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Louisiana State Senate 1st Special Session-Audio  
Transcription

January 17, 2024

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In Re: Louisiana House Floor/Committee Video

**EXHIBIT**

**JE30**

**PLAINTIFFS'  
EXHIBIT**

**P25**

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MALE SPEAKER: Senate will come to order.  
Sector, open machines. Members, vote your machines.  
OCHA, machines. Senator McMath is here. Senator  
Pressly. Senator Morris. Senator Talbot. Senator  
Talbot is here. Senator Connick is here. 36 members  
are present for a quorum. Senate will rise. Senator  
Mizell will -- will open the senate in prayer and also  
lead us in the -- for the Pledge of Allegiance.

MS. MIZELL: Thank you, Mr. President.  
Members, before we pray, I just want to say, we are all  
here for a time such as this. I -- I haven't heard one  
member say this is easy, and I -- I just -- I think it  
would be appropriate if we join together in the Lord's  
Prayer of unifying our body and reaching out to God. If  
you'd join me. Our Father, who art in Heaven, hallowed  
be Thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done on  
earth, as it is in Heaven. Give us this day our daily  
bread. And forgive us our trespasses, as we forgive  
those who trespass against us.

And lead us not to temptation, deliver us from  
evil. For thine is the kingdom and the power and the  
glory forever. Amen. Thank you. Join me in the  
pledge, please.

(Pledge of Allegiance.)

MALE SPEAKER: Reading of the journal.

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 2</p> <p>1 MS. MIZELL: Official Journal of the Senate of  2 the state of Louisiana, Second day's proceedings,  3 Tuesday, January 16th, 2024.  4 MALE SPEAKER: Senator Hodges moves to  5 dispense the reading of the journal without objection.  6 MS. MIZELL: Petitions, memorials, and  7 communications, I am in receipt of a letter from the  8 president appointing the parliamentarians, Senator  9 Gregory Miller. Messages from the house, the house is  10 finally passed and asked for concurrence in the  11 following house bills and joint resolutions. House Bill  12 16. House Bill 8, respectfully submit headed. Michelle  13 Fontenot, Clerk of the House. Introduction of House  14 bills. Senator Talbot now moves for suspension of the  15 rules for the purpose of reading the house bills the  16 first and second time and referring them to Committee.  17 House Bill 8 by Representative Mike Johnson is  18 an act to Entitled 13 relative to the Supreme Court to  19 provide relative to redistricting Supreme Court Justice  20 districts. It is referred to senate and governmental  21 affairs. House Bill 16 by Representative McFarland is  22 an act to appropriate funds and to make certain  23 reductions from certain sources to be allocated to the  24 designated agencies and purposes in specific amounts for  25 making of supplemental appropriations. Refer to</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 4</p> <p>1 long, detailed process, achieves several goals.  2 First, as you know and you're aware of,  3 Congresswoman Julia Letlow is my representative in  4 Washington, DC. The boundaries in the bill I'm  5 proposing ensure that Congresswoman Letlow remains both  6 unpaired with any other incumbents, and in a  7 congressional district that should continue to elect a  8 Republican to Congress for the remainder of this decade.  