and Congress. Both parties have used gerrymandering to secure their hold on power. And it is time for both parties to end the process.

Gerrymandering creates districts that are monolithic in their views, with the result that those of a particular view are concentrated in any given district. The result is the election of increasingly extreme candidates and ever-more polarization in our government.

For example, no one would call Richard Burr a liberal. Yet, he is being challenged by an individual who claims Burr is not conservative enough.

We see this on both side of the political spectrum, where there is a race to the extremes. Does anyone really want to see a choice between Ted Cruz and Bernie Sanders as our option for President, polar opposites, neither of them willing to compromise.

For democracy to function, there is a need for an exchange of alternative views and a degree of compromise to take the best aspects of the different views in creating the best public policies. This should be the primary objective of both parties, rather than perpetuating their hold on power.

For the politicians who are still in attendance, I say put your personal ambitions aside, show some statesmanship, and create an independent process that’s non-political in nature for drawing district lines. The office you hold is not what commands respect. Respect is either generated or not generated by your actions. If you want respect, be respectable. Thank you.

SEN. RUCHO: Okay. Moving on to UNC-Asheville, Representative McGrady, your next speaker, please.

REP. MCCGRADY: Our next speaker is Julie Mayfield. And I’ll be turning the chair over to Senator Hise.

SEN. RUCHO: Okay. Thank you, Representative McGrady. We can’t hear the speaker.

MS. JULIE MAYFIELD: There we go. Is that better?

SEN. RUCHO: Better now.

MS. JULIE MAYFIELD: All right. Thank you. My name is Julie Mayfield.

SEN. RUCHO: Lost you, Julie.
afternoon, by now.

Just like you, I guess, I’m still trying
to figure out the implications of a court decision
that declares electoral districts unconstitutional
in a -- in a -- in regions and elections that are
already underway.

Logically, frankly, legislative leaders
have appealed for a stay of that decision. And
that outcome was uncertain to begin with, and is
even more so now, I think, following the death
of -- of the death of Justice Scalia.

My comment this morning, thus, is not
really about how to redraw those districts or
whether the election should be postponed, but
rather the bigger lessons that I think this all
points to. And other have made many of these same
points to. And other have made many of these same
points to. I’ll -- I’ll be reiterating.

Basically, I want to make one simple
point. We have to reform the process by which we
draw electoral districts in this state. We have a
long tradition now, stretching across both parties,
of the courts filing -- finding districts drawn by
our legislators to be unconstitutional. North
Carolina has very much to be proud of, but our
representative districts frankly are a source of
embarrassment.

Let me focus on two points why I think it
makes sense that this is a tradition in North
Carolina that needs to be gotten rid of, and as
quickly as possible.

I understand that it’s tempting to draw
the districts to your own advantage and draw
yourself and your party into safety while putting
others at a disadvantage. God knows I understand
that the Democrats, for far too long, did that for
themselves, and shame on them for having done so.

But North Carolina is changing
dramatically, as you well know, and with it so is
the strategy of gerrymandering, the value of it to
you. We know that there’s rapid urbanization in
the state, and that rural counties are losing
population. We know that North Carolina is
becoming substantially more diverse. We do not
know how these new more diverse populations will
vote.

We know that traditional racial, ethnic
and socioeconomic settling patterns in the
center -- in the urban centers versus suburbs
versus exurbs are also breaking down at rapid
rates. In short, your districts, your districts
will look very different in 10 or 15 years than
they do right now.

Applied political dynamics are also
expected to be very different. Some of you will
know Dr. Andy Taylor in our department. He’s fond
of saying, “We also know that the primary strategy
gerrymandering is to win small and lose big.”

The sum total of all of that for you as
legislators means that the majority party drawing
the districts are the ones actually subject to most
change that comes from even small demographic
shifts. So in attempting to draw yourself into
safe districts, you actually put yourself at
greater danger of losing your seat because of these
demographic shifts.

There is, in other words, a tremendous
amount of uncertainty that is within North Carolina
over the next 10, 15, or 20 years. Again, as Dr.
Taylor has said, “It therefore behooves all of you
and those in power in particular to buy yourselves
a bit of an insurance policy and implement a system
of redistricting that is transparent, accountable,
reliable, and fair regardless of the party in
charge.” It’s a hedge against predictable
uncertainty and its unpredictable outcomes.

Second, as a professor, I am sensitive to
the critique that this is abstract political
theory. But I assure you this has real impact on
our economy and our democracy. For those of you
involved in the gritty day-to-day of this, I think
sometimes it morphs into a somewhat technical or
largely technical wonky kind of a practice where
you move a few voters here and you move a few
voters there to try to get over the constitutional
bar.

Let me assure you, most people outside of
this political activist world see this as the worst
kind of political maneuvering. It feeds into an
already strong criticism -- cynicism -- thank you,
Sergeant -- feeds into an already strong cynicism
about the ugliness and pettiness of our political
process.

My own students, for example, just
finished reading a study, a landmark study by
Robert Putnam, where he tries to understand why
some regions in Italy, for example, perform much
better despite having been given the similar
institutions and the same resources.

His argument, very simply, is that
those -- those citizens trust their institutions.
They trust that the -- the people in charge of them are not rigging the game to the systematic advantage of some and the disadvantage of others. As a result they engage their fellow citizens in their representative institutions in a way that makes the entire system work that much better. Gerrymandering, including, I would say very strongly here, partisan gerrymandering that has been so brazenly endorsed here this afternoon breaks that trust and hampers the functioning of our democracy. As Representative Stam said in a -- in a forum that I hosted last fall, this will not fix all of our problems, but it will go a long way. It's the infrastructure on which our democracy is built, and it deserves a better system. Thank you.

SEN. RUCHO: Sergeant-at-Arms, we have no more speakers on the -- on the sign-up sheet unless someone has come in that was on here earlier and was not present when they were called. Can you check to be sure, 'cause we're going to go on to Central Piedmont now. But that will be the last call for that -- those people that have signed up for this. Okay.

Central Piedmont? Representative Brawley.

SEN. HARRINGTON: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Senator Kathy Harrington standing in for Representative Bill Brawley.

SEN. RUCHO: Thank you, Senator Harrington.

SEN. HARRINGTON: Our next speaker is Christian Cano.

MR. CHRISTIAN CANO: Cano.

SEN. HARRINGTON: Cano? Excuse me for the mispronunciation.

MR. CHRISTIAN CANO: That's fine. Thank you. Thank you very much. My name is Christian Cano. I'm the Democratic nominee for Congressional District Number 9.

And everything that I was going to say has been said already. So basically what I would like to challenge all candidates who are running for Congress, because this is basically what this about, is to have enough pride in your message that if we were able to compete fairly, that would you be able to win.

If you don't have enough pride and you don't believe that you are relevant anymore in your district, then yes, you want this to continue the way it is.

And I'm challenging any candidate who is running for office to allow our representatives to create fair and balanced Congressional districts. And I will say that I have enough pride in my message and the message of the people that support me that we are going to win our district however it's designed.

So I challenge those -- the incumbents and candidates to have enough pride and -- and relevance in your campaign that you would be able to compete competitively however the district is -- is drawn. Thank you very much.

SEN. HARRINGTON: Thank you, Mr. Cano.

SEN. RUCHO: Thank you. Moving on to Fayetteville. I've got Senator Jackson. Do you have another speaker there, please?

SEN. JACKSON: Yes, sir, Senator Rucho.

We have Mr. George McMillan, Jr. George? Apparently he left. We have Mrs. -- our last speaker that we have signed up is Mrs. Wanda Lawrence.

MS. WANDA LAWRENCE: Thank you. I'm Wanda Lawrence from Fayetteville, North Carolina.

It is very unfortunate that the election process is underway, and now a change is required. It is unfortunate because our legislators knew of this problem when the lines were drawn and the maps were created.

The district maps were challenged when they were introduced to the public. Changes should have been addressed and made at that time, not now for when -- through the [break in transmission] of the Court to [break in transmission].

Stop prolonging the inevitable and redraw the lines of the districts so that there will be fairness for all voters. Follow the law as it has already been handed down to you. Correct the district lines so that the voting process can proceed fairly.

Thank you for your time.

SEN. RUCHO: Thank you. Going to Cape Fear, Representative Davis.

REP. DAVIS: Mr. Chairman, our next speaker is Mr. Dwight Willis, and then I have 13 more speakers signed up after that.

SEN. RUCHO: Wonderful.

MR. DWIGHT WILLIS: Are you ready for me?

REP. DAVIS: Yes, sir.

MR. DWIGHT WILLIS: I am Dwight Willis.
I live at 140 Carolina Avenue, Holden Beach. I'm here today speaking as a private citizen representing no one except the citizens of North Carolina. I appreciate your taking the time to conduct this hearing and to allow me to speak before you today.

For 41 years I worked in the public school system as both a teacher and administrator. That's why I look so tired. For many of those years, I taught high school history, civics, and government. And I passionately believe in and taught my students about the sacred right and the privilege of voting. For me, the right to vote is more important than the first 10 amendments to the Constitution, because without the right to vote, none of the other rights, freedoms, and privileges that we have as Americans can be protected.

For much of my life I've advocated for a system where an independent commission redraw federal and state districts after each 10-years census. That never happened in my lifetime yet. For generations in North Carolina, the Democratic Party controlled the redistricting process and adjusted districts to meet their political goals and interests.

