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## House Speaker Blames Legislature

# New Redistricting Plan Called 'Breakthrough For Black People'

By STAN BAILEY

Monday's federal court ruling setting up 105 single-member Alabama House districts and 35 single-member Senate districts has been hailed as "a breakthrough for black people."

And the House speaker blames the ruling on the legislature's failure to act.

"For the first time, you have people living in a compact group who can have a man to consider and be responsive to their needs," said Rep. Fred Gray, one of two blacks in the legislature.

House Speaker G. Sage Lyons, saying the ruling would be "a terrific problem" to carry out, said "the failure of the legislature to pass a realistic reapportionment plan is what precipitated this."

Gray said the decision Monday allows blacks in Alabama for the first time to be represented "in proportion to our strength."

Gray called it a "breakthrough... not only for black people, but also for people in various socio-economic groups."

In the past, counties with

large black populations sent no blacks to the legislature because legislators were elected from the county at-large, which gave the overall white majority control. Now some districts in such counties are predominantly black in population.

Also, the new plan even cuts across county and precinct lines with many districts, voiding a section of the Alabama Constitution which prohibits slicing across county lines.

Under the single-member plan, only residents of the court-drawn district—not residents of the whole county—may vote on the county's representatives.

"The effect of this case can be to require single district representation across the South," said Charles Morgan, regional director of the American Civil Liberties Union.

Morgan was one of the original plaintiffs in the suit which led to a 1964 Supreme Court ruling involving Alabama and five other Southern states requiring reapportionment on a population basis.

The plan approved Monday by Circuit Judge Richard T. Rives and District Judges Frank M. Johnson Jr. and Daniel H. Thomas is the plan proposed by plaintiffs.

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Tue, Mar 19, 2024



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### The Reapportionment Order

UNTIL ONE has time to study of a big increase in black representation, but looking below on reapportionment, the only the surface one can see that is positive thing that can be said Alabama, as in almost every state in the Union, the big fight is the Legislature is between rural interests and urban interests.

The court took a bold step in 1961 when the federal court last ordered reapportionment, the rural forces carried the day on that still is. The court demanded necessity, the court said, to more rural delegates for the Legislature to be able to handle the increased urban delegation increased to the point that, by using the filibuster and bloc voting with other urban delegations, they gained a veto power on all legislation.

Now six years later, it is the urban legislators who may lose the most from the new reapportionment order. Jefferson County's 20-member House delegation is elected at large, and most of them live in the same area in Birmingham and share the same legislative interests. The new district plan might force some of the present members to have to run against each other and others might be defeated if forced to run in certain districts.

This possibility already has some of the rural legislators licking their chops. One Black Belt legislator who has had more than his share of troubles with the urban bloc is looking forward to the outcome.

"When they adopt that plan," he said, "I'll tell you what you're going to get from Jefferson County: Six Republicans, six Negroes, six Klans, and two fools. They won't be able to agree on anything and I can beat every damn one of them."

Even more ironic, at least on the surface, is the seeming indifference the present Legislature has faced the prospect.

### A National Sales Tax?

IF AS Shakespeare wrote, a country should spend on justice

WASHINGTON (AP)—The House of Representatives today passed a bill to create a new federal sales tax. The bill would require states to collect the tax and remit it to the federal government. The House vote was 308-107. The Senate has yet to act on the bill. The bill is part of a package of tax reforms proposed by the administration. The package also includes changes to the income tax and the estate tax. The administration hopes to pass the package before the end of the year.



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