9 I have great pride in the work of Congresswoman Letlow  10 and -- that she's accomplished, and this map will ensure  11 that Louisianans will continue to benefit from her  12 presence in the halls of the Congress for as long as she  13 decides to continue to serve this great state.  14 Second. Louisiana has six congressional  15 districts. The map that's proposed bill ensures that  16 four are safe Republican seats. Louisiana Republican  17 presence in the United States' countours has contributed  18 tremendously to the national discourse, and I'm very  19 proud that both Speaker of the US House of  20 Representatives, Mike Johnson, and US House Majority  21 Leader Steve Scalise are both from our great state.  22 This map ensures that two of them will have solidly  23 Republican districts at home, so they can focus on the  24 national leadership that we need in Washington, DC. The  25 map that's proposed in this bill ensures conservative</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 3</p> <p>1 finance.  2 MALE SPEAKER: Oh, Senator O'Connor for an  3 introduction.  4 MALE SPEAKER 2: (inaudible 0:04:15).  5 MALE SPEAKER: Oh, okay.  6 MALE SPEAKER 2: It's okay.  7 MALE SPEAKER: Never mind. It's -- that zip  8 sound? Senate bills on third reading and final passage.  9 MS. MIZELL: First bill? Senator Womack now  10 moves for a suspension of the rules for the purpose of  11 calling out of order, Senate Bill 8 by Senator Womack.  12 It's an act to amend Title 18 relative to congressional  13 districts to provide for the redistricting of  14 Louisiana's congressional  15 FEMALE SPEAKER: To provide with respect to  16 positions and offices other than congressional, which  17 are based on congressional districts.  18 MALE SPEAKER: Senator Womack, on your bill.  19 SENATOR WOMACK: Thank you, Mr. President.  20 Colleagues, I bring Senate Bill Number 8 before you this  21 evening. As you know, Louisiana congressional districts  22 must be drawn, given the Federal Voting Rights Act  23 litigation that is still ongoing in the US District  24 Court for the Middle District of Louisiana. This map in  25 the bill that I'm introducing, which is the product of a</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 5</p> <p>1 principle is retained by the majority of those in  2 Louisiana and will continue to extend past our  3 boundaries to the nation's capital.  4 Third. The corridor that you see on the map  5 that -- that you have on your -- your table, if you'll  6 notice the map runs up Red River, which is barge  7 traffic, commerce. It also has I-49, which is a --  8 which is -- goes from Lafayette to Shreveport, which is  9 also a corridor for our state that is very important to  10 our commerce. We have a college. We have education  11 along that corridor. We have a presence with ag with  12 our row crop, as well as our cattle industry all up  13 along Red River in those parishes.  14 A lot of people from that area, the  15 Natchitoches Parish, as well as Alexandria, use  16 Alexandria for -- for -- for their healthcare, their  17 hospitals, and so forth in that area. So finally, the  18 amounts in the proposed bill responds appropriate to the  19 ongoing Federal Voting Rights Act in the Middle District  20 of Louisiana. For those who are unaware, the  21 congressional amounts that we enacted in 2022 of March  22 have been the subject of litigation, roughly since the  23 day -- the 2022 Congressional Redistricting Bill went  24 into effect. Even before we enacted it.  25 After a substantial amount of prolonged</p>