When Republicans took control of the state government in 2010, I was hopeful, because of their previous statements, that they would remedy this situation and adjust districts according to the geographic and economic interests of the citizens who lived in those districts.

Unfortunately, it appears my hopes and dreams were to no avail, and those new maps were solely created to meet the political goals and interests of the Republican Party now.

I keep hoping that someday, someone will create the districts to meet the goals and interests of the citizens who live in those districts.

This could be you, and this could be now. District 1 and District 12 were obviously created to further the interests of the Republican Party without any thought as to how those lines might impact the citizens who live within those districts or how the makeup of those districts might -- might impact the makeup of the surrounding districts.

Ideally, Congressional districts would be drawn to reflect the geographic and economic interests of the citizens of those districts. The Federal and State Constitutions require that these districts be compact and contiguous. A quick look at District 1 and District 12 show the makers of these maps clearly violated the intent of the Constitutional requirements.

Although not related to the makeup of the 1st and 12th districts, there's no reason that places like district precincts in downtown Wilmington would be removed from the 7th District and placed in the 3rd District other than to dilute the voting strength of the American -- the African American voters who live in that precinct. This dilution of minority voting strength is even more egregious in the 12th District. By segregating minority votes in two or three districts, their votes become marginalized.

The maps that the General Assembly approved in 2011 are clearly illegal, as determined by the recent federal court decision, and they must be changed. The General Assembly has an opportunity to be magnanimous and right this wrong. You have an opportunity to protect the concept of one man, one vote, when everyone's vote really matters.

In 2012, 2,219,000 people, or 51.8 percent, cast Democratic ballots for the US House, and 2,143,000 people, or 49.13 percent, cast Republican ballots. Yet the will of the people was clearly not heard. Ten Congressional seats were awarded to Republicans, and only three were awarded to Democrats.

How can our democracy work when the will of the people is clearly undermined and subverted by egregiously gerrymandered districts?

However, even worse are the number of districts, federal and state, where the districts are so politically misaligned that incumbents run without opposition. These candidates go to Raleigh and Washington without any need to work across the aisle or represent those constituents who did not vote for them because they're always going to get reelected.

The art of compromise has always been a foundation of our democratic principles that I taught for many years in public school. But compromise is no longer even considered our -- in our gerrymandered districts. It's ultimately created the gridlock in our legislative body to make it so difficult to govern our state and nation.
I've heard a lot of state legislators argue that primary elections are already in process, and that we -- it's too late to do anything now. However, it's more important to ensure that our elections are constitutional. I'm asking you today to protect and encourage the democratic process in North Carolina by drawing compact and contiguous districts based on economic and geographic interests and keeping counties intact whenever possible.

I'm asking that you return to Raleigh committed to making democracy work for we the people. Many of our citizens don't believe that you believe in us or work for us. This is your opportunity to show North Carolina citizens that you are statesmen and not just politicians.

Thank you for allowing me to speak today. SEN. RUCHO: Moving on to Asheville. I think Representative McGrady. Or -- no, I think Senator Hise is there now. Am I correct?

SEN. HISE: You are correct. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. We have 12 left to speak after this speaker, and now we have Kathy Scott representing herself. She's left. Luke Hyde?

MR. LUKE HYDE: I'm here.

Mr. Chairman. We have 12 left to speak after this speaker, and now we have Kathy Scott representing herself. She's left. Luke Hyde?

MR. LUKE HYDE: I'm here.

SEN. HISE: Representing attorney-at-law.

MR. LUKE HYDE: Can I be heard now?

SEN. RUCHO: Yes.

MR. LUKE HYDE: I'm Luke Hyde, and I'm an attorney in Raleigh, the 5th District, and in the 30th District, the seven western counties of North Carolina.

Gov. Elbridge Gerry gave us the term "gerrymandering," as we've heard already. He borrowed that idea from the State of Pennsylvania, which had borrowed it from England. It had been going on for years.

On July the 4th, 1776, five members of the Continental Congress, composed of Benjamin Franklin, John Adams, Roger Sherman, Robert Livingston, and a young lawyer from Virginia named Thomas Jefferson, wrote the first draft of the Declaration of Independence.

Jefferson put a clause in that declaration which would outlaw slavery in the United States. Delegates from two Southern states objected, and the clause was removed because the Continental Congress required unanimous consent.

Seven years later, in 1783, and four years before the US Constitution was drafted, while serving as a Congressman from Virginia, Jefferson introduced a bill in Congress --

SEN. RUCHO: Can't hear him. Hello?

Got to hold your finger down on the -- on the -- to speak. We lost your audio. Are you speaking?

UNIDENTIFIED: He is speaking.

SEN. RUCHO: Well, we -- we can't hear his audio there.

MR. LUKE HYDE: This is the speaker. Can you hear me now?

SEN. RUCHO: Yes. Go ahead.

MR. LUKE HYDE: As a student of history, I go to court cases for guidance. The US Supreme Court ruled in the Dred Scott case in 1855 that Dred Scott, an African American, did not have rights as a citizen.

The US Supreme Court ruled in 1896 in the Plessy v. Ferguson case that the defendant, an African American, could not ride trains with white citizens. In Brown v. Board, 1954, the Court ruled segregation was illegal and improper. In Baker v. Carr '62, the Court ruled that one person got one vote.

In Thornburg v. Gingles, a North Carolina case of the late '60s, the US Supreme Court ruled that the North Carolina legislature could not unconstitutionally gerrymander the districts.

This gerrymandering perpetrated by the current and past General Assembly is an insult to the citizens of North Carolina. It is inappropriate, impractical, illegal, and unconstitutional. And as a person who cares about every person voting, I'm offended, and every thinking person ought to be offended.

Gerrymandering harms all citizens, not just Democrats, not just Republicans, not just unaffiliated. It harms all citizens.

All reasonable and intelligent citizens, I believe, would support a non-partisan or bipartisan commission to select the districts in practical, honest ways.

About 100 years after Elbridge Gerry was doing his improper, illegal, unconstitutional gerrymandering, another person from Massachusetts named John Erskine, who was a professor at Amherst, wrote a little essay called "The Moral Obligation to be Intelligent." I believe we're all required to do that.

I request this General Assembly please be intelligent. Please honor all citizens. When I
was a lad growing up in Swain County on a farm, we
used to have to plow the fields. We had a blind
mule named Fred. I believe that Fred the blind
mule could see that this gerrymandering is
unconstitutional and illegal, and Fred would do the
right thing. I request the legislature follow
Fred’s advice, please.

SEN. RUCHO: Thank you very much. We’re
going to go back -- since Halifax is closed, we’re
going to back to Raleigh. And we have Sue Googe.
Five minutes, Ms. Googe.

MS. SUE GOOGE: Thank you, Chairman, for
allowing me the opportunity to speak.

Ladies and gentlemen, my name is Sue
Googe. I’m the Congressional candidate for
District 4, so redrawing the district actually
enhances my chance to win. But that is not my
purpose here.

As a Republican candidate, I often told
District 4 is unwinnable. Why it’s unwinnable?
Because gerrymandering. But I want to talk about
this issue from a different point of view.

As a citizen, when I went into the
Congressman’s office to request a constituent
service, I don’t think anyone would deny a service
to me because of my skin color. So if my
representative represents me well, regardless of
the skin color, it doesn’t matter which district
I’m in.

I used to be in District 4, and then to
13, and then back to 4 again. So to me as citizen,
I believe as long as the elected official really
represent us, the people, it really doesn’t matter
where do you live. Within the boundary of the
United States of America.

I came here for request the primary date
to stay. Here’s the reason. As a candidate, we
have been campaigning for a very long time. We
connect to the voters in the districts. We
advertise to our constituents. We have supporters,
all cause, all races. Even some registered
Democrats supporting us. So I don’t see the race
issues right here, as long as we get a vote.

I think the problem is when I’m on the
campaign trail, I very often hear the elected
officials in DC do not represent we the people.
That’s why the Congress consistently have the
approval rate in the 20s. So it doesn’t matter
what color they are. They don’t represent us, the
people. Then no matter how we redraw the map, we
don’t solve the problem if the elect official only
represent the special interests in D.C.

So I think in order to preserve our
democracy, the elect official must represent we the
people, regardless of the races, because our system
is two-party system in the general. It doesn’t say
white versus black or what color it was. So I
believe the divide between the country is the
political ideology, not the -- not necessarily
racial. It’s just my personal point of view.

District 4 I’m running in has 30 percent
of black, 50 percent of white. Chinese American,
which is my [unintelligible], only account for one
percent. No one can say I only represent one
percent of the Chinese American because when I
enter this race, I represent all. When I see
constituent, I don’t see their color. I only see
they are constituents of mine. I only see they are
American citizens.

That’s why I request the primary date to
stay where it is. I don’t deny gerrymandering
maybe have some political gain one way or the
other. However, it’s a poor way to change it right
now. It will undermine our democracy. For those
who already identified their candidates, and they
have to rechoose their candidates, how could that
going to enhance our democracy?

Ladies and gentlemen, we are here to cast
our vote for the people we’re believing in. It
doesn’t matter what color. Barack Obama is black.
Me as Asian, I don’t see him as black. I see him
as President. And I want my constituents to see me
as their represent -- their -- their elect
official, not because I’m Asian or other racial
color. Thank you very much.

