[MUSIC/OVERLAY 00:00:00-00:49:25]

MALE 1: Can everyone soon please find a seat so we get started? Please find your seats. Members take your places, so we can get started.

[00:55:00]

SHARON HEWITT: All right, if everyone will take their seats, please. I think we're ready to get started. You can't hear me. Is that better? All right, if y'all will come to order, please we'd like to get started. Good evening and welcome to the Joint Senate and House Committee on Governmental Affairs. Before we get started, I'd like to remind you to please silence your phones, so that we don't distract from any of the presentations or the testimony. Also, be aware that this meeting is being live streamed and recorded. I'm Senator Sharon Hewitt. I'm Chairwoman of the Senate and Governmental Affairs Committee and next to me is Representative John Stefanski, who is the Chairman of the House and Governmental Affairs Committee. We'd like to welcome all of you who are here to Monroe and thank you to ULM for hosting us at this beautiful facility. I'd also like to welcome those of you who are watching on the internet at the first of ten public meetings of The Joint Committee of the Senate Governmental Affairs and House and

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Governmental Affairs Committees. Our two committees and our staffs have come together to provide you with information regarding the redistricting process. At some point early next year and prior to the next regular session, the legislature will call themselves into special session for the purpose of redistricting the State House, the State Senate, Congress, the Board of Secondary and Elementary Education, the Public Service Commission and possibly the judicial districts. It's our goal and responsibility to redraw some of these districts, in particular Congress, prior to the 2022 fall election cycle. The legislature districts must be redrawn by the end of 2022. We've scheduled our regional meetings in the evening hours, so that most working people can participate in this outreach, and thank you to all of you who are here today to help us kick off our first meeting. It's our desire, our goal, and our objective to make this an open, accessible, and transparent redistricting process. In addition to our physical presence here, we are utilizing every technological tool within our ability to provide you with the greatest access to the process. We have our legislative redistricting webpage on our joint legislative website, and we are utilizing social

media, including Facebook and YouTube to keep the public informed about the process. Every slide and all the data we present here today can be found on our website. Persons who do not feel comfortable giving testimony in-person may submit a prepared statement in accordance with a Senate and the House rules in lieu of appearing before the committee. Statements or testimony, which were received timely have been distributed to the members prior to the meeting. Statements or testimony received after our deadline of 5:30 p.m., the day before the meeting, will be transmitted to members as soon as possible. All such statements and testimony will be made of part of the record. Finally, your voice, your thoughts and ideas are absolutely vital to this process. This is a listening session. It's our goal to take whatever information that you provide to us and to use it as we begin the process of drafting redistricting plans. I can assure you that as the Chairwoman of the Senate Committee, your ideas and recommendations matter to me and they matter to us.

[00:59:57]

Following the staff presentations, you will have an opportunity to make comments or suggestions and offer ideas. If you haven't completed a witness card,

please fill it out and give it to a member of our staff, and you saw these on the table outside. In an effort to give everyone a chance to speak, I'm going to ask that you keep your comments as brief as possible. We have a lot of folks in the room tonight. And keep it relevant to the purposes that we have before us today. In addition, I'd like to remind the audience that this is a legislative hearing and ask that do not applaud or speak out during the hearing. Again, thank you for your presence and your interest in this very important process. At this time, I'd like to ask Madam Secretary, if you would please call the roll for the Senate. And members, excuse me members, I'll ask that you stand and stay here as your name is called so that everyone in the audience can see?

LAUR`EN M. CIMINO: Chairwoman Hewitt.

SHARON HEWITT: Present.

LAUR`EN M. CIMINO: Present. Vice Chairman Milligan.

BARRY MILLIGAN: Present.

LAUR`EN M. CIMINO: Senator Allain.

R. L. BRET ALLAIN: Here.

LAUR`EN M. CIMINO: Present. Senator Foil.

FRANKLIN J. FOIL: Here.

LAUR`EN M. CIMINO: Present. Senator Harris. Senator Price. Senator Reese.

MIKE REESE: Here.

LAUR`EN M. CIMINO: Present. Senator Tarver. Senator Womack.

GLEN WOMACK: Here.

LAUR`EN M. CIMINO: Present. The Senate has six in a quorum.

SHARON HEWITT: Thank you. And I know that Senator Price is on campus. He's trying to navigate through the marathon race or whatever is happening outside. And now Madam Secretary, the roll for the House, please.

LAUR`EN M. CIMINO: Chairman Stefanski

JOHN M. STEFANSKI: Here.

LAUR`EN M. CIMINO: Present. Vice Chairman Duplessis.

ROYCE DUPLESSIS: Here.

LAUR`EN M. CIMINO: Present. Representative Beaullieu.

GERALD "BEAU" BEAULLIEU, IV: Here.

LAUR`EN M. CIMINO: Present. Representative Carter. Representative Deshotel.

DARYL ANDREW DESHOTEL: Here.

LAUR`EN M. CIMINO: Present. Representative Farnum.

LES FARNUM: Here.

LAUR`EN M. CIMINO: Present. Representative Gadberry.

FOY BRYAN GADBERRY: Here.

LAUR`EN M. CIMINO: Present. Representative Hodges. Representative Horton.

DODIE HORTON: Here.

LAUR`EN M. CIMINO: Present. Representative Ivey.

BARRY IVEY: Here.

LAUR`EN M. CIMINO: Present. Representative Jenkins.

SAM JENKINS: Here.

LAUR`EN M. CIMINO: Present. Representative Mike Johnson.

MIKE JOHNSON: Here.

LAUR`EN M. CIMINO: Present. Representative LaCombe.

JEREMY LACOMBE: Here.

LAUR`EN M. CIMINO: Present. Representative Lyons.

RODNEY LYONS: Present.

LAUR`EN M. CIMINO: Present. Representative Magee. Representative Newell.

CANDACE N. NEWELL: Here.

LAUR`EN M. CIMINO: Present. Representative Thomas.

POLLY THOMAS: Here.

LAUR`EN M. CIMINO: Present. Representative White. The House has 12 in a quorum.

SHARON HEWITT: Thank you Madam Secretary. I'd also like to recognize a few additional Senate members that are with us, who are not members of the committee, but are here in attendance. You'll probably recognize a few of these folks. We've got Senator Jay Morris, Jay. And did Senator Cathey make it in the room yet? There he is, Stewart. And Senator Katrina Jackson sends her regards. I think she's home with an illness, but wanted to be here with you tonight. And now, I'd like to turn the mic over to my co-chairman Representative John Stefanski to introduce the members of the House, as well as your House staff.

JOHN M. STEFANSKI: Yeah, absolutely. First of all, thank you for being here. This is an extremely important part of the process. So everyone who's here, we do appreciate your participation. Also joining us from the House side, we have Representative Chris Turner. We also have

Representative Francis Thompson. We have Representative Pat Moore. We have Representative Neil Riser. We have Representative Michael Echols. We have Representative Jack McFarland and we have Representative Patrick Jefferson. I believe -- did I miss any House members, no? We are good. I'll also read through. We have a number of members of the House who are joining us as well. First of all, we have our Clerk of the House, Michelle Fontenot who is here. We have our senior analyst Patricia Lowery-Dufour. We have out attorney with H&GA, Lori Lucas. We have our Committee Administrative Assistant, Rosie Ammersbach.

[01:05:02]

We have our Sergeant-at-Arms, we call him Smoke, you can call him Clarence Russ. We have also our Assistant Sergeant-at-Arms, Danny Leming, and I also want to thank our entire communications staff, including Cory as well, who set all of our audio and visual up. Thank you.

SHARON HEWITT: Thank you Mr. Chairman. And I'd also like to recognize our Senate staff that came with us. This is quite a road show. You get a sense of the effort to come here and be with you tonight. We have Ms. Yolanda Dixon, our Secretary of the

1 Senate; J. W. Wiley, our First Assistant Secretary;
2 Sue Morain, our Second Assistant Secretary. We have
3 Matt DeVille, our Committee Attorney. We have Angela
4 Bizette our Committee Secretary, she was out of the
5 table working. We've got Lewis Carroll our Sergeant
6 at Arms. Thank you, Lewis; and Dr. William Blair, our
7 demographer; and we have a number of communication
8 staff here with us, headed up by Cory Stewart. So
9 thank you all very much for all of your work and
10 preparation and setting this meeting up for us. So
11 let's get the show on the road. At this time now, I'd
12 like to invite our staff to make a presentation,
13 which is going to include a couple of big things. We
14 are going to talk about 2020 population and
15 population trends, redistricting terms, concepts, and
16 law, redistricting criteria, the malapportionment
17 statistics and illustrative maps, and we'll close out
18 with our redistricting timeline. Following that, you
19 all will have an opportunity to speak. So let's start
20 first with Dr. William Blair, our legislative
21 demographer. Bill.
22 DR. WILLIAM BLAIR: Thank you Chairwoman Hewitt.
23 Hello members, the public. Nice to see you all here
24 today. So it's my job to kind of tell you what the
25 state of play is for the population in the state, and

that will determine sort of how our redistricting will go. Now before we get started, in normal times, which is probably clear to everyone this room, we're not in normal times, the Census Bureau would have released the data to the President of United States on December 31 of 2020, and every parish and every municipality in the state would have gotten the data to redistrict their areas in by February or March of this year, of 2021. But as you may be aware, this is not normal times, and as such, the Census Bureau has released their data to the state at a much later date. Now, the Census Bureau releases two sets of data. One is what we call the apportionment data. That is the data that the Congress is reapportioned on where states gain or lose seats based upon the relative growth rates in each state. The more pertinent data for us in Louisiana is what we call the PL94171 data. That is the redistricting data. That is the granular data at the state and parish and lower levels, which we do our redistricting on. Now that data, the apportionment data, the reshuffling of congressional districts wasn't released until April 26 of 2021 and the granular data, the PL94171 data wasn't released until August 12 and September 16. So let's have a look at what Louisiana's data looks

like. On the top, you see the apportionment data. That's the congressional reshuffling data. It includes 3711 overseas, military and civilian personnel and family. That is not the data we do redistricting on. It is the second line, which is the 4,657,757. That is the redistricting data for the State of Louisiana. That is where statewide districts will compute their ideal population based upon this number. For instance, every House district in the state will now be down about, the ideal number is about 45,000. Every Senate district is about 120,000, and every congressional district is about 775,000 people.

[01:10:00]

So how do we compare to the rest of the country? Well, the percentage you just see here are percentages you could look back over several decades and they would look fairly similar. Louisiana grew at 2.74%, the United States grew at 7.35%, which by the way is the lowest growth rate for the country since 1940. So we're seeing a deceleration of our population growth in this state, I mean, I'm sorry in this country. And then finally, we have the southern regional growth rate at 10.22%. Those are our neighboring states in our region. And again, these

are historical trends. The south has been growing much faster than other areas of the country for the last several decades. So let's have a look at our redistricting data, the PL94171 data. This is our state and local data. As I said earlier, there are two release dates from it. The August 12 data, the earliest data we got was not very user-friendly, really required data manipulation to get something out of it. But the Census Bureau was kind enough on September 16 to release on their website, a much more user-friendly data that anyone in this audience can go to the data.census.gov and drill down and see what their city looks like, what their parish looks like, what the state looks like, which is much more easy user-friendly format, so good for the Census Bureau. Now, let's talk about more specific population and composition changes within the State of Louisiana. Scary math, green is good, green is growth; red or orange, our parishes that have lost population from 2010 to 2020 in the census. As I'll show you in a minute, this is not a unique trend, but the main trends you see on this map here, population declines in the Northeast and Northwest where we sit today, population gains in and along the I-10 and I-12 corridor from St. Tammany to Calcasieu Parish, and

population gains in more suburban areas in this state, which is a trend that is also national. The next slide will show you over multiple decades, the trends and population growth in the State of Louisiana, and while there are some decades that are fairly unique such as the 2000 and 2010 Katrina affect, up there in the upper right -- no, lower left, sorry, and more robust growth between 1990 and 2000, which is in the upper right. And so the population effects we're looking at with our redistricting for the state and even your localities, these are trends that have been in existence for multiple decades and will have to be addressed once again with our redistricting. Now, let's have a look at some of the individual parish data. Here are the largest numerical losses by parish. This list is fairly well distributed around state, notably absent is the southeast region of our state. Now, if we go to the next slide, here they are. These parishes, which experienced the largest numerical gain, are much more focused or concentrated in the southeast portion of our state, and again, mostly along the I-10 and I-12 corridor. Next slide is the largest municipalities. We can only fit 12 on here, but there are many more, obviously, over 400. And finally, last

slide for me is the demographic change within the State of Louisiana. The top line is from 2010 census data, 2020 is the second line, and change is on the third line, third section. And I think the most interesting trends you can pull out of this data are, one, a 6.3% in total white population, so a decline in white only population in the State of Louisiana.

