EXHIBIT 10

https://www.lsureveille.com/news/when-we-sue-we-win-black-baton-rouge-residents-call-for-second-majority-black-congressional/article_35da528c-4a3d-11ec-bff3-f341498a4f66.html

'When we sue, we win': Black Baton Rouge residents call for second majority Black congressional district

Piper Hutchinson | @PiperHutchBR
Nov 21, 2021

Gov. John Bel Edwards stands on the side on Wednesday, Jan. 31, 2018, at the William A. Brookshire Military & Veterans Student Center Ribbon-Cutting Ceremony.

Dilyn Stewart

Black Baton Rouge residents called for a second majority Black congressional district in Louisiana at the Joint Governmental Affairs Committee's fifth public meeting on the redistricting process.

Case 3:22-cv-00211-SDD-SDJ Document 51 04/15/22 Page 3 of 45

At the Nov. 16 meeting at Southern University in Baton Rouge, residents pointed out that Black people make up a third of the state's population, but only one of Louisiana's six congressional districts is majority Black.

This sentiment was repeated by Rep. Ted James, chair of the Legislative Black Caucus, who gave public comment. "One third of six is two," he repeated multiple times during his five-minute speech.

After U.S. Census results are delivered every 10 years, state legislatures use the data to redraw district lines, which determine how areas of the state are represented politically on a local, state and federal level. Louisiana's district maps for the U.S. House of Representatives, state legislature, Board of Elementary and Secondary Education and other local jurisdictions will be redrawn.

Louisiana became less rural and more diverse in the last 10 years, the 2020 Census shows. New Orleans and six surrounding parishes are no longer majority white.

2020 Census: Louisiana becoming less rural, more diverse

Redistricting in Louisiana has historically been fraught with accusations that political districts have been drawn in ways to limit the power of minority voters and keep dominant political groups in power.

During his monthly call-in radio show on Nov. 17, Louisiana Gov. John Bel Edwards made his first public comments on the redistricting process. He said he was working under the premise that the maps need to be fair and easy to understand.

“We want a fair map so that the voter has a reasonable chance of choosing their representatives rather than representatives choosing their voters,” he said.

Edwards said he’s concerned about “packing and cracking,” which are types of gerrymandering meant to weaken the voting power of a political party or racial group.

Packing forces a large number of voters from one group into a single or small number of districts to lessen their power in other districts. Cracking dilutes the power of those voters into many districts.

Rep. John Stefanski, chair of the House and Governmental Affairs Committee, which oversees redistricting, said that he hasn’t had any communication with the governor.

“The governor has the final say whether or not any bill becomes a law,” Stefanski said. “So it’s a relevant consideration through this process. At this point, I have not had any contact with the administration about anything that they would like to see.”

Stefanski pointed out that the legislature hasn’t begun drawing maps.

“When we get to a point where we start drawing maps, it's going to be something that we say, ‘I wonder if the Governor could sign something like this,’” he said.

The current redistricting cycle is the first time since the passing of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 that Louisiana is not subject to preclearance, which requires jurisdictions with a history of voter suppression to submit proposed changes to the federal government for approval before implementation.

Case 3:22-cv-00211-SDD-SDJ Document 51 04/15/22 Page 5 of 45

In 2013, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that this provision, laid out in section 4 of the VRA, was unconstitutional.

Still, Louisiana is not immune from lawsuits if its maps violate federal law. These suits have become a regular part of the process, especially in Louisiana. During the 1990 redistricting cycle, litigation and federal involvement drew out the process for most of the 1990s.

In 2018, Louisiana was sued by an organization headed by former U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder. It pointed out that Louisiana's 2nd congressional district is drawn in a way that encompasses the Black population of both New Orleans and Baton Rouge.

"Louisiana's failure to create a second majority-minority congressional district in its 2011 Congressional Plan has resulted in the dilution of African American voting strength in violation of Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act," the suit said.

Mike McClanahan, a representative from the Louisiana NAACP, raised the threat of litigation if the maps don't have two majority minority districts during his public comments to the joint committee.

Previous lawsuits on racial gerrymandering in Louisiana cited Section 2 of the VRA, which prohibits procedures that discriminate on the basis of race.

"I have something called the law on my side," McClanahan said. "I like to tell people to know how to organize, mobilize, agitate and litigate. If it don't work, I'm gonna sue you. And I can tell you now when we sue, we win."

