EX. 12
REP. TORBETT: Well, we're going to move on. Are y'all ready? All right, the same rules apply. The same rules apply; you get three minutes. We have a gentleman right here, Sergeant at Arms, that's going to give you the one-minute warning and tell you when time is up. We can, if it's more effective, also have people if you would, on deck -- even though I'm using a baseball analogy over here.

So now we're going to jump ahead. Remember y'all voted for this. We're going to let Abby Connors, if she hadn't gone to sleep yet. Abby, come up here, young lady.

(REP. TORBETT: What Ralph is telling you is that we have devices up here that are recording this for this evening, okay? So all that will be heard by the court reporter --)

(REP. TORBETT: What Ralph is telling you is that we have devices up here that are recording this for this evening, okay? So all that will be heard by the court reporter --)
REP. TORBETT: And so -- so your words will be captured, they will be recorded onto the court document, if you would, just as if we were all in Raleigh, for example. Okay? So I just wanted to let you know that.

We’re going to move forward with this. Abby, you made some people mad at me, because I let you go first, but I don’t care. Are you good? I’m a granddad, I told them a minute ago. Abby Connors, tell us what you’d like for us to hear.

MS. CONNORS: My name is --

REP. TORBETT: It’s all good.

MS. CONNORS: My name is -- oh --

REP. TORBETT: It’s okay, hon.

MS. CONNORS: I’m so sorry, I get really nervous.

REP. TORBETT: You’re doing great. You’re doing great. Take your time.

MS. CONNORS: My name is Abigail Connors, and I am nine years old, and I live in Charlotte. I came here with my mom because the decisions being made to redistrict will even impact my first elections. Oops, I mean my first election. Districts should be fair -- everyone -- for everyone. Elections should be about what all
people want. We should pick who we want to speak for us in Congress. They should not speak -- be picking us. Thank you.

REP. TORBETT: Now back to the list. Who -- who's on deck? Casey Throneburg, Beth Henry, Anne Clifford, Sally Kneidel. All right. Hang on one second. Let me ask a question here. Sergeant at Arms, do we need to still use this microphone, or was it for -- only for that thing?

SERGEANT AT ARMS: It's only for that, yes.

REP. TORBETT: So if they stand actually closer to here, you'll hear them more easier for the recording; is that correct?

SERGEANT AT ARMS: Okay.

REP. TORBETT: Y'all get that? When you speak, disregard the microphone; come to this area right here right here so you can be picked up by these microphones. Thank you.

MR. THORNBURG: Hello, my name is Casey Throneburg. Thank you for holding these hearings, but I'm not particularly optimistic, given that we have -- since we haven't been given time to fully analyze these maps and they were drawn by the same consultants who drew the previous maps which we
wasted $4.8 million defending, and the Supreme Court unanimously upheld the decision that those maps were racially gerrymandered.

Although this hearing isn’t about Congressional districts, since those already had to be redrawn, I do think our 2012 Congressional election illustrates the severe impact of gerrymandering. That year 81,000 more North Carolinians chose Democratic representatives for Congress than Republicans, but we elected three Democratic representatives and ten Republicans. Republicans won 76.92 percent of the seats, with only 48.75 percent of the votes.

Before those 2012 maps were unveiled, Congressman Patrick McHenry bragged to Politico about packing black voters into a new majority-minority district. State Representative and Redistricting Chair David Lewis, tried to explain the motivations were partisan instead of racial. Lewis stated, "We want to make clear that we are going to use political data in drawing this map. It is to gain partisan advantage." Lewis also stated they were drawing districts to elect ten Republicans and three democrats because, quote, "I do not believe it’s possible to draw a map with
Courts have not said partisan gerrymandering is legal, but instead that it is difficult to measure. The best method may -- may be with the efficiency gap. And an analysis by Professor Simon Jackson counted out of 512 US elections, dating back to 1976, North Carolina's past three elections were -- had the seventh, eighth, and 13th most pro-Republican efficiency gaps. Last year, Republicans won 64 percent of the General Assembly with only 53 percent of the votes. That doesn't even account for unchallenged districts, where safe incumbents must pander to party extremes to survive primaries. This lack of accountability leads to extreme partisanship. Under fair maps, the Republicans wouldn't have a supermajority, and unconstitutional legislation such as the Voter Identification Verification Act would not have become law.

While white nationalists like those in Charlottesville deserve vehement condemnation, they have not systematically undermined the will of African Americans in a way comparable to the North Carolina legislature. Gerrymandering and disenfranchising voters is less overt, but has a
greater impact. Courts ruled North Carolina's voter ID laws targeted black voters with surgical precision, but an Election Board audit found only one instance in 2016 where a photo ID would have prevented an impersonation attempt. Gerrymandering, however, essentially nullifies hundreds of thousands of votes.

Politicians should not draw districts based on partisanship, predicted outcomes, or incumbency protection. 80 percent of North Carolinians agree voters should be able to choose their representatives instead of politicians choosing their voters. Districts should adhere to geographic boundaries, be compact, and not split communities or precincts like the proposed maps do, such as like with the districts of Senators Ford and Tarte, here in Mecklenburg.

