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Louisiana State Senate 1st Special Session-Audio
Transcription

January 19, 2024

In Re: Louisiana House Floor/Committee Video

EXHIBIT

JE34

**PLAINTIFFS'
EXHIBIT**

P29

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MALE SPEAKER: Secretary will open the machines. Vote at the machines, members. Vote at the machines. Are we finished voting? 36 members in a quorum. Next order of business.

THE CLERK: Messages. Messages from the House. The -- I'm directed to inform you that the House of Representatives has finally passed the following Senate bills and joint resolutions. Senate Bill 8 reported with amendments respectfully submitted. Michelle Fontana, clerk of the house. Senate bills returned from the House with amendments. Senate Bill 8 by Senator Womack is an act to amend Title 18, relative to congressional districts, to provide for the redistricting of Louisiana's congressional districts to provide with respect to positions and offices other than congressional, which are based upon congressional districts. The bill comes from the House with a set of House Committee amendments and House Floor amendments.

Senator Womack now moves for suspension of the rules to take up the bill at this time.

MALE SPEAKER: Without objection. Without objection. Senator Womack, on your bill.

SENATOR WOMACK: Thank you, Mr. President. Members, Senate Bill 8, which provides for redistricting of congressional districts, appears to be before you now

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 2</p> <p>1 in the exact posture that it left the Senate. The House 2 is removed. HGA Committee amendment I move to concur 3 with on Senate Bill Number 8. 4 (Pause.) 5 MALE SPEAKER: Gotcha. Members, the summaries 6 are being passed out right now, so we're just going to 7 slow down a little bit. I want to give everybody the 8 chance to see what we're voting on. 9 (Pause.) 10 MALE SPEAKER: Senator Womack, would you mind 11 going over the -- I know we've all seen the amendment 12 once. We -- we know what the bill looks like, but if 13 you could just go over some high points on it while 14 they're passing this out. Members, if you have a -- 15 members, if you want to speak, hit your Floor button if 16 anybody would like to come to the Floor to discuss the 17 bill. I know some members -- make sure that you do 18 that. 19 (Pause.) 20 SENATOR WOMACK: Okay. They're passing out 21 the amendments. The -- the way they did lay up the 22 House -- I mean, lay up the Senate, it was one district 23 change on that amendment. That took in part of 24 Avoyelles Parish. That was the only change, to my 25 knowledge, that was in the -- that was in the new map.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 4</p> <p>1 Committee. 2 SENATOR MORRIS: Yes, sir. I think you 3 altered the amendment. 4 SENATOR WOMACK: Senator Morris, I'll have to 5 -- I'll have to look back and -- and put that together 6 for you. Any other questions? 7 SENATOR MORRIS: So you don't know why we put 8 Avoyelles in Miss Letlow's district? 