Stefanski was asked if Louisiana Gov. John Bel Edwards would sign off on a congressional map that doesn't have two majority Black congressional districts, but Stefanski declined to speculate, simply saying that he hasn't heard from the Governor.

While Edwards has not commented on specifics of what he will veto, he did say that he would prefer if it didn't come to that.

"As governor, you hope that you can work with the legislature and others to create legislation that doesn't need to be vetoed," Edwards said. "I will veto bills that I believe suffer from defects in terms of basic fairness."

Explainer: What is redistricting and why should students care?

Piper Hutchinson

EXHIBIT 11

https://www.theadvocate.com/baton_rouge/opinion/article_c42f8b5a-94d0-11ec-81ec-7732dee83c2c.html

Guest column: Legislature sought public input in redistricting, but mostly ignored it

BY STEVEN PROCOPIO AND MELINDA DESLATTE
FEB 23, 2022 - 6:00 PM

State Rep. John Stefanski, R-Crowley, left, speaks with state Sen. Sharon Hewitt, R-Slidell, at the end of the 2021 regula
Rouge. They are leading redistricting efforts in the chambers this year.
STAFF PHOTO BY HILARY SCHEINUK

The Louisiana Legislature's redistricting special session offered mixed results for public transparency and participation, with lawmakers giving citizens widespread access to information but appearing to use few of the outside suggestions to sway map designs.

Discussion, not to mention litigation, about the maps produced during the session and their implications will continue for months, if not years. While the outcome of that remains unsettled, the process to create the maps is easier to judge.

The districts drawn by the House and Senate, if they aren't overturned by the governor or the courts, will affect elections for the next decade for the U.S. House, state Senate, state House, Board of Elementary and Secondary Education and Public Service Commission. The updated district lines are slated to take effect with the new terms of office for each elected body.

Lawmakers did an admirable job of offering the public an opportunity to understand and comment on the redistricting work ahead of the special session. They held "roadshow" hearings around the state to hear from the public and explain the complicated mapping process. They accepted outside map submissions. And their staff created a comprehensive website with detailed Census data and legal information.

But only a sliver of that spirit of openness carried into the session.

Lawmakers heeded calls from the Public Affairs Research Council of Louisiana to release corresponding maps with each proposed change to district lines, and to give the public at least 24 hours ahead of a vote to review a bill and map when districts were heavily reworked or changed with amendments. In some ways, it was the most transparent redistricting process yet.

Still, the primary deals on most maps were worked out behind the scenes.

The House and Senate disregarded many of the public comments and much of the hours of testimony they received and fell into age-old patterns of protecting incumbent officials, political parties and personal allies.

Put charitably, this was a good session for fans of the status quo.

Lawmakers rejected overwhelming calls from people who attended hearings around the state and at the Louisiana Capitol to expand the number of majority-minority districts across several of the maps. It's not clear the Legislature made any significant changes to district lines, big or small, based on citizen input.

Transparency without responsiveness is more likely to lead to frustration rather than good public policy.

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Unfortunately, legislators were secretive about the use of outside consultants. The Republican legislative leadership only provided information about BakerHostetler, the outside law firm enlisted to help with its redistricting work, and the taxpayer-financed contract after receiving public records requests from the media and public pressure from Democratic lawmakers who weren't aware the outside counsel was hired.

In addition, one of the firm's lawyers was publicly quoted advising officials to avoid putting anything about redistricting in writing, raising further questions about transparency. Caution is understandable when litigation is expected. But preparing your defense should be secondary to conducting public business in an open manner.

And there was no reason for secrecy. Outside experts can be helpful, if not required, when dealing with such a complex process that is certain to wind up in court. Legislators just need to be forthright with the public about their use.

Redistricting is difficult work. Lawmakers couldn't create maps that please everyone. However, an open, transparent process that takes citizen input into account isn't only possible, it should be expected. The Legislature got some things right in the special session but fell short in other critical ways.

Case 3:22-cv-00211-SDD-SDJ Document 51 04/15/22 Page 12 of 45

Steven Procopio is president of the Public Affairs Research Council of Louisiana. Melinda Deslatte is PAR's research director.

