NORTH CAROLINA GENERAL ASSEMBLY
JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE ON REDISTRICTING

TRANSCRIPT OF THE PROCEEDINGS
PUBLIC HEARING CONCLUSION - HUDSON SATELLITE SITE

In Raleigh, North Carolina
Tuesday, August 22, 2017
Transcribed by Brad Worley

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(Transcriptionist's note: the following transcript is of proceedings held at the satellite hearing site following disconnection of the communications feed from the central Raleigh site.)

SEN. DANIEL: Because of the problems they've experienced and the number of -- really, there's a high volume of speakers that are still left in the metropolitan areas, so they just want the areas to each do their own speakers that are remaining. I think we have maybe eight here that are still wanting to speak.

And so this will -- hopefully, you'll be recorded by these gentlemen down here so it still all can be part of the record, and we're going to see if we can video it too. I'm not sure if they can do that without the -- that's the point. So the next speaker, then, is Josh Brannon. Stand right here. So you're recognized for three minutes, Josh.

MR. BRANNON: So my question to any legislators who still believe in gerrymandering is, would you -- if it were legal to break into voting machines and flip the ballots, would you do that? And if not, then how do you justify gerrymandering, because to democracy, it is exactly the same thing.
In North Carolina, it's very hard to quantify the effect that gerrymandering has on the state-level districts simply because there's so many districts that don't have challengers due to the districts being so partisan in the first place.

However, as a proxy, we can use the congressional districts in North Carolina, and in 2016, 47 percent of ballots cast in North Carolina for Congress were cast for Democrats. We elected 23 percent of Democrats to Congress. We undermined half of Democratic ballots. That's functionally no different from breaking into voting machines, flipping half of the Democratic votes to Republican.

And, you know, if we're going to continue to pretend we live in a democracy, we have to fix that. We can't have a situation where one party, each voter has one and a half votes and the other party, each voter only has half a vote. That's what we have right now. It's looking like for the General Assembly, the outcome is going to be the same. The numbers have already been crunched, and out of 16 districts that were the closest to
being flipped to Democratic this past election season, 11 have now moved to be more Republican. So we're -- we're actually more gerrymandered now and not less. We have to fix this. We have to -- we have to return to a national democracy, and we -- we have to have a system where one person has one vote, full stop. Thank you.

SEN. DANIEL: The next speaker is Ted Alexander, and then following Mr. Alexander will be Charles Senf.

MR. ALEXANDER: Thank you. My name is Ted Alexander. I'm from Shelby. I serve as the 10th District Chairman for the North Carolina GOP. That covers Polk, Rutherford, Cleveland, Gaston, Lincoln, and parts of Buncombe, Catawba, and Iredell Counties. I do want to thank you for the opportunity to speak today and for holding these hearings.

I'm here in support of these maps for redistricting. And while I know that they're probably not perfect, from what I've seen, what I've heard, otherwise these maps -- compared to previous maps drawn by both Republicans and Democrats in the past, are a vast improvement from where they've been set.
The new districts, I've heard some comments that I've agreed with, the fact that they do. They are more contiguous. I think the legislature's tried their -- their best to keep the counties together where it's -- it's possible. They are smaller and more compact for the most part, and I do think that for the most part, they represent the common interest of the communities and they do -- do -- they do split fewer precincts. But my point regardless of any of that, and -- and this is my particular major point, is -- is that I know that the courts follow the North -- the North Carolina Constitution Article IV, Section 4, which says that the legislature is responsible for drawing these districts and not the courts. The -- the legislature are the elected officials. And they -- that is the body that was designated by the Constitution to do these districts.

The fact is, in North Carolina, the Republicans in the past almost decade have gained in registration by about 125,000 voters. Simultaneously, the Democrats have lost almost the same, similar amount of voter registration. They -- the fact is, they have lost -- Democrats have lost nine out of the last ten presidential
elections, and they have lost three straight United States Senate races, and 14 out of the -- they've lost 14 out of the 18 partisan statewide races. These are statewide races. And I think my estimation is that these maps are simply a reflection of that reality of voter registration.

I'm concerned that continued litigation of these maps and districts will only serve to create continued unnecessary expense, chaos, and uncertainty for voters and candidates alike.

I'm a native of North Carolina. I grew up in Burke County. I can't recall a time in our state's history where districts have been challenged over and over and over just because someone or some group doesn't like the outcome. I would respectfully request and urge the courts to abstain from further undue interference. Thank you for your courtesy.