Our elected officials are to represent and serve the people, so let's have fair maps and a battle of ideas. Cheating by gerrymandering and disenfranchising voters is unpatriotic, disgusting and not sustainable. Thank you to those who fight gerrymandering, like Democracy NC and Common Cause. I urge the legislature to draw fair maps and give us all a voice. Thank you.
REP. TORBETT: Thank you, Beth Henry.

MS. HENRY: I'm Beth Henry, a lifelong North Carolinian. I am horrified to see our state still in the national news for anti-voter laws and unfair legislative maps that target African Americans with almost surgical precision. As recent events in Charlottesville reminded us, our country and our state need racial reconciliation and healing, but instead of healing, gerrymandering promotes racial divisions and resentment. Racial gerrymandering robs African Americans of their constitutional right to one person, one vote. This is wrong.

Most North Carolinians understand that we are all better off when all people are treated with fairness and respect, when all are encouraged to participate in our democracy, when all votes have meaning. I urge the Committee and the legislature to reject maps that have the impact of disenfranchising African Americans. Please, at this critical time, recognize how important it is to make these maps fair.

I'm also concerned that when districts are not competitive, lawmakers do not listen to the people. The maps and inadequate data just came...
out, and there hasn't been time to analyze them thoroughly, but initial reviews suggest that the maps are only slightly better than the court reject -- those the court rejected that's racist. 90 percent of the districts seem solidly tilted to one side or the other. This lack of competition leads to unaccountable legislators, whatever their part. Unaccountability amounts to taxation without representation. Unaccountability means money replaces the vote. I urge the Committee not to approve any districts that lack partisan competitiveness or show racial bias.

REP. TORBETT: Thank you, Beth. All right. Anne Clifford. By the way, while Anne's coming up here, I'm going to tell y'all have been great. We've been hearing about complaints from other places; y'all have been great. Thank y'all for that. Anne Clifford.

MS. CLIFFORD: Yes, Anne Clifford from Mecklenburg County. And based on the reaction that I've heard that you've had for other speakers, I'm counting on your Southern hospitality and your concern for my feelings. Feelings are a big thing now, right?

So I'll begin by saying that hopefully
the judiciary will respect the constitutional duty of the legislature to draw district lines. The maps as drawn are fair and legal. There are more compact districts following the whole county provision. There are fewer precincts split, and city and state boundaries are respected to the best of the ability to do so.

Gerrymandering? Look no further than the historical Congressional 12th. The gerrymandering is only a rallying cry when Democrats are in the minority. When they were in the majority, it was a non-issue. Disenfranchised? Look no further than the Charlotte City Council and the Mecklenburg County Board of Commissioners.

Maps cannot give the Democrats victories they fail to gain on their own in elections. I can go through elections the Democrats have recently failed to win in greater detail, quote percentages or data, but simply put, the Democrats have lost nine out of ten Presidential elections, three straight Senate elections, 14 out of the last 18 partisan statewide elections. Drawing district lines don’t guarantee outcome, but better policies that reflect the will of the voters do.

REP. TORBETT: Sally Kneidel. Next up,
Debbie Snowdon, William Brice, Austin Miller Orteneau. Did I do that okay?

MS. KNEIDEL: I'm Sally Kneidel. I'm a retired teacher and writer. I've been in Charlotte all my life. I've been thinking about the difference between gerrymandering and the strategies of the KKK and the neo-Nazis. Most Americans oppose the KKK and the neo-Nazis, especially their violence and their hatred. Gerrymandering is different from that. It's inconspicuous, almost invisible. It's carried out mostly by polite, white men in expensive suits, doing their prestigious jobs.

Most Americans don't even know what gerrymandering means, and yet the violence of the neo-Nazis and the gerrymandering of the elite are very similar in their effects. Both are white supremacist tactics to put down and disconnect people of color. Both can be effective, but in the end, gerrymandering is much more effective and more dangerous.

Gerrymandering is killing our democracy. Not only does it leave a large portion of our population without representation, it moves us closer to a repressive, totalitarian government.
owned by the ultra-rich. It says -- gerrymandering says loud and clear, quote, you don't count, you have no voice, you are other. We will knock you off the playing field. We are in control. We now own the government, and we have rigged it so we will stay in control.

I heard on NBC that North Carolina is ground zero for voter suppression largely because of gerrymandering. We are the state most tainted by racist politics, most dishonored. I used to love this state where I was born, where my dad was a politician back in the day. Now, I feel ashamed to live here in this madness. I'm glad my dad can't see it.

To the legislators, please honor our democracy and our Constitution. Please act like you have principles. If you don't, we are going to wind up in a very ugly future that is a far cry from what the Founding Fathers intended.

REP. TORBETT:  Debbie Snowdon.