EXHIBIT 12

https://www.theadvocate.com/baton_rouge/news/politics/legislature/article_2324563e-83a3-11ec-9ce2-b3e0b1ee1a99.html

Should Louisiana draw a second majority-Black congressional district? Here's what lawmakers proposed

Three-week redistricting session kicks off Tuesday with flurry of maps

BY BLAKE PATERSON | STAFF WRITER
FEB 1, 2022 - 3:25 PM

From left, Daszia Williams, Mike Cason and Beverly Young, all from the Computer Center, go over how the new voting monitors operate that are on the upper left corner of each desk in the House of Representatives chamber, Monday Jan. 31, 2022, in Baton Rouge, La. The legislative special session on political redistricting begins at 5 p.m. on Tuesday Feb.1st.

STAFF PHOTO BY BILL FEIG

Blake
Paterson

As the Louisiana Legislature considers how to redraw the lines of election districts for the next decade, Black state lawmakers and civil rights groups are keeping tally: How many majority-Black districts does each potential map include?

That question could define the three-week redistricting effort — and any lawsuits filed over its results. It was already front and center Tuesday when lawmakers gaveled into the special session shortly after 5 p.m. Tuesday.

Republican legislative leaders and Senate Democrats offered competing plans for drawing Louisiana's six congressional districts, with varying levels of Black representation.

House Speaker Clay Schexnayder, R-Gonzales, state Sen. Sharon Hewitt, R-Slidell, and Senate President Page Cortez, R-Lafayette, each filed maps that essentially maintain the status quo, keeping Black voters packed in the 2nd Congressional District stretching from New Orleans East to north Baton Rouge.

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Lawmakers set to redraw their own political boundaries: racial makeup a huge issue

Meanwhile, Democrats in the state Senate banded together to co-author eight proposals that all include a second, majority-Black congressional district.

With 33% of Louisiana's population identifying as Black, Gov. John Bel Edwards, a Democrat who has the power to veto maps, has said it's only fair that two of the state's six congressional districts include a majority of Black voters.

In January, the governor said he'd be open to a map that included just one majority-Black district if it also contained a so-called "influence district," where the proportion of

Black voters is large enough to influence the outcome of the election but less than a majority. He said such a proposal would need significant buy-in from the Legislature.

If lawmakers fail to boost the number of districts where Black voters have the opportunity to elect their candidates of choice, a coalition of civil rights groups has said Louisiana could face "costly and unnecessary litigation."

Last week, a federal court in Alabama blocked that state's congressional map after lawmakers packed Black voters into one of seven congressional districts. The three-judge panel – which included two appointees of former President Donald Trump – unanimously determined the configuration likely violated Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act, the federal law that prohibits minority vote dilution. Similar challenges are unraveling in Texas and North Carolina.

But it's not just congressional districts that are at stake. Over the next three weeks, Republican majorities will craft districts for 105 state representatives, 39 state senators, 11 state school board members, five state utility regulators, and, perhaps, seven state Supreme Court justices.

Senate President Page Cortez, R-Lafayette, introduced a bill Monday to redraw Louisiana's state Senate districts, and already, it's sparking concern among civil rights groups.

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The proposal includes 11 districts where Black residents constitute a majority of voters, maintaining the same number of seats as were drawn a decade ago. But an analysis from the American Civil Liberties Union determined that Louisiana's Senate maps could be configured to include additional majority-Black districts in

Baton Rouge, Shreveport and Jefferson Parish. The fact that Cortez' map doesn't could leave it open to legal challenge.

"If it's possible to draw an additional district that gives Black voters the opportunity to elect a preferred candidate, and you don't do it, then that is likely considered discriminatory," said Chris Kaiser, advocacy director at the ACLU of Louisiana.

Reflecting shifting populations, Cortez' proposal also moves Senate District 37, which currently spans Shreveport and Bossier, to south Louisiana. The seat would represent Hammond in Tangipahoa Parish and Albany in Livingston Parish.

But the marquee battle of the three-week session will be the congressional maps. With the balance of power in Congress on the line, it's unlikely that Louisiana's Republican-led Legislature will draw two majority-Black districts without some intervention from the courts.

State Sen. Cleo Fields, D-Baton Rouge, introduced three maps that include two districts where Black voters constitute a slim majority. Similar proposals were filed by state Sen. Karen Carter Peterson, D-New Orleans; state Sen. Gary Smith, D-Norco; state Sen. Gerald Boudreaux, D-Lafayette; state Sen. Jay Luneau, D-Alexandria; and state Sen. Joseph Bouie, Jr., D-New Orleans.

Most of the proposals group Black voters in north Baton Rouge and north Lafayette in with delta parishes along the Mississippi River to create a majority-Black District 5.