SEN. DANIEL: Next is Mr. Charles Senf. And if I didn't mention this, please identify yourself to the microphone so that it'll be in the record.

MR. SENF: Good evening. My name is Charles Senf. I'm from Lenoir, North Carolina. I -- I -- there's so much you want to say after
what you've listened to tonight. Transparent, inclusive, nonpartisan American democracy. We were not created equal or given our rights by the political operatives sequestered in the proverbial back room. The United States Constitution demands but a simple count of male citizens and slaves to apportion legislative districts. No mention of race, religion, habits, voting registration were required then or now.

The information age has provided partisan hacks the ability to effect [inaudible] schemes with unerring precision. The computer offers a solution to the divisiveness this scheme has brought across America. Simply eliminate race, religion, gender, ethnicity, and political affiliation from the data fed into the redistricting programs. Publish open source the program and databases used so anyone might verify the process and duplicate the results. An inclusive, transparent, nonpartisan process to ensure our citizens choose their representatives and not the gerry way around. To paraphrase an old technical maxim, partisan in, partisan out. Thank you.

SEN. DANIEL: Thanks. Next speaker will
be Mr. Norm Bossert. And following Mr. Bossert will be Cindy Sellers.

MR. BOSSERT: Thank you. My name is Norm Bossert. I'm here from Transylvania County. I had a nice drive to get here. I was looking at my map up there, and I just want you all to know a fly landed directly on Macon County. I'm not sure what that means, but it means something. I'm sure of that.

In 2010, I lived in Senate District 15. We had a Senator named John Snow. Fine man, hard worker, good representative for us who ran a race against Phone-in Jim Davis -- Senator Jim Davis. That was in a Democratic gerrymander. John Snow lost that election, and we Democrats have tried to figure out why for a long time.

The bottom line is, in the districts that have been gerrymandered by the Democrats, a Republican won. And that 2010 year was a real critical election year here in North Carolina. It concerned everybody because eventually, a fellow named Tom Apodaca, who was a tremendous supporter, a tremendous supporter of nonpartisan gerrymandering in the state, nonpartisan redistricting, lost his passion for that when the
Republicans came into power. Find that interesting.

I find a hopeful note -- just as a bit of history, I find a very hopeful note right now; I'm glad you all are doing hearings. I wish they had been done differently, but I'm glad you're doing them. You certainly heard a lot of people who have opinions, strong opinions, but I'm very, very excited, because near where I live, there's a Republican named Chuck McGrady, and he was one of the principal sponsors of House Bill 200. Along with people like Stevens, Jordan, Hardister, Adcock, Ager, Ball, Beasley, Bell, Brockman, Butler, Carney, of course, Brian Turner, a good friend of mine. All of those folks, Democrats and Republicans, looking to change the way we redistrict in North Carolina.

Now, House Bill 200 isn't perfect from my point of view, and I don't love it, but at least it's a bill, I think, that has its heart in the right place, looking to redistrict this state in a nonpartisan fashion with a nonpartisan committee. I hold that to you, the current Senate and current General Assembly will look more carefully at the House Bill 200 and revisit this whole redistricting
business. The way you've done it is just going to create a lot of disorder in the state, and there's too much partisan discord already.

I personally am sick to death of the acrimony between Democrats and Republicans. I -- the gentleman who spoke earlier about the numbers of people registering, I would just remind Republicans that 39 percent of the voters in this state are registered Democrats, 30 percent are Republicans, but 30 percent are a growing group called unaffiliated voters. They're sick of it, too. They're really sick of it, and they are going to hammer us all. Thank you.

SEN. DANIEL: Next speaker is Cindy Sellers, and then following Ms. Sellers will be Emily Wilkins.

MS. SELLERS: Wake up. Get woke. If you haven't heard that phrase get woke, you're going to hear it again sometime. My name -- good evening. My name is Cindy Sellers, and I live in Alexander County. I'm retired, proud retired school teacher, but I am a disenfranchised voter. I have watched this state slide down the slope for hopelessness and feeling like the middle class doesn't matter anymore while carrying on their backs for the
taxes.

We have to fund the nonprofits to help the poor and watching the poor only get poorer while the rich get richer. Those without conscience gerrymander voting districts so they can stay in power and follow the directions of ALEC, the -- the legislative agenda, ALEC, and they're -- they're pushing us down -- that down our throats.