MS. SNOWDON: My name's Debbie Snowdon. I'm from Denver, North Carolina, and I don't know about you all, but I'm tired of being told that this system is okay because it was done to us, so now we can do it to you. That's a kindergartener's
excuse, and we need to grow up.

There are people's lives at stake.

People's quality of life suck because of this gerrymandering. It is so unconscionable that Raleigh continues this madness. Sorry, I'm not shaking because I'm nervous; I'm shaking because I'm mad.

The new maps are just crazy. They're submitted this late just because gerrymandering lets you do that because you don't have to listen to us. As we've heard, 90 percent of these districts are still completely locked up. And you can call it racial gerrymandering, you can call it partisan gerrymandering; it all comes down to the same thing. It's racial. We know that in North Carolina, there is no difference between the two.

This just simply means the extreme partisanship and the polarization in this state will continue. That less than 80 percent of the electorate will still continue to determine who gets in office and what policies are going to be heard, which is why, of course, we got HB2. So again, you're using the exact same company whose maps were illegally drawn, and we get to pay for it. Thank you very much.
Now, I want to share some really frightening results and they were frightening for me, anyway. This is a 2012 Electoral Integrity Project study. This assessed the integrity of electoral processes throughout the world. Within the United States, North Carolina ranked last of all the 50 states. And some of the quotes from the findings of this report are -- I'll keep it short.

"North Carolina is a deeply flawed, partly-free democracy that is only slightly ahead of the failed democracies that constitute much of the Third World." And "North Carolina can no longer be considered as a full-functioning democracy." And also, "North Carolina is the worst entity in the world ever analyzed by the Electoral Integrity Project."

I was so alarmed by these findings that I went up to Raleigh and I made appointments with my two legislators, who are, of course, Republican. There's Representative Saine and there's Senator Curtis. Both of them said to me, "Hey, you did it to us." That's -- that -- that was what I got in return. They were very frank about it. Screw you. You did it to us.

These results have been brought to
your -- these results have been brought to the legislators' attention many times, but they just brush them aside in favor of maintaining a status quo. Well, this might make their lives comfortable, and it might make their seats secure, but I've got to tell you. It's leaving many of our citizens stranded on the outside of this system and we're waving worthless ballots. Thank you.


MS. WIGGINS: Good afternoon. I'm Nancy Wiggins. I've been a voter in Mecklenburg County since 1977. The purpose of my testimony is to implore the state legislature to finally make the most equitable districts that are fair-minded regarding the citizens, giving them competitive choice for their representation.

Since Gomillion v. Lightfoot, Baker v. Carr and Reynolds v. Sims, the directive of the U.S. Supreme Court has been to have equitable proportional representative districts regarding population and socioeconomic demographic factors of citizens. For far too long, the legislative agenda
on this matter has been to satisfy and maintain
the -- the dominating partisan representatives in
the legislature. Totally ignoring the needs of the
citizens of the -- that they represent.

North Carolina -- North Carolinians,
excuse me, and Americans are practical people, and
their structure of government reflects their desire
to have practical policies that serve the greater
needs. Currently, we are operating under an
erroneous assumption that these citizens and
constituents are better served by an
artificially -- artificial district representation
system that does not fit their needs or beliefs.
Let's please live up to our commitment as Americans
and as North Carolinians to live by our motto.

In Mecklenburg County, the most egregious
of these senatorial -- of the districts that I have
noticed under the brief amount of time I've been
given to look at them is the State Senate District
41. It needs to be more geographical --
geographically relevant to the citizens -- for the
citizens' representation of this county. Thank
you.

REP. TORBETT: Thank you, ma'am Martin
Doherty? Have I pronounced your name wrong?

MS. DEGREE: My name is Mary Degree, and I'm a state officer of the NAACP. The right to vote is not a game. It is a sacred right won both through the blood, sweat and tears of our ancestors and it's -- you know what? It's a low-down, dirty shame that we're here today in the 21st century, going through maps. Despite having come to power by using racism for the -- their partisan gain, the GOP -- GOP caucus is unrepentant. There has been no acknowledgement or apology to the people of North Carolina, particularly to African Americans and other people of color, whose voting power was suppressed by the GOP's unconstitutional and racial, unjust maps for six years.

To the contrary, the all-white leadership of the General Assembly has played, and continues to play, the same game of putting their own interests and discriminatory agenda above the will of the people. We do not trust these maps which were driven -- drawn by the same hired helper --
helper who drew the 2011 racially-gerrymandered
maps, and which was commissioned by an illegal
legislature that has failed at every turn to act
with integrity.

Instead, an independent special master
should be tasked with drawing new maps to ensure
that the law is followed and not the directives of
an illegal legislature that the federal courts have
already found guilty of intentionally acting to
suppress the votes of African Americans, and that
numerous federal and state courts have been found
guilty of passing legislation that flaunts the
federal and state constitution and the will of the
people.

These games must stop. The GOP
leadership of the General Assembly has repeatedly
argued before the courts that it is impossible to
quickly remedy their unconstitutional maps. But
now that they have lost their Supreme Court appeal,
we see the truth, that maps can be created in days
when the General Assembly decides it has to. We
deserve an apology for the inexcusable games that
people have played. Justice delayed is justice
denied. Thank you.