9 SENATOR WOMACK: As I stated earlier, we were 10 -- we were trying to put what we could to -- to give 11 senator -- Representative Letlow as much North Louisiana 12 as we could. So that was what we -- that was what we 13 done on -- on that amendment. 14 SENATOR MORRIS: By -- by trading Avoyelles 15 for Monroe, we gave her more North Louisiana. 16 SENATOR WOMACK: As I understand it, in that 17 bill, I didn't think that -- that your home or Senator 18 Cathey or Echols was in the original bill to start with. 19 My recollection. 20 SENATOR MORRIS: It wasn't in Miss Letlow's 21 district. 22 SENATOR WOMACK: Right. 23 SENATOR MORRIS: Would you be shocked if that 24 was not the case, and that we were all in Miss Letlow's 25 district?</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 3</p> <p>1 MALE SPEAKER: Okay. Senate Morris for -- for 2 -- Senator Morris for a question on the bill, and you 3 also have your Floor button, so which -- you want to 4 question. Let's do question first, please, and then we 5 can do the Floor. Thank you. 6 SENATOR MORRIS: Senator Womack, you said the 7 only change was -- was taking some of Avoyelles Parish 8 and putting it in Miss Letlow's district, correct? 9 SENATOR WOMACK: Correct. 10 SENATOR MORRIS: However, it actually took my 11 personal home out of Miss Letlow's district, as well as 12 Senator Cathey's home precinct, as well as State Rep 13 Echols' home precinct, and put that in Representative 14 Johnson's district; did it not? 15 SENATOR WOMACK: It did. 16 SENATOR MORRIS: So the only thing being done 17 was not just Avoyelles Parish, correct? 18 SENATOR WOMACK: I stand to be corrected. 19 You're correct. 20 SENATOR MORRIS: Why did we do that for 21 Avoyelles Parish? 22 SENATOR WOMACK: That was -- that was brought 23 before the -- the -- I'll have to look back. I -- I was 24 -- I was thinking that was a -- a -- a Senate Committee 25 amendment on that, and that's the way it came out of</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 5</p> <p>1 SENATOR WOMACK: Probably so. But that -- at 2 the -- at the time I put that amendment on, I don't 3 remember the original map having that -- y'all's address 4 in her district. 5 SENATOR MORRIS: But you did know that the 6 amendment took some more of Ouachita Parish out of 7 Letlow's, and put it into Johnson's district; you did 8 know that, right? 9 SENATOR WOMACK: I knew it had to come from 10 somewhere. 11 SENATOR MORRIS: Yes, sir. Thank you. 12 MALE SPEAKER: Senator Morris, you have the 13 Floor now for the -- for Senate (inaudible 0:08:19). 14 SENATOR MORRIS: Thank you, Mr. President. We 15 came here to redistrict because there's a chance. It's 16 not absolute, but there's a chance that the judge will 17 rule that our districts that we -- that we completed in 18 the last couple of years will not be declared 19 unconstitutional. That case never went to a final 20 judgment. It hasn't even gone to a full trial on the 21 merits, but yet here we are. So what do we do? We're 22 supposed to redistrict with a lot of principles in mind. 23 Among those include compactness and contiguity. 24 This bill does neither. It's neither 25 contiguous nor compact. We're all supposed to do it and</p>

