

EX. 16

NORTH CAROLINA GENERAL ASSEMBLY
JOINT SELECT COMMITTEE ON REDISTRICTING

TRANSCRIPT OF THE PROCEEDINGS
PUBLIC HEARING CONCLUSION - WELDON SATELLITE SITE

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

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

5 REP. J. BELL: For those who couldn't
6 understand what was said, due to some of the
7 technical difficulty and the length of time between
8 sites, we're going to actually conduct our own
9 public hearing here for the people that are here.
10 We will go through the list that's already been
11 signed up according the rules put forth by the
12 Committee. The Sergeant-at-Arms from the House and
13 Senate will also start recording devices. If you
14 give us just a minute to make sure everything is on
15 go, we will run through everybody. Same rules
16 apply, maximum of three minutes, and then we will
17 go through the list, and then the court reporters
18 will transcribe after the -- the hearing.

19 (Discussion off record.)

20 REP. J. BELL: I have six people left to
21 speak. We will go in the order as they signed up.
22 I have speaker number 10, Kim Castle, will be up
23 first, and then Tom Metzger -- I apologize if I do
24 mess up your name. Tom Metzger will be second, and
25 then we will have on Jennifer Smyth, Gwen Wilkins,

1 John Horton and Ernestine Goldsberry will this
2 finish us up.

3 So the Sergeant-at-Arms will be sitting
4 right here; he'll start when you're ready. You'll
5 hold up one-minute when you have one minute left,
6 then stop when your times up. So y'all, what I do
7 ask is that you state your name -- state your full
8 name for the record, first and last name for the
9 record, and the microphones and everything are up
10 here. So you stand right here.

11 MS. CASTLE: I stand here?

12 REP. J. BELL: Yup, right up here.

13 MS. CASTLE: Good evening; my name is Kim
14 Castle. I'm the vice president of African American
15 caucus of the Hertford County, North Carolina,
16 Democratic Party. I just want to speak on behalf
17 of all the constituents who -- and everyone who
18 worked so hard and so endlessly and gave the
19 hard-earned monies to elect our senators -- or our
20 legislators just for us to find out that we would
21 be receiving -- we are being forced to have
22 legislators that we don't know. We had no idea
23 in -- who they are, we -- we know absolutely
24 nothing about them.

25 Our legislators said to Erica

1 Ingram-Smith [sic], she worked so hard with us. We
2 have a rapport with her, and just to know that she
3 will be -- have -- she will be -- we will be
4 [inaudible] this year. It's tragic, in of itself
5 it's heartbreaking, it's basically speechless, and
6 to me is strictly voter suppression, 'cause we gave
7 so much of our time and -- you know, we -- it -- I
8 mean myself personally, I have not slept, you know,
9 certain nights, you know, with strategies trying to
10 make sure, you know, that, you know, we -- we
11 represent her and that we -- we make sure that she
12 get a win, and now y'all are taking it away from
13 us. Thank you.

14 REP. J. BELL: Tom Metzger will be the
15 next speaker. Please step to the podium.
16 Pronounce your name correctly if I messed it up; I
17 apologize, and you have up to three minutes. Thank
18 you, sir.

19 MR. METZGER: My name is Tom Metzger, and
20 I'm here as a citizen who loves his state and
21 democratic processes.

22 North Carolina's motto is, to be and not
23 to seem. Well, let's live up to that and not be a
24 poser. Let's be a democracy based on the will of
25 the people, not an oligarchy based on the will of a

1 privileged select few. The most essential element
2 of a shift toward democracy in North Carolina is
3 for the people to elect their representatives, not
4 the way -- the other way around. Enough, enough,
5 enough.

6 The current General Assembly, due to the
7 history of gerrymandering, is not a duly-elected
8 body, and is therefore not legitimate. They cannot
9 serve. How could they expect us, we the people, to
10 accept these new maps that represent more of the
11 same blatant, partisan, racist behavior perpetuated
12 by illegitimate, aspiring oligarchs? No.
13 Unacceptable.