2 (Pages 2 to 5)

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 6</p> <p>1 litigation, the Federal District Court has adhered to</p> <p>2 its view that the federal law requires that the state</p> <p>3 have two congressional districts with a majority of</p> <p>4 Black voters. Our secretary of state, attorney general,</p> <p>5 and our prior legislative leadership appealed that, but</p> <p>6 have yet to succeed. And we are now here because of the</p> <p>7 federal court order, that we have to have first</p> <p>8 opportunity to act. The district court order that we</p> <p>9 must have two majority voting-age population districts,</p> <p>10 combined with the political impurities I just described,</p> <p>11 have largely -- largely driven the boundaries of</p> <p>12 District Two and District Six on your map, both of which</p> <p>13 are over 50 percent voting -- Black voting age</p> <p>14 population.</p> <p>15 Given the state's current demographics, there</p> <p>16 is not enough high Black population in the southeast</p> <p>17 portion of Louisiana to create two majority Black</p> <p>18 districts, and to also comply with the US Constitution</p> <p>19 one person, one vote requirement. That is the reason</p> <p>20 why District Two is drawn around Orleans Parish, while</p> <p>21 District Six includes the Black population of East Baton</p> <p>22 Rouge Parish and travels up the I-49 quarter to include</p> <p>23 Black population in Shreveport. While this is a</p> <p>24 different map than the Plaintiffs' litigation have</p> <p>25 proposed, this is the only map I reviewed that</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 8</p> <p>1 common with one another within the district?</p> <p>2 SENATOR WOMACK: No, I didn't because it was</p> <p>3 -- it was -- we had to draw two districts, and that's</p> <p>4 the only way we could get two districts. One of the</p> <p>5 ways we could get two districts, and still protect our</p> <p>6 political interest.</p> <p>7 SENATOR MORRIS: Well, one of the things you</p> <p>8 said earlier was that -- that we had in common the</p> <p>9 agriculture. You mentioned that. That's a community of</p> <p>10 interest. So you did consider agriculture as being</p> <p>11 something that everybody had in common with this</p> <p>12 district, or?</p> <p>13 SENATOR WOMACK: My comment was -- was the</p> <p>14 fact that it was along that corridor. Ag was along that</p> <p>15 corridor some -- some -- not so much in that community</p> <p>16 interest. Just maintaining -- bringing out the fact</p> <p>17 that I-49 does go through there, and it does encompass</p> <p>18 your -- your timberland, your ag, your hospitals. Just</p> <p>19 trying to bring to light some of the positives going up</p> <p>20 that corridor.</p> <p>21 SENATOR MORRIS: So would you -- would you say</p> <p>22 that the heart of this district is Northeast Louisiana</p> <p>23 and North Central Louisiana?</p> <p>24 SENATOR WOMACK: I wouldn't say the heart of</p> <p>25 the district is that way, but the way the district -- to</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 7</p> <p>1 accomplishes the political goals I believe that are</p> <p>2 important for my district, for Louisiana, and for the</p> <p>3 country.</p> <p>4 While I did not draw these boundaries myself,</p> <p>5 I carefully considered the number of different map</p> <p>6 options. I firmly submit that the congressional voting</p> <p>7 boundaries represented in this bill best achieve the</p> <p>8 goals of protecting Congresswoman Letlow's seat,</p> <p>9 maintaining a strong district for Speaker Johnson, as</p> <p>10 well as Majority Leader Steve Scalise, ensuring four</p> <p>11 Republican districts, and adhering to the command of the</p> <p>12 Federal Court in the Middle District of Louisiana. And</p> <p>13 I ask for favorable passage.</p> <p>14 MALE SPEAKER: We have -- we have one question</p> <p>15 by Senator Morris for --</p> <p>16 SENATOR MORRIS: Senator Womack, among the</p> <p>17 factors that you considered was the community of</p> <p>18 interest of the district. Something that was considered</p> <p>19 in coming up with this version of the map that we have</p> <p>20 before us.</p> <p>21 SENATOR WOMACK: Senator Morris, this map was</p> <p>22 strictly drawn from the political aspect of our</p> <p>23 congressman in -- in office is how it was drawn.</p> <p>24 SENATOR MORRIS: Did -- you didn't consider</p> <p>25 the community of interest of people having something in</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 9</p> <p>1 pick up the -- the -- and honor the courts, it had to be</p> <p>2 drawn like it had to be drawn to pick that up.</p> <p>3 SENATOR MORRIS: So the -- is there a heart of</p> <p>4 the district?</p> <p>5 SENATOR WOMACK: If it is, it'll be a small</p> <p>6 majority of the heart. I don't think it's a -- it's a</p> <p>7 -- it -- it has a heart of the district, but it had to</p> <p>8 start somewhere.</p> <p>9 SENATOR MORRIS: Do you know what the most</p> <p>10 populated parish is of Congressional District Five at</p> <p>11 the current moment?</p> <p>12 SENATOR WOMACK: I do not. I hadn't looked at</p> <p>13 that to -- to prove that myself. I (inaudible 0:08:54)</p> <p>14 -- could be Ouachita Parish.</p> <p>15 SENATOR MORRIS: Right. So Ouachita Parish,</p> <p>16 which is the most populated parish in Congressional</p> <p>17 District Five, which you seek to protect for</p> <p>18 Congresswoman Letlow. Your map cuts Ouachita Parish</p> <p>19 into various pieces, does it not? And puts a lot of</p> <p>20 that in Congressman Johnson's District Four, correct?</p> <p>21 SENATOR WOMACK: That's true. The way the map</p> <p>22 is drawn. That's in my bill. That is the way it's</p> <p>23 drawn.</p> <p>24 SENATOR MORRIS: And like you, your -- I -- I</p> <p>25 think you indicated that Congresswoman Letlow is your</p>