2 (Pages 2 to 5)

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 6</p> <p>1 consider political subdivisions and communities of 2 interest. So now, by everyone's account, I live in 3 Northeast Louisiana, and now I'm in the same district as 4 Lake Charles. Louisiana Tech, Grambling, and University 5 of Louisiana, Monroe are now in different congressional 6 districts. They're all only 30 miles apart.</p> <p>7 Senator Womack said in Committee that what he 8 wanted to do was protect Julia Letlow. She's the only 9 woman in our congressional delegation in this state, 10 she's the only member of appropriations, and she's on 11 the Agriculture Committee. So protecting her district 12 because she has seniority, and because she's a bright, 13 articulate, and effective Congresswoman, that's a very 14 noble and worthwhile goal. And I applaud him for having 15 stated that that is one of the objectives of this bill, 16 but this bill doesn't do that.</p> <p>17 This bill puts more votes south of the 18 Mississippi line in the Florida parishes than it does in 19 the northeast corner of the state. Now, I'm not 20 horribly disappointed to be in Congressman Johnson's 21 district because I admire him immensely. It's nothing 22 against him. He -- I served with him in the House, and 23 we are friends, and I'm a supporter, and he knows that. 24 It has nothing to do with him. But we didn't do the 25 things that I believe that we should have done. Well,</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 8</p> <p>1 than what Senator Morris just said, and I wholeheartedly 2 agree with everything that he said. You know, I love 3 the Senate, and I love being a member of this body, and 4 I'm excited about the things that we're going to do in 5 this term. I think we're going to do some great things. 6 Unfortunately, today is not one of those days.</p> <p>7 What we're doing to Northeast Louisiana with 8 this map is a travesty and a disservice to the only 9 woman that we have serving in our congressional 10 delegation. The only member that we have that sits on 11 the House Appropriations Committee, which controls 12 federal dollars to this state. When we say that this 13 map protects Northeast Louisiana and Congresswoman 14 Letlow, I'll have you know, 50 percent of the votes in 15 Congresswoman Letlow's district now reside within 30 16 miles of this building. Let that sink in. 30 miles of 17 this building. Look, I can see the writing on the wall, 18 and I know where this is going to go.</p> <p>19 And so, look, I'm -- I'm -- I've been around 20 long enough to -- to count, and -- and I know that -- 21 that we can't get to 20, but -- but I just couldn't let 22 this go without standing up for my people and my 23 district and my congresswoman. And so I guess there is 24 one other thing that -- that I do want to say just to 25 put it into perspective. Again, kind of like Senator</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 7</p> <p>1 what did we do?</p> <p>2 It looks like to me we primarily considered 3 race, and we considered the personal interest of a 4 handful of members. There was no reason. The bill, as 5 originally filed, we did not like. It cut my home 6 parish in half. I understand it's got to go through 7 somebody's district, right? A lot of you have your 8 districts, your home parishes cut through, but you 9 didn't have to zigzag it around just so somebody can get 10 a personal stake, who might want to run for Congress, or 11 just wants their parish there because of their personal 12 interest.</p> <p>13 I'm not going to be around to run for Congress 14 or anything of the sort in two years, eight years, or 15 ten years. This is about districts and regions that 16 will represent the people of our area, and the lack of 17 compactness is going to effectively disenfranchise, I 18 believe, to a certain degree, the people that I 19 represent. And for these reasons, I urge you to vote 20 against this bill. Thank you, Mr. President.</p> <p>21 MALE SPEAKER: Thank you, Senator Morris. 22 Senator Cathey to the Floor on the bill. 23 (Pause.) 24 SENATOR CATHEY: Thank you, Mr. President. 25 Members, I -- I don't know that I can say any better</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 9</p> <p>1 Morris said, my home, my personal home, which is 35 2 miles from the Arkansas line, and 65 miles from the 3 Mississippi line will now be in the same congressional 4 district as Fort Polk and McNeese State University and 5 Lake Charles. That's a disservice and a travesty. So 6 with that, I close.</p> <p>7 MALE SPEAKER: Thank you, Senator Cathey. 8 Senator Luneau for the Floor. 9 (Pause.) 10 SENATOR LUNEAU: Thank you, Mr. President. 11 Members, we -- we did redistricting last year, I'm sure 12 most of you remember that, and it was an utter failure. 13 And there were a lot of us that talked about some of the 14 things that we could have done different to make it 15 different, but it didn't work out that way, so here we 16 are again. And I remember when we redistricted our own 17 district, our Senate districts, Rapides Parish, my home 18 parish, now has six different senators. Six. And I 19 fought that, but I lost on that -- on that -- on that 20 quest. I -- I just couldn't -- couldn't get everybody 21 together.</p> <p>22 And they said, "You know, it's going to be 23 great if you have six centers. Then you've got six 24 people coming together." That -- that didn't happen. 25 That's not true. We didn't come together, and it hurt</p>

3 (Pages 6 to 9)

