

EXHIBIT NO.

CAUSE NO.

WITNESS

CLERK:

SHONE POWELL

FEB 26 2024

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF MISSISSIPPICondie Cline, REPORTER

STANDING JOINT CONGRESSIONAL REDISTRICTING COMMITTEE
Public Hearing on 08/08/2021

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TRANSCRIPT OF AUDIO-RECORDED
PUBLIC HEARING OF THE
STANDING JOINT CONGRESSIONAL REDISTRICTING COMMITTEE
AUGUST 8, 2021
GULFPORT, MISSISSIPPI

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STANDING JOINT CONGRESSIONAL REDISTRICTING COMMITTEE
Public Hearing on 08/08/2021

Page 2

1 MR. BECKETT: I want to, uh, welcome all of you
2 here tonight. Uh, we're scheduled to begin at 6:00
3 o'clock and not only -- uh, just -- just a reminder
4 that we have [inaudible] here who al- -- also have
5 others that are watching, uh, online.

6 So occasionally I may say something or have to
7 repeat something or something, just -- just remember
8 that you -- you know, you guys have a handout or
9 something, those that are watching wouldn't have
10 access to that information.

11 So addresses and things like that we're going to
12 mention. Again, I want to just -- just say one note
13 of, you know, the Joint Committee holds these public
14 hearings to receive suggestions and recommendations on
15 how this new legislature should redistrict itself and
16 its four Congressional districts.

17 During the course of this hearing, um, the chair
18 will offer members of the public an opportunity to --
19 to give comments to the committee or give, uh,
20 statements to the committee about our upcoming
21 redistricting efforts. I'm going to just say that
22 we're not here to answer questions. We're -- we're --
23 we -- we're not here to debate anything. We're here --
24 this is a public forum where [inaudible].

25 We're here to hear what you all have to say,

STANDING JOINT CONGRESSIONAL REDISTRICTING COMMITTEE
Public Hearing on 08/08/2021

Page 3

1 comments and ques- -- comments and suggestions that
2 you might have. This is just the beginning of the
3 process. And so that's what this is designed to do. By
4 custom, we try to give members of the public a free
5 opportunity to say what they wish.

6 In cases where it appears that there are going to
7 be many persons who want to speak, we limit their time
8 and I can just tell you that I've already had a lot of
9 requests, uh, they're mostly [inaudible], but I do set
10 [inaudible] the other people that are here and that's
11 -- that's [inaudible] limit our time, um, you know, as
12 to, uh, what it is we impose, uh, and share our -- our
13 [inaudible] how many persons, uh, that want to speak.

14 And so, uh, I just -- I just want to kind of set
15 that out before we start and -- and at -- at this
16 time, as chair, I -- I -- I -- I do call the public
17 hearing for the Joint Reinforcement Committee, Joint
18 Congressional Redistricting Committee to order and I
19 ask our counsel to call the role of the members
20 present.

21 COUNSEL: Mr. Beckett.

22 MR. BECKETT: Here.

23 COUNSEL: Mr. Blackmon. Mr. Brown. Mr. Eubanks.
24 Mr. Ford. Mr. Mangold.

25 MR. MANGOLD: Here.

STANDING JOINT CONGRESSIONAL REDISTRICTING COMMITTEE
Public Hearing on 08/08/2021

Page 4

1 COUNSEL: Mr. Read.
2 MR. READ: Here.
3 COUNSEL: Mr. Shanks. Mr. Taylor. Mr. White. Mr.
4 Kirby.
5 MR. KIRBY: Here.
6 COUNSEL: Mr. Bryan. Mr. DeBar. Mr. Hawkins. Mr.
7 Hopson. Mr. Parker. Mr. Simmons. Mr. Tate.
8 MR. TATE: Here.
9 COUNSEL: Ms. Turner-Ford.
10 MS. TURNER-FORD: Here.
11 COUNSEL: Mr. Wiggins.
12 MR. WIGGINS: Here. Here.
13 MR. BECKETT: All right. Thank you. Uh, just want
14 to remind -- remind you that, uh, you know, we do not
15 have to have a forum in order to take -- take
16 testimony. Uh, the roll is called for the purposes of
17 documenting who is here.
18 Uh, we have, uh, [inaudible] here and I will say,
19 uh, our members are from all over the state and all
20 the different Congressional districts, as a majority
21 of them choose to go to hearings that are close --
22 closer to them. So someone from Southaven might --
23 might choose not to drive down here today. Uh, we have
24 many members of this committee and -- and other
25 members that are -- that are watching this online.

STANDING JOINT CONGRESSIONAL REDISTRICTING COMMITTEE
Public Hearing on 08/08/2021

Page 5

1 So -- and we're -- we're here to take co- -- you
2 all's comments. And so the -- they're -- they're
3 hearing those comments whether they're here or not.
4 Uh, you know, uh, I want to, uh, thank our staff, I
5 want to thank the community college for -- for
6 providing this opportunity for us to be here and thank
7 the members of this committee and -- and the other
8 members of the legislature here.

9 But, uh, at this time, I would like to -- I don't
10 think we have any member of the committee that's come
11 in, we called the roll, but if there any other members
12 of the legislature would like to identify themselves,
13 it is really hard to see up here with these lights.

14 So, uh, I will give you an opportunity now if you
15 wanted to introduce yourself.

16 MR. THOMPSON: My name is Mike Thompson. I'm a
17 senator for Senate District 48, which is parts of
18 Gulfport, Long Beach and Pass Christian.

19 MR. DELANO: Scott DeLano, Senate District 50,
20 uh, Harrison County.

21 MS. WILLIAMS-BARNES: Sonya Williams-Barnes,
22 House District 102.

23 MR. PAYNE: Ray Payne [ph], East Gulfport, north
24 and south of [inaudible].

25 MR. BECKETT: All right. Is there anyone else?

STANDING JOINT CONGRESSIONAL REDISTRICTING COMMITTEE
Public Hearing on 08/08/2021

Page 6

1 All right. I thank you all for that. Uh, do I have, um
2 -- I don't -- is there -- I don't think there are --
3 is -- our host is here tonight.

4 So, uh, we will just, uh, go forward wi- -- wi- -
5 - and -- with our meeting and just as we get started,
6 there are a couple things I want to -- want to cover
7 before we start and, you know, our -- our staff has
8 graciously gone through the transcript of the meetings
9 that were held in 2010 and the meetings that were held
10 earlier -- that have been held earlier this year.

11 This is our setup of the night [inaudible] how
12 and they have given a few of the comments and
13 questions that have been asked [inaudible] just some
14 information that might be useful to the public. And so
15 -- that covered those things and I want to cover a few
16 of those -- those things right now before we get to
17 the -- to the question and answering part -- I mean,
18 before we get to the comment part, excuse me.

19 Uh, and [inaudible] just a real basic thing, you
20 know, why -- why are we redistricting? I've had a lot
21 of people [inaudible] ask why -- why -- why are you
22 redistricting? And so, you know, I need to point out
23 that both the federal Constitution requires a one
24 person one vote, requires us to redistrict both the
25 Congressional districts and the Legislative districts

STANDING JOINT CONGRESSIONAL REDISTRICTING COMMITTEE
Public Hearing on 08/08/2021

Page 7

1 every 10 years following the Census.

2 And additionally, Section 254 of our Constitution
3 of 1890 requires that we redistrict the legislature.
4 So we're doing this redistricting because it's
5 required by law to do that. Um, you know, and my -- my
6 -- when will, um -- when we -- when will we commence
7 redistricting?

8 And actually, that -- that actually commenced
9 with the taking of the Census, but [inaudible] had an
10 organizational meeting around the 1st of July and like
11 I said, this is the seventh in a series of nine public
12 hearings. We're on a [inaudible] redistricting
13 process. We're just -- just taking public comm- --
14 comments about -- about the redistricting, but it's --
15 it's -- so it's important to let the -- the public
16 know this.

17 And because of the qualifying deadlines, uh, next
18 year, our efforts in the Congressional redistricting
19 will come -- will come first and will -- uh, and will
20 occur during the fall of this year. Uh, we will be
21 working on the Legislature during the months of the
22 2022 Legislative session. The -- the -- the
23 Congressional re- -- qualifying time starts January,
24 2022.

25 So we -- because of that deadline, we will need

STANDING JOINT CONGRESSIONAL REDISTRICTING COMMITTEE
Public Hearing on 08/08/2021

Page 8

1 to do theirs first and then we hopefully will do ours
2 dur- -- during the session. Uh, you know, and because
3 of population shifts, we're going to face challenges.

4 Uh, you know, uh, as you noticed, there are maps,
5 uh, around this -- around the room and -- and as you
6 come in, go out, that [inaudible] Congressional -- the
7 Mississippi House and Mississippi Senate, uh, is --

8 That's the current population [inaudible] that --
9 on -- on this Census. We began this process with
10 estimates, but -- but this is the actual numbers with
11 -- with [inaudible] that we have until, uh, September
12 30th that -- that could be modified [inaudible] that -
13 - that at least these numbers -- there's a 99.9
14 percent chance these are the actual final -- final
15 numbers with -- there might be a few modifications.

16 Um, but it show- -- it shows the counties and
17 districts that gained and lost population and, uh, as
18 -- as you can see, there are parts of the state that
19 had major gains in population. There are parts of the
20 state that had major losses in population and there's
21 a large portion of the state that goes -- there was
22 some change but not a dramatic change.

23 That does not mean that those districts will not
24 move around, because, uh, even though we might have,
25 within 6,000 people, the same number of people at the

STANDING JOINT CONGRESSIONAL REDISTRICTING COMMITTEE
Public Hearing on 08/08/2021

Page 9

1 state that we had 10 years ago, the population moved
2 [inaudible]. So the -- the lines will -- the lines
3 will change. Uh, and in pointing out that there are
4 years of gain, years of loss, both -- both ends of the
5 spectrum cause -- cause problems in drawing districts.

6 Uh, there are difficulties in drawing districts
7 where you had a loss -- loss of population, but there
8 are also difficulties in areas where you gain
9 population. Of all the hearings we've had, this is
10 probably the one where basically the entire area
11 gained population. You've got, uh, [inaudible] County
12 was pretty much level, but the other five counties in
13 this general area gained population.

14 With Harrison County, obviously, gaining more
15 people and percentage-wise than the others gained and,
16 uh -- but -- but that's just -- you know, that's just
17 what -- what has happened and we -- at the same time,
18 you -- you all have others.

19 Uh, the, uh -- and like I said, the [inaudible]
20 we offer will tell you, uh, that the i- -- the ideal
21 size of the House district is somewhere around 24,000
22 and something people, the -- and the ideal size for a
23 Senate district is around 56,000 and change and it
24 allows for a 5 percent deviation. So districts can be
25 a little larger [inaudible] than that ideal number.

