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WITNESS _____
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FEB 26 2024

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
SOUTHERN DISTRICT OF MISSISSIPPI
Candice Cane REPORTER

STANDING JOINT CONGRESSIONAL REDISTRICTING COMMITTEE
Hearing on 08/12/2021

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TRANSCRIPT OF AUDIO-RECORDED

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PUBLIC HEARING OF THE

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STANDING JOINT CONGRESSIONAL REDISTRICTING COMMITTEE

11

AUGUST 12, 2021

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<p>1 MR. BECKETT: All right, um, we're -- we're</p> <p>2 supposed to get started [inaudible] I believe it's</p> <p>3 about 5:00 now. I want to welcome you all here</p> <p>4 tonight.</p> <p>5 Uh, I just have a couple of comments. The joint</p> <p>6 committee hosts public hearings to -- to receive</p> <p>7 suggestions and recommendations on how the Mississippi</p> <p>8 Legislature should redistrict itself.</p> <p>9 And our four congressional districts, uh, during</p> <p>10 the course of the hearings, uh, as chair I'll -- I'll</p> <p>11 offer members of the public, an opportunity to give</p> <p>12 the committee -- I mean, comments in the committee or</p> <p>13 the statements to the committee about the -- our</p> <p>14 upcoming redistricting efforts. Um, by custom we try</p> <p>15 to give members, uh, of the public from opportunity to</p> <p>16 say what they wish.</p> <p>17 And in -- in cases where it appears that they're</p> <p>18 going to be, uh, many persons who are to speak we --</p> <p>19 we do limit the time as to what limit to impose will</p> <p>20 be up to the chair depending on how many persons want</p> <p>21 to speak.</p> <p>22 Uh, I would like to remind you just as a courtesy</p> <p>23 that -- that this is, uh, we will be redistricting</p> <p>24 congressional districts and legislative districts from</p> <p>25 the past and the Senate on the state.</p>	<p>1 Perkins.</p> <p>2 MR. PERKINS: Here.</p> <p>3 MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Rops.</p> <p>4 MR. ROPS: Here.</p> <p>5 MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Parker. Mr. Simmons.</p> <p>6 MR. SIMMONS: Here.</p> <p>7 MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Tate.</p> <p>8 MR. TATE: Here.</p> <p>9 MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. [inaudible].</p> <p>10 NAME: Here.</p> <p>11 MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Williams.</p> <p>12 MR. WILLIAMS: Here.</p> <p>13 MR. BECKETT: All right. Thank you Mr. Chairman.</p> <p>14 I do, just to mention that, you know, we don't have to</p> <p>15 have [inaudible] type testimony that we're simply</p> <p>16 trying to verify who is here, uh, who has attended the</p> <p>17 meeting. Um, we have -- we have other members who are</p> <p>18 -- who for various reasons are not here tonight.</p> <p>19 Uh, but, uh, I would -- I would -- I would like</p> <p>20 to, uh, take this chance [inaudible] time, but we do</p> <p>21 have other members of the legislature who are present</p> <p>22 and I'd like for them to introduce themselves if they</p> <p>23 want.</p> <p>24 MR. WILLIAMS: Uh, yeah. I'm Bob Williams,</p> <p>25 [inaudible] district 15.</p>