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<p>Page 10</p> <p>1 congressperson, and -- and it's important to you for her</p> <p>2 to remain to be your Congresswoman; is that correct?</p> <p>3 SENATOR WOMACK: Very important.</p> <p>4 SENATOR MORRIS: Well, under your map, I would</p> <p>5 be Congressman Johnson's -- in his district, and so</p> <p>6 would Senator Cathey, and so would Representative</p> <p>7 Echols; is that correct?</p> <p>8 SENATOR WOMACK: That would be correct. I</p> <p>9 don't -- I know -- I've been to your house, but I hadn't</p> <p>10 been in any of the others, but I think you're correct.</p> <p>11 SENATOR MORRIS: So that would be important to</p> <p>12 me; did you know? But -- but this district as it's</p> <p>13 drawn now, would move Lincoln Parish and Louisiana Tech</p> <p>14 into Congressman Johnson's district; would it not?</p> <p>15 SENATOR WOMACK: That's a possibility.</p> <p>16 SENATOR MORRIS: Well, your map does -- map</p> <p>17 does put Lincoln Parish -- all of Lincoln Parish into</p> <p>18 Congressman Johnson's district; does it not?</p> <p>19 SENATOR WOMACK: It does do that, yes.</p> <p>20 SENATOR MORRIS: So -- but the district does</p> <p>21 reach down into Baton Rouge; does it not?</p> <p>22 SENATOR WOMACK: It does.</p> <p>23 SENATOR MORRIS: And the district includes</p> <p>24 Tiger Stadium in the district and also Joe Aillet</p> <p>25 Stadium at -- in Louisiana Tech in Ruston.</p>	<p>Page 12</p> <p>1 Louisiana Tech will be in Congressman Johnson, even</p> <p>2 though Louisiana Tech is only 30 mile -- 30, 40 miles</p> <p>3 away from Congresswoman Letlow's home.</p> <p>4 SENATOR WOMACK: I -- I agree with that --</p> <p>5 with that totally, where we had to draw two minority</p> <p>6 districts. That's -- that's the way the numbers worked</p> <p>7 out. You've worked with -- with -- with redistricting</p> <p>8 before, and that's -- that's -- you have to -- you have</p> <p>9 to work everybody around the best you can. This is --</p> <p>10 SENATOR MORRIS: Well, as of yesterday before</p> <p>11 Committee, the map -- my home and Senator Cathey's home,</p> <p>12 but you amended it to put even more in Congressman</p> <p>13 Johnson's district; did you not?</p> <p>14 SENATOR WOMACK: Senator Morris, my</p> <p>15 understanding that -- that -- that my amendment put you</p> <p>16 all in Congresswoman Letlow's district.</p> <p>17 SENATOR MORRIS: In Congressman Johnson's</p> <p>18 district under the -- under your amendment because it</p> <p>19 added more Ouachita Parish into District Four; did it</p> <p>20 not?</p> <p>21 SENATOR WOMACK: My understanding that when we</p> <p>22 moved that, that it added y'all. I could be wrong on</p> <p>23 that, but it added y'all.</p> <p>24 SENATOR MORRIS: The -- the amendment as I</p> <p>25 understand it and looked at it in Committee before</p>