STANDING JOINT CONGRESSIONAL REDISTRICTING COMMITTEE
Public Hearing on 08/08/2021

Page 10

1 Uh, that's in the Mississippi Legislative
2 districts and in Congressional districts, I want you
3 to understand that there's basically a zero tolerance.
4 Uh, so all four of our Congressional districts will
5 need to be the same [inaudible]. They might be up or
6 down one, because it has to be -- to be -- it just may
7 not be a -- it may be a high number, that may have a
8 little --

9 Basically, those districts will be identical and
10 that -- that's -- they don't have the same powers of -
11 - for -- for -- for different changes that we have in
12 Mississippi. So, uh, you know, uh -- you know, we are
13 -- like I said, these -- these numbers were
14 [inaudible] presenting, these numbers started out the
15 first four hearings maybe had estimates and -- no,
16 plus five and this is the second time we've -- we've
17 had actual population data.

18 Uh, but the estimates were -- for these purposes,
19 were basically just as useful, because you're just
20 trying to show what -- whether your part of the state
21 grew, whether your part of the state lost population.
22 And so you can anticipate, uh, whether you might have
23 a little more representation, you might have a little
24 less representation or you might have basically around
25 the same representation that you had.

STANDING JOINT CONGRESSIONAL REDISTRICTING COMMITTEE
Public Hearing on 08/08/2021

Page 11

1 Uh, you know, [inaudible] a public, uh -- uh, you
2 know, won't [inaudible] participate in this process.
3 You know, there are several ways you can participate
4 in this process. One is by coming to this -- this
5 meeting and expressing your -- your concerns at the
6 hearing. You know, we're here to hear -- hear your
7 concerns this evening.

8 We will listen to any matters that you wish to
9 bring to our attention about how and where we will
10 draw Congressional and Legislative districts. You
11 know, you -- you can, uh -- the public needs to know
12 that, uh -- you know, that -- that -- that we're asked
13 to sign a card. If, uh, for some reason that you want
14 to speak and you haven't signed a card, the staff --
15 this [inaudible] staff will be -- will be glad to get
16 you a card and that is for sole purposes so I will
17 know who to call on.

18 I'm going to call on individuals in the order
19 that I was given the cards. And so that's -- that's --
20 that's what that's for. Uh, you can also -- you can
21 submit your suggestions to the committee in writing or
22 by email, uh, and you can take advantage of the
23 opportunity to use the -- use the meeting's public
24 access computer terminals.

25 There will be a period of time for Congressional

STANDING JOINT CONGRESSIONAL REDISTRICTING COMMITTEE
Public Hearing on 08/08/2021

Page 12

1 and a period of time for Legis- -- uh, Legislative,
2 uh, redistricting that you can use the public access
3 terminals -- terminals. So in, uh -- in -- what kind
4 of concerns does the committee need to hear the
5 public? We want to hear the concerns that you have.

6 Uh, doesn't matter that primarily it's going to
7 be something we've heard maybe five or six times
8 already at the other hearings, you may have the same
9 concern that so many people have had, doesn't matter.
10 We -- we're here to -- to -- to hear -- hear your
11 concerns.

12 This is an example of some things that -- that we
13 hear on a normal ba- -- normal basis is the Voting
14 Rights Act concerns, uh, splitting the pre- --
15 concerns about splitting the precincts, concerns about
16 splitting of municipalities, uh -- um, districts, uh,
17 that are odd- -- odd-shaped.

18 Uh, in short, uh, we've heard most of the things
19 that -- that you're going to think about as being
20 concerned that it's something that has come to your
21 mind as something we've already heard, but that
22 [inaudible], you have the right to state those
23 concerns.

24 Uh, just to remind you of the rules of the House,
25 uh, [inaudible] committees and, uh, [inaudible], those

STANDING JOINT CONGRESSIONAL REDISTRICTING COMMITTEE
Public Hearing on 08/08/2021

Page 13

1 rules and -- and we'll -- we'll follow the rules of
2 the House as -- and -- and we'll handle the way the
3 House would handle them.

4 Uh, I can tell that we're already going to have a
5 lot of people that want to speak. And so just as -- as
6 -- as a reminder, as a courtesy of everyone, we're
7 going to limit that to five minutes and, uh, that's
8 been pretty customary as -- as what's been done and
9 that -- that has not been an issue for any -- from
10 anyone that's wanted to speak, uh -- uh, you need to
11 [inaudible].

12 Uh, and how can members of the public contact the
13 committee to provide information or book time on the
14 public access computers? Uh, and, uh, members of the
15 public should be advised to send a written mail
16 request to Ted Booth, staff counsel Joint
17 Reapportionment Committee, P.O. Box 1204, Jackson,
18 Mississippi 39215-1204 or you can send your email to
19 ted.booth@peer, that's p-e-e-r.ms.gov.

20 Uh, please provide staff, uh, your email address
21 and telephone numbers so that they can follow up. Uh,
22 if you asked them a question and you don't provide
23 them something to follow up, then they're not going to
24 be able to send you, uh, a reply to that.

25 So please do that. And a public access to

STANDING JOINT CONGRESSIONAL REDISTRICTING COMMITTEE
Public Hearing on 08/08/2021

Page 14

1 Congressional redistricting will commence following
2 delivery of our final PL 94-171 data, uh, you know,
3 which should arrive at the close of September.

4 We're supposed to give it September 30th. So
5 that, uh -- the, uh -- the public access will -- will
6 last three weeks, starts September 1st. You know, for
7 Legislature, it's going to -- it will occur after
8 January 1, 2022 and last three weeks. Um, so is there
9 any other member that would like to say anything
10 unless, uh -- [inaudible]. Thank you for your arrival.
11 Um, is there anyone who would like [inaudible] say?

12 All right. All right. Well, thank you very much.
13 Um, at this time, we're going -- going to begin with
14 the, uh -- with the taking of, uh, any comments or
15 questions that -- that the public has. I'm going to
16 take them in the order that -- that they were given to
17 me. And, uh, so the first one is Mr. Crowell.

18 And you all, I apologize if I mispronounce
19 someone's name, but I'm going to do the best I can.

20 MR. CROWELL: Good evening.

21 MEMBERS: Good evening.

22 MR. CROWELL: My name is James Crowell. I'm
23 president of the Biloxi Branch NAACP and I have a -- a
24 few comments I want to make very quickly and this is
25 from our Mississippi Joint Legislative Redistricting

STANDING JOINT CONGRESSIONAL REDISTRICTING COMMITTEE
Public Hearing on 08/08/2021

Page 15

1 Committee, uh, and this is [inaudible] NAACP
2 [inaudible] in the Biloxi Branch.

3 Redistricting, uh, is one of the most critical
4 aspects of our democracy. It -- the [inaudible] of our
5 power as voters to elect public officials that will
6 represent the interest of our community. Therefore, it
7 is important that the state of Mississippi engage in
8 the redistricting process that is fair and
9 transparent.

10 The [inaudible] in Biloxi know all too -- too, uh
11 -- too well how the unfair redistricting process
12 contributes to voter suppression. If we are to honor
13 the fundamental rights to participate in the political
14 process, the district must be [inaudible] in
15 accordance to Se- -- Section 2 of the Voters Rights
16 [sic] -- Voting Rights Act of 1965.

17 This section outlaws the development of a map
18 that discriminates on the basis of race. That means
19 [inaudible] not be racially [inaudible]. We are asking
20 that this community to comply with federal laws and to
21 provide community stakeholders with regular updates
22 about the redistricting process. Thank you. [applause]

23 MR. BECKETT: Thank you. Uh, Mr. James.

24 MR. JAMES: Good evening, chairmen, [inaudible]
25 and members of the committee [inaudible]. I thank you

STANDING JOINT CONGRESSIONAL REDISTRICTING COMMITTEE
Public Hearing on 08/08/2021

Page 16

1 for the opportunity to speak at this important
2 hearing.

3 My name is Reverend Dr. Robert James. I'm a
4 lifelong citizen of Stone County, physical address 123
5 [inaudible] Road, [inaudible] City, which is in the
6 Congressional District number 4, Senate District
7 number 47, House District number 93.

8 I'm also the president of the Mississippi State
9 Conference of NAACP. I stand before you to speak on
10 this current redistricting process and why this should
11 be fair and transparent. It is our desire that this
12 committee [inaudible] and not discriminate against any
13 already disfranchised Mississippi communities.

14 Officially, the racial composition of this
15 committee of having only five African Americans with
16 one female does not adequately reflect racial and
17 general population of the state. Given the lack of
18 diversity of this committee we hope these hearings
19 will enable the [inaudible] the concerns of all of
20 [inaudible] to be the [inaudible] and rejoin the hope
21 -- rejoin the hope of the district.

22 We know that the way lines are drawn affect
23 everyone of the issue in our community from
24 healthcare, public education, the economy and the
25 criminal justice system. When politicians [inaudible]

STANDING JOINT CONGRESSIONAL REDISTRICTING COMMITTEE
Public Hearing on 08/08/2021

Page 17

1 the maps for personal and political gain, it affects
2 everyone from having a [inaudible].

3 In Mississippi, counties who have significant
4 communities of [inaudible] pose a risk for being shut
5 out of the political process.

6 In the past, Mississippi has been a home to
7 several lawsuits alleging in racial voter dilution
8 just as recently as 2018 where 3 African American
9 votes, as American voters, from Senate District 22,
10 filed a federal lawsuit challenging the district on
11 the [inaudible] of the Voting Rights Act.

12 The district diluted the votes of the African
13 Americans to prevent them from electing a candidate of
14 their choice. On February 13, 2019, the court
15 concluded that District 22 violated Section 2 and the
16 Legislature then [inaudible]. We do not want a repeat
17 of an unfair map [inaudible]. Voting dilution
18 prohibits the community of [inaudible] to come
19 [inaudible] advocate on important issues.

20 Moreover, when we know that whoever is elected in
21 the poorly [inaudible] drawn map district will not be
22 permitted to listen to the people concerned. Thank you
23 for the opportunity to speak before you tonight.

24 MR. BECKETT: Thank you. [applause] Next is Ms.
25 Christene Brice.

STANDING JOINT CONGRESSIONAL REDISTRICTING COMMITTEE
Public Hearing on 08/08/2021

Page 18

1 MS. BRICE: Good evening.

2 MEMBERS: Good evening.

3 MS. BRICE: Mr. Chairman and committee members,
4 my name is Christene Brice, Harrison County Election
5 Commissioner for District 4. I would like to know are
6 you using total population, [inaudible] population,
7 citizen [inaudible] population or something else as
8 your base population metric?