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<p>1 We will not be doing any county or city</p> <p>2 districts. Uh, we have -- we have several questions</p> <p>3 about county and city districts and I just want to</p> <p>4 make it clear that, um, if that's what you want to</p> <p>5 comment about then that -- that's fine, but that's</p> <p>6 not something that we -- we will be doing.</p> <p>7 So, um, it -- it yeah. At this time, um, as -- as</p> <p>8 -- as tier, I call the -- this public hearing of the --</p> <p>9 -- of the joint reapportionment committee. Joint</p> <p>10 congressional redistricting committee to order and ask</p> <p>11 our council to call the roll of the members present.</p> <p>12 MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Beckett.</p> <p>13 MR. BECKETT: Here.</p> <p>14 MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Brown. Mr. Brown. Mr. Subanks.</p> <p>15 Mr. Ford.</p> <p>16 MR. FORD: Here.</p> <p>17 MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Mangos. Mr. Reed.</p> <p>18 MR. REED: Here.</p> <p>19 MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Rhanks.</p> <p>20 MR. RHANKS: Here.</p> <p>21 MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Taylor.</p> <p>22 MR. TAYLOR: Here.</p> <p>23 MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Wyatt (ph). Mr. Kirby.</p> <p>24 MR. KIRBY: Here.</p> <p>25 MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Bryan. Mr. Debar (ph). Mr.</p>	<p>1 MR. BECKETT: All right. I believe -- I believe</p> <p>2 that -- thank you. I believe that that is it and I</p> <p>3 want to thank you for that [inaudible]. I want to</p> <p>4 thank this state for hosting this event is a -- it's --</p> <p>5 -- it's a very, very nice place to have something like</p> <p>6 this. Uh, we -- we are having nine of these across the</p> <p>7 state.</p> <p>8 Uh, prior -- prior to [inaudible] where they are</p> <p>9 as convenient as possible. Um, or different members of</p> <p>10 the state they are, um, [inaudible]. So people who</p> <p>11 aren't here, members and scores of the public have an</p> <p>12 opportunity to -- to watch the proceedings. And</p> <p>13 there'll be other ways that -- that they can</p> <p>14 contribute.</p> <p>15 I want to, uh, thank our staff for setting</p> <p>16 everything up and for working with -- with the, uh,</p> <p>17 [inaudible] and making sure that, uh, the room was</p> <p>18 ready for us tonight and also for all the help that --</p> <p>19 that they're going to give us in this process of, uh,</p> <p>20 uh, redistricting and, um, and otherwise.</p> <p>21 And just, uh, and I -- I want to -- at this time</p> <p>22 is there any member of committee that would like to</p> <p>23 have anything to say? [Inaudible].</p> <p>24 NAME: Thank you vice chairman. Uh, it's -- it's</p> <p>25 a pleasure to be here in the [inaudible] Parker</p>

