

**State Defendants' Response to Brooks, LULAC, and
MALC Plaintiffs' Joint Motion for Preliminary Injunction**

Exhibit AF

Texas House Committee on Congressional Redistricting, Thursday, July 24, 2025,
Transcript.

THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON
CONGRESSIONAL REDISTRICTING, SELECT
89TH LEGISLATURE

PUBLIC HEARING

July 24, 2025

1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 REP. VASUT: The time is 2:14 p.m. The
3 House Select Committee on Congressional Redistricting
4 will come to order. The Clerk will call the roll.

5 THE CLERK: Chair Vasut?

6 REP. VASUT: Here.

7 THE CLERK: Vice Chair Rosenthal?

8 REP. ROSENTHAL: Here.

9 THE CLERK: Garcia?

10 REP. GARCIA: Here.

11 THE CLERK: Geren?

12 REP. GEREN: Here.

13 THE CLERK: Gervin-Hawkins?

14 REP. GERVIN-HAWKINS: Present.

15 THE CLERK: Guerra?

16 REP. GUERRA: Here.

17 THE CLERK: Hefner?

18 REP. HEFNER: Here.

19 THE CLERK: Hunter?

20 REP. HUNTER: Here.

21 THE CLERK: Manuel?

22 REP. MANUEL: Here.

23 THE CLERK: McQueeney?

24 REP. MCQUEENEY: Here.

25 THE CLERK: Metcalf?

1 REP. METCALF: Here.

2 THE CLERK: Moody?

3 REP. MOODY: Present.

4 THE CLERK: Pierson?

5 REP. PIERSON: Here.

6 THE CLERK: Spiller?

7 REP. SPILLER: Here.

8 THE CLERK: Tepper?

9 REP. TEPPER: Here.

10 THE CLERK: Thompson?

11 REP. THOMPSON: Here.

12 THE CLERK: Turner?

13 REP. TURNER: Here.

14 THE CLERK: Wilson?

15 REP. WILSON: Here.

16 THE CLERK: Wu?

17 REP. WU: Here.

18 REP. VASUT: Quorum is present. Chair

19 recognizes the following members that are up on the

20 dais today. Representative Jones, Representative

21 Goodwin, Representative Shofner, Representative Perez,

22 Representative Trey Martinez Fischer. Chair will show

23 Mr. Guillen here. Chair will show Ms. Hickland here.

24 All right, we miss anybody?

25 Appreciate you dealing with our technical

1 issues as we get started here today. Members, it's an
2 honor to get to serve with you on this committee. To
3 start with some housekeeping, our Committee Clerk is
4 Edward Jaax, who's up here with me. Our Assistant
5 Committee Clerk is Dylan Menard, right down there.
6 They're here to help you with any logistics. We also
7 have Kylie Hicks from my office here today if you need
8 any help.

9 Any documents relating to the committee
10 will be emailed to you and your chiefs by Edward or
11 Dylan, as has already been done for today's hearing.
12 We have set up a Dropbox for the members of the
13 committee where we will post materials for committee
14 meetings. You have already received an invitation to
15 join that Dropbox. If you have any issues, let us
16 know. You should be able to find the materials for
17 today's meeting on that Dropbox. We will endeavor to
18 scan any documents handed to the committee and place
19 them in that Dropbox for your access as soon as we can.

20 There will be food or drinks in the back
21 if you need them. As you are no doubt aware, please
22 ensure that a quorum of the committee does not meet in
23 the back to discuss any committee business.

24 By way of background for the members of
25 the public and the members here today, as you may be

1 aware, on July 9th, 2025, Governor Greg Abbott issued a
2 proclamation calling the 89th Legislature to convene in
3 special session starting this past Monday, July 21st,
4 2025. Under the Constitution, the length of each
5 special session is limited to 30 days. Governor Abbott
6 has asked the 89th Legislature, in his proclamation, to
7 take up legislation that provides a revised
8 congressional redistricting plan in light of
9 constitutional concerns raised by the U.S. Department
10 of Justice. A copy of the governor's proclamation can
11 be found in the Dropbox.

12 The current congressional redistricting
13 plan for the 119th Congress is Plan C2193. We have
14 printed out a copy of this current plan for you. A
15 copy can also be found in the Dropbox. And for the
16 general public and everyone viewing at home, you can
17 access the plan at dvr.capitol.texas.gov, click
18 Congress, and then click Current Districts.

19 It is the Chair's intention at this time
20 to take up any revisions to the congressional
21 redistricting plan in two phases. First, we have three
22 public hearings to hear from anyone wishing to testify
23 on revisions they would like to see or not see to the
24 current congressional redistricting plan found in
25 C2193. These three public hearings include today's

1 hearing in Austin, a hearing on Saturday, July 26, 2025
2 at 11:00 a.m. in Houston, and a hearing on Monday, July
3 28, 2025 at 5:00 p.m. in Arlington. Each of these
4 hearing notices have been posted, and copies can be
5 found in the committee Dropbox.

6 As the chair previously requested, all
7 members of the committee, the legislature, the media,
8 and the public are strongly encouraged to share the
9 details for each of these hearings with the people of
10 Texas. Second, after these public hearings are
11 completed, the Chair anticipates scheduling a public
12 hearing on a bill, if one is filed, to revise the
13 congressional redistricting plan. While the rules
14 allow the Chair to schedule public hearings and special
15 sessions with as little as 24 hours' notice, the Chair
16 intends to provide more notice than that of any public
17 hearing or meeting to discuss any bill revising the
18 congressional redistricting plan. Members, in addition
19 to keeping your calendar clear during each week of the
20 special session, please also keep your calendar clear
21 the first weekend in August in case we need to schedule
22 any committee business during that time.

23 Before we take up any revision to the
24 congressional redistricting plan or discuss such a plan
25 amongst ourselves, we are here today to hear from the

1 public about what that revision should be, if any. As
2 set out on the posting for today's hearing, we will
3 take public testimony regarding a revised congressional
4 redistricting plan pursuant to the governor's July 9,
5 2025 proclamation, calling a special session for the
6 89th Legislature. Today's hearing will focus on those
7 counties of the state lying wholly or partly within
8 Congressional Districts 10, 11, 15, 16, 17, 20, 21, 23,
9 27, 28, 31, 34, 35, and 37 for the 119th Congress. But
10 the committee will hear testimony about any region of
11 the state, will hear any region of the state you want
12 to talk about today.

13 Today's hearing will feature both in-
14 person and invited virtual public testimony. Pursuant
15 to the posting, the deadline to register for virtual
16 public testimony was yesterday, July 23rd, 2025 at 2:00
17 p.m. All individuals who have been invited to provide
18 virtual public testimony have received instructions.
19 Should you have any questions, please email us at the
20 email provided to you with your instructions.

21 For everyone in the audience, and those
22 in the overflow rooms, I believe we have two overflow
23 rooms, thank you for being here today. In order to
24 testify in person today, you must register at the
25 kiosks outside the committee room. They're right over

1 here. If you have any questions or encounter any
2 difficulty, please confer with committee staff up here
3 at the front. We'd be happy to assist you. We'll be
4 closing registration for in-person testimony today at
5 3:30 p.m., a little more than an hour, so please
6 register at the kiosk before this deadline. I plan to
7 alternate invited virtual testimony and in-person
8 testimony.

9 For everyone wishing to testify,
10 testimony will be limited to two minutes in length. I
11 will have a timer. I think we have it down here, and
12 there is, I believe, one in front of the testifying
13 witness right there. There will also be an audible
14 bell that goes off. It'll be, I believe, two chirps at
15 15 seconds and then two chirps when you're done. And
16 of course, when that time runs out, I'll tell you,
17 "Thank you for your time" and then we can take up any
18 questions.

19 So for our virtual witnesses we'll take
20 questions immediately after each witness testifies.
21 Okay? And I just want to note that any questions you
22 receive are not an opportunity to extend your time for
23 testimony broadly. The reason why is we want to be
24 fair to everyone here and generally provide the same
25 amount of testimony for everyone, no matter who you

1 are, no matter where you're from. In order to ensure a
2 balance of public testimony across the three public
3 hearings and to reasonably structure the committee's
4 business, the public testimony for today's hearing will
5 also be limited to five hours in length. The time
6 right now does not count against that. We're only
7 going to start that running while people are testifying
8 and answering questions.

9 This time -- and I want to stress this.
10 This time is not the only opportunity that you have to
11 provide information for the committee to consider.
12 This is just one of many ways. First, if you have more
13 to say than the time allows, or we unfortunately do not
14 reach you here today, as the hearing notice mentioned,
15 we welcome you to bring up a written copy of your
16 testimony. Please turn that in to Dylan at the end, if
17 we get to that point. If you had more to say you
18 couldn't get to or we run out of time, please turn in
19 your written testimony to Dylan. He's going to scan
20 that in so every member of this committee will be able
21 to hear from you.

22 Second, if you have any handouts with you
23 today, as the notice mentions, please bring the
24 handouts up front to Dylan before your testimony, and
25 they will be provided to members of the committee. We

1 ask you to bring 22 copies. That's for our members
2 here. For those on the dais that are not on the
3 committee, we might not have a copy for you. I
4 apologize for that. I didn't know the numbers, but for
5 the members of the committee, we will.

6 The Texas -- third, anyone is welcome to
7 submit an electronic comment without testifying online.
8 The electronic portal is linked in today's hearing
9 notice, and it could be found at:
10 comments.house.texas.gov. Information can be uploaded
11 to the portal for today's hearing through the end of
12 today's hearing. You can also upload information to
13 the portal for future hearings through the conclusion
14 of those future hearings.

15 The Texas Legislative Council also hosts
16 a website for redistricting at:
17 redistricting.capital.texas.gov. On that website, you
18 can find information about submitting proposed maps for
19 consideration. Click 2020s at the top, then click
20 Public Participation. There will be links on that page
21 that will guide you. Finally, every member of the
22 public is always welcome to email, contact, or call any
23 member of the legislature at any time, and many of you
24 have done that. We welcome you to continue to do so.

25 So finally, logistics, for our virtual

1 witnesses, again, we're going to take you one at a
2 time. I'm going to announce the four that we will take
3 just so that you know that your testimony is coming up.
4 So if you're in those first four witnesses that I
5 mentioned, just be ready. But we will take virtual
6 witnesses one at a time. For our in-person witnesses,
7 I'm going to bring you up in panels of four. We have
8 four seats right up here. If you're in here, great.
9 If you're in the overflow room, just be listening.

10 What I plan to do is, I'll call up our
11 four virtual witnesses and I'll go ahead and tell you
12 who the four on the next panel of in-person will be.
13 If your name is called for the in-person panel, just
14 make your way into the room up here to the front, and
15 you can be seated at those chairs. That way, we can
16 get to you expeditiously. Members, please hold
17 questions for our in-person testimony until all four
18 panelists have testified. And then, of course, you can
19 question the panel.

20 Finally, since we have no bill before us
21 today -- and we've gotten some questions about this, so
22 I'll make sure this is clear. Since we have no bill
23 before us, at any of these first three public hearings,
24 all testimony will be neutral or on, which I will
25 verify with each of you when you come up here to

1 testify.

2 With that, let's get started. Our first
3 four witnesses for virtual testimony today are going to
4 be -- just so the members are aware, since we're in the
5 Appropriations Committee Room, the technology is a
6 little different. In order to be recognized by the
7 Chair, please press the button on your microphone.
8 It'll pop up on here, and then we'll recognize you. So
9 Vice Chair Rosenthal, for what purpose?

10 REP. ROSENTHAL: May I make an opening
11 statement?

12 REP. VASUT: The gentlemen is recognized
13 for such purpose.

14 REP. ROSENTHAL: Thank you. Thank you,
15 Mr. Chairman. Thank you all for being here today. For
16 the people that don't know me, my name is Jon
17 Rosenthal. I'll be your co-host for the afternoon and
18 evening. I'm a career mechanical engineer. I believe
19 in practical solutions. This, in my view, is far from
20 anything resembling a practical solution. I also note
21 that it's an incredible responsibility for me to be
22 here serving as your vice chair today. Sometimes oil
23 field engineers get to take on some really big things,
24 and I have had the privilege and the opportunity to
25 work on some major undertakings. Nothing in my life

1 compares to serving as the vice chair in this committee
2 today. So I feel the weight and the gravity of this
3 proceeding because there's a real fight on our hands,
4 let's face it. I'm ready for it. I know my colleagues
5 are as well.

6 I'd like to ask the Clerk to pass out
7 this little packet. I've got the letter from the
8 Department of Justice, the proclamation from the
9 Governor, and the committee hearing notice. If we
10 could please make sure that every member of the
11 committee has this. I want to ensure that we all
12 understand what's happening here and what's brought us
13 here today.

14 So, members, I want you to pay special
15 attention to the letter from the Department of Justice,
16 which is what set this entire chain of events in
17 motion. The congressional districts specifically
18 mentioned by the Department of Justice are
19 Congressional District 9, 18, 29, and 33. It's curious
20 to me that none of these districts are mentioned among
21 the dozen or so districts listed in our hearing notice.
22 And I'll let you think about why that might be the
23 case.

24 Mid-decade redistricting is unusual.
25 It's unnecessary. We are actually constitutionally

1 required to redraw districts every ten years following
2 the census. Texas did its constitutional duty and
3 redrew the districts following the 2020 census in 2021,
4 and I was here for that proceeding. So that process is
5 supposed to be about making things fair. As the
6 population of the state grows and changes and moves
7 around, we adjust district boundaries to make sure
8 folks have fair representation. This process, in my
9 view, has nothing to do with making things fair.

10 If you look at the four districts in
11 question that the Department of Justice listed on their
12 letter, this process is aimed at removing black
13 congressional representatives. Three of those four
14 seats are black held seats. That is an attempt to
15 racially gerrymander our state under the guise of un-
16 racially gerrymandering. And then one Latino seat.
17 The effort to change these districts at this time has
18 nothing to do with representing people better. It's
19 the opposite of that. It's a power grab at the expense
20 of black and brown communities.

21 So here's what's really at stake. Texas
22 is growing. The vast majority of that growth is by
23 people of color. So, I live in a world of facts.
24 Engineers make stuff happen in real life. We use a lot
25 of math, so I hope you'll bear with me.

1 This population growth measured from 2010
2 to 2020 was black and brown people. So the population
3 during that period, according to the Census Bureau of
4 the United States of America, grew by 3,999,994 people.
5 That's six short of four million. Let's just call it
6 four million. Of that growth, 187,252 were white,
7 557,887 were black, 1.98 million were Latino.

8 So, I'll do the -- I have done the math
9 for you already: 4.6 percent of that ten-year growth
10 was white. But the four million drove the need for
11 this state to draw two new congressional districts,
12 Congressional 37 and 38. And by some miracle of
13 chance, this legislature drew both of those districts
14 to be majority white. I live in one of them. Black
15 and brown communities already don't have fair
16 representation. So if our population is 60 percent
17 communities of color, why is our congressional
18 delegation 34 percent from communities of color? So,
19 if we have a proceeding aimed at taking away their
20 seats, we're taking away their voices, plain and
21 simple.

22 So -- and I know I'm talking about black
23 and brown communities. And I don't know if you are
24 aware of this, but I'm actually a white guy. And I do
25 feel it's especially important for me, for people that

1 look like me, to speak out about this kind of
2 injustice. It was Desmond Tutu that said, "If you are
3 neutral in situations of injustice, you have chosen the
4 side of the oppressor." We need to speak up and speak
5 out. It's on us, especially those who benefit from
6 these systems, to have our voice in these spaces.

7 I'm just going to end with this. Mid-
8 decade redistricting is pointless, unjust, and we won't
9 let that happen quietly. I'm here to fight. We all
10 need to raise our voices to protect democracy for every
11 Texan. Thanks for your attention.

12 REP. VASUT: Mr. Turner, for what
13 purpose?

14 REP. TURNER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
15 Before we move on to testimony, I have a couple of
16 questions, if I may, in terms of -- can you hear me
17 now?

18 REP. VASUT: Yes, I can. Please restate
19 your inquiry.

20 REP. TURNER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
21 Before we move on to testimony, I just wonder if you
22 would allow me a couple of questions so I can better
23 understand the process here.

24 REP. VASUT: Chair recognizes Mr. Turner
25 for his questions.

1 REP. TURNER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
2 So you have seen the letter from the Department of
3 Justice objecting to the racial compositions of
4 Districts 9, 18, 29, and 33?

5 REP. VASUT: I have, and I have received
6 a copy of it here, I believe, with all of you.

7 REP. TURNER: Yes. And I think you said
8 this in your opening, but just to clarify, it is that
9 letter that Governor Abbott cited in his proclamation
10 for the special session?

11 REP. VASUT: He doesn't cite to a
12 specific letter in his proclamation. He does reference
13 concerns, I believe, raised by the U.S. Department of
14 Justice.

15 REP. TURNER: Okay. Are you aware of any
16 other way that DOJ has raised concerns beyond that
17 letter?

18 REP. VASUT: That would have to be a
19 question for the Governor. I'm not aware of any other
20 letter, though, personally myself.

21 REP. TURNER: Okay. I'm not either. I
22 think it -- I think it refers back to the letter. So
23 the letter that you've read, and I've read as well,
24 basically is asking Texas to dismantle those four
25 districts because of their racial makeup. And my

1 question is, do you believe, as the Chair, does the
2 Committee believe that it is legal for us to
3 intentionally dismantle majority minority districts
4 because of their racial composition?

5 REP. VASUT: I don't believe that the
6 letter is a specific request for us to dismantle any
7 district. However, it's the Chair's intention at all
8 times that we are going to follow the Voting Rights Act
9 and we're going to follow the law. And we have no
10 plans, at this moment, to change any particular
11 district. The purpose of today's hearing is, of
12 course, to hear from the public before we go into that
13 process.

14 REP. TURNER: Well, Mr. Chairman, the
15 letter specifically says that these are coalition
16 districts, meaning that they're majority minority
17 districts. And they say that they're unconstitutional.
18 And we urge the State of Texas to rectify these race-
19 based considerations from these specific districts. So
20 it seems to me they're asking us to change the
21 districts based on their racial makeup by virtue of the
22 fact that they're majority minority districts.

23 REP. VASUT: You'd have to refer
24 specifically what the Department of Justice wants to do
25 or not wants to do to them. The Chair obviously did

1 not have this letter addressed to him. And as far as
2 I'm concerned, we're -- the whole point of this process
3 is solely to respond to the Governor's call. And we're
4 going to take up congressional redistricting in that
5 two-phase process I mentioned earlier. And I'd love to
6 get to this first phase of hearing from the public.

7 REP. TURNER: No, I appreciate that. And
8 I appreciate your point about the Department of Justice
9 didn't address the letter to you or any member of the
10 Legislature. Will we be hearing from the Department of
11 Justice today?

12 REP. VASUT: I am not certain. The Chair
13 is not advised whether they have registered to testify.
14 I believe that an open invitation was sent to everyone
15 to register if they'd like to. And the Vice Chair has
16 reached out to me and wanted to invite some
17 individuals, and I've worked with him to do so. And
18 we'll take any of his invited witnesses out of the
19 regular order as a courtesy to the Vice Chair.

20 REP. TURNER: Appreciate that. Would we
21 be able to formally invite the Department of Justice to
22 come and testify before this committee? If not today,
23 then in Houston or in Arlington?

24 REP. VASUT: I'd be happy to talk with
25 you about that. I know the Vice Chair was thinking

1 perhaps, but we can talk about that.

2 REP. TURNER: I think it'd be important
3 to try to understand their legal basis for this
4 exercise. Who are the -- and just a couple more
5 questions, Mr. Chairman. I appreciate we want to get
6 to witnesses. Who are the legal advisors to our
7 committee for this process?

8 REP. VASUT: My understanding is the
9 House has retained Butler Snow, and I believe that --
10 I'm not exactly certain of whether or not they
11 represent the individual members of the committee, but
12 I believe, to respond to your inquiry, it would be
13 Butler Snow.

14 REP. TURNER: Okay. But they are --
15 you're not sure if they're available to the entire
16 committee?

17 REP. VASUT: That is a legal question. I
18 don't want to give you a right or -- an incorrect
19 answer. Right? So I'd be happy to look at that and
20 get you an answer to that.

21 REP. TURNER: Okay. I appreciate that.
22 Are there any other outside law firms, that you're
23 aware of, that are involved in the process?

24 REP. VASUT: Not to my knowledge.

25 REP. TURNER: Okay. And have you had --

1 as you've kind of undertaken this process, have you had
2 any discussions about this process with our Attorney
3 General's Office, General Paxton's office?

4 REP. VASUT: I received a -- I cannot
5 waive attorney-client privilege during the regular
6 session as to the litigation. I did receive a briefing
7 of the litigation, but no, I have not communicated with
8 the Office of the Attorney General regarding this
9 redistricting process.

10 REP. TURNER: Okay. And I take it from
11 your previous comment you've not communicated with the
12 Department of Justice?

13 REP. VASUT: I have not.

14 REP. TURNER: Okay. How about the White
15 House?

16 REP. VASUT: I have not.

17 REP. TURNER: Okay. How about a
18 gentleman named Adam Kincaid?

19 REP. VASUT: I have -- I honestly have no
20 idea who that is.

21 REP. TURNER: Okay. He's -- my
22 understanding is he's the person who drew the maps in
23 the last decade. Anyone with the National Republican
24 Redistricting Trust?

25 REP. VASUT: No.

1 REP. TURNER: Okay. And lastly, have you
2 seen any proposed maps that the White House has sent?

3 REP. VASUT: No.

4 REP. TURNER: That President Trump's
5 operatives have sent?

6 REP. VASUT: No. I believe the only map
7 that I have seen is the one that was posted to the
8 public portal, which I reminded everyone, anyone in the
9 public is invited to submit a map. Just because a map
10 is put onto that portal does not mean in any way that
11 that is a map this committee is intending to take up or
12 otherwise. The public is free to submit whatever the
13 public wants.

14 REP. TURNER: Okay. So you've seen -- no
15 one has sent you any maps for this committee to
16 consider?

17 REP. VASUT: No.

18 REP. TURNER: Okay. Thank you, Mr.
19 Chair.

20 REP. VASUT: Thank you, Mr. Turner.

21 Mr. Wu, for what purpose?

22 REP. WU: I have some questions.

23 REP. VASUT: Yes. Chair recognizes Mr.
24 Wu for questions.

25 REP. WU: Thank you. Mr. Chairman, I

1 just want to follow up on Representative Turner's
2 questions just a little bit. I'm personally very
3 confused about why exactly we're here doing this. And
4 from what I heard you say earlier, you've not been
5 given any explanation or any notice from the governor
6 of why he made the call.

7 REP. VASUT: I have received the same
8 proclamation that you have received.

9 REP. WU: Okay. And this is not a
10 process that you have personally asked for?

11 REP. VASUT: No.

12 REP. WU: This redistricting, you've not
13 personally asked for that?

14 REP. VASUT: Does anyone really ask to be
15 chair of redistricting?

16 REP. WU: Well, yeah, I mean --

17 REP. VASUT: But I am here. No, I have
18 not asked.

19 REP. WU: Just -- I just want to be clear
20 that as the chair of this committee, as the Chair of
21 the Redistricting Committee, that you did not say,
22 "Governor Abbott, please" --

23 REP. VASUT: No, I did not.

24 REP. WU: And as far as you know, nobody
25 on this committee has made those requests either?

1 REP. VASUT: Not to my knowledge.

2 REP. WU: Do you know of any member of
3 the legislature went to the governor and said, "We
4 really could use this right now?"

5 REP. VASUT: Not to my knowledge.

6 REP. WU: Okay.

7 REP. VASUT: Again, I'm limited to what I
8 personally know.

9 REP. WU: No, absolutely. Absolutely.
10 And, you know, I only know what I know; you only know
11 what you know. And between the two of us, I don't
12 think we know anything of why we're here.

13 REP. VASUT: I think the Chair would say
14 that the Governor has put an item on the call. It is
15 prudent and proper for the legislative committees to
16 take up the items that the governor has designated.
17 And what the legislature does with that is up to the
18 legislature. But it's the Chair's position that the
19 governor has placed this item on the call, and we're
20 going to take it up in a two-phase process.

21 REP. WU: Absolutely. And you're -- I
22 mean, you -- I know you keep up with this stuff.
23 You're aware that we were recently -- the State was
24 recently involved in a trial, three-week trial in El
25 Paso --

1 REP. VASUT: Very generally.

2 REP. WU: -- over the maps that we passed
3 in '21?

4 REP. VASUT: I have very general
5 knowledge, not specific. I was not involved in that.

6 REP. WU: Same here, same here. But you
7 were -- are you aware that members of our body
8 testified under oath in that trial saying that there
9 was absolutely no racial gerrymandering in the current
10 maps that we're discussing?

11 REP. VASUT: I'm generally aware of that.

12 REP. WU: Okay. Thank you. And you've
13 not seen anything that would speak to the contrary?

14 REP. VASUT: No. I've certainly never
15 seen any indication that any map that has been passed
16 out of this legislature, anytime I've been in a
17 legislature that I voted on, would violate in any way
18 the Voting Rights Act. But again, I'm not a legal
19 expert. I'm going to just tell you what I know. And,
20 of course, I voted on that -- I had an opportunity to
21 vote on the same maps that you did.

22 REP. WU: Have you seen -- have you
23 personally seen any demographic evidence or any data of
24 any kind that would suggest that or would say that,
25 that there needs to be mid-cycle redistricting?

1 REP. VASUT: Well, I think whether or not
2 there needs to be mid-cycle redistricting is a matter
3 of opinion. To your first question about whether I've
4 seen evidence, I believe -- and correct me if I'm
5 wrong. I think your question was have I seen evidence
6 of the current map engaged in some type of
7 inappropriate violation of the VRA?

8 REP. WU: Um-hmm.

9 REP. VASUT: And I have not.

10 REP. WU: Okay. All right. Thank you
11 very much.

12 REP. VASUT: Thank you, Mr. Wu.

13 REP. THOMPSON: Mr. Chairman.

14 REP. VASUT: Dean Thompson, for what
15 purpose?

16 REP. THOMPSON: I happened to see the
17 letter that the DOJ sent down here. But I want to say
18 that the Attorney General of Texas answered them, and
19 they said that the Texas Legislature did not pass race-
20 based electoral districts for any of those three
21 political maps. The Texas State Senator, Joan Huffman,
22 who chaired the Senate Redistricting Committee,
23 testified under oath that she drew Texas districts
24 blind to race and sought to maximize Republican
25 political advantage, balance against traditional

1 redistricting criteria. And he goes -- he went on to
2 say in his letter to the DOJ that the Texas Legislature
3 has led the nation in rejecting race-based decision-
4 making in its redistricting process, and it has thrown
5 its current maps in conformance with traditional non-
6 racial redistricting criteria to ensure Texas continues
7 to adopt policies that would truly make Texas great
8 again.

9 And, Mr. Chairman, I resent the Texas
10 Department of -- the United States Department of
11 Justice sitting down here accusing our state that we
12 have drawn some race-based maps and actually putting
13 scorn upon our elected officials, because you and I
14 know that Dan Patrick never would have passed a map out
15 of the Senate, and we never would have passed one out
16 of the House that would have included this. And,
17 again, not trying to be deletory in your getting to the
18 witnesses, I just resent this, and I just think that
19 this is a waste of good taxpayers' dollars that we
20 ought to be putting somewhere like into flood victims.
21 And we flood in Harris County, incidentally. We need
22 some of this flood money, too. Thank you.

23 REP. VASUT: Understood, Dean Thompson.
24 Ms. Gervin-Hawkins, for what purpose? Is your
25 microphone on?

1 REP. GERVIN-HAWKINS: It is. I believe
2 so.

3 REP. VASUT: It's like the Verizon
4 commercial. Let's try it again.

5 REP. GERVIN-HAWKINS: Can you hear me
6 now?

7 REP. VASUT: I can hear you good. Ms.
8 Gervin-Hawkins, for what purpose?

9 REP. GERVIN-HAWKINS: I'd like to make a
10 couple comments.

11 REP. VASUT: Chair recognizes Ms. Gervin-
12 Hawkins for some brief comments. Hold on, Ms. Gervin-
13 Hawkins. I believe -- can you try that microphone one
14 more time? I don't believe your microphone's on.
15 We're going to work on that. How about now, Ms.
16 Gervin-Hawkins?

17 REP. GERVIN-HAWKINS: Testing.

18 REP. VASUT: There we go. Thank you.
19 Ms. Gervin-Hawkins, you're recognized for brief
20 comments.

21 REP. GERVIN-HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr.
22 Chair. A couple questions and then a comment. Is it
23 possible that the minority party also get access to an
24 attorney?

25 REP. VASUT: I'd be happy to evaluate

1 that request. I have not received such a request.

2 REP. GERVIN-HAWKINS: Okay. Will any of
3 the senators who said that the maps weren't race-
4 baited, will they come and testify?

5 REP. VASUT: Chair's not advised. That
6 would be a rather different kind of request. I don't
7 believe that members of each house testify at committee
8 hearings, but the Chair's happy to look at that. I
9 know a lot of rules. Never heard that one.

10 REP. GERVIN-HAWKINS: Let's be the first.

11 REP. VASUT: Yeah.

12 REP. GERVIN-HAWKINS: We're swimming
13 through new waters. You know, let's add what we need.
14 The other question is this -- a couple more questions.
15 Will you define for this group, as the Chair, what you
16 determine is a minority district versus a coalition
17 district?

18 REP. VASUT: That's a legal question.
19 The Chair's not going to engage in answering or
20 attempting to answer legal questions, not the least of
21 reasons, I'm not an expert on redistricting law.

22 REP. GERVIN-HAWKINS: Thank you, Mr.
23 Chair. Will a recommendation from this committee be
24 forthcoming to the Governor?

25 REP. VASUT: I'm not sure I understand

1 your question. Are you referring to a bill or a
2 resolution or a particular action?

3 REP. GERVIN-HAWKINS: I'm talking about
4 the maps. Will any recommendation be coming from this
5 committee to the Governor's Office?

6 REP. VASUT: It's the Chair's intention
7 to complete these initial hearings that have been
8 noticed before we take up, if we take up, such a
9 question.

10 REP. GERVIN-HAWKINS: Okay. And my
11 comment is this, Mr. Chair. You know, when I look at
12 the districts that's listed on the Department of
13 Justice letter, and I'm looking at our Congressperson
14 Garcia, Congressman Al Green, Congressman Marc Veasey,
15 and the open seat, the historical seat of Congresswoman
16 Sheila Jackson Lee and Sylvester Turner. And so when I
17 see these names mentioned, and I think of our historic
18 and iconic members of our congressional group, I'm
19 insulted, I'm concerned, and I'm wondering, why must we
20 do this?

21 And what I'm hoping, and this is to the
22 entire committee, let's not allow the White House to
23 put its arms into Texas and divide our community. It's
24 wrong. It should not happen. And we want to make sure
25 that our legislators know this is wrong. And we will

1 not stand by and just let it occur. Thank you, Mr.
2 Chair.

3 REP. VASUT: Thank you, Ms. Gervin-
4 Hawkins. Hearing no further matters before the
5 committee -- Speaker Moody, for what purpose?

6 REP. MOODY: Questions of the Chair.

7 REP. VASUT: Chair yields for questions.

8 REP. MOODY: Thank you, sir. I was
9 reading the proclamation that you cited, and there's a
10 number of items that are listed in the proclamation.
11 The one you've referred to states, "Legislation that
12 provides a revised congressional redistricting plan in
13 light of the constitutional concerns raised by the
14 United States Department of Justice," or U.S.
15 Department of Justice, is how it reads. It's within
16 the power and the purview of the Governor to convene
17 the Legislature in a special session and set the agenda
18 for that session. Is that -- is that your
19 understanding?

20 REP. VASUT: Subject to the rules of the
21 House and the Constitution, yes.

22 REP. MOODY: Is there any obligation upon
23 the - I'll stick with the Texas House, because I don't
24 think the Texas Senate has rules. Is it incumbent upon
25 the Texas House to take up and pass legislation in

1 furtherance of the Governor's call? Is there any
2 mandate that we must do so?

3 REP. VASUT: All legislative power is
4 vested in the Legislature. It's up to the Legislature
5 at its discretion. It's the Chair's intention to take
6 up this process, if at all, in the two phases
7 mentioned.

8 REP. MOODY: Yeah, and I appreciate you
9 lining that up because I think it allows for us to
10 understand the process that we're going to undertake.
11 But we don't have -- we don't have legislation before
12 us today. There is no bill. And I know that your
13 intent is to take public testimony at this hearing
14 today, one in Houston, and one in Arlington in the next
15 several days. How is -- how is that public testimony
16 going to inform proposed legislation?

17 REP. VASUT: All information that flows
18 through the committee is available to committee members
19 to guide them in making any decision, whether or not to
20 file a bill, what the bill may look like, what
21 amendments they may want to do to any type of bill.
22 And so the first stage is to hear from the public, to
23 determine what they believe about whether they'd like
24 to see revisions, and if so, what kind. And then that
25 feedback can certainly be taken into account.

1 REP. MOODY: And is it the Chair's intent
2 to hear that testimony and then as the Chair engage in
3 drafting the legislation to bring forward?

4 REP. VASUT: I'm not sure what I'm going
5 to do. I would say that we're going to hear from the
6 public. And then once we get through that hearing in
7 Dallas on Monday, then we'll evaluate what next steps
8 we take.

9 REP. MOODY: So if that process was
10 housed with the Chair, how would the public testimony
11 inform your drafting of that legislation?

12 REP. VASUT: That would be a
13 hypothetical. I wouldn't be able to answer that at
14 this time. I think the general expectation, and of
15 which I've attempted to operate it the whole time I've
16 been in the Legislature, is that everyone that comes to
17 a public hearing and gives testimony, that that
18 testimony is taken into account.

19 REP. MOODY: Mr. Chairman, I appreciate
20 the time to ask questions. I know we have a number of
21 members of the public here to testify. And to those
22 members that are waiting to -- the members of the
23 public waiting to testify, this is an opportunity, as
24 the Chair stated, to let your opinion be known. And
25 that this process should be and must be informed by

1 your opinions about what we should or shouldn't be
2 doing. There is no obligation for us to do this at
3 all. At all. And I look forward to hearing from the
4 public about whatever opinion they have on these maps.
5 And my hope is that whoever engages in drawing these
6 maps, because in the past -- in the past it's been the
7 Chair, but whoever engages in drawing these maps and
8 proposing this legislation also listens intently to the
9 testimony that we're going to gather over the next
10 several weeks. So thank you very much, Mr. Chair.

11 REP. VASUT: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Mr.
12 Wu, for what purpose?

13 REP. WU: I apologize. I have just a few
14 follow-up questions.

15 REP. VASUT: The Chair yields for
16 questions.

17 REP. WU: I apologize. I didn't hear
18 your answer exactly. In terms of the law firm Butler
19 Snow, you said that is the committee's representation
20 or you don't know?

21 REP. VASUT: I m not -- I'm not fully
22 advised on the full extent of their representation.
23 Certainly they can and have --

24 REP. WU: Would you let us know who the
25 attorneys are so we can talk to them directly and say,

1 "Hey, do you represent us or not?"

2 REP. VASUT: The Chair would be happy to
3 circle back with the member.

4 REP. WU: Thank you. Just on a quick
5 procedural question, I know you said earlier that
6 witnesses are being asked to testify neutral, changing
7 -- no matter what they put into their affirmation --

8 REP. VASUT: Rules require that just
9 because there's not a bill before the committee.

10 REP. WU: Okay. But member -- people,
11 witnesses, even though they're listed as neutral --

12 REP. VASUT: They do not have to be
13 neutral.

14 REP. WU: Okay. Thank you.

15 REP. VASUT: Yes, that is a -- that's a
16 good question, Representative Wu. Under the rules,
17 that's just required for purposes when you don't have a
18 bill. It's always neutral testimony to reflect that
19 into the minutes. But members of the public are, of
20 course, free to give any testimony that they like. Any
21 further questions for the Chair? Chair has none.

22 Chair will move into invited public
23 testimony. The first one we're going to do is virtual
24 testimony. The first three that I would like to have,
25 or first four I'd like to have on-deck, so please be

1 ready in the virtual panel. We're going to invite you
2 in one at a time. Ellen Katz, Ally Flores, Eric
3 Jacobsen, Robin Peeples.

4 Our first panel for in-person testimony,
5 which if you would, please make your way up to these
6 chairs. I'm going to take three. And I apologize for
7 pronunciation of any name. Nothing is intended -- I'm
8 from southeast Texas. I like to say southeast Texas.
9 Maybe they don't claim us in southeast Texas, but I
10 like southeast Texas, Brazoria County. Greg Casar,
11 Joaquin Castro, and Sylvia Garcia, if you'll make your
12 way up to the front.

13 So let's go to our first virtual witness.
14 Chair calls Ellen Katz to provide invited virtual
15 public testimony. Ms. Katz if you'll unmute your --
16 we're going to send you a little blue dot to unmute
17 yourself. And if you could, make sure that we can see
18 your video. Thank you very much.

19 ELLEN KATZ: Can you hear me?

20 REP. VASUT: We can hear you. Can you
21 hear us?

22 ELLEN KATZ: Yes, wonderful. Thank you.

23 REP. VASUT: I show you registered --
24 bear with me one moment.

25 ELLEN KATZ: Sure.

1 REP. VASUT: Let me get your registration
2 here. We'll be a little slow for the first few but
3 that's okay. We're eventually going to going to get
4 there. Since I'm taking you out of order, Ms. Katz, I
5 need to -- there we go, okay. I show you registered to
6 testify as Ellen Katz, on behalf of yourself, on
7 revisions to the Congressional Redistricting Plan. Is
8 that correct?

9 ELLEN KATZ: Yes, it is.

10 REP. VASUT: Please give us your
11 testimony.

12 ELLEN KATZ: Sure. Thank you so much.
13 As you mentioned, my name is Ellen Katz. I'm a law
14 professor and associate dean at the University of
15 Michigan Law School, and I'm speaking here in my
16 personal capacity not on behalf of the law school. I
17 want to thank the committee for the opportunity to be
18 here today, and particularly to Vice Chair Rosenthal
19 for the invitation. In my brief comments today, I'm
20 going to focus on the July 7th letter from the Justice
21 Department to the Governor and the AG of this state,
22 providing what the letter calls "formal notice of
23 serious concerns about the legality of Congressional
24 Districts 9, 18, 29, and 33."

25 I'm going to make three points today.

1 First, the assertion -- the assertion that these
2 districts violate the Voting Rights Act is plainly
3 incorrect. Second, the letter's assertion that these
4 districts violate the Constitution is also plainly
5 incorrect. And third, I want to point out that what
6 the letter is instructing Texas to do, were Texas to do
7 it, would in fact be illegal. More precisely,
8 dismantling these districts, as the letter instructs,
9 would require Texas to engage in improper
10 considerations of rights in violation of both the
11 Voting Rights Act and the 14th Amendment.

12 So just a quick note on terminology, the
13 Justice Department's letter describes the targeted
14 districts as "coalition districts." It doesn't define
15 that term, but that's a term that generally refers to
16 electoral districts in which the combined population of
17 two minority groups that vote as a block comprises the
18 majority of the district's population.