Such a configuration would jeopardize the chance that first-term Rep. Julia Letlow, R-Start, has at getting reelected, underscoring why GOP legislative leaders aren't interested in advancing plans with two majority-Black districts.

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New Orleans gained enough population for a new state House seat. Where should it be placed?

"It would be unconscionable for us to pass a plan with a single Black district," Fields said. "It may not pass the Legislature. But it will pass the courts."

Under many of the Senate Democrats' proposals, much of New Orleans would remain in the majority-Black District 2; south Baton Rouge would be lumped in with a north shore-based District 6; and Lakeview, Uptown and the East Bank of Jefferson Parish would be included alongside Terrebonne and Lafourche parishes in District 1.

U.S. Rep. Troy Carter, the New Orleans Democrat who represents the 2nd Congressional District, said Tuesday he'd prefer to keep north Baton Rouge, but he also wants a second minority-majority congressional district. "I don't know what the maps would look like. It's important to have two, but it's not until you get to the nitty-gritty of how the lines are drawn, what makes sense and what would pass muster" with courts, Carter said.

The proposals put forth by Republican leaders make far fewer changes to the existing congressional seats – and maintain the status quo of one majority-Black district. Under both maps, District 5, based in northeast Louisiana, would expand to include all of Point Coupee, East Feliciana and West Feliciana parishes.

On Tuesday, the chambers swore in new members, then started reading at least 22 redistricting bills, almost all of which were filed Tuesday, that describe which precincts each bill proposed to include in the various districts for elected officials. It's the first step in the process.

Lawmakers on the Senate & Governmental Affairs Committee will take up Cortez' Senate map Wednesday at 9:30 a.m.

Case 3:22-cv-00211-SDD-SDJ Document 51 04/15/22 Page 23 of 45

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EXHIBIT 13

GOVT + POLITICS LEGISLATIVE

Louisiana House approves Congress map with 1 majority Black district

Republican-drawn proposal 'honors traditional boundaries,' co-sponsor says

BY: **WESLEY MULLER** - FEBRUARY 10, 2022 6:53 PM

The Louisiana House of Representatives, photographed Feb. 2, 2022. (Greg LaRose/Louisiana Illuminator)

Lawmakers in the Louisiana House of Representatives approved a congressional redistricting bill Thursday that maintains the status quo of one majority-Black district and five White districts in the U.S. House. Census numbers show Black residents comprise one-third of the state's population.

The map next heads to the Senate, where a similar bill originated and has already been advanced.

House Bill 1 was approved in a 70-33 vote. All but two Republicans voted in favor of the proposal: Reps. Beryl Amedee of Houma and Blake Miguez of Erath. Democrats Travis Johnson of Vidalia and Francis Thompson of Delhi broke away from their party and supported the bill, along with independents Roy Daryl Adams of Jackson, Joe Marino of Gretna and Malinda White of Bogalusa.

The 70-vote margin would indicate the House could override a veto should Gov. John Bel Edwards, a Democrat, choose to reject the bill. The governor has said he supports additional minority districts but has yet to say whether he will exercise his veto power in redistricting.

House Speaker Pro Tempore Tanner Magee, R-Houma, handled the proposal on the floor Thursday for its lead author, House Speaker Clay Schexnayder, R-Gonzales. Democrats in the chamber grilled Magee over the lack of a second majority-minority district.

Rep. Denise Marcelle, D-Baton Rouge, asked Magee if any attempt was made to draw a second majority-minority district. Magee said factors considered for the new district lines included communities of interest, population shifts and geography. A priority was to ensure the proposed map "honors traditional boundaries," he said.

Rep. Wilford Carter, D-Lake Charles, who is Black, said the federal Voting Rights Act doesn't force lawmakers to create a second majority-Black district, but it does require them to make an effort to draw a district that gives minorities an opportunity to elect a candidate of their choice.

Wilford said the House Bill 1 map is "totally illegal" because no attempt was made to draw a second majority-minority district.

Magee disagreed, saying he believes the map is legal based on feedback and analysis he absorbed throughout the redistricting process, including a statewide "roadshow" with public hearings before the special legislative session.

Democrats made multiple attempts to add a second majority-minority congressional district through floor amendments, but each failed against the overwhelming Republican majority.

"It is clear that there was no attempt to create a second majority-minority district," Marcelle said while proposing one such amendment that failed in a 30-71 vote.

Similar attempts were made in the Senate, where a comparable bill with one minority district was approved.