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<p>1 Ballroom tonight. Good folks. Um, I want to say that,</p> <p>2 of course we have several senators, uh, because</p> <p>3 they've told us that, uh, they're watching, uh, that</p> <p>4 aren't here tonight.</p> <p>5 Um, Lieutenant Governor and his staff all are</p> <p>6 watching every night. So, uh, we will let you know</p> <p>7 that, uh, even though some aren't here, we have a</p> <p>8 couple of members that aren't here in the Senate but,</p> <p>9 um, but they are watching along with several others</p> <p>10 and we appreciate the opportunity to be here.</p> <p>11 MR. BYRNE: All right. Thanks (inaudible).</p> <p>12 Anyone else has a comment? All right. With that we'll</p> <p>13 -- we'll just begin but -- but -- but I would like to</p> <p>14 -- to once again just thank our staff for graciously</p> <p>15 going through the testimony of the hearings, both from</p> <p>16 2010 and (inaudible) we -- we've had.</p> <p>17 And I've looked at transcripts and looked at some</p> <p>18 of the questions that were asked re -- repeatedly and</p> <p>19 -- and provided with some information that I think</p> <p>20 would be helpful to get out to the public.</p> <p>21 And by answering some questions that someone has,</p> <p>22 if they don't ask are just things that they may have</p> <p>23 thought about. And, uh, once again and -- and thank</p> <p>24 them for doing that.</p> <p>25 Um, and you know, you might -- you'd have people</p>	<p>1 so, uh, our efforts will -- will -- congressional</p> <p>2 redistricting will come first because of this and will</p> <p>3 occur during the fall of this year. And -- and we will</p> <p>4 work on the legislature during the months of the 2022</p> <p>5 legislative sessions (inaudible) to do the</p> <p>6 congressional districts first and then do the</p> <p>7 legislative districts.</p> <p>8 And as you can tell by that timeframe, we can't</p> <p>9 wait a lot longer to get started. We've got -- we've</p> <p>10 got to get started with the session. You know, because</p> <p>11 the (inaudible), um, you know, we're going to face</p> <p>12 many challenges of those maps and scattered around the</p> <p>13 room and the small amounts (inaudible) available to</p> <p>14 you all (inaudible) estimates.</p> <p>15 Um, and they -- they show, um, they showed to</p> <p>16 2020 population estimates for counties showing --</p> <p>17 showing where the Census Bureau projects gains and</p> <p>18 losses. Um, as you can tell some -- some part -- some</p> <p>19 places we're going to go and have these hearings, um,</p> <p>20 there's a population gain in majority of the counties.</p> <p>21 Some places we're going to go, uh, we have</p> <p>22 (inaudible), we have population loss and, you know, we</p> <p>23 are all required to have basically the same size</p> <p>24 districts, uh, everywhere. (Inaudible) district is</p> <p>25 24,273 is the -- is -- is the average size of -- and</p>
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<p>1 who would ask, you know, why -- why re -- re -- why</p> <p>2 redistrict? Um, say very simple.</p> <p>3 Uh, I think all of us know that it's -- I've</p> <p>4 always known it's just something we had to do, but</p> <p>5 they're -- they're reasons why we do that. We do it</p> <p>6 because, um, both the federal constitutional</p> <p>7 requirements on one person, one vote requires three</p> <p>8 districts.</p> <p>9 Both congressional districts and legislative</p> <p>10 districts every 10 years following the census. Um,</p> <p>11 additionally to section 24 of our constitution of</p> <p>12 1890 requires that we redistrict the legislature. So</p> <p>13 we -- we do this redistrict every 10 years because</p> <p>14 it's the requirement of the law that we do that.</p> <p>15 Um, a -- additionally, um, we have asked, um,</p> <p>16 when -- when -- when we commence redistricting as and</p> <p>17 -- just (inaudible) started, it started with our</p> <p>18 organization meeting back about a month ago.</p> <p>19 And this is the fifth of the series of nine</p> <p>20 public hearings that we have. Um, it's, it's, um, you</p> <p>21 know, this is just, uh, the cost of a qualifying</p> <p>22 deadlines that we have some congressional qualifying</p> <p>23 deadlines are in January.</p> <p>24 They can -- start qualifying from as early as</p> <p>25 January. So we -- we -- we cannot wait any longer. Uh,</p>	<p>1 Senate districts, 56,948. And, you know, we have some</p> <p>2 tolerance, 5 percent tolerance.</p> <p>3 Uh, but on our congressional districts, we have</p> <p>4 basically a zero tolerance. So, uh, so you can tell</p> <p>5 because those years of (inaudible) loss population,</p> <p>6 even though the (inaudible) is basically (inaudible)</p> <p>7 the same population with a very small change, that's</p> <p>8 not true in different areas of the state.</p> <p>9 And so you -- you -- you got that dif --</p> <p>10 difficulty in both gaining and losing population</p> <p>11 districts causes problems. So it's a different set of</p> <p>12 problems but it causes problems or challenges.</p> <p>13 And, uh, you know, the, uh, the -- these maps</p> <p>14 are intended not for us to use to draw districts, but</p> <p>15 to -- just to give them (inaudible) and, uh, just, uh,</p> <p>16 an idea of how many people must be in a district and</p> <p>17 how -- and -- and how many people your County has.</p> <p>18 And so you can tell kind of what areas are going</p> <p>19 to gain or lose. You know, why are we presenting these</p> <p>20 estimates instead of the data or the actual data? Is</p> <p>21 it because of delays in redrawing the census and the</p> <p>22 actual number (inaudible) we use in redistricting and</p> <p>23 have not been available?</p> <p>24 Um, our staff actually received kind of official</p> <p>25 numbers today. They're not really official until</p>