14 By the way, even a moderately socialized
15 five-year-old doesn't try to give away by
16 misbehavior by saying, he or she started it.
17 Democrats' past misbehavior does not justify
18 Republicans' current misbehavior. Any group of
19 people, for instance, North Carolinians, can be
20 expected to have different opinions and
21 perspectives. When those differences are cynically
22 exploited by those who abuse power to divide and
23 conquer, we all lose -- all lose.

24 Better to wisely utilize the diversity of
25 perspectives to come up with creative, workable

1 solutions that most folks can accept as fair. A
2 purple state that's ruled from the far right is a
3 recipe for trouble. Unfair, illegal gerrymandering
4 is at the core of the problem. I call for fair,
5 reasonable, nonpartisan districting. They won't
6 erase our differences, nothing will or should, but
7 it's my opinion that it is the right thing to do
8 and will make things better for us all. Thank you
9 very much.

10 REP. J. BELL: Thank you. Next speaker,
11 Jennifer Smyth.

12 MS. SMYTH: Gentlemen, I apologize. I
13 missed the part where you introduced yourselves.
14 I'd like to know who I'm speaking with, if you
15 don't mind.

16 REP. J. BELL: I'm Representative John
17 Bell.

18 MS. SMYTH: Okay.

19 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: And I'm a staff -- I'm
20 a Sergeant-at-Arms.

21 REP. J. BELL: And he's a
22 Sergeant-at-Arms staff. So you also have Senator
23 Don Davis, Representative Bobbie Richardson, and
24 Senator Smith-Ingram here as well.

25 MS. SMYTH: Thank you.

1 REP. J. BELL: You have up to three
2 minutes to speak, and please state your name for
3 the record.

4 MS. SMYTH: All right. My name is
5 Jennifer Smyth, and I live in a teeny, tiny, little
6 corner of Bertie county, known as the town of
7 Roxobel. I'm about a half an hour from Scotland
8 Neck, which is in Halifax County. I'm about a half
9 an hour from Jackson, which is in Northampton
10 county. I'm about a half an hour from Ahoskie,
11 which is in Hertford County, and which is where I'm
12 proud to work for the last 12 years. And I'm about
13 half an hour from my county seat in Windsor.
14 That's my community of interest.

15 In order to get anything, to go anywhere,
16 I've got to drive a half an hour, which, to those
17 of you who spend a lot of time in Raleigh, it's
18 going to sound like it's a whole lot, but really,
19 it's -- it's as easy as getting on and off the
20 beltline and going where you need to go.

21 It's a great place to live, to work and
22 to learn, but that's my community of interest,
23 right there: Northampton County, Halifax County,
24 Hertford County, Bertie County. We have familial
25 ties there, we have geographic ties, we have

1 economic ties.

2 Bertie County shops at the Super Wal-Mart
3 in Hertford County. There's a lot of our money
4 going into Hertford County, and now we've been
5 separated from Hertford County in both the House
6 and the Senate redistricting plans, and there is
7 not but one reason for that; Bertie County is 61
8 percent black. It's racism, pure and simple, and
9 it's nothing but a blatant attempt to minimize and
10 dilute the black vote in Northeastern North
11 Carolina. We see you. We know who you are. We
12 believed you the first time. So that's the House
13 plan. Instead of having me with my community of
14 interest, I'm now with Chowan County.

15 Let me tell you about Edenton right now.
16 The most prominent realtor in Edenton is
17 Sotheby's -- Sotheby's. They sell off antiques for
18 rich folks. That's the most prominent realtor in
19 my county -- 25 percent of the county is in
20 poverty, and the way they've drawn this district,
21 I'm going to be represented by a transplant from
22 Virginia, a retiree who can afford to buy real
23 estate in Edenton, and my black neighbors are going
24 to be represented by a man who can afford to buy
25 real estate in Edenton. And if I'm shaking, it's

1 cause I'm mad, and that's just the House map.