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 10</p> <p>1 Rapides Parish. And now this map, yet again, has</p> <p>2 Rapides Parish divided in half. I guess that's better</p> <p>3 than six, but I guess we would have to have every</p> <p>4 congressperson from the -- from the state to have six.</p> <p>5 It's important that we do these maps, and we do them</p> <p>6 correctly, where we establish another minority majority</p> <p>7 district. And for that reason, I'm going to support and</p> <p>8 I'm going to vote for this map, but like my colleagues</p> <p>9 before me, I have to admit we should do better.</p> <p>10 MALE SPEAKER: Thank you, Senator Luneau.</p> <p>11 Senator Carter for the floor.</p> <p>12 SENATOR CARTER: Thank you, Mr. President.</p> <p>13 Members, we have an historic opportunity before us</p> <p>14 today, and it's an exciting day for the great State of</p> <p>15 Louisiana. If we concur and accept Senate Bill 8, we</p> <p>16 get to create two performing African American districts</p> <p>17 right here in the State of Louisiana. That is historic.</p> <p>18 That is to be celebrated. I really want to say thank</p> <p>19 you to everyone in this room. I can't thank you all</p> <p>20 enough. I appreciate the sincere effort. I appreciate</p> <p>21 the -- the -- the working late into the evenings that --</p> <p>22 I want to thank the staff of the SGA committee and the</p> <p>23 tireless hours that they have. This is -- this is</p> <p>24 historic.</p> <p>25 I know that it's hard to do anything that's</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 12</p> <p>1 because they did it last year. And some of them said,</p> <p>2 "We are tired. We're tired of keep doing this." But</p> <p>3 let me tell my friends and my colleagues, to everyone,</p> <p>4 we shall not tire. We shall continue to fight for</p> <p>5 what's right. It is -- this is how we make progress.</p> <p>6 It is not easy, it is challenging, but this is how we</p> <p>7 make progress, and we make progress. We celebrate it.</p> <p>8 We acknowledge it. So thank you to my colleagues.</p> <p>9 Thank you to all of us who engaged in this process.</p> <p>10 Thank you, Mr. President.</p> <p>11 MALE SPEAKER: Thank you, Senator Carter.</p> <p>12 Senator Womack to close.</p> <p>13 SENATOR WOMACK: Members, we all -- we all</p> <p>14 know what we went through and worked through and</p> <p>15 tirelessly. Late nights. Many hours. Many hours spent</p> <p>16 in the drafting room, of trying to help Senator Morris</p> <p>17 and Senator Cathey in trying to alleviate some of the</p> <p>18 problems they had. We worked on that. However,</p> <p>19 congressional, it wasn't working for everybody. So</p> <p>20 we're here where we're at, and here your bill's before</p> <p>21 you. I ask that you concur with Senate Bill 8. Thank</p> <p>22 you.</p> <p>23 MALE SPEAKER: Thank you, Senator Womack.</p> <p>24 Senator Womack moves to concur in Senate amendments</p> <p>25 proposed to House -- to Senate Bill 8. When the</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 11</p> <p>1 perfect, and I know redistricting is the hardest thing</p> <p>2 that we do of all. This is my second redistricting</p> <p>3 session, and they're very tough, but we came together in</p> <p>4 a effort to comply with a federal judge's order that</p> <p>5 Louisiana provide equal representation to the African</p> <p>6 Americans in the State of Louisiana, and we have an</p> <p>7 opportunity to do that. Let's celebrate. Let's be</p> <p>8 happy. Let's be glad this state has an opportunity to</p> <p>9 provide equal representation in our congressional</p> <p>10 leadership right here in the State of Louisiana. Thank</p> <p>11 you all so much.</p> <p>12 And I also want to thank -- I'll be remiss if</p> <p>13 I didn't thank the -- the president, all the members of</p> <p>14 SGA committee, the -- the governor who called this</p> <p>15 session. We began with the governor addressing us on</p> <p>16 Dr. King's Day, and here we are celebrating at the end</p> <p>17 of that week. And it just didn't start at the beginning</p> <p>18 of this week with Dr. King's Day. It started way back</p> <p>19 when Dr. King was alive, in a push for a voters' rights</p> <p>20 act. There's so many hurdles along the way and so many</p> <p>21 battles. There's so many -- so many -- so much effort.</p> <p>22 So much energy.</p> <p>23 And when we were in Committee, we heard from</p> <p>24 many people. From the LDF people to the plaintiffs to</p> <p>25 all the -- the community people that came to testify</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 13</p> <p>1 machines are open, all those in favor to concur in the</p> <p>2 Senate amendments will vote aye. All opposed will vote</p> <p>3 nay. Madam Secretary may open the machines.</p> <p>4 SENATOR HENRY: Go to machine, members. Go to</p> <p>5 machines. Go to machines, members. Close machine,</p> <p>6 please.</p> <p>7 27 yeas, 11 nays, and the motion carries.</p> <p>8 Senator Talbot for a motion.</p> <p>9 SENATOR TALBOT: Thank you, Mr. President. I</p> <p>10 make a motion that we adjourn sine die.</p> <p>11 SENATOR HENRY: Without objection. Members,</p> <p>12 if you could have your seat just for a second. Sit down</p> <p>13 just.</p> <p>14</p> <p>15</p> <p>16</p> <p>17</p> <p>18</p> <p>19</p> <p>20</p> <p>21</p> <p>22</p> <p>23</p> <p>24</p> <p>25</p>