19 So just turning to my first point, the
20 DOJ letter claims that coalition districts, "run afoul
21 of the VRA." They don't. Last year, the Court of
22 Appeals for the Fifth Circuit issued a decision called
23 Petteway vs. Galveston County, which held that what's
24 known as the results or effects-based test set forth in
25 Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act does not require

1 jurisdictions to draw coalition districts. That is, it
2 doesn't mandate the aggregation of two separately
3 protected minority groups in a single district.
4 Nothing in this decision, however, suggests, much less
5 holds, that the VRA prohibits the very existence of
6 coalition districts. The mere fact that a district
7 exists in which two minority groups --

8 REP. VASUT: Please finish your
9 testimony, Ms. Katz. Thank you.

10 ELLEN KATZ: Okay. I have a bit more to
11 say --

12 REP. VASUT: A closing sentence.

13 ELLEN KATZ: Oh, okay. I will just say
14 on the voting rights point that it doesn't establish,
15 and it's never established, a violation of the VRA.
16 There are hundreds of these districts nationwide in
17 which jurisdictions relying on traditional principles
18 create these districts. The VRA doesn't prohibit them.

19 REP. VASUT: Thank you, Ms. Katz. I have
20 a second registration from you. Do you want -- do we
21 have your permission to -- do we have your permission
22 to delete your second registration? Is that okay?

23 ELLEN KATZ: Of course. Yeah. I might
24 have not --

25 REP. VASUT: No, you're fine. You're

1 just fine. We'll take care of that for you.

2 Members, questions for the witness?

3 REP. ROSENTHAL: I have a question.

4 REP. VASUT: Chair recognizes Vice Chair
5 Rosenthal.

6 REP. ROSENTHAL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
7 Is this working? Can you hear me, Dr. Katz? Okay.
8 And thank you, Mr. Chairman, really, for graciously
9 putting these witnesses first. Professor Katz, can you
10 please help us understand why it's wrong that, the
11 assertion that the Department of Justice made that
12 coalition districts violate the Voting Rights Act? I'd
13 like you to complete that thought, please.

14 ELLEN KATZ: Sure. As I was saying, the
15 Petteway decision says that Section 2's effects test
16 doesn't require these districts, but there's nothing in
17 that decision that suggests that they would -- that
18 they are -- that their very existence violates the
19 Voting Rights Act. As I was saying just in closing,
20 somewhat rushed, that there are hundreds of these
21 districts, maybe more, nationwide in which
22 jurisdictions relying on traditional districting
23 principles created electoral districts in which the
24 combined population exceeded 50 percent. And there's
25 no sense that the VRA prohibits them.

1 If I may, the DOJ letter also says that
2 these coalition districts are unconstitutional, that
3 they run afoul of the 14th Amendment, which is separate
4 from the voting rights claim. More specifically, the
5 DOJ letter says that these districts constitute
6 unconstitutional racial gerrymanders under the logic
7 and reasoning of Petteway. This statement is simply
8 incorrect. As noted, the Petteway results test -- I'm
9 sorry, held that the results test of Section 2 doesn't
10 require jurisdictions to create them, but nothing in
11 its logic and reasoning makes these, the existence of
12 these districts racial gerrymanders. Racial
13 gerrymanders occur when, among other things, a
14 jurisdiction allows race to predominate over
15 traditional districting principles. And there's no
16 indication here that racial considerations predominated
17 over traditional districting principles in the drawing
18 of the four districts that the DOJ letter targets. And
19 in fact, Attorney General Paxton noted in his July 11th
20 letter to the Justice Department that the chairperson
21 of the Texas Senate Redistricting Committee testified
22 under oath that these districts were, in fact, drawn in
23 a process that was blind to race, this is a quote, "and
24 sought to maximize Republican political advantage
25 balanced against traditional redistricting criteria."

1 Districts drawn this way cannot, by definition, be
2 unconstitutional racial gerrymanders.

3 If it's okay, I'd like to just offer two
4 more thoughts on the constitutional claim, if I may.

5 REP. ROSENTHAL: Yes.

6 ELLEN KATZ: The DOJ letter also spends
7 some time talking about impermissible race-based
8 considerations. And it's perhaps the Justice
9 Department means here that there's a constitutional
10 defect in these districts, apart from whether or not
11 they might be characterized as racial gerrymanders.
12 And it appears to be making, or the letter appears to
13 be making two points here. One is its assertion that
14 Districts 9, 18, and 29, "sort voters along strict
15 racial lines." Again, Attorney General Paxton's letter
16 indicated that race was not considered when these
17 districts were drawn. So, as a result, what the DOJ
18 letter is calling racial sorting is instead simply the
19 racial composition of these districts, created in what
20 the state said was a race-neutral process. Districts
21 created this way don't reflect any racial
22 considerations, much less impermissible ones.

23 The second thing that the letter seems to
24 be saying is that District 33 is, "another race-based
25 coalition district," apparently because the letter

1 claims the borders districts resemble those imposed
2 from a federal court order a bunch of years ago. And
3 just two quick points here. District 33 -- District 33
4 borders, in fact, are substantially different from
5 prior iterations of the district. And second, it's
6 simply false that race-based considerations in prior
7 iterations of the district render unconstitutional new
8 and different district boundaries drawn for race-
9 neutral reasons. And in fact, back in 2022, the Court
10 of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit held in a related
11 context that overtly racial -- overtly
12 unconstitutional, racial discrimination animating a
13 state constitutional provision did not taint or
14 otherwise affect the legality of an amended version of
15 that provision. And if that's correct, the same has to
16 be true for considerations that were wholly lawful and
17 made.

18 So in sum, the DOJ is simply wrong when
19 it states that these four districts target -- that
20 these four -- the four districts it targets violate the
21 Voting Rights Act or the Constitution. They plainly do
22 not. And quite frankly, it's not a close question at
23 all. I do want to make one final point, and I do
24 promise to be brief, and it is as follows.

25 What would violate both the VRA and the

1 14th Amendment would be for Texas to do now what this
2 letter urges Texas to do. The DOJ letter is insisting
3 that Texas now inject race-based considerations into
4 what Attorney General Paxton said had been a race-
5 neutral process. The DOJ letter itself repeatedly
6 employs race-based considerations by relying on the
7 racial compositions of these districts as the sole
8 basis to argue that they are unlawful. The letter then
9 calls on the State of Texas to engage in the same race-
10 based considerations and use them as cause to dismantle
11 the -- I promise I'm closing, but I'll just add this.

12 The Supreme Court told us already that
13 this approach is misguided. Back in 2009 in a decision
14 called *Bartlett v. Strickland*, the Court held that
15 Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act doesn't require
16 jurisdictions to draw so-called crossover districts,
17 which differ from coalition districts for reasons that
18 are not relevant here. What's critical here is that,
19 for present purposes, when the Court in *Bartlett* said
20 that it's -- that it was holding only that Section 2
21 doesn't require the creation of crossover districts in
22 the first instance, it went on to emphasize, and again
23 I'm quoting -- this is -- I think this is crucial, "If
24 there were a showing that a state intentionally drew
25 district lines in order to destroy otherwise effective

1 crossover districts, that would raise serious questions
2 under both the 14th and 15th Amendment."

3 The July 7th DOJ letter instructs Texas
4 to do just that, that is to do what Bartlett said would
5 raise serious constitutional questions. The letter
6 targets what it understands to be an operational -- to
7 be operational coalition districts, and it calls on
8 Texas to alter their racial composition so as to render
9 them ineffective as coalition districts. Bartlett
10 indicated that destroying an otherwise effective
11 district in this manner is constitutionally suspect,
12 and so I just want to urge that Texas decline what is
13 an ill-advised -- what I think is an ill-advised
14 invitation to engage in conduct that at its core
15 amounts to intentional racial discrimination. It
16 should instead -- it should instead leave these
17 districts in place, unchanged. That's all I have, but
18 I just want to thank you again for your time and the
19 opportunity to be here today.

20 REP. ROSENTHAL: Thanks for bringing your
21 expertise here today. I truly appreciate it.

22 REP. VASUT: Mr. Wu, for what purpose?

23 REP. WU: I have a question for the
24 witness.

25 REP. VASUT: Gentleman yields for -- Mr.

1 Wu, you're recognized for questions.

2 REP. WU: Thank you.

3 I'm sorry, you caught my attention.

4 Could you -- but I'm -- I was not sure of the exact
5 answer because I was thinking about what you said. But
6 you said the -- doing the mapping now would be illegal.
7 That's a very strong statement. Could you -- something
8 -- a statement that strong, can you elaborate on that?
9 And let's be very precise about our language.

10 ELLEN KATZ: Sure. And I intended to be
11 quite precise about that in making that assertion.
12 What the letter is doing is asking Texas to inject, and
13 as I said, in considerations, race-based considerations
14 into a districting process that your Attorney General
15 has said was race neutral. The letter itself is
16 engaging in repeated race-based considerations by
17 relying on the racial composition of each of these
18 districts as the sole basis to argue that they're
19 unlawful. And then it's asking Texas to now go back to
20 the process that it says was race neutral, and think
21 about race, and use race to dismantle, to dismantle
22 districts that the Justice Department itself is
23 recognizing to be effective coalition districts, take
24 them apart.

25 And you can look at the decision in

1 Bartlett. The Court has made this point where it's
2 saying, look, whatever Section 2 requires you to draw,
3 the effects of this test requires you to draw, it's a
4 whole different matter if you are -- and this -- again,
5 I'm just going to pull up the language here from
6 Bartlett. If there were showing that a state
7 intentionally drew lines, the new lines that the
8 Justice Department's asking you to draw now in order to
9 destroy what are otherwise effective crossover
10 districts -- they're talking about crossover. These
11 are coalition districts; it's the same thing for every
12 legal purpose here. That's intentional racial
13 discrimination, or at least it strongly looks like it.
14 Looks at districts based on their racial composition
15 and targets them to be dismantled for that reason.
16 It's a violation of the Voting Rights Act; it's a
17 violation of the 14th Amendment.

18 REP. WU: So, I want to make sure I fully
19 understand that. So, A -- number one, the State -- the
20 maps that we're using right now are maps that the State
21 has specifically stated under oath and stated in public
22 legal opinion that there was no le- -- there was no
23 racial consideration in making those maps, therefore
24 making them legal, correct?

25 ELLEN KATZ: And for our purposes here,

1 we should just talk about the four districts that the
2 Justice --

3 REP. WU: Sure, sure.

4 ELLEN KATZ: -- Department letter is
5 targeting. So the State has said we have not used race
6 in any part of this, there's no indication that these
7 four districts were drawn using race-based
8 considerations.

9 REP. WU: And the DOJ letter that sparked
10 this process, what the DOJ letter suggests, and the
11 solution that they offer in order to fix it, is in
12 itself racial gerrymandering, right?

13 ELLEN KATZ: I would say race-based
14 decision-making. Gerrymandering is a complicated term.

15 REP. WU: Sure. Like drawing maps based
16 on race.

17 ELLEN KATZ: Looking at districts,
18 counting people based on race within the district and
19 saying, redraw these because these are effective
20 coalition districts. That's targeting these districts
21 because they provide a venue for effective political
22 participation by minority voters in Texas. They're
23 going after them. That's a race-based decision that
24 the Supreme Court has said, don't do that. Or at
25 least, you know, we'd be seriously worried if you were

1 to do that. That's not what we're holding in Bartlett
2 in related context.

3 REP. WU: So you're saying that the DOJ
4 letter, its intent itself is unconstitutional. Like
5 their attempt to, their desire, their end goal of doing
6 this is in itself unconstitutional, and the method by
7 which it wants to do it is also unconstitutional. Is
8 that fair?

9 ELLEN KATZ: I guess I would limit to the
10 latter. Their intent, as I understand it, is to
11 provide a basis for Texas to redistrict at this moment
12 by saying that there's a defect under the Voting Rights
13 Act and under the Constitution for these existing
14 districts. There is no defect. It's simply -- for the
15 reasons I already stated, they don't violate the Voting
16 Rights Act, they don't violate the Constitution, the
17 existing districts. So instead, they're saying, go
18 look at race now and dismantle performing coalition
19 districts, what it understands to be that. And the
20 Supreme Court has told us that that raises serious
21 questions under the Constitution.

22 REP. WU: Thank you.

23 REP. VASUT: Ms. Gervin-Hawkins, for what
24 purpose?

25 REP. GERVIN-HAWKINS: Mr. Chair, I'd like

1 to ask the witness a question.

2 REP. VASUT: I'm going to yield to you in
3 just a second. I just want to remind everybody, you
4 must be registered at the kiosk to testify in person.
5 The deadline to register is coming up at 3.30 p.m.

6 Ms. Gervin-Hawkins, you're recognized to
7 question the witness.

8 REP. GERVIN-HAWKINS: Professor Katz, if
9 indeed we went the DOJ route, would that then open up
10 the floodgates for our State House and Senate seats
11 also?

12 ELLEN KATZ: I mean, I think that would
13 depend on if you were to redistrict there as well. To
14 redistrict by targeting districts based on their racial
15 composition in the way this letter suggests does
16 suggest to me that you would be causing problems. I
17 didn't understand that the State and the State House
18 and Senate --

19 REP. GERVIN-HAWKINS: Well, I'm just
20 saying if the DOJ letter was correct, instead of we
21 know it's illegal and not proper, but if we were to
22 adopt this and establish a record towards this, it
23 potentially can open up the same methodology for our
24 State House and Senate seats, correct?

25 ELLEN KATZ: If I understand you

1 correctly, yes. I think if the logic that is
2 underlying this letter suggesting you redistrict for
3 these reasons were applied more broadly to other
4 districts in the State, the State House and state
5 Senate, I think the same arguments would apply, yes.

6 REP. GERVIN-HAWKINS: Thank you, ma'am.

7 REP. VASUT: Mr. Manuel, for what
8 purpose?

9 REP. MANUEL: To ask a question of the --

10 REP. VASUT: Chair recognizes Mr. Manuel
11 to question the witness.

12 REP. MANUEL: All right. I am a lover of
13 history, and I know most people aren't because they
14 find it boring and I get that. What I guess my one
15 question really is, can you explain, what is the reason
16 for districts like these and why they were created in
17 the Voting Rights Act? Because I don't think most
18 people understand why we have districts like these
19 throughout the country.

20 ELLEN KATZ: Sure. I mean, these
21 districts -- districts like these -- I guess I want to
22 sort of -- there's a long history under the Voting
23 Rights Act about aggregating voters in districts when
24 they vote a certain way when a whole bunch of other
25 conditions apply; majority-minority districts and other

1 districts of the like. I just want to be clear here
2 that those are not the districts we're talking about
3 right now because of Texas' claim, assertion that the
4 Attorney General has made, that has been made under
5 oath by your elected representatives, that race was not
6 considered in the creation of these districts.

7 So if you want to talk, we can talk about
8 going back to 1982 when Congress amended the Voting
9 Rights Act in response to the Supreme Court's decision,
10 Mobile v. Bolden, recognizing that certain forms of
11 electoral structures, particularly at large districts,
12 but also single district lines that divide communities
13 where there is a history of discrimination, where there
14 is racial block voting, where there's a distinct
15 socioeconomic status -- there's a whole literally
16 laundry list of conditions. That the failure to create
17 districts that allow voters to aggregate their votes in
18 a certain way is a form of racial discrimination, and a
19 form of racial discrimination under the Constitution,
20 and a form of racial discrimination under the Voting
21 Rights Act as it was amended in 1982.

22 And we can talk for a very long time
23 about the case law that's developed over the years,
24 Thornburg v. Gingles onward through Bartlett, and more
25 recently for that matter, on the intricacies of that

1 doctrine. But the basic premise of it is the notion
2 that political participation should allow, at some
3 level, the aggregation of votes of communities,
4 particularly communities that are protected by the
5 statute. I guess I just want to add, though, I think
6 that's actually not the question here, in part because
7 Texas is not saying, has never asserted, and there's no
8 indication that it drew these districts to comply with
9 the Voting Rights Act or for any race-based reason
10 independent of that, but rather wholly race-neutral
11 considerations went into place. And it's now the
12 Justice Department that's coming in and saying,
13 dismantle districts that one might even say organically
14 developed as places in which minority voters are
15 exercising, are having a meaningful right to vote in
16 them.

17 REP. VASUT: Further questions for the
18 witness, Mr. Manuel?

19 REP. MANUEL: No.

20 REP. VASUT: Okay.

21 REP. MANUEL: She answered my questions.

22 REP. VASUT: Okay. Any further questions
23 for the witness, members? Hearing none, Dr. Katz,
24 thank you for coming to testify today. You're excused.

25 Chair's going to go to our in-person

1 panel. I appreciate you patiently waiting for us.

2 Chair calls Greg Casar, Congressman. Casar, I
3 apologize.

4 GREG CASAR: Thank you, Chairman, Vice --

5 REP. VASUT: Let me pull up your
6 registration, one second.

7 GREG CASAR: Yes, sir.

8 REP. VASUT: I show you as Greg Casar,
9 Congressman of Texas, 35. You're here to testify on
10 behalf of yourself on revisions to the Congressional
11 Redistricting Plan. Is that correct?

12 GREG CASAR: That's correct, sir.

13 REP. VASUT: Please give us your
14 testimony, sir.

15 GREG CASAR: Chair, Vice Chair, Dean,
16 Speaker, and members of the committee, I'm Greg Casar.
17 I currently represent Texas's 35th Congressional
18 District, and I'm here to speak to support the hundreds
19 of thousands of Texans that I represent and their
20 voting rights, from urban to rural Texans,
21 conservative, liberal Texans from Bexar, to Comal, to
22 Hayes, to Travis County. Texas's 35th Congressional
23 District was drawn by this body coming after the 2010
24 census. It was constitutionally mandated to be drawn,
25 and it was upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court and the

1 conservative justices on that Court as a promise to
2 Latino communities in Central Texas to make sure they
3 had meaningful participation and the ability to elect
4 the representative of their choice under the Voting
5 Rights Act. Whether they chose a Democratic or
6 Republican or Independent congressman should be up to
7 them, but to fulfill the Voting Rights Act of 1965,
8 this district was drawn and approved.

9 And what I am here to ask is that we
10 continue to preserve and protect those voting rights
11 that so many people fought and marched and bled for,
12 including Dr. King, where we have a street right behind
13 this Capitol named after him, who in 1965 helped a
14 Texas president sign the Voting Rights Act into law.
15 And I ask each of you to focus on protecting those
16 rights. There's no need to redraw these maps and to
17 violate those rights, and to represent the values of
18 Texas, and to represent that critical federal law, and
19 not have somebody tell you from outside of the state,
20 from Mar-a-Lago or from the White House, to violate
21 those basic rights of all Texans. We should be
22 focusing on rebuilding and relief for the people of the
23 Texas Hill Country who have suffered from these floods,
24 not on radical and ridiculous redistricting. Thank you
25 so much, Chairman.

1 REP. VASUT: Thank you. We'll come back
2 for questions. Chair recognizes or calls on Sylvia
3 Garcia to testify. I show you registered as Sylvia
4 Garcia, testifying on behalf of yourself, on revisions
5 to the Congressional Redistricting Plan.
6 Congresswoman, thank you for being here today. Is that
7 correct?

8 SYLVIA GARCIA: Yes, sir. That's
9 correct.

10 REP. VASUT: Please give us your
11 testimony.

12 SYLVIA GARCIA: Thank you, Mr. Chairman,
13 and to the Vice Chair and to Ms. T and to all the other
14 members. We really should not even be here today. We
15 should be working on legislation to support families in
16 the Hill Country after the devastating flooding,
17 working together to provide resources for the families
18 who lost everything, for new warning systems to prevent
19 future tragedies, and doing what is best for the well-
20 being and safety of all Texans. Instead, we are here
21 today playing political games to appease the felon in
22 the White House in his lust for power. We are
23 pretending that the governor did not approve the very
24 maps he's now insisting to be changed. This political
25 theater will hurt communities in my district, and it's

1 shameful.

2 And we do so with not even a map.
3 Where's the map? This is getting the cart before the
4 horse. We're talking about impact when we haven't seen
5 anything. We know the Republicans in Congress are
6 wildly unpopular. We've all seen the polls that show
7 that the vast majority of Americans oppose Trump's big
8 ugly bill. But here we are.

9 So let me tell you just a little bit
10 about District 29, which it's a targeted district on
11 the Justice Department letter, which I'm honored to
12 represent. Our shared values and culture far outnumber
13 our differences. We're a community that values faith,
14 family, hard work, and service. From Aldine to
15 Pasadena to Galena Park and Jacinto City, we are a
16 community and we stick together. Ripping up the 29th
17 District will silence the voice of these communities,
18 and that will be a travesty. The population growth in
19 Texas has been because of the Latino population. The
20 Voting Rights Act protects districts like the 29th with
21 common interests, priorities, and background.

22 Given this, I urge you to reject this
23 partisan gerrymandering of Texas, reject the map that
24 may come soon from the felon in the White House, and do
25 what Texans want. End the charade and support the

1 families who are grieving, build up our infrastructure,
2 enhance our resiliency, and do what matters. Let's
3 stand up for Texas. With that, I thank you, Mr.
4 Chairman.

5 REP. VASUT: Thank you, Congresswoman.

6 Chair calls Joaquin Castro. I show you
7 registered as Joaquin Castro, testifying on behalf of
8 yourself, on revisions to the Congressional
9 Redistricting Plan. Congressman, thank you for being
10 here. Is that correct?

11 JOAQUIN CASTRO: Yes.

12 REP. VASUT: Please give us your
13 testimony.

14 JOAQUIN CASTRO: Thank you, Chairman and
15 members of the committee. I'm proud to represent my
16 hometown of San Antonio, Texas, the 20th Congressional
17 District. And I was a freshman in 2003 when, as
18 Democrats, we left the state for Ardmore, Oklahoma to
19 stop mid-decade redistricting more than 20 years ago.
20 It was wrong then and it's wrong now.

21 And you all are being used. You're being
22 used by the White House and by Donald Trump. You're
23 being used because he doesn't want Democrats to control
24 a majority of the Congress so that there'll be no
25 investigations. There has been no discussion in

1 Congress about the floods that occurred in Kerr County
2 and the loss of so many lives. There has been no
3 discussion on the Epstein files, no discussions on the
4 Iran leaks, and all those messages by the Secretary of
5 Defense and others. There literally is no
6 accountability right now in Congress.

7 And the people that are going to pay for
8 this are the folks in black and brown communities in
9 our cities. They're going to have their districts
10 cracked and packed and un-blackened because of this
11 effort. That's what's at stake here. Whether you all
12 are going to work for the people of Texas, as we used
13 to do or try to do, or whether you're going to take
14 your commandments from Donald Trump and the White
15 House, I hope that you all will choose to do the
16 business of the people of Texas, as this body has a
17 history of being independent from the federal
18 government, not a stooge for it. I yield back.

19 REP. VASUT: Thank you for your
20 testimony.

21 Mr. Manuel, for what purpose? No
22 purpose.

23 Mr. Wu, for what purpose? Sorry, this is
24 all on me because we've got this weird tablet up here,
25 and it has people's names, and I'm pushing buttons.

1 Ms. Garcia, for what purpose?

2 REP. GARCIA: Does the gentleman yield
3 for questions?

4 REP. VASUT: Ms. Garcia, you're
5 recognized to question the witnesses.

6 REP. GARCIA: There we go. Thank you so
7 much, Mr. Chair. Congressman Castro -- and thank you
8 all for being here. We represent Military City USA.

9 JOAQUIN CASTRO: That's right.

10 REP. GARCIA: I'm proud to serve as the
11 first and only woman veteran in this legislature. But
12 I would like to know, sir, what implications does this
13 potential redistricting have on Military City USA?
14 Because I think a lot of times when we're thinking
15 about the lines that are being drawn, we only think
16 about people who were born and raised here and what
17 neighborhoods they come from. But there's a very true
18 implication for Military City USA when people from all
19 over the world and all over the United States are
20 converging upon our city for its diversity, for its
21 culture, for its availability to government. Can you
22 express to us what this could possibly do to Military
23 City USA?

24 JOAQUIN CASTRO: It could quite possibly
25 be very harmful. In the last few rounds of

1 redistricting, for example, Fort Sam Houston was moved
2 from one district to another. The area that used to be
3 Lackland Air Force Base was moved from one area to
4 another, and the port was split up, those neighborhoods
5 there. And as you know, in San Antonio, the military
6 and Joint Base San Antonio is also an economic driver.
7 Besides serving the military, it also serves our
8 community. And those communities in the last rounds of
9 redistricting have not fared well. And any kind of
10 further splitting up of those communities would be
11 harmful to the people of San Antonio.

12 REP. VASUT: Mr. Wu, for what purpose?

13 REP. WU: Questions for the witnesses.

14 REP. VASUT: Chair recognizes Mr. Wu to
15 question the witnesses.

16 REP. WU: Thank you. I guess this
17 question is for all three of y'all. I know that
18 Congressman Casar has a district in the current map
19 that runs from the north side of Austin all the way to
20 the south side of San Antonio, which is, at the best of
21 times, about an hour and a half away on the freeway.

22 GREG CASAR: Thanks for wishing me luck.

23 REP. WU: Yeah. But I think -- I know we
24 were joking about it, but this is kind of a serious
25 matter in that, you know, our discussions about the

1 only way to do what Donald Trump and the DOJ is
2 suggesting that we do is to make everybody's maps look
3 like that. Could you tell us -- could y'all tell us
4 how it's been -- how difficult it's been representing,
5 essentially areas that are like 100 miles apart? And
6 what that would do to your communities if -- and
7 Congresswoman Garcia and Castro, like if you had to --
8 if your communities were paired with a community that's
9 100 miles away, that's an hour away, what would that
10 turn -- how would that would affect your communities?

11 GREG CASAR: Representative, thank you so
12 much for your question. It's critical that these maps
13 be drawn and that -- that maps be drawn to have
14 compactness and to keep communities of interest
15 together. We've done the very best we can, despite,
16 like I said, representing rural areas, suburban areas,
17 two different major metropolitan areas, to bring people
18 together and have folks know that they can call us.
19 Just like you all, we field thousands of calls from
20 folks that don't have a partisan matter in mind, but
21 are just wanting to make sure they get their backpay
22 from the army, or they changed their address and need
23 to get their social security check, or are looking to
24 make sure they get the proper veterans benefits. And
25 all of a sudden, whether you are redrawing the

1 districts for a Democrat or a Republican, if suddenly
2 you are drawing a map that has somebody going hundreds
3 of miles away to another area, that could really
4 complicate things for our constituents.

5 And that's why I echo the urging of my
6 colleague, Congresswoman Garcia, that I think not just
7 the members of Congress, but the people of Texas
8 deserve to see a map and be able to come and testify to
9 you on a map because they want to be able to contact
10 their member of Congress. Some of these things are
11 make or break for a person and their bank account, or
12 their life, or their job. And I think many of my
13 Republican colleagues, I'll tell you, have told me
14 privately that they are deeply concerned with a map
15 being drawn without their input, without the input of
16 legislators, without input of their constituents,
17 because you could draw all sorts of crazy maps that
18 ultimately disenfranchise those constituents, because
19 they may have no idea which congressional district
20 they're in because the person across the street has a
21 different member of Congress and the person up the
22 block has a different member of Congress. And I would
23 just really hope that you all recognize your
24 responsibility as legislators, just as we try our best
25 to do, to say you should use your independent judgment

1 on whether the people of Texas are getting adequate
2 representation or if you're just being handed a ChatGPT
3 map being handed over to you from somewhere else in the
4 country.

5 SYLVIA GARCIA: If I may, Representative,
6 again, thank you for the question. It really is about
7 communication and casework. It is more difficult, when
8 you've got to deal with hundreds of miles, to be able
9 to communicate appropriately and effectively with your
10 constituents, to do the casework. People want to see
11 their member of Congress out there at their events, in
12 their communities. You know, I've got four other
13 cities, Galena Park, Jacinto City, part of Pasadena.
14 It's not just Houston. It takes some time to go to all
15 those communities, to go to their events, to their --
16 to their church events or bazaars. If you had to go
17 from here all the way to San Antonio, that's about the
18 only thing you're going to do one night. So it's about
19 contact. It's about being effective and being there
20 when you're needed.

21 I know somebody's already thinking in
22 their mind, well, they can do it by Zoom. No, there
23 are many communities who don't have hotspots. They
24 don't have computers. They don't know the first thing
25 about Zoom. Quite frankly, in some school districts,

1 it didn't work for teaching our kids. It ain't going
2 to work for telling our seniors what's happening to
3 their Social Security or explaining to them why they're
4 one of 17 million Americans who are losing their
5 Medicaid. People want to know. They want to see their
6 members. They want to touch and feel us.

7 REP. WU: And I know you --

8 REP. VASUT: One second. Try now. There
9 you go.

10 REP. WU: So, I'm sure you didn't watch
11 the Senate's debate on their, talking about the
12 resolution for the redistricting last Friday. But
13 during that debate, the discussion came up that, well,
14 we're only having three hearings in the Senate because
15 members -- the public will be allowed to testify by
16 Zoom. Right? And are you saying that even providing a
17 Zoom option is not really providing an option for a lot
18 of people?

19 SYLVIA GARCIA: Absolutely. I think when
20 I read that, I was frankly appalled that they would not
21 allow any live testimony hearing in front of someone.
22 I mean, we're Texas. We like to see people eyeball to
23 eyeball and ask them the question. You know, you can't
24 have any empathy for a senior who's losing their
25 Medicare or Social Security because of the big, ugly

1 bill if you're talking by Zoom. I mean, how are they
2 going to feel that you really feel for them? So I
3 think it's just awful. And I strongly urge you all to
4 have committee hearings after a map. I mean, where is
5 the map?

6 REP. WU: And not just have the hearings,
7 but those committees should be held in the communities
8 that are being affected, correct?

9 SYLVIA GARCIA: Well, I mean, I think
10 it's awful, too, that y'all aren't having a hearing in
11 the Rio Grande Valley. There's a million and a half
12 people in that four- or five-county region that don't
13 have a hearing. They're going to have to drive all the
14 way here, if there's anybody here from the Rio Grande
15 Valley, just to be able to have their say. We should
16 be accommodating and bending over backwards to make
17 sure we give people an opportunity to be heard. This
18 process, like you called it earlier, it's a sham.

19 REP. WU: And in fact, we -- I mean, like
20 for these initial hearings, we're only having three
21 total hearings for a state of 30 million people.

22 SYLVIA GARCIA: I would urge you all to
23 beef it up a little bit, make it a little more robust.
24 Either do one in every district or one in every
25 quadrant of the state, but just three -- and I know

1 that the districts that are being targeted are urban,
2 minority districts. But even at that, you're not going
3 to all those districts. So that doesn't make sense to
4 me. You're not going to Fort Worth. You're going to
5 Arlington. It's probably easier for them to get there.
6 But I'm glad you're doing one in Houston because we've
7 got three targeted in Houston. But it's going to
8 impact all of us because, quite frankly, I think this
9 is just a pretext to go in there and just change
10 everything to get those five districts that the felon
11 in the White House needs to maintain his power.

12 REP. WU: Thank you.

13 REP. VASUT: Speaker Moody, for what
14 purpose?

15 REP. MOODY: Questions of the witness.

16 REP. VASUT: The gentleman is recognized
17 to question the witnesses.

18 REP. MOODY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

19 Congressman Castro -- well, actually, I'm
20 glad to have all the members of Congress here that have
21 joined us. I had heard that your speaker gave you
22 early recess for some other reason, but maybe it was --

23 JOAQUIN CASTRO: They won't release the
24 Epstein files.

25 REP. MOODY: But maybe it was to make

1 sure that you were able to raise your voices.

2 SYLVIA GARCIA: I think the files are
3 sitting next to the maps.

4 REP. MOODY: Maybe -- maybe it was --
5 that was -- I'm grateful that you have the opportunity
6 to be here because it's important. And just a couple
7 of questions for Congressman Castro, well, actually,
8 for all three of you all, because we haven't seen maps
9 up here. We continue to hear that they are coming from
10 Washington, DC. You all just came from Washington, DC.
11 Have y'all seen any proposed maps?

12 SYLVIA GARCIA: No.

13 JOAQUIN CASTRO: I haven't.

14 GREG CASAR: Nothing official.

15 REP. MOODY: Okay. Let me ask you this,
16 Congressman Castro. And I appreciate -- I appreciate
17 the fact that you, for your entire career, have
18 represented a majority Latino district, both in the
19 House and now in the United States Congress. Is that
20 correct?

21 JOAQUIN CASTRO: That's right.

22 REP. MOODY: And do you think it would
23 make a difference to folks in your area if they could
24 see a proposed map as to how it would impact or affect
25 them and impact their representation?

1 JOAQUIN CASTRO: No, absolutely. I think
2 people right now, we've gotten calls and emails, people
3 wondering and asking, well, where is the map? Where is
4 it coming from? Who's drawing it? Who's going to
5 represent me? I think -- and you all have
6 constituents. People sometimes call you very
7 frantically about different things. You know, we deal
8 with people who are having trouble with the VA, for
9 example, who are desperate to get IRS refunds, who call
10 two days before because they're going out of town and
11 they realize that their passport is expired. Different
12 things that, to them, are very personal and sometimes
13 frantic matters. And so knowing who their member of
14 Congress is and having easy access to that office and
15 that person or their staff is important.

16 And when you change those maps mid-
17 decade, you're going to leave a lot of people, first of
18 all, very confused and disrupted, those communities.
19 And it's very likely, at least from -- look, I mean,
20 all we know for sure, right, is that the president
21 wants you guys to draw five more Republican seats out
22 of the existing map. And bear in mind, the districts
23 are already very gerrymandered. I realize that the
24 state, for about a generation, has voted mostly
25 Republican. If you look at the statewide races,

1 there's about a, you know, somewhere between a 10- and
2 13-point difference, but right now it's two to one. So
3 now you're trying to make it three to one. And that's
4 going to mean that you're cutting up a lot of
5 communities, including Latino communities and African-
6 American communities, Asian-American communities, and
7 it's going to be incredibly harmful.

8 REP. MOODY: Well, and it's what I want
9 to kind of get down to because, obviously, we can see
10 the DOJ letter that highlights four specific districts.
11 So we can look at those and we can understand --
12 obviously, Representative Garcia, yours is on that
13 list. We can understand the makeup of those. We can
14 try to understand what should or shouldn't happen with
15 those. But what input can your constituents have?
16 Your district's not on that list. But if we're drawing
17 new districts, this body could choose to adjust your
18 district as well.

19 JOAQUIN CASTRO: No, that's absolutely
20 right. I think it's important that it be said that
21 there is going to be a domino effect on the other
22 districts. It's not like you can discreetly go in
23 there and redraw four districts or even five without
24 having, oftentimes, a significant impact on the other
25 congressional districts and the communities that are

1 represented by those members of Congress. So there
2 will be a terrible domino effect. And there's no
3 hearing in San Antonio. You know, thank you all for
4 going to Houston. Thank you for going to North Texas
5 for your hearing today. But y'all, we live in a state
6 of 30 million people. That's bigger than a lot of
7 countries around the world. You should be having
8 really about ten in-person hearings in a state like
9 Texas.

10 And then the State Senate, I know, is
11 having a bunch of virtual hearings. Let's be honest,
12 most of our constituents, yours and ours, are not even
13 going to know that those hearings are taking place.
14 They're not going to know that there's a Zoom thing or
15 whatever platform it's on where folks can come and
16 [audio skips]. And I would hate to see this
17 legislature do that and be used in service of one
18 person. Really, whoever that person is, but we know
19 it's a person in the White House, because they're
20 trying to use Texas.

21 And the last thing, Joe, from here,
22 sorry, Representative Moody, that a lot of the -- on
23 our Republican colleagues who have privately said that
24 they weren't for this, some of them, they and their
25 public service will be affected too. If you redo the

1 maps, you also realize that you're putting their public
2 service in jeopardy as well, even though many of them,
3 even though we have deep disagreements on policy, have
4 tried earnestly to represent their constituents. And
5 the White House is saying, we don't care about your
6 service. We don't care which of you comes back to
7 Washington to represent the people or not. Donald
8 Trump wants five districts because he doesn't want any
9 investigations or any accountability, including on the
10 flooding in Texas, and that's why we're doing this.

11 REP. MOODY: And would it be your
12 position that, if at some point during this process a
13 bill comes forward, a piece of legislation comes
14 forward, that does impact your district or
15 Representative Casar's district or Representative
16 Garcia's district, that it would be important for the
17 members of the public in those impacted regions to have
18 the ability to comment on a -- on something they can
19 see?

20 JOAQUIN CASTRO: A live map. Yeah,
21 absolutely.

22 SYLVIA GARCIA: Absolutely.

23 JOAQUIN CASTRO: They need to be able to
24 comment and give input on a live map once you have a
25 live map, and we know what it looks like.

1 REP. MOODY: And I'll ask a simple
2 question. Why? Why is it important for them to do
3 that?

4 JOAQUIN CASTRO: These are the people we
5 represent. These are the communities that we
6 represent. They're supposed to have public input.
7 Just like when we file legislation and somebody comes
8 here and presents their bill, and you know that there's
9 members of the public that are waiting to speak on that
10 bill, on something they can see and deal with, that's
11 how it should be here as well.

12 REP. MOODY: Thank you all so much.

13 REP. VASUT: Members, any other
14 questions? Chair recognizes Mr. Turner to question the
15 witnesses.

16 REP. TURNER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

17 Just a brief question to the members of
18 Congress. Thank you all for being here. As you've
19 heard in this hearing already, and probably knew before
20 this hearing, apparently the only reason we are here is
21 because the Department of Justice sent this letter to
22 the governor earlier this month saying that four
23 congressional districts, District 9, 18, 29, and 33,
24 currently constitute unconstitutional coalition
25 districts and urge the State of Texas to rectify. And

1 they go on to say that they're unconstitutional.

2 I think between the three of you, I'm
3 guesstimating, but I think you've got about two and a
4 half decades of experience in the Congress between the
5 three of you, across Democratic and Republican
6 administrations. In your dealings with the Department
7 of Justice over all those years, across different
8 administrations, have you ever heard the Department of
9 Justice ever say that a district that is majority
10 minority, functioning as a coalition district, has to
11 be intentionally identified and dismantled in order to
12 comply with the Constitution? Has anyone ever heard
13 that until this DOJ letter earlier this month?

14 SYLVIA GARCIA: I've never seen anything
15 like it. In fact, when I first -- if I could say this,
16 I mean, as a lawyer and former judge, when I first saw
17 the letter, I thought they must have asked the,
18 somebody up front, at the front desk to write it. It's
19 not even crafted in a lawyerly, quality manner. But I
20 think it was somebody who was just told, write
21 something to get the governor to do this, and they just
22 typed something away. I've absolutely never seen
23 anything like it before.

24 REP. TURNER: Thank you.

25 Congressman Casar?

1 GREG CASAR: No, I've never heard
2 anything from Democratic or Republican Department of
3 Justice to this effect. And to Speaker Moody's point,
4 I think there would be grave concern if the map that
5 eventually comes forward targets other parts of the
6 state as well, as we are hearing it very well might.

7 And to Congressman Castro's point, by
8 changing two, three, four, or five districts that are
9 majority people of color, in fact, you likely are
10 drastically changing the districts around them. And
11 so, you know, the requirements, as I understand them,
12 for redistricting is to have real hearings, not to have
13 show hearings and then go do something completely
14 different that the public is never allowed to comment
15 on, including the public that votes for and supports
16 their conservative or Republican members of Congress
17 who may have their maps radically changed. And so, the
18 Department of Justice letter, in my view, is
19 unprecedented. And what I am hearing rumblings of is
20 that whatever map gets handed down from the White House
21 may target many districts, Democratic and Republican,
22 that go far outside the scope of even that
23 unprecedented letter.

24 REP. TURNER: Okay. Thank you.

25 Congressman Castro, have you ever seen

1 anything like that?

2 JOAQUIN CASTRO: I never have. This is
3 my 23rd year of public service. Like I said, I went
4 through the 2003 round of redistricting sitting where
5 you all are sitting, and now I'm in my 13th year in
6 Congress. And I think that the argument they're making
7 is a perversion of the Voting Rights Act and who it was
8 meant to protect. And that's what they're trying to
9 get away with. They're trying to use you all to
10 achieve that.