9 Also, [inaudible] -- [inaudible] be treated as
10 [inaudible] where they [inaudible] or is suited from
11 the commission? Thank you very much, [inaudible].

12

13 MR. BECKETT: Ms. Brice, uh, no, uh, we're not --
14 we don't answer questions at the hearing, but, uh, you
15 were kind enough to provide [inaudible].

16 MS. BRICE: Yes.

17 MR. BECKETT: And, uh -- and it's my
18 understanding that, uh, it's customary that it's been
19 done as the incarcerated voters will be counted when
20 they're incarcerated. And so it's -- it's one of the
21 [inaudible]. That's -- that would be for anyone that
22 is -- so that's -- that [inaudible] incarcerated. And
23 as far as the population, it's -- it's based on total
24 population.

25 Now, uh, obviously, through all the different

STANDING JOINT CONGRESSIONAL REDISTRICTING COMMITTEE
Public Hearing on 08/08/2021

Page 19

1 tests that you have to do, you will -- you will
2 consider, uh, the black [inaudible] population
3 [inaudible] use of, uh, total population is what the
4 district size is based on.

5 MS. BRICE: Thank you very much, sir.

6 MR. BECKETT: Ms. Wheeler.

7 MS. WHEELER: Good evening, Mr. Chairman, other
8 members of the committee. Thank you all for being here
9 tonight. Brice and John, it's good to see you both. My
10 name is Christy Wheeler. I am co-president of the
11 League of Women Voters of Mississippi. I live in
12 [inaudible] and I am a registered voter.

13 The League and I, and our supporters here
14 tonight, want fair maps. We want transparency in the
15 redistricting process and we want you to know that we
16 will be paying attention to your process and we will
17 hold you accountable. We know about our state
18 Constitution and Legislative districts must be
19 contiguous. We do not believe a [inaudible] land with
20 no dwellings in District 111 meets this criteria and
21 we do not want to see anything similar on the new maps
22 that you draw.

23 We know our state statute that communicates an
24 interest and jurisdictional boundaries should be
25 broken as little as possible. This is not the case for

STANDING JOINT CONGRESSIONAL REDISTRICTING COMMITTEE
Public Hearing on 08/08/2021

Page 20

1 many municipalities and communities on the Gulf Coast
2 today. We want to see that change. We demand that you
3 engage in -- that you do not engage in [inaudible],
4 political, racial or economic income.

5 We would like to protect and expand the number of
6 majority and minority districts. We appreciate
7 opportunity to speak at this hearing but expect more.
8 We would like for the entire redistricting process to
9 be made public. We would like to have influence into
10 your process. We would like to see the criteria you've
11 used for drawing districts before you actually draw
12 any maps.

13 We would like to have input into your proposed
14 maps before you vote on them. We want to be involved.
15 Again, we want fair maps, transparency and we will be
16 watching. We appreciate the Joint Committees allowing
17 us to participate tonight and look forward to more
18 public hearings and public participation as you
19 navigate the redistricting process.

20 I want to thank everyone who is here tonight or
21 streaming this hearing. Our voices matter. [applause]

22 MR. BECKETT: Thank you. Ms. Perryman.

23 MS. PERRYMAN: Good evening. My name is Allytra
24 Perryman. I'm a citizen of Biloxi, Mississippi and I'm
25 representing the East Biloxi Community Collaborative.

STANDING JOINT CONGRESSIONAL REDISTRICTING COMMITTEE
Public Hearing on 08/08/2021

Page 21

1 So Harrison County's population grew by 21,516 between
2 2010 and 2020, which is enough that [inaudible]
3 requires state Legislature to draw at least 1 new
4 House district within the county.

5 Eight-nine percent of that growth came from
6 people of color. The county is now 40 percent non-
7 white and yet only [inaudible] county's [inaudible]
8 House districts are majority people of color. Because
9 of this, it seems necessary that the Harr- -- that
10 Harrison County add a majority and minority district,
11 specifically a majority African American district.

12 African Americans make up 27 percent of the
13 county with a population of 56,407, which is the
14 equivalent of 2.32 House districts. So we are
15 requesting that African Americans receive a
16 minority/majority district in Harrison County. Thank
17 you. [applause]

18 MR. BECKETT: Thank you. Mr. Holmes [ph] --
19 Holmes, excuse me.

20 MR. HOLMES: Good afternoon, everyone. And I move
21 for [inaudible]. My name is [inaudible] United States
22 Army and I'm represented by the [inaudible] whose, uh,
23 House Representative of District 19. I've been in Iraq
24 for three tours, I've been in Afghanistan for two
25 tours and we have [inaudible].

STANDING JOINT CONGRESSIONAL REDISTRICTING COMMITTEE
Public Hearing on 08/08/2021

Page 22

1 I'm just asking you to quit drawing lines
2 [inaudible] to city, you know, and [inaudible] to
3 please [inaudible]. With the -- with the unequal
4 representation in the drawings of [inaudible] in the
5 matter of events of African American [inaudible] in
6 Harrison County, how do you plan to enforce the
7 dynamics of the 1965 Voter's Act?

8 I just want you to think about that. Also, will
9 this meeting ensure [inaudible] one person and one
10 [inaudible] through this redistricting process?
11 Because we will do it for Iraq and Afghanistan who
12 [inaudible] for our citizens, all people -- all the
13 citizens in the state of Mississippi that have
14 [inaudible]. Thank you. [applause]

15 MR. BECKETT: Ms. Piper [ph].

16 MS. PIPER: Good evening, Mr. Chairman and
17 committee members. My name is Stephanie [ph] Piper.
18 I'm a homeowner in the House District 117 and Senate
19 District 50 in Harrison County. I'm a registered voter
20 and [inaudible]. And with that being said, as a person
21 of color, I am [inaudible] people of color.

22 Harrison County has a 40 percent black --
23 [inaudible]. This is a represent- -- misrepresentation
24 of me. Do you know that you are still seen as a direct
25 misrepresentation of myself even though I see a woman

STANDING JOINT CONGRESSIONAL REDISTRICTING COMMITTEE
Public Hearing on 08/08/2021

Page 23

1 that looks like me. The [inaudible] senators
2 [inaudible]. Is it the committee's intent to draw
3 lines that are fair and representing the state
4 demographics or will the lines be discriminatory and
5 [inaudible] underrepresented?

6 How does this committee plan to and will this
7 committee deliberately draw the lines to portray an
8 accurate depiction to represent the growth of the
9 African Americans in the state? Ultimately, I request
10 that you prohibit partisan [inaudible] minority in an
11 effort to suppress our voices and votes.

12 [inaudible] communities of color [inaudible].
13 Will the lines be, um, presented before they're voted
14 on in Jackson? And if so, when will they happen? Will
15 there be transparency? [inaudible] seems to be
16 representing the Gulf of Mexico. I'm not sure if there
17 are any mermaids out there [inaudible], but will the
18 mermaids [inaudible] or will you draw the lines to
19 exclude them in the next redistricting? Thank you.

20 [applause]

21 MR. BECKETT: Thank you. Mr. Sakes [ph].

22 MR. ELLERBY: Senator [inaudible] Ron Sakes,
23 former colleague of Paul Brian [ph] -- Senator Brian.
24 My name is Mitch Ellerby. I'm a former state
25 representative from [inaudible]. Jeramey Anderson is

STANDING JOINT CONGRESSIONAL REDISTRICTING COMMITTEE
Public Hearing on 08/08/2021

Page 24

1 my predecessor now. As a Vietnam veteran and a former
2 of this state -- and a former House [inaudible], I'm
3 very, very concerned about the direction that this
4 city is heading.

5 I -- I speak for the House, the lieutenant
6 governor, to reconsider the makeup of what we are
7 doing and I'm asking you to come back to this
8 community and bring us updated information before you
9 vote on it. Give us an opportunity to give you more
10 input, those of us who fought -- had fought in wars,
11 we are very concerned.

12 We don't need [inaudible], because we move from
13 face to face, from force to force. Is this really
14 taking into consideration veterans of [inaudible] into
15 the city? It's very important for the freedom that we
16 so enjoy. So I ask you deep down in your soul, as you
17 have sat in the seat of this awesome, beautiful state,
18 governing us, [inaudible] drawing these lines,
19 searching [inaudible] to do what's right, the way that
20 you were taught by the [inaudible] talk at home.

21 Put things aside and let's move forward. So I ask
22 that you please return, bring us some information on
23 what your plans to do to make sure they coincide with
24 our plans so that we all can live in the prosperity in
25 this state so we can continue to grow. Thank you.

STANDING JOINT CONGRESSIONAL REDISTRICTING COMMITTEE
Public Hearing on 08/03/2021

Page 25

1 [applause]

2 MR. BECKETT: Thank you. Ms. Vanwright [ph].

3 MS. VANWRIGHT: Mr. Chairman, committee members,
4 um, my name is Chantrell Vanwright and I'm a concerned
5 citizen, registered voter here in the state of
6 Mississippi, the city -- the county of Harrison, the
7 city of Gulfport and the community of Turkey Creek.

8 Um, there are a number -- my concerns are there
9 are a number of split precincts locally here in
10 Harrison County -- [inaudible] split precincts who use
11 the voters and they have created an unnecessary hassle
12 for [inaudible] records. Will there be a concerted
13 effort to reduce the [inaudible] split precincts to
14 create a more efficient elected -- election system
15 that [inaudible] the confusion and keeps our
16 communities together?

17 And also, will there be more opportunities like
18 this for public input before the district maps are
19 finalized? Those are my concerns. [applause]

20 MR. BECKETT: Thank you. I didn't want to do
21 this, but I -- I want to res- -- just give a very nice
22 [inaudible] on split precincts, because that's a
23 concern that's been expressed in multiple locations
24 and this committee will not be splitting anymore
25 precincts and absolutely has to be done, but I want to

STANDING JOINT CONGRESSIONAL REDISTRICTING COMMITTEE
Public Hearing on 08/08/2021

Page 26

1 say that that was done 10 years ago also, but mostly
2 [inaudible] the districts.

3 Then the counties are going to move the precinct
4 lines in some cases. So a district that was -- a
5 precinct that was not split when we drew our districts
6 may end up being split, because a county has to move
7 those lines. They're not -- they don't have the same
8 requirements as when they were -- when those
9 [inaudible] we did it.

10 So there may be some split precincts, but we're
11 going to limit them as much as possible. Uh, Mr.
12 Pierce [ph].

13 MR. PIERCE: Good evening. Uh, Ryan Pierce. Uh, I
14 live in Gulfport. My representative is, uh,
15 [inaudible] in the district. She represents me quite
16 frequently. She does it well. [laughter] My main
17 concern is, uh, the [inaudible]. Um, my understanding
18 is you have created [inaudible].