<p>Page 11</p> <p>1 SENATOR WOMACK: In the minority district, in</p> <p>2 district -- in District Two -- or District Six.</p> <p>3 SENATOR MORRIS: Isn't it true that Tiger</p> <p>4 Stadium in your -- on your map is located in</p> <p>5 Congresswoman Letlow's district?</p> <p>6 SENATOR WOMACK: Yes.</p> <p>7 SENATOR MORRIS: And so is Joe Aillet Stadium</p> <p>8 at Louisiana Tech.</p> <p>9 SENATOR WOMACK: Not -- not in -- not in that</p> <p>10 district. She don't go into -- under my map, she</p> <p>11 doesn't go into Ruston.</p> <p>12 SENATOR MORRIS: Under your map, all of</p> <p>13 Lincoln Parish is in Congresswoman -- that's Lincoln on</p> <p>14 the map right there. That's where Ruston is.</p> <p>15 SENATOR WOMACK: Right.</p> <p>16 SENATOR MORRIS: And so that is Congresswoman</p> <p>17 -- that would be -- it's currently Congresswoman</p> <p>18 Letlow's, but now it's going to be Congressman</p> <p>19 Johnson's.</p> <p>20 SENATOR WOMACK: Right.</p> <p>21 SENATOR MORRIS: Okay. Right.</p> <p>22 SENATOR WOMACK: Yeah.</p> <p>23 SENATOR MORRIS: So they will be in different</p> <p>24 districts. Tiger Stadium will be in Congresswoman -- I</p> <p>25 mean, yeah, Congresswoman Letlow's district, but</p>	<p>Page 13</p> <p>1 yesterday, the bill as filed -- but now, under the</p> <p>2 current version of the bill, I am in Congressman</p> <p>3 Johnson's district.</p> <p>4 SENATOR WOMACK: Okay.</p> <p>5 SENATOR MORRIS: Don't you think we should</p> <p>6 have moved -- included Louisiana Tech and Ouachita</p> <p>7 Parish in the Northeast Louisiana Congressional</p> <p>8 District?</p> <p>9 SENATOR WOMACK: Senator Morris, it's -- it's</p> <p>10 a lot of could have, and -- and -- and I regret that</p> <p>11 it's not, but we also have to look at the other members</p> <p>12 of Congress, and what we can live with concerning that.</p> <p>13 SENATOR MORRIS: If your bill gets out of --</p> <p>14 off the floor today and goes over to the House, would</p> <p>15 you be amenable to amendments that would allow this</p> <p>16 district, as long as all the other requisites are -- are</p> <p>17 there for -- to comply with the judge's order, and to</p> <p>18 comply with, you know, the -- the community of interest</p> <p>19 and all the other redistricting principles that we have</p> <p>20 to abide by?</p> <p>21 SENATOR WOMACK: Senator Morris, I have no</p> <p>22 problem in that, as long as it -- it -- it -- it -- it</p> <p>23 meets the requirements of the bill.</p> <p>24 SENATOR MORRIS: Thank you, Senator. I</p> <p>25 appreciate your efforts, and I'm hopeful that we can --</p>