[01:15:02]

Increases in other groups proportions of our population, be it African-American, Asian-American, Indian and other, and thirdly, a very large increase in those self-identifying as the other category, really 180,000 gain and people had self-identifying when they answer the census as some other race. That's when somebody says they are white plus one other race or some other race or any other race is not Black, Asian-American, Indian or Hawaiian. That concludes my breakdown of the population in the State of Louisiana. Now, I'm going to turn it over to Matt DeVille.

MATTHEW R. DEVILLE: Thank you. My name is Matt DeVille, I'm the Staff Attorney for the Senate and Governmental Affairs Committee. And now that Bill has given you a bunch of numbers, I'm going to give you some words, namely an introduction to some terms and

1 concepts and some legal requirements that we're going
2 to be dealing with throughout this redistricting
3 process. So to start, we should probably refine what
4 redistricting is. There's going to be two key terms
5 that are sometimes used interchangeably that you'll
6 hear throughout this process and those are
7 apportionment and districting, and while you may hear
8 them used interchangeably, they are two distinct
9 terms. So apportionment is simply the process of
10 allocating seats in a legislative body, namely for us
11 based on the census data, the formula that the
12 federal government establishes, Louisiana will retain
13 our six congressional representatives, which is the
14 same that we had from the last census. So we didn't
15 gain any, but we didn't lose any either. And
16 districting is the process of drawing the lines for
17 each of those districts, which are the geographical
18 territories from which officials are elected. So why
19 do we do it? Simply put, the Constitution says, we
20 have to. There are specific legal requirements in
21 play, both state and federal. I'll touch on our state
22 constitution ones just in a moment here. But first of
23 these, we'll see Article 3, Section 6, which will
24 also include duties and deadlines for legislative
25 redistricting, and those have to be done by the end

of 2022. There are also various statutes for local bodies that aren't necessarily constitutionally enumerated, such as school boards, city councils, police juries, things of that nature that go on their own timeline. There's also two major general federal requirements in the Equal Protection Act of -- sorry, the Voting Rights Act 1965 and the Equal Protection Clause in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments. Those will both be discussed at detail a little later on in the presentation. So who gets redistricted? It's going to be the State House and the State Senate, Congress, the Public Service Commission, the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education as well as our judicial system and the courts, including the Supreme Court. And so, how does this process work? As this is a legislative process, it functions in the same way that other laws are enacted. Bills will be drafted and submitted, debated, voted on, and ultimately, the byproduct of that end result will lead to the new maps and the new districts. As I mentioned earlier, there's a couple of key state constitutional terms and requirements that we need to abide by here, found in Article 3. The first one you can be found in Section 1 that requires single-member districts, which are simply those that only elect one

1 person to represent the entire district. Section 3
2 provides for the maximum amount of members for each
3 house of the state legislature, which is going to be
4 39 senators and 105 representatives. And then Article
5 6 establishes that timeline that I touched on a
6 moment ago. So the legislature has to be redistricted
7 by December, 31, 2022. And it has to use that census
8 population data, that PL94-171 data that Bill just
9 mentioned. And now I will turn things over to my
10 colleague, Michelle Fontenot, Clerk of the House to
11 discuss federal requirements and other issues.
12 MICHELLE FONTENOT: Thank you Matt. Again, my
13 name is Michelle Fontenot. Good to be with you, and
14 this evening, I'll be discussing equal population and
15 what that means. The starting point of the one-person
16 one-vote concept is Equal Protection Clause of the
17 Fourteenth Amendment, which states that no state
18 shall deny to any person equal protection under the
19 laws.
20 [01:20:02]
21 In the 1960s, this concept was further developed
22 through a series of court cases in which the courts
23 held that there must be substantially equal
24 legislative representation for all citizens of the
25 state. Therefore, state must have legislative

1 districts of roughly equal population. Population
2 equality, house is that measured? It's measured by
3 determining the ideal population, and you get to the
4 ideal population by taking total population of an
5 area and then dividing it by the number of districts.
6 Deviation is the term that we use to refer to the
7 amount at which the population, the district's
8 population, differs from that ideal number. In terms
9 of standards for equal protection, those standards
10 are different for congressional districts and state
11 legislative districts. In Congress, the deviation
12 standard is as nearly equal as practicable, which
13 means that the deviation must be as close to zero as
14 possible. If there is deviation, there must be a good
15 faith effort to avoid deviation and must be able to
16 provide a legally acceptable non-discriminatory
17 justification for that deviation. The deviation
18 standard for state and local legislative districts is
19 substantially equal, as possible. And again, that's
20 based on the Equal Protection Clause of the
21 Fourteenth Amendment. Generally, a plan with a
22 deviation overall range of less than 10% is not
23 enough to make a prima facie case of a discrimination
24 under the Fourteenth Amendment, but it's important to
25 know that that is not a safe harbor. States must

still be able to support the need for deviation with some justification, showing a significant state interest. In Louisiana, that deviation standard that we try to abide by is plus or minus 5%. Again, the overall, the overriding objective of districting is equality of population and deviations from this principle are permissible only if incidental to the effectuation of a rational state policy. Some of those items that the states have recognized, state policies, would be allowing representation to a political subdivision, compactness, preserving cores of our district, and avoiding contest between incumbents. The one person, one vote requirement does not apply to judicial districts. So when we're talking about the courts, it's important to keep that in mind, and although the concept of one man one vote does not apply Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act does still apply. Now, I'll turn it over to Lori Lucas, Attorney for House and Governmental Affairs.

LORRAINE LUCAS: In discussing discrimination against minorities, there are several legal considerations involved that one should be aware of. The Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendment, the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and the voting dilution issues in regards to racial gerrymandering. First up, I'll

1 provide some background of the Voting Rights Act of
2 1965. The Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth
3 Amendment prohibits states from purposefully
4 discriminating between individuals on the basis of
5 race. The Fifteenth Amendment adopted in 1870
6 declares that the right of a citizen to vote shall
7 not be divide -- I'm sorry, shall not be denied or
8 abridged by the United States or the states on
9 account of race, color, or previous condition of
10 servitude. The amendment was ineffectual after
11 adoption in eliminating the problem of voting
12 discrimination and the Voting Rights Act enacted in
13 1965 was a means to ensure that all citizens have the
14 right to vote, regardless of their race, color, or
15 membership in a language minority. Specifically,
16 Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act prohibits any
17 state or political subdivision from imposing any
18 voting qualification, standard practice, or procedure
19 that results in the denial, abridgement of any US
20 rights, citizen's rights to vote on account of race,
21 color, or status. Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act
22 was amended in 1982 to clarify that a violation of
23 Section 2 is established if based on the totality of
24 circumstances, it's shown that the election processes
25

are not equally open to participation by members of the protected class.

[01:24:57]

And that members have less opportunity than others of the electorate to participate in the political process and to elect representatives of their choice. The extent to which members of the protected class have been elected to office is one circumstance, which may be considered. However, nothing establishes a right to have members of a protected class elected in numbers equal to the proportion of the population. In 1986, those amendments were reviewed by the Supreme Court n Thornburg versus Gingles. The court impose three preconditions that a plaintiff must prove before court proceeds to a detailed analysis of a redistricting plan, and to establish a prima facie case. Those three preconditions are the minority population is sufficiently large and geographically compact to constitute a majority in a single-member district, the minority population is politically cohesive, and that in absence of special circumstances, bloc voting by the majority defeats the majority's preferred candidate. Once those preconditions are established, the court will then

1 proceed to consider several other objective factors
2 in determining the totality of circumstances,
3 including but not limited to the extent of the
4 history of an official discrimination touching on the
5 class participation in the democratic process,
6 racially polarized voting, the extent to which the
7 state or political subdivision has unusually large
8 election districts, majority vote requirements, or
9 other practices that enhance the opportunity for
10 discrimination. Denials of access to the candidate
11 slating process for members of the class extent to
12 which members of a minority group bear the effects of
13 discrimination in areas, like education, employment
14 and health, whether political campaigns have been
15 characterized by racial appeals, the extent to which
16 members of the protected class have been elected,
17 whether there is a significant lack of responsiveness
18 by elected officials to the particularized needs of
19 the group, and whether the policy underlying the use
20 of the voting qualification, standard practice, or
21 procedure is tenuous. The plaintiffs must show that
22 the totality of circumstances will support a court
23 finding that the contested voting scheme is dilutive
24 of the minority's electoral power. And in this case,
25 when discussing the Gingles precondition and the

1 Voting Rights Act, a language minority group is
2 considered American-Indian Asian-American Alaskan
3 Natives, and persons of Spanish heritage. When
4 drawing a minority district to avoid a violation of
5 Section 2, the line drawer must take care to not
6 create a racial gerrymander that runs the foul of the
7 Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment.
8 As stated earlier, the Equal Protection Clause of the
9 Fourteenth Amendment prohibits states from
10 purposefully discriminating between individuals on
11 the basis of race. A racial gerrymander is the
12 deliberate and arbitrary distortion of district's
13 boundaries for racial purposes. A redistricting plan
14 that expressly distinguishes among citizens, because
15 of race must narrowly be tailored to further a
16 compelling governmental interest. That means that the
17 plan of individuals drawn were drawn narrowly to
18 satisfy the compelling government interest. What is a
19 compelling government interest? It's remedying past
20 discrimination, avoiding retrogression, or avoiding a
21 violation of Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act.
22 These interests must be strongly supported in
23 evidence. This applies not only to plans that
24 expressly distinguished because of race, but also
25 plans that although race-neutral are on their face

1 inexplicable on the grounds other than race. Courts
2 have said that the legislature is always aware of
3 race when drawing district lines just as it is aware
4 of age, economic status, religion, and a variety of
5 other demographic facts. That sort of race
6 consciousness or race awareness does not lead
7 inevitably to impermissible race discrimination. So
8 race can be considered; however, race cannot be a
9 predominant factor in drawing a district.
10 [01:29:57]
11 Critical to determining the factors involved
12 would be the shape of the district, the regard given
13 to the traditional district principles, and the
14 motivations that drive the drawing of the lines. When
15 a majority minority district is created. It must be
16 created given due regard to traditional districting
17 principles. Otherwise, the principles will be subject
18 to strict scrutiny. To avoid pitfalls of
19 gerrymandering, we must be aware of bizarre shapes,
20 draw district lines that are reasonably compact, do
21 not make race A dominant motivation, follow
22 traditional districting principles. Principal
23 submission in court cases have included compactness,
24 contiguity, respect for political subdivisions,
25 respect for communities of interest, maintaining

traditional boundaries, maintaining core districts, protecting incumbents with contest from each other. I will now transition over to Ms. Yolanda Dixon, the Secretary of the Senate to discuss redistricting criteria.