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<p align="right">Page 10</p> <p>1 September 30th, but, uh, kind of official numbers.</p> <p>2 The first precinct that really, that [inaudible]</p> <p>3 that just began looking at so that these estimates</p> <p>4 that you have really is the most current information</p> <p>5 we have.</p> <p>6 We hope -- we hope to do something different and</p> <p>7 -- and, you know, the first set of data will be</p> <p>8 available [inaudible] available today with the final</p> <p>9 official delivery occurring close to the end of</p> <p>10 September.</p> <p>11 The cen- -- census estimates give us a good</p> <p>12 indication of where -- where our challenges are and --</p> <p>13 and -- and having -- they have been used in the past.</p> <p>14 uh, to just to assist the public in understanding</p> <p>15 what's going on. Uh, you know, as of [inaudible]</p> <p>16 today, the re- -- the redistricting staff down- --</p> <p>17 downloaded the POP4-171 [inaudible] basically the --</p> <p>18 the more accurate data than -- than what these</p> <p>19 estimates are.</p> <p>20 And, you know, they got that from the US Census</p> <p>21 Bureau, um, our -- our technical partners [inaudible]</p> <p>22 are working on organizing and preparing this data for</p> <p>23 use, uh, as we speak. Uh, um, once prepared the data</p> <p>24 will be put through a quality assessment and -- and</p> <p>25 assurance process. Then maps and data will be prepared</p>	<p align="right">Page 12</p> <p>1 your concerns and [inaudible] we will listen to -- to</p> <p>2 any matter that you wish to bring to our -- our</p> <p>3 attention about how and where we -- we -- we draw</p> <p>4 congressional legislative districts.</p> <p>5 Uh, [inaudible] members come and go [inaudible]</p> <p>6 they must sign a card, uh, with -- with their name, so</p> <p>7 the committee can call them.</p> <p>8 And so if there's anyone here that [inaudible]</p> <p>9 comment, then, um, you need to let staff know and</p> <p>10 [inaudible] so we can call on that person [inaudible]</p> <p>11 and then we'll do that in just a few minutes.</p> <p>12 So you can -- you can ask one if you want one,</p> <p>13 uh, [inaudible] passing those out. Uh, another way,</p> <p>14 you can submit any -- any suggestions to the committee</p> <p>15 in writing or by email. You don't have to comment</p> <p>16 [inaudible] if you've got something you want say, you</p> <p>17 just want to present that, or it's too long</p> <p>18 [inaudible] you'll have an opportunity to present that</p> <p>19 to the committee.</p> <p>20 And -- and you'll also have -- you can take</p> <p>21 advantage of the opportunity to use the committee's</p> <p>22 public rooms [inaudible]. So if you want to go and --</p> <p>23 and actually work -- work on computer terminals there</p> <p>24 will be a time [inaudible] you can do that. Uh, in --</p> <p>25 in a hearing, what kinds of concerns does the</p>
<p align="right">Page 11</p> <p>1 outlining changes at the congressional senate -- and</p> <p>2 state senate state house and county levels.</p> <p>3 These parts will -- will be ready for a</p> <p>4 presentation at our public hearing matches on Monday,</p> <p>5 uh, August 16. And, uh, individual district maps and</p> <p>6 sta- -- and statistics will be available on a</p> <p>7 legislative redistricting website and -- and -- and in</p> <p>8 the coming days on a flow basis as -- as they are</p> <p>9 completed.</p> <p>10 So, I mean, they can't do them all immediately.</p> <p>11 So they will begin, uh, begin [inaudible] and that's</p> <p>12 what [inaudible] and with the intention of having a</p> <p>13 long -- long layer in a relatively short period of</p> <p>14 time.</p> <p>15 So if -- if the district [inaudible] and it makes</p> <p>16 [inaudible] just keep checking it will -- it will be --</p> <p>17 -- it will be on there and, um, you know, [inaudible]</p> <p>18 and we should have [inaudible] use [inaudible] the</p> <p>19 last four hearings.</p> <p>20 But, uh, you know, how many -- how -- how many</p> <p>21 members of the pr- -- participating process, um, you</p> <p>22 know, and there's several ways that members of the</p> <p>23 public anticipate this process.</p> <p>24 One is by, um, by expressing your concern</p> <p>25 [inaudible] at this hearing. Um, we're here to hear</p>	<p align="right">Page 13</p> <p>1 committee need to hear from the public? We need to</p> <p>2 hear just anything is -- is on your mind [inaudible]</p> <p>3 we've heard things about [inaudible] concerns.</p> <p>4 Uh, we've heard about split precincts, splitting</p> <p>5 municipalities. Uh, uh, districts that are odd shaped.</p> <p>6 Uh, you're probably not going to have a question or</p> <p>7 concern if somebody else had- -- hadn't already</p> <p>8 expressed, but -- but that's fine.</p> <p>9 You -- you -- you have the right to express that</p> <p>10 concern. Uh, you know, and just be aware that, you</p> <p>11 know, I might call [inaudible] a member -- , uh, a</p> <p>12 member of the public as I see fit.</p> <p>13 The rules -- the rules of the house governance</p> <p>14 committees, and we will -- we will handle such matters</p> <p>15 as a house would -- would handle those -- those</p> <p>16 issues. Uh, and at this time is just [inaudible]</p> <p>17 recognise any member that is coming in and we thank</p> <p>18 you, thank you for your attendance.</p> <p>19 And -- and uh, they, uh, I -- I want to -- I want</p> <p>20 to read this -- this after, you know -- if you -- if</p> <p>21 you want to mail something in that -- that the public</p> <p>22 wants to contact to make you provide information, um,</p> <p>23 you -- you need to send this and I know it's on your</p> <p>24 material but I will tell them just be patient there</p> <p>25 are people watching that don't have the same materials</p>