4 (Pages 10 to 13)

Page 14

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5 (Page 14)

A	articulate 6:13	Carter 10:11 10:12	compact 5:25	couple 5:18
ability 14:9	association 14:13	12:11	compactness 5:23 7:17	create 10:16
absolute 5:16	audio 14:7	case 4:24 5:19	company's 14:9	cut 7:5,8
accept 10:15	Avoyelles 2:24 3:7	Cathey 4:18 7:22,24	completed 5:17	D
account 6:2	3:17,21	9:7 12:17	comply 11:4	Dated 14:15
acknowledge 12:8	4:8,14	Cathey's 3:12	computer 14:5	day 10:14
act 1:12 11:20	aye 13:2	celebrate 11:7 12:7	concur 2:2 10:15	11:16,18
address 5:3	B	celebrated 10:18	12:21,24	days 8:6
addressing 11:15	back 3:23 4:5 11:18	celebrating 11:16	13:1	declared 5:18
adjourn 13:10	based 1:16	centers 9:23	Congress 7:10,13	degree 7:18
admire 6:21	battles 11:21	certain 7:18	congress... 1:13,14,16	delegation 6:9 8:10
admit 10:9	began 11:15	CERTIFICATE 14:1	1:16,25	die 13:10
African 10:16 11:5	beginning 11:17	certify 14:3 14:11	6:5,9 8:9	different 6:5 9:14
agree 8:2	believe 6:25 7:18	challenge 12:6	9:3 11:9	9:15,18
Agriculture 6:11	best 14:9	challenging 12:6	12:19	directed 1:6
aided 14:5	better 7:25 10:2,9	chance 2:8 5:15,16	Congressman 6:20	disappoi... 6:20
alive 11:19	bill 1:8,11 1:17,20,22	change 2:23 2:24 3:7	congress... 10:4	discuss 2:16
alleviate 12:17	1:24 2:3	Charles 6:4 9:5	congress... 6:13 8:13	disenfra... 7:17
altered 4:3	2:12,17	clerk 1:5,10	8:15,23	disservice 8:8 9:5
amend 1:12	3:2 4:17	close 9:6 12:12 13:5	consider 6:1 7:2,3	district 2:22 3:8
amendment 2:2,11,23	4:18 5:24	colleagues 10:8 12:3	considered 5:23	3:11,14
3:25 4:3	6:15,16,17	12:8	contiguity 5:23	4:8,21,25
4:13 5:2,6	7:4,20,22	come 2:16 5:9 9:25	contiguous 5:25	5:4,7 6:3
amendments 1:9,11,18	10:15	comes 1:17	continue 12:4	6:11,21
1:18 2:21	12:21,25	coming 9:24	controls 8:11	7:7 8:15
12:24 13:2	bill's 12:20	committee 1:18 2:2	COO 14:2,17	8:23 9:4
American 10:16	bills 1:8,10	3:24 4:1	corner 6:19	9:17 10:7
Americans 11:6	bit 2:7	6:7,11	correct 3:8 3:9,17,19	districts 1:13,14,17
anybody 2:16	body 8:3	8:11 10:22	corrected 3:18	1:25 5:17
apart 6:6	brought 3:22	11:14,23	correctly 10:6	6:6 7:8,15
appears 1:25	building 8:16,17	communities 6:1	count 8:20	9:17 10:16
applaud 6:14	business 1:4	community 11:25		divided 10:2
appreciate 10:20,20	button 2:15 3:3			doing 8:7 12:2
appropri... 6:10 8:11	C			dollars 8:12
area 7:16	called 11:14			Dr 11:16,18
Arkansas 9:2	carries 13:7			11:19
				drafting 12:16
				E