4 (Pages 10 to 13)

<p style="text-align: right;">Page 14</p> <p>1 as if -- assuming the bill does move, that we can  2 perhaps find a resolution that can make everybody, if  3 not absolutely happy, a little happier. Thank you.  4 SENATOR WOMACK: Thank you, Senator Morris.  5 MALE SPEAKER: Senator Stine for the floor.  6 (Pause.)  7 SENATOR STINE: Thank you, Mr. President.  8 Members of this esteemed chamber, today we stand at a  9 crossroads, burdened with a decision that weighs heavily  10 on each of us. The congressional map before us, a  11 construct far from our ideal, now demands our reluctant  12 endorsement. It pains me, as it does many of you, to  13 navigate these troubled waters not of our own making,  14 but of a heavy-handed, Obama-appointed federal judge,  15 who has regrettably left us little room to maneuver.  16 This map, imperfect as it is, stands as a bulwark  17 protecting not just lines on a map, but the very pillars  18 of our representation in Congress.  19 It safeguards the positions of pivotal  20 figures, the United States Speaker of the House, the  21 majority leader, and notably, the sole female member of  22 our congressional delegation. Her role is not merely  23 symbolic. She is a lynchpin in the appropriations,  24 education, and workforce committees which are vital to  25 the prosperity and well-being of our state. We are the</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 16</p> <p>1 Despite those concerns, I stand in support of  2 this legislation. It still needs work, it must be  3 amended, but I stand in support of it today, and I speak  4 only for today. I would like to read to you all a  5 statement from Congressman Carter, who currently  6 represents the Second Congressional District. Many of  7 us served with him either when we were in the House, or  8 those of us who served with him in the Senate. Here's a  9 statement.  10 "My dear friends and colleagues, as I said on  11 the steps of the capital, I will work with anyone who  12 wants to create two majority-minority districts. I am  13 not married to any one map. I have worked tirelessly to  14 help create two majority-minority districts that  15 perform. That's how I know that there may be better  16 ways to create -- to craft both of these districts.  17 There are multiple maps that haven't been reviewed at  18 all. However, the Womack map creates two  19 majority-minority districts, and therefore I am  20 supportive of it. And I urge my former colleagues and  21 friends to vote for it while trying to make both  22 districts stronger with appropriate amendment."  23 "We do not want to jeopardize this rare  24 opportunity to give African American voters the equal  25 representation they rightly deserve." And that's the</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 15</p> <p>1 guardians of Louisiana's voice on the national stage.  2 Our decision today, while constrained, is crucial.  3 It's about more than lines on a map. It's  4 about ensuring our state's continued influence in the  5 halls of power where decisions are made that affect  6 every citizen we represent. So with a heavy heart, but  7 a clear understanding of the stakes, unfortunately, we  8 must pass this map before us instead of giving the pen  9 to a heavy-handed, Obama-appointed federal judge who  10 seeks to enforce her will on the legislature. Into an  11 untenable situation, rather than acting as a co-equal  12 branch of government as laid out in our constitution.  13 MALE SPEAKER: Senator Carter for the floor.  14 SENATOR CARTER: Thank you, Mr. President,  15 members. This proposed map by Senator Womack -- well,  16 let me start with the current district, District Two.  17 The current African American voting age population in  18 District Two is currently 58 percent. This map proposed  19 by Senator Womack reduces it to barely 51 percent, and,  20 Committee, the bill's author testified that no sort of  21 performance analysis had been conducted to determine  22 whether or not District Two continues to consistently  23 perform as an African American district. There are  24 serious concerns about this map. There are serious  25 concerns about this proposal.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 17</p> <p>1 statement from Congressman Troy Carter. I expressed my  2 concerns. They're serious concerns. It is my  3 expectation and my hope that this bill continue to be  4 worked on, that amendments continue to happen, but today  5 I stand in support. Thank you.  6 MALE SPEAKER: Senator Jackson for the floor.  7 (Pause.)  8 SENATOR JACKSON: He tried to cut off my mic.  9 (Pause.)  10 MALE SPEAKER: Members, you have to talk  11 directly into the mic, unlike in previous times, where  12 you could kind of talk around the mic. You have to  13 literally talk directly into the mic for it to work.  14 We're going to adjust that for the next --  15 SENATOR JACKSON: Hello. Okay. Good.  16 (inaudible 0:23:11) was going to have a fit if I wasn't  17 able to speak. I stand in support of this map. I first  18 want to thank Senator Womack, who had the fortitude,  19 regardless of how we got here, but to stand up and do  20 what the last body couldn't do, and that's to come  21 together. But I do stand to say this because I said it  22 in Committee. I reluctantly came to the floor to  23 support this map because my constituents and a lot of  24 our constituents in North Louisiana right now are still  25 experiencing an ice state. That's what I call it</p>