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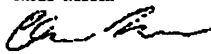
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<p align="right">Page 14</p> <p>1 like you did so I'll read this address out 2 [inaudible]. 3 Staff Council Joint Reapportionment Committee PO 4 Box 1204, Jackson, Mississippi, 39215-1204. And you 5 can, uh, send an email to ted.boothspear that's p-e-e- 6 s.ms.gov. And, uh, so just please provide the 7 information for staff to follow up such as your email 8 address and telephone number. 9 So please don't send us any information and ask 10 questions and not identify yourself because they're 11 not going to be able to get back with you if you -- if 12 you don't. uh, public access for our congressional 13 redistricting will commence following the delivery of 14 the final 7094-171 data which should arrive at the 15 close of September. Um, the public access time will 16 last for three weeks. 17 So starting at early October, they'll be a three- 18 week period of time that -- that you'll be able to 19 work on the congressional redistricting plans. For 20 legislature will occur -- for legislative districts it 21 will occur January 1, 2022 and last three weeks. 22 Um, before -- before, uh, the call on members of 23 the public, uh, uh, is there anybody, [inaudible] you 24 would like to add? 25 All right. Well, thank you. At this time, we're</p>	<p align="right">Page 16</p> <p>1 And at the system, such as the lack of online 2 voter registration, lack of early voting programs and 3 an absentee voting system that requires [inaudible] of 4 an application and ballot. The COVID-19 pandemic made 5 these issues even worse. Many states implemented 6 [inaudible] programs and other efforts to ensure the 7 safety of both voters and election officials. 8 Mississippi could have used this urgent health 9 crisis to rise to the occasion and put the health of 10 its citizens first. But we did not. 11 Instead, you pass legislation to allow 12 individuals who contracted the virus or were cured 13 [inaudible] to use this as an excuse to vote by 14 absentee ballot. This caused more confusion for 15 citizens [inaudible] then had to put their own health 16 at health at risk to provide a ballot for individuals 17 with the virus. 18 This is voter suppression. Incidents like these 19 continue to -- to display themselves in various form 20 and make it more difficult for people to vote. Among 21 the top of this -- of the list of these concerns of 22 voter [inaudible] confusion regarding polling places 23 and the lack of adequate election equipment. 24 Citizens of [inaudible] process that's handled 25 with integrity. The development of [inaudible]</p>
<p align="right">Page 15</p> <p>1 going to open it up and for -- for comments from the 2 public and the one I have [inaudible]. 3 FEMALE: Good evening. This is starting the 4 statement and this is to the city joint legislative 5 redistricting committee from Mississippi Civil 6 Engagement Roundtable. The city state conference 7 NAMEP. One Voice. NAMEP the acting [inaudible]. And 8 this is for political appointment concerns and 9 activity [inaudible]. 10 The process of redistricting is a critical 11 component of the citizens [inaudible] at a local state 12 and federal level. All the process of [inaudible] 13 technical skill it is very -- that very few can 14 master. Everyone has a right to express how these 15 [inaudible] affect their lives. Vote suppression seems 16 to be a major issue in Mississippi. 17 Barriers to vote as well as a lack of political 18 representation are [inaudible] to the 19 disenfranchisement of citizens. My organization, along 20 with the Mississippi Civil Engagement Roundtable have 21 documented years of vote suppression tactics that have 22 led to considerable amount of mistrust in the voting 23 system. Mississippi remains at the bottom of the 24 mainstream for the lack of access that it provides to 25 citizens for voting.</p>	<p align="right">Page 17</p> <p>1 political boundaries at the local state and federal 2 level can help us improve our election process by 3 developing districts that keep our communities 4 together and are transparent. Thank you for your 5 consideration. 6 MR. BECKETT: Thank you. Mr. Taylor. 7 MR. TAYLOR: Yes, sir. Chris Taylor. Uh, I have 8 two questions. Number one, prior to, uh, [inaudible], 9 I have worked in elections here [inaudible] County for 10 years. And over the last 10 years the last time we did 11 redistricting we went from like 10 students to 20 12 students in one precinct. Now you got to look at 13 [inaudible] election. Please look at that [inaudible]. 14 I know you're not supposed to, but you'll need to 15 [inaudible] but you can get a recommendation from the 16 county [inaudible]. And, uh, with the population 17 [inaudible] is losing, do you all think [inaudible] 18 Mississippi in the congressional districts. Just think 19 about [inaudible] and I'll appreciate it. 20 MR. BECKETT: Thank you. 21 MR. TAYLOR: Yes, sir. 22 MR. BECKETT: Uh, does anyone else have a 23 comment? All right. That's the only ones I had, uh, at 24 this time. Is there any member of the committee have 25 anything they want to say? Okay. Um, I want -- I want</p>