YOLANDA DIXON: Good evening. So I'll be discussing the criteria that we have adopted for our redistricting plans that are to be submitted to the legislature. This criteria was adopted by the legislature in the 2021 regular session and is contained in a joint rule, Joint Rule 21. So some of the criteria will apply to all of the plan types, whether it be House, Senate, Congress, PSC, or the courts, and other criteria are plan specific, and I will go into those now. First, all redistricting plans have to comply with all applicable federal and state laws including the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment and the Fifteenth Amendment of the United States Constitution and Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which you just heard about. All redistricting plans have to be composed of contiguous geography within district. All redistricting plans should contain whole election precincts to the extent practicable. And if a precinct has to be divided, it shall be divided into

as few districts as practicable, using a visible census tabulation boundary. All redistricting plans have to respect establish boundaries of political subdivisions, including parishes, municipalities, and the natural geography of the state to the extent practicable. Now this criteria however is subordinate to and shall not be used to undermine the maintenance of communities of interest within the same district, to the extent practical. All redistricting plans should also utilize the most recent federal decennial census data is validated through the data verification program of the House and Senate, and that validated data can be accessed by the public on our redistricting website. Any redistricting plan, which is submitted by the public, has to be submitted electronically in a comma delimited bloc equivalency files, which is a typical export format and is commonly available on redistricting websites. We also encourage you to include any additional information that can assist in the consideration of your plan, including any rationale that you might have for the decisions that you made in making the plan or in your maps and shape files. Each redistricting plan for the House, the Senate, PSC, BESE, Congress and the Supreme Court has to be a whole plan that assigns all

geography of the state. It is very easy to draw just a single district and make that perfect for whatever your interest might be. But the rest of the state has to be considered and as you've heard all the districts have to be either substantially equal in population or as near perfectly in population as possible. So that challenge comes in when you have to assign all of the surrounding districts to accommodate your perfect district. Each redistricting plan for the House, Senate, PSC and BESE has to contain single-member districts. Districts that are substantially equal in population and for our purposes that means at least within plus or minus 5% of the ideal population. And it must give due consideration to traditional district alignments to the extent practicable.

[01:34:54]

Now for Congress, each plan has to contain single-member districts and districts which are nearly equal to the ideal district population, as practicable. This is a much more stringent standard and for an example in the 2010 redistricting cycle, the congressional plan deviation from the smallest district to the largest district was only 162 people. So I will turn it over to my colleague, Patricia

Lowery Dufour, who will begin the presentation of the malapportionment data.

SHARON HEWITT: Actually, we're going to be turning it over to J. W. Wiley with the Senate, the Assistant Clerk of the Senate who will discuss the malapportionment of the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education.

J. W. WILEY: Good evening. I'm J. W. Wiley not Trish. Now we're going back to more numbers and color-coded graphs, okay. We will first discuss the State Board of Elementary and Secondary Education also known as BESE. This map, right here, shows the configuration of the eight current BESE districts. When these districts were drawn in 2010, the ideal population of a BESE district was 566,671. The new ideal population for each BESE district, following the 2020 census is 582,219. This will reflect an increase of 15,548 in the idea due to the population growth of the state. This chart, right here, shows the current population in each BESE district and the difference from the ideal population. Now as you can see from this chart, districts 3 and 8 are under populated and district 6 and 7 are overpopulated. This map illustrates the population deviations with the dark red and dark orange colors representing

population below the acceptable range. The orange represents the low side of the acceptable range and the light yellow represents the high side of the acceptable range, and the light and dark green represent overpopulation. Now we will discuss the Public Service Commission also known as the PSC. This map shows the current configuration of the five PSC districts. When these districts are drawn in 2010, the ideal population of a PSC district was 906,674. Now the new ideal population based on the 2020 census is 931,551, reflecting an increase of 24,877 in the ideal. This is also due to the population growth in the state. This chart, right here, shows the current population in each PSC district and the difference from the ideal population. And as you can see from this, district 1 is overpopulated. This map illustrates the population deviations with the yellow representing the low side of the acceptable range. The light yellow representing the high side of the acceptable range and the light green representing overpopulation. Now, I will turn it over to Patricia Lowery to represent the malapportionment of Congress.

PATRICIA LOWERY-DUFOUR: Hi. I'm Patricia Lowery-Dufour. I'm a senior analyst for the House and Governmental Affairs Committee, and it's a pleasure

to be with you this evening. We are going to discuss the malapportionment of Congress. This map illustrates the current congressional districts. There are six. Following the apportionment of Congress, Louisiana retains six congressional districts. This illustrates the ideal population of the congressional districts as they were drawn in 2010. It was 755,562. The new ideal is 776,292 indicating a growth of 20,730 in the ideal population for each congressional district. And I'll remind you that each congressional district must be drawn as close to that 776,292 as absolutely practicable. This chart illustrates the deviations of the congressional districts from the ideal population.

[01:40:02]

I will tell you that we haven't colored any of them red or green, because none of these districts are as close to the ideal population as practicable, and they will all have to be redrawn. This map illustrates the current districts and how far they deviate from that ideal population. Again, the dark orange color represents the population furthest below the ideal orange representing population below the ideal, the light yellow represented population above the ideal, and the light green illustrating

population the farthest above the ideal population. Now we're going to move to the Supreme Court. This map illustrates the current seven Supreme Court districts within the state. These districts were drawn in 1997. They have not been redrawn since 1997. However, if we had redrawn them last decade, the ideal population for a Supreme Court District would have been 647,624. The ideal population under the 2020 census is 665,393. However, I must again remind you that judicial districts are not subject to the equal requirement populations that other districts are subject to. However, when these districts were drawn in 1997. They were drawn substantially equal in population. In fact, they were within the mean deviation of the Supreme Court districts when they were drawn in 1997 with less than 2%. Here is a chart that illustrates how far each of the Supreme Court districts are from what would be the 2020 ideal population. As you can see, there is a substantial difference in the population of these districts from a low of 476,554 people in district 7, which is based in Orleans and Jefferson to a high of 838,610 people in district number 5, which is in the Florida parish area, and this map illustrates those differences in that population. Now we're going to move to a

1 discussion of the malapportionment of the State House
2 of Representatives. This map illustrates the current
3 105 districts of the House of Representatives. When
4 these districts were drawn in 2010, the ideal House
5 district was 43,174 people. In accordance with the
6 2020 census, the new House ideal population is
7 44,359, reflecting an increase in the ideal of 1,185.
8 There are 29 House of Representatives districts that
9 are above the acceptable deviation, again, that plus
10 or minus 5% from the ideal population. There are 39
11 House districts that are within the acceptable
12 deviation and there are 37 House districts that are
13 below the acceptable deviation for a House district.
14 Here's a map that illustrates those deviations that
15 we just discussed and each House district within the
16 state. Now I'm going to move to a little bit more
17 detailed discussion of Northeast Louisiana. So first,
18 I have to start with North Louisiana. And again,
19 everybody's idea of what North Louisiana is may
20 differ, but I can just tell you that basically from
21 the Vernon Rapids and Avoyelles, even though
22 Avoyelles is in the Acadiana triangle north, these
23 districts, there are 28 districts in this area. And
24 you may wonder why I'm showing you this map. Well,
25 I'm showing you this because any redistricting

decision that is made in this area may affect the configuration of the House districts in your immediate area.

[01:44:55]

As you can see from this map, the population of each district relative to the ideal district. There are only four House districts of the 28 House district that exist within this current geography that have experienced significant growth. Two districts located in Bossier Parish, a district located solely within Ouachita Parish and a district that is located within Ouachita and extends into Morehouse Parish. So we'll talk a little bit more about the traditional northeast corner of the state. This is a map showing the existing districts, and we've included a few boundaries to kind of give you a perspective. In this area, there are districts that this -- this chart shows the difference in the district's population from the ideal. Eight of these districts, districts 11, 13, 16, 17, 19, 21, 26 and 28 are under populated outside of the acceptable plus or minus five from the ideal. Two of the districts, 20 and 22 are under populated, but they are within the acceptable range. Three of the districts 12, 25 and 27 have some overpopulation, but they are within

1 acceptable range, and again, two districts, districts
2 14 and 15, are overpopulated outside the acceptable
3 range. This map illustrates the deviations of those
4 districts from the ideal population. And then we have
5 some other districts, just to kind of zoom in on the
6 immediate Monroe Area, so you can see those
7 districts. And again, a zoom in showing the
8 deviations within the immediate Ouachita Monroe Area.
9 Now I'm going to turn it over to my colleague,
10 Yolanda Dixon, Secretary of the Senate to discuss the
11 malapportionment of the Senate.
12 YOLANDA DIXON: Thank you Patricia.
13 PATRICIA LOWERY-DUFOUR: Thank you.
14 YOLANDA DIXON: Okay. So we're going to focus in
15 on the Senate districts as they exist today. In 2010,
16 the ideal population for the Senate was 116,240, and
17 2020, after the census was taken, it is 119,429,
18 reflecting an increase of 3,189 per Senate district.
19 This chart shows that there are 10 Senate districts
20 in which the current population exceeds 5% above the
21 ideal population. There are 14 districts that are
22 within the deviation, plus or minus 5%. And there are
23 15 Senate districts in which the current population
24 is more than 5% below the ideal population. This map
25 illustrates the population deviations with the dark

red and dark orange colors, representing the population below the acceptable range. The orange representing the population on the low side of the acceptable range and the light yellow, representing population on the high side of acceptable range, and the light and dark green, representing population of the acceptable range, and if you can look at this map and you see in North Louisiana, it's barely dark. Now focusing on the Senate districts of the northeast region of the state, and Patricia did mention that we do talk about Avoyelles and some of those parishes as North Louisiana. So we have included some of the districts in that region in this particular tabulation of the northeast. Most significant is that all but one district, district 35, is outside of the acceptable deviation of 5%. And overall of the 15 Senate districts in the state, which are below the deviation range, five of them are in the northeast region. You can see on this slide, district 35 is close to being ideal, only 277 people under the ideal population, still has the population loss. District 34 is 12,000 below the ideal or 10% under the acceptable deviation range.

[01:50:00]

1 District 33 is 9.7 thousand people under the
2 ideal or -8% under the acceptable deviation. District
3 32 is 10.5 thousand under the ideal population or -
4 8.7 under the acceptable deviation range. District 29
5 is 9.7 under the ideal or -8% under the acceptable
6 deviation range. And district 28, which touches on
7 Avoyelles and goes down to Evangeline and Allen
8 Parrish is 7,000 under the ideal population or -6%
9 under the acceptable deviation range. And all of that
10 shows you that where do you go, there's not really a
11 large path to go forward, because everything around
12 you is under the acceptable deviation range. Then
13 focusing in on the next slide, the dark red and dark
14 orange color districts again are the districts which
15 are most below or under the acceptable range of
16 deviation. The orange color districts 35 and 36 are
17 on the low side of the acceptable range, and I want
18 to point out that there's no yellow green, or dark
19 green colored districts in North Louisiana, which
20 would represent either a stable increase or an
21 increase in population. Again, this focuses in on
22 more in this area with some markings of I-20 and some
23 of the landmarks that you can see. Next slide. And
24 then you can see that districts 34 and 31 lost the
25 most population followed by 28, 29, 33 and 35.

Focusing in on the Monroe metro area, which is districts 32, 33, 34 and 35, again, all of these districts have lost population. And you can see from the dark red dark orange that those, the dark red lost the most, dark orange next, and they have the greatest amount of population loss within the region. That completes our presentation of malapportionment data, and I will turn it back over to our Chairwoman.