5 (Pages 14 to 17)



<p style="text-align: right;">Page 18</p> <p>1 because we didn't get snow.</p> <p>2 And so a lot of them don't even know that</p> <p>3 we're down here right now passing maps. And so this is</p> <p>4 the first time in a long time I'm probably going to vote</p> <p>5 for something that I haven't vetted through my</p> <p>6 constituency because tonight, myself, Representative</p> <p>7 Fisher and Representative Morrell will have a Zoom</p> <p>8 community meeting to catch them up on what they have</p> <p>9 lost while they were at home, because my legislative</p> <p>10 assistant was finally able to get to the office and at</p> <p>11 least send something out to our constituency.</p> <p>12 However, at some point, what they did tell me</p> <p>13 over and over again for the last year, year and a half</p> <p>14 that we've been going through this process, that they</p> <p>15 were supportive of fair and equitable maps, and that</p> <p>16 they knew a fair and equitable -- equitable map would be</p> <p>17 something that created fair representation for all</p> <p>18 people in the State of Louisiana. I will end with this.</p> <p>19 I don't think we're in a -- in the hands of a</p> <p>20 heavy-handed judge, but we're in the hands of</p> <p>21 consequences that the last legislature created in our</p> <p>22 failure to act. And I say that with a heart of hope</p> <p>23 that we act today on what is right, on what is just, and</p> <p>24 what is fair.</p> <p>25 I don't believe, and I said this before, any</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 20</p> <p>1 spirit of fairness that they asked me to carry in the</p> <p>2 last redistricting session. And I want to thank Senator</p> <p>3 Womack because the mark of a true leader is a leader</p> <p>4 that not only does what he wants to do, but what's</p> <p>5 necessary to bring resolve and wholeness to a body that</p> <p>6 has to work together on a number of issues. Thank you.</p> <p>7 MALE SPEAKER: Thank you, Senator Jackson.</p> <p>8 Senator Duplessis for the floor.</p> <p>9 SENATOR DUPLESSIS: Thank you, Mr. President.</p> <p>10 Thank you, Chairman Womack. I just want to make a few</p> <p>11 brief comments based on some comments that have been</p> <p>12 made earlier today. I was not necessarily planning to</p> <p>13 speak, but I think it's important that I just share a</p> <p>14 thought or two. It was said that this is much more than</p> <p>15 just lines on a map, and I agree. It is much more than</p> <p>16 just lines on a map. We've heard a lot from Chairman</p> <p>17 Womack and my colleague, Senator Stine about the</p> <p>18 importance of protecting certain elected officials, but</p> <p>19 it's about more than lines on a map. It's about the</p> <p>20 people of this state. It's about one-third of this</p> <p>21 state going underrepresented for too long.</p> <p>22 It's about a federal law called the Voting</p> <p>23 Rights Act that has not been interpreted just by one</p> <p>24 judge in the Middle District of Louisiana who was</p> <p>25 appointed by former president Barack Obama, but also a</p>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 19</p> <p>1 of my colleagues in this chamber would have it to be</p> <p>2 that a certain group of people in the State of Louisiana</p> <p>3 would not be properly represented. I am an American who</p> <p>4 stands every time the flag is presented. I proudly say</p> <p>5 one nation under God. And I hope today that in this</p> <p>6 senate we will stand as one Louisiana under God, because</p> <p>7 God is for what's just and what's equitable and what</p> <p>8 helps all people.</p> <p>9 There is nothing that says that a second</p> <p>10 African American serving in Congress in Louisiana will</p> <p>11 not help the masses. Well, if we think that, then we</p> <p>12 think that we're less or better than a person based on</p> <p>13 race. If anyone in this chamber could articulate a</p> <p>14 reason why they believe that any African American that</p> <p>15 sits before you today wouldn't go to Congress with the</p> <p>16 same zeal and vigor and heart for the people, then maybe</p> <p>17 we can say that there's not an African American in this</p> <p>18 state that's going to stand in Congress and represent</p> <p>19 us.</p> <p>20 But I literally do not believe that there's a</p> <p>21 colleague in here that looks across this chamber at any</p> <p>22 member of the Black caucus and does not believe that we</p> <p>23 wouldn't go to Congress and represent Louisiana. And so</p> <p>24 I stand in support, with reluctance of having to talk to</p> <p>25 my constituents after this vote, but with carrying the</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 21</p> <p>1 US Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals that's made up of</p> <p>2 judges that were appointed by predominantly Republican</p> <p>3 presidents, and a United States Supreme Court that has</p> <p>4 already made rulings. That has been made up of justices</p> <p>5 that were appointed by a majority of Republican</p> <p>6 presidents, primarily former president Trump. This is</p> <p>7 not about one judge that was appointed by former</p> <p>8 president Barack Obama. This is about the people of</p> <p>9 this state, and one-third of that state, 33 percent, to</p> <p>10 be exact, being underrepresented.</p> <p>11 So I think it's important that we keep the</p> <p>12 focus on why we're here today. None of us want to be</p> <p>13 here today. We've been at this for well over two years,</p> <p>14 and all of us have a level of reluctance with the maps</p> <p>15 that are before us. Just like Senator Carter, I'm not</p> <p>16 thrilled about what's happening to send it to</p> <p>17 Congressional District Two, and the way that it's</p> <p>18 lowering the numbers.</p> <p>19 Senator Price and I, we coauthored a bill that</p> <p>20 we felt performed better, but we too are going to</p> <p>21 support this map because not only have we been ordered</p> <p>22 to do it by, yes, a judge who was appointed by President</p> <p>23 Obama, but if we felt like the -- the -- the -- the</p> <p>24 appellate judges would overrule her, then we'd be right</p> <p>25 back in court. We're at the end of the road, and I too</p>