19 Um, I [inaudible] in 2008 and, uh, I feel I was
20 picked [inaudible], because in 2010, I was going from
21 one district to another district, which in my opinion,
22 [inaudible]. So my concern is that you just be fair
23 and I hope that, uh, those who do this [inaudible]
24 follow your guides and, uh -- and do it fair and
25 equitable so we can have fair elections. Thank you.

STANDING JOINT CONGRESSIONAL REDISTRICTING COMMITTEE
Public Hearing on 08/08/2021

Page 27

1 [applause]

2 MR. BECKETT: Thank you. Mr. Daniels [ph].

3 MR. DANIELS: Good evening, Chair, committee
4 members. My name is Rick [ph] Daniels. My family came
5 here in 1876 [inaudible] as set forth. My great-great-
6 grandfather was Thomas [inaudible]. He was [inaudible]
7 troops and he -- he mustered out the unit forces in
8 Memphis. That boy had [inaudible].

9 At that time, he was [inaudible]. That was during
10 the time the Mississippi [inaudible] something called
11 the Mississippi Plan. That plan was designed to
12 disenfranchised people like my grandfather. By the
13 1880 Census, he was no longer [inaudible] primarily
14 because of things like, uh, the -- the grandfather
15 clause and other devices that was used at that time.

16 And I want you to know last November your same
17 body did something that really made the world watch,
18 they got rid of [inaudible]. You brought forth the
19 initiative to rid ourselves of that [inaudible] that
20 represented the disenfranchisement of my grandfather
21 and you did it under the guise of that [inaudible]
22 people.

23 You're looking at probably the younger person in
24 this room that took down [inaudible], because I'm a
25 descendent of men who [inaudible] freedom and unity in

STANDING JOINT CONGRESSIONAL REDISTRICTING COMMITTEE
Public Hearing on 08/08/2021

Page 28

1 this country. That I congratulate -- I congratulate
2 you for coming up with that initiative and putting
3 Mississippi on the map and showing me, without a
4 shadow of doubt, that we would be [inaudible] and
5 disenfranchised.

6 Now, [inaudible] that that [inaudible] -- that
7 battle flag represented in [inaudible] lifted
8 [inaudible]. Surely you must understand that the
9 African Americans are 44 percent of this population
10 and 80 percent of [inaudible] are black, that that too
11 must be undeniably unfaithful to the [inaudible].

12 There's no way you can [inaudible] that simple
13 and somehow it'll come out of the 2020 Census and not
14 redistrict your state such that it represents the
15 people of Mississippi and not represent that
16 [inaudible] that happened after 1875. That resulted in
17 the 1894 flag change, flag [inaudible] being arrested
18 [inaudible].

19 But I -- I assure you for the rest of the world
20 that says Mississippi gets it. So if we are 44 percent
21 and if it [inaudible] the same service [inaudible]
22 influence and the number of African American
23 population, it will be [inaudible]. I dare say it
24 would be then some an embarrassment that we
25 [inaudible] Mississippians and to the rest of America,

STANDING JOINT CONGRESSIONAL REDISTRICTING COMMITTEE
Public Hearing on 08/08/2021

Page 29

1 for us to be represented [inaudible] underrepresented.

2 So I only ask that you keep that in mind as we
3 are moving forward [inaudible] and in be inclusive and
4 demonstrate that yeah, it wasn't just [inaudible], we
5 have in fact changed to be inclusive. The world's
6 watching. [applause]

7 MR. BECKETT: Ms. Sparks [ph]. Ms. Sparks.

8 MALE 1: Mr. Chairman, can I make a suggestion?

9 MR. BECKETT: Okay.

10 MALE 1: Maybe call the next name on deck just to
11 save a little time. [inaudible]

12 MR. BECKETT: Suggestion noted. [laughter] Thank
13 you.

14 MS. DUNBIRKS: *Good afternoon to the committee,*
15 *committee Chair. We thank you all for, uh, coming to*
16 *[inaudible] today for this redistricting hearing. My*
17 *name is Felicia Dunbirks [ph]. I'm a resident of*
18 *Harrison County, District 119, Senate District 48 and*
19 *I have been a registered voter for over 45 years now.*

20 So, uh, you know, I come from a generation where
21 we were -- and I had the right to vote, had to watch
22 my parents [inaudible] to earn the right to vote
23 through litigation, through marching, through
24 protesting and we're here today where we're
25 redistricting and I look at this committee -- this

STANDING JOINT CONGRESSIONAL REDISTRICTING COMMITTEE
Public Hearing on 08/08/2021

Page 30

1 committee makeup and in an area of the state where we
2 have had the most significant growth in minority
3 population.

4 We have one person on the committee south
5 [inaudible], one person and they're both from Harrison
6 County.

7 My question and my concern, as has been raised by
8 many speakers, um, from the League of Women Voters to
9 members who served in the military to Rick Daniels,
10 with me is how do you all plan to fairly redistrict
11 Harrison County, particularly, but South Mississippi
12 across the board where we have had significant growth
13 in minority populations when there's someone on the
14 committee is even intimately familiar with these
15 areas?

16 What we are asking, and you've made clear, Mr.
17 Chairman, at the beginning of the -- of the hearing,
18 that you all are not here to answer questions,
19 however, I will rephrase my statement in the form of
20 not a question but a request. We need to know what
21 criteria the commission will use in implementing as it
22 begins the redistricting process.

23 Mississippi Code Section 53108 requires that you
24 consider [inaudible] practice, continuity,
25 preservation of communities of interest and

STANDING JOINT CONGRESSIONAL REDISTRICTING COMMITTEE
Public Hearing on 08/08/2021

Page 31

1 preservation of political subdivisions. We are asking
2 that you pledge to consider all of those factors and
3 not favoring or disfavoring an incumbent, a candidate
4 or a partisan when drawing district lines.

5 We're asking that you not use partisan election
6 data or recent reelec- -- election results when you're
7 drawing your redistricting lines. We're asking that
8 you pledge to the people of Mississippi that
9 consideration of party affiliation, incumbent status,
10 um, party status and election result data will not
11 play a role in the redrawing of the district lines.

12 Now, particularly with respect to South
13 Mississippi and Harrison County, in particular, there
14 are many of us who live here, who because of that lack
15 of representation on this commission from Harrison
16 County, have a very strong interest in submitting a
17 partial plan, because we do not have full confidence
18 that you all will do the right thing.

19 Will you all pledge to keep us informed on when
20 the partial plans can be submitted and give us the
21 data that we need so that we can draft those plans and
22 submit them in a timely manner for consideration?
23 Those are my comments. I appreciate you all here
24 today. Thank you. [applause]

25 MR. BECKETT: Thank you. Ms. Swanson [ph]. Ms. --

STANDING JOINT CONGRESSIONAL REDISTRICTING COMMITTEE
Public Hearing on 08/08/2021

Page 32

1 oh, okay. Please --

2 MS. SWANSON: Good evening. My name is Sandra Key
3 [ph] Swanson and I am a citizen of Gulfport,
4 Mississippi, Senator Bonds [ph] is my representative
5 and my concern is this, I believe that [inaudible]
6 neighborhood -- I have lived in the neighborhood for
7 some years now and the redistricting process has been
8 -- has seen my community broken up to where part of
9 the neighborhood was represented by one person and
10 another represented by someone else.

11 Because of meeting, the people in my community
12 care about the same issues, but because we did not
13 have fair representation as a community of interest,
14 our needs have rarely been met. We want to keep our
15 community together and elect our representatives based
16 on our interests and concerns and we want to be able
17 to elect legislatures to address our needs.

18 We believe that our representation, based on
19 population of African Americans in Harrison County, is
20 lacking. We feel like our votes do not [inaudible] us
21 much [inaudible] -- much [inaudible] or importance as
22 white people -- as white people's votes. We would like
23 to see that change, especially since there has been an
24 increase in [inaudible] of African Americans in
25 Harrison County.

STANDING JOINT CONGRESSIONAL REDISTRICTING COMMITTEE
Public Hearing on 08/08/2021

Page 33

1 I understand that this is your job to ensure that
2 this happens. Thank you for holding this hearing and
3 we know you will consider holding another hearing on
4 the Gulf Coast after you draw the maps so that we can
5 provide feedback before they are voted on and I thank
6 you. [applause]

7 MR. BECKETT: Thank you. Ms. Weaver [ph]. Ms.
8 Julia [ph] Weaver.

9 FEMALE: [inaudible]

10 MR. BECKETT: All right. I'll come back and give
11 her a couple -- uh, M- -- uh, Ms. Yearwood [ph].

12 MS. YEARWOOD: Good evening. My name is Felicia
13 [ph] Yearwood. I am a registered voter and, uh,
14 resident of Moss Point, Mississippi in Jackson County,
15 which is in the 110th, uh, House District and the 57th
16 Senate District, uh, [inaudible]. Moss White, for
17 those of you who are not familiar with it, this is the
18 southeast corner of the state.

19 It's the most southeasterly city in the state of
20 Mississippi. This is a confluence of the classical
21 [inaudible] and right on the 110 Freeway. We actually
22 have two exits from the interstate in the city limits
23 of [inaudible]. The city is really [inaudible] growth
24 and development. It's a beautiful, lovely lush city
25 with wonderful people and [inaudible].

STANDING JOINT CONGRESSIONAL REDISTRICTING COMMITTEE
Public Hearing on 08/08/2021

Page 34

1 It's a great pic- -- picturesque place where, um,
2 it's a -- a place where people [inaudible] rowing and
3 fishing, it's just a lovely, lovely city.
4 Unfortunately, in recent years, as many [inaudible]
5 coastal experience, um, [inaudible] down the street
6 with, uh, not having fully recovered from Hurricane
7 Katrina -- uh, the effects of Hurricane Katrina and we
8 have unfortunately experienced a population decline.
9 [inaudible] from the Gulfport area and we lost
10 population. So my ques- -- actually, I have two
11 requests. As you consider redrawing the lines for
12 House District 110, my request is that you take
13 careful consideration to not dilute the population. As
14 of now, the population is estimated at about 70
15 percent African American in the city of Moss White.
16 Uh, because you're going to have to expand
17 geographically, we're asking that you take efforts to
18 not dilute that [inaudible] that we do have in this
19 town now. And the second request is that [inaudible]
20 if you would, to please come back and speak with us
21 again, particularly after the September 30th Census
22 data [inaudible] release and the communities
23 [inaudible] opportunity to digest that and to really
24 see the Census tract of [inaudible] where we can
25 effectively expand its geography [inaudible].