REP. TORBETT: Jay Leach? Jay Leach?
MR. LEACH: I don't know about you, but I look forward to the day when the economic miracle in North Carolina is so miraculous that the County of Mecklenburg can afford a microphone that amplifies voices. I understand they're making them now.

I'm Jay Leach, and I'm minister of the Unitarian Universalist Church of Charlotte. Here and around our state today, many have asserted and will assert that Republican redistricting is a regressive, irresponsible, racially-biased offense of a system steeped in white supremacy. I don't disagree with that assessment. Regrettably, it is insufficient.

Yes, Republicans are the problem now, but they are following a cynically crass course invoked by North Carolina's Democrats to their own biased ends. Ever since Governor Gerry of Massachusetts used this political sleight of hand to create his salamander-shaped district, the status quo has used gerrymandering to protect and defend its own interests. Nothing I or anyone could say today will change this. You will keep on with surgical precision cynically trying to defend your own power. While Democrats -- when Democrats are back...
in the majority, they will do the same thing.

If you wonder why the fastest-growing political affiliation is unaffiliated and why many opt not to participate at all, look no further than this practice. Your shared cynicism has not only fueled the raging fire of political animosity and encouraged the mass exodus from party politics, it has sown the seeds of social unrest. You have colluded to create the kind of mistrust we saw in our streets last September and which we will surely see again. When people cannot trust the political process, they will look for and find ways outside of it to give deepest expression to their concerns, complaints, aspirations and ideals. It is abundantly clear today. We do not, we cannot and we should not trust this long-practiced process.


MR. LONG: Good evening, ladies and
gentlemen, and to the Chairman of the Committee, Mr. Lewis. I appreciate the opportunity to speak here. My name's Ronnie Long. I'm a -- been elected as an at-large member for the North Carolina 8th District Republican Party. I'm also a business owner in Cabarrus County, a father, grandfather and a great-grandfather. Don't let the gray hair fool you; I'm only 47.

A word to our members of the House and the Senate that are here. You guys have caught hell tonight. One thing that some of the public may not know is that they had planned to have a longer time to work on this situation. They were supposed to be going to Raleigh on September 6th and work on this through November 15th. My understanding is it was what -- within the last three weeks, the courts have come back and said, you got until -- and then they shut us down quite a bit.

I am not in favor of the maps that we have drawn. Now, the Committee has done as good a job as possibly they could with what they had to work with. I have to tell you, I'm very disappointed in the people that they hired to do this work. I think anybody with any kind of common
sense could have sat down, thrown darts at a map over their shoulder and done a better job than our quote, hired map drawer has done.

The gerrymandering has got to stop. We can't use that as an excuse anymore, though. We have got to set up a system here in North Carolina that represents all of the voters. I don't care if you're pink, green with purple polka dots. Doesn't matter whether you've got an R, a D, a U, or a whatever behind your name. We all need to have fair representation.

These folks that we have elected to represent us need to know that we're standing behind them but they also need to know that they work for us. We remind them of that, and we ask them to please go back to Raleigh, take this information that we've given them in public hearing. And I have to say, this has been one of the worst episodes of a public hearing I have ever seen. Learn from it, put us together a map that will pass Superior Court or Supreme Court final say-so and get us back on track like we need to be. Enough of this he said, she said, the Democrats did it, the Republicans did it.

Look, let's get it right, folks. We got
a very short time to do it in. The Committee's
done as good a job, I guess, as they feel like they
could in a short period of time, but quite frankly,
I think they left us woefully short. Thank you for
your time.

REP. TORBETT: Thank you. Louise?
Louise Woods? James Doermann?

MR. DOERMANN: Yeah?

REP. TORBETT: James, you're next. Steve
Turner?

MS. WOODS: I thank for the opportunity
to speak to you today -- tonight. I'm Louise
Woods. I am a resident now of Mecklenburg County
for the last 50 years, but I grew up in eastern
North Carolina in the Farmville area. And my
family for generations and generations has lived
there, since before the Revolution, as a matter of
fact. And so I have a heritage, my heart -- is as
a North Carolinian and my heart breaks right now.
My heart breaks when I feel like that the ideal
that I was taught in public school, the ideal that
I felt that North Carolinians believe -- North
Carolinians believed in and were working toward has
been destroyed. And that is one man, one woman, one vote. My heart breaks because I'm -- I am -- for the last seven years voted, and my vote hasn't counted.

How long do we have to wait? How long is justice denied? How long when we know that my senatorial -- state senatorial district, for example, is like this in a little circle and got a big table that goes across Independence Boulevard on North Independence -- goes across Independence Boulevard down to Monroe Road, all the way down to Villa Heights.

Now, it doesn't take any -- it really doesn't take anything but a little logic to know that that was gerrymandering and that that took away the rights of African Americans. It took away the rights of everyone who lived in that district, and that's happened all over the state. In seven years, nothing. We still don't have our right to vote. And I'm angry about that. I'm frustrated.