SHARON HEWITT: Thank you to our staff for that, great presentation. That's a lot of information, and you can see the complexities and the challenge before us. I'll close with this slide and then we're going to go to public comments. This is a list of all the road show hearings that we have scheduled around the state. Tomorrow, we will be in Shreveport from 5:30 to 8:30 at LSUS. Following that we will be in the Acadiana area in Lafayette, October 26; Central Louisiana, November the 9; Baton Rouge, the 16. We will be on the North Shore November 30 and Lake Charles on December 15, New Orleans January the 5. We will be in the bayou region on January the 11. We actually pushed that back as late as possible to help them with some of their hurricane recovery efforts, and then back to Baton Rouge on January the 20. So you have lots of opportunities to participate. For

1 those of you that are listening online, we hope that
2 you'll join us at a future meeting. And so now we're
3 ready to move into public comment period. So I want
4 to do a couple of things. Excuse me. Yes, Chairman
5 Stefanski.
6 JOHN M. STEFANSKI: Yeah. I just want to
7 recognize a couple former colleagues who came in. I
8 see our new appellate judge, Judge Marcus Hunter in
9 the back. He's being shy but we served in the House
10 together. Welcome. And our newest judge, Judge Fred
11 Jones, who has also served in the House with me as
12 well. I want to recognize him in the back as well.
13 SHARON HEWITT: Old habits are hard to break.
14 It's good to see you all here. All right, and we do
15 have a website here on the screen. It's
16 redist.legis.la.gov, and we really are working hard
17 to keep all of the most current information there on
18 our website. If you even just go to the legislative
19 website where many of you are used to going, on the
20 left side, we have a redistricting tab. And so all of
21 the presentation materials as well as public input
22 will be documented there for your use.
23 [01:54:58]
24 All right, I want to briefly touch on the
25 comments or the input that we have received by email

before our deadline of 5:30 yesterday, anything that we received after that, of course, we will distribute to the members in post online as well. So let me just review this. Members, you have this in your folder, this information, and I will just touch on it briefly for the record. We have an email from Logan Wolf with attached US Congressional Maps. We have an email from Michael Pernick, the redistricting counsel, from the NAACP Legal Defense Fund. It attaches some congressional maps along with a letter regarding congressional redistricting compliance with Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act. We have an email from Mark Landry, expressing his opinion with regard to the redistricting process. An email from Chris Kaiser of the ACLU with an analysis of the 2020 census data and demographics. Okay, and I think that is it in terms of emailed comments. We have witness cards that many of you have filled out. If you have not filled out a card, they have them outside at the table. I will read two folks that submitted comments that they wrote on the back, so they do not wish to speak. But I will read their comment briefly, Brenda Groves on Amelia Drive, when voting for redistricting, please be mindful of representation by gender, race, and background, when calculating equity. There's a little

representation by women and non-whites in either House. And I'm sorry I'm having trouble with the writing. Clarance C. Jackson, sorry, here in Monroe writes, minority representation should be represented in the State of Louisiana. Only two minority districts in the state does not accurately represent AA and other minorities in the entire state. Another minority district is the only solution. So those are two written comments. Okay, and so now we have a number of cards that members of the public have signed and asked to speak. We have, it's 6:45. We are scheduled to end at 8:30. So that's a little bit less than two hours. Based on the number of cards if we allow five minutes per person, that should allow us to finish up pretty close on time, okay. So if you all will consider that in your comments, that will allow all of us to speak and hear what everyone has to say while we're here. Anybody that's extra hungry, you can take less than five minutes and we'll just finish a little bit earlier. I saw a few people here and I kind of got your drift on that, because I'm pretty hungry as well. All right. Now we have a microphone set up in the aisle in the back. That would be where you go when I call your name. And if you would, again, begin by introducing yourself and

1 if you're representing any particular group, and we
2 will give you some time to share your opinions. The
3 first person is Mayor Staci Mitchell here from West
4 Monroe.
5 MAYOR STACI MITCHELL: [INDISCERNIBLE 01:58:41]
6 SHARON HEWITT: Well, there you go. We just got
7 five minutes back. Thank you Mayor. Jared Evans from
8 the NAACP Legal Defense Fund.
9 JARED EVANS: Good evening members. I am Jared
10 Evans. I am a proud North Louisiana native and I'm
11 even a more proud graduate of Grambling State
12 University. I'm also a former law clerk and staff
13 attorney with the House of Representatives, where I
14 had the pleasure of working with many of you. I
15 currently serve as a policy counsel with the NAACP
16 Legal Defense Fund or LDF. I am here today to urge
17 you to ensure that voters of color in Louisiana are
18 afforded an equal opportunity to elect candidates of
19 their choice. My testimony this evening will focus on
20 compliance with Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act,
21 which provides voters the tools to challenge voting
22 laws or policies, which result in the denial or
23 abridgement of the right to vote on account of race
24 or color. You've already heard about the Gingles
25

1 factors from the awesome presentation earlier, so I
2 won't go through them now.
3 [01:59:56]
4 But with respect to Louisiana's Congressional
5 Map, LDF believes that Section 2 of the Voting Rights
6 Act likely requires the Louisiana legislature to draw
7 two majority-minority congressional districts in the
8 Congressional Map. In fact, we know that it is easy
9 to draw a map with two majority-minority districts.
10 LDF along with 16 other civil and human rights
11 organizations, including Power Coalition and the
12 ACLU, submitted a letter earlier this week that
13 included seven different district plans based on 2020
14 census data, in which two of the six districts are
15 comprised of a majority of black voters. In each of
16 those maps, the black community is sufficiently large
17 and geographically compact satisfy the first Gingles
18 precondition. Not only do the maps include compact
19 communities of black voters as reflected by
20 traditional redistricting principles, but each of
21 those seven maps are more compact than the current
22 map on at least two of the three widely recognized
23 measures when it comes to compactness. Accordingly,
24 the first Gingles precondition would likely be
25 satisfied if Louisiana's new Congressional Map fails

1 to provide a second majority-minority congressional
2 district. Second, there is ample evidence to show
3 Louisiana's well-documented history of ongoing and
4 ongoing record of racially polarized voting in
5 elections across the state. Over the past three
6 decades, numerous federal courts have found that
7 racially polarized voting pervades Louisiana
8 statewide and local elections. Here in Monroe, black
9 voters have no opportunity to elect their preferred
10 candidate to Congress. The congressional candidates
11 preferred by Monroe's black voters are consistently
12 defeated by the candidates preferred by white voters
13 in the fifth congressional district. As a result,
14 Monroe's black voters have virtually no chance to
15 elect their candidate of choice to Congress. Five of
16 the seven maps that we submitted to you in our letter
17 Place Monroe in one of those two majority-minority
18 districts. In closing, it is fair necessary and
19 logical that black Louisianans who comprise nearly
20 one-third of Louisiana's residence have an
21 opportunity to elect candidates of their choice,
22 their preferred Congressional representatives. The
23 seven maps that we submitted to you this week show
24 that doing so is easy and feasible. Members of
25 Congress make decisions and enact policies that

1 impact every aspect of American life including access
2 to education, economic opportunity, housing,
3 healthcare, voting and criminal justice. An
4 additional majority-minority district, which Section
5 2 of the Voting Rights Act likely requires would
6 provide black voters with representation to address
7 the state's pervasive and ongoing record of an
8 equality of opportunity in every aspects of life.
9 Thank you.
10 SHARON HEWITT: Thank you Mr. Evans. I am going
11 to remind members of the audience that we do not
12 applaud in legislative hearings and ask you to not do
13 so.
14 JOHN M. STEFANSKI: And also, when I was
15 recognizing former members, I did forget our former
16 congressman in state, we have Congressman Rodney
17 Alexander, who's sitting over to our right. So thank
18 you sir for being here as well. I apologize former
19 state representative, Ms. Katz as well sitting in the
20 front. I appreciate it. And also, I was told former
21 Senator Jones is here as well, our former colleague's
22 father as well.
23 SHARON HEWITT: All right, this is like a who's
24 who. Is there anybody else? Stand up and be counted.
25 No, appreciated, it shows an interest in a very

1 important topic. So thank you all for being here. All
2 right, and with that, I will invite our next speaker,
3 Ms. Kay Katz to join us at the microphone if you
4 would like to speak.
5 KAY KATZ: Thank you Madam Chairman, and I hate
6 to follow that erudite speaker that went before me,
7 but let me just say, once again --
8 SHARON HEWITT: Introduce yourself one more time
9 on the record.
10 KAY KATZ: I'm Kay Katz. I am just a citizen from
11 Ouachita Parish. I want to thank the two committees
12 for coming. They are not required by law to bring
13 this project to the people to hear from the people
14 that are here. And I think that is wonderful, and I
15 appreciate you doing it. I'm going to speak on the
16 Congressional District Five. We are homogeneous area.
17 We are all good folks in this area. We have the same
18 problems. We think alike. We do a lot of things the
19 same way and district 5 seems to have been working
20 very well.
21 [02:05:05]
22 The services that have come out of district 5
23 have been good in all areas. It's one of the largest
24 congressional districts in the United States. And
25 yet, the people that have held that office seem to

have provided for us to the best of their ability. We have the same interest. We are a communal group. We want what's right for all our folks. And I hope that in the lines that were drawn, I hope that district 5 stays in Northeast and North Central Louisiana with our rural area. And we have the same interest. Of course, we have a great metropolitan area in Monroe, which is the big city in Northeast Louisiana, and we're not real big. So we're good folks together, and I hope that you will keep the lines as close as to what they were before. I support the 5th district the way it is. Thank you.

SHARON HEWITT: Thank you Ms. Katz. All right, our next speaker is Melissa Flournoy with the Louisiana Progress Action.

MELISSA FLOURNOY: Thank you Madam Chairman. I'm also a former legislator. I actually ran for the legislature in 1991 as a result of redistricting, and I represented the part of Shreveport, Louisiana. And so I want to say that the redistricting process is very important to bring new voices into government in Louisiana. I'm the Board Chair of Louisiana Progress Action, and we're very interested in promoting competitive districts as well as representing racial proportionality across the state. What we have seen

over the last three redistricting cycles is we've seen many more sort of packing of voters to create or over create minority districts or over create more Republican or more white conservative districts. And so the point that I want to make today is, we have an opportunity given the population changes to really look at representing people across the State of Louisiana, ensuring the voices of minority voters are heard, but also looking at how to create more competitive districts. Right now, there are 52 people who ran for the legislature in the last cycle that ran unopposed. We do not have inner party competition. And so we have a number of issues I think that has really affected the ability to compromise in the state capital. And so our position is that we should focus on competitive districts that represent the communities and not be so focused on incumbent protection, which has been one of the primary driving forces in the redistricting process the last three election cycles. Thank you.

SHARON HEWITT: Yes ma'am. Thank you. Next up, I have representative and former state senator, Francis Thompson. Thank you, sir. I had my clock started already. Y'all know Frances, don't y'all? I can tell? France Hill with the Monroe district 3 NAACP. Sir,

1 would you like to speak? Thank you. Adarian Williams
2 11th House district from Ruston, Adarian Williams.
3 Are you here? When would you like to speak?
4 ADARIAN WILLIAMS: Yes, ma'am.
5 SHARON HEWITT: Yes sir.
6 ADARIAN WILLIAMS: Good evening. To Chair
7 Stefanski, Chair Hewitt, and members of the
8 Committees on House and Governmental Affairs and
9 Senate and Governmental Affairs. Thank you for the
10 opportunity to testify this evening in reference to
11 the redistricting process in our great state. I am
12 Adarian Williams, a 25-year resident of Simsboro,
13 Louisiana, a former two-term student body president
14 of Grambling State University, the 2017, 2018,
15 Louisiana Board of Regents student member, former
16 Congressional staffer and a community leader within
17 Louisiana's 11th House district, well represented by
18 the Honorable Patrick O. Jefferson. I would be remiss
19 if I didn't recognize my Grambling State University
20 family if you're in the house, just give me a wave of
21 a hand.
22 [02:10:00]
23 All right, I am here this evening with a number
24 of community members to reiterate the obligations of
25 the committees and the entire Louisiana legislators

1 engaged in the redistricting process to ensure fair,
2 non-discriminatory representation, and an open and
3 accessible process. Many of my peers have asked the
4 question, what does it mean to have fair and
5 equitable maps. In 2022, the Louisiana legislature
6 and our state's local governments have yet the chance
7 to define what those terms truly mean in our state to
8 restore the systemic problems we face, and ensure
9 equal representation and competitiveness every step
10 of the way. With respect to traditional redistricting
11 principles and though population data shows a decline
12 in population within district 11, consisting of
13 Lincoln, Bienville and Claiborne parishes, I
14 encourage the committees to sustain these communities
15 along the same boundaries. Not only do our schools
16 compete together in sports, we also shop at many of
17 the same stores, and as a man of faith, I'm happy to
18 note that we worship together. We sustain, build, and
19 grow together. In regard to congressional districts,
20 our state lacks equal representation and
21 competitiveness, which has consequences for our
22 politics, our policies, communities, our economy, and
23 society as a whole. The districts we draw in 2022
24 will shape our lives and our communities for the next
25 decade. We must continue to educate our citizens

about the process, mobilize more participation, and protect our communities of interest. Thank you for hosting this road show of events, and thank you again for the opportunity to testify.