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<p style="text-align: right;">Page 18</p> <p>1 to thank -- once again I want to thank our host for 2 providing this -- this space. I want to thank the 3 public for their attendance. 4 And I want to thank our staff just for the work 5 [inaudible] and remind them that we're just at the 6 very beginning of this process. 7 And that we have -- we have -- and that we made -- 8 -- that the -- that the comments we have, you know, you 9 -- you can submit any comments, suggestions, 10 [inaudible] proposed plans by mailing once again to 11 Ted Booth, Staff Council Joint Reapportionment 12 Committee PO Box 1204, Jackson, Mississippi 3 -- I 13 mean 392151-1204. 14 Or you can send an email to 15 ted.booth@pearce.gov. And uh, I say please -- please 16 provide info- -- the information we would need that we 17 can follow up as far as emails and addresses. 18 And, uh, if there are -- with there being no 19 further comments, I move we stand adjourned. 20 21 22 23 24 25</p>	
<p style="text-align: right;">Page 19</p> <p>1 2 3 I, Chris Headen, a transcriber, hereby declare 4 under penalty of perjury that to the best of my 5 ability the above 18 pages contain a full, true and 6 correct transcription of the tape-recording that I 7 received regarding the event listed on the caption on 8 page 1. 9 10 I further declare that I have no interest in the 11 event of the action. 12 13 August 25, 2021 14 Chris Headen 15  16 17 18 (Standing Joint Congressional Redistricting Committee, 19 Starkville, MS-387-21) 20 21 22 23 24 25</p>	

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