SEN. RUCHO: Thank you. Going to Central
Piedmont, Senator Harrington, are you there?

REP. BRAWLEY: Senator Harrington has
given me back the delightful task of chairing,
Senator.

SEN. RUCHO: Okay, Representative
Brawley. Next speaker.

REP. BRAWLEY: Our next speaker, we will
have Ms. Terry Taylor-Allen. Ms. Taylor-Allen,
you’re recognized for five minutes.

MS. TERRY TAYLOR-ALLEN: Okay. Okay.
Thank you so very much. My name is Terry Taylor-
Allen. I am an unaffiliated voter in the 9th
Congressional District. And I’m here today to
express my strong support for the Court’s decision,
and my urgent request that the North Carolina General Assembly do its duty, and take care of these maps immediately.

We have an embarrassment on a national stage due to our aggressively and inappropriately gerrymandered Congressional districts. So many people who are far wiser than I have effectively pointed out the detriment that these Congressional map have caused to our state, to our citizens. I don’t need to revisit all that.

I just simply need to say this action is overdue. The time is now to fix it. Let’s get it done. Let’s not wait. Thank you very much for the time to speak today. I appreciate it.

REP. BRAWLEY: Thank you, Ms. Taylor-Allen. Thank you, Senator.

SEN. RUCHO: Thank you. Going on -- now, I will say Senator Jackson has said that he has no more speakers at Fayetteville, so that has been closed at 2:00 p.m. And then we move on to Cape Fear Community College, and I think I still have Representative Davis there.

REP. DAVIS: Yes, sir, Mr. Chairman. Our next speaker will be Mr. Richard Poole.

MR. RICHARD POOLE: Thank you,
1 resumed in the chair, and our next speaker is Jake Quinn.

MR. JAKE QUINN: Good afternoon. My name is Jake Quinn. I live in Asheville in Buncombe County, and I'm representing Mountain Voices Alliance today.

2 I am disappointed in the scheduling, noticing, and conduct of this meeting. The technical difficulties that have plagued this poorly organized hearing do not instill confidence in the Committee or in its staff.

3 About four years ago, I testified against the Rucho-Lewis maps. Suffice it to say that I am not surprised that they were thrown out by a federal court or that we have to have this hearing today.

4 Despite Senator Rucho's stated belief that the maps are fair, the federal District Court has clearly indicated they are not. Senator Rucho is mistaken in his belief, and he ought to discard it.

5 I am, frankly, surprised to hear the confusion about these maps' constitutionality. The US District Court has made crystal clear that they are not constitutional and that they do not comply with law in the United States.

6 So folks, let's not debate this. Keeping these maps is not an option. Take it off the table and change them.

7 The executive director of the North Carolina Republican Party has stated belief that the maps are fair, the federal District Court has clearly indicated they are not. Senator Rucho is mistaken in his belief, and he ought to discard it.

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13 taints the process terribly.

14 I will conclude in stating that I fully concur in the testimony offered by my friend and neighbor Tom Byers earlier today, and urge the committee to consider it carefully.

15 North Carolina has gotten (break in transmission) --

16 SEN. RUCHO: I assume the speaker has completed his presentation. Am I correct?

17 MR. JAKE QUINN: No, you are not.

18 SEN. RUCHO: Well, we couldn't hear you.

19 MR. JAKE QUINN: Unfortunately --

20 unfortunately, the technical facilities are not conducive to a smooth-running hearing. That is not my fault. That is your committee's fault. Thank you.

21 SEN. RUCHO: Thank you very much. Let's go ahead now and go to -- we're going to -- well, we've closed Raleigh as far as speakers are concerned. We're going to continue doing our work. Let's go to Central Piedmont, Representative Brawley.

22 REP. BRAWLEY: Than you, Senator. The next speaker is Hasan Harnett. Mr. Harnett, you're recognized for five minutes. You have the floor.

23 sir.

24 MR. HASAN HARNETT: Thank you, sir. Mr. Chairman, Committee members, and ladies and gentlemen both far and near, my name is Hasan Harnett. I am an American, a registered voter in the 8th District, and the Chairman of the North Carolina Republican Party.

25 My single voice, as Republican Chairman, represents large, diverse communities of the human race. Nearly two million Republicans, voters who are strong in this state. Overall, the North Carolina Republican Party strongly opposes the redrawing of the Congressional maps in the midst of an election. Likewise, we believe lawmakers, through the General Assembly, have and -- have and will continue to protect the rights of North Carolina voters.

26 We also believe lawmakers have previously established voting boundaries that are fair, reasonable, and legal. Just for the record, the General Assembly is not here to choose voters, or even marginalize voters, like some might have suggested. This type of thinking in itself is offensive.

27 And from an African American perspective,
quite frankly, color has nothing to do with it. Therefore, it is completely ludicrous to think otherwise.

Let me remind you, the North Carolina Supreme Court upheld unanimously ruling of the three-judge panel that heard the case in North Carolina Superior Court. Let me remind you that since 2011, every court has issued an opinion. And even the Obama Justice Department has reached the same conclusion, North Carolina’s redistricting maps are constitutional. All in all, the Republican Party in North Carolina is very diverse. We are largely satisfied with our present-day representation and the — and the constituent services we are receiving.

Mr. Chairman and Committee members, present-day Congressional primaries must go on without judicial tinkering. Delaying the North Carolina Congressional primary for a court-ordered redraw of the map will cause massive voter confusion, which will destabilize and utterly destroy voter confidence all across the state. Additionally, disenfranchised voters will not come out to vote in a standalone Congressional primary, and this will end up costing the state close to 10 million dollars for all the business owners and parents out there whatever happened to financial accountability and responsibility.

Again, the North Carolina Republican Party opposes the redrawing of the Congressional maps. Democrat Roy Cooper won all 13 of these Congressional districts, showing that they can be won by Democrats. Of the 10 Congressional districts currently held by Republicans, none have had majority GOP registrations. Therefore, all must create a broad coalition between Republicans, conservatives, Democrats, and unaffiliated voters to win. It is all about campaigns and candidates and the message they present. Therefore, the current 10/3 partisan split is a fair result of Republican election victories, which allow legislators to take partisan votes into account when drawing districts.

If North Carolina is forced to redraw the Congressional districts as a potential solution, the North Carolina Republican Party believe that any Congressional districts should keep precincts and counties whole as much as possible. Congressional maps should be drawn in a complete colorblind fashion with no regard to race or racial political quotas. Due to the declining influence of North Carolina’s rural communities, it is imperative that our state’s small counties not be split.

In closing, the North Carolina Republican Party opposes the redrawing of Congressional maps in the midst of the election cycle. We have full confidence in the North Carolina General Assembly. We thank you for your public service. We thank you for this public hearing.

REP. BRAWLEY: Mr. Hasan, your time has expired, sir.

MR. HASAN HARNETT: Thank you, sir.

SEN. RUCHO: Thank you. Moving on to Cape Fear Community College, again, Representative Davis.

REP. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Our next speaker will be Mr. William Whalen.

MR. WILLIAM WHALEN: I am William Whalen.

I am the president of the Southeastern North Carolina Central Labor Council, a coalition of labor unions in Brunswick, Columbus, Duplin, New Hanover, and Pender Counties.

We are here today because our legislature chose partisan politics over the will of the citizens of North Carolina.

The 3rd District stretches from Wilmington to the Virginia border. The 7th district stretches from Southport to Raleigh.

Most North Carolinians -- and believe me, I represent the pride from the conservative to the liberal in my members, in our members. But most North Carolinians, regardless of their political leanings, find gerrymandering wrong.

The Republican legislature can do right by the citizens of North Carolina now by rejecting their soft -- sophisticated software program that created these gerrymandered districts that split communities and not competitive in the general election.

Legislature can choose to create districts that are compact and keep communities together as much as possible. Legislature -- legislature can choose to use North Carolina Constitution Articles 2, Section 3 and 5, as a guide that districts are not to be gerrymandered.

In closing, the Southeastern North Carolina Central Labor Council believe the citizens of North Carolina should choose the representatives, and that Raleigh politicians
should not chose their voters. Thank you.

SEN. RUCHO: Thank you. Moving on to
UNC-Asheville, Representative McCrady.
REP. MCCRADY: Our next speaker is Blake
Ethelston.

MR. BLAKE ETHELSTON: Can I be heard?
SEN. RUCHO: Go ahead. Try it again.
MR. BLAKE ETHELSTON: Thank you. Thank
you for the chance to speak. My name is Blake
Ethelston. I’m a Buncombe County resident. I’m a
Mecklenburg County native. I’m an unaffiliated
voter. I’m a father. I’m a business owner. And
professionally, I work as a geographer. I’ve
worked with geographic information systems for more
than 20 years.

The situation that this recent court
ruling and the deadlines driving the hearing -- I
should say the recent court hearing and the
deadlines driving this hearing are emblematic of a
larger problem that’s been discussed many times
today, and is partisan gerrymandering.

I’m here to encourage the General
Assembly to follow the example of other states in
adopting a non-partisan, transparent redistricting
process.

And I’d like to recognize that there are
General Assembly representatives from both parties
in this room today who would champion such a
process. Representative McCrady in particular
should be commended for supporting non-partisan
redistricting when his party was both a -- or when
he was a member of both the majority and minority
parties.