I want to tell you that -- that any public school -- excuse me, student in North Carolina could tell you that if half of the people vote -- it's Democrats, approximately. If half of the people that vote as Republicans, and if
two-thirds of the legislature is in either party and one-third in the other party, something's wrong. It doesn't take a judge to figure that out. Anybody in the legislature knows it. You know it's wrong, and you need to do something about it, and you need to do it now.

One other thing that I don't understand. Republicans -- many Republicans, I believe, really would like to have non-partisan maps. I know every Democrat I've talked to now, since the Democrats are not in charge, but every Democrat now is saying they want non-partisan maps. So why don't you get together? Why is House Bill 200 not even allowed to be put up for a vote? Why doesn't every representative demand that your leader put it up for a vote and then take it to the Senate? Give people a chance. Give our -- give our -- at least give our leaders a chance to vote on a non-partisan plan. Thank you.

REP. TORBETT: Thank you. Thank you for coming out. James Doermann. How do you pronounce the last name?

MR. DOERMANN: Doermann.

REP. TORBETT: Doermann.

MR. DOERMANN: Yep.
REP. TORBETT: Excellent. Thank you.

MR. DOERMANN: Good evening. My name's Jim Doermann; I live here in Charlotte. In 2005, in December, I was part of the force of Marines that was occupying a part of Iraq. And we were encouraging the voters of Iraq to participate in the first free and fair elections that the nation of Iraq had had since 1958.

And now 12 years later, I'm in my own state watching my fellow citizens have to fight to have free and fair elections in their own state, here in the United States of America? You can't understand how upsetting that is to me to know that we'll send people overseas and dump trillions of dollars into wars overseas to spread democracy, and then we have officials in our own cities and states that fight against letting us have fair and free representation in our own country. It's disgusting and it's anti-American.

There have been a lot of really great points that have been made here tonight. And I don't want to rehash a lot of the same ones because -- you know, whether it's been coming from Republicans or Democrats, the overwhelming message coming from everyone is that these maps don't work.
These maps are terrible.

The solution coming from both sides of your constituency is set up a system a non-partisan committee or some non-partisan form of creating voting districts that don’t create such partisan divides. Everyone’s pointed this out. It’s the Democrats did it, the Republicans did it. You know, like, we’ve heard this time and again tonight, and it’s time to put a stop to that. You can do that. Be the representatives who stand up to the — you know, the House majority whips or whoever it is that’s — that’s forcing this to continue. Stand up to them and vote for your constituents. Thank you.


still have a racism problem. It has always been a racism problem, never a race problem.

And thanks to the hate rhetoric of our divider in chief, it's only getting worse. So I say to our fine representatives in Raleigh, who are tasked with getting these maps right, to get colorblind. Get it right. Get on the right side of -- of history. Get woke. Country over party. Country over party. Do it right.

REP. TORBETT: Thank you, Carl. Chris Turner.

MR. TURNER: Thank you very much. I come before you as the elected official for the Mecklenburg County Republican Party. I am a millennial. I have been here for about eight years. I work for a company here in Charlotte. I'm raising my family here in Charlotte.

First of all, I want to thank our representatives. It is disappointing to hear from grown adults terms like white supremacist, Nazis, neo-Nazis for people who are drawing maps. There's a big difference. I'm a history major. I'm a religion major. I might have been out of class for a while, but there's a big difference between that and drawing maps.
That being said, as the representative for Mecklenburg County and speaking about the county, let's get past platitudes. Let's get past the talking points. Let's look at the statistics. In 2016, Hillary Clinton won Mecklenburg County by 294,000 votes to 150,000 votes against Donald Trump. That is two-to-one. Two-to-one. In our State House, we have eight Democrats and four Republicans. Two-to-one. Sounds like the maps that they drew work just fine.

In the Senate, it's three-to-two. Democrats to Republicans. The maps got it right. Am I disappointed in that? Do I wish Mecklenburg County would be more Republican? Absolutely. That's why I ran for office, and that's why I'm going to continue to work to turn that around. Because in Raleigh since 2010, Republicans have proven that the Carolina comeback is real.

We have lower taxes, we have better business, we owe less debt to the government and we all as citizens have more opportunity. That being said, look at the city council. Nine-to-two; Democrats to Republicans. You don't hear me complaining about districts. We've got more work to do in Mecklenburg County as Republicans.
county commission, I think, is seven-to-two. You
don't hear me complaining about district drawings.

I'm going to work harder and bring better
policies in these local races to win the way we
have done on the state and national level. This is
not about districting. Donald Trump, whether you
like him or not, he won 76 counties out of our
state. Our state has rejected Democratic policies,
and we are seeing that countless times in
non-partisan and partisan races across our state.

As soon as people realize that the
Republican values that are being led through our
Raleigh leaders are what's best for our county and
for our state, then the better we'll be able to
move past this absolutely ridiculous statement that
our maps are what's holding Democrats down. It's
their policy. Thank you very much.

