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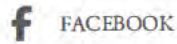
News

House Pro-Tem Pringle: Federal court redrew second congressional district 'almost exclusively along racial lines'

[Caleb Taylor](#) | 11.21.24

(Dave Martin/AP)

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A recent decision by the U.S. Supreme Court to hear arguments on a redistricting case from Louisiana will likely "clarify" many similar questions in Alabama, according to House Pro-Tempore Chris Pringle (R-Mobile).

A redistricting trial that could change the makeup of the State Senate is currently being held in federal court in Birmingham. Plaintiffs who originally challenged 33 different State House and Senate districts dropped challenges to all but two areas in December 2023 following Attorney General Steve Marshall's filing of a motion to dismiss the claims.

Now, challenges only remain for Senate districts in Huntsville and Montgomery areas.

Plaintiffs' challenges focus on State Senate Districts 25 and 26 held by State Sens. Will Barfoot (R-Pike Road) and Kirk Hatcher (D-Montgomery), respectively. They also claim Huntsville area State Senate districts held by State Sens. Tom Butler (R-Madison), Sam Givhan (R-Huntsville) and Steve Livingston (R-Scottsboro) "unnecessarily cracks Black voters." The group of plaintiffs suing the State over its state legislative map is similar to the group that is suing the State over its federal redistricting map. It includes groups such as the NAACP, SPLC and the ACLU.



State Representative Chris Pringle with Apryl Marie Fogel - Midday

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"The Senate lines are in trial in federal court in Birmingham so that trial should wrap up at the end of this week. I did not participate in drawing the Senate plan at all. It's kind of an unwritten rule that the House draws the House and the Senate draws the Senate. I'll brag a little bit because there's no litigation against the House. The House is safe. The Senate is before the judge right now. I can't tell you specifics because I don't know a lot. I do know people don't realize that the

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attorneys that guide the reapportionment committee that represent the legislature have no standing in lawsuits. So when we went to court on the congressional races, we had to rely solely on the solicitor general to go before the judges to make whatever arguments the solicitor general wanted to make. I mean, you saw the results of that, it was the 2nd Congressional District. This time, fortunately, the Attorney General gave our attorneys the (Deputy Attorney General) appointments so the attorneys representing the reapportionment are in arguing the case. Every indication I have is they're doing a great job arguing the case on behalf of the state of Alabama," Pringle said in an interview with Mobile radio FM Talk 106.5's "Midday Mobile" on Wednesday. "If they lose, the courts will always give us an opportunity to redraw. That means there will have to be some type of revision done in the regular session starting next year. If the court accepts that plan, then it will be implemented and the Senators will run under the new plan at the next election. If the Senate fails to draw an acceptable plan to the court, then the court will redraw it like they did the Second District and implement it for the Senators to run under the next election. We ought to have a ruling by that January of this trial, and then in February, we go to trial on what we call the Bobby Singleton case on congressional redistricting. It was filed the same time as the Milligan case was. It was stayed for the outcome of the Milligan case."

Pringle said the outcome of a similar redistricting case in Louisiana, in which the U.S. Supreme Court is set to hear arguments early next year, could have implications for Alabama's congressional and legislative maps.

"The United States Supreme Court is taking up the Louisiana case. Louisiana got hit with the same problem we did. There's a conflict between the 14th Amendment, the equal protection clause of the United States Constitution, and Section II of the Voting Rights Act...special protection for black Americans. The court is looking for a way to give equal protections for all citizens and special protections to blacks. That's what all this litigation is about: where is that mark? In 2017, the court slapped our hands and said, 'When you redrew your legislative districts, you relied too heavily on race. You need to redraw race-neutral.' We went back and drew the legislative districts race-neutral. The courts said, 'That's exactly what we want, race-neutral drawing.' So when we started drawing these new districts for the Congress and the Legislature, we drew them race-neutral. Well, the courts ruled in the Congressional race, 'Well, no, you have to draw them

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exclusively on race.' That's what the courts did. They drew that Second Congressional District almost exclusively along racial lines. They did the same thing in Louisiana. The Supreme Court is going to take up the Louisiana case. I think that's going to have an impact all over the nation. Hopefully, the court will finally give us some guidance on how you balance between equal protection and special protection," Pringle said. "We had a preliminary hearing on the Congressional (map). It was just a hearing. Court ruled there's a likely violation, we need to try the case. The decision was made by the solicitor general, 'No, we're going to appeal to the Supreme Court.' The solicitor general went to the Supreme Court and made his arguments and Kavanaugh wrote in his opinion, 'Had you argued the case before the court, I would have voted with you.' They never argued that our plan complied with the law. He argued the law Section II of the Voting Rights Act should be thrown out. Kavanaugh said, 'You didn't argue the case before us so we threw it out.' They remanded it back to us to draw a new plan and we drew the plan. The solicitor general got involved, and he drew a plan, sent it to the judges, and the judges rejected that plan. Here we are. Now... they're using our lawyers to make arguments for us, so again, I'm not there. I'm not part of it because it's a Senate plan."

Pringle continued, "Hopefully, we'll get a favorable ruling. At least a decent ruling that gives us some clarity but I think the Supreme Court is going to clarify a lot of these questions in that case in Louisiana."

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PO Box 1812
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