2 This Senate redistricting plan -- y'all
3 think we don't know what you did? That man in
4 Beaufort County doesn't know. That man in -- in
5 Beaufort County has no idea he's a sacrificial
6 lamb. That the Republican Party was willing to
7 give up 15,000 GOP votes to make it look cute, when
8 they double-bunked two black women. The same two
9 black women that they went after in that 3 a.m.
10 budget bill, and y'all is going to tell me that's
11 not racist -- I am not done.

12 REP. J. BELL: Ma'am -- ma'am, your three
13 minutes are up.

14 MS. SMITH: Uh-uh -- yeah. Uh-uh.

15 REP. J. BELL: Ma'am, your three minutes
16 are up.

17 MS. SMITH: Go ahead and take me --

18 REP. J. BELL: Sergeant-at-Arms.

19 MS. SMITH: -- cause I'm not done.

20 SERGEANT-AT-ARMS: Ma'am, thank you.

21 Thank you.

22 MS. SMYTH: There a whole lot of white
23 folks' tip-toe around the fact that this is racist,
24 and I'm not having it.

25 (Interruption by applause.)

1 REP. J. BELL: Sergeant-at-Arms, please
2 remove the people that are clapping. Ma'am.
3 Sergeant-at-Arms, please remove the gentleman.
4 Please remove the lady, thank you.

5 (Pause in proceedings.)

6 REP. J. BELL: Next speaker, Gwen
7 Wilkins.

8 MS. WILKINS: Okay. My name is Gwen
9 Wilkins; I'm from Nash County. Good evening. It
10 is a fact we would not be here this evening if some
11 lawmakers had not forced the hand of a federal
12 court and made them rule that those very lawmakers
13 that control the House and Senate gave too much
14 emphasis to race when drawing our district lines,
15 but here we are, and here I stand.

16 I am here to voice my concerns and
17 disappointment with the way these district maps
18 have been drawn, and I pray those concerns do not
19 fall on deaf ears. I pray you all are keeping an
20 open mind and have a genuine concern for the people
21 you serve -- all of them, and I pray your mind is
22 not already made up.

23 I have a concern. I question how you, in
24 good conscience, could schedule public hearings
25 when you have just released the maps a day or two

1 before the hearing. The voters of this state have
2 not had ample time to review them, and you know it.
3 You should be ashamed. You then schedule these
4 hearings knowing full well many of us would have to
5 leave work early or not be able to participate at
6 all.

7 From what I could see of the newly drawn
8 maps, you have certainly drawn them to favor one
9 political group over another and have made some
10 lawmakers' district almost impossible for them to
11 return to. You should be ashamed. You may have
12 been elected in a certain House or Senate district,
13 but you serve all the people of North Carolina, or
14 at least you are supposed to.

15 I am of the opinion your mind is already
16 made up, though, and the public hearings going on
17 across this state are just a farce to appease us,
18 so you can satisfy the requirement of the federal
19 court. If elected officials of any party have to
20 result to partisan gerrymandering to win elections,
21 I can only determine that they are doing so because
22 they do not have the confidence or the self-esteem
23 to win an election the old-fashioned way, that is,
24 presenting their platform to and interacting with
25 the voters. Partisan gerrymandering is a crutch.

1 Stand on your own merits rather than on leaning on
2 wrongfully drawn districts to win a race.

3 Lastly, the lines you have drawn
4 intentionally protect the supermajority of the
5 political party already in power, rather than the
6 people of this state. Sure, you used a few
7 sacrificial lambs of your own party when redrawing
8 the lines to make it appear that the lines were
9 drawn fairly. Do you really think that voters are
10 that naive? I urge Republican Senator Ralph Hise,
11 Chief of the Redistricting Committee, to work with
12 House and Senate colleagues from opposite sides of
13 the political spectrum to draw lines that are
14 reflective of a democracy North Carolina can be
15 proud of. Thank you.

16 REP. J. BELL: Our next speaker is John
17 Horton. Mr. Horton, please state your name for the
18 record, and you have up to three minutes.