11 REP. TURNER: Thank you. Well, I just
12 would reemphasize --

13 SYLVIA GARCIA: Representative, if I
14 could add something.

15 REP. TURNER: Sure.

16 SYLVIA GARCIA: My theory is that the
17 short-term gain is getting the five seats to retain the
18 gavel of the House and get the agenda done. I mean,
19 that's the power grab. But I think the long-term gain
20 is to repeal the Voting Rights Act, which could be
21 devastating not just to Texas, but so many other parts
22 of the country where we rely on the Voting Rights Act
23 to make sure that we ensure one person, one vote,
24 fairness and representation for all, and the whole
25 concept of our democracy of we the people, represented

1 by people we elect, not decided by some politician, a
2 felon in the White House who just wants to have power.

3 So I think this is -- this is more than
4 just us. It's more than just Texas. I think this is
5 about the future of electing folks. If we're going to
6 be doing this every five years, that is really
7 disruptive at all levels of government. And I think
8 that the representative is correct. If you do it in
9 the Congress, then naturally you're going to have to go
10 and look at the Senate districts, the House districts,
11 even school boards. It has -- it could have very
12 potential devastating effects.

13 JOAQUIN CASTRO: And also a domino effect
14 across the country. If Texas does redistricting, it's
15 likely that it's going to set off a domino with other
16 states, whether it's California, New York, or others,
17 that also start their own redistricting processes.

18 REP. TURNER: Thank you.

19 REP. VASUT: Members of the public, it's
20 3:41 p.m. Chair previously advised that the kiosk
21 registration would close at 3:30. Is there anyone else
22 wishing to register to testify on revisions to the
23 Congressional Redistricting Plan? Chair hears none.
24 The Chair will close registration at this time.

25 Any member of the committee have any

1 other questions for this panel of witnesses? Chair
2 recognizes Ms. Garcia to question witnesses.

3 REP. GARCIA: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

4 REP. VASUT: Bear with us one second.

5 REP. GARCIA: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

6 Congressman Casar, my question is for
7 you. Can you kind of describe to us, because like
8 we've mentioned, a lot of our constituents, especially
9 where these areas are going to be redrawn, are rural.
10 They don't have access to social media or Zoom. Can
11 you kind of describe what the fiscal implications will
12 be on our communities as we look at federal aid,
13 benefits, even taxes? Can you kind of describe to us
14 what that means? Because, although I know we're
15 talking about maps and lines and maps and lines, you
16 know a lot of our folks, especially in my community,
17 don't really know what that means. So if we could kind
18 of tell them nickel and dime what it means to their
19 pockets for this redistricting to happen in the way
20 that it is.

21 GREG CASAR: Yes. Thank you for the
22 question, Representative. I mean, for the everyday
23 person, and this is across party lines, members of
24 Congress oftentimes deliver millions of dollars back to
25 their individual constituents in IRS tax refunds, in

1 making sure that their full disability is counted when
2 they are dealing with their veterans' issues. And they
3 develop a relationship with their member of Congress.
4 The idea that suddenly you are no longer calling this
5 congressman or that congressman for ongoing work,
6 simply because somebody in the White House is just
7 demanding that Texas make changes for him, could be
8 really disruptive to an everyday person, regardless of
9 whether they're calling a Democratic or Republican
10 member of Congress.

11 And then furthermore, many of us as
12 members of Congress are regularly working on
13 infrastructure projects, for example, through the Army
14 Corps of Engineers or through FEMA. Here in Travis
15 County, in the southeast part of the county, we have
16 very significant flooding that, of course, has taken
17 lives and property, but then also could take out
18 critical infrastructure. For example, our power plants
19 that are concentrated in southeast Travis County, we
20 work with the federal government to eventually do that
21 kind of work. If there is not sufficient time for
22 testimony and for looking at these maps, you could
23 cause all sorts of havoc because a new member of
24 Congress, be they Republican or Democratic now, doesn't
25 even know about that ongoing flooding issue or that

1 infrastructure threat.

2 So for the everyday person, this could
3 seriously disrupt the federal services, be they
4 constituent services or infrastructure, that every
5 member of Congress, regardless of party and regardless
6 of what you see on cable news, are working on. This
7 could get screwed up for you, and I think it's
8 something that nobody on this panel, from what I heard
9 in the opening, is actually interested in doing. And
10 when I go talk to my Republican colleagues in Congress,
11 they say they're not interested in it either because
12 they know it could screw that up, too. So I'm having
13 trouble finding a single person in the state of Texas
14 that actually wants any of this to happen.

15 And if this body moves forward with this,
16 when there obviously is so much other important work to
17 do, especially as it relates to flooding, you could be
18 spending a bunch of time up here screwing something up
19 on behalf of somebody that we don't even represent and
20 messing up the lives of everyday people in rural parts
21 of this state, suburban parts of this state, Republican
22 and Democratic parts of this state. Somebody that
23 politics is not even their thing. They might be living
24 next to that gas plant that could get flooded with
25 sewage where we're working on a project and it just

1 gets dropped because you draw a line right through
2 there, and y'all don't know it and we don't even know
3 it because you're given a map last minute after the
4 hearings and just ram it through. That could really
5 impact the lives of Texans and you just don't have to
6 do it.

7 REP. GARCIA: And one more thing.
8 Applications that are in the process, let's talk about
9 SSI, SSDI, disability, immigration.

10 JOAQUIN CASTRO: Let me just say, what
11 happens when those lines change is that we're supposed
12 to service our constituents. So if they get a new
13 member of Congress, you have to transfer those cases
14 over based on where they live. So it becomes
15 incredibly disruptive to folks because they've been
16 working -- some of these -- if you've dealt with a
17 social security case, sometimes they go on for years,
18 the appeals. And so people are calling our office
19 every few months trying to find out about the status of
20 their case, and it's going to be incredibly disruptive.

21 And then also, Representative Garcia, I
22 just want to say that I think it's also telling that
23 there are no Republican members of Congress here today
24 to testify in support of this effort. Unless I'm
25 wrong, perhaps there's some that are coming later, but

1 otherwise, there's not a single Republican member of
2 Congress who is here today from Texas to say this is a
3 good thing and we should do it. Maybe they'll be on
4 the virtual hearings that you have in different states,
5 the Senate or you guys. Otherwise, I think that's very
6 strange that none of them are saying that they'd like
7 to do this.

8 REP. VASUT: Members of the committee,
9 any other questions? I've had requests from two on the
10 dais. The Chair will recognize Representative Raymond
11 on the dais with us as well. Chair recognizes Ms.
12 Jones to question witnesses.

13 REP. JONES: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I've
14 got a question for each of you. Very simple, are you
15 asking this committee to keep the lines the same?

16 SYLVIA GARCIA: To keep it simple, yes.

17 GREG CASAR: Yes.

18 JOAQUIN CASTRO: Yes.

19 REP. JONES: Second question, are you
20 asking this committee that when there is a map, that
21 there be hearings around the state so that the public
22 can testify to the specific effects of those maps on
23 them? In other words, so they have due process in the
24 conversation about redistricting?

25 SYLVIA GARCIA: Yes, robust hearings.

1 Three is good for New Jersey, but it ain't -- it ain't
2 Texas.

3 REP. JONES: I said around the state, so
4 I agree. Yes, sir?

5 GREG CASAR: Yes, ma'am.

6 JOAQUINC CASTRO: Yes, I think it's
7 essential.

8 REP. JONES: Thank you. No further
9 questions.

10 REP. VASUT: Thank you, Ms. Jones.

11 Mr. Perez is recognized by the Chair to
12 question witnesses.

13 REP. PEREZ: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

14 And Mr. Chairman, I do appreciate the opportunity for
15 allowing us to participate even though we're not part
16 of the committee. As was mentioned by the witnesses, I
17 want to talk a little bit about, I guess, the current
18 gerrymandering and the current makeup. Something that
19 I have expressed my concern is that the current
20 districts are incredibly segregated and that these are
21 the most racially segregated maps that Texas has seen
22 since the Civil War. To put it in context, Hispanics,
23 blacks, and Asians make up 60 percent of Texas's
24 population. But when you look at the 25 Republican
25 colleagues that you all have, 90 percent of them are

1 elected by an Anglo-majority electorate. And I think
2 that speaks to the segregation that currently exists.

3 So my question is, Congresswoman Garcia,
4 since your district was specifically in the letter, the
5 only way that President Trump can achieve his objective
6 by saying that he wants to convert your district to a
7 Republican district is by shifting out 200,000 black
8 and Latino constituents and spreading them out amongst,
9 one of them would be District 36 to your east, District
10 7 to your southeast. One, what is that going to do to
11 your constituency in terms of community cohesion? I'm
12 hoping you can talk about the communities that would be
13 broken up in this effort and how that would affect
14 their representation being in a segregated district
15 where they don't have the opportunity to make a
16 difference in that district come election time.

17 SYLVIA GARCIA: We really don't have time
18 to fully answer that question. I'll try to make it
19 brief. You know, as crazy as it sounds, I actually saw
20 a map that someone said, well, this is what they could
21 do. And it obviously doesn't come from the felon in
22 the White House. This is somebody's idea. They
23 actually had my district going all the way to Orange,
24 Texas. And Orange, Texas has got probably very little
25 community of interest with the north side of Houston

1 where I live, which is predominantly Latino. But the
2 only thing we do with orange is wear orange on Go
3 Astros days. That's about -- that's probably about the
4 only affinity we might have.

5 But you're absolutely right. They're
6 really going to have to stretch it out there. It's
7 like they're going to blow a bubble and then they'll
8 see how the bubble is shaped. But it's going to tear
9 us apart. And it's going to leave a lot of people
10 without representation. It's -- even as something as
11 simple as being able to find someone who can speak your
12 own language. We get Spanish-speaking callers. We get
13 Spanish-speaking callers sometimes from all over the
14 country because they see me on TV speaking Spanish
15 about an issue, and the calls start coming the next
16 day. Or there'll be calls -- I've had calls from other
17 members, especially from West Texas, that they'll tell
18 us, well, call Garcia in Houston. But all we can do is
19 take the call because, by law, we cannot spend
20 resources, personnel, or any type of funding outside
21 our districts.

22 So it's going to tear people apart.
23 They're going to have less representation, and their
24 casework is just not going to happen, especially if
25 there's language barriers involved also. So thank you

1 for the question.

2 REP. VASUT: Members, any other questions
3 of this panel?

4 Chair recognizes Mr. Raymond to question
5 witnesses.

6 REP. RAYMOND: Chairman, thank you very,
7 very much for allowing me to -- I don't want to
8 question the witnesses. I wanted to ask a couple of
9 questions of the Chair if I could, just to clarify.
10 Would that be okay?

11 REP. VASUT: The Chair will yield for
12 questions.

13 REP. RAYMOND: Thank you. As I
14 understand it, we've established before the hearing,
15 but I think reestablished during the hearing -- I'm
16 looking at the letter from the Justice Department and
17 it says, "As stated below, Congressional Districts TX-
18 09, 18, 29, and 33 currently constitute
19 unconstitutional 'coalition districts,' and we urge the
20 State of Texas to rectify these race-based
21 considerations from these specific districts." And so,
22 this was sent to the Governor, it moved the Governor to
23 put on the call that we needed to have a session that
24 included, special session that included responding to
25 the Justice Department's request. Is that the way you

1 see it as well? I think you've said you see it that
2 way, so I'll say you see it that way.

3 REP. VASUT: As the Chair stated earlier,
4 you'd have to ask the Department of Justice what they
5 mean with this letter.

6 REP. RAYMOND: Well, the letter pretty
7 specifically says -- I mean, you can read the second
8 sentence in the first paragraph. So that's what it
9 says, and it specifically says that these four
10 districts, 9, 18, 29, and 33, currently constitute
11 unconstitutional coalition districts. So the question
12 I have for you, Chairman, is, then you as Chairman,
13 presumably, laid out the -- put together the notice of
14 public hearing. Is that right? You put it --

15 REP. VASUT: That is correct.

16 REP. RAYMOND: Okay. In it -- and the
17 reason I ask is because you cover the congressional
18 district in which I live, which is District 28. And so
19 you say in the notice, "This hearing will focus on
20 counties of the state lying wholly or partly within
21 Congressional Districts 10" -- I'll start with this,
22 10. So is it the Chair's position that 10 is also one
23 of the districts in addition to the four that the
24 Justice Department references? You're adding District
25 10 to that; is that right?

1 REP. VASUT: The Chair noticed the
2 hearings based off of a -- since there were going to be
3 three initial hearings on any revisions to the plan,
4 which was in response to the Governor's proclamation, I
5 divided the state up into three. That is -- that is
6 the sole reason why today's hearing -- as is customary
7 every time that we've done redistricting, to my
8 knowledge, we have these types of prehearings, these --
9 they sometimes refer to them colloquially as field
10 hearings or informational gathering hearings. And
11 there has to be some type of division of focus to
12 encourage us to focus on something. And so I split the
13 state up into three. The decision was made based off
14 of the districts that were the closest to Austin, which
15 is where we were going to be today. That's how that
16 list came up for today's hearing. But as the notice
17 indicates, any member of the public is free to testify
18 on any district they wish.

19 REP. RAYMOND: But Chairman, you did not
20 list every single congressional district in the state.
21 You very specifically, in your notice to the public,
22 you said you would focus on Districts 10, 11, 15, 16,
23 17, 20, 21, 23, 27, 28, which is where I live, 31, 34,
24 and 35, and 37. You did not list all of them.

25 REP. VASUT: I listed every single

1 district when you add all three of the hearing notices
2 up together.

3 REP. RAYMOND: Again, my -- then my --

4 REP. VASUT: And there's a bold statement
5 in the notice that says --

6 REP. RAYMOND: So my question --

7 REP. VASUT: -- "But the committee will
8 take testimony about any region of the state."

9 REP. RAYMOND: So my question to you
10 then, and you can say, no, you don't believe that 10,
11 11, 15, 16, 17, 20, 21, 23, 27, 28, 31, etc., you don't
12 believe that they currently constitute unconstitutional
13 coalition districts. Is that the Chair's position? Or
14 do you think that they do?

15 REP. VASUT: I think you need to ask the
16 Department of Justice what they think about --

17 REP. RAYMOND: I'm asking you because you
18 listed them in the --

19 REP. VASUT: -- any particular districts.
20 My position is, and always has been, that any map that
21 I have voted on as a member complies with the Voting
22 Rights Act.

23 REP. RAYMOND: Correct, but the reason
24 that we have this hearing is directly because of this
25 letter from the Justice Department, and they

1 specifically point out Texas 9, 18, 29, and 33. They
2 do not point out 10, 11, 15, and certainly don't put
3 28. So I'm asking you, why would you have put those
4 specific numbers? And by the way, it's my
5 understanding --

6 REP. VASUT: Because the Chair did not
7 set this schedule based off of the letter from the
8 Department of Justice but from the Governor's
9 proclamation, which is not limited to particular
10 districts.

11 REP. RAYMOND: But the governor has said
12 -- he has said many times by now that this letter, this
13 request by the Justice Department, is the reason that
14 he has put it on the agenda. And because he has put it
15 on the agenda, you are having a hearing today. You've
16 said that.

17 REP. VASUT: I have said that it is
18 customary for the legislature, when the governor places
19 an item on the call to hold, to hold -- to take up that
20 item. And so that item that was listed was revisions
21 to the Congressional Redistricting Plan. I then set up
22 these pre-hearings, these field hearings -- we'll just
23 call them field hearings -- based on the prior
24 precedent, which has always been followed by the
25 Redistricting Committee, is to canvass every area of

1 the state with hearings focused on particular regions.
2 I then divided the state in three, aligning the regions
3 closest to where the hearings were taking place.

4 REP. RAYMOND: Chairman, I believe we're
5 going to be taking up disaster because of the disaster
6 on July the 4th. Would you agree with that?

7 REP. VASUT: I -- whether or not --
8 certainly a committee, a select committee has been
9 appointed --

10 REP. RAYMOND: Right.

11 REP. VASUT: -- to take up the disaster
12 items, and they've held a hearing already, and they
13 will hold another.

14 REP. RAYMOND: And would you agree that
15 they're doing it because of the recent disaster?

16 REP. VASUT: I would say that would
17 probably be obvious --

18 REP. RAYMOND: Yes.

19 REP. VASUT: -- but I would say this.

20 REP. RAYMOND: And so, Chairman, with all
21 respect --

22 REP. VASUT: Let's keep the questions
23 limited to the --

24 REP. RAYMOND: Okay.

25 REP. VASUT: -- business before the

1 committee.

2 REP. RAYMOND: But that was an example
3 that, just like the reason that we're taking up
4 disaster is because of July 4th, because of that storm,
5 the reason we are taking this up, and the governor has
6 said it -- and I just want to establish, the governor
7 said that he is taking it up. He's asking us to take
8 it up because of this letter from the Justice
9 Department. And my question, and I'll move on, but in
10 this letter, which necessitated the governor, I guess,
11 putting it on the agenda, necessitated you having this
12 hearing, was because of these four districts, which he
13 -- which the Justice Department says are
14 unconstitutional coalition districts.

15 And what bothers me, I have to tell you,
16 because it includes my district, my area, is that then
17 you expand that to all these other districts. You
18 specifically put them in the announcement, Chairman.
19 Now, if you don't -- if you don't want to answer it,
20 that's okay, but you either believe or you don't
21 believe that the districts that you have added to the
22 agenda, because you specifically pointed them out here,
23 including mine, 28, you either believe that they are
24 also, like the Justice Department believes,
25 unconstitutional coalition districts, or you don't, or

1 you don't want to answer it. It's up -- I'm just
2 curious.

3 REP. VASUT: I would reject the
4 gentleman's hypothetical. I think that the Chair has
5 succinctly answered already why the list is the way it
6 is. It was chosen because the Governor's call asked
7 for revised congressional district plan. I then
8 followed the practice of every redistricting that I'm
9 aware of, which is to have hearings that go around the
10 entire state, in the sense of covering all the regions.
11 We had three hearings. We divided the state in three.
12 Ipso facto, the list.

13 REP. RAYMOND: Chairman --

14 REP. VASUT: And yes, the Chair will
15 acknowledge the number distinction, but as the Chair
16 has already stated, I did not set these hearings based
17 off of that July 7th letter.

18 REP. RAYMOND: Well, Chairman --

19 REP. VASUT: And so I've answered your
20 question.

21 REP. RAYMOND: Chairman, you know I love
22 you. You've helped me on the floor. I appreciate you,
23 brother. But when you put my district, 28, along with
24 all these others, on your announcement here, it seems
25 to me you're indicating you believe it's an

1 unconstitutional district.

2 REP. VASUT: That is --

3 REP. RAYMOND: It's not a hypothetical.

4 REP. VASUT: The chair's position is that
5 every map he's ever voted on complies with the Voting
6 Rights Act. And the gentleman --

7 REP. RAYMOND: So in other words, you
8 believe --

9 REP. VASUT: -- should not construe
10 anything the Chairman believes to indicate that he
11 believes any particular district that's currently drawn
12 or previously drawn violates the Voting Rights Act.

13 REP. RAYMOND: Thank you. You've
14 answered it. You've said that all these districts, 10,
15 11, 15, 16, you believe are constitutional. Thank you.

16 REP. VASUT: Okay. Any other questions?

17 Thank you, panelists, for being here
18 today. We appreciate your testimony. You are excused.

19 SYLVIA GARCIA: Thank you for your time.

20 REP. VASUT: Thank you. Chair's
21 intention at this time is to go back to virtual
22 testimony. I want to try to keep it balanced between
23 the two. As the Chair previously indicated, there were
24 three other individuals we were going to reach on
25 virtual testimony. I'm going to call them now at this

1 time, one at a time, so please be ready.

2 The Chair calls Ally Flores. All right.

3 We can see you. If you'll unmute yourself. And then
4 we're going to pull up your witness registration here
5 momentarily. We can see you. Can you hear us okay?

6 ALLY FLORES: Yes.

7 REP. VASUT: And we can hear you. Thank
8 you very much. I show you registered as -- let me pull
9 that up real quick. I show you registered to testify
10 as Ally Flores, on behalf of yourself, on the revised
11 Congressional Redistricting Plan. Is that correct?

12 ALLY FLORES: Yes.

13 REP. VASUT: Thank you. Please give us
14 your testimony.

15 ALLY FLORES: Yeah, hello. My name is
16 Ally Flores, and I'm a student at UT Austin. I was on
17 the ground in 2024 helping drive what became the
18 highest student voter turnout our university had ever
19 seen. We made it clear that students want serious
20 attention to the issues affecting our generation, and
21 that's been reflected by Congressman Lloyd Doggett,
22 who's consistently shown up, listened, and represented
23 our district with integrity. Yet here we are facing a
24 redistricting effort in the middle of a decade with no
25 new census and no clear justification. If this moves

1 forward, it could completely reshape the district I
2 live in, organize in, and vote in, breaking apart a
3 community I felt finally represented me.

4 What message does it send to young voters
5 when the moment we show up in force, the goalposts are
6 moved and our districts are redrawn? We finally get
7 involved and now it seems that the rules are being
8 changed because we made our voices count. Not long
9 ago, you could walk from one side of UT's 40 acres to
10 the other, crossing several congressional districts in
11 the process. Additionally, primary elections are
12 already confusing and under publicized, especially for
13 new voters. If this redistricting effort moves
14 forward, students could be shuffled into new districts
15 with different representatives right before a
16 competitive primary. That kind of sudden change
17 doesn't just cause confusion, it makes participation
18 harder in a system that already isn't built for young
19 people. We're balancing classes, jobs, financial aid
20 deadlines, and now we're expected to keep up with last
21 minute shifts in political lines, too.

22 Members of the committee, this decision
23 matters not just for Austin, but for students and young
24 voters across the state who are finally engaging with
25 the political process in meaningful ways. Redrawing

1 districts mid-decade risks undoing that progress and
2 discouraging participation at the exact moment it's
3 growing. I'm asking you to reject this redistricting
4 push, keep our UT Austin community whole, and protect
5 the broader principle of equal representation over
6 partisan advantage. Thank you.

7 REP. VASUT: Thank you, Ms. Flores, for
8 your testimony. Members, any questions for the
9 witness? Chair hears none. Thank you, ma'am, you're
10 excused.

11 ALLY FLORES: Thank you.

12 REP. VASUT: Chair calls Eric Jacobsen.
13 All right, Mr. Jacobson, we're getting you into the
14 Zoom here. We can see you. We'll make sure that we
15 unmute you. Okay. You're going to receive a little
16 blue box. There we go. Okay.

17 ERIC JACOBSEN: Can you hear me?

18 REP. VASUT: We can hear you now. Let me
19 go -- I'm going to pull up your witness affirmation
20 form momentarily. Appreciate you hanging with us
21 through this process. I show you registered to testify
22 as Eric Jacobsen, on behalf of yourself, on revised
23 Congressional Redistricting Plan. Is that correct?

24 ERIC JACOBSEN: That is.

25 REP. VASUT: Please give us your

1 testimony.

2 ERIC JACOBSEN: I'd like to thank
3 everyone for holding this hearing and for allowing me
4 to speak. I'd also like to express my thanks and
5 agreement with many of the things that our
6 congressional panel and Dr. Katz spoke of earlier. I
7 hope that if you all have any detailed legal /
8 technical questions for me, you would refer those to
9 Dr. Katz and not me.

10 I have been a voter in Texas for the
11 better part -- it's a little over the last quarter
12 century. And that's really the only expertise that I
13 bring here. I think the reasons for redistricting are
14 plain and simple in normal circumstances. It's because
15 populations have changed. Demographics have changed to
16 the extent that they might necessitate consideration of
17 the Voting Rights Act criteria. And, you know,
18 frankly, I do think that Texas needs to work on the
19 compactness of their districts. There's no reason why
20 someone 500 miles away should be in the same district
21 as somebody in the state with the population that we
22 have.

23 I think Texas has always been known as
24 relatively independent. It's often advocating for
25 local government, states' rights, and so on, on the

1 basis that people in a particular region and particular
2 community know what they need. They know how to ask
3 for what they need. They can group together and build
4 consensus around what they need. I just have trouble
5 seeing how that's possible when someone's in a district
6 that starts in Blanco and ends in El Paso, for example.

7 REP. VASUT: Please complete your
8 testimony.

9 ERIC JACOBSEN: Okay. I also think,
10 though, that this is not the right time to redistrict.
11 There's no basis for it from what I've heard and read.
12 And I would just urge that, in the future,
13 redistricting plans be based on those criteria and the
14 law rather than --

15 REP. VASUT: Thank you very much.

16 Members, any questions for this witness?

17 Thank you for your time, sir. Witness is
18 excused.

19 Before the Chair calls the next witness,
20 the next in-person panel is going to be the following
21 four people. When I call your name, please come in and
22 come sit at the front. Gary Bledsoe, Gabriel Rosales,
23 Alicia Perez-Hodge, and Dr. Angela Valenzuela. If
24 you're one of those four, please make your way into the
25 committee room.

1 Chair calls Robin Peeples. We don't show
2 Ms. Peeples in the waiting room on Zoom, so at this
3 time we will show Ms. --

4 UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Mr. Chairman, sorry,
5 Ms. Peeples is actually in here.

6 ROBIN PEEPLES: I ended up making it
7 here, and I'm in the queue for in-person later. So I
8 just didn't --

9 REP. VASUT: Let's go ahead and take you
10 now. Congratulations. Job opportunity. I appreciate
11 you accommodating us. It's just a little easier to
12 handle it that way. You'll come right up there at the
13 front. Now, I show you registered -- we're going to
14 have two registrations. I'm going to read the first
15 one. I show you registered as Robin Peeples,
16 testifying on behalf of yourself --

17 ROBIN PEEPLES: Yes.

18 REP. VASUT: -- on the revised
19 Congressional Redistricting Plan. Is that correct?

20 ROBIN PEEPLES: Yes.

21 REP. VASUT: And I show that you have a
22 duplicate registration. I believe you had it for
23 virtual. Is it okay if we remove that registration?

24 ROBIN PEEPLES: Please.

25 REP. VASUT: Thank you very much. Please

1 give us your testimony.

2 ROBIN PEEPLES: Okay. Well, I think I'll
3 keep it really quick because I -- I'm just a regular
4 person, and I don't have a lot of expertise to add
5 here. I'm speaking as a constituent of Texas 31. And
6 I'm a software designer and developer, and I'm a voter.
7 And I echo everything that the congressional witnesses
8 said earlier. And I am dismayed that the legislative
9 session is not focused on, first and foremost, flood
10 relief and infrastructure for preventing devastation
11 and loss of life in the future. And instead we're here
12 giving neutral feedback about how blatantly political
13 and clearly unconstitutional the attempt to redraw our
14 congressional districts in the middle of the decade is.

15 It's clear that it will have racist
16 impacts on black and brown communities across Texas.
17 And the redistricting process is critical and deserves
18 the time and attention that other witnesses have
19 specified about the number of hearings, the number of
20 opportunity for impact and input. And it should not
21 be, like, shoved through so quickly at a time when
22 we're dealing with disaster in the state. So, thank
23 you for your time.

24 REP. VASUT: Thank you for your
25 testimony.

1 Members, any questions for the witness?

2 Chair recognizes Vice Chair Rosenthal to question the
3 witness.

4 REP. ROSENTHAL: And thank you, Ms.
5 Peeples, for taking the time to make your way to this
6 capitol building, and run this maze, and show up in
7 this environment. You started your remarks by saying
8 you're just a normal citizen.

9 ROBIN PEEPLES: Yeah.

10 REP. ROSENTHAL: I think you are the most
11 important person we need to listen to, the citizens
12 that walk into this room.

13 ROBIN PEEPLES: I agree.

14 REP. ROSENTHAL: And as a citizen, as one
15 of our constituents here, you feel like we should be
16 prioritizing flood relief, the people of Texas --

17 ROBIN PEEPLES: Yes. And not me, but the
18 thousands of people that care about this, if not
19 millions.

20 REP. ROSENTHAL: I agree with you. And I
21 hear that a lot, and I really -- I cannot thank you
22 enough for being here today. Thank you.

23 ROBIN PEEPLES: Thank you.

24 REP. VASUT: Chair recognizes Ms. Garcia
25 to question the witness.

1 REP. GARCIA: Thank you Mr. Speaker, I
2 mean Mr. Chair.

3 REP. VASUT: I'll take it.

4 REP. GARCIA: Premonition? Ms. Peeples,
5 again, my comment was based on yours as well. I want
6 to share with you that three years ago when I came
7 here, I was just an Air Force dental assistant and just
8 a mom and just a combat veteran. And now I'm a state
9 representative. And that was three years ago where I
10 came and testified just like you. So I humbly thank
11 you. And you are one of the most important people in
12 this room because it's people like you take time out of
13 your life who care enough to help us get elected and to
14 be here. So thank you so much for that.

15 My deepest condolences to anybody who's
16 been impacted by what we can only describe as a
17 biblical tragedy in the Hill Country. I have the honor
18 of leading a search and rescue team that's out there
19 helping. And as a member of this committee, it is an
20 honor to be here, but please understand that our hearts
21 are with you. As a lot of us here in this legislature,
22 although we stand as state reps, many of us are also
23 behind the scenes helping the devastation and impact.
24 And so we do agree that there are more things that we
25 need to be focused on right now. However, we're still

1 here to make sure that we're doing our due diligence
2 and doing right by Texans.

3 ROBIN PEEPLES: Thank you.

4 REP. GARCIA: So thank you so much for
5 that.

6 REP. VASUT: Members, any other questions
7 for the witness?

8 Thank you, Ms. Peeples, for being here
9 today. We appreciate you, and you're excused.

10 All right. Chair calls Gary Bledsoe.

11 GARY BLEDSOE: Mr. Chairman, I have some
12 written copies. Should I hand them over to the --

13 REP. VASUT: You certainly may. Please
14 hand them to the clerk right over here.

15 GARY BLEDSOE: Mr. Bledsoe, I have you
16 registered as Gary Bledsoe, on behalf of the Texas
17 NAACP and yourself, testifying on the revised
18 Congressional Redistricting Plan. Is that correct,
19 sir?

20 GARY BLEDSOE: That is -- that is
21 correct.

22 REP. VASUT: Thank you, sir. Please give
23 us your testimony.

24 GARY BLEDSOE: Chair, Vice Chair, members
25 of the committee, members of the Legislature, this

1 highly unusual mid-decade redistricting, like every one
2 before it, reminds me of the long, unbroken history of
3 efforts to silence and diminish the political power of
4 black Texans. We need to remember that this is not
5 just about political parties. It is about the
6 systematic efforts to restrict the influence of people
7 of color in this state. At this nation's founding, the
8 Constitution enshrined a three-fifths compromise,
9 counting black people as only three-fifths of a human
10 being for the purpose of legislative representation.
11 But while our bodies were counted to inflate the power
12 of slave-holding states such as Texas, we had no vote,
13 no real voice, and absolutely no ability to shape who
14 represented us, even at that subhuman level. That
15 compromise dehumanized my ancestors, turning them into
16 tools to strengthen the political interests of those
17 who would keep them in chains, and set the foundation
18 for centuries of racially-discriminatory laws and
19 practices. With this mid-decade redistricting, Texas
20 is moving back to that era and that system.

21 The DOJ letter to Governor Abbott
22 specifically targets three of the four districts where
23 African-American voters are able to elect their
24 candidate of choice directly, and one Latino district
25 where Latinos are able to elect their candidate of

1 choice directly. Importantly, the fourth African-
2 American district has been possibly added for the
3 hearing in Arlington next week, so it seems as though
4 they are trying to wipe the slate clean and reinstate
5 the three-fifths compromise. The 9th 18th, and 30th
6 are not just any districts, these are opportunity seats
7 protected under the law, as confirmed by both the DC
8 Circuit and panels right here in Texas, as well as
9 being admitted to by the State of Texas, even in the
10 current litigation that is now pending.

11 REP. VASUT: Thank you for your
12 testimony. We may come back for questions of the panel
13 right at the end. Thank you, sir.

14 GARY BLEDSOE: Okay. Thank you.

15 REP. VASUT: And we have received your
16 submission and appreciate it. Chair at this time is --
17 let me go ahead and note, when we get to the next
18 group, it's going to be virtual testimony, so if the
19 following could be ready for the next virtual panel:
20 Carol Teitelman, Heidi Bray, Frederick Woods, and Conor
21 Rice.

22 Chair calls Gabriel Rosales. I show you
23 registered as Gabriel Rosales.

24 GABRIEL ROSALES: Yes. I'm the State
25 Director for the League of United Latin American

1 Citizens. I represent over 21 different districts here
2 in the State of Texas.

3 REP. VASUT: And you're here to testify
4 on behalf of yourself and Texas State LULAC on
5 Congressional Redistricting Plan. Is that correct?

6 GABRIEL ROSALES: Yes.

7 REP. VASUT: Thank you. Please give us
8 your testimony.

9 GABRIEL ROSALES: Thank you. The Latino
10 community has contributed to the majority of the
11 population growth from the beginning. This is
12 historic. I was actually a plaintiff on the
13 redistricting lawsuits many years ago. So every ten
14 years, we go through this, and they continue to dilute
15 our community. So what we know is that the history of
16 LU- -- the history of Texas is to dilute the vote. So
17 even the current maps, we can argue, right, have
18 diluted the vote of the Latino community for years.

19 It has been our fight, since the
20 beginning of the conception of LULAC, to fight for
21 representation, to fight for representation at the
22 local level, at the state, and at the federal. And
23 what you're doing is completely unacceptable. We have
24 a tremendous amount of community. We make up a large
25 percentage of the population growth, and it just cannot

1 continue in this direction. Our people have
2 contributed to the success of this economy, and we
3 continue, we continue to be successful academically
4 within your institution, undocumented or otherwise.

5 I'm very proud of our community for being
6 as resilient as we have been, but we deserve
7 representation. We deserve to have a larger
8 representation that reflects our community. And the
9 maps, I don't know, you keep saying there's maps.
10 There's not maps. The maps that I think that we're
11 looking at definitely, definitely want to send an all-
12 white delegation to Congress, definitely want to help
13 out the felon in the White House, as Ms. Garcia said so
14 eloquently earlier. We're going to continue to want to
15 be there.

16 I think the Mexican-American community,
17 the Latino community, have served this country as
18 veterans, have served this country on the school
19 boards, and have served this country honorably. And we
20 continue to serve this country. And so it is your
21 responsibility to allow for diversity to be a part of
22 the representation that we have going to Congress.
23 Thank you.

24 REP. VASUT: Thank you for your
25 testimony.

1 Chair calls Angela Valenzuela.

2 ANGELA VALENZUELA: Yes, thank you.

3 REP. VASUT: I show you registered as
4 Angela Valenzuela, testifying on behalf of LULAC. Is
5 that correct?

6 ANGELA VALENZUELA: That is correct.

7 REP. VASUT: And it's on the revised
8 Congressional Redistricting Plan. Is that correct?

9 ANGELA VALENZUELA: That is correct, yes.

10 REP. VASUT: Thank you for your
11 testimony. Please give it.

12 ANGELA VALENZUELA: Yeah, thank you so
13 much. I think we're all learning a lot today. This is
14 very complicated work. It should be done with real
15 thought and real care and democratic deliberation. The
16 very process itself feels like a railroad that's coming
17 down the track, and that's a terrible feeling because
18 so many lives are at stake. And also, doing this
19 deflects from other things that we should really be
20 focusing on as a state exclusively, so that we're
21 protected as citizens. This flood that happened should
22 be front and center, and this just feels like a
23 significant weapon of mass distraction.

24 I mean, I think that it makes a lot of
25 sense for us to be represented as black and brown

1 people equitably in the state, because we do
2 contribute. We have a voice. We're professors. We're
3 scholars. We're researchers. We're also, you know,
4 just rank-and-file folks that need to be represented.
5 They need to go to someone in Congress and feel that,
6 as we heard earlier, that they have a relationship with
7 them and that they can count on them. And that's
8 what's being jeopardized.

9 This is a very reckless process. I feel
10 very, very uncomfortable about the whole thing. I
11 mean, I think you heard that you're being played. I
12 never like being played. If there's anything I don't
13 like in my life, it's being played. And y'all are
14 being played big time. Yeah. And so, you know, have
15 some self-respect here. That's what I would say. Have
16 some self-respect.

17 REP. VASUT: Thank you for your
18 testimony.

19 Chair calls Alicia Perez-Hodge. Could
20 you please come up to the front here, ma'am? And while
21 you're coming to be seated, I'm going to come back to
22 you.

23 Mr. Rosales, actually, I had you
24 registered only testifying on behalf of Texas State
25 LULAC.

1 GABRIEL ROSALES: Yes.

2 REP. VASUT: Is that correct?

3 GABRIEL ROSALES: That's correct.

4 REP. VASUT: Okay. Thank you for
5 correcting the record.

6 Ms. Perez-Hodge, I saw you registered as
7 Alicia Perez-Hodge, testifying on behalf of LULAC.

8 ALICIA PEREZ-HODGE: Yes, sir. That is
9 correct.

10 REP. VASUT: And that's on revised
11 Congressional Redistricting Plan.

12 ALICIA PEREZ-HODGE: That is correct.

13 REP. VASUT: Please give us your
14 testimony.

15 ALICIA PEREZ-HODGE: Yes, sir. I am
16 originally from Corpus Christi. I knew Todd Hunter
17 when he had a full head of beautiful, blond hair.
18 Texas LULAC strongly asserts that fair representation
19 is not up for debate. It's required by federal law,
20 the U.S. Constitution, and the Voting Rights Act.
21 Voting Rights Act championed by a great Texan named
22 Lyndon Baines Johnson. Please do not forget that great
23 legacy of a man who lived among us, Mexican-Americans,
24 who lived among blacks, and remembered, remembered that
25 they needed democracy as much as people with blonde and

1 blue-eyed. And he stood up against the Dixiecrats.
2 Please don't forget that as Texans, that we do not, we
3 do not bend the knee to anyone in Washington. And
4 Lyndon made sure that that never happened. So I please
5 ask you to remember that.

6 This includes a safeguarding of Latino
7 majority districts, such as Congressional District 29,
8 from being dismantled under false pretenses. Any
9 attempts to redraw such districts as part of a partisan
10 scheme must be rejected. Our communities will not be
11 erased or sidelined. We demand maps that respect our
12 numbers, our rights, and our rightful role in Texas'
13 future. Texas LULAC demands redistricting plans honor
14 the explosive growth of Latino populations by
15 increasing, not diminishing, our political voice. The
16 Voting Rights Act requires equal opportunity to elect
17 candidates of our choice.

18 Yet Texas lawmakers have a long history
19 of suppressing Latino voting strength. During the last
20 redistricting cycles, maps were drawn that increased
21 the number of majority white districts, ignoring the
22 very communities that had driven the population surge.
23 This cannot continue. Any map that reduces Latino
24 representation is not only unjust, it's illegal and
25 must be challenged. And Todd, don't forget, darling,

1 you grew up among us. So please don't forget us.

2 REP. VASUT: Thank you for your
3 testimony. I'm trying to envision Chairman Hunter with
4 all the blond hair.

5 ALICIA PEREZ-HODGE: Beautiful blond
6 hair.

7 REP. VASUT: Members, questions for the
8 panel? Chair recognizes Ms. Gervin-Hawkins to question
9 the panel.

10 REP. GERVIN-HAWKINS: Yes. Thank you,
11 Mr. Chair.

12 Attorney Bledsoe, you know, you've been
13 around a long time with the NAACP, working very closely
14 in that arena.

15 GARY BLEDSOE: Yes, ma'am.

16 REP. GERVIN-HAWKINS: You know, one thing
17 I think is so important, and could you just concisely
18 share with this body, the importance of not creating
19 racial divide?