REP. TORBETT: Thank you. Dan Steele.
Dan, you're next. Laura McNamara. Okay. Sarah
Cassie -- Casey? Sarah Casey? I'm sorry, but
Dimple Shah? Is that right? Okay. Did I do your
name okay? Excellent. Thank you. Abbey Dunn.
Joanna Hollingsworth? Joanna Hollingsworth?
Elliott Willingham? Elliott Willingham? Steve
Lenise Melton? Okay. So we have Dan, right?

MR. STEELE: Yes, sir.

REP. TORBETT: We have Dan Steele, Laura McNamara, Dimple Shah, Steve Rundle, Lenise Melton and Mary Bowman. Is that correct? Thank you.

Dan, sorry.

MR. STEELE: It's all right. My name is Dan Steele, and I was born just a few blocks from this spot, grew up on Rea Road, graduated from Myers Park High School, and I've spent a combined total of seven years on two degrees from UNC Chapel Hill. I say all that simply to provide a background as to how much of a personal, vested interest I have in the future of my state.

I'm also a healthcare professional. And so directly serving the citizens of this state is my professional mission, as well as my personal conviction. Every doctoral program including the clinical doctorates like the one I recently completed, involves training in research methods and principles.

One of the most basic concepts in research is that of bias. Much attention is paid in peer-reviewed settings to conflict of interest and how those can cast doubt on the validity of all
findings that follow them. It's important to remember that bias does not require malicious intent in order to negatively affect the outcome of any scientific undertaking. This is a basic and uncontested principle known to every first-year PhD student.

I will not use this public forum to express my personal opinions on the -- on the intent of the GOP lawmakers who drew our current legislative maps. What I will say to the Republican legislators is that if you wish to be taken seriously in your assertions, that your intentions are to have fairly represented elections in North Carolina, then prove it by appointing an independent non-partisan committee to draw legislative maps using scientific statistical methods to ensure as fair a system of representation as possible.

The current method of politicians choosing their own voters is a glaring red flag that would immediately fail peer -- fail to pass peer review in any respected research journal. I understand that politics is not a laboratory science. But the impact of what happens in the legislature tangibly effects the lives of millions
of vulnerable citizens like the patients I treat every day. So surely any honest public servant owes his or her constituents the most fair and systematic way possible to determine their representatives. Take this decision out of the hands of both Republicans and Democrats. Demonstrate your willingness to eliminate even the appearance of a conflict of interest and take the first step towards restoring shattered voter trust in our democratic system. Thank you.

REP. TORBETT: Thank you, Dan. Laura McNamara.

MS. MCNAMARA: Hello. Thank you for being here. Thank you for staying so late. I'm Laura McNamara. I'm from Charlotte, North Carolina. I'm 27 years old, and I know a lot of people my age would like to voice their opinions here today, but they couldn't be here at the four o'clock start time. So I do feel I'm speaking on behalf of many like-minded folks; that I'm ashamed to be part of a state that is called the worst efforts of gerrymandering in the United States. It -- it ashamed me and it's why I'm here today because I just felt like I needed to say something. I needed to protest. I needed people to hear that
we are not okay with this.

The new maps are not fair. They are still unfairly divided by race and income throughout party lines that were designed by legislators that are interested in their own benefit. I understand it has happened in the past, and I just want it to stop. I want non-partisan efforts to re-draw the maps. I want new maps. The current maps are -- I echo other speakers in saying that we need the courts to throw them out and we need non-partisan people to create a new map in order to create a fair voting system that respects democracy. We need maps that are free from partisan politics, that ignore voter registration data, past election results, and incumbent addresses that are used to draw the lines that benefit the people in power.

The new maps must comply with the Voting Rights Act to give minority voters, whose voices in North Carolina have been suppressed for decades, the chance to elect candidates of their choice. This is an issue that is imperative to upholding a democracy, and we cannot expect a fair representation of our citizens until these maps are fairly drawn. Again, thank you for being here and
staying 'til the end, and thank you for listening.

REP. TORBETT: Thank you.

MS. MCNAMARA: Thank you.

REP. TORBETT: Dimple Shah. Thank you.

MS. SHAH: Thank you. Thanks for having me. My name is Dimple Shah. I live in Matthews, North Carolina. These maps are still being gerrymandered. Less than 36 hours before the only opportunity for public comment on the proposed new legislative maps, the NCGOP finally released the correlating election data. We see why they don't want the public to have time to see and understand these new maps.

We compared the proposed maps to the current unconstitutional ones. Of the 16 GOP-held NC District House Districts Flip NC has identified as the most flippable based on past election results, 11 have been slanted more heavily for the GOP while only two were drawn more favorably for Democrats. The other three were unchanged.

Make no mistake; the NCGOP is actually trying to benefit from having drawn illegal racially-biased maps in the first place and the court order to redraw them. These lawmakers were elected under unconstitutional maps, and now
they've used the most recent election results of
data on demographic changes to try to preserve as
many Republican-held districts as possible and
limit competition. This is what racism looks like.