Miguez voted against the proposed map because splits St. Mary and St. Martin parishes between the 3rd and 6th Congressional districts. Miguez, who represents those areas, said his constituents are not happy with the proposal.

Amedee opposed the same split in St. Mary Parish, specifically in Morgan City where three precincts were put into a different district from the rest of the city.

Black lawmakers and voter advocacy groups have called on lawmakers to draw a second majority-minority congressional district since 2020 Census figures were released last year. Those numbers show Louisiana's white population decreased 6.3% and its Black and mixed-Black population increased 3.8% since 2010. Currently, only one of Louisiana's six congressional districts has a minority representative, Congressman Troy Carter, D-New Orleans.

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An earlier version of this story included the incorrect hometown for House Speaker Clay Schexnayder.

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WESLEY MULLER

Wes Muller traces his journalism roots back to 1997 when, at age 13, he built and launched a hyper-local news website for his New Orleans neighborhood. In the years since then, he has freelanced for the Times-Picayune in New Orleans and worked on staff at the Sun Herald in Biloxi, WAFB-9News CBS in Baton Rouge, and the Enterprise-Journal in McComb, Mississippi. He also taught English as an adjunct instructor at Baton Rouge Community College. Much of his journalism has involved reporting on First Amendment issues and coverage of municipal and state government. He has received recognitions including McClatchy's National President's Award, the Associated Press Freedom of Information Award, and the Daniel M. Phillips Freedom of Information Award from the Mississippi Press Association, among others. Muller is a New Orleans native, a Jesuit High School alumnus, a University of New Orleans alumnus and a veteran U.S. Army paratrooper. He lives in Ponchatoula, Louisiana, with his two sons and his wife, who is also a journalist.

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EXHIBIT 14

GOVT + POLITICS LEGISLATIVE VOTING ACCESS WASHINGTON

Louisiana Senate approves map for Congress without new minority district

Questions reveal Senate leaders hired redistricting law firm

BY: **WESLEY MULLER** - FEBRUARY 8, 2022 7:37 PM

State Sen Sharon Hewitt, R-Slidell, chairs the Senate & Governmental Affairs Committee meeting on Feb. 2, 2022. Her bill to redraw Louisiana's congressional districts was approved Tuesday, Feb. 8, in the state Senate (Greg LaRose/Louisiana Illuminator)

Louisiana Senate Republicans approved a redistricting bill Tuesday that proposes new U.S. House boundaries that maintain the status quo of five majority-White and one majority-Black district in Louisiana, despite new Census numbers that show Black residents comprise one-third of the state's population. The map next heads to the House for consideration.

Proposed by Sen. Sharon Hewitt, R-Slidell, the map passed in a party-line vote of 27-12 after fending off a floor amendment from Sen. Cleo Fields, D-Baton Rouge, who has led Senate Democrats in attempts to give Black residents a share of congressional districts equal to their population proportion.

Hewitt's map maintains a single majority-Black stronghold in District 2, which includes the Black communities of New Orleans, Baton Rouge and those along the Mississippi River between the two cities.

Fields' amendment was a last-ditch attempt for a second majority-minority district after Republicans blocked every map Democrats proposed in committee. Repeating an argument she made in committee debates, Hewitt said a second majority-minority district, which proposals estimated would have about a 54% share of Black voters, would not have the numbers to elect a candidate of their choice, though Hewitt has not provided data to backup that claim.

"You could put the current minority district in jeopardy and wind up with no minority district," Hewitt said.

When asked during Tuesday's floor debate if she tried to draw a second majority-minority district, Hewitt said "she looked at that" but decided she couldn't draw a "performing" one that would result in electing a minority representative.

Sen. Karen Carter Peterson, D-New Orleans, pressed Hewitt on the law firm the Legislature hired to assist with redistricting and whether it gave assurances Hewitt's map would meet Voting Rights Act standards. Hewitt initially resisted answering but ultimately disclosed the lawyer's name, Kate McKnight with BakerHostetler.

Continuing the scrutiny, Peterson asked why she and other senators, such as Fields who drew multiple maps for different elected bodies, did not have access to the lawyer. Hewitt deferred on this and other questions to Senate President Page Cortez, R-Lafayette, who she said was responsible for the contract with BakerHostetler.

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After the vote on Hewitt's bill, Cortez said he and House Speaker Clay Schexnayder, R-Gonzales, contracted with the law firm for its expertise in election law. He added that no public money has been paid to the firm, and that they were hired only for litigation purposes.