20 GARY BLEDSOE: Well, Madam Chair, that is
21 such an incredible point, question, because what's
22 occurring in our country, and particularly in our
23 state, we see a rise of hate crimes and antagonism
24 between our students. This morning we had a news
25 conference with K-12 and college students talking about

1 this being part of adding to the divide. You see the
2 N-word being directed towards students in K-12 and
3 school districts doing nothing about it to respond to
4 that. You see students down at Texas State talking
5 about the concerns that they have and the disrespect
6 they're receiving on campus, and how the campus is not
7 responding. You know, ironically, I've met with the
8 students in the Department of Justice to try to address
9 some issues there, but then they fired the department
10 individuals who were handling it three weeks after we
11 met with them. So you understand it's a real problem.
12 And what this says is that you don't matter; you have
13 no rights.

14 Because, if right now, as we sit here
15 now, the current map, Madam Chair, is 73 percent of the
16 seats in Congress are controlled by white voters, 73
17 percent. If this proposal goes through, if you just
18 move the four districts that are in the letter, that
19 means 84 percent would be controlled by white voters.
20 And if you add five, as the President has indicated,
21 that would mean 87 percent. So whites are 40 percent
22 of the population, already control 73 percent of the
23 seats, and we're talking about moving it to 84 percent,
24 87 percent. That -- if that doesn't tell brown people
25 and black people that they don't matter, that really

1 kind of does. And so you just have to look at the
2 numbers and see what that means if we go through with
3 what we're doing.

4 REP. GERVIN-HAWKINS: So Attorney
5 Bledsoe, you can agree and tell this committee that
6 creating a racial divide hurts us, weakens us, as
7 Texans?

8 GARY BLEDSOE: There's no question about
9 that, because people are empowered. We look at -- we
10 look at South Lake, we look at Lubbock, we look at
11 Slaton, we look at Grand Prairie. We look even here in
12 Austin, where we've had incidents like that where
13 people don't matter anymore. The rise of hate is
14 really and truly there.

15 REP. GERVIN-HAWKINS: So as leaders, you
16 would agree that we should be the example and stand up
17 to this and say, we want fairness and accessibility to
18 everyone. We as leaders should be the example to not
19 only just Texans, but the greater America. Would you
20 agree with that?

21 GARY BLEDSOE: I would 100 percent agree
22 with that. And I think that dovetails into what Dr.
23 Valenzuela said earlier, because what's happening is
24 people are coming into our house, telling us to have
25 division in our house, and they're telling you how to

1 run your house and make people angry and hate each
2 other down here, when they're somewhere else dealing
3 with their issues and their people running the show.
4 So it's gosh-awful wrong, Madam Chair. I think you
5 really hit the nail on the head.

6 REP. GERVIN-HAWKINS: And would you agree
7 that by the White House stepping its arms in our
8 community, dividing our community, and then he goes off
9 into the sunset while we're fighting each other and
10 have created a divide that could be unrepairable.
11 Would you agree with that?

12 GARY BLEDSOE: That's absolutely true.
13 He doesn't have to deal with it. He doesn't have to
14 see it. And all those people are going to be crying
15 and they're going to be upset. And I think the
16 acrimony -- you know, one of the reasons that we've
17 done in this country is we've tried to bring everybody
18 in. Our country has become an example around the world
19 of how a country should be run, but now that's being
20 torn down.

21 And so, one of the reasons why that's
22 done, all the experts will tell you, is so that all
23 people buy into the government that you have. Right?
24 And so we want people to be supportive of the
25 government. We don't want people to be antagonistic

1 towards the government and potentially disruptive
2 towards that government. And that buy-in will be lost
3 because you're telling us we have no role. We don't
4 have a vote. We don't have representation. So that
5 means we're outsiders, and that can mean some very
6 dangerous things.

7 REP. GERVIN-HAWKINS: Thank you, sir.

8 REP. VASUT: Mr. Manuel, for a purpose?

9 REP. MANUEL: -- to ask a few questions
10 of Ms. Angela, please.

11 REP. VASUT: The gentleman is recognized
12 to question witnesses.

13 REP. MANUEL: It's Doctor?

14 ANGELA VALENZUELA: Valenzuela.

15 REP. MANUEL: Ms. Venezuela [sic], thank
16 you so much. I'm really asking this because I love
17 your passion on this, and we both said the same word,
18 apartheid. What I want to know is, has there ever --
19 and I know I'm going to ask some questions that might
20 seem a little asinine, but I promise that's not the
21 point of it. Has there ever been a time in just this
22 state that Latinos or Hispanics have been represented
23 by someone who was white, and they did not have an
24 option to be able to represent themselves?

25 ANGELA VALENZUELA: Who was right?

1 REP. MANUEL: Who was white.

2 ANGELA VALENZUELA: Who was white and
3 didn't have an opportunity --

4 REP. MANUEL: Like it was a majority
5 Hispanic district, and somehow you weren't represented
6 by someone who looked like you, who spoke like you, who
7 was from the community? Because I know at one point in
8 time, for black people, we could only be represented by
9 someone who was white. And so I know how --

10 ANGELA VALENZUELA: I think maybe Gary
11 can answer that --

12 REP MANUEL: Well, no, I'm really more
13 asking it from the point of view where you were saying
14 from LULAC and you're saying people being played.
15 Because my -- I'm trying to see is, what is it that the
16 Latino, from the Latino experience, the Hispanic
17 experience, of what it feels like to not have your
18 voice heard in a room when you're talking? If someone
19 else wants to answer it, that's what I'm trying to get
20 to.

21 ANGELA VALENZUELA: Yeah, no, I mean,
22 we're talking about like, sort of, you know, layers and
23 systems of oppression, right?

24 REP. MANUEL: Right.

25 ANGELA VALENZUELA: And so, you know, one

1 layer is that you're present, but you're not even
2 heard, right? You testify, and it just evaporates into
3 the wind, right? It's dismissiveness is a very common
4 word. And it feels like a lack of respect. We're not
5 being treated respectfully. Those are the words that
6 come up a lot in the community. Respect, dignity, a
7 right to a life of dignity. It's at that level of
8 social relationships, how we, you know, like talk to
9 each other and work together. And, you know, it's a
10 complicated state because of a very deep history of
11 racial discrimination against Latinos.

12 And if I can be frank here, I'm going to
13 mention the black-white binary. It's killing us. I
14 mean, because, it's like, you know -- I mean, there's
15 more to this country than black. I'm a professor in
16 the area of race and ethnicity at UT Austin. And
17 that's an issue that means that oftentimes people
18 understand race as black and white, when a more
19 textured analysis is that, you know, race is a social
20 construct and historical.

21 REP. MANUEL: Right, it's all culture.

22 ANGELA VALENZUELA: Well, it's
23 historical, right? And so, even if you're not
24 technically a race, which is itself, like, inaccurate,
25 there's only ultimately one race, the human race,

1 right? But these are words that come in with slavery,
2 right? With the consolidation of slavery, with -- you
3 know, the US census is making race every day by, you
4 know, using these terms that, you know, that are just
5 widely circulated and somehow interpreted, right, as
6 complex as this is.

7 Such that my point is that we're a race,
8 from a sociological perspective, as Latinos and
9 Mexican-Americans. And we feel ourselves like a race.
10 We are a race because we are treating -- we are treated
11 as other. But again, it's fluid. It doesn't have to
12 be that way, right? It doesn't have to be that way
13 anywhere. We can just sort of align as people that
14 love each other. Why not? Why can't we have black and
15 brown dialogues on policy? We formed an organization
16 to promote that, right? And that's inclusive of
17 Asians, indigenous, queer, Latino.

18 I mean, let me tell you, y'all are
19 messing up big time by focusing on the wrong issues.
20 Because in doing that, you have blind spots like
21 infrastructure that you are not addressing. Y'all are
22 screwing up big time. I'm sorry to say. Not you
23 individually, I'm not saying that, but I'm saying that
24 when your attention is on these sets of issues that
25 have to do ostensibly with, you know, with culture,

1 with trans youth, with gender-affirming care, I mean,
2 God, you know, we have an ecological crisis. Now we
3 have an infrastructural crisis. It's hard not to
4 understand that as, I mean, weapons of mass
5 distraction. That's what they are, to keep us from
6 focusing on other things. We get focused on
7 immigration and education a lot, right?

8 REP. MANUEL: Well, no, I just kind of
9 want to stick to that part. But I'm going to -- if
10 it's okay, I want to ask that same question, but for
11 you I want to add -- because I know there's something
12 else that I'm trying to also see is, what does -- of
13 course, the representation, not having it, but not
14 having that representation, how has that been -- how
15 has that negatively affected the community and how
16 other people have seen you all if you're not able to
17 have communities of interest or you're not able to have
18 districts that look like people that are represented.

19 GABRIEL ROSALES: Yes, it's very
20 demoralizing. I get phone calls on, you know, a lot
21 about different communities where we have a majority in
22 a pocket in a community that have no representation on
23 school board. That's going around Texas now. That's
24 usually some of -- the most of the cases that we take
25 on when we go into places like Kerrville, where we have

1 Latinos in every part of the state, but they absolutely
2 have no representation. So they're calling LULAC.

3 Because the first thing that I know, when
4 you have issues in your community, go to your elected
5 official, go to your city council, go to your county.
6 But how do you go there if it's a white person who
7 doesn't care about you? If it's someone -- I mean, we
8 have little fights over, in small towns in Texas, where
9 we're going over someone getting -- when you get
10 permission from the city to be able to rezone. And so
11 a lot of discrimination is going on in the rezoning
12 effort where, you know, a wealthy ranch owner can put
13 as many campers on his land as he wants, but the Latino
14 down the block cannot. So that's going on now.

15 Even with the way the state is set up as
16 it is now, I get phone calls all the day about
17 discrimination cases, and there has been an uptick,
18 since the election of that president, across the state.
19 So what you're talking about, how it feels, that's what
20 the Latino community is going through now. And it's
21 demoralizing. You feel like you can't get anything
22 done. You have no trust. [Speaking Spanish], they
23 don't vote. Why are they not going to vote? Because
24 why would they if they have representation at the city
25 council?

1 It's been our fight for the single-member
2 district lawsuits, you know, to empower our people in
3 our communities to be able to have seats at this table.
4 That fight hasn't ended. That fight still needs to
5 happen in many of our communities across the state. So
6 the answer to your question is, it's very demoralizing.
7 That we can do as much as we can, contribute as much as
8 this economy that we can, but we don't have
9 representation on water boards, on school boards, and
10 city councils across the state. And it shouldn't be
11 that way. We need single-member districts in small,
12 rural areas especially. It is.

13 And like I said, we've got a history of
14 voter suppression. When people ask people why Latinos
15 don't vote, well, try voting in a little town called
16 Uvalde. Try voting in -- try running for office in
17 Frio County and see what happens to you. So what's
18 going on here is a complete attack against the Latino
19 community. It's demoralizing. Even, you know, we feel
20 like in San Antonio, you know, we have a congressional
21 district.

22 We're a little bit better off than most
23 people across the state because at least we have
24 Castro. At least we have Gina Ortiz Jones that we can
25 go to. At least we have Tommy Calvert that we can go

1 and talk to and get some results. But what about all
2 these other little counties across the state and even
3 in some parts of South Texas where we don't have
4 representation? I mean, this has been historic.
5 That's why LULAC was founded to begin with, was to
6 continue to gain back that political power.

7 REP. MANUEL: Okay. Thank you so much.
8 And lastly to you, Mr. Bledsoe, we live in a state that
9 has the highest percentage of black people, African-
10 Americans, in this country. And the representation
11 doesn't show. And with you being with the NAACP -- and
12 what I don't think most people truly understand about
13 the NAACP is, it started because of mass lynchings of
14 black people. The statistics were two black people
15 would die every week from lynchings, which is why this
16 organization was created, to try to protect even when
17 we didn't have voting rights. Can you explain how that
18 is affecting our community at the thought of losing
19 representation when we already are underrepresented?

20 GARY BLEDSOE: That's such an important
21 statement and question. And let me just say that one
22 of the ironies is that the National NAACP was made by
23 lynchings in Texas. Many of those lynchings occurred
24 in Texas, but there's a book called The Lynching of
25 Jesse Washington in the making of the NAACP that

1 details a 1916 lynching in Waco that occurred in real
2 time. It was the first time there was live footage,
3 and the New York Times wrote feature stories about it.
4 And we had actually had a white member of the staff to
5 actually be there in attendance.

6 But that kind of feeling of alienation
7 has dissipated some over the years, and now it's all
8 coming back. What's occurring in recent times is
9 really something that is designed and intended to make
10 people feel like they're outsiders, that this is not
11 yours. The whole idea that kind of started with the
12 Tea Party thing before take our country back, as if
13 others don't have a share in the country, and that when
14 the Constitution -- when Barbara Jordan said, "We the
15 people didn't include me." Well, that's a big concern.
16 And so in our community, when we see attempts like
17 this, it really generates some real animosity towards
18 what's happening.

19 Voters are very sophisticated. They
20 understand exactly what's going on. You don't have to
21 really explain it to them. And the level of -- let's
22 just say, the level of being upset within the African
23 American community is huge. You look on social media.
24 You know, it's kind of like when you develop those
25 ideas of being able to have this system of

1 communication where people communicate with each other.

2 And you see it in Dallas, you see it in Houston, you
3 see it in the rural areas.

4 And so we've got people that are just
5 upset and they've been inundating us with calls. We've
6 had town halls on this and they've been in
7 participation at the town halls. All the
8 organizations, even some that are not really civil
9 rights-type organizations, but you find that the
10 organizations in the black community are all upset
11 because they understand what this means. Because when
12 you look at the whole, what's actually intended with
13 this, and the rights that are going to be in jeopardy,
14 and you look at what's actually going to occur if this
15 is being able to be achieved, you have to be very
16 frightened.

17 Because right now, that representation of
18 African-Americans and Latinos is what is now saving
19 this country. And so that is kind of a bulwark saving
20 the country from itself. Because, as you said, like
21 Dr. Valenzuela said, you know, people being played.
22 And because there's no reason for us to even be here
23 right now. There's no reason to be here.

24 REP. MANUEL: Can I interject? Because I
25 just want to get to one other point, because you made -

1 - you said something, and it brings me to something
2 which is important, I guess for my young mind is, we
3 don't have any maps right now, so we don't know what
4 any of this is going to look like. And for me, and I
5 want to know if this is your opinion as well, is this
6 seems a lot like redlining, where all of a sudden,
7 communities of interest were completely separated. And
8 then all of a sudden, you're like, I wonder why this
9 poor side of a black community is just poor and
10 desolate? And then it gives you the right to call them
11 ghetto, lazy, they don't do this, but you cut them off
12 from every source of income that they traditionally
13 have had. And I'm wondering if you see that as the
14 same.

15 GARY BLEDSOE: I think that's actually a
16 brilliant point. Because that's what it is. And
17 that's pretty much what Professor Katz said in the
18 beginning. Because that's what the letter is telling
19 the legislature to do. Go and find where they are.
20 And you have to move them. You have to move them so
21 they can't elect their person of choice. So that's
22 clearly redlining.

23 And so you look at the map and see what
24 seats you can take, you come up with this mythical
25 idea, calling opportunity districts, coalition

1 districts, when -- like number one, coalition districts
2 are legal; they're not illegal. But number two, all
3 those districts in the letter, they are -- they
4 opportunity districts; 9, 18, and 29 have been held by
5 courts to be opportunity districts. And the 33rd was
6 actually created by a court, created by a three-judge
7 panel of two Republicans and one Democrat that created
8 the 33rd. Okay? And the other thing I want to say
9 about that is, everything is so ridiculous. Is that
10 the process that Senator Huffman testified to about
11 what occurred during the last process showed that what
12 occurred was that they said they drew the maps race
13 blind. And then they sent the maps to Ken Paxton to
14 make sure they complied with the Voting Rights Act.

15 So black people and brown people were
16 nowhere to be found in that process. And the
17 legislative record shows that they had no impact on the
18 actual outcome and changes in the map. So you're
19 telling us that somehow, that that map that was drawn
20 without black or brown input or influence, that was
21 approved and supported by Ken Paxton's office during
22 that process, that that map ended up with race-based
23 seats? I don't think so.

24 REP. VASUT: Mr. Turner, for what
25 purpose?

1 REP. TURNER: I'm sorry. That's a
2 mistake. I don't --

3 REP. VASUT: Okay. Understood.

4 Mr. Perez, for what purpose?

5 REP. PEREZ: To ask the witnesses --

6 REP. VASUT: Chair recognizes Mr. Perez
7 to question the panel.

8 REP. PEREZ: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

9 Mr. Bledsoe, I appreciate you putting it
10 in a historical context, the origins of these types of
11 tactics that had been used to segregate the population
12 for political purposes. And you mentioned that, you
13 know, during times of slavery, that, you know, the
14 policies enacted or empowered the slaveholding
15 population, while, you know, diminishing, obviously,
16 you know, slave themselves. I was hoping you can talk
17 about that a little bit more in the context of --
18 again, so we have very racially segregated maps where
19 you have a situation where you do have minority rule,
20 right? You do have a circumstance where you have 40
21 percent of the population determining the outcome and
22 90 percent of the seats in Texas. You also have a
23 circumstance where, when it comes to apportionment, you
24 know, we have an undocumented population where --
25 that's equal to 1.7 million Texans, the equivalent of

1 two congressional seats. Texas was happy to have those
2 undocumented immigrants for political purposes to gain
3 those seats. But when it came time to fairly represent
4 the population, that's nowhere to be found.

5 So I'm hoping you can kind of put some
6 historical context to these strategies, because these
7 strategies do have origins dating back to times of
8 slavery, dating back to the times before the Civil
9 Rights Act. Virginia was the largest state that --
10 they had the largest House delegation because they had
11 the largest slaveholding population. In Alabama, under
12 Governor Wallace, they refused to grant apportionment
13 for 60 years. If you can talk about how some of these
14 strategies have led to very similar results that we're
15 seeing here in Texas, and why we should not go down
16 this route.

17 GARY BLEDSOE: I think that's a great
18 point, because it's actually wicked to invite someone
19 here so that you can use them for numbers and mistreat
20 and abuse them, which is actually what's happening. So
21 when I made the comment, I know that historically the
22 three-fifths rule is about African-Americans, but I
23 intended that to encompass our Latino brothers and
24 sisters, because the whole idea there is the
25 underrepresentation of Latinos as well. You know, this

1 last session, just to be very honest about it, 50
2 percent of the growth was due to Latino Texans. And
3 you get two new seats, both given to white voters and
4 none to Latinos. That's clearly discriminatory.

5 So, and if we take a look at history,
6 Texas suffered under discrimination when it was done
7 with democratic rule. Latinos had no opportunity to
8 have their elected first anyone in Congress. It was
9 Henry B. Gonzalez, I think, late '50s or early '60s,
10 that finally was elected, even though you had a
11 substantial Latino population for the whole time. And
12 you didn't have an African--American there until 1973
13 with Barbara Jordan. And so they were the only ones
14 until really around the 1980 period.

15 But in 1979, Texas had 24 congressional
16 seats, and now we have 38. If you took the population
17 of Texas in 1980, and you included the increased white
18 population from 1980 until now, we would have lost
19 seats. So all 14 of those new seats are due to
20 African-American, Latino, and Asian growth, 100
21 percent. And we would have lost. And so, we're using
22 minorities to gain the population, but we continue to
23 come up with these really incredible ways of being able
24 to gerrymander around them and not allow them to elect
25 the candidates of their choice. That's why so many

1 districts look so strange and unusual.

2 You know, I'll call Congressman Green's
3 district the chicken district because it looks like a
4 chicken. And you just see all those things that occur,
5 and it's truly a problem. But that's historically been
6 done to blacks and browns. But I intend that three-
7 fifths rules, they're trying to apply that to Latinos
8 as well right now.

9 REP. PEREZ: The packing and cracking of
10 the districts -- we have 12 of the 13 democratic seats
11 are packed, where they have a racial makeup of, in some
12 instances, of 90 percent black or Latino population.
13 And that's also designed to ensure that the population
14 is freed up, where they're not in other districts that
15 affect Republican turnout. And then you have the vast
16 majority, I think 75 percent of the Republican seats
17 that are cracked, where they are engineered where they
18 have less than a 50 percent Latino or black population.
19 And it's no coincidence that you have that on the
20 democratic side, these packed districts and the cracks.
21 So if you could talk about the packing and cracking
22 that also and how that impacts.

23 GARY BLEDSOE: Well, that's another great
24 question. What occurred last time, in 2011, was that
25 the way to try to dilute the minority vote, there was a

1 decision to use the suburbs and to dilute the black and
2 brown vote in the urban areas by including the suburbs.
3 But due to the growth being minority, Asian, African-
4 American, Latino, the suburbs have become increasingly
5 diverse. And so since the suburbs are diverse, that's
6 changing the demographics within the districts. And so
7 that's why, for example, you saw in 2018, the 7th
8 Congressional District in Houston and the 32nd
9 Congressional District in Dallas both flipped. And so
10 this time they did something a little bit different.

11 What they did this time is they decided
12 that they were going to use rural areas to anchor the -
13 - to suppress the vote in the urban areas. So I heard
14 all the great discussion on the committee earlier about
15 100 miles and the questions to Congressman Casar about
16 having 100 miles difference. Well, Congressional
17 District 13 in the northwest quadrant of the state,
18 there are 413 miles from one point to Dumas up in the
19 north, northern part of the district bordering
20 Oklahoma. And you have 38 counties in one
21 congressional district. And so the districts became
22 elongated. So you get the rural areas in to do that.

23 So what they did, they cracked the
24 minority population. That's why, like you take the
25 Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex. That metroplex has enough

1 population to have ten self-contained districts within
2 the metroplex. But instead of having ten self-
3 contained, they packed everything into 30, 32, and 33
4 in that area. And then they cracked the rest of the
5 community to go out with the rural areas to suppress
6 the vote, to create 12 other seats. And so that's what
7 happened. They did it with the 22nd in Harris County.
8 So that was the idea.

9 So there was -- so like, for example,
10 they cracked populations. They cracked population out
11 of Tarrant County and put it into District 30 or what
12 have you. So there are things like that, that have
13 occurred all throughout the map, the cracking and
14 packing. But they just, they put as many as they could
15 in the metroplex in 30, 32, and 33 in order to do that.
16 But they did more cracking this time than packing, the
17 map drawers. But the big thing that they did, though,
18 was joining the rural areas, because the rural areas
19 don't have much in common, as we've heard so many of
20 you on the panel say already. But the rural areas are
21 now dominating the urban votes by the way they've drawn
22 the districts.

23 REP. PEREZ: As I previously mentioned,
24 you know, there's 11 million Anglo-Texans. Republicans
25 represent 80 percent of them in Texas. Do you believe

1 it's possible to achieve that 80 percent without racial
2 considerations?

3 GARY BLEDSOE: There's zero chance of
4 doing that without racial consideration. I think it's
5 all a myth. And one of the things that's so ironic
6 here that we talk about is like that's some new thing,
7 like a new book in the Bible or something that you've
8 got to, if you're race-blind, it's good. That's just
9 not true. What even Chief Justice Roberts said in the
10 Milligan case, that there are times when you should
11 look at race in order to avoid discriminating against
12 minority voters.

13 I mean, I think, to me, it's an act of
14 discrimination in itself when you decide you're not
15 going to look at race. Because, you know, ironically,
16 if you look at the guidelines put forth by the
17 Legislative Council, I think it's page 4 or page 10 of
18 the 2021 guidelines, they talk about the depth that the
19 Legislature needs to go through to avoid discriminating
20 against black and brown voters. And when you don't do
21 that, that means you're going to be involved in
22 discrimination. And I think the data and all that here
23 really indicates that.

24 And one other point I'd like to make
25 about that is that, for example, if you look at black

1 and brown voters and the way they were moved, it's
2 incredible. Because, you know, with the new
3 population, you would think, well, each population will
4 be moved about the same. But when we had folks take a
5 look at the actual movement of voters in the 2021 map
6 that was adopted, what they found was that black
7 voters, brown voters, Asian voters were moved well
8 beyond the numbers they should have been moved. And
9 so, what they did, they looked at standard deviations
10 to see from the normal. And what the experts said is
11 that, you know, if you have two standard deviations
12 from what the norm should be, then we have to look at
13 it. It might be something intentional.

14 Well, for example, in Dallas County, the
15 movement in Tarrant County, the movement of black
16 voters was 52.5. They said that was just beyond
17 imagination, that standard deviation. It was 46.7 in
18 Harris County. And you had similar numbers for
19 Latinos. So folks said, well, you had all that growth
20 in the metroplex. What was it like in the rest of the
21 state? Well, it was 39.5. So it's still a lot higher
22 than two.

23 So there was clearly, in our opinion,
24 some kind of race-conscious thing going on. But we
25 have to take what was testified to. And the State took

1 the position, and they have sworn testimony from a
2 number of witnesses saying we were race-blind in how we
3 drew the map. But I agree. I look at the map and say,
4 how could you do this kind of gerrymandering and it be
5 race-blind? Because it's clearly -- how do you take
6 care of such numbers of Latino growth? And you don't
7 give Latinos at least one? Latinos probably deserve
8 two more congressional districts, and they got none.
9 And so it's very clear that there was somebody with a
10 mindset.

11 But the other thing I want to just
12 caution everyone about, the way the rules were last
13 time, they prevented you from introducing maps that
14 would have new opportunity districts. Because you had
15 to drop in your map to the existing district and get
16 the approval of all folks in the proposed congressional
17 plan that would actually approve or allow you to go
18 forward with your amendment. So the people who were
19 engaged in drawing up the original map had to give you
20 authorization. So when you wanted to put forth a new
21 Latino opportunity district, you couldn't get it duly
22 considered.

23 REP. VASUT: Ms. Jones, for what purpose?

24 REP. JONES: I have a witness question.

25 Can you hear me? I have questions for the witnesses.

1 REP. VASUT: The lady is recognized to
2 question the panel.

3 REP. JONES: Thank you. All four of you
4 testified that you were here to testify on the revised
5 congressional plan. I'm sort of confused, because have
6 you guys seen a congressional plan? So you're not here
7 to testify on a specific plan. You're here to testify
8 on why either we shouldn't change what we have, if
9 that's accurate. Because I don't want anybody to think
10 that you're here talking about something that you've
11 seen in advance. And I would like, I guess, a verbal
12 answer to that.

13 ALICIA PEREZ-HODGE: No, ma'am. Like
14 you, we have not seen a plan. What is of great concern
15 is when President Trump demands of Governor Abbott five
16 Republican congressional seats. That is premeditated
17 gerrymandering. And that is of grave concern.

18 REP. JONES: Thank you. Professor
19 Valenzuela?

20 ANGELA VALENZUELA: Yeah, same deal. I
21 think my colleague said it well. This is preemptive,
22 right? And it's for his own personal gain. And again,
23 that weapon of mass destruction agenda that he has so
24 he doesn't have to deal with the Epstein files and
25 other matters of great importance to him.

1 REP. JONES: And Mr. Bledsoe?

2 GARY BLEDSOE: No. This is almost like
3 an exercise in checking a box of what occurred.
4 Senator West talked about how, since he'd been here
5 since 1991, you could usually see a map and the public
6 could come and comment and testify on a map. And so
7 this is kind of new. It's like checking a box where
8 people can talk. There's no real consequence to what
9 they say. And no disrespect, but it has been
10 disregarded in the past. It sure was in 2021. And it
11 was in 2011.

12 REP. JONES: And Mr. Rosales?

13 GABRIEL ROSALES: Yeah, I think it's
14 concerning with the Department of Justice letter, that
15 it names Latino and African-American seats that they're
16 going after. They're not -- they're not being overt.
17 They're being very straightforward about who they're
18 going after.

19 REP. JONES: It's reverse racism.

20 GABRIEL ROSALES: Right. So for me, we
21 know what they're doing. For me, it's just outright
22 racism is what's going on here. And so we're here to
23 testify on their efforts to try and come in and tell
24 the state how they should gerrymander.

25 REP. JONES: And so are you asking this

1 committee and the House of Representatives to have
2 public hearings around the state once a proposed map is
3 filed? Are you asking us to do that?

4 GABRIEL ROSALES: Yes, ma'am.

5 REP. JONES: And I want a verbal answer
6 from each of you.

7 ANGELA VALENZUELA: Ten places statewide.

8 REP. JONES: Okay. Mr. Bledsoe?

9 GARY BLEDSOE: Please. I'm definitely
10 requesting that.

11 REP. JONES: And Ms. Perez-Hodge?

12 ALICIA PEREZ-HODGE: Well, I'm a little
13 confused because there's maps still in the courts,
14 correct? So why don't we settle that before we go on
15 and draw more maps?

16 REP. JONES: So you're asking us not to
17 do any redistricting?

18 ALICIA PEREZ-HODGE: Right. Until --

19 REP. JONES: Okay.

20 ALICIA PEREZ-HODGE: Until the Court
21 decides on the previous maps. Why compound the
22 problem?

23 GARY BLEDSOE: And that would be our
24 position, too, but if they're going forward with the
25 map, we'd like to have it shown to the public.

1 REP. JONES: So I just want to reiterate.
2 You don't want us to do anything until the current
3 court case is determined. Is that accurate? Yes?

4 GARY BLEDSOE: Exactly.

5 REP. JONES: But if we decide as a body
6 to move forward, you want basically due process on
7 these maps so that Texans get to see the maps in
8 advance so that they can assess exactly how the maps
9 will affect them and then be able to give testimony
10 specifically. Is that accurate?

11 ALICIA PEREZ-HODGE: Yes.

12 ANGELA VALENZUELA: Yes, ma'am.

13 GABRIEL ROSALES: Yes.

14 REP. JONES: Which would absolutely help
15 in court if you can show that you warned us in advance
16 of what the maps might do. Is that accurate?

17 ANGELA VALENZUELA: We're warning you.

18 GARY BLEDSOE: Yes.

19 ANGELA VALENZUELA: This is a warning.

20 REP. JONES: Okay. All right.

21 ALICIA PEREZ-HODGE: No kings.

22 REP. JONES: Right. And I've got a
23 question. I need you to repeat something for me, Mr.
24 Bledsoe. You said that basically 40 percent of the
25 population of Texas, white Texans, controls 73 percent

1 of the Texas congressional districts. Did I hear you
2 say that?

3 GARY BLEDSOE: That's an absolute fact.

4 REP. JONES: Okay. And then did I hear
5 you say, if the president successfully, probably cracks
6 the three black and one Hispanic district, that that --
7 such that there would not be a critical mass of either
8 blacks or Hispanics to be able to elect or choose the
9 candidate of their choice, that if they were able to
10 change those three black and one Hispanic seats, that
11 what would the percentage be of the 40 percent of white
12 Texans controlling whatever percent of Congress?
13 What's that percentage?

14 GARY BLEDSOE: It would become 84. So
15 the numbers are, we have 38 districts; 28 of the 38 are
16 controlled by white voters.

17 REP. JONES: Right.

18 GARY BLEDSOE: And so then the number
19 becomes 32 or 33.

20 REP. JONES: So now -- that's what I was
21 getting to. You're ahead of me. So if they're able to
22 get the fifth seat that we are -- and let me be clear,
23 everything in this building is like As the World Turns
24 of Search for Tomorrow. If enough people are talking
25 about it, it's going to happen, right? Which just

1 terrifies me, right? So if they're able to get that
2 fifth seat, what percentage of the congressional
3 delegation of Texas with a 40 percent of white Texans
4 control in the Texas delegation?

5 GARY BLEDSOE: Eight-seven percent.

6 REP. JONES: If that's not political
7 welfare for white Texans, I don't know what it is,
8 right? And that is actually DEI, because you damn sure
9 didn't earn it, right? So I'm concerned. I'm glad I
10 got a laugh out of you, because if this wasn't so
11 serious, it'd be funny, right? No one would believe
12 it's happening.

13 And then I guess the thing that concerns
14 me is this. And I guess we'll see at the end of this
15 process whether the people sitting around these daises
16 are listening to us or whether this is a kangaroo
17 court. We're going to find out, because the proof is
18 in the pudding. But my concern is that this particular
19 redistricting has the capacity to literally change
20 politics in Texas and in this country. As you spoke
21 about people say, well, black people should vote more,
22 Hispanic people should vote more.

23 Fundamentally, people want to be treated
24 fairly. And people will participate in a system if
25 they understand that that system is fair. If the

1 people don't have a belief that the system is fair,
2 then they'll either be apathetic, and they just won't
3 care. So if Trump is successful here, it concerns me,
4 because if him and those like him maintain control of
5 the House, because that's the only place he can be
6 stopped, then I fear that they'll -- we might be slaves
7 again, right? Because we're moving backwards, and it
8 will literally undo the advances that black and brown
9 people have made through the civil rights struggle.
10 And we may not be able to overcome it.

11 And I also fear that if we are successful
12 here in Texas, it will be the roadmap to around the
13 country, to dismantle this democracy and basically
14 enslave us and make us indentured servants again. So I
15 just want to thank you for coming and educating people,
16 because I think that a lot of people didn't know what
17 cracking and packing were, right? They didn't know
18 that. And with the emphasis on "invisibling" -- I just
19 made that word up -- us by getting rid of our history
20 so that we don't know what our history is, then we're
21 absolutely doomed to repeat it. So thank you so very
22 much for coming. I appreciate it in helping the public
23 at large understand what will happen if we don't figure
24 out a way to stop this.

25 GARY BLEDSOE: Thank you so much for what

1 you've said. And you remember we had that slogan maybe
2 10, 20 years ago about One Texas? Somehow we need to
3 get back to that. But we're a long ways away from it.
4 Thank you for those comments, because I think that's
5 where you want to head.

6 REP. JONES: Thank you.

7 REP. VASUT: Members, any other questions
8 for this panel? Hearing none, thank you all for your
9 testimony. This panel is excused. As you may have
10 noticed, we have a court reporter over here on the side
11 who's been gracious. She's smiling at me because
12 everything I say she has to take down. And as I talk,
13 she's having to take that down. Anyways, we've entered
14 the twilight zone. We're going to take a brief break
15 so that our court reporter can have a break, if that's
16 okay with you guys, and maybe all of you as well.

17 So the House Select Committee on
18 Congressional Redistricting will stand at ease for five
19 minutes.

20 [The Committee Stands at Ease.]

21 REP. VASUT: Members and members of the
22 public, please take your seats. The House Select
23 Committee on Congressional Redistricting will come back
24 to order. That's what we in common parlance refer to
25 as a Texas Legislative five-minute break. That was

1 perhaps a little bit more. And so I do want to bring
2 us back and give some time for the members to make
3 their way back in here.

4 Just so everybody knows for keeping track
5 here, we have spent about two hours and 14 minutes so
6 far on public testimony. Now, some of that was an
7 exchange between myself and Mr. Raymond, of which I'm
8 not going to credit ten minutes of, because that's how
9 much that took. So we really only spent two hours and
10 four minutes. So for planning purposes, we got two
11 hours and 56 minutes left.

12 And I would just encourage the members of
13 the committee just to remember, you know, as we bring
14 these panels up, let's be as expeditious as we can so
15 we can hear from as many people as possible. And for
16 that being said, we're going to go back into public
17 testimony at this time. I had mentioned earlier, our
18 virtual panelists, and I appreciate you waiting on us
19 to bring you back up.

20 Before I call these virtual witnesses,
21 our next in-person panel is going to be comprised of
22 Regina Vanburg, Susana Carranza, Lauren Pena, and
23 Danielle Bryant. If those four individuals could make
24 their way into this room and be seated at the front, as
25 soon as we do these virtual witnesses, we will come to

1 you. And I appreciate everybody for your patience.

2 At this time, the chair is going to call
3 Carol Teitelman. I hope that I pronounced that
4 correct. Carol Teitelman. Is Carol Teitelman on the
5 Zoom waiting room? Is Carol Teitelman here? Last call
6 for Carol Teitelman. We will show Ms. Teitelman
7 registered to testify, but not testifying, on the
8 Congressional Redistricting Plan on behalf of herself.

9 Chair calls Heidi Bray. Chair calls
10 Heidi Bray. Is Heidi Bray in our waiting room? We do
11 not see her. Is Ms. Heidi Bray here? Chair will show
12 Ms. Heidi Bray registered to testify on behalf of
13 herself on the revised Congressional Redistricting
14 Plan, but not testifying.

15 Chair calls Frederick Wood. Mr. Wood,
16 we've got you coming in here. I'm sorry, Frederick
17 Woods. Okay. We can see you, sir. If you'll unmute.
18 There we go. Can you hear me?

19 FREDERICK WOODS: Yes, I can. Can you
20 hear me?

21 REP. VASUT: I can hear you. Let me pull
22 up your witness registration form, just a moment. Dot
23 our I's and cross our T's. I show you registered to
24 testify as Frederick Woods, on behalf of yourself, on
25 revised Congressional Redistricting Plan. Is that

1 correct, sir?

2 FREDERICK WOODS: That is correct.

3 REP. VASUT: Please give us your
4 testimony.

5 FREDERICK WOODS: Hello. My name is Fred
6 Woods. I'm a community leader and activist in
7 Northeast Houston, and proud resident of the 18th
8 Congressional District. I strongly oppose any effort
9 to redraw congressional districts mid-cycle to increase
10 one party's likelihood of representation, further
11 tipping the scales of power in the U.S. House of
12 Representatives. Governments on all levels work best
13 when they reflect the constituency they are to serve.
14 This ideal cannot be achieved by manipulating maps, by
15 means of cracking and packing congressional districts
16 targeting communities of color.

17 It is also unacceptable that the public
18 has no visibility to any proposed maps prior to this
19 hearing or means to comment after maps have been
20 selected. This is not good governance. This is a
21 continuation of petty politics, power grabs, and one
22 party's allegiance to an insurrectionist out of fear
23 you will lose your place in society. You are stealing
24 elections and killing democracy.

25 Less than 30 days ago, members of this

1 same legislature testified under oath in El Paso that
2 your 2021 redistricting maps were not based on race.
3 How can those same people now claim that they are? So
4 were you lying then or are you lying now? Nobody is
5 fooled by what you are doing. What profiteth a man
6 that he gains a congressional seat and destroy the
7 whole of democracy? The world is watching America
8 self-destruct, and you are the one with gasoline in one
9 hand and a match in the other, doing the bidding of a
10 felon indeed. I pray that your ethics overcomes your
11 ambitions. Thank you for your time and attention.

12 REP. VASUT: Thank you for your
13 testimony. Members, any questions for this witness?
14 Seeing none, thank you, sir. You're excused.

15 Chair calls Conor Rice. Mr. Rice, if
16 you'll -- there we go. Got your camera coming.

17 CONOR RICE: Awesome. Are y'all able to
18 hear me?

19 REP. VASUT: We are. We're able to hear
20 you. I'm going to go through your registration here
21 momentarily. I show you as registered to testify as
22 Conor Rice, on behalf of yourself, on the revised
23 Congressional Redistricting Plan. Is that correct?

24 CONOR RICE: That's correct.

25 REP. VASUT: Thank you. Please give us

1 your testimony.

2 CONOR RICE: My name is Conor Rice. I am
3 from Corpus Christi in Chairman Hunter's district. And
4 I'm also here not just as a Texan, but as someone who
5 believes that Texas governs Texas. We don't take
6 orders from Washington, or we shouldn't. And we sure
7 should not be redrawing our democracy to satisfy
8 political operatives in the White House. As Reba
9 McEntire once said, "Freedom, it isn't easy, but it's
10 worth the fight."