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<p style="text-align: right;">Page 22</p> <p>1 will support this -- this map. Not because I think it's</p> <p>2 perfect, not because I think it's the best thing that we</p> <p>3 could do, but because it's time to give people of this</p> <p>4 state fair representation. Thank you.</p> <p>5 MALE SPEAKER: Thank you, Senator Duplessis.</p> <p>6 Senator Pressly for the floor.</p> <p>7 SENATOR PRESSLY: Thank you, Mr. President,</p> <p>8 and members. Senators, I rise today in opposition of</p> <p>9 this bill, and I rise in opposition because I represent</p> <p>10 a community that's unique and wonderful in many ways,</p> <p>11 very diverse, and clearly a passionate part of my life</p> <p>12 in Northwest Louisiana. I believe that Shreveport and</p> <p>13 Bossier City and the surrounding parishes of De Soto and</p> <p>14 Red River and Webster are unique from the rest of our</p> <p>15 state, and I believe that commonalities of -- of</p> <p>16 interest are important.</p> <p>17 I agree with -- with Senator Jackson. I would</p> <p>18 have no issue whatsoever of having any member of this</p> <p>19 body, and many others from throughout our state of any</p> <p>20 background, of any creed, of any race represent our</p> <p>21 great, wonderful, diverse state in Washington, DC. But</p> <p>22 I cannot support a map that puts Caddo Parish and</p> <p>23 portions of my district, which is over 220 miles from</p> <p>24 here, in a district that will be represented by someone</p> <p>25 in East Baton Rouge that may or may not have ever even</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 24</p> <p>1 MALE SPEAKER: Thank you, Senator Pressly.</p> <p>2 The board is clear. Senator Womack, to close on your</p> <p>3 bill.</p> <p>4 SENATOR WOMACK: Colleagues, appreciate the</p> <p>5 questions and the comments, and I just ask that we move</p> <p>6 this bill favorable.</p> <p>7 MALE SPEAKER: Senator Womack has moved</p> <p>8 favorable passage of Senate Bill 8. When the machines</p> <p>9 are open, all those in favor, aye. Those opposed, vote</p> <p>10 nay. Open the machines. Madam Secretary, open the</p> <p>11 machines. Go to a machine, members. Senator -- Senator</p> <p>12 Miguez. There we go. Secretary, close the machines.</p> <p>13 27 ayes, 11 nays. The -- the -- the bill is passed.</p> <p>14 Senator Womack moves of reconsideration. The -- the</p> <p>15 vote by which the bill was passed. I lay the motion on</p> <p>16 the table without objection. So ordered.</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>
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 23</p> <p>1 been to Northwest Louisiana, and certainly doesn't</p> <p>2 understand the rich culture, rich, important uniqueness</p> <p>3 of our area of the state.</p> <p>4 When we look at -- at Louisiana, we often talk</p> <p>5 about north and south, and that division is true. It's</p> <p>6 real. I think all of us acknowledge that. The I-10</p> <p>7 corridor has unique needs. When you look at -- at the</p> <p>8 challenges that you face with storms, often you think of</p> <p>9 hurricanes. In North Louisiana, we think of tornados</p> <p>10 and ice storms. When you look at the -- the important</p> <p>11 region of our states and the -- the diverse industries</p> <p>12 that we have in Northwest Louisiana, Barksdale is</p> <p>13 vitally important. Certainly, having Barksdale and Fort</p> <p>14 Johnson now, previously Fort Polk, together in one</p> <p>15 district is the one positive thing that I see in this</p> <p>16 map, and I think that is something that we must keep in</p> <p>17 mind as we continue through this process.</p> <p>18 But I am concerned with the important part of</p> <p>19 -- of this state, Northwest Louisiana, not having the</p> <p>20 same member of Congress. With having a -- two members</p> <p>21 of Congress, that has the potential to split our</p> <p>22 community even further along a -- a -- a -- a -- a --</p> <p>23 line that's based purely on race, and I'm concerned</p> <p>24 about that. Therefore, I'm voting no, and I urge you to</p> <p>25 do the same.</p>	<p style="text-align: right;">Page 25</p> <p>1 CERTIFICATE OF TRANSCRIPTION</p> <p>2 I, Nathan Pikover, COO of TranscribeMe, Inc.,</p> <p>3 do hereby certify that</p> <p>4 290872-Audio-011724SCHAMB-Edited-Appended.json was</p> <p>5 transcribed utilizing computer aided means and the</p> <p>6 TranscribeMe transcription team.</p> <p>7 The transcript of the audio mentioned above,</p> <p>8 having been transcribed and reviewed by TranscribeMe,</p> <p>9 Inc. to the best of the company's ability, is a full,</p> <p>10 true, and correct transcription.</p> <p>11 I further certify that neither I, nor the</p> <p>12 TranscribeMe, Inc. transcription team, have any personal</p> <p>13 association with the parties involved or are in any way</p> <p>14 interested in the outcome thereof.</p> <p>15 Dated this 8th of March, 2024.</p> <p>16 _____</p> <p>17 Nathan Pikover, COO TranscribeMe, Inc.</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>

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