Sen. Katrina Jackson, D-Monroe, questioned Hewitt's claims that districts with Black voter share in the low 50th percentile range struggle to elect candidates of choice. Hewitt said experts told her a racially-polarized voting analysis to predict such a trend cannot be conducted because there is "too much noise in the data" available.

"No one has had the confidence to predict with some certainty any of the trends," Hewitt said.

Jackson then asked Hewitt who provided the data insight that led to her conclude that two Black districts couldn't elect a candidate of their choice. Hewitt said BakerHostetler was consulted but did not provide a completed report to reach her conclusion. Pressed further, she said the law firm hired a consultant from Stanford University whose name she could not recall.

Jackson requested that Hewitt provide that consultant's name to the Senate.

Sen. Edward Price, D-Gonzales, asked Hewitt to defer her bill until a public records request could obtain the information Democratic senators were seeking on the law firm, but Cortez instead ended the debate so a vote on Hewitt's proposal could move forward.

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Louisiana Legislature sends congressional map with one majority-Black district to governor's desk

BY BLAKE PATERSON | STAFF WRITER
FEB 18, 2022 - 12:50 PM

A large flock of black-bellied whistling ducks take flight in the shadows of the Louisiana State Capitol at sunset on Capitol Lake, Wednesday, January 19, 2022, in Baton Rouge, La.

STAFF PHOTO BY HILARY SCHEINUK

Blake
Paterson

Case 3:22-cv-00211-SDD-SDJ Document 51 04/15/22 Page 36 of 45

Republicans in the Louisiana Legislature approved two, identical congressional maps on Friday that maintain the status quo of a single majority-Black district while nibbling along the edges of the existing boundaries.

The proposals — House Bill 1 and Senate Bill 5 — were drawn to protect incumbents and would all but guarantee Louisiana sends five Republicans and one Democrat to the U.S. House of Representatives in the congressional midterms this fall.

Gov. John Bel Edwards, a Democrat, has 20 days to sign, veto or allow the legislation to become law without his signature. The governor previously called the proposals "problematic" but has otherwise remained mum on whether he'd reject the bills.

During floor debates Friday, Democratic lawmakers in both chambers argued that the Republican-backed proposals violate Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act for failing to draw a second majority-Black district.

Given that nearly one-third of Louisiana's population is Black, they argued it's only fair that two of the six congressional districts be

drawn to allow Black voters to elect their candidate of choice.

"People who look like me are ignored repeatedly," said state Sen. Karen Carter Peterson, a Black Democrat from New Orleans. "Why is that White people only get to be represented fairly?"

A coalition of civil rights groups have threatened to sue Louisiana over the map if it becomes law. Under existing Supreme Court jurisprudence, if the Black population is "sufficiently large and geographically compact" to support another majority-Black district, that district must be drawn.

Over the course of the three-week redistricting session, Democrats introduced more than a dozen proposals showing how a second-majority Black district could be drawn. None made it out of committee.

The map that advanced Friday packs Black voters into the Second District, stretching from New Orleans East to north Baton Rouge. The seat is currently represented by U.S. Rep. Troy Carter, D-New Orleans.

"The fact is that this map does not comply with the Voting Rights Act," said state Rep. Royce Duplessis, D-New Orleans.

In a statement following adjournment, Edwards said he'd examine the bills closely to determine whether they are "reasonable, fair, and in line with the Voting Rights Act," adding that the maps should reflect the growth of the Black population.

The Louisiana Legislative Black Caucus in their own statement urged Edwards to veto the bills, saying the legislation clearly violates the Voting Rights Act.

House Democratic leader Sam Jenkins, D-Shreveport, also called on Edwards to veto the maps, saying they "aggressively and illegally suppress the voice of minority Louisianans."

Republican map-drawers have repeatedly maintained that their proposal is in line with federal law.

State Sen. Sharon Hewitt, a Slidell Republican who sponsored Senate Bill 5, said Friday there was insufficient evidence that a Black-preferred candidate would win if a second majority-Black district were drawn.

GOP legislative leaders worked behind closed doors in the hours leading up to Friday's vote to iron out differences between competing House and Senate plans. Hewitt said they decided to send "two identical bills to the governor in a show of unity."

The resulting compromise keeps all of Union Parish in the Fourth Congressional District, represented by U.S. Rep. Mike Johnson, R-Benton. Most of Rapides Parish would stay in the Fifth District, represented by U.S. Rep. Julia Letlow, R-Start.