11 And right now what's at stake is our
12 freedom to govern ourselves, without manipulation,
13 without interference, and without bending to federal
14 pressure. This redistricting process should reflect
15 the will of the people, not protect incumbents, not
16 answer partisan demands from D.C. What's worse is
17 we're in a special session right now being used not to
18 fix infrastructure, not to fully fund Texas public
19 schools, not to help communities recover from disaster,
20 but to fine-tune gerrymandering based on the fear of
21 the future and rumored pressures from federal
22 leadership. And let's be clear that no official maps
23 have been made public. We're being asked to trust a
24 process that hasn't even shown its hand.

25 In Corpus Christi, even the rumored

1 proposal and rumored maps threaten to siphon voices
2 from the Rio Grande Valley and fracture our city,
3 binding us for far-flung communities that have no
4 shared values or concerns. That's not representation,
5 to say the least. That's political engineering. And
6 it flies in the face of what Texans expect from our
7 government, which is independence. You know, we
8 believe in local control, in fair maps. And if this
9 committee wants to defend Texas values, it must show
10 that Texas answers to Texans, not Washington.

11 I encourage this entire committee to
12 reject any gerrymandering or redistricting proposals.
13 Spend your time fighting for disaster relief or funding
14 our schools or lowering property taxes, because here in
15 Texas, we fight for freedom, and we do it on our own
16 terms. Thank you, committee.

17 REP. VASUT: Thank you. Members, any
18 questions for this witness?

19 Hearing none, thank you for your
20 testimony. Witness is excused.

21 I saw on our Zoom that it looks like Ms.
22 Heidi Bray is in our waiting room now. I'm going to go
23 back. The chair calls Heidi Bray. Go ahead and show
24 us your video and unmute.

25 HEIDI BRAY: Yes.

1 REP. VASUT: We can hear you. Could you
2 -- is it -- do you have video? We'll have to be able
3 to --

4 HEIDI BRAY: Yes, I do.

5 REP. VASUT: -- see you, too. Let's see.

6 HEIDI BRAY: Okay. Let me see. Right,
7 here I do.

8 REP. VASUT: Ooh, there we go.

9 HEID BRAY: Can you see me?

10 REP. VASUT: We can see you and hear you.
11 I'm going to read your registration form, if you don't
12 mind.

13 HEIDI BRAY: Yeah, I don't mind.

14 REP. VASUT: Thank you for your patience,
15 and glad we were able to get back to you. I show you
16 registered to testify as Heidi Bray, on behalf of
17 yourself, on the revised Congressional Redistricting
18 Plan. Is that correct?

19 HEIDI BRAY: Yes, sir.

20 REP. VASUT: Please give us your
21 testimony.

22 HEIDI BRAY: My testimony is that Abbott
23 has wasted billions and billions of money fighting for
24 our democracy. He is now willing to give five seats
25 because Trump asked him to. Whereas the State of

1 Georgia, when asked to find 11,780 seats for his win,
2 in the past election, the Georgia state senator, I
3 mean, sorry, Secretary of State had the balls in
4 democracy. He stood up for democracy. I don't see
5 Abbott standing up for democracy.

6 You are not to do redistricting. It was
7 just done in 2021, and it's against the constitution to
8 do it within ten years. You were supposed to go out to
9 each district and summarize who lives where. So I
10 don't see why we're doing something unconstitutional at
11 this moment.

12 REP. VASUT: Thank you for your
13 testimony.

14 Members, any questions for this witness?
15 Seeing none, the witness is excused. Thank you very
16 much.

17 HEIDI BRAY: Thanks.

18 REP. VASUT: Chair's going to go to our
19 in-person panel at this time. Chair calls Regina
20 Vanburg.

21 REGINA VANBURG: That's me.

22 REP. VASUT: Did I say your name right?

23 REGINA VANBURG: Yeah, you did.

24 REP. VASUT: Thank you very much. I'm
25 going to -- bear with me. We're going to have to pull

1 up your witness registration forms for this panel real
2 quickly. I show you registered to testify as Dr.
3 Regina Vanburg, testifying on behalf of yourself, on
4 the revised Congressional Redistricting Plan. Is that
5 correct?

6 REGINA VANBURG: Yes, sir.

7 REP. VASUT: Thank you. Please give us
8 your testimony.

9 REGINA VANBURG: Good afternoon, Mr.
10 Chairman and committee members. My name is Dr. Regina
11 Vanburg. I'm a congressional candidate for Texas 21,
12 but I'm not here to speak only for Texas 21 today.

13 REP. VASUT: Could you possibly pull your
14 microphone just a little closer?

15 REGINA VANBURG: Sure.

16 REP. VASUT: Thank you so much.

17 REGINA VANBURG: I'm here to do what
18 every one of us must do, defend our fellow Texans, all
19 of them, from every district, from every party. The
20 only appropriate response to D.C. for this self-
21 admitted and self-serving attempt to change Texas maps
22 and interfere with our elections is war drums. That is
23 what our nation should hear echoing from the heart of
24 Texas, from these very halls. Donald Trump has plainly
25 said that he expects Texas to redraw its maps to make

1 him more comfortable come the 2026 elections, but his
2 mistakes are not Texans' to bear. Losing power is what
3 is supposed to happen when elected officials become
4 unpopular with the people. That is the point. That's
5 the value and virtue of free and fair elections.

6 You are under no legal obligation to
7 redraw maps mid-decade. This isn't required. It's
8 requested, and it's wrong. Please do not set this
9 precedent. Texas will need to redistrict again, but
10 not like this, not during ongoing litigation, not in 30
11 rushed days, and not to serve a failing federal
12 administration, especially when your attention is
13 urgently needed for flood recovery in Texas 21.

14 When it is time to redraw, do it through
15 an independent redistricting commission, chosen by the
16 people, after the 2030 census. In other words, please
17 do it right. These are not ordinary times. The stakes
18 are high. Texas is watching, our nation is watching,
19 and in this historic moment, the world is watching.
20 What will we show them? The gutting of democratic
21 ideals, or Texas standing at her full height to defend
22 them? For once, if only once, let us be the ones that
23 get it right. Thank you.

24 REP. VASUT: Thank you for your
25 testimony.

1 Chair calls Susana Carranza. I show you
2 registered to testify as Dr. Susana Carranza,
3 testifying on behalf of yourself, on the revised
4 Congressional Redistricting Plan. Is that correct?

5 SUSANA CARRANZA: That's correct.

6 REP. VASUT: Please give us your
7 testimony.

8 SUSANA CARRANZA: I'm Dr. Carranza. I
9 live in Congressional District 37, testifying on my own
10 behalf. Even though I said on, I actually oppose this
11 legislature's attempt to redistrict Congress mid-
12 census. Of the 18 items in the special session agenda,
13 you chose, you chose to prioritize this one. You don't
14 have to. What Texans need right now is legislation
15 focused on disaster relief and prevention.

16 It adds insult to injury that the call
17 came as an imposition from the White House and DOG, DOJ
18 as an attempt to further disenfranchise communities of
19 color. Based on 2020 census, we all know that the
20 majority of Texas growth was from minorities, yet we
21 reduced the number of minority districts. And
22 legislators said, we didn't look at race, so there
23 can't be racial gerrymandering. And now they're
24 saying, oh yeah, we look at race, and it's wrong
25 because it favors minority too much. And then now

1 we're going to break down these communities. That is
2 absurd.

3 It's not acceptable that we don't have a
4 map. It's not acceptable that you're cutting testimony
5 in five hours, and it's not acceptable that you're
6 really trying to break up minority districts. I urge
7 you to choose what's good for Texas, to do your job,
8 and stop right now this ridiculous process because you
9 don't have to do this. You have to work for Texas.
10 You should be focusing 100 percent of the time on
11 disaster prevention, on making our infrastructure more
12 resilient to the many more crazy climate events that we
13 know is going to happen. Thank you.

14 REP. VASUT: Thank you for your
15 testimony.

16 Chair calls Lauren Pena. I show you
17 registered to testify as Lauren Pena, on behalf of
18 yourself, on revised Congressional Redistricting Plan.
19 Is that correct?

20 LAUREN PENA: Yes, sir.

21 REP. VASUT: Please give us your
22 testimony.

23 LAUREN PENA: Hello, my name is Lauren
24 Pena. I actually live walking distance from here on
25 the other side of 35 in one of the first housing

1 projects ever implemented in the United States. I'm
2 sure you're wondering what this big stack of papers is
3 right here. This is just one copy. I've had to file a
4 federal lawsuit myself, with no assistance, because
5 I've reached out to every single elected official and
6 begged for help.

7 My community is falling apart so bad that
8 I have elderly and disabled on the second-, third- and
9 fourth-story floors that for five weeks, unable to go
10 and even get groceries. If there was a fire, they
11 would die. None of my elected officials have responded
12 to me. None of my elected officials have even offered
13 to help. So you guys can definitely have all of this
14 evidence.

15 I would let you know that -- I don't know
16 if I'm allowed to, because for whatever reason, they
17 sealed this court case. But in here, it's going to
18 show evidence of nonprofit fraud. It's going to show
19 evidence of City of Austin fraud. It's going to show
20 ADA violations and numerous violations to federal law.
21 And that's why I'm running for United States Congress.

22 Now today, we're here because of
23 redistricting, and I've heard several people bring up
24 how it's unconstitutional. Well, I have a good
25 solution for that. Let's not make new -- let's not

1 move the districts around. Let's put districts in
2 every major city. If I can get representation, one
3 representation from the entire city, millions of people
4 are going to get help.

5 There's 4 million people in Texas
6 currently living in poverty. I'm a survivor of ten
7 years of human trafficking in my district. And in
8 fact, my congressman was here earlier, Greg Casar, one
9 who did not answer an email, one who refused to see me,
10 one who -- I got a -- I got a scholarship to fly up to
11 Washington DC to learn some political trainings and
12 things like that. For weeks, I reached out to his
13 office and begged to speak with his staff so that I
14 could get assistance with all of these civil rights
15 violations.

16 So I'm asking you guys today for, I
17 guess, so it looks good on everybody, just make a
18 district in every major city and then let the city
19 decide who's going to represent them instead of
20 chopping us up, breaking us up into black/brown
21 communities, attacking all the different, you know,
22 types of people. Let's go ahead and just make one
23 district in the city, and the city can decide who
24 represents them because this is ridiculous.

25 And I'd be more than happy to hand over

1 all of this evidence to you guys, but you need 22
2 copies and I'm too poor. I can't afford to do it. In
3 fact, I'm so poor that four of my children, two of them
4 had birthdays in the past month and I can't even buy
5 them presents for their birthday. There are times that
6 me and my daughters don't even have tampons when we're
7 on our period. I am extremely poor. I'm below the
8 poverty line, and I have no representation to help me.

9 REP. VASUT: Thank you for your
10 testimony.

11 Chair calls Dr. Danielle Bryant. I show
12 you registered to testify as Dr. Danielle Bryant,
13 testifying on behalf of yourself, on revised
14 Congressional Redistricting Plan. Is that correct?

15 DANIELLE BRYANT: That is correct.

16 REP. VASUT: Please give us your
17 testimony.

18 DANIELLE BRYANT: Hello, I am Dr.
19 Danielle Bryant. I have spent my career as an
20 educator. I live in CD35, and I am so tired of the
21 Texas Legislature wasting our time. During the special
22 session, we spent tens if not hundreds of hours
23 fighting Abbott's voucher scam, an unpopular, out-of-
24 touch plan that rips millions away from our
25 neighborhood public schools. And what did y'all do?

1 Not one hearing on literacy, not one on student
2 behavior, not one on the teacher shortage. Nothing to
3 address the actual school issues.

4 And now here we are again, dragged into a
5 special session. Not to help the hundreds of families
6 devastated by flooding, but to do what? Redraw
7 gerrymandered maps so nationally, Republicans can cling
8 to power.

9 Now, for those who didn't follow the
10 voucher fight this spring, let me explain why so many
11 of us are not surprised at the cowardice of Texas
12 Republicans. Rural Texans were upset when they
13 realized their schools were gutted to give handouts to
14 rich families already sending their kids to private
15 schools. Folks started talking, okay, let's put it to
16 a vote. Let Texans decide. But then on the day of the
17 floor vote, Daddy Trump called, threatened Texas
18 Republicans, and all but two of you caved to him.
19 That's exactly what's happening again today. Do not be
20 fooled. This is not about fairness. It's not about
21 representation. It is about power.

22 I live just four miles from here in
23 Austin, in CD35, and somehow I share a congressman with
24 people in San Antonio. But we know this isn't about
25 fixing our current, broken, under-litigation maps.

1 Everyone knows this is nothing but a Trump-backed power
2 grab. A rogue DOJ letter was cooked up to give cover
3 to steal five more seats for a politically-toxic agenda
4 because this platform is wildly unpopular. The same
5 Texans whose schools you defended this spring, they're
6 about to lose their Medicare, their Medicaid, their
7 hospitals will close, and they will lose their lives so
8 billionaires can get tax breaks, and you all know this.

9 So you redraw maps, you cheat, you bow to
10 people more obsessed with power than actually helping a
11 single Texan. You spent day one of session serving
12 Trump, not Texans, not your voters, not the flood
13 victims who needed you. And while I do not expect a
14 thing from Governor Abbott, I still have not forgiven
15 him for skipping every single Uvalde funeral, and
16 showing us he does not care about Texans after
17 disaster, but I am asking more of the rest of you.
18 Thank you.

19 REP. VASUT: Thank you for your
20 testimony.

21 Members --

22 LAUREN PENA: Mr. Chairman, may I please
23 make a response to what she said?

24 REP. VASUT: Not at this time.

25 Members, any questions for this panel? I

1 see none. Thank you all for your testimony. This
2 panel is excused.

3 Going back to our virtual witnesses --
4 before I call out those names, our next in-person panel
5 is going to be Conchita Reyes and Nina Perales. If
6 you'll make your way into the room and be ready for us
7 once we do this virtual panel.

8 Chair calls Scott Cardillo. We are
9 submitting you here now to the Zoom. It's actually
10 Scout Cardillo, I apologize. I said that incorrectly.
11 I'll give you a moment to join. There we go. You've
12 got your -- there we go, video, perfect. I show you
13 reg- -- can you unmute yourself, actually? I think I
14 see you muted. There we go. Can you hear me?

15 SCOUT CARDILLO: Yes, I can hear you.

16 REP. VASUT: Perfect, we can hear you.
17 We show you registered to testify as Scout Cardillo, on
18 behalf of Bulletproof Pride, on revised Congressional
19 Redistricting Plan. Is that correct?

20 SCOUT CARDILLO: Yes.

21 REP. VASUT: Thank you. Please give us
22 your testimony.

23 SCOUT CARDILLO: Hi, everyone. Firstly,
24 I want to make it abundantly clear that as an
25 organization, we recognize that the Texas Legislature

1 has a constitutionally-protected right to redistrict.
2 We also want to make it clear that even though it is
3 legal, it does not mean it should be done. We as an
4 organization believe that no one, regardless of
5 political party, should have their livelihoods treated
6 like political pawns, especially in the context of
7 redistricting that will dictate the weight of certain
8 votes. A poll conducted by Texas-based Z to A Research
9 found that 63 percent of likely Texas voters and 41
10 percent of Texas Republicans across 22 congressional
11 districts think the effort to redraw lines in favor of
12 the current political party in power is unnecessary.
13 As an organization that works with empowering first-
14 time voters from backgrounds that are systemically
15 disenfranchised and historically left out of
16 conversations regarding accessible democracy for all,
17 we are concerned about the current plans for
18 redistricting.

19 Regardless of party, we urge you to
20 reconsider the proposed redistricting and ensure that
21 all voices are being equally seen, heard, represented,
22 and valued in these conversations. Your zip code
23 should not determine the weight or value of your vote,
24 and it is quite frankly disrespectful to constituents
25 for those of you in power to use your constitutionally-

1 granted rights to launch attacks against your own
2 constituents for the sake of your personal political
3 gain. Thank you.

4 REP. VASUT: Thank you for your
5 testimony.

6 Members, any questions for this witness?
7 Chair hears none. Thank you. The witness is excused.

8 Chair calls Levatta Levels. Chair calls
9 Levatta Levels. We don't see you on our Zoom here. Is
10 Levatta Levels here? Chair will show Levatta Levels
11 registered to testify, on behalf of herself, on the
12 revised Congressional Redistricting Plan, but not
13 testifying.

14 Chair calls Stephanie Smith. Chair calls
15 Stephanie Smith. Don't see you on our Zoom here. Is
16 Stephanie Smith here in person? Chair will show
17 Stephanie Smith registered to testify, on behalf of
18 herself, on the revised Congressional Redistricting
19 Plan, but not testifying.

20 Chair calls Christy Stockman, Christy
21 Stockman. All right. We can see you, if you can
22 unmute yourself. Here comes the blue button. There we
23 go. Can you hear me?

24 CHRISTY STOCKMAN: I can.

25 REP. VASUT: Perfect. We can hear you.

1 CHRISTY STOCKMAN: But I'm Christy
2 Stockman, not Stephanie Smith.

3 REP. VASUT: No, you're absolutely fine.
4 I show you registered to testify as Christy Stockman.

5 CHRISTY STOCKMAN: Correct.

6 REP. VASUT: Testifying on behalf of
7 yourself, on the revised Congressional Redistricting
8 Plan. Is that correct?

9 CHRISTY STOCKMAN: That's correct.

10 REP. VASUT: Please give us your
11 testimony.

12 CHRISTY STOCKMAN: Like I said, my name
13 is Christy Stockman. I am not a -- I am a citizen and
14 not affiliated with any particular group or
15 organization. I live in Corpus Christi, as I've lived
16 for most of my life, though I grew up in Clear Lake
17 City, just outside of Houston. Corpus is currently
18 represented by Michael Cloud, the 27th Congressional
19 District, one of the most gerrymandered districts in
20 the country if the litigation is to be believed.

21 What I saw when you folks were doing --
22 what you folks were doing up here in the Legislature, I
23 got steaming mad. At first I thought, great, a special
24 session. If that's what the governor needs to deal
25 with the natural disaster in the Hill Country [audio

1 cuts out] in place after Kerr County wasted 10 million
2 taxpayer dollars to do just that so that folks never go
3 without warning again, so be it. But that's not what
4 you people are doing. It's a good old-fashioned bait
5 and switch with a power grab added in.

6 Instead of helping those who are harmed
7 and keeping us out of harm's way in the future, you
8 want to see if you can rig an election. You want to
9 engage in discrimination against communities of color.
10 You want to go back to disenfranchising black folks and
11 Latinos the way it's always been. Well, Texans don't
12 want to see that, and we won't stand for it. This is
13 the wrong time and forum to [audio cuts out] stop this
14 process now.

15 But if you insist, show us the maps. If
16 you insist on this wrongheaded fight, at least -- give
17 us at least five days to review the maps and an
18 opportunity to comment on the proposed changes before
19 the vote. Twenty-four hours is completely
20 unreasonable. You have already been admonished by a
21 federal district court for an insufficient process.
22 For once, listen to your constituents and make this a
23 fair and open process. I thank the committee for its
24 time and this opportunity to speak. Thank you.

25 REP. VASUT: Thank you for your

1 testimony.

2 Members, any questions for this witness?

3 Hearing none, thank you. The witness is

4 excused.

5 Chair calls Terris Goodwin.

6 TERRIS GOODWIN: I'm actually here in

7 person.

8 REP. VASUT: Yes, we had you on our list.

9 If you'll come on up to the front. We had you
10 registered twice.

11 TERRIS GOODWIN: Sorry.

12 REP. VASUT: No, you're fine. We're
13 going to -- we're just going to correct this for you.
14 I show you registered to testify as Terris Goodwin.

15 Okay. I show you registered to testify as Terris
16 Goodwin, on behalf of yourself, on the revised
17 Congressional Redistricting Plan. Is that correct?

18 TERRIS GOODWIN: Yes, sir.

19 REP. VASUT: And we had you registered
20 twice. Is it okay if we have your permission to delete
21 the other registration?

22 TERRIS GOODWIN: Yes, please.

23 REP. VASUT: We will do so. Please give
24 us your testimony.

25 TERRIS GOODWIN: Perfect. So, like I

1 said, my name is Terris Goodwin, and I'm a nurse, a
2 mother, and a longtime resident of Bell County in
3 Congressional District 31. And I do have something
4 written down, but as we've been hearing things,
5 something came to mind and I don't want to miss it.
6 And that's -- I haven't heard anything today so far
7 giving a reason or an argument for this, other than
8 that the governor said so. And then we also know that
9 Trump told him so.

10 The chair and others have said here and
11 in court that the current maps don't violate the VRA.
12 They weren't racially motivated or drawn. No one in
13 the committee asked to redistrict or to be on this
14 committee. No one here today has testified for it.
15 And you don't serve the president or the governor, you
16 serve us. So why are we doing this? Why are we here?

17 Like we heard, yes, we are -- y'all are
18 congressionally allowed to do so, but that doesn't mean
19 it's right, and that doesn't mean that that's what the
20 people want. Last month, Donald Trump called on Texas
21 Republicans to redraw the maps mid-decade, in his
22 words, to gain five more Republican seats in Congress.
23 Shortly after, following a conversation by Trump,
24 redistricting was added to the special session. It's
25 not coincidence. It should occur once every ten years

1 based on census data, a measured process. Texans
2 haven't even had a fair chance to review these maps or
3 provide meaningful public comment. That alone should
4 disqualify this.

5 At our core, our government is supposed
6 to represent all of us, supposed to represent the
7 diverse needs of our communities and our state as a
8 whole, not just one party, one race, or one mindset.
9 But that's not what's happening here. As we heard, the
10 demographics of our beautiful state are not represented
11 -- excuse me -- fully represented currently and are not
12 if this redistricting process goes through. And so
13 this is a betrayal of democracy, an intentional
14 dilution of the votes of Texans. And I have to believe
15 that you all know this. Don't let Trump bully the
16 leaders of our great state into rigging the map. Let
17 us see the maps, let us talk about the maps, but
18 honestly, just don't do it in the first place. Thank
19 you.

20 REP. VASUT: Thank you for your
21 testimony.

22 Members, any questions for this witness?
23 I hear none. The witness is excused. Thank you very
24 much.

25 We're going to go to our panel here.

1 Chair calls Conchita Reyes.

2 CONCHITA REYES: Yes.

3 REP. VASUT: And let me pull up your
4 affirmation here momentarily. I show you registered to
5 testify as Conchita Reyes, on behalf of yourself --

6 CONCHITA REYES: And also with LULAC
7 Council 60 as a member.

8 REP. VASUT: And also on behalf of LULAC
9 Council 60?

10 CONCHITA REYES: Council 60, correct.

11 REP. VASUT: Do we have your permission
12 to update your registration to say that?

13 CONCHITA REYES: Yes, you do.

14 REP. VASUT: Bear with us one moment
15 while we do that. LULAC?

16 CONCHITA REYES: Council.

17 REP. VASUT: Council.

18 CONCHITA REYES: 60.

19 REP. VASUT: 60. All right. We now show
20 you registered to testify as Conchita Reyes, on behalf
21 of yourself and LULAC Council 60, testifying on the
22 revised Congressional Redistricting Plan. Is that
23 correct?

24 CONCHITA REYES: Yes, correct.

25 REP. VASUT: Please give us your

1 testimony.

2 CONCHITA REYES: Chairman, members of the
3 committee, thank you for this opportunity to speak. My
4 name is Conchita Reyes. I stand before you today as a
5 proud Navy mom, daughter, business owner, servant
6 leader, and member of LULAC Council 60. I'm also part
7 of the Leander Disaster Relief Support Team. Please
8 excuse my attire, but as I remain actively involved in
9 the relief efforts.

10 I am a Houstonian and a resident of the
11 Congressional District 29, and I come to you to express
12 my deep frustration as a Texan that a \$1.2 million
13 special session has been called not to address the
14 disaster recovery needs of Texans, the Hill Country,
15 and Leander, but to undermine the representation voters
16 in District 29, 9, 18, and 33. Let's be clear, the
17 efforts violates the principle of VRA, contradicts the
18 constitution, and disregards the foundation of fair and
19 equal representation in Texas. The voices being
20 targeted are voters who look like me. We deserve to be
21 heard, not silenced. District 29 is home to over
22 740,000 residents, 75 percent of whom are of Hispanic
23 descent. But beyond those numbers lies a vibrant
24 historic community that has contributed to Houston's
25 identity and resilience for more than a century. We

1 are Houston strong.

2 During my time in the aftermath of
3 Hurricane Harvey, Winter Storm Yuri, and now the
4 Leander disaster, I've seen firsthand what true
5 representation and community support looks like. A
6 survivor in Leander recently told me, you're from
7 Houston, then you understand what we're going through.
8 And I do, we do. I brought my daughter here today to
9 witness the moment because she deserves to know what's
10 at stake. The proposed redistricting is not wrong for
11 -- it's not just wrong for me or my district, it's
12 wrong for her generation and for every Texan who
13 believes in democracy. I urge you to not use this
14 session to redraw 29; use it to restore trust and to
15 not silence our voice. Thank you.

16 REP. VASUT: Thank you for your
17 testimony. I'm going to -- before I go to the next
18 witness, and I want to go ahead and alert, our next
19 virtual panel of four is going to be Brian Trautner,
20 Lucy Frost, Fainot Pierre, and Amanda Zurawski. If
21 you'll be ready in the Zoom waiting room, we'll get to
22 you.

23 Chair calls Nina Perales.

24 NINA PERALES: Yes.

25 REP. VASUT: Did I say that right? Okay.

1 I show you registered to testify as Nina Perales, on
2 behalf of the Mexican-American Legal Defense and
3 Educational Fund, on revised Congressional
4 Redistricting Plan. Is that correct?

5 NINA PERALES: Yes, that's correct.

6 REP. VASUT: Thank you. Please give us
7 your testimony.

8 NINA PERALES: Thank you. Mr. Chairman,
9 Mr. Vice Chair, and members of the committee, my name
10 is Nina Perales. I'm the Vice President of Litigation
11 for MALDEF, the Mexican-American Legal Defense and
12 Educational Fund. We are the law firm that represents
13 Latino individual voters and organizations in the
14 current Texas redistricting litigation. And I'm here
15 to answer any questions that the committee might have
16 regarding that case. Among the coalition of Latino
17 organizations that we represent from around the state
18 is LULAC. And it's our great honor and privilege to
19 represent LULAC, as well as the other plaintiff
20 organizations.

21 We just finished a three- to four-week
22 trial in El Paso, which dealt in part with the
23 congressional redistricting. In that case, our claims
24 include that the Texas legislature, in 2021, did not
25 draw a sufficient number of Latino majority

1 congressional districts. And that, in fact, the growth
2 of the Latino community since 2010, but certainly since
3 before that as well, can support the creation of an
4 additional Latino majority district in Harris County,
5 in addition to 29 represented by Congresswoman Garcia,
6 from whom you heard earlier today, as well as enough
7 Latino population to support an additional
8 congressional district in the Dallas-Fort Worth
9 metroplex. That would be in addition to congressional
10 33 represented by Marc Veasey.

11 In light of the growth of the population
12 over the past two decades, Section 2 of the Voting
13 Rights Act does require the creation of additional
14 districts. If the committee and the legislature
15 decides to take up redistricting, it is certainly true
16 that you cannot subtract from the current level of
17 representation that we have. That would violate the
18 Voting Rights Act. And our final request would be to
19 please allow public review and comment of any plans
20 under consideration, because currently we are unable to
21 comment on any proposed plans. Thank you.

22 REP. VASUT: Thank you for your
23 testimony.

24 Members, any questions for this panel?
25 Chair recognizes Speaker Moody to question the panel.

1 REP. MOODY: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

2 Ms. Perales, I want to kind of highlight
3 the last bit of your testimony. You talked about the
4 ability for people to comment on any proposed changes.
5 Well, let me start with this instead. And we've talked
6 about it throughout the hearing, this letter from the
7 Department of Justice to the Governor and Attorney
8 General. You've seen that letter?

9 NINA PERALES: I have, as well as General
10 Paxton's response.

11 REP. MOODY: Okay. So let me ask you
12 this, because we've heard from some other folks. And
13 obviously, I've known you for some time, and you have
14 quite a bit, extensive history in litigating these
15 types of issues. And so, I'd just like to get your
16 opinion on the letter that the DOJ sent to the State of
17 Texas about these -- about the need or constitutional
18 concerns that they have.

19 NINA PERALES: We agree with the concerns
20 raised by the first witness in this hearing, Professor
21 Katz. With the letter, there's a number of things that
22 are very odd or unusual about the letter. Perhaps it
23 was hastily prepared. But it's factually incorrect
24 when it refers to Congressional District 29 as a
25 coalition district, as the law understands it. Because

1 Congressional 29 is over 50 percent Hispanic citizen,
2 voting-age population, it is not a coalition district.
3 It is a single-minority, Hispanic opportunity district.
4 Another example would be the strange characterization
5 of CD33, which is represented by Marc Veasey in Dallas-
6 Fort Worth. That district was not created as a Voting
7 Rights Act district, but rather a remedy for racial
8 gerrymandering by a past legislature. And so the way
9 that the letter was approaching these issues was just
10 very odd and not consistent with reality.

11 REP. MOODY: So let me drill down onto
12 the District 29 issue that you raised. Hispanic
13 citizen, voting-age population, HCVAP. Anybody that's
14 been in this process, they've heard that terminology.
15 If you haven't, that's what it means. Why does that
16 matter? Why does that threshold matter? Why do we --
17 why do we look at that number? Is there a reason why
18 we look at it?

19 NINA PERALES: There is a reason, and
20 it's very important. Because the Supreme Court has
21 told us that if we're asking the question whether there
22 needs to be, for example, in this case, a Hispanic-
23 majority district in a particular location, the very
24 first question that the Court will ask is, are there
25 enough people there to constitute a majority, for

1 example, of the Latino population? That is the very
2 first question. And if you answer that question in the
3 affirmative, as we have with 29 for several decades,
4 then you move on to additional questions resulting in
5 the conclusion that the district is required by the
6 Voting Rights Act.

7 REP. MOODY: And I think it's important
8 to draw this distinction, because HCVAP, different from
9 HVAP, different from Hispanic population. Right? So
10 the Hispanic population would be everyone Hispanic in a
11 particular area, correct?

12 NINA PERALES: That's right. Hispanic
13 citizen voting age population takes into account not
14 just total population, but those over age 18, those who
15 are US citizens. So what you're really referring to
16 there is the voter-eligible population.

17 REP. MOODY: So if you've got -- and in
18 District 29, you said the HCVAP is what?

19 NINA PERALES: Comfortably over 50
20 percent.

21 REP. MOODY: Okay. So that's the status
22 of it today.

23 NINA PERALES: That's -- yes.

24 REP. MOODY: And so I just want the
25 committee members to understand, the Hispanic

1 population in that district is far more than that,
2 because we're actually winnowing down. The HCVAP is
3 the lowest threshold, because the Court has told us
4 we're going to gear off of that number. If we're going
5 to afford protections, we're going to gear off of that
6 number, because those are the folks that can actually
7 vote in that election, right?

8 NINE PERALES: Yes.

9 REP. MOODY: Okay. And so, this letter
10 identifies a district as a coalition district that is
11 actually a majority Hispanic district.

12 NINA PERALES: Yes.

13 REP. MOODY: Tell me the difference, and
14 tell the committee the difference.

15 NINA PERALES: Well, as the law -- as
16 cases discuss it, a coalition district is where you
17 combine more than one minority group to exceed 50
18 percent. And that may be the case in other districts.
19 That doesn't tell us anything about its
20 constitutionality or legality, but simply a coalition
21 district is a coalition of minority groups. That is a
22 different type of district than the district that is
23 what we would say majority Hispanic, in this case of
24 29. The letter is factually incorrect when it refers
25 to 29 as a coalition district.

1 REP. MOODY: So as a fundamental part of
2 this letter, the Department of Justice has
3 misidentified a congressional district as a -- and I
4 believe that there's a whole other conversation about
5 protections for coalition districts. But this goes to
6 the point of, the reason why we are here is because a
7 letter was written by the DOJ to the State of Texas.
8 And in that letter, one of the four districts that were
9 identified doesn't even qualify under what they say it
10 qualifies as. And that's under Supreme Court case law.

11 NINA PERALES: Yes.

12 REP. MOODY: What is that -- what do you
13 take from that?

14 NINA PERALES: I take from that that the
15 letter perhaps was hastily prepared. It's carelessly
16 written. It doesn't follow the standards that are used
17 by the US Supreme Court when it discusses these types
18 of districts.

19 REP. MOODY: You know, and I share your
20 concern and the fact that we are here talking about
21 this. And a letter coming from the D- -- letters come
22 from the DOJ, probably that's something you would take
23 seriously. You're pointing out something that is
24 factually wrong and has now become a premise for why
25 we're here. I mean, it doesn't shock me. This is the

1 same administration that levied tariffs on an island of
2 penguins. But look -- and I say that for a little bit
3 of levity, but this is serious in that this is talking
4 about people's representation and what matters to them.

5 I want to go to the last point of what
6 you raised in your testimony, and then that'll be the
7 end of my questions. You talked about participation,
8 the ability to participate. And we are grateful. I
9 see here still 158 witnesses that have registered,
10 either in-person or virtually, that want to weigh in.
11 And we have multiple hearings. There are a couple more
12 hearings that are coming. But we have no maps in front
13 of us. We have no bill in front of us. Do you think
14 that this is -- do you think that this participation is
15 meaningful for you when you don't have a map to look
16 at?

17 NINA PERALES: I want to express
18 gratitude for the opportunity to testify today. But
19 the opportunity is a limited one if we are not able to
20 comment on a proposed map.

21 REP. MOODY: Because you wouldn't know,
22 unless you saw something, what communities are in a
23 district or are being moved from a district, which
24 institutions are here, there, wherever. You have none
25 of that data in front of you.

1 NINA PERALES: It's impossible to know.
2 And honestly, with the naming of four districts in the
3 Department of Justice letter and what we read in the
4 newspapers, which is all we know about certain goals
5 that have been announced for the redistricting, if it's
6 four districts, if it's five districts, the ripple
7 effect from redrawing even one district can be
8 substantial. And so we are potentially looking at a
9 significant redraw of the congressional map. And it
10 would be critically important to see maps under
11 consideration and be able to comment on them so that
12 the committee and the body understand what are the
13 risks, what are the rewards, what are the potential
14 legal liabilities.

15 REP. MOODY: Well, and I want to talk
16 about that. So you talked about the ripple effect. I
17 think the members of Congress maybe mentioned that a
18 little bit, too, in their testimony. Because when
19 you're drawing these, and for those of you who haven't
20 participated in this process at that level, you know,
21 when we draw our House and Senate districts, there's
22 deviations. You can 5,000 down, or you can -- there's
23 a little bit of variance within the districts. When
24 we're looking at congressional districts, that's
25 different, isn't it?

1 NINA PERALES: That's correct. The US
2 Constitution requires that every congressional district
3 contain the exact same number of people. So in the
4 Texas Congressional Redistricting Plan, all of the
5 districts have the same number, except for one district
6 that gets to have one more person.

7 REP. MOODY: So that's it. The deviation
8 there is one person. So the ripple effect, when you
9 move 5,000, 10,000, 15,000, because everything has to
10 be identical, you will necessarily see a ripple effect
11 across.

12 NINA PERALES: The ripple effect is
13 greater in congressional redistricting because of the
14 need to equalize population across the districts.

15 REP. MOODY: When we have the ability to
16 have a little bit bigger variance, like we do in the
17 House and the Senate, you maybe couldn't -- you could
18 maybe massage that around the edges a little bit. But
19 in congressional maps, as you point out, that is a one
20 for one.

21 NINA PERALES: Yes.

22 REP. MOODY: So it is going to be
23 exacerbated when you change one. The ripple effect is
24 greater, is it not?

25 NINA PERALES: Yes, that's right.

1 There's not the same kind of flex that you would have
2 in Senate redistricting or House redistricting.

3 REP. MOODY: And I know in our -- when we
4 do our redistricting in the House side, we talk about
5 breaking county lines. And that has a lot of legal
6 significance. Not that we don't do it, but it has
7 legal significance. Any rule like that exists in
8 congressional redrawing?

9 NINA PERALES: Not in Texas, no. So
10 congressional districts can insert appendages into as
11 many districts as they want to. And often, they do,
12 for various reasons. And thus, the sort of wider
13 ability to draw and the tighter requirements on
14 population mean that the ripple effect can be very
15 strong.

16 REP. MOODY: Ms. Perales, thank you so
17 much for your testimony. I appreciate your time.

18 REP. VASUT: Mr. Wu, for what purpose?
19 Mr. Turner, for what purpose?

20 REP. TURNER: Questions of the witness.

21 REP. VASUT: You're recognized for
22 questioning the witness.

23 REP. TURNER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

24 Thank you both for being here. Ms.
25 Perales, I have a few questions just to follow up on

1 your testimony and your dialogue with Speaker Moody.
2 First, you were being very humble as you introduced
3 yourself. But I want the committee to understand the
4 scope of your experience and expertise as a lawyer who
5 has specialized in voting rights and redistricting
6 litigation. Am I correct that you have argued numerous
7 cases in federal court over the years, both on Texas
8 redistricting and voting rights? Is that correct?

9 NINA PERALES: Yes, I have.

10 REP. TURNER: Okay. Is that including
11 the United States Supreme Court?

12 NINA PERALES: Including successfully in
13 the United States Supreme Court in the Texas
14 redistricting case, LULAC v. Perry?

15 REP. TURNER: Very good. Thank you. So
16 you have considerable expertise as to what the
17 requirements of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 are, as
18 well as the constitutional requirements with respect to
19 redistricting. Is that fair to say?

20 NINA PERALES: I am familiar with the
21 standards.

22 REP. TURNER: Very good. Humble, as I
23 said. Well, I want to -- while you're here, I want the
24 committee to be able to take advantage of, continue to
25 take advantage of your expertise and experience. You

1 mentioned in your testimony that the legislature, in
2 2021, had the opportunity to draw, to create two new
3 Hispanic Opportunity Districts, one in Houston -- one
4 anchored in Houston, Harris County, and the other
5 anchored in the Dallas-Fort Worth metroplex, where I'm
6 from. And, of course, the legislature, while there
7 were proposals to do that, those proposals were
8 rejected by the majority. And those did not become
9 law. Is that right?

10 NINA PERALES: That's correct.

11 REP. TURNER: Okay. And that is one of
12 the subjects of the recent trial in El Paso, is that
13 right, of which the decision is still pending?

14 NINA PERALES: Yes.

15 REP. TURNER: Okay. In that trial, which
16 you referenced, what was the State of Texas' arguments
17 as they defended those 2021 maps? Did they center --
18 did the State contend that they drew those maps based
19 upon race?

20 NINA PERALES: No. I would observe --
21 and I don't think the team who tried the case for the
22 Texas Attorney General's Office would disagree. One of
23 the critical points of the defense, the State's defense
24 of its Congressional Redistricting Plans is that they
25 claim they were drawn blind to race.

1 REP. TURNER: Drawn blind to race. Okay.
2 So that testimony would appear to be somewhat
3 contradictory to this Department of Justice letter that
4 the Governor received in early July this year. Is that
5 right?

6 NINA PERALES: Yes. The testimony is
7 that the maps were drawn race blind. The DOJ letter
8 asserts there is evidence showing that the maps weren't
9 race blind. The Attorney General's response to the
10 Department of Justice is that the maps were drawn race
11 blind.

12 REP. TURNER: Okay. So we have a
13 disagreement then between the Department of Justice and
14 the official position of the State of Texas, from our
15 Attorney General's Office.