To me, there's a little bit of white supremacy that may be going on there. I'm not sure about that, I'm still wondering about that. But the Koch brothers don't care anything about us. You guys are supposed to, be in separate opinion on you guys. Being blue in a red state is infuriating, and those of us who are paying attention can see through all the games being played against the citizens by Republican legislators who march lockstep to the ALEC tune. Democratic legislators were not even given the chance to debate the devastating laws to benefit the rich and the corporation in the past. Even -- not even from the past, not even from this state.

Throw the maps you have created in secret out in the trash, please. Computer programs to intentionally favor either group should be
outlawed, and maps should be drawn with both parties present. Shame on all of you who call yourselves a Christian in these times of racism and dirty politics and won't stop this. I'm a proud United Methodist and a Rotarian, and I bet some of the legislators are too, maybe many of them. One of the things that we say at the end of all our meetings is, is it fair to all concerned? Set things straight now. Change your ways. It's not too late. You know this is not right, and my vote should count. And indivisible, we were -- will persist to resist. Thank you.

SEN. DANIEL: Next speaker is Ms. Emily Wilkins, and then will be followed by Lynn Dorfman. Is Ms. Dorfman still here? And so after that would-be Thelma Eley.

MS. ELEY: You've got that right.

SEN. DANIEL: You'll be the last one.

You get the last word.

MS. ELEY: All right. Very good.

MS. WILKINS: Hi. My name is Emily Wilkins, and I'm from Durham, North Carolina. And it is my pleasure to be accompanying you here tonight because I'm traveling back from the eclipse today. So on my way home, I have to do something
political, switch it up.

In light of the unanimous Supreme Court rulings, what prevents North Carolina voters from free and fair elections? Gerrymandered maps, which disenfranchise black voters with surgical precision. These maps are no improvement. Black lives matter. Punching some folk into small pockets and stretching districts through six counties to enhance representation of predominantly white people repeats the same illegal districting.

I'd like to draw your attention to the following on the Senate redistricting plan. Please look at the District 47. It includes Madison, Yancey, Mitchell, McDowell, Rutherford, and Polk. These are six counties on the outskirts of Asheville. Also, look at Senate District 3: Vance County, Warren County, Northampton County, Bertie County, Martin County, and Beaufort County. You've already heard from your Republican colleagues that they don't like this, and I don't like it, either. Those are on the outskirts of Raleigh. Then, we have the concentrated areas. 41, suburbs of Charlotte, 28 for Greensboro, 29 for Winston-Salem Franklin County dips into downtown Raleigh, number 18.
Dividing us by race is an old strategy to deprive everyone of access to economic, social, and political parity. Forward together, not one step back. Forward together, not one step back. Forward together, not one step back. Thank you.

SEN. DANIEL: Final speaker is Ms. Eley.

MS. ELEY: Oh, that's me. I thought Lynn --

SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Lynn Dorfman.

SEN. DANIEL: Oh, did she come back yet?

Oh, she did not? Okay.

MS. ELEY: Alright. Good evening. My name is Thelma Eley, and I'm from Hickory, North Carolina. You know, sitting silently endorses agreement to an existing situation or circumstance. I stand before you today to loudly proclaim the disapproval of the quote, unquote redrawn maps. These maps are just -- they're unjust, and they do not allow proper representation of the people of North Carolina. The redrawn maps were created by the originator of the previously drawn maps, Thomas Hofeller.

Now, I believe that his goal remains the same. And that goal is the goal of the existing governing body of North Carolina, the Republican
Party. Those are the ones who -- they have proven year over year that their concern is not for the marginalized, but for those who have those deep pockets and who look more like them. Gerrymandering is not just and does not provide the voices of all North Carolinians to be heard.

As a member and a citizen of these United States of America, I -- I have the sacred right of being able to vote unencumbered and without suppression. A trusted entity must be engaged to draw the maps equitably that would provide the citizens of North Carolina the ability to voice their opinions and elect officials that will represent our voices, our issues, and our concerns. The amount of time and money that we spend on this issue could have been utilized for education, healthcare, and infrastructure. One person, one vote, and my vote should be valued just like those of the majority party. Thank you.

SEN. DANIEL: Thank you, everybody. That concludes this hearing, so we're going to adjourn the Caldwell County hearing of the Senate Legislative Redistricting Committee. I appreciate everybody coming here. Everybody was very respectful. We didn't have any disturbances like
some of the other locations had, so I appreciate your participation, and good night and safe travels.

(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.

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