Though the GOP can, and will, technically
argue that they fixed the problem of overt racial
gerrymandering, they have simply returned to a
model of precise partisan gerrymandering no fairer
than the model used to draw the illegal maps in the
first place. This is an arrogant, cynical attempt
to adhere to the court's ruling while blatantly
disregarding the spirit of the order to draw
districts that would result in fair representation
for all NC -- North Carolina citizens.

These new proposed maps are actually more
favorable to the GOP than the current ones, and
they do nothing to address the fact that the
current legislature was elected based on
unconstitutional maps. This is a clear attempt by
the NCGOP to cement their illegal super-majority,
and one that the court should reject for a number
of reasons.

Most flagrantly, they've reached well
beyond the areas affected by racial gerrymandering
and redrawn many districts that were completely
unaffected by the court ruling. The court ordered the NCGOP to address a narrow set of districts it determined had been racially gerrymandered with near-surgical precision, and the NCGOP has used the court order as a chance to redraw much of the legislative map in its favor.

Historically, Democrats and Republicans have both been responsible for gerrymandering. Now, the GOP is showing that they have no interest in drawing fair maps. The future of North Carolina's democracy depends on all of its citizens to make their voices heard and demand the power to draw legislative maps be removed from the legislature. And they should be drawn independently, and we should have fair maps. I tell my children that they must play fairly, and it's not too much to ask for our legislature to play fairly as well. Thank you.

REP. TORBETT: Thank you, Dimple. Steve Rundle.

MR. RUNDLE: Bless your all's hearts for being here so late. Good God. I'm - I'm going to be brief and not rehash too much, but I do want to point out that one of the fundamental things at -- at work here is a racial bias and a discriminatory
intent. What we -- we have to look at what happened back in 2013 when the Supreme Court removed the shackles off North Carolina and were -- and they no longer had to submit their voting plans to the Justice Department. It -- Katie, bar the door. We -- we got voter ID laws. You know, voter suppression measures. Things to make it harder for those of -- in our communities of color and those, you know, who are -- they would be biased against due to race or party to get out to vote. Plain and simple.

And what we have here, just to look at the maps that we have coming out or look at the process that is keeping all of us here for hours on end, essentially a process that -- that gives you only a fifth of the voice because you're taking the entire state at one time as in a -- in a commentary period. And -- and a process that doesn't give you the data backing up the maps to really be able to evaluate in time.

So when we have had a legislature that -- that has tried -- tried to get away with stuff, been found by the courts to have discriminatory intent in what -- in what they have tried to get -- get away with in the past. This -- this map is --
is supposedly a correction of that. It's clearly not. It's just the latest example, exactly, of the egregious way this legislature has tried to suppress the vote and, you know, have a racially biased intent in the way they are doing things.

So bless your hearts. I -- I would also support a non-partisan way of doing this. You know, it's simply become too refined with the -- with the electronics and the way they can literally gerrymander things right down the middle of the street these days, you know, based on voter things. You know, for years and years you could never get it that fine. Now, both parties have the technologies, so we have to move to a non-partisan way of doing this.

But I -- I just have to point out, tonight with the process that's taking this long, keeping us all here, and -- and suppressing comments from a lot of people because of the cumbersomeness of the process. You know, it is just the -- the latest example of, you know, a legislature that doesn't want to open this up to comment, that doesn't want to pay attention to the courts and does -- doesn't want to -- and we will
see you in court again. Thank you.

REP. TORBETT: Lenise -- Lenise Melton.
Did I do your name -- first name right?
MS. MELTON: Yes, that is correct.
REP. TORBETT: Thank you. And then Mary Bowman. Thank you, Mary.

MS. MELTON: My name is Lenise Melton. I'm a resident of Gaston County. I work here in Charlotte. All of my voting life has taken place in North Carolina. I grew up in South Carolina. I'm just really discouraged about this whole thing. I'm going to say that it feels like theater to me. Like, nobody really cares what the citizens want. I'm sort of like the voting process; I've got an appeal, but I'll do my best.

In a democracy, the voters are supposed to pick the representatives. The representatives are not supposed to pick the voters, but both sides do. It doesn't really have a lot of sway with me. When Democrats were doing it, they weren't nearly as good at it, and two wrongs do not make a right. I'm pretty sure my parents taught me that. I'm pretty sure all your parents taught you that. They taught you that. I like to see the best in people. I like to think that whatever's in their heart,
it's for the good of all of us. And it's just really getting hard to always think that.

I really like this gerrymandering map. I don't know if anybody else has showed it to you. How you take a representative population, and there's four ways to do it. There's straight line. There is perfect, so that it comes out equally. There's compact, but completely unfair. And there's neither compact nor fair. And it feels like North Carolina picks winner number four. And the entire -- and we're leading the way. Other people are going yeah, let's do that. We're setting a terrible example.