It’s also worth noting that organizations
on both the conservative and liberal sides of the
spectrum have espoused overhauling the state’s
process for redistricting. Other speakers have
explained that the best practices for drawing
boundaries have been identified and that the
districts should be designed for compactness,
contiguity, keeping counties whole when possible,
and of course, complying with the Voting Rights
Act.

The turnout for these hearings on short
notice is a testament to public interest in the
redistricting issue. The process, therefore,
should allow for substantial citizen input with
numerous locations, numerous times of day, and many
opportunities for involvement.

Another thing about me, I’m a few weeks
shy of my 43rd birthday. That puts me at older
than the median age in North Carolina, older than
the median age in Buncombe County. In other words,
half of North Carolina, half of this county, are
younger than I am.

I was asked to list my race when I signed
in, but not my age. Maybe it’s not okay to ask,
and it’s probably not okay for me to ask for a show
of hands in this room, although that would have
been more helpful earlier today, to ask how many
folks are younger that I am in this room, or how
many folks were younger at the beginning of this
meeting.

I would submit that the composition of
folks who were here today does not represent
anything close to a cross-section of western North
Carolina, certainly when it comes to age. And in
2016, this here calls for a more inclusive public
participation process.

Thank you again for the opportunity to
speak.

SEN. RUCHO: That concludes the remark of
the speaker? Thank you. We’ll go on to Central
Piedmont Community College, Representative Brawley.
REP. BRAWLEY: Thank you, Senator.

Pamela Grundy? Ms. Grundy, you’re recognized for
five minutes.

MS. PAMELA GRUNDY: Good afternoon,
everybody. Thank you for the opportunity to speak.
Thank you everybody who has come out for this very
important issue.

My name is Pamela Grundy. I have lived
in the Plaza Midwood neighborhood of Charlotte for
the past 20 years. I have been in several
Congressional districts, although I have never
actually moved. I’ve been in the 12th
Congressional District, I was in the 8th
Congressional District, I am now in the 9th
Congressional District.

When I was in the 8th Congressional
District, it was fairly evenly split between
Democratic and Republican voters. I was
represented for a while by Republican Robin Hayes,
who is sitting here listening to all of this. Then
for a while I was represented by Democrat Larry
Kissell. My vote mattered.

I must admit, I did not ever vote for
Representative Hayes -- sorry about that -- but I
felt that he had been elected fairly. Every time
that he was elected, he had won a fair race.
Elections in the District 8 were lively and hard-fought, as you well know. And eventually, we
Democrats did -- wound up by very hard work, by
grassroots campaigning, Larry Kissell prevailed and
became our representative. That is how democracy
should work.

Now, I am in the 9th District. I'm
represented by Robert Pittenger. This district
leans so heavily Republican that the race is
decided in the Republican primary. We had a very
strong Democratic candidate when the district was
recently changed, to no avail. It was really -- it
was really a hopeless race despite the strength of
the Democratic candidate.

So essentially, as a Democrat, my vote is
meaningless, as I do not vote in the Republican
primary, and I do not appreciate it. I can go to
the polls and vote and I can cast my ballot, but
technically I am disenfranchised, which was the
purpose of the change.

A group of Democratic-leaning voters was
moved from a mixed district into a heavily
Republican district specifically in order to reduce
the impact of our vote in the district we had been
in and in the district into which we were put.

There were no more hard-fought races, no
more districts where the better Republican or the
better Democrat won. It was now a -- both
districts are essentially not competitive.

Representative Brawley noted at the
beginning that this meeting, all of us here today,
represents the kind of democracy that the Founding
Fathers intended. Gerrymandered districts which
drive people -- deprive people of meaningful votes
do not represent the kind of democracy the Founding
Fathers intended.

We need fair, non-partisan maps so we can
have competitive races, fair representation, and
get back to running the kind of democracy that our
ancestors fought for and that the people of North
Carolina deserve. Thank you.

REP. BRAWLEY: Thank you, Ms. Grundy.

SEN. RUCHO: Thank you very much. Going
to Cape Fear Community College, Representative
Davis.

REP. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Our speaker will be Mr. Gerald Benton.

MR. GERALD BENTON: How do you do? My
name is Gerald Benton. I'm from Leland, North
Carolina.

I'd like to go ahead and just voice my
support for the current districting. I believe
they're fair.

If we are looking at turnout last year,
we had 120 people in the district I'm running
for -- I mean, 120,000, and only 30 actually showed
up to vote, 30,000 people. No matter how
gerrymandered the districts are -- I'm running in
the district D-10 as a Republican -- that they're
fair. It comes down to voter turnout, because
ultimately that will decide all races.

And for us to change after the veteran
vote has been cast already through absentee ballots
is wrong. If we want to change it, we change it
after the general election when we have time to sit
down and actually make a difference in how things
are done. I do appreciate it. Thank you.

SEN. RUCHO: Thank you very much. Moving
on to UNC-Asheville, Representative McGrady.

REP. MCGRADY: Our next speaker is
Darlene Azarmi.

MS. DARLENE AZARMI: Thank you. Can
y'all hear me?

SEN. RUCHO: Yes.

MS. DARLENE AZARMI: All right, great.

So, thanks for the opportunity to speak. I am an
organizer for Democracy North Carolina, but I am
here as a young person who cares and always has.

So having a father from Iran, I was
always taught the value of participating in our
democracy, and have been an active voter since I
was eligible. I grew up in Lincolnton, North
Carolina, attended Cape Fear and UNC-W, where I
worked at the polls for all four years.

And now I work in -- across western North
Carolina to ensure that people turn out and vote.
It is a tough job amidst all of the confusion
voters face, such as the complexities of the voter
ID law, but I'm passionate about it and enjoy it.
I am a firm believer that voters should
choose elected officials instead of legislators
dividing our state to choose their voters.

The timeline in which we have seen these
public hearings created and announced speaks
volumes about the level of transparency which
citizens can expect in this process of redrawing,
and unfortunately depict what lawmakers feel is
acceptable or what they can get away with in terms
of accountability in doing so.

Equal access to and fair representation
in the political process are at the core of what elections are meant to ensure in democracy supposedly of, by, and for the people.

The gentleman who spoke earlier about his suspicions of race determining whether comments are heard should not be ignored, but taken seriously and responded to by all who represent us.

I would like to highlight the importance of the public perception of how this act of redrawing plays out as a critical player in North Carolinian voters’ integrity, morale, and trust in a process that has been proven [break in transmission] --

SEN. RUCHO: We can’t hear you at this moment.

MS. DARLENE AZARMI: Can you hear me now?

SEN. RUCHO: Yes.

MS. DARLENE AZARMI: Okay. Apologies for that.

So the gentleman who spoke about his suspicions of race determining whether comments are heard should not be ignored, but taken seriously and responded to by all who represent us.

I would like to highlight the importance of the public’s perception of how this act of redrawing plays out as a critical player in North Carolinian voters’ integrity, morale, and trust in a process that has been proven [break in transmission] --

interim plan should be drawn out by the General Assembly on a State computer to ensure accountability.

Further, any consultants should be available to [unintelligible] accessible to the public for [unintelligible] communication. Every cent of taxpayer dollars spent on consultants to draw maps [unintelligible] should be disclosed to the public. The fact that some absentee ballots have been requested and submitted does not outweigh the damage done by holding a third election on unconstitutional maps.

Ensuring that our elections are constitutional should be our first and foremost priority. I hope that all of you have heard and take seriously the concerns of citizens from across the state today. Eight people with me in the overflow room had to leave due to time constraints, and I hope that you please remember all those who are at work or school or for whatever reason and could not be here to make comments. Thank you.

SEN. RUCHO: Thank you very much. We’re going to go to Central Piedmont Community College. And a reminder to the moderators at each of the locations that we are -- have a five-minute limit.
So, Representative Brawley?

REP. BRAWLEY: Thank you, Senator. The next speaker is Clare Mahoney. Ms. Mahoney, you are recognized for five minutes. The floor is yours.

MS. CLARE MAHONEY: I appreciate it. And first of all, I -- I really think it's great that this many citizens have come out --

REP. BRAWLEY: Talk loud, Clare.

MS. CLARE MAHONEY: -- that this many citizens have come out to this hearing and have stuck with it this long speaks volumes about how involved we all are in the process.

Most of my most salient points have already been made eloquently and repeatedly by other speakers. But throughout this entire process, one thing keeps repeating in my mind, so I wanted to share it.

If indeed the call for a non-partisan, independent redistricting committee is a principle that all hold dear, and that we should be fighting for in this country, why only calling for it on the state level? Shouldn't it also apply on the local level, where government is closest to the people?

You see, as a 24-year resident of Charlotte, and a lifelong Republican, I know well what it feels like to live in a gerrymandered district. I know well what it feels like to live in a county where my voice is diluted, where my ideas get very little play on the governmental scene.

And so I do find it -- when I hear Christian Cano, you know, give the clarion call to candidate, if you believe in your cause, don't be afraid to say it. Does he believe in this cause enough to call for it right here in Charlotte, where we live closest, where we should be closest as a community, where we should be fighting for what's right together as a community.