STANDING JOINT CONGRESSIONAL REDISTRICTING COMMITTEE
Public Hearing on 08/08/2021

Page 35

1 Do not dilute that [inaudible] district. Thank
2 you very much for being here. Thank you for attending
3 this and [inaudible]. [applause]

4 MR. BECKETT: Thank you. Ms. Holmes-Hines [ph].

5 MS. HOLMES-HINES: Good afternoon. [inaudible]
6 residents [inaudible]. Thank you all for being in
7 Gulfport. I am a city council woman and this is the
8 start of my 25th year to serve in government office.
9 It is so important to have an opportunity that I think
10 [inaudible] opportunity for redistricting and I would
11 request that, um --

12 Because we [inaudible] need to have a more
13 impressive inclusion of diversity on it. That's the
14 number one thing. The power of a map is so important.
15 It's almost like it used to be when it was a power of
16 a pen when a pen can change the life of an entire
17 community, of a child, of an area, a community that's
18 how we live and where you integrate in community.

19 And so you all are very important people and you
20 will have my prayers, because it's important that you
21 accept this responsibility and I don't want to
22 [inaudible] you. The [inaudible] has played a
23 significant part in a lot of the southern states. In
24 Mississippi, we have been right in the middle of that.

25 But intentionally, we [inaudible] the

STANDING JOINT CONGRESSIONAL REDISTRICTING COMMITTEE
Public Hearing on 08/08/2021

Page 36

1 redistricting process from political power. We
2 understand why the power is necessary, we just came
3 out of a very horrific presidential election. So we
4 need not fool ourselves on [inaudible] we need to have
5 representation, because we are well aware, to
6 understand the vulnerability of what redistricting and
7 [inaudible] will do to our community and neighborhoods
8 and the challenges of having opportunities.

9 And what I ask is that there are not [inaudible]
10 ways that communities have been just consolidated and
11 hacking and sacking and sometimes when you hear those
12 words, it's almost like you're thinking somebody is
13 doing a dance, hacking and sacking and moving.

14 Well, what it does is that it does not give us
15 the representation that will be so [inaudible] needed,
16 because you are well aware that you will never know
17 the inside and outside of my community and what our
18 needs are, but if that representative is there and
19 lives in those communities, they will know what the
20 need is.

21 And our goal is to bring Mississippi up and to
22 improve that what we [inaudible] outside of these
23 boundaries that we can have the economic [inaudible]
24 to our cities and wake up knowing that we look like
25 other states, that we want to know that our past is

STANDING JOINT CONGRESSIONAL REDISTRICTING COMMITTEE
Public Hearing on 08/08/2021

Page 37

1 just that. It is relative to how we will receive in
2 our future.

3 I'm interested in you providing transcripts of
4 these meetings that you have and I thank you that each
5 of you have left your families and you decided that
6 you want to do this. The transcripts will be very
7 important as well as public information [inaudible]
8 that you've heard over and over that what will be
9 clear and concise [inaudible] House Representative in
10 119, William-Barnes and Senate 48, that's Mike
11 Thompson.

12 The racial [inaudible] intentionally goes at the
13 process to reduce the power of what can happen inside
14 of my community. Partisan gerrymandering [inaudible]
15 an opportunity to have -- to have an unfair advantage.
16 We understand what that is. That's why we keep hearing
17 about [inaudible] the big lie or did he win or did he
18 not win and who really is concerned about that at this
19 point and time with some of the problems that we are
20 having that's on the national [inaudible].

21 We need your help, Joint Committee of the
22 Redistricting and Reapportionment, to ensure that you
23 stop partisan gerrymandering and racial
24 gerrymandering. We need your help and we can't do it
25 without your recommendation and we pray that you all

STANDING JOINT CONGRESSIONAL REDISTRICTING COMMITTEE
Public Hearing on 08/08/2021

Page 38

1 would [inaudible] bringing Eddy [ph] back on. God
2 bless you. [applause]

3 MR. BECKETT: All right. One more time is Ms.
4 Weaver now. Is she back?

5 MALE 2: [inaudible]

6 MR. BECKETT: Okay. All right. She's going to
7 email her questions. All right. I'm going to thank you
8 for -- for your comments and questions. Um -- uh, is
9 there anything more that the committee would like --
10 like to say? All right. I thank you each one of you
11 for your attendance tonight and -- and for your
12 comments.

13 Be sure that you provide the staff with any
14 follow-up information and take advantage of the
15 opportunities, um, to access all the information that
16 we have. It's -- it's going to -- I want to give you a
17 website that I believe all of the data is -- is going
18 to be -- going to be on.

19 I know that -- I know, uh, [inaudible]
20 www.msjrc.state.ms.us. Let me read -- let me read that
21 again, www.msjrc.state, that's s-t-a-t-e, it's spelled
22 out, .ms.us and that's a place that you could look up
23 and -- and -- and see more detail -- a detailed looked
24 of what's going on and then also some of the handouts
25 that were given out also have some of the addresses

STANDING JOINT CONGRESSIONAL REDISTRICTING COMMITTEE
Public Hearing on 08/08/2021

Page 39

1 and -- and contact information on that.

2 So, uh, I would like -- once again, I -- I -- I
3 thank you for being here. Uh, I want to -- I want to
4 thank our host for providing this -- this space. Uh,
5 thank you all for your attendance. Thank our
6 staff for -- for all their work and, uh, you know,
7 just remind the public that this is the beginning of
8 this process and -- and, uh, the [inaudible], you
9 know, and please provide us with the comments,
10 suggestions of both our proposed plans, uh, mailing
11 those to Ted Booth as staff counsel, Joint
12 Reinforcement Committee, P.O. Box 1204, Jackson, MS
13 39215-1204 or you can email ted.booth@peer.ms.gov. Uh,
14 and please provide your information for the staff so
15 that they can follow up with email or telephone
16 number, something like that.

17 If you -- if you contacted us, please provide
18 [inaudible] that we can contact you back. All right.
19 Thank you all and with that, I'll adjourn the meeting.

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STANDING JOINT CONGRESSIONAL REDISTRICTING COMMITTEE
Public Hearing on 08/08/2021

Page 40

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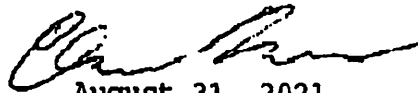
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13

August 31, 2021

14

Chris Naaden

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18 (Standing Joint Congressional Redistricting Committee,
19 Gulfport, 8-8-21)

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STANDING JOINT CONGRESSIONAL REDISTRICTING COMMITTEE

Public Hearing on 08/08/2021

Index: 1..addresses

1	2	4	9
1 14:8 21:3 29:8,10	2 15:15 17:15 38:5	4 16:6 18:5	93 16:7
10 7:1 9:1 26:1	2.32 21:14	40 21:6 22:22	94-171 14:2
102 5:22	2008 26:19	44 28:9,20	99.9 8:13
110 33:21 34:12	2010 6:9 21:2 26:20	45 29:19	A
110th 33:15	2018 17:8	47 16:7	absolutely 25:25
111 19:20	2019 17:14	48 5:17 29:18	accept 35:21
117 22:18	2020 21:2 28:13	37:10	access 2:10
119 29:18 37:10	2022 7:22, 24 14:8	5	11:24 12:2 13:14,25 14:5 38:15
1204 13:17 39:12	21,516 21:1	5 9:24	accordance 15:15
123 16:4	22 17:9,15	50 5:19 22:19	accountable 19:17
13 17:14	24,000 9:21	53108 30:23	accurate 23:8
1875 28:16	254 7:2	56,000 9:23	Act 12:14 15:16
1876 27:5	25th 35:8	56,407 21:13	17:11 22:7
1880 27:13	27 21:12	57th 33:15	actual 8:10, 14 10:17
1890 7:3	29215-1204 13:18	6	add 21:10
1894 28:17	3	6,000 8:25	additionally 7:2
19 21:23	3 17:8	6:00 2:2	address 13:20 16:4 32:17
1965 15:16 22:7	30th 8:12 14:4 34:21	7	addresses
1st 7:10 14:6	39215-1204 39:13	8	
		80 28:10	

STANDING JOINT CONGRESSIONAL REDISTRICTING COMMITTEE

Public Hearing on 08/08/2021

Index: adequately..Beckett

2:11 38:25	alleging	21:17	
adequately	17:7	22:14	B
16:16	allowing	23:20	
adjourn	20:16	25:1,19	ba- 12:13
39:19	Allytra	27:1 29:6	back 24:7
advantage	20:23	31:24 33:6	33:10
11:22	America	35:3 38:2	34:20
37:15	28:25	area 9:10,	38:1,4
38:14	American	13 30:1	39:18
advised	17:8,9	34:9 35:17	base 18:8
13:15	21:11 22:5	areas 9:8	based 18:23
advocate	28:22	30:15	19:4
17:19	34:15	Army 21:22	32:15,18
affect 16:22	Americans	arrested	basic 6:19
affects 17:1	16:15	28:17	basically
affiliation	17:13	arrival	9:10 10:3,
31:9	21:12,15	14:10	9,19,24
Afghanistan	23:9 28:9	arrive 14:3	basis 12:13
21:24	32:19,24	aspects 15:4	15:18
22:11	Anderson	assure 28:19	battle 28:7
African	answering	attendance	Beach 5:18
16:15	6:17	38:11 39:5	beautiful
17:8,12	anticipate	attending	24:17
21:11,12,	10:22	35:2	33:24
15 22:5	anymore	attention	Beckett 2:1
23:9 28:9,	25:24	11:9 19:16	3:21,22
22 32:19,	apologize	aware 36:5,	4:13 5:25
24 34:15	14:18	16	15:23
afternoon	appears 3:6	awesome	17:24
21:20	applause	24:17	18:13,17
29:14 35:5	15:22		19:6 20:22
al- 2:4	17:24		21:18
all's 5:2	20:21		22:15
			23:21
			25:2,20