And my other chart that I brought -- and it's not about the state legislature, because I have a full-time job. I'm not an activist. I'm not representing anybody, so I don't have time to dig through all these maps and figure this out for the state legislature. But I don't think -- that guy that was just quoting statistics about how it's exactly right because of Hillary's vote? I don't really think that's a good representative example.

This is a New York Times thing that lines up nine states. North Carolina comes in third behind West Virginia and South Carolina for the
most unrepresentative legislative nationally.  I think in '12, we were 44 percent Democrat votes and got three out of 13 seats, for 23 percent. And then it got worse. It got to 44 percent and we still have the same, you know, terrible 23 percent of our, you know, national seats. And you know, when are you going to be ashamed? When it's 51 percent, and we still only get 23 percent of the seats?

I just would beg you to be the bigger party. Be noble. Show us all in North Carolina and the country that we can do this non-partisan and we can win on ideas. We're a purple state. We need purple representatives. Thank you.

REP. TORBETT: Thank you, Lenise. Mary Bowman?

MS. BOWMAN: My name is Mary Bowman, and I am a minister here in Charlotte, North Carolina. I just really wanted to weigh in, in a general way, about just the importance that every voice really matters in North Carolina. That I think gerrymandering we've seen so often that we're seeing our elections determined at the primary stages. That we're really not allowing full votes to be cast and to be heard. And it's just
something that's so important.

Many others have pointed out that both parties are certainly guilty of this. I'm right in the middle of reading about Alexander Hamilton and the forming of our country. And we simply are asking for true, sort of, leadership in terms of allowing the process to really benefit all voices. And just really encourage that the current legislature would -- would take leadership. That they would allow that neither party has done this process very well and that it's really time to turn it over to an independent and bipartisan commission that can really analyze and get things to a more fair value. So thank you.

REP. TORBETT: Thank you, Mary. Ladies and gentlemen, wow. We started out, the room was just absolutely burning up. We had to turn the AC up as high as it would go. Thank you all so very much for attending. Very much, from the bottom of my heart. This is -- this means a whole lot when you participate, and we need more of that across our state and -- and country.

MR. WILLINGHAM: I thought I was on as well.

REP. TORBETT: What's your name, sir?
MR. WILLINGHAM: Elliott Willingham

REP. TORBETT: I'm sorry. I called your name earlier, and I marked you off for some reason.

MR. WILLINGHAM: I didn't hear you, obviously.

REP. TORBETT: I'm sorry. We have one more. Elliott Willingham

MR. WILLINGHAM: Thank you. I'm coming here from work. As a teacher, I'm always good about showing this like -- what this looks like to me. And also as a lifelong Presbyterian, my grandmother -- go back to my grandmothers of elder, many, many years. And she always went back to Micah. Love justice, show mercy and walk humbly in the eyes of God.

So when I looked at the map the other day for the district that I'm assigned to according to the new representative map, that's a combination of 67 and 99. To me, it kind of looks like this. Forgive me, I'm not -- not the best drawer. There. All right. Kind of like a fat cat, if you may, with the tail that's been cut off. Kind of what my -- my neighbor's cat used to look like when some relatives got a hold of the -- the tail here.

In any case, you have a -- a district
here where you have one representative, Representative Moore, who lives in Charlotte. Now, coming against Representative Burr, who lives in Albemarle down here. With fully about 50 miles between them, correct? Okay. Well, not 50 miles -- I'm sorry. About 50 minutes in terms of driving distance between you.

Now, how is -- when I looked at the map, how is this going to best benefit those families and constituents that live in Charlotte versus those that live in -- I guess this is fast-growing suburban Cabarrus County, rural Cabarrus County going into Stanly County which is mostly rural as well? It doesn't make sense. It's not showing that basic common-sense principle about, you know, love and justice, showing mercy -- mercy, and being humble in the way that we utilize our -- our -- our -- ideas in terms of democracy.

Again, being a lifelong Presbyterian, we're supposed to believe in representative government. We're supposed to believe in making sure the people are represented fairly. This, in this particular case, isn't showing that to me. And that's beyond all the other historical issues that happened with our redistricting efforts here.
Please keep this in mind. There's got to be something better here. There's got to be. The fat cat really ain't working.

REP. TORBETT: Thank you very much. Let me start by announcing that I'm not seeing anybody else that was here to speak and I did not call your name. I do apologize again, Elliott. All right. That -- that is all I have. Thank you all for being here. Thank you all for participating and this meeting is -- unless anyone has any last -- adjourned.

(End of proceedings.)
STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA
COUNTY OF WAKE

CERTIFICATION OF TRANSCRIPT

This is to certify that the foregoing transcript of proceedings held on August 22, 2017, is a true and accurate transcript of the proceedings as transcribed by me or under my supervision. I further certify that I am not related to any party or attorney, nor do I have any interest whatsoever in the outcome of this action.

This 28th day of August, 2017.

Brad Worley

Brad Worley, transcriptionist
Worley Reporting
P.O. Box 99169
Raleigh, NC 27624
919-870-8070
brad@worleyreporting.com