19 MR. HORTON: Thank you, sir. Good
20 afternoon -- afternoon. It's evening now. Good
21 evening. My name is John Horton. Life resident of
22 Hertford County for 65 years, been active in the
23 local politics, been elected to eight, four-year
24 terms.

25 Gentleman, I'm not here to bash the

1 Republicans tonight, 'cause you all have been
2 bashed and probably deserve it, but I'm here to
3 appeal to your sense of political dignity. I've
4 seen gerrymandering before. The Democrats tried
5 that, it didn't work, to the satisfaction to a lot
6 of the citizens. The Republicans tried that, it
7 didn't work. Here we are again.

8 We're in the 21st century, and it is time
9 that we move towards a computer-based model of
10 redistricting. We're too intelligent not to be
11 able to do that. I'd rather be angry over a
12 computer and calling it a racist before I will call
13 you one -- I will not call you one. You're
14 representing all the citizens of Hertford County.
15 Move where people can't say you got a personal
16 interest, and the only way I see out of this, is a
17 computer-based model with one of the variables in
18 that model, not to split not one county. Thank
19 you, very much.

20 REP. J. BELL: Our last speaker is this
21 evening, Eustice Goldsberry.

22 MS. GOLDSBERRY: Ernestine.

23 REP. J. BELL: Ernestine, excuse me. I
24 apologize. Ernestine, please state your name for
25 the record, and you have up to three minutes.

1 Thank you.

2 MS. GOLDSBERRY: My name is Ernestine
3 Goldsberry, and I learned to vote -- began voting
4 in 1965, which I had to learn the Preamble to the
5 Constitution of the United States of America, but
6 by time it was time to vote, they had demolished
7 it, because they had passed the Civil Rights Act.

8 I have been away from Northampton County
9 for 50 years. I moved back here three years, and I
10 thought it had changed, but I see, from what I see
11 now, it has not. It says, look at us now. We're
12 back in the same predicament 50 years ago that
13 you're doing now. The same hatred, the same
14 prejudice is here. There's no need for to divide
15 these counties like this and take them away. Take
16 them away from the economics of the counties that
17 are trying to bring businesses into the different
18 counties and being the people -- the older people.

19 You got -- you have to think of someone
20 but yourself, and I'm not going -- I'm not going,
21 like, the gentlemen before me, I'm not going to
22 call you prejudiced. Because you've -- every one
23 of us know what's in our hearts. You can believe
24 it or not. I'm ashamed. I'm appalled to say that
25 I came back to Northampton County, and it's still

1 the same way. Fifty years have not prospered us,
2 and that is a shame.

3 We're in the 21st century, and I'm not
4 going to get up here and try to tell you what you
5 should do, 'cause everybody in their hearts knows
6 what's right and wrong, but this is choice that you
7 make, and I'm ashamed to say I'm a North Carolina
8 citizen, because the country is looking at us.
9 Every time you turn the TV on, it's North Carolina
10 this, North Carolina that, so I'm -- that's all I
11 have to say. I'm just ashamed that I ever moved
12 back here.

13 REP. J. BELL: Thank you, ma'am. Ladies
14 and gentlemen, that concludes our -- and the people
15 that have signed up for the public hearing. I want
16 to thank Representative Bobbie Richardson, Senator
17 Don Davis and Senator Smith-Ingram for attending.
18 I'd thank our Sergeant-at-Arms, our -- our law
19 enforcement here locally -- our General Assembly
20 law enforcement. I want to thank the staff from
21 the General Assembly, and I also want to thank
22 Halifax Community College and the staff here at
23 Halifax Community College.

24 If you'd like to -- to listen to other
25 comments, I believe the -- the Committee hearing in

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Ral eigh, you can go through the North Carolina
General Assembly websi te and log i nto the commi ttee
room there and finish hearing the comments, and all
of thi s will be transcribed by the court reporters
as soon as possible for the record. Wi th that
said, thi s commi ttee hearing i s closed. Thank you.
(End of proceedi ngs.)

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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