SHARON HEWITT: Thank you sir. Our next speaker Vee Wright [PH 02:12:02] with Community Action.

VEE WRIGHT: Good evening, welcome. I am Vee Wright. I am actually a baby community activist. I know you couldn't read my hieroglyphics.

SHARON HEWITT: Thank you.

VEE WRIGHT: I am just a regular citizen who grew up in Monroe, came back two years ago and became a community activist. So here I stand. A number of things I want to say have already been said. I'll dive down a little bit on a couple of them. But when it's all said and done, I hope this is a road show and I hope it's not just a show, like you're going all around the state, listening to us and then you're going to go down in Baton Rouge and draw the maps in a way that mux everything up. Basically, what people are saying is they want fairness and representation so they can get their fair amount of resources. When I think about some of the things I've heard since I've been here, it's like for instance, in North Louisiana, particularly Northeast Louisiana, we're

not getting the resources that the South gets, and that hurts the whole state. You have too many people moving down south and the south can't sustain that with all of the weak infrastructure and the storms weakening it further. But we have space up here for people. We need to have Monroe and Greater Ouachita Parish look like a place that people want to live, want to move to. We want to retain companies like CenturyLink, so that they can attract people who want to live here, and we need resources for that, and part of that comes with representation. Like globally, obviously, districts 4 and 5 are two friggin large. Okay, they need to be split in two. I mean, rural concerns are not the same thing as urban or suburban concerns. So the district 5 is ginormous. I didn't know it until I saw it tonight. Same deal with district 4. I mean, those are two districts that needs to be four districts not two districts, essentially. You can use another metric rather than ideal population or how about ideal geographic area. Okay, so there's that. And I think that's about it. I just want you guys to just do the right thing. How is that? I think, that's what everyone is saying, do the right thing. We are all in the state together. So let us all live well and prosper together. So when it's

all said and done and you're done with your drawing, and it looks like everyone's going to be represented fairly and get their fair number of resources, then you've done a job well done. And I'd like to remind you, you work for us, we the people. So please do the work we want you to do. Thank you.

[02:14:59]

SHARON HEWITT: Thank you Ms. Wright. All right, our next speaker Kenya Robertson [PH 02:15:06] Black Owned Businesses from here in Monroe. She waits, all right. Al Pastor, NELA Realtors, Northeast Louisiana Realtors from Monroe. Yes sir. Are you Peterson? I must have butchered your name.

AL PETERSON: I am Al Peterson.

SHARON HEWITT: I am reading it twice now. Thank you.

AL PETERSON: Thank you. I was just going to confess that maybe my recent parish education didn't teach me, the graphics and the art of writing.

SHARON HEWITT: You did well. It was my eyes, they failed us.

AL PETERSON: Thank you for that. I've been a realtor in Northeast Louisiana since 2006. Coming out of the business community, I wanted to do something in the community that gave me an opportunity to speak

to the things that are happening in the things that take place in our neighborhood. I would like, first of all, to thank those who are in the road show, who came to educate us on the things that we need to know about the redistricting and the things that takes place in our state government. As a realtor, as a leader in the real estate community, not only in North Louisiana, but in the state, I want to reassure everyone that we are governed by a high standard in our code of ethics. And in that code of ethics, the things that is prominent is the fair housing laws. The information that we are receiving here and the information that will go back to Baton Rouge for the redistricting and all, it carries with it that same mandate. Thank you. We appreciate what you're doing, and we look forward to the result of the redistricting.

SHARON HEWITT: Thank you Mr. Peterson. Our next speaker is B. Meadows from Monroe, West Monroe.

MARION T. MEADOWS: My name is Marion T. Meadows. Marion isn't a name I'm big enough to support, nor am I brutal enough, but I have been a long-term resident, originally of Ruston, the last 53 years of West Monroe. My family for over 130 years has held land in Claiborne Parish, which we proudly hold

today. We had family on our land that shared, and I say, fabulous disregard in skin pigment color. I am an evangelical. I'm really upset with the division over what your skin pigments and my skin pigments might be, because I'm colored too. I do recognize that politically, we've done things in the past that has presented and prevented fair treatment. I support fair treatment. And I support us recognizing each other as who we are. I think many of us in here are believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. So we're part of a family. So it's not a matter of just deciding to redistrict by color, but rather by values. I'm proudly represented by a woman that I've known long before she was really involved. When a project and disaster would happen, my representative Pat Moore would be on the scene. And I'm proudly represented by her today, and we're in the same family. Thank you.

SHARON HEWITT: Thank you, sir. Kudos to Representative Moore, very nice.

[02:19:58]

All right, our next speaker is Brenda Grover, am I saying that correctly, from Monroe. Brenda Grover, on Amelia Drive. Okay, maybe she stepped out. Paul Herd.

PAUL HERD: My name is Paul Herd. I'm 40 plus years of Ouachita Parish, and I've been involved in districting before and I am hoping that we all figure out a way to do this in a proper manner so that we can all be proud of what we do and not have our names once again dragged through the newspapers of what it is our legislature chose to do. I was involved in the redistricting and setting aside of congressional districts twice in this state, setting aside and redrawing the Senate districts, setting aside 14 Congress districts in Texas. And the number one thing I would ask this legislature to think about when you redistrict is we're redistricting for voters. We are not redistricting land, we're not redistricting incumbents. We are redistricting voters. And the number one thing redistricting can do for voters is compactness. Now, when we challenged the redistricting in the 90s, there was a congressional district that started in Opelousas, went through Baton Rouge, came up to river, came and had a finger in Alexandria, come on up the river and had a finger in Ouachita and kept going, had a finger in Ruston, and ended in Shreveport. Now, the point is, we had people stand up under oath and say why that's a compact district. What I'm going to tell you is

you're going to hear from many people, the districts they want are compact. They're compact enough to achieve other purposes, but they're not compact in any rational, historic, or any definitional sense. The number one thing we can do is to preserve in a sense what we had. There's a few districts that we would all be embarrassed to believe that we really voted for that that exists today. But many of them are compact. The number one thing we need to do is we're going to talk about it, you guys are going to do it, and then you're going to have to stand up and be judged for the activity you did. And when you start preferring one set of voters and you cut them into a district and you cut others out, there are no secrets in Baton Rouge. We know what occurs and you will get to be put on the stand, you will be asked how did this silliness occur. I want us not to be put on a stand and told what outrageous incumbent protection will carve up a third of the voters in Louisiana to make a House district or a Congressional district work for John or Mary. What I'm asking you to do is look at traditional districting principles, maintain, don't split parishes when you don't have to. Ironically, y'all have adopted a joint rule that says that you will not split parishes if it's

practicable not to do it. Look up with. Mr. Google, what practicable is. It means if you don't need to do it, if it's possible, don't split the parish, don't split the cities. And if you do split them on boundaries that make sense internally in that parish, if I can give you any guidance, it's not that these boundaries of cities, boundaries of parishes, they're not just things that occur. Our entire lives of voters, the schools we go to, the police jurors that we rely upon, those are all arising inside these lower districts, these lower governmental affairs. Use those boundaries, keep the districts compact, and the minority districts that exist should be honored.

[02:24:56]

But we don't need to go from Baton Rouge to Monroe to Ruston to Grambling to call it a district that has anything in common other than race. We're a rural community black and white. We are a small business community, black and white. We have education problems, black and white. We go to the same schools, leave us to work together, and the best thing you can do is to draw our representatives from a common pool. And I appreciate your patience your time and I wish you well. Well, start with that.

1 SHARON HEWITT: Thank you, sir. All right, thank
2 you very much. Our next speaker James Bradford from
3 Jackson Parish, Jonesboro, Louisiana. Mr. Bradford.
4 Okay, our next speaker, Sonia Jacobs from Monroe.
5 SONIA JACOBS: Good evening. Sonia Jacobs,
6 September 3 last year, we were at the height of
7 COVID. I was in my bedroom, 8:48 p.m. distinctly
8 remember, because it was about 18 minutes past my
9 bedtime, I received a phone call and I didn't want to
10 answer, but I felt about five minutes later compelled
11 went to the phone. It was a 225 number, and I was
12 like, what in the world is this. So again, I
13 responded. It was Treasurer John Schroeder, and he
14 said Ms. Jacobs, thank you so much for calling me. I
15 have someone on the other end that you don't know
16 anything about, but I want to join the two of you and
17 he was being facetious, because it was Senator
18 Katrina Jackson. She was out, can't remember the name
19 of the hurricane. Please forgive me, because we've
20 had so many, but she was out helping, assist and
21 provide food and other necessities for those affected
22 by the hurricane. So the three of us were on a call
23 after 9:00 at night about the Louisiana Main Street
24 program. That program that was designed to provide
25 grants to small businesses that were affected by

1 COVID. So we only had three weeks, because we had
2 been going back and forth, trying to construct a plan
3 that would be fair. And thank you to our legislators
4 who designed that program to give priority to women,
5 minority and veteran-owned business, because one
6 thing that COVID did, it unearthed a lot of
7 disparities and inequities with women and minorities
8 in our country. So we got together. We constructed a
9 plan and we had less than three weeks to implement it
10 successfully. When I tell you the overwhelming number
11 of minority, women, and veteran-owned businesses that
12 responded, we were up to at 11:59 p.m. at the end of
13 September uploading applications, assisting, the
14 phones -- we were there until after 1:00 in the
15 morning. The overwhelming response from the women and
16 minority-owned business community was staggering. And
17 at the end of that, it caused us to think and to look
18 at things a little differently. Where's the
19 representation. With this many in Northeast Louisiana
20 coming from every parish in Northeast Louisiana, even
21 coming from Northwest Louisiana, as far as Bossier
22 and Shreveport. We had a number of those businesses
23 that needed our assistance. We need more. Katrina
24 Jacksons you all. We need more of you who are women
25 and minority-owned business -- I mean, women and

minority legislators and the maps drawn fairly will produce that. We're convinced of it. And I know that you all are too. So we ask you, again, we need help, we need your help, we need your prayers. We need you to do the right thing. Thank you.

SHARON HEWITT: Thank you Ms. Jacobs.

ROYCE DUPLESSIS: Madam Chair, if I may briefly. I just want to correct the record. Senator Jackson asked me to be clear that she is recovering from a surgery. So she asked that I'd be specific and put that on the record, she is recovering from a surgery.

[02:29:57]

SHARON HEWITT: Thank you very much Representative Duplessis, and I know she would be here otherwise, absolutely. All right, our next speaker, Chris Kaiser with ACLU of Louisiana.