earlier 4:9	friends 6:23	7:5,8 9:1	know 2:11,12	love 8:2,3
easy 12:6	12:3	9:1,17	2:17 4:7	Luneau 9:8
Echols 4:18	full 5:20	horribly	5:5,8 7:25	9:10 10:10
Echols' 3:13	14:9	6:20	8:2,14,18	
effective	further	hours 10:23	8:20 9:22	M
6:13	14:11	12:15,15	10:25 11:1	machine 13:4
effectively	G	house 1:6,6	12:14	13:5
7:17	give 2:7	1:10,11,17	knowledge	machines 1:2
effort 10:20	4:10	1:18,18	2:25	1:2,3 13:1
11:4,21	glad 11:8	2:1,22	knows 6:23	13:3,5,5
eight 7:14	go 2:13 7:6	6:22 8:11		Madam 13:3
energy 11:22	8:18,22	12:25	L	majority
engaged 12:9	13:4,4,5	hurdles	lack 7:16	10:6
equal 11:5,9	goal 6:14	11:20	Lake 6:4 9:5	MALE 1:1,21
establish	going 2:6,11	hurt 9:25	late 10:21	2:5,10 3:1
10:6	7:13,17		12:15	5:12 7:21
evenings	8:4,5,18	I	lay 2:21,22	9:7 10:10
10:21	9:22 10:7	immensely	LDF 11:24	12:11,23
everybody	10:8	6:21	leadership	map 2:25 5:3
2:7 9:20	Gotcha 2:5	important	11:10	8:8,13
12:19	governor	10:5	left 2:1	10:1,8
everyone's	11:14,15	inaudible	Let's 3:4	maps 10:5
6:2	Grambling	5:13	11:7,7,8	March 14:15
exact 2:1	6:4	include 5:23	Letlow 4:11	McNeese 9:4
excited 8:4	great 8:5	inform 1:6	6:8 8:14	mean 2:22
exciting	9:23 10:14	interest 6:2	Letlow's 3:8	means 14:5
10:14	guess 8:23	7:3,12	3:11 4:8	member 6:10
F	10:2,3	interested	4:20,24	8:3,10
failure 9:12	H	14:14	5:7 8:15	members 1:2
favor 13:1	half 7:6	involved	line 6:18	1:3,24 2:5
federal 8:12	10:2	14:13	9:2,3	2:14,15,17
11:4	handful 7:4	J	little 2:7	7:4,25
fight 12:4	happen 9:24	Johnson's	live 6:2	9:11 10:13
filed 7:5	happy 11:8	3:14 5:7	long 8:20	11:13
final 5:19	hard 10:25	6:20	look 3:23	12:13 13:4
finally 1:7	hardest 11:1	joint 1:8	4:5 8:17	13:5,11
finished 1:3	heard 11:23	judge 5:16	8:19	mentioned
first 3:4	help 12:16	judge's 11:4	looks 2:12	14:7
floor 1:18	HENRY 13:4	judgment	7:2	merits 5:21
2:15,16	13:11	5:20	lost 9:19	Messages 1:5
3:3,5 5:13	HGA 2:2	Julia 6:8	lot 5:22 7:7	1:5
7:22 9:8	high 2:13	K	9:13	Michelle
10:11	historic	keep 12:2	Louisiana	1:10
Florida 6:18	10:13,17	kind 8:25	4:11,15	miles 6:6
following	10:24	King 11:19	6:3,4,5	8:16,16
1:7	hit 2:15	King's 11:16	8:7,13	9:2,2
Fontana 1:10	home 3:11,12	11:18	10:15,17	mind 2:10
Fort 9:4	3:13 4:17	knew 5:9	11:5,6,10	5:22
fought 9:19			Louisiana's	minority
			1:14	10:6