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JTX-024-042

STANDING JOINT CONGRESSIONAL REDISTRICTING COMMITTEE

Public Hearing on 08/08/2021

Index: began..co-president

27:2 29:7, 9,12 31:25 33:7,10 35:4 38:3, 6	39:12 boy 27:8 Branch 14:23 15:2 Brian 23:23 Brice 17:25 18:1,3,4, 13,16 19:5,9 bring 11:9 24:8,22 36:21 bringing 38:1 broken 19:25 32:8 brought 27:18 Brown 3:23 Bryan 4:6	care 32:12 careful 34:13 case 19:25 cases 3:6 26:4 Census 7:1,9 8:9 27:13 28:13 34:21,24 chair 2:17 3:16 27:3 29:15 Chairman 18:3 19:7 22:16 25:3 29:8 30:17 chairmen 15:24 challenges 8:3 36:8 challenging 17:10 chance 8:14 change 8:22 9:3,23 20:2 28:17 32:23 35:16 changed 29:5 Chantrell 25:4 child 35:17	choice 17:14 choose 4:21, 23 Christene 17:25 18:4 Christian 5:18 Christy 19:10 cities 36:24 citizen 16:4 18:7 20:24 25:5 32:3 citizens 22:12,13 city 16:5 22:2 24:4, 15 25:6,7 33:19,22, 23,24 34:3,15 35:7 classical 33:20 clause 27:15 clear 30:16 37:9 close 4:21 14:3 closer 4:22 co- 5:1 co-president 19:10
began 8:9 begin 2:2 14:13 beginning 3:2 30:17 39:7 begins 30:22 big 37:17 Biloxi 14:23 15:2,10 20:24,25 black 19:2 22:22 28:10 Blackmon 3:23 bless 38:2 board 30:12 body 27:17 Bonds 32:4 book 13:13 Booth 13:16 39:11 boundaries 19:24 36:23 Box 13:17	<hr/> c <hr/>		

STANDING JOINT CONGRESSIONAL REDISTRICTING COMMITTEE

Public Hearing on 08/08/2021

Index: Coast..contacted

Coast 20:1	18:5	16:23	concluded
33:4	committee	17:18	17:15
coastal 34:5	2:13,19,20	20:25 24:8	Conference
Code 30:23	3:17,18	25:7 32:8,	16:9
coincide	4:24 5:7,	11,13,15	confidence
24:23	10 11:21	35:17,18	31:17
Collaborative	12:4	36:7,17	confluence
20:25	13:13,17	37:14	33:20
colleague	15:1,25	comply 15:20	confusion
23:23	16:12,15,	composition	25:15
college 5:5	18 18:3	16:14	congratulate
color 21:6,8	19:8 22:17	computer	28:1
22:21	23:6,7	11:24	Congressional
23:12	25:3,24	computers	2:16 3:18
comm- 7:13	27:3	13:14	4:20 6:25
commence 7:6	29:14,15,	concern 12:9	7:18,23
14:1	25 30:1,4,	25:23	8:6 10:2,4
commenced	14 37:21	26:17,22	11:10,25
7:8	38:9 39:12	30:7 32:5	14:1 16:6
comment 6:18	committee's	concerned	consideration
comments	23:2	12:20	24:14
2:19 3:1	committees	17:22	31:9,22
5:2,3 6:12	12:25	24:3,11	34:13
7:14	20:16	25:4 37:18	consolidated
14:14,24	communicates	concerns	36:10
31:23	19:23	11:5,7	Constitution
38:8,12	communities	12:4,5,11,	6:23 7:2
39:9	16:13 17:4	14,15,23	19:18
commission	20:1 23:12	16:19	contact
18:11	25:16	25:8,19	13:12
30:21	30:25	32:16	39:1,18
31:15	34:22	concerted	contacted
Commissioner	36:10,19	25:12	39:17
	community	concise 37:9	
	5:5 15:6,		
	20,21		

STANDING JOINT CONGRESSIONAL REDISTRICTING COMMITTEE

Public Hearing on 08/08/2021 Index: contiguous..discriminate

contiguous	21:1,7	Daniels	depiction
19:19	couple 6:6	27:2,3,4	23:8
continue	33:11	30:9	descendent
24:25	court 17:14	dare 28:23	27:25
continuity	courtesy	data 10:17	designed 3:3
30:24	13:6	14:2 31:6,	27:11
contributes	cover 6:6,15	10,21	desire 16:11
15:12	covered 6:15	34:22	detail 38:23
corner 33:18	create 25:14	38:17	detailed
council 35:7	created	deadline	38:23
counsel	25:11	7:25	development
3:19,21,23	26:18	deadlines	15:17
4:1,3,6,9,	Creek 25:7	7:17	33:24
11 13:16	criminal	Debar 4:6	deviation
39:11	16:25	debate 2:23	9:24
counted	criteria	decided 37:5	devices
18:19	19:20	deck 29:10	27:15
counties	20:10	decline 34:8	difficulties
8:16 9:12	30:21	deep 24:16	9:6,8
17:3 26:3	critical	Delano 5:19	digest 34:23
country 28:1	15:3	deliberately	dilute
county 5:20	Crowell	23:7	34:13,18
9:11,14	14:17,20,	delivery	35:1
16:4 18:4	22	14:2	diluted
21:4,6,10,	current 8:8	demand 20:2	17:12
13,16	16:10	democracy	dilution
22:6,19,22	custom 3:4	15:4	17:7,17
25:6,10	customary	demographics	direct 22:24
26:6 29:18	13:8 18:18	23:4	direction
30:6,11		demonstrate	24:3
31:13,16	D	29:4	discriminate
32:19,25			16:12
33:14	dance 36:13		
county's			

STANDING JOINT CONGRESSIONAL REDISTRICTING COMMITTEE

Public Hearing on 08/08/2021

Index: discriminates..estimated

discriminates	12:16	19:20	electing
15:18	19:18	dynamics	17:13
discriminatory	20:6,11	22:7	election
23:4	21:8,14		18:4 25:14
	26:2,5	E	31:5,6,10
disenfranchise			36:3
d 27:12	diversity	earlier 6:10	elections
28:5	16:18	earn 29:22	26:25
disenfranchise	35:13	East 5:23	Ellerby
ment 27:20	documenting	20:25	23:22,24
disfavoring	4:17	economic	email 11:22
31:3	doubt 28:4	20:4 36:23	13:18,20
disfranchised	draft 31:21	economy	38:7
16:13	dramatic	16:24	39:13,15
district	8:22	Eddy 38:1	embarrassment
5:17,19,22	draw 11:10	education	28:24
9:21,23	19:22	16:24	enable 16:19
15:14	20:11 21:3	effectively	end 26:6
16:6,7,21	23:2,7,18	34:25	ends 9:4
17:9,10,	33:4	effects 34:7	enforce 22:6
12,15,21	drawing 9:5,	efficient	engage 15:7
18:5 19:4,	6 20:11	25:14	20:3
20 21:4,	22:1 24:18	effort 23:11	enjoy 24:16
10,11,16,	31:4,7	25:13	ensure 22:9
23 22:18,	drawings	efforts 2:21	33:1 37:22
19 25:18	22:4	7:18 34:17	entire 9:10
26:4,15,21	drawn 16:22	Eight-nine	20:8 35:16
29:18	17:21	21:5	equitable
31:4,11	drew 26:5	elect 15:5	26:25
33:15,16	drive 4:23	32:15,17	equivalent
34:12 35:1	Dunbirks	elected	21:14
districts	29:14,17	17:20	estimated
2:16 4:20	dur- 8:2	25:14	
6:25 8:17,	dwelling		
23 9:5,6,			
24 10:2,4,			
9 11:10			

STANDING JOINT CONGRESSIONAL REDISTRICTING COMMITTEE

Public Hearing on 08/08/2021

Index: estimates..give

34:14		29:17	27:25
estimates	<u>F</u>	33:12	Freeway
8:10	face 8:3	female 16:16	33:21
10:15,18	24:13	33:9	frequently
Eubanks 3:23	fact 29:5	filed 17:10	26:16
evening 11:7	factors 31:2	final 8:14	full 31:17
14:20,21	fair 15:8	14:2	fully 34:6
15:24	16:11	finalized	fundamental
18:1,2	19:14	25:19	15:13
19:7 20:23	20:15 23:3	fishing 34:3	future 37:2
22:16	26:22,24,	flag 28:7,	
26:13 27:3	25 32:13	17	<u>G</u>
32:2 33:12	fairly 30:10	follow 13:1,	gain 9:4,8
events 22:5	fall 7:20	21,23	17:1
exclude	familiar	26:24	gained 8:17
23:19	30:14	39:15	9:11,13,15
excuse 6:18	33:17	follow-up	gaining 9:14
21:19	families	38:14	gains 8:19
exits 33:22	37:5	fool 36:4	general 9:13
expand 20:5	family 27:4	force 24:13	16:17
34:16,25	favoring	forces 27:7	generation
expect 20:7	31:3	Ford 3:24	29:20
experience	February	form 30:19	geographically
34:5	17:14	forum 2:24	34:17
experienced	federal 6:23	4:15	geography
34:8	15:20	forward 6:4	34:25
expressed	17:10	20:17	gerrymandering
25:23	feedback	24:21 29:3	37:14,23,
expressing	33:5	fought 24:10	24
11:5	feel 26:19	free 3:4	give 2:19
	32:20	freedom	3:4 5:14
	Felicia	24:15	14:4 24:9

STANDING JOINT CONGRESSIONAL REDISTRICTING COMMITTEE

Public Hearing on 08/08/2021

Index: glad..House

25:21	grow	24:25	10,16	high	10:7
31:20	growth	21:5	22:6,19,22	hold	19:17
33:10	23:8	30:2,	25:6,10	holding	
36:14	12	33:23	29:18	33:2,3	
38:16	guides	26:24	30:5,11	holds	2:13
glad 11:15	guise	27:21	31:13,15	Holmes	
goal 36:21	Gulf	20:1	32:19,25	21:18,19,	
God 38:1	23:16	33:4	hassle 25:11	20	
good 14:20,	Gulfport		Hawkins 4:6	Holmes-hines	
21 15:24	5:18,23		heading 24:4	35:4,5	
18:1,2	25:7	26:14	healthcare	home 17:6	
19:7,9	32:3	34:9	16:24	24:20	
20:23	35:7		hear 2:25	homowner	
21:20	guys	2:8	11:6 12:4,	22:18	
22:16			5,10,13	honor 15:12	
26:13 27:3			36:11	hope 16:18,	
29:14 32:2			heard 12:7,	20,21	
33:12 35:5			18,21 37:8	26:23	
governing	hacking		hearing 2:17	Hopson 4:7	
24:18	36:11,13		3:17 5:3	horrific	
government	handle	13:2,	11:6 16:2	36:3	
35:8	3		18:14	host 6:3	
governor	handout	2:8	20:7,21	39:4	
24:6	handouts		29:16	House 5:22	
graciously	38:24		30:17	8:7 9:21	
6:8	happen	23:14	33:2,3	12:24	
grandfather	37:13		37:16	13:2,3	
27:6,12,	happened		hearings	16:7 21:4,	
14,20	9:17	28:16	2:14 4:21	8,14,23	
great 34:1	hard	5:13	7:12 9:9	22:18	
great-great-	Harr-	21:9	10:15 12:8	24:2,5	
27:5	Harrison		16:18	33:15	
grew 10:21	5:20	9:14	20:18	34:12 37:9	
21:1	18:4	21:1,	held 6:9,10		