CHRIS KAISER: Good evening Chairwoman Hewitt, Chairman Stefanski and members of the committee. My name is Chris Kaiser, I'm the Advocacy Director with the ACLU of Louisiana. Thank you so much for this opportunity to talk with you tonight and for the opportunity for the people of Louisiana to engage in this redistricting process. ACLU of Louisiana is a statewide organization. We have members and

1 supporters in every part of the state, who care
2 deeply about democracy and the fundamental right to
3 have a fair opportunity and equal representation in
4 our electoral districts. Equal opportunity for
5 political representation is a cornerstone of our
6 democracy, and that's why it is protected by the
7 Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment.
8 Among other mandates, the United States Constitution,
9 the Voting Rights Act required their maps fairly
10 reflect the voting strength of our minority
11 communities, and in particular, our black
12 communities. By law, the legislature must ensure that
13 those communities are neither unduly fractured nor
14 improperly concentrated into single districts. As the
15 census data confirms from this year 2020, Louisiana's
16 voting age population has grown almost 5% statewide.
17 But as you heard earlier, that growth has not
18 happened equally across the state. Specifically, in
19 rural areas, generally, we've seen lost population
20 while many of our metro areas grew. But importantly,
21 Louisiana's black voting-age population grew by 4.6%
22 statewide, while are white voting age population
23 decreased by 3%. Therefore, we know that many of our
24 current districts must change, especially those that
25 have lost significant population. But at the same

1 time, the law requires that you ensure a fair
2 opportunity for a growing black population to elect
3 their candidates of choice. Fair maps, when we say
4 fair maps, that means they must adequately reflect
5 and balance these realities. So improper
6 redistricting is a direct threat to our democracy as
7 a whole and our sacred right to vote, because it can
8 result in unequal representation and a dilution of
9 minority votes. And historically in Louisiana, we
10 know that past redistricting processes and other
11 voting practices have indeed resulted in unequal
12 voting power among citizens and discrimination
13 against black voters. For decades, we know that black
14 people in Louisiana have been underrepresented in our
15 state's public offices. Three times over the last 30
16 years, the DOJ has sued Louisiana parishes for
17 violating Section 2. In between the passage of the
18 VRA, in 1965 in 2013, when the Supreme Court handed
19 down Selby County, the DOJ blocked 148 proposed
20 changes to voting policies and practices in Louisiana
21 on the grounds that they discriminated against black
22 voters or diluted black voting strength. So
23 redistricting has concrete far-reaching impacts on
24 our people and our quality of life, but the state of
25 Louisiana can ensure fair representation for

1 communities of color by drawing districts that are
2 reasonably competitive and that ensure non-dilution
3 minority votes. To aid in this process, the ACLU of
4 Louisiana has conducted a thorough analysis of the
5 2020 census data, including first Louisiana's overall
6 population changes from 2010 to 2020. Second,
7 summaries of demographic shifts by corresponding road
8 show region, and third population and demographic
9 changes broken down by both parish and state
10 legislative districts. So ahead of this hearing, you
11 received a detailed summary for 20 parishes
12 comprising the northern part of the state. It's a
13 document that looks like this. I will note we drew
14 that line a little bit farther north than the
15 presentation you heard earlier. We adapted basically
16 the LDH regions to draw that line, but notably, that
17 breakdown shows that in this North Louisiana region,
18 the overall population fell by about 2.4%, but at the
19 same time the voting age population of people of
20 color grew by 9.1%. In an 8 of 18 House districts and
21 4 of the 10 Senate districts in the region, the
22 number of people of color of voting age increased
23 since 2010. So the takeaway here is just that this
24 information is going to be crucial in order to assess
25 whether the proposed electoral districts that you'll

1 debate over the next several months do indeed provide
2 fair representation for the people of North
3 Louisiana. And respectfully, we urge you to use this
4 information to inform your decisions and to draw maps
5 that fairly represent these communities.
6 [02:34:58]
7 Throughout the process, your obligations under
8 the constitution and Section 2 of the Voting Rights
9 Act must guide your decisions. Your responsibility
10 and ours is to uphold Louisianans' most sacred rights
11 to be represented fairly in this state. Thank you for
12 your time.
13 SHARON HEWITT: Thank you sir. All right, our
14 next speaker, Lisa Tomkies with Power Coalition. Good
15 LISA TOMKIES: Good evening Chairman and members
16 of the committee. My name is Lisa Tomkies, and I am a
17 redistricting fellow at the Power Coalition for
18 equity and justice, and I live in North Louisiana.
19 I'm also going to go ahead and give a shout out to
20 Louisiana Tech, my alma mater in Lincoln parish, and
21 also Grambling State University, where I did a little
22 postgraduate work as well. So I have a vested
23 interest in North Louisiana. I'm here this evening
24 representing Power Coalition, and I'm urging you to
25 ensure that any maps submitted to the governor should

adhere to principles of equity. In a state where one third of the population is black and there are increasing populations of people of color, we must draw districts that reflect our population and give all communities the opportunity to elect people that will represent their interest. Here's a little statistical information about the Fifth Congressional District. The income per household is a mere $35,421 dollars, which is below the poverty line. The Fifth Congressional District is the second district in Louisiana out of the out six in race and African-American demographics. It is also 36 out of 436 other congressional districts in the United States, as far as race, black or African-American. Today we sit here in Monroe with a 60% black population, but our congressional delegation does not reflect this, because lines have been drawn to dilute black voter power. Our partners at the NAACP Legal Defense Fund have submitted seven possible maps that reflect that this area could be competitive and make it more likely that the community can elect candidates of color, candidates of choice to lead and represent this state. It is possible to not draw maps that oppose vestiges of Jim Crow and white supremacy. We ask that you use your power to draw maps that reduce

the efficiency gap, create competitive districts, and stop packing and cracking minority communities. I thank you for your time.

SHARON HEWITT: Yes ma'am. Thank you. All right, our next speaker is Richard Windsor from Monroe.

RICHARD WINDER: Ma'am to report my bad writing, the last name is Winder. And that's not your fault, it's mine.

SHARON HEWITT: Winder, I see that. Thank you very much.

RICHARD WINDER: You're quite welcome.

SHARON HEWITT: You state your name for the record.

RICHARD WINDER: Yes. I am Richard A. Winder, Sr. My address is 2089 Highway 80 E, Monroe, LA 71203, and I don't mind giving my home address, because I have no reason to hide from anyone. What I would like to say is that I had the benefit of living in New Orleans for 63 years. I've been in Monroe since 2010. And with that I have a perspective on representation, how it works, how power is shifted, how governmental agencies work, and how the haves continue the haves and the have-nots continue to have-nots. I don't represent an organization. I'm representing those folks who can't be here tonight. I'm representing

1 those folks who don't know where ULM is. I'm
2 representing those folks who don't care where ULM is
3 and what you're doing here tonight. But they need to
4 know that there are individuals here in this room who
5 care about what happens to them. Now, I retired from
6 the City of New Orleans government agencies in 2010.
7 I've been a real estate broker and owner of an
8 agency, small business, for 41 years.
9 [02:40:00]
10 I've been recently appointed by Governor Edwards
11 to the Louisiana Housing Corporation, effective
12 September 1, with a termination date of August 2025,
13 and that's, of course, pending approval from the
14 Senate. I know how it works. The thing that I've
15 learned in just a month and a half I've been on the
16 Housing Corporation is that the haves continue to
17 haves and the have-nots continue to have-not. The
18 amount of money that flows through our cooperation,
19 and the staff is doing a great job, continues to be
20 somewhat centered in South Louisiana, mainly New
21 Orleans and Baton Rouge. We want to tell people that
22 Monroe, Tallulah, Lake Providence, Sicily Island,
23 Winnsboro, Bastrop, Jonesboro, Farmerville, Ruston,
24 these are not cities or towns in Mississippi,
25 Arkansas, or Texas. We are in Louisiana. So when

we're talking about redistricting, it's almost a parallel that we have large populations that are really underrepresented. And now we have large populations in this little corner of Northeast Louisiana that doesn't get any money for housing. We get some money, but nowhere near what needs to happen. And now that I have one of those 11 seats on their board, my goal is to make sure that something really happens for this area. The redistricting plan, it's a no-brainer ladies and gentlemen with all due respect, you have it, you know what needs to happen, you know who needs to be represented. We don't need to be in court. We know we can do the right thing. And with that, I will say, thank you for your time. Go Saints.

SHARON HEWITT: Yes sir. Thank you Mr. Winder. All right, our next speaker, Brenda Shepherd Nelson with Booker T. Washington Community.

BRENDA SHEPHERD NELSON: Good evening. Chairman, my name is Brenda Shepherd Nelson, and I'm here with other members of the community to discuss the voting rights for the next 10 years. I'm a member of the Booker T. Washington Community here in Ouachita Parish. I grew up in Booker T, attended all black Lincoln Elementary, Carroll Junior and Senior High

School. This community and its structure has assisted in supporting my ability to stand for what is right, my ability to make sound decisions, and most importantly, my commitment to exercising my right to vote. In our home on Bailey Street, my parents understood and appreciated the power of voting. For you see, they lived at a time when they could not vote. During my mother's last day, she insisted on going to the polls and voting for the person she felt would be best to serve our community. I graduated from Grambling State University and started a career in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. I never missed an opportunity to vote in Wisconsin and having returned to Booker T, I do not want my options could vote to be hampered by unfair drawing of district lines. As a black member of the City of Monroe Community, before you develop those ideal districts, I would appreciate your consideration for the following four realities. Number one, that each congressional district has the same amount or almost the same amount of citizens, individuals of color are in a position to elect individuals they feel will best represent them. Gerrymandering is not occurring to achieve a specific goal, and most importantly, the strength of our black community is not weakened due to redrawing unfair

lines. So in conclusion, I ask that when you are considering developing two minority districts in this state, I hope you will see the importance of this area being one of them. Thank you.

[02:45:08]

SHARON HEWITT: Yes ma'am. Thank you. Our next speaker, Melanie Salisbury from Sterlington, Louisiana.

MELANIE SALISBURY: Good evening everyone. I am Melanie Salisbury from Sterlington, Louisiana. I'm here, representing myself as a mother, okay. It's super important that the education that my children receive in secondary and elementary education is adequate. The resources are there that we receive all over the state. So my reason for being here is to -- okay, I'm going to take it off if you don't mind. My reason for being here is to ensure that legislators know that we need two majority-minority districts for sure. Reason being that the education level and our reading level in our schools can be utilized in different ways to those educators, because I've seen it happen. My son started at one school and I literally had to work extremely hard, make extra income, which that income wasn't there in that area. So now I drive 35 minutes one way getting to work, so

my children can have the adequate education and the resources that were not in the community that I grew up in. It's fortunate that once you retire, you could go back to your community. You can work in that community, and you could be a part of that community. But I am outside of the community that I love in order for my children to get the resources that they need in order to be successful. So the BESE Board redistricting is super important to me. It's important that we know and understand that there are children falling behind, because they don't have resources that other children have in our very state, financing, and resources that one school has that another one doesn't. And I know we can say, that's because of your council or that's because of your board, but it's because we have a limited amount of resources that comes to Northeast Louisiana. So it's very important that you understand that my vote, my children are just as important as those in the southern part of the state, people that doesn't look like me, and I really am very concerned about how this redistricting will help resources come to neighborhoods that I want to live in. Thank you.

SHARON HEWITT: Yes ma'am. Thank you. All right, our next speaker, Lynetta Whitehurst from Monroe.

LYNETTA WHITEHURST: Good evening, and thank you for coming to Monroe. My name is Lynetta Whitehurst from Monroe, Louisiana. I'm actually now back for four years. I returned from living in Atlanta, Georgia for almost 30. I am a Northwest baby that went to Plain Dealing High School. So when I stand up here, I am speaking for my 89-year-old mom who was not coming out in Shreveport. I'm speaking for my 69-year-old sister who still has to work, and for that 57-year-old sister who is the primary caregiver of mom. So when I stand up here, I stand up as a born and raised in Northwest Louisiana. So when we talk about Northwest, it's not just Shreveport and Bossier City. It's Plain Dealing, Sarepta, Cullen, Cotton Valley, Springhill, and all of those little rural communities in between. When I stand up here, you're looking at a father who raised five girls who have passed away almost 10 years ago, and a lot of y'all say logging, well, we called it hauling pub wood straight to Springhill. He was a small farmer, always up at 5:00 picking those purple hull peas, and he was a Bossier Parish school driver, and he was a volunteer fire department until he lost his hearing.