To keep the district populations as equal as practicable — as required by federal law — lawmakers opted to split Grant Parish between the Fourth and Fifth districts.

State Rep. Gabe Firment, a Republican who represents Grant Parish, chastised legislative leaders for splitting the parish up without first consulting with him.

"I just feel like this was done in the dark of night," Firment said in a floor speech. "It stinks to high heaven if you ask me."

Exiting the House chamber upon adjournment, Firment said he "hates" the map and hopes Edwards vetoes it. In a brief interview, he said he'd "seriously consider" voting with Democrats to sustain the governor's veto if the Legislature attempted an override.

Firment was one of three House Republicans to join Democrats in voting against the maps. House Republican leader Blake Miguez, R-Erath, and state Rep. Beryl Amedee, R-Gray,

said they couldn't support a map that split St. Martin and St. Mary parishes between two congressional districts.

Lawmakers took two votes on the congressional maps Friday. Both chambers voted in the morning to amend their counterpart's proposal to make the bills identical. Those bills then returned to their chamber of origin for concurrence in the afternoon.

Senate Bill 5 won final passage in the House in a 64-31 vote, and House Bill 1, sponsored by House Speaker Clay Schexnayder, R-Gonzales, earned final passage in the Senate in 27-10 vote.

State Rep. Francis Thompson, D-Vidalia, was the lone Democrat to support the Republican-backed map. Thompson, who is White, represents a district that overwhelmingly voted for Donald Trump in 2020. He said a second Black-majority seat would imperil U.S. Rep. Julia Letlow, R-Start, who lives in his parish.

State Rep. C. Travis Johnson, D-Vidalia, voted alongside Democrats in opposing the map. The Vice Chair of the Louisiana Democratic Party

faced heat from both his colleagues and state party officials for voting alongside Republicans for an earlier version of the map.

The proposal approved Friday mirrors the existing district boundaries with a few minor changes. Point Coupee, East Feliciana and St. Helena parishes would be moved into the Fifth District. St. Landry Parish, which is currently split between three congressional districts, would be kept whole in the Fourth District.

Voting for House congressional redistricting bill (27): President Cortez, Sens Abraham, Allain, Bernard, Cathey, Cloud, Connick, Fesi, Foil, Henry, Hensgens, Hewitt, Lambert, McMath, Milligan, F. Mills, R. Mills, Mizell, Morris, Peacock, Pope, Reese, Stine, Talbot, Ward, White and Womack.

Voting against HB1 (10): Sens Barrow, Boudreaux, Carter, Fields, Harris, Jackson, Luneau, Peterson, Price and Smith.

Not Voting (2): Sens Bouie and Tarver.

Voting for Senate congressional redistricting maps (64): Speaker Schexnayder, Reps Bacala, Bagley, Beaullieu, Bishop, Bourriaque, Butler, Carrier, Coussan, Crews, Davis, Deshotel, DeVillier, DuBuisson, Echols, Edmonds, Edmonston, Emerson, Farnum, Fontenot, Freiberg, Frieman, Garofalo, Geymann, Goudeau, Harris, Hilferty, Hodges, Hollis, Horton, Huval, Illg, M. Johnson, Kerner, Mack, Magee, Marino, McCormick, McFarland, McKnight, McMahen, G. Miller, Mincey, Muscarello, Nelson, Orgeron, C. Owen, Pressly, Riser, Romero, Schamerhorn, Seabaugh, St. Blanc, Stagni, Stefanski, Tarver, Thomas, Thompson, Turner, Villio, Wheat, White, Wright and Zeringue.

Voting against SB5 (31): Reps Adams, Amedee, Boyd, Brass, Brown, Bryant, Carpenter, R. Carter, W. Carter, Cormier, Cox, Duplessis, Firment, Fisher, Freeman, Gaines, Glover,

Case 3:22-cv-00211-SDD-SDJ Document 51 04/15/22 Page 45 of 45

Hughes, Jefferson, Jenkins, T. Johnson, LaCombe, Landry, Larvadain, Lyons, Miguez, D. Miller, Newell, Phelps, Pierre and Selders.

Not Voting on SB5 (9): Reps Gadberry, Green, Ivey, Jordan, Marcelle, Moore, R. Owen, Schlegel and Willard.

Staff writer Tyler Bridges contributed to this report.

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