And I just had to get up here and make that call because I -- I do caution you, beware of the siren song that encourages you to take this sort of power away from the unelected representative and put it in the hands of unelected bureaucrats. That is just not something that I think is best for this state or this country.

Thanks for listening.

And again, you are all great for being here today.

SEN. RUCHO: Thank you very much. Moving on to Cape Fear Community College. I've got Representative Davis for the next speaker.

REP. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Our next speaker will Steve Unger.

MR. STEVE UNGER: Like to say thank you for the committee for holding this today. I am the chair of the Democratic Party in Pender County, I'm also running for office in the NC House 16th District.

It is time to redraw the districts. The -- the Courts have said so. No decision is going to come down from the Supreme Court, and folks who say that the current process is fair, the -- the courts have already spoken. And now it's a matter of how we redraw districts so that we create the most fair.

The argument that the election has started already isn't sufficient. We've gone through two election cycles already, and why should we do a third? So I think a battle like that -- that is an insufficient argument.

The other thing is that the leadership -- if the General Assembly had not moved up the primary, we wouldn't be having a problem with election underway with this Court ruling. And sure, we wanted to have more of a say on the national level, but it's also created this quandary.

Any new map should be drawn by -- on a State computer. Any consultants should be revealed. And anybody who's paid to assist should be revealed. This should be open. We should be transparent.

Now, I live in the 7th District. You know the 3rd District comes here, goes all the way up to Corolla. And I lived in the Outer Banks for a year. That's a long way away. I couldn't tell you if right here at Cape Fear Community College, whether this is the 3rd or the 7th District. So it's important to have districts that are contiguous, to include counties whenever possible, to include areas and regions. I -- I remember when this area was all 3rd District.

Even in Pender County, where I came from, the county and former officials had to sue and won the case in the Supreme Court to leave the county alone when it came to State House districts. And we need to look at the North Carolina Constitution which guides us in this area.
Lastly, I'd like to point out that my regular job has me making athletic teams. I work as an athletic supervisor for the Town of Surf City. And one of the things I have to do is I have to try to create teams in such a way that there's competitive balance and making sure we have fun playing, we have fun games. I can't guarantee who's going to win or who's going to lose. But if we don't have fair teams and we don't have fair districts, the kids and adults don't play and they drop out. And if we don't have fair districts, people are going to drop out of the electoral process.

We heard from a couple of the Millennials today. They just want to see fairness. They want to see opportunity. And right now, we don't have that. The Courts have said that we need to have that opportunity. So I'm glad we're moving forward in that area.

One thing also that the State officials might consider is as you're redrawing and taking a look at a non-partisan way of doing the Congressional districts, to also look at the State and Senate districts because there is also a lawsuit winding through the courts on that. Let's do it all at once.

Thank you so much for the opportunity today. I appreciate it. SEN. RUCHO: Thank you. Moving on to UNC-Asheville, Representative McGrady. REP. MCGRADY: Our next speaker is Renee Rafeni. After that, Judy Mattox, I believe I saw leave. That would bring Currie First?

MR. CURRIE FIRST: I'm here. UNIDENTIFIED: Currie First. MR. CURRIE FIRST: Currie First from Buncombe County. Today is about one issue: how our government effectively disenfranchised African Americans in two state districts by a practice called gerrymandering. Voting right advocates challenge the districting on racial grounds under the 13th Amendment, granting voting privileges to former male slaves, and equal protection clause of the 14th Amendment giving protected classes equal rights under law.

We know the result. Three federal judges, after hearing oral argument and reviewing a massive evidentiary record, ruled two districts unconstitutionally discriminated against African American by significantly diluting their voting rights.

Even at this late date, I urge the Assembly to accept the court opinion and send a message to African Americans in North Carolina that our state government respects them, respects their voting rights, and will continue -- and will start to do that.

I submit accepting -- accepting the three-federal-judge decision is especially important to communities of color because of other legislation some call voter suppression.

Legislative voting changes that have affected African Americans include reducing early voting, noting African Americans disproportionately vote more as a percentage in early voting than whites. Eliminating same-day registration. Number 3, voter ID.

By continuing to challenge the federal decision which found unconstitutional the curtailment of minority rights, we're telling our state minorities we care more about legislative election strategy than about your voting rights.

The democratic government at the federal, state, and local level should be taking legislative action to encourage voting and sending a message, barriers to voting must be removed.

Before 1920, for many of us in this room, our grandmothers by law could not vote. Their gender was an absolute bar to voting. In 1920, a constitutional amendment gave the right to vote to women. In the 1970s and earlier, men who were sent to Vietnam, conscripted and drafted and killed, could not vote. A constitutional amendment in 1972 gave the right to vote to those 18 to 21.

Extending and supporting voting privileges is our proudest, best history, not diluting voting rights of minorities. The right thing for the General Assembly is to tell your attorney -- you're the client -- tell your attorney that you're going to abide by the three-judge decision and get on with it.

In concluding, I'm extremely upset that at least at several of the public hearing sites, folks signing in were required to write in their race at the sign-in. The chairs of this committee should immediately write to each person listing their race and apologize for this invidious request. This is not unimportant at a hearing that -- that concerns race discrimination. Do not
allow future public government hearings to include
a racial, ethnic identity. Thank you.
SEN. RUCHO: Thank you. Moving to
Central Piedmont Community College, Representative
Brawley.
REP. BRAWLEY: Thank you, Senator. Our
next speaker is Justin Conley. Mr. Conley, you are
recognized for five minutes. You have the floor.
MR. JUSTIN CONLEY: Thank you. [break in
transmission] morning, but good afternoon. I'd
first like to thank the committee for the
opportunity to speak on Congressional
districting.
Our country was founded ideal of
government of, by, and for the people. Our great
state deserves qualified leaders fairly elected to
represent their interests in Raleigh and in
Washington. But that's not happening.
I am a new Mecklenburg County resident,
but a North Carolina native. I currently serve as
the President of the Young Democrats of North
Carolina. We work to provide a mechanism for
registered Democrats ages 18 to 35 to have an
active role in our communities in the spirit of the
Democratic party. My organization represents the
changing face of the seventh most rapidly
diversifying state in our country.
The overwhelming majority of our members
could only legally vote around the time of the last
census in 2010. Our state is changing. And in
order to harness the potential we have as a state,
we must ensure we have a government that reflects
its people.
Elections should be simple. The party
that gets the most votes should win the most seats
in Congress and in our General Assembly. But
that's not what is happening. In 2012, 2.2 million
of our friends and neighbors voted for a Democratic
Congressional candidate, compared to 2.1 who voted
for a Republican candidate. Yet nine out of the 13
US House districts sent a Republican to Congress.
Fair district lines matter. They matter
because these elected representatives should
reflect our state's population and accurately
reflect the will of the people in North Carolina.
It is frustrating to stand in a forum and
argue for my right to be represented fairly by my
elected officials. It is frustrating to see the
will of our people not reflected in the halls of
our Congress and on Jones Street in Raleigh. It is
frustrating to feel the weight of our generation's
challenges from tackling climate change to income
equality to have to use time and energy to
fight for something more fundamental, my right to
be represented fairly in my government.
Every North Carolina -- excuse me. Every
North Carolinian should be have equal access to be
represented. When power is not shared, democracy
breaks down. Politics from the fringe extremes of
both political parties with an unwillingness to
compromise. Last year, we saw Congress have one of
its most unproductive and unpopular sessions in
history despite being packed full of
representatives from one party.
Now, I'm a Democrat without prefix or
apology, but I long for the era of hyper-
partisanship to be over. I am tired of waking up
every day to the same old politics. I want a
government that compromises, works across the aisle
to solve problems, and put people first. Now, you
have an opportunity to draw fair districts.
You also have 53 members of both parties
in the House and additional members in the Senate
willing to work to end this argument altogether by
passing independent redistricting reform. You have
the opportunity to make this state's elected
leadership look like North Carolina, the
opportunity to give the people of this state the
representation it deserves.
Our state faces too many problems to get
hung up on the usual partisan politics. But at the
end of the day, unfair districts do not address the
one in four children of our state living in
poverty. Unfair districts do nothing to make
college more affordable. Unfair districts do not
create jobs or boost wages for those working full-
time but still can't make ends meet.
But I know if we have a government that
reflects the great people of this state, there is
no problem we cannot solve together. Remember,
this is the state where the weak grow strong and
the strong grow great. We can overcome the
problems of today and get ahead of the ones
tomorrow. But it starts with fairness. This is
how we create a more perfect state, and this is how
we create a more perfect union. Thank you.
SEN. RUCHO: Thank you.
REP. BRAWLEY: Thank you, Mr. Conley.
SEN. RUCHO: Okay. Going on to --
continuing our discussion about redistricting and
how the speaker believes that they can change and improve it; we’re talking about Cape Fear Community College, Representative Davis.

REP. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Our next speaker will be Mr. Dennis Dixon.

MR. DENNIS DIXON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Representative Davis. My name is Dennis Dixon. I live in Wilmington. And I am happy to have the opportunity to participate in this hearing.

I am very thankful that the framers of our Constitution organized a House of Representatives so that the members would have to stand for reelection every two years. That makes the House of Representatives, that part of the national government best able to respond to changing issues and priorities.