[02:49:54]

So when I stand up here, I also look at what he made when he tells me the story of he made two dollars and something a week, and we are arguing over $15 an hour. So I want to get you start with some numbers. I wanted you to know who I am. I did return to work for my alma mater right here on this campus. When you look at $15 an hour in my congressional, and I don't have a lot of numbers. They've already given that. I want my congressional and state districts to not just reflect who I look like and who my values were, because we have some similar rule values, but who those ideals are. So I decided to break down at $15 an hour, a little bit, making $31,200, working 2080 hours. And if you look at all the percentages that you have to pay on that $15 an hour. I got down to $7.14. I haven't eaten yet and I haven't paid child care yet. But I decided to look up bread, peanut butter, and milk that if I go in that hour, it's $8.90 at Brookshire's. So $8.90, I got to work another hour just to get that peanut butter, milk, and bread. So if we're arguing over the $15 an hour, I need, when you think about drawing those districts, at least a chance to vote on someone who has close to the ideals. I might like Governor Edwards, but I don't agree with everything he does. But at least he

1 works and listens to the other party, because he's
2 born and raised here too. When you look at feelings,
3 I left in 1991 with a four-year-old. My husband and I
4 went to Atlanta, because there were no jobs. I can't
5 tell you how many times the old tower building with
6 Detroit Nicholas that he applied for African-American
7 males were not hired at the rate here than in Atlanta
8 Georgia. And we left fighting David Duke becoming
9 mayor, but we come back to an insurrectionist. I want
10 someone when you think about drawing those lines that
11 they will oppose that and know that was against the
12 constitution and know that you have other people
13 besides looking like them, but not just looking like
14 them, that has a human value, that a criminal act for
15 one should not be, oh it was a bad day for another.
16 So when you look at me, I laughed, because there were
17 no opportunities for me and for my husband, for my
18 four-year-old. So when you redraw those lines, I want
19 you to think about that 89-year-old woman that's in
20 the rural area between Sarepta and Plain Dealing
21 whose three daughters, five total, but four is more
22 flexible to take care of her. One comes out of town,
23 because we work remotely and that's another
24 conversation that people don't want to have, because
25 they talk about control of that. But that rotates to

take care of her, because all jobs don't give that. So let's think about that fit other component of family and paid medical leave to share that. So thank you. Think about that 89-year-old woman that fusses at that TV, because her former viewer was $5 too much this year. And just as a childhood memory, When Governor Edwin Edwards was running, and I was a teen and I said, dad, why you voted for him. He said he was the only governor that gave bus drivers raises. So if you can't draw those lines, where the bus drivers feel it, you might have to rethink those lies. Thank you.

SHARON HEWITT: Yes ma'am. Thank you. All right, our next speaker, Reverend Douzart with NAACP.

REVEREND AMBROSE DOUZART: Douzart, it is the way to pronunciation of name, but I accept the apology.

SHARON HEWITT: Thank you.

REVEREND AMBROSE DOUZART: Good evening everyone. It is the way to remember, with all due respect to our guests in North Louisiana, you can remember Ouzart, you can remember Mozart, so put a do when you say and you got Douzart. Amen. I come on behalf of some nearly 300 members of this Ouachita parish NAACP.

[02:54:53]

My background, I left here early to go to a place called Shreveport, Louisiana, and I was very prosperous to see the growth of Shreveport expand in law enforcement. So I decided to come back to Monroe to see if what significance I could be. I'll tell people, I'm 37, but I'm 73. I remember the night where they actually passed offering table or they just open the doors of the church. But here's my position. I returned to Ouachita parish and you see some 60 years later. In some perspective, things have gotten better. Some things have not changed. If we look at, the west side of Ouachita in this redistricting, I ask y'all take a closer peek. 60 years later, started under a man by the name of Toast on the Ouachita Parish School Board. By way of Reverend John Rusher now and Reverend Hale McCoy. Looking at that redistricting, I pray and all due respect to you all that make the decisions that it won't decrease, it will only increase. Six years later, we still got one representation on the Ouachita Parish School Board, that's sad. But I have returned to come to Monroe to see what can we do. Our track record in NAACP about engagement, that's all we do tonight. We've engaged some [INDISCERNIBLE 02:57:00]. We have engaged with the sheriff's

department to cohesively come together with all the problems all over the world to develop by which cohesively together getting body cameras, because cohesively as we all in this room tonight to make a decision that perhaps some minds already made up. But take a close look when you draw that redistricting line. When you look at our track record, you will see that even in engagement, the problems in Ouachita Parish with swamps, because your cohesive efforts of our working with the DOJ and your current new director, William Sumner, now for the first time that we are putting things together as a community and naming a new director at their facilities to bring about ourselves satisfaction of better safety in Ouachita Parish. What am I saying to us tonight? And all that you think all your efforts, I pray tonight that y'all make a correct decision, not to decrease but increase, increasing our efforts that Ouachita Parish like all other parishes in all parts of the state. We grow by numbers that you all made a best decision that the people can say, oh, I was there. I remember those, because it wasn't Ouzart, it was Douzart that said. Thank you for your time. And my time has been well spent.

SHARON HEWITT: Thank you Reverend. All right, our next speaker, Courtney Glass from Morehouse Parish.

COURTNEY GLASS: Good evening, everyone. How are you doing? My name is Courtney Glass. I am a banker, a financial consultant, a mother, and an entrepreneur. I actually live here in the Monroe area, but my parents have been residents of Bastrop in the Morehouse Parish for about 14 years. We relocated here from Pine Bluff, Arkansas. Tonight, I am here with my community members and a larger coalition to urge you to keep our community together. Our goal for this redistricting process is for our elected officials to pass fair and impartial maps that do not reduce the importance and effectiveness of my power in the election process. It is important to create districts that are minority-majority. This will allow us to elect those that represent our community. How many people in here have a bank account?

[03:00:00]

Can you raise your hand if you have a bank account? Okay, so you will know that I deal with a lot of different people from a lot of different walks of life. In doing so, you know that finance and

1 economics is extremely important in your everyday
2 life, getting up every day knowing that you can
3 afford necessary resources in your community is very
4 important to the morale that you experience in your
5 everyday life. I've even had former legislative
6 members, administrators, secretaries who were able to
7 help people receive resources in their communities
8 based on where they lived and where they were able to
9 go and be a voice for the people that they're
10 representing. Imagine how many people will be
11 bypassed due to the distance between them and their
12 nearest point of representation. If the lines in the
13 map are not drawn in a way that is fair. A lot of
14 times, you may look at the numbers in the maps, that
15 was great. You look at the numbers in the maps and
16 you say numbers don't lie, but we all know,
17 historically, that women were not given the right to
18 vote previously. That means my number would count as
19 a zero. I am also African-American. African Americans
20 were not given the right to vote. And when we finally
21 were counted as people, we were considered one-third.
22 Numbers do lie when the perspective does not align
23 with the value and the purpose of the people that it
24 represents. I know that it's great to sit back and
25 say, this is where the numbers are and this is where

we should go. But that is also the equivalent of me reading the job description of everyone that is sitting in this room and determining that I would be able to stand in your position and perform your task. I cannot do that by reading the do's and don'ts of your job description. I have to live in it. I have to work in it. I have to work my way up. I have to come into contact with your resources. And I also have to earn my place in my position and my role. The people that we have representing us are doing just that and they're trying to push our communities forward. I'm a mother of an 11-year-old who is actually over here asleep, and I'm here with my mother. And my mother was actually given the opportunity to take my daughter to Baton Rouge and she was able to be a senator for a day and meet the governor. I don't know that someone who does not live in my community and who does not come face-to-face with my people like Senator Katrina Jackson did, and allowed my daughter to be able to experience that opportunity. It is very important that our communities are not bypassed and lumped into numbers that make sense according to the perspective and the goal to be able to push certain outcomes that you're trying to reach. Keep the people and the lives that are affected by this all the way

1 down the chain, from the top of the economic
2 structure all the way down, from the top of the
3 legislative structure all the way down. Thank you.
4 SHARON HEWITT: Thank you. Our next speaker is
5 Oliver Billups, Jr. from Monroe.
6 OLIVER W. BILLUPS, JR.: Chairman Stefanski,
7 Chairwoman Hewitt, honored members of the committee.
8 Thank you for this signal honor and opportunity to
9 testify in this public hearing. I applaud your
10 efforts to hear from the people, which the
11 legislature represents. My Name is Oliver W. Billups,
12 Jr. I'm a citizen of Ouachita Parish, Louisiana, an
13 honorably discharged veteran of the United States
14 Army, a husband, father, grandfather, and 45-year
15 pastor of the Mount Olivet Baptist Church. I stand
16 before you this evening speaking on behalf of those
17 who have been marginalized, disenfranchised, and
18 intimidated. All of whom I have been, they're brother
19 in tribulation. I appreciate that you and others will
20 participate in the drawing of the lines of the
21 congressional districts of Louisiana, State House,
22 and Senate districts, the BESE Board districts, the
23 courts, and the Public Service Commission. For 37
24 years of my voting life, I was forced to vote for
25 candidates, many of whom had no interest in my life,

livelihood, or future, or in the welfare of the minorities of this state and country as a whole.

[03:05:02]

It is my concern that these present districts with minority representation remain and that others be added to represent majority-minority voting population. We recognize that these newly drawn districts will be in effect for the next 10 years and will impact public safety, neighborhood policing, education of our children, the health issues of our communities. We ask you to take advantage of these new opportunities, to create districts that will allow black citizen voters. The privilege to elect their candidates of choice so that the equitability of representation will become a reality. Let us not rescind positions already gained, but add more. How can a country so variegated in color, so variegated in culture and history have only one minority representative on the bench of the country's highest court? I conclude, a young man was asked the question, where is your brother. His reply was, am I my brother's keeper, knowing full well that he had ended his own brother's life. I pose this inquiry of you, our legislators of Louisiana, where is your brother. Will you reply the same as that young man,

1 am I my brother's keeper? Knowing full well that come
2 February 2022 that you have not seized the
3 opportunity to bring about union, justice and
4 equality for all of Louisiana's citizens For these
5 and those who have nursed and raised Louisiana and
6 America's children, for those who have taught them in
7 pre-K, kindergarten, elementary, middle school, high
8 school, our universities of this state and country,
9 who have coached them on the courts and football
10 fields, who have cared for them in medical
11 facilities, those who have grown and processed the
12 food that you enjoy at your tables, those who protect
13 you while you sleep. Those who defend this way of
14 life against powers both foreign and domestic. I pray
15 that the lines of the new congressional districts and
16 the BESE Board districts will not mimic those which
17 were before 2022, but will be new, different,
18 encompassing and liberating. I pray that you do not
19 deny those who have reached down your feels, those
20 who demand their place in time, those who demand
21 their wages, those who do their recognition, less
22 their cries enter into the ears of the lord of the
23 Sabbath. Thank you for your time.
24
25

SHARON HEWITT: Thank you sir, and thank you for your service. Our next speaker is Breshatta Davis from Monroe.

BRESHATTA DAVIS: Put it down a little bit. Good afternoon. My name is Breshatta Davis. I am a citizen here in Monroe, Louisiana. I am a fellow Southern University graduate in Southern University Law Center, probably won't be a lot here. I grew up in Monroe, Louisiana, born and raised, and I went down south to undergraduate school, as well as law school. Upon graduating, I was offered about five offers in South Louisiana, but I wanted to come back here to my community, to my roots. I was the first high school graduate in my family, the first college graduate, the first law school graduate. I'm born and raised on the south side of Louisiana, all of my life. I moved here on the scholarship, and I went on to law school, and I came back here and started my business.

[03:09:51]

I employ two students, a Grambling State University and the University of Louisiana, Monroe student, who have both been accepted into law school and will be leaving me soon. I work here, I pay taxes here. And when I think about the future and my future, as it compares to my classmates who are

1 millennials, who decided to stay in South Louisiana,
2 and unlike me who decided to come back to Monroe,
3 Louisiana, I think about my career, I think about the
4 way I vote and where I live. And for me, and facts
5 for purchasing a home, it makes me have to consider,
6 do I purchase a home in different neighborhoods or do
7 I go somewhere that I rather not be so that I can
8 have the opportunity to fairly represent my
9 community. Monroe is very different. We can say, we
10 are the same, but it's not the same. Living here is
11 not the same as it was in South Louisiana to me. It
12 has been a culture shock for me. It's completely
13 different. It's hard to say that you can represent
14 the same, in that you can create all the same
15 interests when we all are different. We are like
16 little different puzzles who fit together, but if we
17 can work together in these different pieces to come
18 together, we can create something wonderful. Nothing
19 needs to stay the same. We are behind. Baton Rouge,
20 New Orleans, they're further. So we have some make
21 changes here. We have to be more appealing to the
22 millennials. We have to want these resources here and
23 you have to give us a reason to want to be here. I
24 would like to see and have an opportunity to vote for
25 someone who can think like me, who can keep my

interest in place, and can understand leaving on both sides of the railroad, and can make decisions and consider everyone, because some of us are not just composed on one side of this town. We dwell, we walk in both sides of town, and it's very important that you have an understanding of what those day to-day lives are like, because it's not the same. The struggles are not the same. Your problems are not my problems. When there comes to solutions to those problems, you will not sink in the way that I would think, because what you consider and what you know in your background is completely different from mine. And that's fine. We can be different and we can all still work together. We are not asking that you take away; we are just asking for more. We are asking for opportunity. We are asking for a chance, because never in history has there ever been an opportunity to be a black congress, woman or man, in Monroe, Louisiana, and if there is not a change, it will never happen ever. So it makes me have to have a decision, do I stay here. Do I continue to pour my money into a community? Do I continue to provide jobs? Do I can continue to be a resource to a community where I have no opportunity. That's all I have. Thank you.