Mississippi 6:18 9:3	11:8	points 2:13	quorum 1:4	11:10 12:5
Monroe 4:15	opposed 13:2	political 6:1	<hr/> R <hr/>	rights 11:19
6:5	11:4	Polk 9:4	race 7:3	room 10:19
Morris 3:1,2	original 4:18 5:3	positions 1:15	Rapides 9:17	12:16
3:6,10,16	originally 7:5	posture 2:1	10:1,2	rule 5:17
3:20 4:2,4	Ouachita 5:6	precinct 3:12,13	really 10:18	rules 1:20
4:7,14,20	outcome 14:14	president 1:23 5:14	reason 7:4	run 7:10,13
4:23 5:5	<hr/> P <hr/>	7:20,24	10:7	<hr/> S <hr/>
5:11,12,14	parish 2:24	9:10 10:12	reasons 7:19	seat 13:12
7:21 8:1	3:7,17,21	11:13	recollec... 4:19	second 11:2
9:1 12:16	5:6 7:6,11	12:10 13:9	redistrict 5:15,22	13:12
motion 13:7	9:17,18	primarily 7:2	redistri... 9:16	Secretary 1:1 13:3
13:8,10	10:1,2	principles 5:22	redistri... 1:14,24	see 2:8 8:17
move 2:2	parishes 6:18 7:8	problems 12:18	9:11 11:1	seen 2:11
moves 1:19	part 2:23	process 12:9	11:2	Senate 1:8,8
12:24	parties 14:13	progress 12:5,7,7	regions 7:15	1:10,11,24
<hr/> N <hr/>	passed 1:7	proposed 12:25	relative 1:12	2:1,3,22
Nathan 14:2	2:6	protect 6:8	remember 5:3	3:1,24
14:17	passing 2:14	protecting 6:11	9:12,16	5:13 8:3
nay 13:3	2:20	protects 8:13	remiss 11:12	9:17 10:15
nays 13:7	Pause 2:4,9	provide 1:13	removed 2:2	12:21,24
neither 5:24	2:19 7:23	1:15 11:5	Rep 3:12	12:25 13:2
5:24 14:11	9:9	11:9	reported 1:9	senator 1:12
never 5:19	people 7:16	provides 1:24	represent 7:16,19	1:19,22,23
new 2:25	7:18 8:22	push 11:19	represen... 11:5,9	2:10,20
nights 12:15	9:24 11:24	put 3:13 4:5	Represen... 3:13 4:11	3:2,6,6,9
noble 6:14	11:24,25	4:7,10 5:2	Represent... 1:7	3:10,12,15
North 4:11	percent 8:14	5:7 8:25	reside 8:15	3:16,18,20
4:15	perfect 11:1	puts 6:17	resolutions 1:8	3:22 4:2,4
northeast 6:3,19 8:7	performing 10:16	putting 3:8	respect 1:15	4:4,7,9,11
8:13	personal 3:11 7:3	<hr/> Q <hr/>	respectf... 1:9	4:14,16,17
Number 2:3	7:10,11	quest 9:20	returned 1:11	4:20,22,23
<hr/> O <hr/>	9:1 14:12	question 3:2	reviewed 14:8	5:1,5,9,11
objection 1:21,22	perspective 8:25	questions 4:6	right 2:6	5:12,14
13:11	Pikover 14:2		4:22 5:8	6:7 7:21
objectives 6:15	14:17		7:7 10:17	7:22,24
offices 1:15	plaintiffs 11:24			8:1,25 9:7
Okay 2:20	please 3:4			9:8,10
3:1	13:6			10:10,11
once 2:12				10:12
open 1:1				12:11,12
13:1,3				12:13,16
opportunity 10:13 11:7				12:17,23
				12:24 13:4
				13:8,9,11
				senators 9:18
				seniority