It’s desirable that the elections of Congressmen be as competitive as possible. However, gerrymandering has come to be a custom established by tradition to interfere with that competitiveness in Congressional elections. Gerrymandering is well-established, and we have to acknowledge that any gerrymandering will work against some segment of the population. In this case, it has turned out that the federal courts have determined that the gerrymandering in North Carolina a few years ago has gone beyond the bounds of ordinary gerrymandering and that it must be corrected.

I think we should be grateful that the Court has impelled us to reduce the impact of gerrymandering on our Congressional elections. Thank you very much.

SEN. RUCHO: Thank you. Moving on to UNC-Asheville, Representative McGrady.

REP. MCGRADY: Our next speaker is Ernie Thurston. He apparently is not here. Next speaker is Terrence Clark. Mr. Clark, you’ve got five minutes.

MR. TERRENCE CLARK: Can you hear me?

SEN. RUCHO: Yes, sir.

MR. TERRENCE CLARK: Okay. My name is Terrence Clark. I am a retired physician. I live in Buncombe County, Candler area. I want to emphasize -- well, I’m speaking -- I’m speaking today as a citizen of North Carolina and Buncombe County.

We are here today, I want to underscore, because it is unconstitutional to base redistricting on race. So I’ll repeat that because we’ve gone on tangents with a lot of issues. We’re here today because it’s unconstitutional to base redistricting on race.

I’m -- I have a concern that there was very poor publicity about this meeting.

Personally, I learned last night in looking at the newspaper. I’m particularly concerned that -- I have a sense that the districts that have been discussed the most, District 1 and 12, have seemed under-represented. I think that this is not going to be a sufficient amount of public hearing.

There have been two illegal elections.

There’s no reason to have a third illegal election. We live in a great country and have a great Constitution, which includes the protection of citizens so that they can elect representatives that reflect sensible and fairly drawn, constitutionally-sound districts. This is a partisan issue, but it has been said today, let’s stop beating each other with the partisan stick.

The inconvenience of the logistics of the upcoming election should not be used to permit the Republican legislature to use that as a manipulation.

I have recommendations. Number one, several people have said it, I believe you need to delete the question about race in today’s hearing. I saw that on the entry forms. It should -- that is not relevant. Can you hear me?

SEN. RUCHO: Yes, sir. Keep speaking.

MR. TERRENCE CLARK: Okay. I request that the legislature comply promptly with the three-panel judges’ ruling to do the redistricting map.

I request that well-publicized public hearings be set for next week, with a particular emphasis on the districts that have been discussed so much today.

I also ask -- ask that you clarify guidelines of how we submit our written document. Many people have scribbled documents, and some have handed them in. I think you would like them typed, and when do you want them?

I also ask that it be a priority in the next session to set up a -- a commission to look at non-partisan redistricting. Thank you.

SEN. RUCHO: Thank you. Moving to Central Piedmont Community College, Representative
REP. BRAWLEY: This -- is Matt Needham here? Okay. No, wait -- yeah, Jack Brosch.

MR. JACK BROSCH: My name is Jack Brosch. I'm a resident of Mecklenburg County, and I think I bring a perspective to this argument that I have not heard enunciated previously. And it is that perspective of a candidate for US Congress in the North Carolina's 12th District. So I know about gerrymandering a little bit.

And I'm not going to talk about some of the effects that are going to happen on voters, but don't let my lack of comments mean that I don't agree with many of the previous speakers on that topic. What I am going to talk about is the effect that the late change will have on candidates in North Carolina.

Candidates file for office, and they try their best to stand up to the rules and regulations supplied by the General Assembly and by the Board of Elections. And those rules need to be out previous so that they can plan their campaigns, that they can map the -- their district, and they can figure out what voters are most likely to be able to be persuaded to their side of the argument, and to be able to use scarce resources to get those constituents to vote for them.

Not to make light of -- of the previous arguments, but a little over a week ago, we had a national event called the Super Bowl. And can you imagine the morning of the Super Bowl, where all of a sudden they decide, "Yeah, we're not going to go by yards. We're going to go by meters. We're going to change the whole game. And you that -- that ten-yard play that you practiced and you planned for so that you can get that first down and you can move that ball down the field. Eh, it's going to be adjusted. We're now working with meters." How would that affect the game that so many of us dearly love called football?

John B. Taylor is a fellow at the Hoover Institute and a professor at Stanford University, and I think he said it best. And what he said was that society thrives when they have a predictable policy framework.

And while I agree with many of the previous people and their comments about redistricting in the long term -- and I suggest that they look at House Bill 49 and Senate Bill 28. These are bills that are already in front of the General Assembly, but now is not the time. Do not shake the globe and create another snowfall. Thank you.

SEN. RUCHO: Excuse me. Thank you. Going on to Cape Fear, Representative Davis.

REP. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Our next speaker will be Ms. Sonya Bennetone.

MS. SONYA BENNETONE: Good afternoon. My name is Sonya Bennetone. I'm a registered voter in District 7 in New Hanover County. However, I was raised in District 3 and a community organizer in District 3.

I am a descendant of those who were held captive and made former slaves here in North Carolina. I can trace my family's history back to the Beverly Plantation here in Wilmington on my father's side, where my great-grandfather and my great-aunt were former slaves there.

I found out about this meeting at the last minute. And it is discouraging when District 3 is heavily impacted by these maps, where you have your heavily populated African Americans who are put in Congressional 3 who were formerly in Congressional 7. And I hope that you'd reconsider this when you redo the map. It's a shame that we live in a country where descendants of former slaves still have to fight for our constitutional right, a right that we were born with.

My father, a disabled veteran, gave his rights for this country, and he believed in voting. He was also a Baptist minister. He believed in voting. He believed not voting was being worse than being locked up in jail because that was something that was not given to us easily.

And when I look for the fight to vote, I don't have to look far. My cousin, in the '70s, was split on trying to exercise her right to vote and jailed for two weeks.

This is not the North Carolina we should have. This is not the North Carolina I want for my children or for future generations. Please revisit the map. Asking for two weeks to protect the Constitution is nothing 'cause many people have died to protect the Constitution.

Thank you for listening.

SEN. RUCHO: Thank you. Moving on to UNC-Asheville, Representative McGrady.

REP. MCGRADY: Our next speaker is Carmen Ramos-Kennedy. Give us just a second.

SEN. RUCHO: Representative McGrady?
REP. MCGRADY: Give us a second.  Too much blood has been spilled for the right to vote.  No elected official should be safe in their district.  They should not spend time focusing on securing funding for their next election.  They should be focusing on the work of the people. 

I'm incensed and dismayed that no sooner than SCOTUS took the teeth out of the Voting Rights Act in 2013, did North Carolina, Texas, and other states pass extreme voter ID laws restricting voting rights all under the guise of voter fraud. They've passed legislation for a problem that is so minuscule that it barely exists. 

Too much blood has been spilled for the right to vote. Too much blood has been spilled for the right to vote. Impediments to voting is un-American. Thank you. 

SEN. RUCHO: Thank you very much. Going to Central Piedmont, Representative Brawley. 

REP. BRAWLEY: Thank you, Senator. 

Margaret Davis. Ms. Davis, you're recognized for five minutes. You have the floor. 

MS. MARGARET DAVIS: Thank you, Senator Brawley. It's a pleasure to be here, and I've learned so much listening to everybody across the state. And I really agree that this wasn't well-publicized. The notice was too short. And obviously, there's great interest in this, and we need more discussion and more opportunity for people that are impacted, and that's all of us in North Carolina.

The thing that keeps coming to me -- and I'm new at this -- I've been a social activist for my whole life because I'm a mother and I care about the future of this country. I'm the daughter of a veteran who was at Pearl Harbor when it was bombed. I lived in -- in a country where I could not vote because I wasn't a citizen. So as an adult, I moved back to this country so I could vote and could be involved in the process.

And I -- I want to acknowledge that today is also the birthday of Susan B. Anthony, who was a fearless activist in many, many fields, but especially for the end of slavery and for the right of women to vote. 

I am in favor of these maps being redrawn. Clearly, the court has spoken. It is inconvenient. It could cause chaos. But I think it's chaos that gives us an opportunity to have a fair system, a system that really does represent the people of North Carolina, that we have a vote that means something.

I've been -- I'm sitting here at Central Piedmont, now. I've been offering voter registration opportunities in a non-partisan way. And it really disturbs me to hear young people say, "My vote doesn't matter. It's a game. It doesn't -- it doesn't interest me because I can't make a difference." And I don't think that's the kind of country we want, and I know that for my children, grandchildren, and yours, that we can do better, and that we must look at these matters, use the technology that's available to us to do this in an impartial way.

The Democrats and the Republicans have been guilty of gerrymandering, and it has to stop. Thank you very much. 

SEN. RUCHO: Thank you. 

REP. BRAWLEY: Thank you, ma'am. 

SEN. RUCHO: Cape Fear Community College, Representative Davis. 

REP. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. 

Our next speaker will be Ms. Barbara Graham. 

MS. BARBARA GRAHAM: I want to thank you that I'm able to speak here. I didn't think I was going to do it. I thought I would back down. But
I've heard a lot of things that people have said. I go this way with one, and I go that way with the other one. So there's been a lot of good things said. But I have mine to say, and I stayed this long, and so I'm going to speak.