16 NINA PERALES: Yes, there is a
17 disagreement.

18 REP. TURNER: Okay. You mentioned that
19 the Voting Rights Act does, in fact, require the
20 creation of opportunity districts or majority minority
21 districts in certain circumstances. Does the Voting
22 Rights Act require identifying majority/minority
23 districts, be they coalition districts or otherwise,
24 identifying them and then dismantling them? Have you
25 ever seen such a directive from the Department of

1 Justice?

2 NINA PERALES: I've never seen such a
3 directive from the Department of Justice. I've been
4 doing this since the mid-1990s. There is nothing in
5 the Voting Rights Act that requires a district to be
6 identified as majority/minority and then dismantled
7 because it's majority/minority. There's also nothing
8 in the Constitution that requires that.

9 REP. TURNER: Okay. And then finally,
10 the four districts that were identified in that DOJ
11 letter, were those districts redrawn substantially in
12 2021?

13 NINA PERALES: They are all different
14 from the versions that existed in the preceding
15 decades' redistricting plans, yes.

16 REP. TURNER: Okay. All right. Thank
17 you very much.

18 REP. VASUT: Dean Thompson, for what
19 purpose?

20 REP. THOMPSON: May I ask a follow-up
21 question, please?

22 REP. VASUT: You may.

23 REP. THOMPSON: How are those districts -
24 - how were those districts drawn? They said they were
25 drawn. You said they were all differently. How?

1 NINA PERALES: Well, from decade to
2 decade, because population tends to shift and move
3 around, and because there is the requirement that every
4 congressional district have the exact same number of
5 people in it, after the census data is released,
6 there's always going to be some changing in the lines.
7 So each -- there is no district that remains exactly
8 the same because it would have the wrong number of
9 people in it. But the extent to which you change the
10 district can be largely driven by whether its
11 population is close to what we call the new ideal. And
12 at least in Harris County, I believe, at least for
13 Congressional 18 and possibly also 9, those districts
14 were very close to the ideal population. They only
15 needed minor modifications to bring them into the
16 population deviation rule. And Texas, in any event,
17 changed their boundaries even more. So it cannot be
18 said that these districts, if they were drawn in some
19 way that a lawyer would say is not right, are still
20 drawn that same way today.

21 CONCHITA REYES: And if I can add, on
22 District 29, when it was designed to be a Latino
23 district, we end up having Gene Green, a white man,
24 representing the district for 25 years.

25 REP. THOMPSON: I was here when that

1 district was drawn.

2 CONCHITA REYES: So only recently, only
3 recently, we have Sylvia Garcia, who has been in office
4 for six years.

5 REP. THOMPSON: Yeah, Ben Reyes ran for
6 that district --

7 CONCHITA REYES: That's right.

8 REP. THOMPSON: -- when it was drawn.

9 CONCHITA REYES: Uncle Ben.

10 REP. THOMPSON: Thank you very much.

11 REP. VASUT: Thank you, Dean.

12 Vice Chair Rosenthal, for what purpose?

13 REP. ROSENTHAL: To ask a question of the
14 witnesses.

15 REP. VASUT: Chair recognizes Vice Chair
16 Rosenthal to question the witness.

17 REP. ROSENTHAL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

18 I actually don't have much of a question.

19 I just want to thank you all for being here. Ms.

20 Perales, I'm going to say there are very few humans on

21 the face of this planet that can take such complex

22 things and break them down into simple terms that help

23 us understand. So my father was an advanced research

24 scientist in mathematics, which is pretty complicated,

25 and he used to say the most brilliant people he knew

1 were the ones who could make something so complicated
2 sound so simple. So thank you for bringing your
3 expertise today.

4 NINA PERALES: Thank you.

5 CONCHITA REYES: If I can also add, if we
6 notice, these two districts -- well, the three
7 districts are being looked at in Houston and down in
8 Dallas, have you noticed the time frame? It's FIFA
9 2026. So we're disrupting dollars as well. So I hope
10 that stays in the back of your mind. I'm an
11 accountant, so I follow numbers. That's why I pointed
12 out that it's cost us \$1.2 million to call this special
13 session, which should be the focus of the disaster that
14 has happened in the Hill Country and Leander. Thank
15 you.

16 REP. VASUT: Representative Spiller, for
17 what purpose?

18 REP. SPILLER: To question the witness.

19 REP. VASUT: Chair recognizes
20 Representative Spiller to question the witnesses.

21 REP. SPILLER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

22 Ms. Perales, I'd like to follow up on
23 some of the questions. I appreciate -- first of all,
24 let me say this. And I'm going to try not to
25 completely demonstrate my ignorance to the world today

1 in asking you some clarification questions. But you
2 and I may not politically agree in some areas, but I do
3 respect your testimony, and I appreciate your
4 testimony. I appreciate you being here today.

5 I'm trying to better understand some of
6 your testimony, in particular the questions that
7 Speaker Moody asked relative to the Congressional
8 District 29. Because, as I understand, you said that
9 it is not a coalition district. Is that correct?

10 NINA PERALES: That's right.

11 REP. SPILLER: Are the other three that
12 are enumerated in the DOJ letter, do you know and would
13 you identify those as coalition districts?

14 NINA PERALES: I know that they're not
15 Hispanic citizen voting age majority districts, but I
16 could not tell you off the top of my head what the
17 citizen voting age population is of the various racial
18 groups in those districts.

19 REP. SPILLER: And why can you not tell
20 that?

21 NINA PERALES: Because I look at a lot of
22 tables and maps every day, and I don't know those
23 numbers off the top of my head.

24 REP. SPILLER: Are there other coalition
25 districts within the state that were not listed on the

1 DOJ letter?

2 NINA PERALES: I'm not aware.

3 REP. SPILLER: So there may be?

4 NINA PERALES: I'm not aware.

5 REP. SPILLER: You just don't know.

6 Okay. And as I understand it, and you just finished
7 your trial in El Paso. And there has not been a ruling
8 in that case yet, correct?

9 NINA PERALES: There has not. We are
10 preparing our post-trial findings of fact, proposed
11 findings of fact and conclusions of law.

12 REP. SPILLER: Okay. And you're familiar
13 with the Petteway case, Petteway v. Galveston County?

14 NINA PERALES: Yes, I am.

15 REP. SPILLER: And you would agree with
16 me that it is currently the law of the land in Texas
17 relative to coalition districts?

18 NINA PERALES: Yes, what the Fifth
19 Circuit tells us is the law of the land.

20 REP. SPILLER: Right, right. Well, and
21 by that, I mean it has not -- that's not been
22 considered or overturned or anything by the US Supreme
23 Court at this time?

24 NINA PERALES: That's right.

25 REP. SPILLER: Okay. And is it fair to

1 say that the Petteway case that was ruled upon in 2024
2 was certainly after the maps that we're looking at
3 today and the subject of which you litigated that were
4 created in 2021?

5 NINA PERALES: Petteway came after the
6 creation of the 2021 maps, yes.

7 REP. SPILLER: But the subject of your
8 trial was not really focused on coalition districts per
9 se, was it?

10 NINA PERALES: No, that's not exactly
11 true.

12 REP. SPILLER: Okay.

13 NINA PERALES: If I could explain.

14 REP. SPILLER: Sure.

15 NINA PERALES: There were various claims,
16 and remain various claims, in this case. This case is
17 six consolidated actions, so there's a lot of
18 complexity and a lot of different claims. Some of them
19 have to do with what are characterized as coalition
20 districts. When the Petteway decision came down, it
21 became the focus of the Court and the parties to
22 understand what Petteway means and what its impact
23 would be on the Texas redistricting litigation. So
24 there was extensive briefing, and the parties modified.
25 Some of them modified their complaints as a result to

1 conform.

2 The US Department of Justice was there.
3 They had, they meaning the US Department of Justice,
4 had about seven months to absorb the Petteway decision
5 and decide what it meant for them and for the law. And
6 then the Department of Justice dismissed its claim
7 [audio cuts out] on Petteway. One would expect that if
8 the Department of Justice had changed its view on the
9 Texas redistricting plans, that it would have simply
10 articulated that within the litigation. But instead,
11 at the conclusion of everything involving the Petteway
12 briefing, the Department of Justice dismissed out and
13 left the case.

14 REP. SPILLER: Question. Did the DOJ,
15 when they dismissed or non-suited their claims in that
16 case relative to coalition districts, was that before
17 President Trump took office?

18 NINA PERALES: The DOJ never had
19 coalition claims in the case. Their claims were more
20 closely aligned with the Hispanic majority districts.
21 But yes, actually, the Department of Justice did not
22 dismiss out until March, so several months into the
23 term of our new president.

24 REP. SPILLER: Okay. And we've heard
25 quite a bit of testimony here today relative to the

1 process. And, you know, as you're sitting here today,
2 do you know of anything that's uncon-, I mean, illegal
3 or unconstitutional about the Texas legislature or this
4 committee considering, regardless of whether or not you
5 like the way that the DOJ letter was drafted, but
6 basically to consider what's on the governor's call to
7 consider redistricting in light of Petteway?

8 NINA PERALES: I would -- there's sort of
9 -- the reason I hesitate is just because I feel like
10 there's a couple of questions within that question. Is
11 there a constitutional or a legal bar mechanically to
12 mid-decade redistricting? Not as we understand it from
13 the LULAC v. Perry decision? Is this letter a
14 sufficient basis to call the Legislature back in?

15 REP. SPILLER: Yeah, I'm not asking about
16 the letter. I'm not asking about the letter. I'm just
17 talking about the process that we're here today,
18 because we've heard testimony from a number of people.
19 I'm assuming that your opinion is, we have the right as
20 -- if the Governor puts something on the call, and we
21 consider that, and we're sitting here considering that
22 and considering testimony like yours today, that we
23 have every right and maybe obligation to do so, and
24 then make a determination whether it would be proper to
25 amend those in light of the Petteway decision or not.

1 NINA PERALES: I would say that I am not
2 an expert in state law --

3 REP. SPILLER: Okay.

4 NINA PERALES: -- or the obligation of
5 the Legislature to address items on the Governor's
6 proclamation for a special session. Do legislatures
7 like Texas primarily carry the responsibility for
8 redistricting? Yes. Should the legislature have a
9 good reason to do so? I also believe yes. And that
10 reason is not present here.

11 REP. SPILLER: Right. I thought you
12 might have that opinion. That's okay.

13 NINA PERALES: Apologies.

14 REP. SPILLER: But the -- let me ask you,
15 on the -- let's go back to Petteway, because the way I
16 understand it and read it, and again, I'm trying not to
17 show my ignorance, but previously you had the Bartlett
18 v. Strickland case, which basically said that these
19 coalition districts were not required. But then you
20 had Petteway that says that they're not authorized. I
21 think -- in summary, I think I would say that that's
22 the ruling there. There's a difference between those
23 two. Wouldn't you agree?

24 NINA PERALES: I would characterize the
25 holding of those cases differently. Bartlett v.

1 Strickland said, if you are going to say a district is
2 required, that a district is mandatory under Section 2
3 of the Voting Rights Act, you have to hit 50 percent
4 plus one. That's in lawsuits where you are suing to
5 have a district created as a Section 2 Voting Rights
6 District. What Petteway said was that you cannot
7 combine different groups together to reach that 50
8 percent.

9 REP. SPILLER: Correct.

10 NINA PERALES: What neither of those
11 cases have said, and I think this is our primary
12 disagreement with the DOJ letter's assumptions or
13 implications, is that sometimes a majority/minority
14 district is just there. And it doesn't need to be
15 justified by Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act. It is
16 simply there. It's there because of history, or it's
17 there because it contains communities of interest. And
18 just because it's there and it is majority/minority,
19 neither Bartlett v. Strickland nor Petteway would say
20 that that district is in any way unconstitutional.

21 REP. SPILLER: Okay. But in the Petteway
22 case, they went and, through their analysis, the way I
23 read it, five different ways that they said no, no, no,
24 no, no, and overturned their previous decision in
25 whatever that case was. You would know, but I don't.

1 NINA PERALES: Yes.

2 REP. SPILLER: So, let me ask you a
3 couple of other quick questions. And I don't want to
4 belabor this, because we've got a lot of folks that
5 want to testify, and I respect that. We've talked
6 about coalition districts. We also heard some
7 testimony today about opportunity districts. I've read
8 some cases about crossover districts. Are opportunity
9 districts and crossover districts the same thing? Or
10 are they second cousins? Or how would you -- how would
11 you define those?

12 NINA PERALES: I know what a coalition
13 and crossover district is under the cases as we have
14 them today. I think the term opportunity district
15 perhaps is a more colloquial term, and I don't have a
16 legal definition for you. I think you would have to
17 ask the person who is using that term, opportunity
18 district, what the intersection of definitions is.

19 REP. SPILLER: I agree. And I didn't see
20 it defined under case law. I did see crossover
21 districts defined, but not those. So let me go back to
22 the other on the -- and you -- I think your testimony
23 was that you can't tell me as you sit here today, which
24 is fine, whether the other three named in the DOJ
25 letter are coalition districts or if they're not. And

1 you can't really tell me if there might be other
2 coalition districts in the state or not. But would you
3 agree with me that, in the event that it would be
4 proper to fix, or to address, or to, as they say,
5 remedy a situation with districts that may be coalition
6 districts, one or more in the state, that you can't do
7 that in a vacuum? In other words, it's hard to fix one
8 district without it affecting other adjacent,
9 contiguous districts, and maybe even districts across
10 the state that you have to make work to get what would
11 be proper under the Petteway decision.

12 NINA PERALES: I need to respond to the
13 idea that if it's a coalition district, it needs to be
14 fixed, because there is no case that says that. The
15 cases that we've been discussing, Bartlett, Petteway,
16 are about whether plaintiffs can come to court and
17 demand that a certain type of district be created, that
18 there's an affirmative obligation to create that
19 district. And that's where Petteway rules that you
20 cannot combine minorities for that purpose.

21 If you simply come across a district that
22 is a coalition district, that doesn't mean it needs to
23 be fixed. In other words, just because a district
24 isn't required by Section 2 does not mean it's
25 prohibited by the Voting Rights Act or the

1 Constitution. There is space between those ideas, not
2 required and prohibited. And the letter -- and the
3 assumption here is that if it's not required to be
4 there by the law, then it has to be dismantled.

5 REP. SPILLER: But Petteway said that
6 Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act does not -- does not
7 necessarily create or mandate coalition districts,
8 correct?

9 NINA PERALES: Petteway said you cannot
10 sue to create a majority/minority district of combined
11 minorities. That's very different than whether a
12 coalition district that you come across, that simply
13 exists in the map, is in any way problematic. It is no
14 more problematic than a white district or a VRA
15 majority district.

16 REP. SPILLER: Right. Okay. I'll leave
17 it at that. I do appreciate your testimony. Thank
18 you.

19 NINA PERALES: Thank you for the
20 opportunity. I like to discuss nothing more than
21 redistricting, so I appreciate your questions.

22 REP. VASUT: You have come to the right
23 place.

24 REP. SPILLER: You're going to make me
25 look worse and worse the farther we go in that

1 discussion but thank you.

2 REP. VASUT: Mr. Tepper, for what
3 purpose?

4 REP. TEPPER: Thank you, Chairman. Real
5 quickly, I'm not sure --

6 REP. VASUT: It's your witness, Mr.
7 Tepper.

8 REP. TEPPER: -- majority/minority might
9 mean something different to me than it does to you.
10 Texas is a majority/minority state, meaning the other
11 races outnumber white race. Does it mean the same
12 thing to you in redistricting that it does for me
13 politically?

14 NINA PERALES: No, probably not. In
15 redistricting, we have very strict standards that are
16 set by the US Supreme Court and the Fifth Circuit. In
17 the Bartlett v. Strickland case, when it was talking
18 about majority/minority, it meant a majority of the
19 population. And sometimes, for example, in this
20 circuit, it means a majority of the citizen voting age
21 population. In Texas demographics, the Hispanic total
22 population has just slightly exceeded the white non-
23 Hispanic total population. But in terms of other
24 numbers like VAP voting age and citizen voting age,
25 those numbers are not the same.

1 REP. TEPPER: Okay. Thank you.

2 REP. VASUT: Any other member have
3 questions for this panel? Representative Perez,
4 patiently waiting. You're recognized to question the
5 panel.

6 REP. PEREZ: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I
7 just had a brief question from some of the earlier
8 discussion regarding county administrative burdens. I
9 believe there's a requirement that when these
10 congressional lines are redrawn, it requires that
11 counties then have to go back and renumber all of their
12 districts. And I don't think that's something that's
13 been talked about yet during the course of this
14 hearing. But if you could go over that, because that's
15 going to be a significant cost for county governments
16 to implement, whenever these lines are drawn, to go
17 back and have to renumber all the precincts within
18 their county.

19 NINA PERALES: Because the -- because any
20 new redistricting, depending on the number of districts
21 that it affects, could have significant ripple effects.
22 We have 254 counties in Texas. It could be that a very
23 high number of counties have to do what is called
24 precinct realignment. Your voting precinct is the
25 little area on the map that you vote in. And everybody

1 in a precinct has to vote the same ballot. So if a
2 redistricting line cuts a precinct in half, the
3 precinct boundaries have to be redefined by the county
4 staff. It's an intensive process, and one that costs
5 money and time.

6 REP. PEREZ: As former county
7 commissioner, we had to -- re have to submit it by a
8 certain time, but I guess they've got to reconfigure
9 the lines to make sure that all the elections are in
10 line. But just thank you for pointing that out. It's
11 another just administrative thing that I want to be
12 sure that the committee was aware. Thank you.

13 REP. VASUT: Any other questions for this
14 panel? We thank you for your testimony. This panel is
15 excused.

16 Virtual testimony, first up is Brian
17 Trautner. Chair calls Brian Trautner. All right. Mr.
18 Trautner, I think you win for the fastest Zoom video
19 reveal of the evening today.

20 BRIAN TRAUTNER: I had my video on the
21 whole time.

22 REP. VASUT: That's awesome. Thank you
23 for that. I appreciate you making it sufficient --
24 easy. We're going to bring up your registration, one
25 second. Okay. I show you registered to testify as

1 Brian Trautner, on behalf of yourself, on the revised
2 Congressional Redistricting Plan. Is that correct?

3 BRIAN TRAUTNER: Yes, that is correct.

4 REP. VASUT: Thank you. Please give us
5 your testimony.

6 BRIAN TRAUTNER: Good evening. My name
7 is Brian Trautner, and I'm just a working-class dad who
8 is running for Congress in Texas's 31st District. You
9 know, I wanted to be there with you guys today in-
10 person, but like a lot of Texans, I'm juggling a full-
11 time job and I also have a family to raise. So, as I
12 mentioned, I am running for Congress, and that brings a
13 unique perspective to this discussion for me.

14 Let me start with this. You know, I've
15 been talking to a lot of people all across my district,
16 which is, you know, hopefully going to stay my
17 district, but anyways, a lot of us are kind of feeling
18 the same way, and that's like the system just isn't
19 built for us, like our voices don't matter. Whether
20 it's the government in Austin, whether it's in DC, you
21 know, they just don't want to listen to us. And so
22 that's what makes me so concerned about this
23 redistricting process.

24 Let's be honest. This has nothing to do
25 with fairness or better representation. It has

1 everything to do with Donald Trump trying to reshape
2 the political map to keep his grip on power. You know,
3 whether it's his deeply unpopular Big Beautiful Bill,
4 his tariffs driving up costs for the average American,
5 or his efforts to keep all the truths buried, he's
6 doing everything he can to silence the American people
7 and avoid accountability.

8 You know, this campaign I have, I kind of
9 started it from nothing. I built it up all myself. I
10 had no big donors to begin with, I had no political
11 connections, just a belief that regular people like me
12 deserve a seat at the table. And, you know, just even
13 the discussion of redistricting is already having
14 consequences on my campaign. You know, I've had to
15 delay the official launch of my campaign because I
16 don't know what my district's going to be. Like where
17 am I supposed to hold it? What venue is going to be in
18 my district? All these little things are just starting
19 to add up.

20 And, you know, this isn't just about me.
21 This is about people on both sides of the aisle. You
22 know, and there are so many more important things that
23 we should be talking about as Texans, I feel, then this
24 redistricting. So it's just too late for me in this
25 kind of cycle for this chaos, and so I'm asking you

1 guys, please just choose democracy over dysfunction.
2 Leave the maps where they are, and let the people, not
3 the vote -- the people and the voters, not the
4 politicians, decide. Thank you, and thank you for
5 listening.

6 REP. VASUT: Thank you for your
7 testimony. Members, any questions for this witness?
8 Seeing none, the witness is excused.

9 Chair calls Lucy Frost. I'll get you
10 unmuted here and then pull up your registration form.
11 We're sending you -- there you go. We sent you a blue
12 dot. That's our little helpline. Can you hear me?

13 LUCY FROST: I can hear you. You can
14 hear me?

15 REP. VASUT: I can hear you. We're going
16 to pull up your registration form. We got you
17 registered as Lucy Frost, testifying on behalf of
18 yourself, on revised Congressional Redistricting Plan.
19 Is that correct?

20 LUCY FROST: That's correct.

21 REP. VASUT: All right. Please give us
22 your testimony.

23 LUCY FROST: Sure. I am Lucy Frost. I'm
24 a Corpus Christi native. I want to shout out to the
25 folks from my hometown. I live in --

1 REP. VASUT: If you wouldn't mind, I
2 think you might have another window with the --

3 LUCY FROST: I think I need to close off
4 that other window.

5 REP VASUT: Yeah, there you go. Thank
6 you so much for that.

7 LUCY FROST: I thought about that.

8 REP VASUT: We'll restart your time.
9 Please give us your testimony.

10 LUCY FROST: I find myself actually
11 agreeing with a guy that just spoke, Brian Trautner. I
12 never saw him before, but he looks like a cool guy. So
13 as far as I know, given I'm a native Texan, nobody's
14 ever told Texans what to do. We've always been like a
15 whole other country, you know, but apparently that
16 doesn't apply to redrawing congressional districts, you
17 know, like mid-decade.

18 So we have an elephant in the room, so to
19 speak, and that is that we have a want-to-be king who
20 wants five more congressional lapdogs. This is about
21 politicians picking voters instead of voters picking
22 leaders. This is about further robbing political power
23 from communities of color in particular. This is not
24 democracy. This is New York City, Epstein-style sneaky
25 stuff. It doesn't matter if it's done with a Texas

1 accent, we know there's right and there is wrong. And
2 what's right right now is tackling real problems.

3 Mr. Chairman, I saw your green ribbon,
4 and that tells me that your heart is with our neighbors
5 who suffered unimaginable flood losses. Y'all should
6 be focused on preventing that from ever happening again
7 and doing right by the Uvalde families as well. Texans
8 want fair maps. We want fair elections. We want a
9 government that works for every Texan from El Paso to
10 Texarkana, from Texline to Port Isabel. And neither of
11 those should be districts, by the way.

12 So anybody who wants to redraw maps
13 should remember what an earlier witness said, is that
14 Texans do not like being played. We know
15 gerrymandering when we see it; we sniff out cheating a
16 mile away. This doesn't pass the smell test. This is
17 the time to take care of Texans. Let's tell the want-
18 to-be king, as we like to say, don't mess with Texas.
19 Thank you.

20 REP. VASUT: Thank you for your
21 testimony.

22 Members, any questions for this witness?
23 Seeing none, the witness is excused. Thank you, ma'am.

24 Chair calls Fainot Pierre. I apologize
25 if I said that incorrectly. I don't see Fainot Pierre

1 on our Zoom list. Is Fainot Pierre here? Not seeing
2 them, we'll show Fainot Pierre registered to testify,
3 on behalf of himself, on the revised Congressional
4 Redistricting Plan, but not testifying.

5 Chair calls Amanda's Zurawski. Amanda
6 Zurawski. We don't see you on our Zoom waiting list.
7 Is Amanda Zurawski here? We'll show Amanda Zurawski
8 registered to testify, on behalf of herself, on the
9 revised Congressional Redistricting Plan, but not
10 testifying.

11 Call up our next panel of four. If
12 you'll make your way into the room here, we're going to
13 have Michael Garrett Neaves, Nathaniel Reed, and Isaiah
14 Martin, and Joshua Martin. If you will make your way
15 up to the front, Michael Garrett Neaves, Nathaniel
16 Reed, Isaiah Martin, and Joshua Martin.

17 Our next virtual witnesses will be, so
18 please be ready in the Zoom waiting list, Kaitlyn Kash,
19 Frank Forsyth, and Nicolette Ardiente. Those will be
20 our next three virtual witnesses.

21 So go ahead with our Panel here. And I
22 know I called four. Maybe somebody's coming from the
23 overflow room. We'll get to them as soon as they get
24 here. That's fine. The Chair calls Michael Garrett
25 Neaves.

1 MICHAEL GARRETT NEAVES: That's me.

2 REP. VASUT: Okay. Did I say that
3 correctly?

4 MICHAEL GARRETT NEAVES: It's Neaves.

5 REP. VASUT: Neaves, Neaves. I
6 apologize. I show you registered to testify as Michael
7 Garrett Neaves, testifying on behalf of yourself, on
8 the Revised Congressional Redistricting Plan. Is that
9 correct?

10 MICHAEL GARRETT NEAVES: That is correct.

11 REP. VASUT: Please give us your
12 testimony.

13 MICHAEL GARRETT NEAVES: Hello, everybody
14 My name is Garrett Neaves. I go by Garrett. I just
15 want to spell my name for people who might want to talk
16 to me after this. Garrett is spelled G-A-R-R-E-T-T,
17 and Neaves is spelled N-E-A-V-E-S.

18 Guys, I have a question. I have a
19 question for everyone who can hear me. How about we
20 all stop allowing ourselves to be treated like pawns in
21 a power game that oligarchs and elites are playing with
22 each other? Trump and the oligarchs and elites that he
23 is in bed with this week have called for redistricting
24 because they know that they are losing the support of
25 hard-working people. Because they are losing support,

1 this redistricting, meant to increase Trump's power,
2 may backfire and cause more Texas Republicans to lose
3 in 2026.

4 Trump and Nancy Pelosi are more helpful
5 to each other than either of them are to hard-working
6 Texans. Pelosi says that the Epstein files are a
7 distraction. Trump says the Epstein files are a waste
8 of time. They both do not want working people to see
9 that the oligarchs and the elites abuse regular people
10 for their own enrichment and pleasure. Bill Clinton
11 and Donald Trump have more experience partying with
12 each other and partying with Jeffrey Epstein than they
13 do with doing any work which is actually intended to
14 help working people. So, how about we all stop
15 allowing ourselves be treated like pawns? Reject this
16 attempt by Trump to serve and protect himself at your
17 expense.

18 REP. VASUT: Thank you for your testimony

19 Chair calls Nathaniel Reed. Okay. I
20 show you registered to testify as Nathaniel Reed, on
21 behalf of yourself, on the Revised Congressional
22 Redistricting Plan. Is that correct?

23 NATHANIEL REED: Yep. Before I do my
24 testimony, can I hand this to the clerk?

25 REP. VASUT: You absolutely can. If

1 you've got some handouts, I won't even start your timer
2 yet. Just hand those and we'll get those passed out.
3 Okay. Let's go ahead and start your timer now. There
4 you go. All right. Please give us your testimony.

5 NATHANIEL REED: All right. Good
6 afternoon. Before this testimony, I have passed along
7 copies of this map of the current shape of Texas's
8 District 35, which is represented by Congressman Greg
9 Casar, who is my congressman. Take a look at it. You
10 know, it starts from Austin and it ends in San Antonio.
11 It doesn't make sense to lump these two faraway
12 communities that are heavily populated into one
13 district. I've looked at dozens of proposed
14 redistricting maps for Texas, and I see more Casar-like
15 districts appearing across the state, with the motive
16 of taking away House seats from the Democrats.

17 There is a dangerous precedent being set,
18 not only in Texas, but across the country. In response
19 to Texas's redistricting, California is considering
20 redistricting maps of their own. Some of these
21 proposed maps could possibly take away every Republican
22 seat from the House. Ohio, Maryland, and many other
23 states are also considering gerrymandering their
24 possible congressional redistrict maps.

25 No matter who you are, Democrat,

1 Republican, this is a terrible idea. This is terrible
2 news. Democrats will have less representation in red
3 states, and Republicans will have less representation
4 in blue states. We are about to witness the end of an
5 era in partisan politics, and the start of a new era of
6 decades of complete distorted representation in
7 Congress. The people of Texas and the people of the
8 United States deserve better than this, so I ask you to
9 redistrict with fair representation. Thank you for
10 giving me time for this testimony.

11 REP. VASUT: Thank you for your
12 testimony.

13 Chair calls Isaiah Martin. I show you
14 registered as Isaiah Martin, testifying on behalf of
15 yourself, on the Revised Congressional Redistricting
16 Plan. Is that correct?

17 ISAIAH MARTIN: That's right.

18 REP. VASUT: Please give us your
19 testimony.

20 ISAIAH MARTIN: Well, hello to the
21 committee. I'm Isaiah Martin. And it's very apparent
22 that no one seems to know why we're here. It just
23 seems as if many are just sitting here going with the
24 emotions. And it makes sense because the game is
25 rigged. We already know the way this situation is

1 going to be.

2 Many of you that are Republicans, and I'm
3 looking at you, you guys understand the game. You've
4 got to get Trump's endorsement. That's the name of the
5 game to be a Republican nowadays. And you know very
6 clearly that Trump told every single one of you that he
7 needs five seats, is what he said. So why do we play
8 this game where we come here to an empty chamber in
9 which all of you pretend as if you don't know what's
10 going on when you already know what the situation is?

11 But the real conversation that we should
12 be having, that I want every single one of you to
13 understand, is that there will be a retaliation for
14 that. You've seen states like California say that they
15 will gerrymander Republicans out of their states. You
16 see the same thing in Maryland. The same thing is
17 going to happen in New York. While you were in here,
18 Governor Kathy Hochul said that she will be
19 gerrymandering Republicans out of their seats. The
20 same thing is going to happen in New Jersey.

21 So for all of the work that you guys see
22 that you guys claim to be doing, when we should be
23 talking about the fact that we live in a state that is
24 unaffordable for people. Our economy is wrecked.
25 People cannot find good jobs. We literally have

1 property taxes going up every single year, despite the
2 fact that you Republicans have been in office for
3 nearly 30 straight years. I mean, this is the game
4 that we live in right here, and you choose, after we
5 literally got after one of the worst mass-casualty
6 events in our state's history, to go and gerrymander
7 people out of their seats. That's what you have chosen
8 to do with your time because you're scared of Donald
9 Trump. You are scared and terrified because you're
10 seeking an endorsement when you understand the truth.

11 And the funny part about it is, that you
12 all know it's true. You can't react to it. I see you
13 guys' faces. You can't react to it, but you all know
14 what the situation is, because Donald Trump runs this
15 body. He runs your vote. He runs your vote. He runs
16 your vote. He runs your vote. Because you guys know
17 that you cannot dare cross him.

18 And ultimately what we need in this state
19 are people that have the cojones to actually go forward
20 and call this stuff out, because what you guys have
21 done to this state is cataclysmically horrific. And I
22 think that everybody across the nation should be able
23 to go look at what you guys have done. So I look
24 forward to Kathy Hochul getting rid of you guys'
25 Republican friends. I look forward to Phil Murphy

1 getting rid of your Republican friends. I look forward
2 to Westmore doing the same thing. I think Andy Harris
3 --

4 REP. VASUT: Please finish your
5 testimony.

6 ISAIAH MARTIN: -- had a long
7 congressional career. He's about to be done, too. All
8 of them will be done. And you can thank your failed,
9 senile, dilapidated, Epstein-partying-with president
10 for all of the work that we're about to do to every
11 single one of you.

12 REP. VASUT: Thank you for your
13 testimony.

14 ISAIAH MARTIN: You did this. You caused
15 this. And this --

16 REP. VASUT: The witness --

17 ISAIAH MARTIN: -- is a result of you and
18 your work. No, I'm not going to finish.

19 REP. VASUT: The witness's time has
20 expired.

21 ISAIAH MARTIN: No, I'm not finished.
22 Because ultimately who doesn't have a say in this are
23 the people of this state. 40 million people that you
24 guys just kicked off of healthcare --

25 REP. VASUT: The witness will come to

1 order.

2 ISAIAH MARTIN: -- the people of this
3 state --

4 REP. VASUT: The witness does not --
5 [Crosstalk]

6 REP. VASUT: The witness is not -- the
7 witness is not recognized.

8 ISAIAH MARTIN: -- as a result of what
9 you guys have done. This is a result of your policies,
10 and you have no shame.

11 REP. VASUT: Okay.

12 ISAIAH MARTIN: You have no shame, none.

13 REP. VASUT: The witness --

14 ISAIAH MARTIN: Zero.

15 REP. VASUT: The witness --

16 ISAIAH MARTIN: You have no shame for
17 what you've done, and I think that we all should be
18 sending you up here and --

19 REP. VASUT: Just cut off his mic. Cut
20 off his mic. Okay. The gentleman will come to order.
21 We will maintain decorum. The gentleman will be
22 reminded one last time. The gentleman will come to
23 order immediately. All right. The sergeants are
24 directed to remove the gentleman from the room.

25 ISAIAH MARTIN: History will not remember

1 you kindly for what you have done. They will not.
2 Matter of fact, history might not remember you at all
3 because of what you have done.

4 REP. VASUT: The gentleman will --

5 ISAIAH MARTIN: You need to have shame.
6 You need to have shame. History will not remember you
7 for what you have done. It is a shame.

8 REP. VASUT: Members of the public --

9 [Shouting]

10 REP. VASUT: Members and members of the
11 public, as the Chair has exhibited throughout this
12 hearing, the purpose of today is to hear your
13 testimony. When individuals fail to maintain order or
14 decorum, it's disrespectful to the other individuals
15 that are here, you. So we're going to maintain order.
16 We're going to go back to our testimony.

17 At this time, the Chair calls Joshua
18 Martin. Joshua Martin here? Chair calls Joshua
19 Martin. The Chair will show that Joshua Martin was
20 registered to testify, on behalf of himself, on the
21 Revised Congressional Redistricting Plan, but did not
22 testify.

23 Members, questions for the panel?

24 Hearing none, the panel is excused. All right. I do -
25 - I do want to take a moment just to reiterate, there's

1 a trend sometimes in this nation, when we have these
2 types of discussions, to disrupt, to disrupt. Our
3 nation works best when we hear each other, regardless
4 of what the topic may be. Okay? And so it's important
5 that we maintain decorum, and the Chair will continue
6 to do so.

7 Chair calls Kaitlyn Kash. Chair calls
8 Kaitlyn Kash. I don't see Kaitlyn Kash in our Zoom
9 waiting room. Chair calls Kaitlyn Kash. Is Kaitlyn
10 Kash present? We will show Kaitlyn Kash registered to
11 testify, on behalf of herself, on the Congressional --
12 revisions to the Congressional Redistricting Plan,
13 choosing not to testify.

14 The Chair calls Frank Forsyth. Is Frank
15 Forsyth -- I don't see him on the Zoom. Is Frank
16 Forsyth here? Hearing none, Chair will show Frank
17 Forsyth registered, on behalf of himself, on the
18 Revised Congressional Redistricting Plan, but not
19 testifying.

20 The Chair calls Nicolette Ardiente.
21 Okay. We're going to admit you onto the Zoom. All
22 right. If we can see your screen here and your
23 microphone unmuted. Perfect. We just shot you the
24 little blue link of help. There you go. Perfect.

25 Can you hear me? Oh, we can't hear you.

1 I think your microphone might be -- here's what I
2 recommend you do. In the bottom left corner of your
3 Zoom, there's an up arrow for your microphone. Make
4 sure that you've got it set to the right input. Try --
5 yeah, I think your earphone might have failed you. Do
6 you want to try it with your headphones out? I know
7 that might be a little strange. It looks like you're
8 at -- is that an American Airline -- you're not flying
9 Southwest? What are you doing? I'm just kidding.
10 That was neither an endorsement of any airline or not.

11 All right. We have you registered to
12 testify as Nicolette Ardiente, on behalf of yourself,
13 on Revised Congressional Redistricting Plan, and on
14 behalf of -- I apologize, not on behalf of yourself, on
15 behalf of Asian Texans for Justice. Is that correct?

16 NICOLETTE ARDIENTE: Yes, sir, that's
17 correct.

18 REP. VASUT: All right. Please give us
19 your testimony.

20 NICOLETTE ARDIENTE: All right. Well,
21 good afternoon, Chairman, members of the committee. My
22 name is Nicolette Ardiente. I'm a constituent of
23 Congressional District 23 in San Antonio, Texas, and I
24 am testifying on behalf of Asian Texans for Justice as
25 the Program Manager. We are a statewide nonprofit,

1 nonpartisan organization that connects the 2 million
2 Asian-American, Pacific-Islander Texan community to
3 civic action through personal and political power.

4 According to ATJ's polling report, deep
5 in the heart of Asian Texas, in 2022, approximately
6 70,000 Asian Americans and 2,500 native Hawaiian and
7 other Pacific Islanders resided in the San Antonio
8 region, and I am one of them. Many live in our Medical
9 Center area or the Stone Oak area and are also spread
10 all over. This directly correlates with the statistics
11 that about half, 52 percent, of Asians in the San
12 Antonio region are employed in management and business,
13 science and arts, exceeding the rate for the region's
14 population, which is about 39.3 percent. This is the
15 fourth-largest concentration of Asian-American Pacific-
16 Islander Texans after Dallas, Houston, and Austin. And
17 despite being a small portion of the San Antonio's
18 overall population, the Asian diaspora is still very
19 diverse, with a quarter, about 25.8 percent of Asians,
20 identifying as Filipino, like, me, and 19.3 percent as
21 Asian-Indian. Like overall state trends and those of
22 other metro areas, Asians in the San Antonio region are
23 more likely to be born outside of the US, 67.4 percent,
24 than in the US, 32.6 percent.

25 I share these statistics to highlight

1 the highly diverse community that I am a part of in San
2 Antonio, yet our community members still don't have the
3 representation they deserve. I'm here to testify on
4 the proposed redistricting and its attempts to
5 intentionally racially discriminate and redraw our
6 congressional district lines during the special
7 session. I want to further validate with facts that
8 the growing API populations throughout Texas deserve
9 fair redistricting to serve our communities. By me
10 being here virtually, I want to continue increasing
11 awareness and understanding of API Texas. Asian Texans
12 for Justice seeks to enable community members,
13 organizations, policymakers like all of y'all, and our
14 other stakeholders to better serve the unique needs of
15 API communities across Texas. If you do vote to do
16 this redistricting now, we will remember this at the
17 ballot box and elect the leaders who actually ensure
18 that the voices of all citizens are heard. Thank you
19 for your time.

20 REP. VASUT: Thank you for your
21 testimony.

22 Members, any questions for this witness?
23 Chair hears none. The witness is excused. Thank you.

24 The Chair is going to call up our next
25 in-person panel, and then also list out the virtual

1 witnesses that will follow. Our next panel is going to
2 be, in-person, Anthony Rivera Straine, Jennifer
3 Jackson, Amanda Edwards, Emily Amps. If those four
4 will make their way to the front.

5 Our next four virtual witnesses, if
6 you'll be available on the Zoom wait list, Brock
7 Sutter, Arnetta Murray, Becky Halpin, and Julie Travis
8 Rogers. If those four would please be available onto
9 Zoom.

10 And so we're going to go to our in-person
11 panel making their way in here. We'll give you a
12 little time. We might start with those that are here
13 and then we'll fill out. Okay. I'm going to first
14 call -- I'm going to speculate here who we got. Okay.
15 Jennifer Jackson?

16 JENNIFER JACKSON: Right here. Thank
17 you.

18 REP. VASUT: Bingo. Got it right on the
19 first time. I'm going to call Jennifer Jackson. Ms.
20 Jackson, I show you registered to testify, on behalf of
21 yourself, on the Revised Congressional Redistricting
22 Plan. Is that correct?

23 JENNIFER JACKSON: That is correct.
24 Thank you.

25 REP. VASUT: Please give us your

1 testimony.