STANDING JOINT CONGRESSIONAL REDISTRICTING COMMITTEE

Public Hearing on 08/08/2021

Index: Hurricane..interested

Hurricane	12 9:2, 11,	18, 19, 21,	31:3, 9
34:6, 7	19, 25	24, 25	individuals
	10:5, 14	28:4, 6, 7,	11:18
I	11:1, 2, 15	8, 10, 11,	influence
	12:22, 25	12, 16, 17,	20:9 28:22
i- 9:20	13:11	18, 21, 23,	information
ideal 9:20,	14:10, 11	25 29:1, 3,	2:10 6:14
22, 25	15:1, 2, 4,	4, 11, 16, 22	13:13
identical	10, 14, 19,	30:5, 24	24:8, 22
10:9	24, 25	32:5, 20,	37:7
identify	16:5, 12,	21, 24	38:14, 15
5:12	19, 20, 25	33:9, 16,	39:1, 14
	17:2, 4, 11,	21, 23, 25	informed
implementing	16, 17, 18,	34:2, 4, 5,	31:19
30:21	19, 21	9, 18, 19,	initiative
	18:6, 7, 9,	22, 23, 24,	27:19 28:2
importance	10, 11, 15,	25 35:1, 3,	input 20:13
32:21	21, 22	5, 6, 10, 12,	24:10
	19:2, 3, 12,	22, 25	25:18
important	19 20:3	36:4, 7, 9,	inside 36:17
7:15 15:7	21:2, 7, 21,	15, 22, 23	37:13
16:1 17:19	22, 25	37:7, 9, 12,	integrate
24:15	22:2, 3, 4,	14, 17, 20	35:18
35:9, 14,	5, 9, 10, 12,	38:1, 5, 19	intent 23:2
19, 20 37:7	14, 20, 21,	39:8, 18	intentionally
impose 3:12	23 23:1, 2,	incarcerated	35:25
	5, 10, 12,	18:19, 20,	37:12
impressive	15, 17, 18,	22	interest
35:13	22, 25	inclusion	15:6 19:24
improve	24:2, 12,	35:13	30:25
36:22	14, 18, 19,	inclusive	31:16
inaudible	20 25:10,	29:3, 5	32:13
2:4, 24	12, 13, 15,	income 20:4	interested
3:9, 10, 11,	22 26:2, 9,	increase	37:3
13 4:18	15, 17, 18,	32:24	
5:24 6:11,	19, 20, 22,	incumbent	
13, 19, 21	23 27:5, 6,		
7:9, 12	8, 9, 10, 13,		
8:6, 8, 11,			

STANDING JOINT CONGRESSIONAL REDISTRICTING COMMITTEE

Public Hearing on 08/08/2021

Index: interests..lost

interests	Joint 2:13	29:12	lights 5:13
32:16	3:17 13:16	law 7:5	limit 3:7,11
interstate	14:25	laws 15:20	13:7 26:11
33:22	20:16	lawsuit	limits 33:22
intimately	37:21	17:10	lines 9:2
30:14	39:11	lawsuits	16:22 22:1
introduce	Julia 33:8	17:7	23:3,4,7,
5:15	July 7:10	League	13,18
involved	jurisdictional	19:11,13	24:18
20:14	19:24	30:8	26:4,7
Iraq 21:23	justice	left 37:5	31:4,7,11
22:11	16:25	Legis- 12:1	34:11
issue 13:9	K	Legislative	listen 11:8
16:23	Katrina 34:7	6:25 7:22	17:22
issues 17:19	Key 32:2	10:1 11:10	litigation
32:12	kind 3:14	12:1 14:25	29:23
J	12:3 18:15	19:18	live 19:11
Jackson	Kirby 4:4,5	legislature	24:24
13:17	knowing	2:15 5:8,	26:14
23:14	36:24	12 7:3,21	31:14
33:14	L	14:7 17:16	35:18
39:12	legislatures	21:3	lived 32:6
James 14:22	32:17	legislatures	lives 36:19
15:23,24	lack 16:17	level 9:12	locally 25:9
16:3	31:14	lie 37:17	locations
January 7:23	lacking	lieutenant	25:23
14:8	32:20	24:5	Long 5:18
Jeramey	land 19:19	life 35:16	longer 27:13
23:25	large 8:21	lifelong	looked 38:23
job 33:1	larger 9:25	16:4	loss 9:4,7
John 19:9	laughter	lifted 28:7	losses 8:20
	26:16		lost 8:17

STANDING JOINT CONGRESSIONAL REDISTRICTING COMMITTEE

Public Hearing on 08/08/2021

Index: lot.moving

10:21 34:9	map 15:17	18:2,3	Mississippi
lot 3:8	17:17,21	19:8 22:17	8:7 10:1,
6:20 13:5	28:3 35:14	25:3 27:4	12 13:18
35:23	maps 8:4	30:9	14:25 15:7
lovely 33:24	17:1	Memphis 27:8	16:8,13
34:3	19:14,21	men 27:25	17:3,6
lush 33:24	20:12,14,	mention 2:12	19:11
	15 25:18		20:24
	33:4	mermaids	22:13 25:6
<u>M</u>		23:17,18	27:10,11
	marching		28:3,15,20
M- 33:11	29:23	met 32:14	30:11,23
made 20:9	matter 12:6,	metric 18:8	31:8,13
27:17	9 20:21	Mexico 23:16	32:4
30:16	22:5	middle 35:24	33:14,20
mail 13:15	matters 11:8	Mike 5:16	35:24
mailing	means 15:18	37:10	36:21
39:10	meeting 6:5	military	Mississippians
main 26:16	7:10 11:5	30:9	28:25
major 8:19,	22:9 32:11	mind 12:21	Mitch 23:24
20	39:19	29:2	modifications
majority	meeting's	minority	8:15
4:20 20:6	11:23	20:6 21:10	modified
21:8,10,11	meetings	23:10	8:12
make 14:24	6:8,9 37:4	30:2,13	months 7:21
21:12	meats 19:20	minority/	Moss 33:14,
24:23 29:8	member 5:10	majority	16 34:15
makeup 24:6	14:9	21:16	move 8:24
30:1	members 2:18	minutes 13:7	21:20
MALE 29:8,	3:4,19	mispronounce	24:12,21
10 38:5	4:19,24,25	14:18	26:3,6
Mangold	5:7,8,11	misrepresentat	moved 9:1
3:24,25	13:12,14	ion 22:23,	moving 29:3
manner 31:22	14:21	25	36:13
	15:25		

STANDING JOINT CONGRESSIONAL REDISTRICTING COMMITTEE

Public Hearing on 08/08/2021

Index: ms.us..percent

ms.us 38:22	number 8:25	38:15	20:17
multiple 25:23	9:25 10:7	opportunity 2:18 3:5	participation 20:18
municipalities 12:16 20:1	16:6,7	5:6,14	partisan 23:10
mustered 27:7	20:5 25:8,	11:23 16:1	31:4,5
	9 28:22	17:23 20:7	37:14,23
	35:14	24:9 34:23	
	39:16	35:9,10	parts 5:17
	numbers 8:10,13,15	37:15	8:18,19
	10:13,14	order 3:18	party 31:9,
	13:21	4:15 11:18	10
NAACP 14:23		14:16	Pass 5:18
15:1 16:9	0	organizational 7:10	past 17:6
national 37:20	occasionally 2:6	outlaws 15:17	36:25
navigate 20:19	occur 7:20		Paul 23:23
needed 36:15	14:7	P	paying 19:16
neighborhood 32:6,9	odd- 12:17		Payne 5:23
neighborhoods 36:7	odd-shaped 12:17	p-e-e-r.ms. gov. 13:19	pen 35:16
nice 25:21	offer 2:18	P.O. 13:17	people 3:10
night 6:11	9:20	39:12	6:21 8:25
non- 21:6	office 35:8	parents 29:22	9:15,22
normal 12:13	Officially 16:14	Parker 4:7	12:9 13:5
north 5:23	officials 15:5	part 6:17,	17:22
note 2:12	online 2:5	18 10:20,	21:6,8
noted 29:12	4:25	21 32:8	22:12,21
noticed 8:4	opinion 26:21	35:23	27:12,22
November 27:16	opportunities 25:17 36:8	partial 31:17,20	28:15 31:8
		participate 11:2,3	32:11,22
		15:13	33:25 34:2
			35:19
			people's 32:22
			percent 8:14

STANDING JOINT CONGRESSIONAL REDISTRICTING COMMITTEE

Public Hearing on 08/08/2021 Index: percentage-wise..process

9:24 21:5,	16:4	politicians	precinct
6,12 22:22	pic- 34:1	16:25	26:3,5
28:9,10,20	picked 26:20	poorly 17:21	precincts
34:15	picturesque	population	12:15
percentage-	34:1	8:3,8,17,	25:9,10,
wise 9:15	Pierce	19,20 9:1,	13,22,25
period 11:25	26:12,13	7,9,11,13	26:10
12:1	Piper 22:15,	10:17,21	predecessor
permitted	16,17	16:17	24:1
17:22	PL 14:2	18:6,7,8,	present 3:20
Perryman	place 34:1,2	23,24	presented
20:22,23,	38:22	19:2,3	23:13
24	plan 22:6	21:1,13	presenting
person 6:24	23:6 27:11	28:9,23	10:14
22:9,20	30:10	30:3 32:19	preservation
27:23	31:17	34:8,10,	30:25 31:1
30:4,5	plans 24:23,	13,14	president
32:9	24 31:20,	populations	14:23 16:8
personal	21 39:10	30:13	presidential
17:1	play 31:11	portion 8:21	36:3
persons 3:7,	played 35:22	portray 23:7	pretty 9:12
13	pledge 31:2,	pose 17:4	13:8
ph 5:23	8,19	power 15:5	prevent
21:18	point 6:22	35:14,15	17:13
22:15,17	33:14	36:1,2	primarily
23:21,23	37:19	37:13	12:6 27:13
25:2 26:12	pointing 9:3	powers 10:10	problems 9:5
27:2,4	political	practice	37:19
29:7,17	15:13	30:24	process 3:3
31:25	17:1,5	pray 37:25	7:13 8:9
32:3,4	20:4 31:1	prayers	11:2,4
33:7,8,11,	36:1	35:20	15:8,11,
13 35:4		pre- 12:14	14,22
38:1			
physical			