I'm Barbara Graham, District 7, precinct chairperson in Woodburn, live in Leland, North Carolina. My precinct -- I'm a minority in my precinct, basically. It's one-quarter Republican, three-quarters Democrat. So you know, I have no problem with that.

I -- I looked to see who's -- what precinct has a chairperson, and I find that there are several precincts -- precincts that have no chairperson. So at the most -- to me, the most important level to be involved in the political process is locally. And so I encourage people to do that, and not -- not to see a precinct without a chairperson.

And I have, on my list, Republicans with no phone number. People don't even want to be called. So I mean, our concerns, if we are concerned, we ought to make ourselves available. And so I'm going to say what I had to say here, I concur with Eric who is the chair of

to one ethnicity or another.

We should not redraw lines a few weeks before the Presidential primary, if at all. Voter ID will not discourage voting, but redrawing Congressional districts will.

We have freedom to move from state to state, county to county, city to city. Populations will always be shifting. District lines represent population numbers, not the color of one's skin.

We are Americans. Let's start being American. Presumption that a person of ethnicity or another -- one ethnicity or another will discriminate or not discriminate is indeterminable because it's a matter of the heart. We in power rule in all ethnicities. To delay the primary and redraw the lines at this time is strictly a move of power, and not in the best interest of our election process.

After having said all that, I am not opposed to redrawing lines, but I am opposed to the delay -- I am -- let's how it -- I am opposed to the delay of the primaries do so at this time. I just don't believe new lines one way or another will satisfy

our population.

We are Americans and that means no color, hereditary ethnicity. American. No matter what the lines, each district includes American. People come together and reason together no matter what your race or color. It's about time.

Exercising your voice in the political process happens in your local precinct. As I said, at my first political -- I didn't say that. At my first political state convention, I noticed the district representing Charlotte had 700 delegates. Approximately 170 were there. I was very disheartened that people weren't there.

We as citizens need to take the responsibility of our democratic process and our local precincts. I researched -- and I said this already -- researched the precincts in my area, and some didn't even have a chairperson. Several -- and several did not include both Democrats and Republicans.

Finally, we should not redraw lines a few weeks before the Presidential primary, if at all. Voter ID will not discourage voting, but redrawing Congressional districts will.

I can't even get five people to attend a
local precinct meeting to talk about issues in our
country, or just in our own county. We need to be
involved. And so I want to thank you for listening
to me.
I am a 67-year-old woman who took this
country for granted for many, many years. I
finally got involved and took notice of what was
happening in the Presidential election in 2012, and
I was appalled. I was appalled at the approach and
the misinformation that we were given by our
mainstream media. So here I am, and that's why I'm
here.

REP. DAVIS: Thank you.

SEN. RUCHO: Thank you. UNC-Asheville,
Representative McGrady.

REP. MCGRADY: Mr. Chairman, our last
speaker is Samuel Kaplan. You have to hold -- go
ahead.

MR. SAMUEL KAPLAN: Hi. Welcome. Thank
you. Thank you so much for listening to the public
today. My name is Sam Kaplan. I'm honored to be a
professor of mathematics at UNC-Asheville. I'm not
formally representing UNC-Asheville, or for that
matter the Mathematical Association of America or
anything else, just myself. I'm a native of North
Carolina.

And I just want to take one second to
remind the audience of the power of gerrymandering.
I think I drew a picture -- apologize for the
simplicity of the image. I think you can see
there's two colors there. They look to me like red
and black. I don't know how it covers over to your
camera. But you can imagine these are a layout
maybe of voters or of neighborhoods or counties.
There are 13 red and 12 black. If you do a
simplest cut of the five districts -- oh, you
can't see the lines between them? Is that true?
[break in transmission] How about now? Can you
see the lines? The horizontal lines, you end up
with two majority in one and one -- three majority
in the other. Okay? Not a big surprise.
If you, instead, group the reds together
into a supermajority district, divide the other one
deeply, you end up with four representing the black
even though they are minority, out of the five
districts.
This is exactly what we've done in North
Carolina. If you overlay the boundaries of the
districts with demographic information from the
census, it's quite apparent, and I'm sure it was
part of the -- influenced the ruling of the -- that
race played a role.

What I would like to say is as we move
past this next crisis, however we decide, we will
hopefully move to a position where we consider a
nonpartisan method of drawing these districts. We
can use tools that have been developed by
mathematicians in the last 20 years, specifically,
around gerrymandering and meeting criteria like
compactness and demographic information, to make
sure that we minimize mischief in any mapmaking.
And we can quantify gerrymandering. And we should
do so.

Everyone believes in rational government.
Let's use the tools that we have that are 21st
Century tools to make sure that we have rational
representation in our districts. Thank you so much
for your time and attention.

SEN. RUCHO: Thank you very much. Going
to Central Piedmont, Representative Brawley.

REP. BRAWLEY: Thank you, Senator. Our
next speaker is Mike Huffman. Mr. Huffman, you are
recognized for five minutes. You have the floor,
sir.

MR. MIKE HUFFMAN: Thank you. My name is
Mike Huffman. I live in south Charlotte near the
airport. I don't know who “gerry” is, but I'm
familiar with two majority in one and one -- three majority
in the other. Okay? Not a big surprise.
If you, instead, group the reds together
into a supermajority district, divide the other one
deeply, you end up with four representing the black
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next speaker is Mike Huffman. Mr. Huffman, you are
recognized for five minutes. You have the floor,
sir.

MR. MIKE HUFFMAN: Thank you. My name is
Bottom line, get a computer program to draw these districts in a nonpartisan fashion, send out new absentee ballots, and hold a fair election for once. Thank you.

SEN. RUCHO: Thank you very much.

REP. BRAWLEY: Thank you, Mr. Huffman.

SEN. RUCHO: I've got -- going to Cape Fear, Representative Davis. Is this your last speaker there?

REP. DAVIS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

The last speaker that I have to sign up today is Mr. William Shell.

MR. WILLIAM SHELL: This is a little weird. I think it's the first time I ever spoken anywhere to a microphone in a ceiling.

I was scheduled to speak earlier. My name is Bill Shell. I'm a former chairman of the Republican Party in New Hanover County. I'm a lawyer, and I followed redistricting litigation for over 40 years. Participated in some of it.

But I -- as I said, I was scheduled to speak earlier. I had to go to the hospital to get a heart monitor put on. And I assure you it wasn't because of all the stuff I'd heard this morning. It was previously scheduled.

So -- but I'm back. And I want to talk to you just a little bit. Some of this stuff may be a little repetitive, but I hope some of it isn't because I'm going to make some suggestions.

Now, we're here because of what I call extreme gerrymandering. We're not talking about gerrymandering. It's -- it's extreme. It's been made possible by the computer and computer software. And what has happened is it's led to noncompetitive elections in North Carolina. None of the elections for any Congressional district are competitive. Not a one. And what that does is decrease voter participation, and what that does is bad for democracy.

And the way we've done it is terribly bad. We've done it and let's be blunt about it. It's been done by racial packing. And we have developed, in North Carolina, a system of apartheid voting. And let's call it just exactly what it is.

Now, this is going to -- to remedy this situation is going to involve more than the 12th and the 1st Districts. It's going to have to be changes in other districts, as well. And they're going to have to be fairly substantial.

I've heard the argument that this will throw things into chaos. That's not true. Number one is, if there's any chaos or any uncertainty, it's the fault of the General Assembly. And voters are going to hold them accountable because of that. But that's not necessary.

We've got the technology available to us to be able to do this job and to do it right and to do it within the time that's been allotted to us. And if we're not able to do that, we'll just use more time, is what we need to do.

There's nothing magic about having a primary on March the 15th. It was previously on May the 15th. It was done ostensibly -- I don't think that's the only reason -- to get more participation from the presidential candidates.

But on March the 15th, we're one of four states holding presidential primary. The others -- Ohio, Illinois, and Florida -- they're all bigger than us, they're all winner-take-all.

We are proportional. If you in the Republican primary, for instance, are going to have five or six candidates probably still at that point, we're not going to get any participation much from Republican presidential candidates. We may get some from the Democrats. Of course, there's only going to be two. But so if the primary has to be postponed and filing reopened, then so be it. We can do that. Let's get this thing right.

Now, this court case is going on, I can tell you it appears to me quite, quite clear that the chances of a stay from the Supreme Court are slim. That's especially not with Justice Scalia's death. Now, I think the case is eventually going to be lost in the 4th Circuit, and certainly it's going to be lost in the US Supreme Court. So why do that? Bad legal advice. Paid hundreds of thousands, maybe millions already, getting ready to pay millions more if we decide to go that route.

We don't need to delay this anymore. We had unconstitutional maps in 2012 and 2014. We don't need it again in 2016.

The way I look at it, there are three choices. One, do nothing. Number two, tinker around the edges of these districts. And both of those choices, that will lead to continued litigation, the expenditure of millions of dollars, and in the end will result in the federal courts redrawing our districts for us. And that's what'll happen.
Those are not the right way. Let’s do it right. And the way to do it right is make the changes that need to be changed, taking mainly into two consideration two things: compactness of the districts and a community of interest. If you do that, redistricting is really not hard. It’s really not.

There was one map shown up here, I believe by Mr. Huffman from Charlotte. Take a look at that because I think that might be -- that might be good. If you do it right and get it right, then the public will thank you. If you don’t, they’re going to punish you. That’s just the way it is.