6:12 served 6:22 serving 8:9 session 11:3 11:15 set 1:17 SGA 10:22 11:14 shocked 4:23 sincere 10:20 sine 13:10 sink 8:16 sir 4:2 5:11 Sit 13:12 sits 8:10 six 9:18, 18 9:23, 23 10:3, 4 slow 2:7 somebody 7:9 somebody's 7:7 sort 7:14 south 6:17 speak 2:15 SPEAKER 1:1 1:21 2:5 2:10 3:1 5:12 7:21 9:7 10:10 12:11, 23 spent 12:15 staff 10:22 stake 7:10 stand 3:18 standing 8:22 start 4:18 11:17 started 11:18 state 3:12 6:9, 19 8:12 9:4 10:4, 14, 17 11:6, 8, 10 stated 4:9 6:15 subdivis...	6:1 submitted 1:9 summaries 2:5 support 10:7 supporter 6:23 supposed 5:22, 25 sure 2:17 9:11 suspension 1:19 <hr/> T take 1:20 Talbot 13:8 13:9 talked 9:13 team 14:6, 12 Tech 6:4 tell 12:3 ten 7:15 term 8:5 testify 11:25 thank 1:23 3:5 5:11 5:14 7:20 7:21, 24 9:7, 10 10:10, 12 10:18, 19 10:22 11:10, 12 11:13 12:8 12:9, 10, 11 12:21, 23 13:9 thereof 14:14 thing 3:16 8:24 11:1 things 6:25 8:4, 5 9:14 think 4:2, 17 8:5 thinking 3:24	time 1:20 5:2 tire 12:4 tired 12:2, 2 tireless 10:23 tirelessly 12:15 Title 1:12 today 8:6 10:14 tough 11:3 trading 4:14 transcribed 14:5, 8 Transcri... 14:2, 6, 8 14:12, 17 transcript 14:7 transcri... 14:1, 6, 10 14:12 travesty 8:8 9:5 trial 5:20 true 9:25 14:10 trying 4:10 12:16, 17 two 7:14 10:16 <hr/> U unconsti... 5:19 understand 4:16 7:6 Unfortun... 8:6 University 6:4 9:4 urge 7:19 utilizing 14:5 utter 9:12 <hr/> V vote 1:2, 2 7:19 10:8	13:2, 2 voters' 11:19 votes 6:17 8:14 voting 1:3 2:8 <hr/> W wall 8:17 want 2:7, 15 3:3 7:10 8:24 10:18 10:22 11:12 wanted 6:8 wants 7:11 wasn't 4:20 12:19 way 2:21 3:25 9:15 11:18, 20 14:13 we're 2:6, 8 5:21, 25 8:4, 5, 7 12:2, 20, 20 we've 2:11 week 11:17 11:18 went 5:19 12:14 wholehea... 8:1 Womack 1:12 1:19, 22, 23 2:10, 20 3:6, 9, 15 3:18, 22 4:4, 9, 16 4:22 5:1, 9 6:7 12:12 12:13, 23 12:24 woman 6:9 8:9 work 9:15 worked 12:14 12:18 working	10:21 12:19 worthwhile 6:14 writing 8:17 <hr/> X <hr/> Y y'all's 5:3 year 9:11 12:1 years 5:18 7:14, 14, 15 yeas 13:7 <hr/> Z zigzag 7:9 <hr/> 0 0:08:19 5:13 <hr/> 1 11 13:7 18 1:12 <hr/> 2 20 8:21 2024 14:15 27 13:7 290872-A... 14:4 <hr/> 3 30 6:6 8:15 8:16 35 9:1 36 1:3 <hr/> 4 <hr/> 5 50 8:14 <hr/> 6 65 9:2 <hr/> 7 <hr/> 8 8 1:8, 11, 24
---	---	---	---	---

2:3 10:15 12:21,25 8th 14:15				
9				