2 JENNIFER JACKSON: Good evening. My name
3 is Jennifer Jackson. I'm not a politician. I'm not a
4 lobbyist. I'm a native Texan and a teacher, and I live
5 in Congressional District 37. I believe it's my
6 responsibility as a citizen to hold our leaders
7 accountable to both the Texas Constitution and the
8 United States Constitution.

9 What's happening right now with
10 redistricting? It's not about population changes or
11 fairness. It's about raw political power. And let's
12 be real, Donald Trump is the one demanding this, and
13 Texas Republicans are going along with this. That's
14 not leadership. It's despicable.

15 Redrawing our maps mid-decade without a
16 court order or new census data, just to gain seats,
17 that's not representation, it's manipulation.
18 Gerrymandering weakens the voice of black and brown
19 Texans. It strips power from working families. It
20 rigs the system so politicians pick their voters not
21 the other way around. When districts are designed to
22 be safe, politicians stop listening. They stop showing
23 up, and we're left with extreme policies that don't
24 reflect the will of the people.

25 This power grab is wrong. It's reckless,

1 and it disrespects every voter who believes in real
2 democracy. Texans deserve better. We deserve fair
3 maps. We deserve elections where candidates have to
4 earn our vote, not inherit it. Stop allowing Trump to
5 desecrate our Constitution any further. Thank you.

6 REP. VASUT: Thank you for your
7 testimony.

8 Chair calls Amanda Edwards.

9 AMANDA EDWARDS: Yes.

10 REP. VASUT: Okay. I show you registered
11 as Amanda Edwards, testifying on behalf of yourself, on
12 the Revised Congressional Redistricting Plan. Is that
13 correct?

14 AMANDA EDWARDS: That is correct.

15 REP. VASUT: Please give us your
16 testimony.

17 AMANDA EDWARDS: Thank you. Good
18 afternoon. My name is Amanda Edwards, and I'm a former
19 at-large Houston City Council member, also a candidate
20 for the 18th Congressional District seat now left
21 vacant. I am also a proud resident of the 18th
22 Congressional District. I am here today to offer my
23 remarks on behalf of the 800,000 people who have been
24 without a voice, who have been up without their vote,
25 who have not had the federal advocacy that one enjoys

1 when they have their voting member in place.

2 You see, we've experienced quite a bit of
3 loss in the 18th. We've lost both Congresswoman Sheila
4 Jackson Lee and Congressman Sylvester Turner within
5 less than one year of each other. We are a community
6 of strong voices, people like Barbara Jordan, Mickey
7 Leland, Craig Washington, Sheila Jackson Lee, and
8 Sylvester Turner, who have fought for people and for
9 justice. Instead of using this moment where the seat
10 remains empty to then put it on the chopping block, let
11 us use this moment to elevate the black and brown
12 voices that have been diluted over the years. Let us
13 use this moment to then elevate policies that promote
14 equity and inclusion and create opportunity for people
15 all across the country to be able to thrive. That is
16 what we are elected to office to do, is to use that
17 public trust, use that public trust of office and that
18 oath, and to really carry out the needs that are of the
19 community. We deserve it.

20 Moreover, I know the old adage you're all
21 familiar with: if you are not at the table, you're
22 what's on the menu. And sadly, because we have a
23 vacancy and this delay in calling the special election,
24 18 months will be the period of time before there has
25 been someone to represent the 800,000 people of the

1 18th Congressional District. And what we are choosing
2 to do at this moment is to put the 18th Congressional
3 District on the menu, and that is wrong. So I
4 encourage you to reconsider redistricting the 18th,
5 reconsider redistricting the 29th, the 33rd, and the
6 9th District, all of which has been named by the
7 Department of Justice as those being targeted at this
8 time. Again, thank you for your time. I'm Amanda
9 Edwards, speaking on behalf of the 800,000 people of
10 the 18th Congressional District. Thank you for your
11 time.

12 REP. VASUT: Thank you, Ms. Edwards.

13 Chair calls Emily Amps.

14 EMILY AMPS: Yes. Thankyou.

15 REP. VASUT: You registered to testify,
16 as Emily Amps on behalf of the Texas AFL-CIO and
17 yourself, on the revised Congressional Redistricting
18 Plan. Is that correct?

19 EMILY AMPS: That is correct.

20 REP. VASUT: Please give us your
21 testimony.

22 EMILY AMPS: Mr. Chairman, members of the
23 committee, my name is Emily Amps, and I am the Director
24 of Politics and Policy at the Texas AFL-CIO, the
25 State's labor federation with over 250,000 affiliated

1 members across the state. And I'm here to testify on
2 their behalf and for myself. Texans, including many of
3 our members, your constituents, are facing serious
4 challenges right now. We have the highest rate and
5 number of uninsured in the nation. Wages aren't going
6 up even though prices are. Workers are dying in the
7 heat of the summer because they have no state or
8 federal protections to ensure they're given a break and
9 some water.

10 And right now, first responders and
11 volunteers are cleaning up and rebuilding communities
12 after a tragic weather event that took the lives of
13 over 100 of our neighbors, including many young Texans.
14 But here we are, talking about redrawing the
15 congressional map, something no Texan asked for,
16 spurred by political pressure, and aimed at dismantling
17 communities of color in coalition districts who elect
18 the candidate of their choice. Bowing to the pressure,
19 to this pressure, would further silence Texans,
20 including many workers, adding the voices already muted
21 by the current district lines.

22 So what makes Texas so special? It's the
23 people who build our state. It's the people who teach
24 our next generation and who keep our state government
25 running. It's the vibrant border communities of the

1 Rio Grande Valley, Laredo, El Paso, the beaches and the
2 coastal bend, the piney woods of East Texas, the
3 weirdness of Austin, the history of San Antonio, the
4 industries and DFW in the Gulf Coast, and the oil
5 fields of West Texas. These communities are unique and
6 they're different, and that's not just limited to
7 geography. These communities have unique challenges
8 that need unique representation in DC.

9 However, already, many of these
10 communities have already been severed and neighborhoods
11 divided. For example, fast-growing suburban
12 communities like mine in Buda, Texas in Congressional
13 District 21 has been cut up, sliced and diced, and put
14 into districts with rural communities, in a district
15 with rural communities that my community has little in
16 common with. So I urge you to move forward. As you
17 move forward, please remember that your actions during
18 these special sessions have real impact on real people,
19 and there are real issues that need to be addressed.
20 And also remember, you do not have to draw a map. And
21 if the 4th of July tragedy has taught us anything, this
22 is a time when Texans need to come together, not be
23 further divided. Please don't forget that.

24 REP. VASUT: Thank you for your
25 testimony.

1 Mr. Manuel, for what purpose?

2 REP. MANUEL: Just to ask a question of
3 one of the witnesses.

4 REP. VASUT: Chair recognizes Mr. Manuel
5 to question the witnesses.

6 REP. MANUEL: Mrs. Edwards, good to see
7 you. I had a question. How long has the 18th
8 Congressional District been without representation?

9 AMANDA EDWARDS: When you count the time
10 from Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee being able --
11 unable to vote and passing away, combine that with
12 Congressman Sylvester Turner also passing away, and the
13 delayed special election, which will likely end in a
14 runoff, this will be a period of time for about one and
15 a half years.

16 REP. MANUEL: Okay. So one and a half
17 years without representation.

18 AMANDA EDWARDS: Taxation without
19 representation.

20 REP. MANUEL: Okay. So the reason -- I
21 want to follow up on that one. So when was the last
22 time there was a congressional member who was in that
23 seat?

24 AMANDA EDWARDS: March 5th is the date of
25 Sylvester Turner's passing.

1 REP. MANUEL: March 5th. Okay. So since
2 March 5th, that seat has been without representation.
3 And has -- and the governor called an election, and
4 that's going to be a special election. And when is
5 that?

6 AMANDA EDWARDS: November 4th, 2025.

7 REP. MANUEL: Of this year?

8 AMANDA EDWARDS: Of this year.

9 REP. MANUEL: Okay.

10 AMANDA EDWARDS: The special election
11 could have been called as early as May of 2025, per our
12 statutes.

13 REP. MANUEL: Do you know when
14 redistricting was put on our call?

15 AMANDA EDWARDS: In terms of when the --

16 REP. MANUEL: Recently?

17 AMANDA EDWARDS: Yes, just recently.

18 REP. MANUEL: So like in a matter of two
19 weeks it was --

20 AMANDA EDWARDS: Yes.

21 REP. MANUEL: -- it was issued out, and
22 then we're having hearings on it. So -- okay. So
23 congressional maps are important when it's for
24 something else. Thank you so much.

25 AMANDA EDWARDS: Thank you.

1 REP. VASUT: Speaker Moody, for what
2 purpose?

3 REP. MOODY: Question of the witnesses.

4 REP. VASUT: Chair recognizes Speaker
5 Moody to question the witness.

6 REP. MOODY: Thank you Mr. Chairman.

7 Ms. Edwards, first of all, I want to
8 thank you for lifting up some very important names,
9 including someone that we all -- many of us served
10 with, in Sylvester Turner, and still kind of reeling
11 from the loss of his leadership. But you lifted up a
12 lot of names that have been strong voices for a
13 community that you're a part of. You said you live,
14 reside in Congressional District 18. Is that right?

15 AMANDA EDWARDS: Born and raised.

16 REP. MOODY: In echoing Representative
17 Manuel's comments, there's been no voice. After all
18 the strong voices you listed, there's been silence in
19 terms of representation for the people that reside in
20 that district. And by the time we get to a runoff,
21 like you said, likely a runoff, right, there's various
22 people that are running. And we don't know exactly
23 when that runoff would be, right?

24 AMANDA EDWARDS: Potentially January of
25 2026.

1 REP. MOODY: And in the middle of that,
2 we have a DOJ letter in front of us listing this
3 district as one that should be dismantled. So after
4 being silenced for over a year and a half, the next
5 step could be to remove a voice altogether.

6 AMANDA EDWARDS: Permanent.

7 REP. MOODY: Tell me, a reconfiguration
8 of this district, how would it dilute the voice? How
9 would it dilute the voting strength of the people that
10 you live with, that you were born and raised with? How
11 would it dilute that voice and strength to elect a
12 candidate of their choice?

13 AMANDA EDWARDS: You know, we have so
14 many people, a strong legacy of former servant leaders
15 who've served in this seat. And we also have such rich
16 treasures like our universities. Texas Southern
17 University, one of our historically black colleges and
18 universities, right in the heart of the 18th
19 Congressional District. The University of Houston,
20 Downtown, Fifth Ward, Acres Homes, East End. I can go
21 on and on about the rich communities and historic
22 nature of the 18th Congressional District.

23 And when you take this moment, instead of
24 uplifting it at this time and helping it to get back on
25 its feet, we're taking this moment to kick this

1 district while it's down. To try to permanently
2 silence the voices of 800,000 people who have been
3 without a vote, who have been without a voice, who have
4 been without a federal advocate for funding. And we
5 are in the middle of hurricane season, which means
6 something in Houston. So to do that now, to do that in
7 a time in which we need to find ways in which we're
8 uplifting and providing more resources and support, is
9 egregious. And we would not only permanently silence
10 these voices, but we would also be encouraging others
11 to follow suit.

12 And I live in a city, Houston, where 142
13 languages are spoken. We celebrate diversity. We
14 celebrate inclusion. We celebrate equitable outcomes.
15 We want people to have the opportunity to thrive every
16 day, not just to get by. And with your policies, with
17 your leadership, you are able to connect those dots.
18 Connect the dots when it comes to health care. Connect
19 the dots when it comes to economic opportunity.

20 Do you know what has happened in the 18-
21 month period where the 18th Congressional District will
22 have had no representation? We had something passed
23 called a Big Beautiful Bill, as was touted by Trump.
24 And do you know what it did? It cut \$900 billion in
25 Medicaid funding, \$300 billion in SNAP benefits, and it

1 told people who were seeking graduate school loans that
2 they had to be capped as well. That was cutting off
3 opportunity for people. And do you know, when it first
4 passed out of the House of Representatives, it only
5 passed by a margin of one vote. Had I been in the seat
6 at that time, had we called a special election by that
7 time, we could have been the vote to block the Big
8 Beautiful Bill that is causing such devastation across
9 America.

10 REP. MOODY: And Ms. Edwards, I
11 appreciate you laying that out for everybody, because I
12 think it's important to know that. And as someone from
13 El Paso, I know the neighborhoods you just mentioned.
14 Why do I know them? Because of the people that
15 represent that area.

16 AMANDA EDWARDS: That's right.

17 REP. MOODY: They made sure I knew what
18 they were.

19 AMANDA EDWARDS: Yes, they did.

20 REP. MOODY: They did. And what you just
21 described is health care being stolen, food being
22 stolen out of the mouths of hungry kids, and now an
23 attempt to steal your voice.

24 AMANDA EDWARDS: A hundred percent.

25 REP. MOODY: And I think that's shameful.

1 Thank you for being here.

2 AMANDA EDWARDS: Thank you.

3 REP. VASUT: Any other questions for the
4 panel? Seeing none, the panel is excused. Thank you
5 for your testimony.

6 Chair calls Anthony Rivera Straine, who
7 was on that panel, but I didn't see him. Anthony
8 Rivera Straine. Chair will show Anthony Rivera Straine
9 registered to testify, on behalf of himself, on the
10 Revised Congressional Redistricting Plan, but not
11 testifying.

12 I'm going to go back to our virtual
13 witnesses. Chair calls Brock Sutter. I apologize if I
14 mispronounced that. Chair calls Brock Sutter. I don't
15 see you on the waiting room. Is Brock Sutter here?
16 Chair will show Brock Sutter registered to testify, on
17 behalf of himself, on the Revised Congressional
18 Redistricting Plan, but not testifying.

19 Chair calls Arnetta Murray. I know Ms.
20 Arnetta. Ms. Arnetta is not on the waiting room, and I
21 do not see Ms. Arnetta Murray here. Is Arnetta Murray
22 here? Chair will show Ms. Arnetta Murray registered to
23 testify, on behalf of herself, on the Revised
24 Congressional Redistricting Plan, but not testifying.

25 Chair calls Becky Halpin. We're

1 admitting you into the room now. Perfect. Ms. Halpin,
2 we're going to ask you to unmute your microphone.
3 There we go. Can you hear me? We're not getting any
4 audio from you. You coming through? [Feedback from
5 livestream] Ms. Halpin, it looks like you have the
6 livestream going right now. If you could close that,
7 and then we'll take up your Zoom testimony. There we
8 go. Ms. Halpin, can you hear me?

9 BECKY HALPIN: Yes.

10 REP. VASUT: Okay, I can hear you. I
11 show you registered to testify as Becky Halpin, on
12 behalf of yourself, on the Revised Congressional
13 Redistricting Plan. Is that correct?

14 BECKY HALPIN: That is correct.

15 REP. VASUT: Please give us your
16 testimony.

17 BECKY HALPIN: All right. So I'm Becky
18 Halpin. I live in Pflugerville, Texas. I was with
19 some friends of mine today and told them that I was
20 going to testify at this hearing, and they said, why
21 would you even bother to do that? It's just formality
22 because the Republicans are going to do whatever Trump
23 tells them to do, because that's what it means to be a
24 Republican these days. It's come to that. And I said,
25 well, you know, for me it hasn't come to that. I still

1 believe in democracy. And even if the hearing is a
2 formality, I will go down and speak, or I will speak
3 virtually.

4 So here I am to say that Texas
5 legislators are elected by and work for Texans. The
6 legislators use tools of the democratic process to get
7 their work done. You represent Texans, work for
8 Texans, but you do not represent President Trump. You
9 do not work for him, but he told you to jump and you
10 are going to jump. Even though Texas believes its
11 districts are constitutionally drawn and
12 constitutionally valid, the president makes a
13 declaration that they be redrawn, and you bend over
14 backwards to satisfy him.

15 You are deforming the democratic process,
16 and if you deform it enough, it's going to break. And
17 I think it's clear from these hearings today that
18 people are losing confidence in it. Our democratic
19 processes have served us long and well and made us safe
20 and free and prosperous. If you comply with this
21 demand from the president, what will he demand next?
22 And would he not expect that you would comply again?

23 This is not democracy; we are veering
24 into autocracy. You should not be drawing districts,
25 or redrawing districts, at the behest of the president.

1 Texas is for Texans, and I hope you will work for us.

2 Thank you very much.

3 REP. VASUT: Thank you for your
4 testimony.

5 Members, any questions for this witness?

6 Hearing none, the witness is excused.

7 Thank you, ma'am.

8 Chair calls Julie Travis Rogers. Ms.
9 Rogers, we got you in. We can see your video. If you
10 could unmute your audio. Perfect. Can you hear me? I
11 would assume so because you just unmuted yourself.
12 That's a rhetorical question. I show you registered to
13 testify as Julie Travis Rogers, on behalf of yourself,
14 on the Revised Congressional Redistricting Plan. Is
15 that correct?

16 JULIE TRAVIS ROGERS: Yes, sir.

17 REP. VASUT: Please give us your
18 testimony.

19 JULIE TRAVIS ROGERS: All right. Thank
20 you. I'm testifying today and asking you to stop this
21 attempt at revising the Congressional Redistricting
22 Plan. Now, leave the maps alone. Wait until census
23 redistricting or a federal court ruling from current
24 litigation, and please focus on the disaster relief and
25 prevention. God bless all the people who have been

1 affected by the floods in Central Texas and on in
2 Kerrville, but also don't forget San Antonio. There
3 were 13 people who died recently also. And there's a
4 huge cloud over the Gulf, so we're all about to get hit
5 with that. So why are you focusing on this?

6 I participated in the last redistricting
7 process. Although I wasn't pleased with the outcome, I
8 live with them out of the respect for our United States
9 Constitution and democracy. I heard it stated many
10 times during that process by legislators that the maps
11 that were being drawn weren't race-based. They weren't
12 colorblind. So why is it -- that's why it's so
13 puzzling that the supposed reason for redistricting
14 mid-census is because of racial gerrymandering. You
15 said you weren't doing it, so why are you doing it now?

16 What the governor is trying to do is
17 wrong. It's just flat-out wrong. It's an insult to
18 all Texans, to all Americans, including Todd Hunter.
19 You're on that committee, and you chaired the House
20 Redistricting Committee. You let the plan go. You
21 were satisfied with it. So, speak up now. Say don't
22 even think about redistricting the maps. It's not
23 necessary. I don't want to demand that we see the maps
24 because there shouldn't be any maps. Thank you.

25 REP. VASUT: Thank you for your

1 testimony.

2 Members, any questions for this witness?

3 Hearing none, the witness is excused.

4 Our next panel for in-person is going to
5 be David Butts, Ebony Rain Eatmon, Ben Suddaby, and
6 Gracie Brady. If you're here, please come forward. If
7 you're in the overflow room, please make your way over
8 here. We'll wait for you.

9 Our next virtual witnesses, if you'll be
10 ready in the waiting room, are going to be Mary
11 Marston, Blair Ault, Shelley McKann, and Lauren Miller.
12 We'll come to those here momentarily.

13 I believe making our way into the room we
14 have -- Chair calls David Butts.

15 DAVID BUTTS: This is he right here.

16 REP. VASUT: Okay. I show you registered
17 to testify as David Butts, on behalf of yourself, on
18 the Revised Congressional Redistricting Plan. Is that
19 correct?

20 DAVID BUTTS: Yes, sir, it is.

21 REP. VASUT: Please give us your
22 testimony.

23 DAVID BUTTS: Okay. Honorable members of
24 the Texas Legislature, and to all our brothers and
25 sisters who are here to protest this obscene power grab

1 by this body. Republicans once accused Harry Truman
2 that he had told them to go to hell. Truman replied,
3 I just told the truth and they thought it was hell.
4 Well, here it goes. This farce is nothing but a cover
5 for a high-tech political lynching. That's all this
6 is, and you know it.

7 You Republicans want to crush into
8 submission and make powerless a major portion of the
9 Texas population. That's what you're doing here, and
10 we know what's going to happen here. There's no
11 question about that. It's all stacked up. And let me
12 just say -- and I grew up in East Texas a little bit.
13 Much like the cur dog, you obediently lick the hand of
14 your master, that moral pervert and convicted criminal
15 who is in the White House, who's now telling you to do
16 this. And you know what I'm talking about.

17 It should be -- I began to think, as I
18 see this process going forward, that y'all really don't
19 like us very much. I have that impression somehow.
20 Well, let me tell you, we're not too fond of you
21 either, just in case you're wondering. This road you
22 guys are going to go down is a very short road that
23 leads to nowhere, as you will find out quicker than you
24 believe. When tyranny becomes law, rebellion must
25 become duty.

1 All I can say, brothers and sisters, is
2 that we must prepare that this conduct is not normal
3 politics. It is the kind of politics -- it's the kind
4 of politics that when you see attacks on voting rights,
5 you attack see attacks to intimidate people from
6 voting, this is simply political terrorism. That's all
7 it is. Political terrorism to try to get your way no
8 matter how you have to do it. I can only say that in
9 light of the Republican robots in Congress --

10 REP. VASUT: Please finish your
11 testimony.

12 DAVID BUTTS: -- giving the guy \$150
13 billion to create another brown shirt army, we need to
14 be aware of what the situation is. Thank you.

15 REP. VASUT: Thank you for your
16 testimony.

17 Chair calls Ben Suddaby. Did I pronounce
18 that correctly?

19 BEN SUDDABY: Close enough. Ben Suddaby,
20 here to testify on --

21 REP. VASUT: Let me get your
22 registration. One moment, please. I show you
23 registered as Ben Suddaby, testifying on behalf of
24 yourself, on the Revised Congressional Redistricting
25 Plan. Is that correct?

1 BEN SUDDABY: Correct.

2 REP. VASUT: Please give us your
3 testimony.

4 BEN SUDDABY: My name is Ben Suddaby.
5 I'm a proud member of AFSCME 1624. I live in the Texas
6 37th Congressional District. I was raised in areas,
7 the hill country about a mile and a half from the
8 Guadalupe that flooded, out in what is now the 21st
9 Congressional District. I'm going to tell you about a
10 few things that, in my community organizing, active
11 here in an urban area now, very different from where I
12 grew up in a rural area.

13 I run into a lot of young people, and one
14 thing scares me. It scares me that I'm hearing a lot
15 of young people saying, what is the point of engaging
16 in our democracy? They don't listen to us. They don't
17 represent us. Sometimes I run into people who say,
18 they don't hold town halls in our part of the district.
19 I hear other people say, those people never listen to
20 faces and voices like mine.

21 And with gerrymandered redistricting,
22 especially mid-decade without even the census to inform
23 us, you risk convincing these young people that our
24 form of government, representative democracy, is not
25 the best way to ensure a good life for themselves. It

1 is not something that has their voice heard, and that
2 maybe other forms of government are a better shot, or
3 maybe that democracy isn't all it's cracked up to be.
4 I know that's not your intention. God, I hope that's
5 not your intention, to instill those thoughts into
6 young people.

7 I also know that living in an urban place
8 with lots of worries about traffic and transit and
9 stuff, I'm glad that my congressional representation
10 knows about those issues, fights on those issues. But
11 I also know that I have friends who are also in my
12 union, who live in parts of Austin that are represented
13 by the same congressperson as rural part of Kendall
14 County, where I grew up, or even further west, Kerr,
15 Bandera, Real County, and our communities don't have
16 the same needs. They're worried about the farm bill
17 and we're worried about mass transit, and we need to
18 have [audio cuts out].

19 So don't do this. I want our legislature
20 in the special session focusing on flood relief,
21 focusing on true needs that Texans feel immediately.
22 Congressional redistricting mid-decade is not required.
23 It is not something mandated by our constitution. It
24 is a favor that is requested and asked, and you don't
25 have to go along with it. Our people here in Texas

1 certainly don't want that.

2 REP. VASUT: Thank you for your
3 testimony.

4 Chair calls Ebony Rain Eatmon.

5 EBONY RAIN EATMON: Present.

6 REP. VASUT: Okay. I had you registered
7 twice. We're going to address that in just a second.
8 I show you registered first is Ebony Rain Eatmon,
9 testifying on behalf of Acres Homes Community Advocacy
10 Group and yourself, on Revised Congressional
11 Redistricting Plan. Is that correct?

12 EBONY RAIN EATMON: That is correct.

13 REP. VASUT: Do we have your permission
14 to delete the duplicate registration?

15 EBONY RAIN EATMON: You do.

16 REP. VASUT: Okay. We will do that.
17 Thank you very much. Please give us your testimony.

18 EBONY RAIN EATMON: Thank you so much,
19 members, for allowing me this opportunity to speak.
20 And quite frankly, I am deeply concerned with the lack
21 of spine that I'm seeing within this committee and
22 within this legislation. The fact that we've had so
23 many representatives move swiftly to address the
24 concerns and paranoias of a president rather than a
25 swifter response to those who are actually facing real

1 dangers in central Texas shows me where our priorities
2 are. I am deeply concerned with the lack of attention
3 that is being brought to Kerr County at this moment.
4 And as a person who has not only lived through Allison,
5 Ike, Harvey, Imelda, Winter Storm Uri, as well as
6 Hurricane Beryl, I understand what it means to lose
7 almost everything and be in a place of desperation when
8 you do not have your representatives standing up for
9 you when it is needed.

10 The simple fact that this administration
11 is taking more priority to center a redistricting that
12 no Texan has asked for, that no Texan has petitioned
13 for, but was quicker to add this to the agenda rather
14 than reach out to those in Kerr County and see what
15 infrastructure dollars can be reallocated to ensure
16 that they can rebuild, and rebuild strong as Texans do,
17 really unsettles me to my core. And this is the one
18 thing I have to ask. If this is the same state
19 government that put on a statue on top of its capital
20 building just to spite DC's Capitol and have that inch
21 taller, why are we bending backwards for a president
22 who has made it known over and over again that he is
23 only interested in his self-worth?

24 So there is no reason why, as Texans, as
25 proud as we are, as we have been so honest in fighting

1 for ourselves and our Texans, we are doing ourselves a
2 dis-justice by making sure that we're putting the needs
3 over a felon, 34 times convicted, over the needs of
4 people who need you right now. Please, remove this
5 agenda item. Please, put the focus back on Kerr
6 County. And please, for the love of God, get a spine.

7 REP. VASUT: Thank you for your
8 testimony.

9 Chair calls Gracie Brady. I show you
10 registered as Gracie Brady, testifying on behalf of
11 yourself, on the Revised Congressional Redistricting
12 Plan. Is that correct?

13 GRACIE BRADY: Yes, sir.

14 REP. VASUT: Please give us your
15 testimony.

16 GRACIE BRADY: Members of the community,
17 my name is Gracie Brady and I live in Congressional
18 District 18. I'm a student at C.E. King High School
19 and I oppose redistricting our maps because it is not
20 good for students like me. Lawmakers are drawing maps
21 for who has power in the next decade, long before many
22 of us turn 18. That means decisions about our school's
23 safety and rights are being made by people who do not
24 represent our communities, and we don't even get a say.
25 Some maps split up communities of color and low-income

1 areas, and this can make our voices feel small,
2 especially when we ask for better school resources like
3 transportation, or mental health funding, or for
4 students with special needs.

5 Redistricting can break up neighborhoods
6 that go to the same school, or share the same youth
7 programs, or face the same struggles. And when they
8 split us up, it gets harder to organize and harder to
9 elect people. Instead of helping, Texas politicians
10 are spending taxpayer money to redraw maps so their
11 friends can stay in office. We may be young, but we
12 are watching and we are coming. Decisions should
13 include us. Thank you.

14 REP. VASUT: Thank you for your
15 testimony.

16 Members, any questions for this panel of
17 witnesses? Hearing none, thank you. This panel is
18 excused.

19 Chair calls Mary Marston, our virtual
20 witness.

21 Go ahead, for our next in-person panel,
22 we're going to have Kylie Mavris, Alyssa Leo, Sarah
23 Syed, and Andrew Flores. If you'll go ahead and make
24 your way in here.

25 Okay. Chair calls Mary Marston. Chair

1 calls Mary Marston. Is Mary Marston present? Seeing
2 none -- not seeing her, present, Chair shows Mary
3 Marston registered to testify, on behalf of herself, on
4 Revised Congressional Redistricting Plan, but not
5 testifying.

6 Chair calls Blair Ault. Blair Ault. Is
7 Blair Ault present? Chair will show Blair Ault
8 registered to testify, on behalf of herself, on Revised
9 Congressional Redistricting Plan, but not testifying.

10 Chair calls Shelley McKann. Shelley,
11 we're going to admit you here. Perfect. We'll send
12 you an unmute request here. Okay. Ms. McKann, can you
13 hear me?

14 SHELLEY MCKANN: Yes. Can you hear me?

15 REP. VASUT: We can. Perfect. I show
16 you registered to testify as Shelley McKann, on behalf
17 of yourself, on the Revised Congressional Redistricting
18 Plan. Is that correct?

19 SHELLEY MCKANN: That is correct.

20 REP. VASUT: Please give us your
21 testimony.

22 SHELLEY MCKANN: Thank you for the time.
23 My name is Shelley McKann. I'm a social worker,
24 advocate, and mom in Austin, Texas, Congressional
25 District 37. As we've heard all day, this current

1 redistricting effort is not only a blatant attempt to
2 break up collective voting power and communities of
3 color with five-year-old census data, while there is
4 still ongoing litigation about the legality of Texas
5 federal congressional district maps drawn in 2021. It
6 is blatant racial discrimination. It lacks due process
7 and will affect federal policies that impact me, my
8 family, my community, and everyone in Texas in deeply
9 detrimental ways if passed.

10 Your constituents want a fair districting
11 process, ample hearings, and ample time to see, hear
12 justification for, and testify on new maps with
13 accurate census data in five years. While Texans are
14 still searching in the rubble of the recent fatal
15 floods for the remains of their loved ones, Abbott and
16 Texas lawmakers are here acquiescing to an
17 authoritarian demand to attempt a power grab from
18 Texans when they should be focused on better preparing
19 for and responding to weather disasters to prevent
20 further loss of human lives, or any number of other
21 social issues in desperate need of our time and
22 attention.

23 Why are we here? To that point, this
24 special session includes bills that attempt to quietly
25 remove access to abortion medication, representing the

1 last scraps of bodily autonomy that women and pregnant
2 people still have in Texas. Let's talk about that.
3 After the shameful federal budget bill passed on July
4 4th, removing access to health care for millions of
5 Americans and hundreds of thousands of Texans, slashing
6 crucial programs like Medicaid, which my child depends
7 on for health care, and SNAP programs for hungry
8 families, and aiming to close more clinics providing
9 routine and lifesaving health care and reproductive
10 health care. Let's talk about that. Let's talk about
11 how we're going to improve the lives of Texans.

12 We're here to say no. We do not accept
13 the shameful, unconstitutional, and racist attempt at
14 dividing our collective power, and to further steal
15 away our autonomy, our representation, and our rights
16 to build and nurture healthy and thriving communities.
17 We will keep on showing up and demanding you stay
18 accountable to the people you're here to represent. I
19 want to thank all the expert witnesses and fierce
20 advocates and community members who have driven hours
21 and skipped meals and made sacrifices to be here today.
22 And thank you for the time.

23 REP. VASUT: Thank you for your
24 testimony. Ms. McKann, we had showed you also
25 registered a second time, a duplicate entry. Do we

1 have your permission to delete that entry?

2 SHELLEY MCKANN: Yes.

3 REP. VASUT: Thank you very much.

4 Members, any questions for this witness?

5 Chair hears none. The witness is

6 excused. Thank you very much.

7 Chair calls Lauren Miller.

8 LAUREN MILLER: Hi.

9 REP. VASUT: Perfect. Can you hear me?

10 LAUREN MILLER: Yes, I can.

11 REP. VASUT: Perfect. And we can hear
12 you. And we -- we can't see you. Can you enable your
13 video?

14 LAUREN MILLER: Sure. One second.

15 REP. VASUT: No worries. There we go.
16 We got you. I show you registered to testify as Lauren
17 Miller, on behalf of yourself, on the Revised
18 Congressional Redistricting Plan. Is that correct?

19 LAUREN MILLER: That is correct.

20 REP. VASUT: Please give us your
21 testimony.

22 LAUREN MILLER: My name is Lauren Miller
23 and I live in Dallas, Texas, but I am the sixth
24 generation of my family born in Houston. My family has
25 a ranch in Southwest Texas. I went to camp at the Hill

1 Country. And in my day job, I get ranchers and farmers
2 paid for good soil health practices. I say all of this
3 to explain that I have a very deep understanding, on a
4 personal and professional level, how different the
5 needs of Texans are across the state and in urban
6 versus rural communities.

7 This political maneuver to back blue
8 urban areas into rural districts hurts rural
9 communities, too. In Dallas, I live within 15 minutes
10 of multiple hospitals. At the ranch, I'm 30 minutes
11 from anyone with medical training, and that person is a
12 large-animal vet. We have different needs. Let's say
13 that hospital funds are appropriated for a newly
14 proposed district where our ranch is located. Does
15 anyone really believe that a new hospital would get
16 built in D'Hanis rather than one of the fancy new
17 suburbs west of San Antonio?

18 Looking at the maps proposed, I'm also
19 struck at how much more of a voice money will get. The
20 resident of a \$20 million mansion in central Dallas
21 will have the same representative as the person with
22 the \$85,000 house in Henderson. I don't think they
23 have the same needs or the same ability to get that
24 representative's attention. The simple truth is that
25 you don't do politically-motivated gerrymanders when

1 you're addressing the needs of your constituents. You
2 do it when you've won the media propaganda wars and
3 want to kick the accountability can down the road as
4 far as possible.

5 I've watched the Texas and US
6 legislatures and current administration force policy to
7 poison our water, defund education, and strip us of
8 bodily autonomy. But eventually, those bad policies
9 hit home for everyone, and the only people you'll have
10 left to lie to that you're working for Texans are
11 yourselves. The House of Representatives should be
12 exactly that, representative of the different voices
13 and different needs of the people. Thank you.

14 REP. VASUT: Thank you for your
15 testimony.

16 Members, any questions for this witness?
17 Seeing none, the witness is excused. Thank you.

18 Go to our next in-person panel. I'm
19 going to call up -- for our next virtual witnesses, if
20 you'll be ready in the Zoom waiting room, Peter
21 Schwartz, Angela Moss, Emmanuel Perez, and Skylar Rolf.

22 Chair calls Kylie Mavris. I show you
23 registered as Kylie Mavris, testifying on behalf of
24 yourself, on the Revised Congressional Redistricting
25 Plan. Is that correct?

1 KYLIE MAVRIS: Yes.

2 REP. VASUT: Please give us your
3 testimony.

4 KYLIE MAVRIS: Good evening, members of
5 the legislature. My name is Kylie Mavris, a University
6 of Houston student who traveled here today because what
7 you're considering isn't just policy, it's an assault
8 on democracy. Let's call it what it is. It's a power
9 grab. Governor Abbott's decision to rush a mid-decade
10 redistricting, requested not by Texans but at the beck
11 and call of a president, is an insult to every voter in
12 this state.

13 I would have thought that a legislator
14 keen on state's rights and limited government oversight
15 would be offended by the leash that the president is
16 trying to claim to you. We don't care what Washington
17 demands. Your job is to represent Texas, not
18 Washington. Your constituents are us, the students,
19 working families, the under-resourced communities
20 you're trying to erase from the map. Look around this
21 room, we see you.

22 When the state took over HISD, we didn't
23 get a vote in that either. Teachers left, leadership
24 changed, enrollment is plummeting, and STAAR scores are
25 being manipulated to deceive the public, political

1 decisions harming the community and being made far away
2 from the community. It feels like the same thing is
3 happening again. Only this time, it's not just our
4 schools, it's our democracy. We are watching, and we
5 are organizing, and we will hold you accountable. The
6 choice is yours. Will you stand with Texas voters or
7 against us?

8 REP. VASUT: Thank you for your
9 testimony.

10 Chair calls Alyssa Leo. I show you
11 registered to testify as Alyssa Leo, on behalf of
12 yourself, on the Revised Congressional Redistricting
13 Plan. Is that correct?

14 ALYSSA LEO: Yes.

15 REP. VASUT: Please give us your
16 testimony.

17 ALYSSA LEO: Good afternoon, members of
18 the Legislature. My name is Alyssa Leo. I'm a student
19 at Houston Community College, and this is my first time
20 ever testifying in front of you. I have paid \$176 and
21 lost work to be with you today because of what's
22 happening with the redistricting. It doesn't just
23 affect maps, it affects people like me, my neighbors,
24 and my family.

25 I've never really been heavily involved

1 in politics. I'm focused on school, supporting myself,
2 and trying to build a future, but when I saw the
3 proposed redistricting plans, when I realized how
4 they'd split up or merge districts that long
5 represented communities like mine, I felt like I
6 couldn't stay quiet because it didn't feel right. It
7 felt like something was designed to silence the people
8 who had already struggled to be heard.

9 In Houston, your proposal is to merge or
10 redraw districts like CD18 or CD9, two districts that
11 have long represented POC communities. These aren't
12 just lines on a map, these are our neighborhoods, these
13 are our voices. And what's being proposed would make
14 it harder for our communities to get the representation
15 we deserve. I may not have all the political language,
16 and I don't come from a political background, but I do
17 know something -- when something is wrong. And trying
18 to redraw districts in a way that weakens the voices of
19 working people and communities of color is wrong. I
20 hope you hear not just me, but the people who are like
21 me, people who don't usually speak up but who are
22 paying attention now. We deserve fair representation
23 and the decision -- to be a part of the decisions that
24 shape our lives. We're asking you to listen. Thank
25 you for your time.

1 REP. VASUT: Thank you for your
2 testimony.

3 The Chair calls Sarah Syed.

4 SARAH SYED: Present.

5 REP. VASUT: I show you registered to
6 testify as Sarah Syed, testifying on behalf of Woori
7 Juntos --

8 SARAH SYED: Juntos.

9 REP. VASUT: -- Juntos and self, on the
10 Revised Congressional Redistricting Plan. Is that
11 correct?

12 SARAH SYED: That's correct.

13 REP. VASUT: Please give us your
14 testimony.

15 SARAH SYED: My name is Sarah Syed, and I
16 serve as the policy manager at Woori Juntos, an Asian-
17 led organization working with multilingual working-
18 class communities. We helped co-found the Texas
19 Language Justice Collective, a coalition of over 20
20 organizations advancing language accessibility, their
21 peer-to-peer support, direct action, and including a
22 statewide network of advocates filling gaps that are
23 otherwise not being met by public state services.

24 We strongly urge this committee to oppose
25 and not move forward with the revised redistricting

1 plan. Asian-American Pacific-Islander Texans are the
2 fastest growing voting bloc in the state, especially in
3 places like Fort Bend and Harris counties, where they
4 are already shaping the future of local and statewide
5 politics. Despite this, hearing notices and materials
6 for today's hearing and the upcoming hearings were only
7 in English and Spanish. Texas is home to 160
8 languages, 145 of which are in Harris County. When
9 people don't engage in the languages that they use
10 every day, they feel excluded from the decisions about
11 their neighborhoods and representation.

12 Redrawing maps now risks diluting the
13 voting strength of communities that are just beginning
14 to build visibility and voice. There are no
15 independent commissions, no public accountability, and
16 no community protections to ensure that past harms are
17 not repeated. This drives people away from
18 participating in our democracy. Districts like 9, 18,
19 29, and 33 were created through years of work by black,
20 Latino, and Asian communities.

21 Redistricting should not continue, and if
22 it does, it must include notices, maps, materials
23 translated into multiple languages with the option to
24 request more, options for interpretation at every
25 public hearing, outreach led by trusted local

1 organizations, and most importantly, a civilian
2 stakeholder process that centers those most impacted by
3 redistricting. Restore legal protections against
4 redistricting efforts that fractured those conditions,
5 and use data disaggregation and local civic engagement
6 to identify where these conditions exist. Lastly, we
7 deserve a process that is clear, fair, and
8 representative of all Texans. Thank you.