Now, you know, we’re in New Hanover County. We have two Congressmen. Neither one of them seem to have any particular interest in New Hanover County, even though we have 220,000 people live here. You know, that’s not the way it ought to be.

I hope you will get it right. I hope you will do the right thing. But I’m not confident. I think that what will happen is that these hearings are pretty much a sham and decisions have already been made. I hope I’m wrong. I really am -- I hope I’m wrong.

I thought at one time the Republicans could do it better. I was wrong. Prove me wrong again now, and do it right in this thing. I appreciate the opportunity to talk to you. It’s my experience over the period of time. And I hope you will get it right, because the way it is now is wrong.

SEN. RUCHO: Thank you. All right. I -- we’re -- I think we’re complete in Cape Fear, Representative Davis. We’re complete in Asheville, Representative McGrady. And the last one, I believe, is going to be at Central Piedmont. Representative Brawley. Is that right?

REP. BRAWLEY: Senator Rucho, I have the excellent news that I am introducing Bill Gent, the last speaker from Central Piedmont. Mr. Gent, you are recognized for five minutes. You have the floor.

MR. BILL GENT: [unintelligible] thanks for being here today [unintelligible] to be here today. I’m going off-script a little bit at the beginning because a lot of what I’ve heard today sounds very reasonable. I’ve also heard a lot of inflammatory things, comments that were absolutely out of the ballpark, nowhere even germane to the conversation.

As I said, my name is Bill Gent. I’ll go back on the script. I am a resident of Mecklenburg County, a member of the 12th District, so I’m directly affected by this issue. I’m also a combat vet. I fought for this country so that you could be here.

Okay. While I’m not an attorney or a judge, I am a common sense person. This issue may well require addressing by legislation, but that’s for the courts to decide, not for us to decide here. However, as a common sense person, it is obvious to me that ordering the redrawing of multiple district lines in such a short time frame just to meet a judicial order or a longstanding problem will result in a generally ill-considered results and will have -- probably have to be redone at a later date.

Also, to demand this action at this point in time will obviously be hugely disruptive to the voters in the upcoming election. If the objective was to truly ensure fairness and equity for all voters, and it will fall in -- it will fail in that. And those that propose moving forward are showing themselves to be disingenuous in their motives.

This leads me to ask, why now and not in a time frame more suited to obtaining a real resolution to the problem, if needed, a real resolution exists. I don’t know that it does. I don’t have the information. I don’t think most of us have the information, to be honest, from what I’ve heard today.

My perception of this effort, both by the individuals bringing this action, as well as the judges that made such a ridiculous order, that this is all meant to be as disruptive as possible, to disenfranchise as many voters as possible. Therefore, I find that if this is allowed to stand, the very people it is supposed to be helping will be hurt in the process. Not to mention, that all the voters that have already voted will get the attitude, "Why bother? My vote doesn’t count anyhow," which is exactly the problem in the first place. It is hard enough to get people out and get -- to vote. And now you are sending them the message that their vote doesn’t count unless it conforms to a new set of rules. New set. Thank you.

SEN. RUCHO: Thank you very much.
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<td>REP. BRAWLEY: Thank you. Last one in Charlotte.</td>
<td>together a flawless public hearing. And I personally say thank you for your hard work. We appreciate it very, very much. And I know the committee members do the same. We have achieved our goal today, and that is to have everyone that chose to speak to have an opportunity to speak. And for anyone else, they are more than welcome to put in, as Representative Lewis alluded to, the -- the -- they can use public comment on the NC -- NCLEG website. Tomorrow -- members of the committee, tomorrow we will be meeting and going over -- of course, you'll have a chance to go over the comments that have been made today. Going over the issue of -- of the written comments that came in.</td>
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<td>SEN. RUCHO: Okay.</td>
<td>REP. LEWIS: Apparently there was one more in Charlotte we missed, if we could just hear him before everybody else.</td>
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<td>REP. BRAWLEY: Senator, at that point, the Charlotte site is closed.</td>
<td>SEN. RUCHO: We'll hold that final comment. Apparently, there was a person that was not seated at his seat when he was supposed to be there to speak. So, Representative Brawley in Charlotte at Central Piedmont, last speaker, please. Representative Brawley? Representative Brawley, can you hear me? Representative Brawley.</td>
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<td>SEN. RUCHO: Thank you. All right. Ladies and gentlemen of the committee, first of all I'd like to thank the public for participating in this event and -- and doing their part. And also for the attention of the committee. I'd like a special thank you to our court reporter. Thank you very much for a wonderful job and being very patient with us. Before I finish the final statement, Representative Lewis, any comments?</td>
<td>REP. LEWIS: Yes, Mr. Chairman. Thank you. I would like to offer my sincere thanks on behalf of the chairs to the members of the House and the Senate, those that are here in Raleigh today and those that are attending the remote sites across the state. Further, I thank our central staff for their hard work over the weekend, the NCGA police, the House and Senate Sergeant-at-Arms, our partnership with the community colleges, and also with the universities. Thanks to your help, we've been able to pull off a series of public comment for the past five and a half hours. We've done that across six sites. I would point out for the record, that in 2002, when the Democratic-controlled General Assembly was ordered to redraw the maps, they held no public hearings. I'd further point out that in 2003, when the Democrat majority was ordered to redraw the map, they held one. It was in Raleigh and had 20 speakers. We have had more than 60 participate and express their concerns over the past five and a half hours. I'm very grateful for all of you who took time to participate today. I will further add, Mr. Chairman, that the comments that were submitted in the -- in written form prior to noon today are hereby directed to be sent to the members of the Joint Redistricting Committee for their review. Comment that continues to come in prior to 8:00 tonight will also be batched and sent to members of the committee prior to our meeting tomorrow. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. That concludes my comments.</td>
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<td>REP. BRAWLEY: Senator, at that point, the Charlotte site is closed.</td>
<td>MR. MATT NEWTON: Thank you so much. And I hope you can hear me now. My name is Matt Newton. I live in Charlotte. I am an attorney with my own law firm here. I'm also chairman of Mecklenburg County's Democratic Party. I will keep it very brief, and I want to apologize for missing the deadline a moment ago, and I thank you all so much for -- for sticking around and for listening to me. Very quickly, I did read the opinion of the -- of the Court that was issued just about a week and a half ago. And as I understand it, I -- I -- I was a big shocked by that opinion. But as I understand it, the proposition was that racial gerrymandering didn't occur, because political gerrymandering had occurred. And in my opinion, I think regardless of the gerrymandering that happened, it should not be tolerated. Even if, right, there's a custom of this in the past, I think it's time that we all put our foot down. And many people before me have talked</td>
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<td>SEN. RUCHO: Okay. Representative Brawley, have the speaker begin again, please, if you'll be kind enough.</td>
<td>REP. BRAWLEY: Yes. Matt Newton is recognized for five minutes.</td>
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<td>REP. BRAWLEY: Senator, at that point, the Charlotte site is closed.</td>
<td>MR. MATT NEWTON: Thank you so much. And I hope you can hear me now. My name is Matt Newton. I live in Charlotte. I am an attorney with my own law firm here. I'm also chairman of Mecklenburg County's Democratic Party. I will keep it very brief, and I want to apologize for missing the deadline a moment ago, and I thank you all so much for -- for sticking around and for listening to me. Very quickly, I did read the opinion of the -- of the Court that was issued just about a week and a half ago. And as I understand it, I -- I -- I was a big shocked by that opinion. But as I understand it, the proposition was that racial gerrymandering didn't occur, because political gerrymandering had occurred. And in my opinion, I think regardless of the gerrymandering that happened, it should not be tolerated. Even if, right, there's a custom of this in the past, I think it's time that we all put our foot down. And many people before me have talked</td>
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about an independent commission to -- to redraw
lines in the future. And I hope that the General
Assembly takes that seriously under consideration
as we move forward.

Having said that, in my county, we have
one of those Congressional districts that needs to
be redrawn. That's Congressional District 12. And
it's surrounded by both Congressional District 9
and Congressional District 8. I wanted to bring to
the attention of the General Assembly the numbers
of folks that have been redistricted out of the 8th
and the 9th into the 12th. And ask that if we move
forward, that there is no -- there is no lifting of
the federal court order tomorrow, to please
consider placing those folks, who in my opinion
have been disenfranchised, back into their 8th and
the 9th Congressional districts.

And what we're talking about here is
we're talking about 47,000 African American voters.
47,000. There are 13,000 in Congressional 9 that
were displaced and put into Congressional 12. And
there were -- what does that leave? -- 34 -- 34,000
that were taken out of 8 and put into 12. So as
you move forward and if the redistricting does
occur by Friday, please, please, please, we value
every voice in our democracy. We value the -- our
neighbors here in Mecklenburg County. Please
consider placing those folks, those 47,000 voices,
back into Congressional 8 and Congressional 9.

Thank you so much for your time.

SEN. RUCHO: Thank you. All right.

Members of the committee, we'll finish up with the
last comment, and that being the Select Committee
on Redistricting -- the Joint Select Committee will
be meeting Tuesday at 10:00 in 643 here. And at
that time, we will have a chance to digest all the
information we received today and try to establish
some criteria upon which we would like to draw
these maps that would coincide with what the court
decision was read. That being said, this committee
meeting, public hearing is over.