STANDING JOINT CONGRESSIONAL REDISTRICTING COMMITTEE

Public Hearing on 08/08/2021

Index: prohibit..regular

16:10 17:5	15,25	16:14,16	redistrict
19:15,16	14:5,15	17:7 20:4	2:15 6:24
20:8,10,19	15:5 16:24	37:12,23	7:3 28:14
22:10	20:9,18		30:10
30:22 32:7	25:18 37:7	racially	
36:1 37:13	39:7	15:19	redistricting
39:8		raised 30:7	2:21 3:18
prohibit	purposes	rarely 32:14	6:20,22
23:10	4:16 10:18	Ray 5:23	7:4,7,12,
prohibits	11:16	re- 7:23	14,18 12:2
17:18	Put 24:21	read 4:1,2	14:1,25
proposed	putting 28:2	38:20	15:3,8,11,
20:13			22 16:10
39:10	Q	real 6:19	19:15
prosperity	qualifying	Reapportionmen	20:8,19
24:24	7:17,23	t 13:17	22:10
protect 20:5	ques- 3:1	37:22	23:19
protesting	34:10	reason 11:13	29:16,25
29:24	question	receive 2:14	30:22 31:7
provide	6:17 13:22	21:15 37:1	32:7 35:10
13:13,20,	30:7,20	recent 31:6	36:1,6
22 15:21	questions	34:4	37:22
18:15 33:5	2:22 6:13	recently	redrawing
38:13	14:15	17:8	31:11
39:9,14,17	18:14	recommendation	34:11
providing	30:18	37:25	reduce 25:13
5:6 37:3	38:7,8	recommendation	37:13
39:4	quickly	s 2:14	reflect
public 2:13,	14:24	reconsider	16:16
18,24 3:4,	quit 22:1	24:6	registered
16 6:14		records	19:12
7:11,13,15	R	25:12	22:19 25:5
11:1,11,23	race 15:18	recovered	29:19
12:2,5	racial	34:6	33:13
13:12,14,			regular
			15:21

STANDING JOINT CONGRESSIONAL REDISTRICTING COMMITTEE

Public Hearing on 08/08/2021

Index: Reinforcement..Senate

Reinforcement	26:14 32:4	33:14	room 8:5
3:17 39:12	36:18 37:9	residents	27:24
rejoin	representative	35:6	rowing 34:2
16:20,21	s 32:15	respect	rules 12:24
relative	represented	31:12	13:1
37:1	21:22	responsibility	Ryan 26:13
release	27:20 28:7	35:21	
34:22	29:1 32:9,	rest 28:19,	s
relec- 31:6	10	25	
remember 2:7	representing	result 31:10	s-t-a-t-e
remind 4:14	20:25	resulted	38:21
12:24 39:7	23:3,16	28:16	sacking
reminder 2:3	represents	results 31:6	36:11,13
13:6	26:15	return 24:22	sakes 23:21,
repeat 2:7	28:14		22
17:16	request	Reverend	Sandra 32:2
rephrase	13:16 23:9	16:3	sat 24:17
30:19	30:20	Rick 27:4	save 29:11
reply 13:24	34:12,19	30:9	scheduled
represent	35:11	rid 27:18,	2:2
15:6 23:8	requesting	19	Scott 5:19
28:15	21:15	rights 12:14	Se- 15:15
represent-	requests 3:9	15:13,15,	searching
22:23	34:11	16 17:11	24:19
representation	required 7:5	risk 17:4	seat 24:17
10:23,24,	requirements	Road 16:5	section 7:2
25 22:4	26:8	Robert 16:3	15:15,17
31:15	requires	role 3:19	17:15
32:13,18	6:23,24	31:11	30:23
36:5,15	7:3 21:3	roll 4:16	Senate 5:17,
representative	30:23	5:11	19 8:7
21:23	res- 25:21	Ron 23:22	9:23 16:6
23:25	resident		17:9 22:18
	29:17		

STANDING JOINT CONGRESSIONAL REDISTRICTING COMMITTEE

Public Hearing on 08/08/2021

Index: senator..streaming

29:18	showing 28:3	35:23	10:14
33:16	shows 8:16	space 39:4	starts 7:23
37:10	shut 17:4	Sparks 29:7	14:6
senator 5:17	sic 15:16	speak 3:7,13	state 4:19
23:22,23	sign 11:13	11:14	8:18,20,21
32:4	signed 11:14	13:5,10	9:1 10:20,
senators	significant	16:1,9	21 12:22
23:1	17:3 30:2,	17:23 20:7	15:7 16:8,
send 13:15,	12 35:23	24:5 34:20	17 19:17,
18,24		speakers	23 21:3
September	similar	30:8	22:13
8:11 14:3,	19:21	specifically	23:3,9,24
4,6 34:21	Simmons 4:7	21:11	24:2,17,25
series 7:11	simple 28:12	spectrum 9:5	25:5 28:14
serve 35:8	sir 19:5		30:1
served 30:9	size 9:21,	spelled	33:18,19
service	22 19:4	38:21	statement
28:21	sole 11:16	split 25:9,	30:19
session 7:22	someone's	10,13,22	statements
8:2	14:19	26:5,6,10	2:20
set 3:9,14	Sonya 5:21	splitting	states 21:21
27:5	soul 24:16	12:14,15,	35:23
setup 6:11	south 5:24	16 25:24	36:25
seventh 7:11	30:4,11	staff 5:4	status 31:9,
shadow 28:4	31:12	6:7 11:14,	10
Shanks 4:3	Southaven	15 13:16,	statute
share 3:12	4:22	20 38:13	19:23
shifts 8:3	southeast	39:6,11,14	Stephanie
short 12:18	33:18	stakeholders	22:17
show 10:20	southeasterly	15:21	Stone 16:4
show- 8:16	33:19	stand 16:9	stop 37:23
	southern	start 3:15	streaming
		6:7 35:8	20:21
		started 6:5	

STANDING JOINT CONGRESSIONAL REDISTRICTING COMMITTEE

Public Hearing on 08/08/2021

Index: street..understanding

street 34:5		thinking	tract 34:24
strong 31:16	T	36:12	transcript
subdivisions	taking 7:9,	Thomas 27:6	6:8
31:1	13 14:14	Thompson	transcripts
submit 11:21	24:14	5:16 37:11	37:3,6
31:22	talk 24:20	time 3:7,	transparency
submitted	Tate 4:7,8	11,16 5:9	19:14
31:20	taught 24:20	7:23 9:17	20:15
submitting	Taylor 4:3	10:16	23:15
31:16	Ted 13:16	11:25 12:1	transparent
suggestion	39:11	13:13	15:9 16:11
29:8,12	ted.booth@peer	14:13	treated 18:9
suggestions	13:19	27:9,10,15	troops 27:7
2:14 3:1	ted.booth@	29:11	Turkey 25:7
11:21	peer.ms.gov.	37:19 38:3	Turner-ford
39:10	39:13	timely 31:22	4:9,10
suited 18:10	telephone	times 12:7	
supporters	13:21	today 4:23	U
19:13	39:15	20:2	
supposed	terminals	29:16,24	Ultimately
14:4	11:24 12:3	31:24	23:9
suppress	testimony	tolerance	undeniably
23:11	4:16	10:3	28:11
suppression	tests 19:1	tonight 2:2	underrepresent
15:12	thing 6:19	6:3 17:23	ed 23:5
Surely 28:8	31:18	19:9,14	29:1
Swanson	35:14	20:17,20	understand
31:25	things 2:11	38:11	10:3 28:8
32:2,3	6:6,15,16	total 18:6,	33:1 36:2,
system 16:25	12:12,18	23 19:3	6 37:16
25:14	24:21	tours 21:24,	understanding
	27:14	25	18:18
		town 34:19	26:17

STANDING JOINT CONGRESSIONAL REDISTRICTING COMMITTEE

Public Hearing on 08/08/2021

Index: unequal.younger

unequal 22:3	voted 23:13	36:10	world's 29:5
unfair 15:11	33:5	Weaver 33:7,	writing
17:17	voter 15:12	8 38:4	11:21
37:15	17:7 19:12	website	written
unfaithful	22:19 25:5	38:17	13:15
28:11	29:19	weeks 14:6,8	www.msjrc.
unit 27:7	33:13	Wheeler	state 38:21
United 21:21	Voter's 22:7	19:6,7,10	www.msjrc.
unity 27:25	voters 15:5,	white 4:3	state.ms.us.
unnecessary	15 17:9	21:7 32:22	38:20
25:11	18:19	33:16	
upcoming	19:11	34:15	Y
2:20	25:11 30:8	wi- 6:4	year 6:10
updated 24:8	votes 17:9,	Wiggins	7:18,20
updates	12 23:11	4:11,12	35:8
15:21	32:20,22	William-barnes	years 7:1
	Voting 12:13	37:10	9:1,4 26:1
	15:16	Williams-	29:19 32:7
	17:11,17	barnes 5:21	34:4
v	vulnerability	win 37:17,	Yearwood
Vanwright	36:6	18	33:11,12,
25:2,3,4		woman 22:25	13
veteran 24:1	W	35:7	younger
veterans	wake 36:24	Women 19:11	27:23
24:14	wanted 5:15	30:8	
Vietnam 24:1	13:10	wonderful	
violated	wars 24:10	33:25	
17:15	watch 27:17	words 36:12	
voices 20:21	29:21	work 39:6	
23:11	watching	working 7:21	
vote 6:24	2:5,9 4:25	world 27:17	
20:14 24:9	20:16 29:6	28:19	
29:21,22	ways 11:3		



My name is Christy Wheeler. I am CoPresident of the League of Women Voters of Mississippi. I live in Gautier and I am a registered voter. The League, and I and my supporters here tonight want Fair Maps. We want transparency in the Redistricting process, and we want you to know that we will be paying attention to your process and will hold you accountable.

We know by our state Constitution that legislative districts must be contiguous. We do not believe that the strip of land, with no dwellings, connecting District 111 meets this criteria and we do not want to see anything similar in the new maps you draw.

We know by state statute that communities of interest and jurisdictional boundaries should be broken as little as possible. This is not the case for many municipalities and communities on the Gulf Coast today.

We demand that you not engage in gerrymandering: political, racial, or by income levels. We would like you to protect and expand the number of majority-minority districts.

We appreciate the opportunity to speak at this Hearing, but expect more. We would like for the entire Redistricting process to be made public. We would like to have input into your process. We would like to see the criteria you use for drawing districts before you draw new maps. We would like to have input to your proposed maps before you vote on them. We want to be involved!

Again, we want FAIR MAPS, transparency and we will be watching. We appreciate the Joint Committee's allowing us to participate tonight and look forward to more Public hearings and public participation as you navigate the Redistricting process.

I want to thank everyone who is here tonight or streaming this hearing. Our voices matter.