SHARON HEWITT: Yes ma'am. Thank you. All right, our next speaker, Vance A. Price, from Munroe.

VANCE ALEXANDER PRICE: Chairman Stefanski and other members of this committee. My name is Vance Alexander Price. I'm a divorced father of three sons. I'm a lifelong resident of Monroe, Louisiana, raised on Reed Street in the corner of Wilson Street in Nexon Quarters. I was introduced to politics through passing out push cards for then seeking election representative, Charles G. Jones, in his initial campaign for district 17. We need a minority-majority district, because of the challenges that we address in the needs of our community. I now reside in North Monroe, Louisiana, North Monroe side of town. However, my heart in the south is not just historical but it's also spiritual and professional. I serve as a senior pastor to New Saint James Baptist Church, where we serve over 75 meals each Saturday for seniors in our community who are often forced to choose between buying medicine or the food needed to take with the medicine. Unfortunately, the south side of Monroe is overwhelmed with food deserts. By definition, urban low-income community, where it's difficult to find and purchase affordable and good quality food. Because of these foods, there's this

obesity, high blood pressure, and hypertension, and diabetes among our children are plaguing our community. For the record, childhood obesity among our minority communities is at 25.6 among Hispanic children and 25.2% among African American children.

[03:15:02]

These are expensive food deserts. Our community is paying a high price for bad health. And now our community is struggling and striving just to stay afloat, where the prices are three times the cost of grocery in more affluent neighborhoods. We don't have any healthcare clinics, after care clinics, or surgical clinics, and it would be beneficial and more convenient for our senior citizens who don't have easily accessible transportation. Jesus, whom I serve under his employ, healed all the sick and the diseased. He also fed the hungry multitude. When advised his disciples to send the people into other districts for food, Jesus instructed the disciples to feed the multitude themselves. As a result of following Jesus' instructions, 12 bastards [INDISCERNIBLE 03:15:49] were also collected. Citizens of our minority communities should not have to be sent away just to find quality food or to have good health. That's why we're asking that when

1 drawing the legislative maps, please provide us with
2 maps that are minority-majority, allow us to elect
3 citizens that will serve and understand the interests
4 of our communities and would speak for the least, the
5 lowly, and the left out. Thank you for your time.
6 SHARON HEWITT: Sir, thank you. Our next speaker
7 Blend Fleming from Monroe. Mr. Fleming. I think we
8 wore him down. All right, we have two cards left,
9 Cheryl Geist from Monroe.
10 CHERYL GEIST: Good evening everyone. My name is
11 Cheryl Geist. I am currently a resident of the City
12 of Monroe. I resided in Tallulah Madison Parish most
13 of my life. I moved away maybe 12 years ago and I
14 come back in 2017. My father Reverend Daniel Geist,
15 he was a parish juror of Madison Parish for 20 plus
16 years. My concern tonight centers around the
17 redistricting. I know that I haven't lived there for
18 some time, because I've been back and forth, but I do
19 have family and friends there, and when you all
20 consider drawing lines, I ask that you consider those
21 who have been incarcerated, who come out, they're not
22 registered voters, those who are elderly, they're not
23 old enough to vote -- they're elderly and they're not
24 able to get out and vote. You have those who are
25 registered to vote, but they move away. They don't

1 change their location. Their address is still the
2 same. So it shows that they're still in a certain
3 district. It shows that they should be voting, but
4 they don't. They don't re-register wherever they do
5 relocate. I am a mother of two, a grandmother now of
6 one, and my son, he's 12 years old. He started school
7 this year really. So everything is new to us here.
8 I'm not trying to undermine anyone when I say what I
9 say, but God has a reason for bringing us together.
10 When you consider drawing the lines, we want someone
11 that's going to represent us, not just by color, but
12 as people as a whole. There are many people who don't
13 have the opportunity to speak. I'm not trying to
14 speak for them. But I know my voice covers a lot of
15 people. So in saying all of that, there are
16 neighborhoods, neighboring communities with Tallulah
17 that are prospering, but Tallulah is not. When I
18 left, it was in a condition that was unfair; when I
19 returned, it's still in a condition that's unfair.
20 Funding hasn't always been provided, and if it was
21 provided, it was withdrawn. The only thing I'm saying
22 is that give us opportunity. If we can elect the
23 official that we believe will represent us, we'll
24 support that official. But I'm not standing behind
25 anyone that make promises that they don't keep or

they carry them out for so long. And when the community follows them, then it falls through.

[03:19:58]

We want someone that can represent us as a state as a whole, that can go beyond just the state, that can go to other states and make improvements. So I'm asking you in everything that you consider, don't overlook the minor people, but know that we do have a voice and we do have concerns. And I want to say this also too. When my father was -- he was alive. He died in 2007. When he was alive, because he knew the law, we were educated. We didn't understand the terms and language of political, I'd just say, the political world, but because he broke things down to us, we were able to go to the polls and make a choice of our own. We weren't coerced, but we were able to choose on our own, but we had that opportunity. We don't want to be denied. We don't want to be overlooked. So I just pray that you would consider that, and I pray that even with each of us sitting here today that we consider the next individual that comes up and speak, because everybody deserves to be heard. Thank you.

SHARON HEWITT: Thank you Ms. Geist. Our next speaker is Frederica Jackson with the Young Democrats of Northern Louisiana.

FREDERICA JACKSON: My name is Frederica Jackson. I represent the Young Democrats of Northern Louisiana. I would like to be heard on the point that the district lines stay fair, that those in my age groups have fair decision and voting precincts as well. I ask that the consideration for those who may need assistance be taken into account when the district lines are redrawn. Adequate education for elementary should be the same regardless of what race may have dominance in their school district. Ouachita Parish is where my roots started and where they lie. I just want to ensure that someone that looks like me is represented fairly and diligently. Oftentimes, someone of my age group would not be in a setting as such as this. I found it important that I stand as a voice of my generation so that our hopes and desires be expressed in heard. Thank you.

SHARON HEWITT: Yes ma'am. Thank you. All right, we have one last card that was submitted with written comments on the back from Ms. Betty Ward Cooper, who is an elected official from the School Board Monroe City schools. And so she has extensive comments on two cards. Here, I'm just going to enter that into the record. I'm not going to read all of that.

BETTY WARD COOPER: I am present and I can speak.

SHARON HEWITT: Yes, ma'am, if you would like to speak, absolutely.

BETTY WARD COOPER: Greetings to all of you, especially this committee from our legislators. I really appreciate what you're doing here. As I read your materials, you talked about you're doing this because you're being accountable and transparent and that you want stakeholder input, and I love those words. And so I thank you for that. I try to stand for that same thing, myself and don't ask others to do something that I'm not willing to do myself. So I really appreciate those words, accountable, transparent, stakeholder input. In other words, you want to hear from us. You're making decisions about us, and we need to be at the table to provide input. And so I want you to know that I am Betty Ward Cooper. I was born in Franklin Parish, but I've been a resident of Monroe for 52 years. This city is the place where I worship where I got educated, where I worked in business and industry, and I worked as a school librarian, and a teacher in the Ouachita Parish School System, and for 35 years, as a faculty member in the College of Business and Social Sciences here at ULM, where I'm now also an elected official as you mention, serving on the Monroe City School

Board for district 5. We are working through redistricting maps right now. It's my first time going through this process. So far, it's going pretty good from what I can tell. Now because of the timeline, I do want to just make mention about three considerations briefly.

[03:25:00]

And look, they told me about two to four minutes, so I wrote it down to try to make sure I adhere to that. Here's one thing. The Fifth Congressional District needs to be changed, because it runs from the borders of Northeast Louisiana to as far south as within close proximity to New Orleans and Baton Rouge. And I've read some of the guidelines for drawing maps and this kind of configuration to me, from what I read, it just doesn't fit. The other consideration is there are six congressional districts in the state, which includes one minority district. That's only 17%. And the state has 36% black population. As some of the others have said, there should be another minority district. That would be 33%, which is close to the state's minority population. The other concern, I read about it today in the report from the US Census Bureau. That report was a data today. And the concern is an educational

1 concern. This report revealed this that the -- it
2 revealed a decline in school enrollment. That was a
3 big head knock. It went on to say that the US school
4 enrollment dropped by 2.9 million from 2019 to 2020,
5 with enrollment among the under 35 population dipping
6 to its lowest level, which is 52.4% of the total
7 population. So under 35 population dipping to the
8 lowest level in over 20 years. It went on to indicate
9 this and I'll make the point in a moment. The
10 percentage of kids ages three and four enrolled in
11 school fell from 54% in 2019 to 40% in 2020. That's
12 ages three and four. Enrollment in nursery schools
13 fell by 25%, and in kindergarten by 9%. So the last
14 point is regarding the college enrollment. And it
15 mentioned, it fell to the lowest level since 2007.
16 And most of that decline took place into your
17 colleges, which had their lowest level, really in 20
18 years. So in looking at this, it made me think about
19 this that few children, few children and young adults
20 are entering are educational institutions, and that
21 is alarming.
22 SHARON HEWITT: Yes ma'am. We need to kind of
23 wrap --
24 BETTY WARD COOPER: This affects everything and
25 should affect every decision you made. And so in

closing, I do want to salute you as I said for your efforts in being accountable, transparent and the stakeholder input, but we know in addition to accountable, transparent and stakeholder input, each one of us must have character. We must have fairness. We know not everyone will have courage to do what is right if you have to stand alone. Do what is fair and equitable if you have to stand alone. And so, will your redistricting effort and your work that you're doing honor our God and our fellow man.

[03:30:00]

And getting back to that, it was educational statistics I gave, there's a quote from Thomas Jefferson that says, "An educated citizenry is a vital requisite for our survival as free people." Thank you for listening.

SHARON HEWITT: Yes ma'am. Thank you. All right, I was handing one last card from Charles Jones with the Jones Law Group in Monroe.

CHARLES JONES: Good afternoon. It's good to be here again. I haven't testified before a legislative committee in a long time, and I haven't seen this many legislators quiet in a long time. I went to the legislature in 1980 and the House of Representatives. I was there for 12 years and then went to the Senate,

was there 16 years. I went through three cycles of redistricting in 1980, 1990, 2000, chaired the Senate Governmental Affairs Committee dealing with redistricting. I just want to say that, you know what to do. Legislators know what to do. You know that in a state that's one-third 1/3 African-American, you know where there are six congress persons. You know what one-third is. We don't need to go through this over and over and over and over again, but I remember the fights I had and the House in 1980. There were two African-Americans in the Senate. There were ten in the House, there were 12 African-Americans at the Capitol and the legislature. And when I left there were eight in the Senate and 25 in the House. It's because we did the right thing.

SHARON HEWITT: All right, thank you. Thank you very much sir. All right, you all have been very attentive. This has been a long hearing. I appreciate your attention and your input very much. To my colleagues in the Senate and the House, thank you for your commitment to this process. Safe travels home everyone. Motion by Chairman Stefanski to adjourn, meeting adjourned.

TRANSPERFECT

I, Anders Nelson, hereby certify that the document "F844315-louisiana-redistricting-2021-monroe" is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, a true and accurate transcription from English to English.

Anders Nelson
Project Manager

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