9 REP. VASUT: Thank you for your
10 testimony.

11 Chair calls Andrew Flores. I show you
12 registered to testify as Andrew Flores, on behalf of
13 yourself, on the Revised Congressional Redistricting
14 Plan. Is that correct?

15 ANDREW FLORES: Yes.

16 REP. VASUT: Please give us your
17 testimony.

18 ANDREW FLORES: First off, good
19 afternoon, members of the Legislature. My name is
20 Andrew Flores, and I'm a student from Northside High in
21 the Houston Independent District. Today I want to
22 share with you a little bit about my experience with my
23 voice being taken away from me. A little over three
24 years ago, the state took over HISD without ever asking
25 parents, teachers, community members, or students like

1 me what our thoughts were. And since then, my school
2 has significantly worsened. And I go to the school
3 board meetings, and they sit there, smile, and ignore
4 us at our communities -- as our community begs them to
5 listen.

6 The decision made about what we learn and how
7 we learn is made by people who don't know us or our
8 needs. It feels like our voices are being disregarded.
9 Now with the new redistricting plan, I'm worried it's
10 happening again. The maps being drawn would combine or
11 break up districts that have long been representing
12 communities such as mine, which are working-class,
13 diverse, and often overlooked. It's hard not to see
14 this as another way to weaken the voices of
15 neighborhoods like Northside. When you change the
16 districts in a way that splits us up or dilutes our
17 voices, you're also changing who gets listened to, and
18 it's often not us.

19 And while some people might see this as
20 just politics, to me it's more personal. These
21 decisions impact who represents our schools, our
22 families, and our futures. They directly affect our
23 schools in receiving funding and whether our
24 neighborhood voices are ignored or heard. We're not
25 asking for special treatment. We're just asking to be

1 seen and heard. If you're going to redistrict, we want
2 a fair and equitable maps that actually reflect the
3 communities that they are meant to represent. Thank
4 you.

5 REP. VASUT: Thank you for your
6 testimony.

7 Members, any questions for this panel?

8 Hearing none, the panel is excused.

9 Thank you for your testimony.

10 We'll go back to virtual testimony.

11 Chair calls Peter Schwartz.

12 As we work on getting Mr. Schwartz on
13 here, our next in-person panel is going to be Helen
14 Taylor, Karina Yonekawa-Blest, Ariel Jessenia Hiraldo,
15 and Savant Moore. If you'll make your way into the
16 room up to the front here. We'd love to have you.

17 Chair calls Peter Schwartz. Is Peter
18 Schwartz present? Chair will show Peter Schwartz
19 registered to testify, on behalf of himself, on the
20 Revised Congressional Redistricting Plan, but not
21 testifying.

22 Chair calls Angela Moss. Is Angela Moss
23 here? Chair will show Angela Moss registered to
24 testify, on behalf of herself, on the Revised
25 Congressional Redistricting Plan, but not testifying.

1 Chair calls Emmanuel Perez. Emmanuel
2 Perez. Emmanuel Perez here? The Chair will show
3 Emmanuel Perez registered to testify, on behalf of
4 himself, on the Revised Congressional Redistricting
5 Plan, but not testifying. He's registered twice.
6 We're going to show him not testifying twice. Not
7 testifying twice. Yeah. Got to. No way around it.

8 Chair calls Skylar Rolf. Skylar Rolf?
9 Chair will show Dr. Skylar Rolf registered to testify,
10 on behalf of herself, on the Revised Congressional
11 Redistricting Plan, but not testifying.

12 Our next virtual panel, possibly, will be
13 -- I have Kaden Ouimet, Patrick Greer, Andrea Brown,
14 Osorio-Lapham, and Sophia Mirto. If you'll be ready in
15 the waiting room when we come there.

16 All right. Go to our panel here. Chair
17 calls Helen Taylor. I'm going to pull up your
18 registration here momentarily. I show you registered
19 to testify as Helen Taylor, on behalf of yourself, on
20 the Revised Congressional Redistricting Plan. Is that
21 correct?

22 HELEN TAYLOR: Yes.

23 REP. VASUT: Please give us your
24 testimony.

25 HELEN TAYLOR: Dear members of the House

1 Select Redistricting Commission, sorry, Committee, my
2 name is Ella, and I'm here testifying as myself in
3 opposition to the proposed redistricting plan. First,
4 I'm astonished by the lack of transparency. We're
5 speaking on redistricting without a map to discuss.
6 Secondly, I live in the 18th Congressional District in
7 Houston. Unfortunately, my district is currently
8 unrepresented in Congress due to the governor's
9 decision to not call a special session following,
10 sorry, a special election following Representative
11 Sylvester Turner's death.

12 I'm deeply concerned with the motives
13 behind these proposed changes. Texas is often accused
14 of racial bias in redistricting, and with good reason.
15 However, in lawsuits raised during the Biden
16 administration, Texas denied racial bias. In fact,
17 they claimed that they made their maps race blind. Yet
18 the moment there's an opportunity to redraw maps in a
19 way that hurts minority districts and increases
20 conservative dominance, you take it. That means either
21 you're changing districts solely due to them being
22 majority/minority or Texas lied and you voted for a
23 racially gerrymandered map. That's not fighting
24 against racial bias, it's fighting for partisan
25 gerrymandering and decreased minority power.

1 I currently live in District 18, and I
2 previously lived in District 9. Both of these
3 districts were named in the Department of Justice's
4 complaint. So this is also my battle because my
5 district is District 18. Houston's already pretty
6 gerrymandered. I used to live in District 2, which is
7 an interesting district for that. But you want to
8 decrease voting power in areas like my district and
9 minority voices are already represented. Don't
10 disenfranchise them and don't disenfranchise Houston.
11 Thank you for your time.

12 REP. VASUT: Thank you for your
13 testimony.

14 Chair calls Savant Moore. I show you
15 registered to testify as Savant Moore, on behalf of
16 yourself, on the Revised Congressional Redistricting
17 Plan? Is that correct?

18 SAVANT MOORE: Yes.

19 REP. VASUT: Please give us your
20 testimony.

21 SAVANT MOORE: My name is Savant Moore.
22 I'm a resident of Fifth Ward in Houston, Texas, which
23 resides in Congressional 18. I'm a trustee on the
24 school board of HISD. I commend all the students that
25 have come from my side of town.

1 As a preacher, I often wonder how can
2 someone praise God on Sunday, then spend Monday through
3 Saturday trying to take away someone else's rights?
4 Why are we still fighting the same tactics they used to
5 silence and erase us in the past? Every day I drive by
6 Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee's office and the
7 school named after Mickey Leland. Redistricting. Why
8 now? Why us?

9 Litigation from the 2021 map hasn't been
10 resolved. Texas is still four to five districts behind
11 in representing this growing minority population. And
12 now you want to take the little that we have. Let's be
13 clear, Congressional District 18 was first drawn in
14 1972 to represent black Houstonians. It's ironic that
15 you're using the same law to try to silence us. We
16 demand that you keep the current map until all
17 litigation is resolved and the 2030 census is
18 completed.

19 I served as an Army Ranger, and I wonder,
20 why did I come from war overseas to fight war for
21 representation in my own city and in my own state? The
22 other week I was at a funeral for a child that lost
23 their life in the flood. And in front of me was
24 Lieutenant Governor. It didn't matter that he was
25 Republican. It didn't matter that I was a Democrat.

1 We were two Texans that felt the pain of a family that
2 lost a child.

3 So the next time that you have a special
4 session, let it be about that. Let it be about funding
5 our public education. Let it be about advocating for
6 those that are vulnerable. I will be running for House
7 District 142, and I will be a peer one day. And it
8 won't matter to me if you're Republican or Democrat,
9 you'll just be a Texan. And we will take care of
10 everybody, whether they're urban, rural, from the
11 Panhandle to Rio Grande, to my favorite city, Houston,
12 Texas. Thank you for your time.

13 REP. VASUT: Thank you for your
14 testimony.

15 Chair calls Karina Yonekawa-Blest.

16 KARINA YONEKAWA-BLEST: Present.

17 REP. VASUT: Okay. I show you registered
18 to testify on behalf of the Fonde Civic Club and
19 Friends of Fonde Park and yourself, on the Revised
20 Congressional Redistricting Plan. Is that correct?

21 KARINA YONEKAWA-BLEST: That's correct.

22 REP. VASUT: Please give us your
23 testimony.

24 KARINA YONEKAWA-BLEST: Good afternoon.
25 My name is Karina Yonekawa-Blest, and I serve as the

1 president of Fonde Civic Club and Friends of Fonde
2 Park. We are located in Houston, Texas in the 29th
3 District, which is up for redistricting. I also serve
4 as an end-of-life doula and chaplain. I'm here today
5 to appeal to your ethics, your morals, and your
6 conscience. I am here to remind you that your legacy
7 is one that will powerfully influence future
8 generations, not only in your family, but also in our
9 future generations of voters, in our state and our
10 country as well.

11 Opposition to gerrymandering is a
12 nonpartisan issue for those who promote justice. It's
13 time for Texas politicians to send a message to the
14 nation that we Texans will not be manipulated by any
15 particular party because we are here to serve all
16 Texans. Please do not be complicit in this unjustified
17 redistricting, which will dilute the voice of my
18 community. Do not allow this frivolous agenda to take
19 time from this very important session, where time
20 should be devoted to provide solutions to Texans, to
21 our flood victims, THC regulation, and other very
22 important agenda items.

23 How many testimonies have you heard today
24 pro-redistricting? How many? Zero. That's correct.
25 And if you're a Republican here, I want to remind you

1 this is a nonpartisan issue. Chair, are you able to
2 dismiss this and not waste time for the hundreds of
3 people who will be in Dallas, Houston, and other
4 locations protesting this? Are you able to end this
5 today?

6 REP. VASUT: Chair can't answer questions
7 from the front, but please go with your testimony.

8 KARINA YONEKAWA-BLEST: Thank you.
9 That's all that I have. Thank you very much.

10 REP. VASUT: Thank you very much. Thank
11 you for being here.

12 Chair calls Ariel Jessenia Hiraldo.

13 ARIEL JESSENIA HIRALDO: Yeah, I'm her.

14 REP. VASUT: All right. I show you
15 registered to testify as -- on behalf of yourself, on
16 the Congressional Redistricting Plan. Is that correct?

17 ARIEL JESSENIA HIRALDO: Yeah.

18 REP. VASUT: Please give us your
19 testimony.

20 ARIEL JESSENIA HIRALDO: Listen, I ain't
21 finna tell y'all all my business now. But you know
22 Southern hospitality has gone too far when Texans
23 started becoming a doormat. In theory, y'all supposed
24 to be the good guys, right? Making Texas better.
25 What's so good about purposely gerrymandering Texas

1 districts to fit into an evil scheme we're all too
2 familiar with? What's so good about redrawing these
3 districts on the basis of manufacturing election
4 outcomes that are detached from the preferences of
5 voters?

6 Now, contrary to what some of your
7 colleagues may believe, we are not stupid. One of the
8 oldest tactics in the book, gerrymandering has a real
9 impact on the balance of power in Congress and many
10 state legislatures, including this one. I don't have
11 to teach y'all this. You have degrees. Use them.

12 This heavily affects communities of
13 color, not that y'all ever cared about them anyway.
14 Texans are fiery and bold people. If you're our
15 representatives, shouldn't you be pissed off about
16 this? I guess nobody messes with Texas except grabby
17 politicians. In conclusion, the customer is always
18 right, unless you work in politics and have to care
19 about minorities. That's it.

20 REP. VASUT: Thank you for your
21 testimony.

22 Members, any questions for the members of
23 this panel?

24 REP. ROSENTHAL: I have a question.

25 REP. VASUT: Chair recognizes Vice Chair

1 Rosenthal to question the panel.

2 REP. ROSENTHAL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

3 Ms. Ariel?

4 ARIEL JESSENIA HIRALDO: Yes? How can I
5 help you?

6 REP ROSENTHAL: Would you consider
7 running for office yourself someday?

8 ARIEL JESSENIA HIRALDO: So I've been
9 asked this, and I'll give you the answer I give
10 everybody else. Texas seats belong to Texans. I am
11 not a Texan. I love Texas, but I am from Chicago. I
12 love my hometown, and Texas seats belong to Texans.
13 That's it.

14 REP. ROSENTHAL: I feel that. How long
15 have you been here?

16 ARIEL JESSENIA HIRALDO: That don't
17 matter. Five years, sir.

18 REP. ROSENTHAL: That's long enough to be
19 an adopted Texan. I'm just saying. Thank you.

20 REP. VASUT: Any other questions for the
21 members of this panel? Chair recognizes Mr. Manuel to
22 question the panel.

23 REP. MANUEL: Something is up with this
24 mic.

25 REP. VASUT: You know, let's just call it

1 what it is. These mics are possessed. This is crazy.
2 All right, is it working now? No? No? I think you
3 actually just cut it off.

4 REP. MANUEL: It's off.

5 REP. VASUT: Okay. Oh, you didn't have a
6 question? Oh, and I was going to do everything I could
7 to turn your mic on. Okay. All right. Panel's
8 excused. Thank you very much for your testimony.

9 All right. Go back to virtual testimony.
10 I'm going to list out some names here, and then go back
11 and call you one at a time. So if I call your name,
12 please make your way into the waiting room here. Kaden
13 Ouimet, Patrick Greer, Andrea Brown, Osorio-Lapham,
14 Sophia Mirto, and Heather Reddick. If I called your
15 name [audio cuts out] I'm going to go back and I'm
16 going to call you one at a time here.

17 Chair calls Kaden Ouimet. Is Kaden
18 Ouimet here? Chair will show Kaden Ouimet registered
19 to testify, on behalf of Task Force USA, on the Revised
20 Congressional Redistricting Plan, but not testifying.

21 Chair calls Patrick Greer. Patrick Greer
22 here? Chair will show Patrick Greer registered to
23 testify, on behalf of himself, on the Revised
24 Congressional Redistricting Plan, but not testifying.

25 Chair calls Andrea Brown. Is Andrea

1 Brown here? Chair will show Andrea Brown registered to
2 testify, on behalf of herself, on the Revised
3 Congressional Redistricting Plan, but not testifying.

4 Chair calls Osorio-Lapham. Osorio-Lapham
5 here? Chair will show Osorio-Lapham registered to
6 testify, on behalf of themselves, on the Revised
7 Congressional Redistricting Plan, but not testifying.

8 Chair calls Sophia Mirto. Sophia Mirto?
9 Is Sophia Mirto here. Chair will show Sophia Mirto
10 registered to testify, on behalf of herself, on the
11 Revised Congressional Redistricting Plan, but not
12 testifying. Since she registered twice, she'll be
13 shown not testifying twice.

14 Chair calls Heather Reddick. Is Heather
15 Reddick here? Chair will show Heather Reddick
16 registered to testify, on behalf of herself, on the
17 Revised Congressional Redistricting Plan, but not
18 testifying.

19 All right. Bring up some in-person
20 witnesses here. Bear with us. We actually just
21 finished all of the virtual witnesses. We're going to
22 go to in-person only from now on. We'll call you up in
23 groups of four. Chair calls Craig Nazor, Gabriel
24 Rosales, Anthony Gutierrez, and Christian Botello. We
25 already had Gabriel Rosales testify. I was told to

1 look at a different screen, and I shall.

2 Chair calls Craig Nazor, Anthony
3 Gutierrez, Leonard Aguilar, and Christopher Botello.
4 We'll give you a moment to make your way in here.

5 Sir, what's your name on the end?

6 CRAIG NAZOR: Craig Nazor.

7 REP. VASUT: All right. Chair calls
8 Craig -- calls Dr. Craig Nazor. I show you registered
9 to testify, on behalf of the Lone Star Chapter of the
10 Sierra Club and yourself, on the Revised Congressional
11 Redistricting Plan. Is that correct?

12 CRAIG NAZOR: Correct.

13 REP. VASUT: Please give us your
14 testimony.

15 CRAIG NAZOR: Hello. My name is Craig
16 Nazor of the Sierra Club. I support the Sierra Club
17 comments submitted by Dr. Cyrus Reed outlining the
18 negative effects of gerrymandering has on environmental
19 advocacy. Here's how political redistricting works.
20 When I first moved to North Austin, at the local HEB, a
21 tall, lanky man approached me and said, hello. My name
22 is Lloyd Doggett, and I represent you in Congress. Do
23 you have any questions for me? From then on, about
24 twice a year, Congressman Doggett was at the HEB for me
25 to talk to.

1 In 2003, this legislature redrew District
2 10 into the shape of a python that swallowed an
3 elephant, represented by Michael McCaul. I never met
4 Congressman McCaul, although I tried to make
5 appointments with him. I never spoke to him, although
6 I called his office many times. He lives in Westlake
7 Hills, yet he never appeared at any public events in
8 Austin where I could meet him or ask him any questions
9 or get any answers. He didn't represent me because he
10 didn't have to. By your design, he knew that he could
11 completely ignore me and still get reelected.

12 When this is done for political or racial
13 reasons, this makes people angry, as we witnessed
14 earlier in this hearing. It also leaves people dealing
15 with deadly environmental issues without a voice. Take
16 the Ninth Ward of Houston, for instance. Now you want
17 to double down again, without a census, in the middle
18 of the decade. Why? Because a president who never won
19 the popular vote in any election is demanding it,
20 further polarizing our already highly-polarized two-
21 party system. Texas is not the representative
22 democracy it always claimed to be, and this
23 redistricting will not fix that.

24 REP. VASUT: Thank you for your
25 testimony.

1 Chair calls Leonard Aguilar. I show you
2 registered to testify, on behalf of the Texas AFL-CIO
3 and yourself, on the Revised Congressional
4 Redistricting Plan? Is that correct?

5 LEONARD AGUILAR: Yes, sir.

6 REP. VASUT: Please give us your
7 testimony.

8 LEONARD AGUILAR: Appreciate it. And
9 thank you all very much for the work that you all are
10 doing and being here late tonight. We appreciate that.
11 Thank you again to the Chair and committee members. My
12 name's Leonard Aguilar. I'm a union member, and I am
13 the Secretary-Treasurer of the Texas AFL-CIO.

14 I'm here today to voice my opposition to
15 the redistricting attempt that's happening here during
16 this special session. We shouldn't be taking aim at
17 voting rights of Texans at this time. We have so many
18 other things that we can do to help people that are in
19 need across our state. And you've heard that over and
20 over here today and getting into this evening. Many of
21 our fellow Texans and union members are still trying to
22 recover. And they're still trying to understand and
23 get through the floods and trying to rebuild their
24 lives.

25 And we should be doing everything. All

1 of us should be doing everything to come together. We
2 shouldn't be wasting our time on trying to come up with
3 these so-called problems that are in front of us. We
4 should be focusing on taking care of our fellow
5 neighbors and helping them as they're trying to get
6 through their time of need through these disasters.
7 The natural disasters deserve the full attention of the
8 state legislature, excuse me, of the state legislature,
9 and nothing else should be done until we get that done,
10 plain and simple. We should take care of each other
11 first before we go into trying to hurting each other in
12 this way.

13 Trying to suppress the vote of black and
14 brown folks across the state or in different parts of
15 the state shouldn't be happening again. It makes me,
16 on a personal note, feel kind of -- it puts me and
17 makes me feel not easy because I see that happening.
18 And it shouldn't be happening. And it's something that
19 we shouldn't be doing again at this time. As I
20 understand, during the last session, the House had a
21 redistricting committee. They didn't meet. The Senate
22 didn't even have a committee. So what's the problem?

23 If redistricting was such a problem, why
24 didn't we come up during the regular session when
25 everybody was here? And again, like you've heard,

1 we're still in the process. The past maps that have
2 come through are there. The legislation is still
3 happening and still hasn't been resolved. The
4 Governor, the President, and now the Texas legislature
5 are playing with the voting rights of hardworking
6 Texans for the simple reason of trying to stay in
7 power.

8 It's amazing sometimes how we talk about
9 respect for individuals and then there's a lack of it.
10 We often talk about how great Texas is. We talk about
11 how great Texas is and we brag about how it is.

12 REP. VASUT: Please finish your
13 testimony.

14 LEONARD AGUILAR: And we also say -- if I
15 can, just one last sentence.

16 REP. VASUT: You bet.

17 LEONARD AGUILAR: How we don't want to be
18 like Washington, DC. So we shouldn't be like them. We
19 should be better. We are the state of Texas. Thank
20 you.

21 REP. VASUT: Thank you for your
22 testimony. To complete out this panel, if you hold one
23 second, the Chair calls Anthony Gutierrez. Is Anthony
24 Gutierrez here? Chair will show Anthony Gutierrez
25 registered to testify, on behalf of Common Cause Texas,

1 on the Revised Congressional Redistricting Plan, but
2 not testifying.

3 Chair calls, let's see, Christopher
4 Botello. Is Christopher Botello here? Chair will show
5 Christopher Botello registered to testify, on behalf of
6 Mary Lee Foundation and self, but not testifying on the
7 Revised Congressional Redistricting Plan.

8 Members, any questions for the members of
9 that panel. Seeing none, the panel is excused. Thank
10 you, sir.

11 Chair calls -- we're going to go back.
12 Chair calls Sophia Mirto. We can hear you, Ms. Mirto.
13 If you could turn on your video for us.

14 SOPHIA MIRTO: Yes, I can.

15 REP. VASUT: Okay. Now we're going to --

16 SOPHIA MIRTO: It's a very strange
17 option.

18 REP. VASUT: We're going to turn up --
19 let me pull up the witness affirmation form real quick
20 here. All right. I show you registered to testify as
21 Sophia Mirto, on behalf of yourself, on the Revised
22 Congressional Redistricting Plan. Is that correct?

23 SOPHIA MIRTO: It is.

24 REP VASUT: Please give us your
25 testimony.

1 SOPHIA MIRTO: My testimony is that this
2 is a ridiculous waste of everyone's time. We have
3 people all over the State of Texas who are in desperate
4 need of government services from the flood. We have
5 had, as someone very eloquently stated a few minutes
6 ago, the largest mass casualty event, and it is
7 absolutely absurd that we are not using time from our
8 employees, y'all right there, to fix this problem of
9 people being unhoused because of the flood.

10 Now, on redistricting, because I know
11 that's what everybody wants to talk about today, it is
12 setting such a dangerous precedent to redistrict the
13 State of Texas. California, Maryland, New Jersey, so
14 many other states are gearing up to redistrict. If
15 redistricting does pass in Texas, we will look at a
16 free-for-all all over the country of states
17 redistricting based on who is controlling power in the
18 state. This is not how the government is supposed to
19 function. This is not what representative democracy
20 looks like, and it is a violation of the Constitution.

21 So my request to everyone on the dais
22 today is to go home and read the Constitution that you
23 took an oath to, because I feel like everybody's
24 fucking forgot.

25 REP. VASUT: Let's maintain decorum, but

1 please continue.

2 SOPHIA MIRTO: I think that the calls for
3 decorum are absolutely absurd, considering that each
4 one of you is violating your oath of office in this
5 very moment. Your oath is to the Constitution, which
6 means government by the people, for the people, and the
7 people very clearly do not want redistricting. We do
8 not want you to be wasting your time as our employees.
9 We want you to be fixing the problems of Texas.

10 We also don't even have a redistricting
11 map to look at, so we can't even register whether or
12 not we're interested in the map. And another thing is,
13 without the census, we are doing this based on,
14 obviously, a request from the administration. That's a
15 violation of states' rights. Texas is supposed to be
16 about Texas. And we have a long, proud history of not
17 listening to the federal government, and this is the
18 moment to use that long, proud history. It is,
19 frankly, embarrassing to see anyone elected in the
20 state of Texas bowing down to a regime rather than
21 protecting the constituents that you are employed to
22 serve.

23 REP. VASUT: Thank you for your
24 testimony.

25 Members, any questions for this witness?

1 Seeing none, the witness is excused. Thank you very
2 much.

3 One sec, Ms. Mirto. We had you
4 registered twice. Is it okay -- do we have your
5 permission to delete the duplicate registration?

6 SOPHIA MIRTO: Yes, thank you very much.

7 REP. VASUT: Thank you very much. Have a
8 good day.

9 Chair calls Gloria Osorio-Lapham. I
10 apologize if I butchered that. We're going to send you
11 an ask to unmute, and if you could turn your video on
12 for us. Ms. Gloria, we're going to ask you to unmute
13 and show your video. There we go. We got you unmuted.
14 If you can show your video for us.

15 GLORIA OSORIO-LAPHAM: Sorry.

16 REP. VASUT: No worries. All right. Can
17 you hear me?

18 GLORIA OSORIO-LAPHAM: Yes, I can.

19 REP. VASUT: And I can hear you. I show
20 you registered as -- well, we had you on your
21 registration registered as Osorio-Lapham, just your
22 last name. Can we modify your registration to have
23 your first name added to there, Gloria?

24 GLORIA OSORIO-LAPHAM: Yes, Gloria.

25 REP. VASUT: Okay. We're going to put

1 that on there. And we had you registered to testify,
2 on behalf of yourself, on the Revised Congressional
3 Redistricting Plan. Is that correct?

4 GLORIA OSORIO-LAPHAM: Yes, that's
5 correct.

6 REP. VASUT: Okay. Please give us your
7 testimony.

8 GLORIA OSORIO-LAPHAM: Okay. Good
9 evening. My name is Gloria Osorio-Lapham. I'm Latina,
10 daughter of immigrants, a combat veteran, a military
11 spouse, and a student at Temple College. I represent
12 many walks of life, and I care about the future of our
13 communities. I'm here, anxious, you know, but still,
14 this is important to me.

15 But I'm here to speak against
16 redistricting. I really think that this special
17 session is focused on the wrong thing. And really, we
18 should be focusing on, again, as the last per-, like
19 the last few people have mentioned, you know, the mass
20 casualty event that just happened. Changing district
21 lines outside the regular, like, ten-year census cycle
22 is unnecessary, it's unfair, and it's destabilizing.
23 It moves the goalpost of representation and sends a
24 message that political power matters more than the
25 people being represented.

1 Just personal experience, I used to live
2 in Killeen, Congressional District 11, and that
3 district stretches all the way to Odessa, which is over
4 300 miles away. I do now live in a different district,
5 Texas 31st. It has a better fit geographically, but I
6 still -- my representation does not show up. I get
7 generic, canned answers and just silence. This is not
8 -- again, sorry. This is not the time for
9 redistricting.

10 We are in a state that has seen
11 devastating floods this year, I mean, even just
12 overall, hurricane season's about to start, and the
13 infrastructure for relief and, like, response needs to
14 be fixed. That's what it should be -- this special
15 session should be focused on, disaster relief and
16 emergency preparedness. And this is what Texans need.
17 It's incredibly frustrating as someone newly involved
18 in civics to watch political leaders chase power and
19 partisan advantage while ignoring the very real, urgent
20 needs of our, like, the everyday people. We need to
21 put people before politics, prioritize disaster relief
22 over district manipulation. And that's all I have.

23 REP. VASUT: Thank you for your
24 testimony.

25 Members, any questions for this witness?

1 Hearing none, the witness is excused. Thank you.

2 I believe that's the last of the virtual
3 testimony we have. We came back. There were two.
4 They showed up late, and we got them in there.

5 Members, it's been five hours and five
6 minutes of public testimony. However, because of some
7 of the disruptions earlier and some questions, the
8 chair has added 15 minutes to the total, so we've got
9 10 more minutes here. The Chair's going to bring up at
10 least one more panel. Chair calls --

11 UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: Call Evelyn Butler.
12 She's here.

13 REP. VASUT: It's going to do it
14 randomly. Let's see what happens.

15 RACHEL PRESTON: I'm Rachel Preston.

16 REP. VASUT: All right. Chair calls
17 Cyrus Reed and Andre Treiber, Heather Hermann, and
18 Terra Anders. If you're here, please make your way up.

19 UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: Cyrus Reed is not
20 here.

21 REP. VASUT: We'll give him about 30
22 seconds to hop over. And we're going to go ahead and
23 get started.

24 What's your name?

25 TERRA ANDERS: Terra Anders.

1 REP. VASUT: Okay. Chair calls Terra
2 Anders. I show you registered to testify, on behalf of
3 yourself, on the Revised Congressional Redistricting
4 Plan. Is that correct?

5 TERRA ANDERS: That's right.

6 REP. VASUT: Please give us your
7 testimony.

8 TERRA ANDERS: Thank you, Mr. Chair and
9 everybody on the committee. My name is Terra Anders,
10 and I'm retired. I work as a consultant for product
11 quality and safety, and I live in Taylor, District 52.

12 As a Texan, I wish that this emergency
13 legislative session was prioritized -- would have
14 prioritized disaster preparedness, emergency
15 management, and early warning systems to prevent the
16 tragedies like the deaths of more than 130 of my fellow
17 Texans. When floodwaters strike, we show up for one
18 another. I've been working and helping at the disaster
19 relief in Sandy Creek, and I am disappointed to see
20 that Governor Abbott has prioritized this demand from
21 the DOJ without evidence or any pushback from the
22 committee above the real emergency.

23 You know, we are -- what we choose to
24 prioritize reveals what we value. I expect that my
25 legislators -- I expect my legislators to value the

1 safety of Texans over political gain. Instead, I'm
2 here to oppose an illicit attempt to redraw our
3 congressional districts mid-decade. I'm involved in
4 advocacy efforts from voting rights to school, public
5 schools. And I share my life with these communities.
6 I will stand for them when their vote and voice are
7 under threat.

8 Texas legislators have long been
9 described as tenacious defenders of voting
10 discrimination. Webb County, for example, has seen its
11 voting power cracked for decades. I fear this rushed
12 process will do more harm. The redistricting process
13 is consequential. It should take months, not five
14 days, two-minute testimonies, and no map to look at.
15 That's inequitable at best and disingenuous at worst.

16 I urge this committee to reveal its
17 priorities, to show the people of Texas that we may see
18 what you value. We deserve representative districts
19 where all voices and all votes are counted and heard.

20 REP. VASUT: Please finish your
21 testimony.

22 TERRA ANDERS: Reject this redistricting
23 push. Remove this from the agenda. And I wanted to
24 say thank you to Representative Garcia for all you're
25 doing for the victims of the floods. Thank you so

1 much.

2 REP. VASUT: Thank you for your
3 testimony.

4 Chair calls Cyrus Reed. Chair will show
5 -- and please remain right there, ma'am. I'm just
6 going to finish out this panel. Chair will show Cyrus
7 Reed registered to testify, on behalf of the Lone Star
8 Chapter of the Sierra Club, neutral, on the Revised
9 Congressional Redistricting Plan, but not testifying.

10 Chair calls Andre Treiber. Chair will
11 show Andre Treiber registered to testify, on behalf of
12 herself, on the Revised Congressional Redistricting
13 Plan, but not testifying.

14 Chair calls Heather Hermann. Chair will
15 show Heather Hermann registered to testify, on behalf
16 of herself, on the Revised Congressional Redistricting
17 Plan, but not testifying.

18 Members, any questions for this panel?
19 Seeing none, you're excused. Thank you, ma'am.

20 Chair calls Emily French, Daniela
21 Hernandez, David Chincanchan, and Collin Steele.
22 Please make your way in. We'll give you about a minute
23 here. Make sure you have an opportunity for an
24 overflow to come. Emily French, Daniela Hernandez,
25 David Chincanchan, and Collin Steele. Anyone in the

1 overflow rooms, if we call your names, just go ahead
2 and maybe just be in the hallway or nearby. We can
3 kind of close this out. Okay. We'll wait for Emily
4 French.

5 All right. Ma'am, what's your name?

6 EMILY FRENCH: I'm Emily French.

7 REP. VASUT: Perfect. Chair calls Emily
8 French. Ms. French, I show you registered to testify,
9 on behalf of Common Cause Texas, on the Revised
10 Congressional Redistricting Plan. Is that correct?

11 EMILY FRENCH: Yes, sir. And if I'm out
12 of breath, it's just my passion for the topic.

13 REP. VASUT: You're good. Please give us
14 your testimony.

15 EMILY FRENCH: Thank you so much. We're
16 thankful for this opportunity to testify before you
17 today. However, it's not enough. As you've heard time
18 and time again, we believe this redistricting process
19 is rushed and unfair. Texas has a history of producing
20 racially discriminatory maps that pack, crack, and
21 disenfranchise communities of color. The passion.

22 We can only fix that history by drawing
23 maps with care. Unfortunately, I do not see care being
24 taken in this process. Drawing maps with care takes
25 time. You can't squeeze months of testimony into only

1 three hearings, especially when you limit it to five
2 hours. You cannot squeeze months of robust debate and
3 negotiation into only 30 days.

4 So many Texans are here today to make
5 their voices heard, and so many of us will go home
6 without the committee calling our name. Many more are
7 hard at work today in other areas of the state, unable
8 to tell you that they oppose this process. You are
9 silencing them, too.

10 Drawing maps with care also requires
11 transparency. This committee is soliciting testimony
12 on redistricting, but the public has yet to see a
13 single map proposed by a legislator. We sincerely hope
14 that you will also hear testimony on the actual maps,
15 not just on the idea of drawing them. Drawing maps
16 with care takes travel. This committee is only holding
17 hearings in Austin, Houston, and Arlington. So far.
18 Not too late.

19 What about the Rio Grande Valley, which
20 President Trump identified as a possible target for
21 redrawing? What about cities with significant black
22 populations, like Prairie View and Beaumont? What
23 about voters out in El Paso, up in Amarillo, down in
24 Corpus Christi? What about my parents in Wichita
25 Falls? They love to have opinions on things. I bet

1 they would have an opinion on redistricting, too.
2 These communities deserve a chance to speak, and this
3 chamber has not provided one. It is not too late to
4 slow down. It is not too late to put more time,
5 transparency, and public availability into this
6 process. I respectfully urge this committee to
7 preserve the voice and vote of every Texan. Thank you.

8 REP. VASUT: Thank you, Ms. French.

9 Members, any questions for this witness?

10 Chair recognizes Mr. Manuel to question
11 this witness.

12 REP. MANUEL: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

13 Mine is really more of a statement. Thank you for
14 mentioning Jefferson County, because most people don't
15 realize that we were redistricted and that we lost
16 significant population, and we are the only
17 majority/minority county area in that area. And there
18 is enough representation for there to be a coalition
19 district that no one ever decides to put together
20 because rural black and brown people don't need the
21 same kind of representation all the time. Thank you.

22 EMILY FRENCH: Yes, sir. Thank you.

23 REP. VASUT: Thank you. Members, any
24 other questions? Stay right -- stay right there just
25 in case somebody changes their mind. I'm going to

1 finish this panel.

2 Chair calls Daniela Hernandez.

3 And if David Chincanchan or Collin Steele
4 are in the room, if you'll go ahead and come on up to
5 the front. Okay.

6 Chair calls Daniela Hernandez. I show
7 you registered as Daniela Hernandez, testifying on
8 behalf of the Workers Defense Action Fund and yourself,
9 on the Revised Congressional Redistricting Plan. Is
10 that correct?

11 DANIELA HERNANDEZ: Yes, that's correct.

12 REP. VASUT: Please give us your
13 testimony.

14 DANIELA HERNANDEZ: Good evening, Chair
15 and members of the committee. My name is Daniela
16 Hernandez. I'm the State Legislative Coordinator for
17 Workers Defense Action Fund. And I'm testifying on the
18 Legislature's attempt to redistrict our congressional
19 districts mid-census. We want to -- we are strongly
20 opposed to these efforts, and we want to be clear that
21 this is a blatant attack on our elections, attempting
22 to rig them to increase Republican representation in
23 Congress by removing power from communities of color.
24 This is a shameful attack and blatant racial
25 discrimination.

1 Elections are meant for people to use
2 their power to choose their electeds, not the other way
3 around. What this effort is doing is ensuring that
4 elected officials are able to cherry pick their own
5 voters. For the past few years, the State has been
6 arguing that they did not rely on race to create the
7 current districts we have. And now the State has
8 decided to flip-flop and claim that they did racially
9 gerrymander their current maps, and now we need new
10 maps. The truth is that these new proposed maps will
11 only further suppress the voting power of people of
12 color. Our maps should be fair and should be drawn
13 independently, reflecting the diversity of our state.
14 The fact is that this attempt to do this mid-decade
15 redistricting is being rammed through, moving at an
16 incredibly fast pace, for something that will have
17 consequences for several years to come.

18 In a time where Texans are still
19 hurting, still grieving the lives lost to the
20 devastating floods that happened not even a month ago,
21 our legislature should be focused on providing
22 solutions to that, providing emergency preparedness,
23 flood relief, and many other things that Texans
24 currently need. Not by blindly following what
25 bureaucrats in Washington want the State to do. I

1 don't remember a time when Texas has ever just willy-
2 nilly let Washington tell us what to do. Texans from
3 across the state deserve to have their voices heard on
4 the new proposed maps. We first need to wait for the
5 current Court case to play out, and if and when the
6 Court says we need to redraw these maps, the
7 Legislature must hold public hearings, with the maps
8 drawn, across the State so all Texans have the
9 opportunity to share their voice. Thank you for the
10 opportunity to testify.

11 REP. VASUT: Thank you for your
12 testimony.

13 What's your name?

14 DAVID CHINCANCHAN: David Chincanchan.

15 REP. VASUT: Okay. Chair calls David
16 Chincanchan. I show you registered to testify, on
17 behalf of the Workers Defense Action Fund and yourself,
18 on the Revised Congressional Redistricting Plan. Is
19 that correct?

20 DAVID CHINCANCHAN: That's right.

21 REP. VASUT: Please give us your
22 testimony.

23 DAVID CHINCANCHAN: Good evening. My
24 name is David Chincanchan, and I serve as the Policy
25 Director for Workers Defense Action Fund. Earlier we

1 heard the reason you're here is because of a letter the
2 DOJ sent our state. Whether that's the case or not, I
3 think you can answer for yourselves. But I want to
4 explain what this looks like to the public through the
5 lens of common sense.

6 Most of you don't seem to want to do
7 this. Our Texas congressional delegation, Republicans
8 and Democrats alike, don't seem to want you to do this.
9 And most importantly, Texans don't want you to do this.
10 Texans want you to focus on the issues impacting them
11 and their families. So then why are we actually here?
12 There may be pretext, but there's no justification.

13 As has been reported widely, it's most
14 likely because Governor Abbott got a phone call from
15 someone who has shown there's no line he won't cross to
16 hold onto that power that he has, even if it means
17 blatantly attacking our freedoms and our fundamental
18 democratic rights, and even if it means intimidating
19 others like you to do the same. Now Governor Abbott
20 has issued his proclamation ordering you to be in this
21 room today to do his dirty work for him. And I do mean
22 dirty work. Because the president's team has demanded
23 that you serve up five more Texas congressional seats
24 to him on a silver platter. It doesn't take a
25 demographer to know that squeezing five more seats out

1 of Texas can only be done if you drag us all back into
2 a past era of racial segregation and poll taxes by
3 adopting what would be the most racially discriminatory
4 maps our state has seen in ages.

5 There are still people missing in Kerr
6 County. Millions of Texans are on the verge of losing
7 their health care. Today, we had our first heat-
8 related death of the year in Dallas County. We have
9 heatwaves coming this summer that will disrupt business
10 operations and result in the deaths of workers just
11 like they did last time. And while Texans are dying,
12 suffering, and hurting, this is how you're choosing to
13 spend your time.

14 The least you can do for Texans who
15 entrusted you with these positions is to dig deep, as
16 deep as you need to, to find the courage to stand
17 against this dictate, to defend our Texas democracy,
18 and to do what's right by Texans. Please put an end to
19 undermining our Texas democracy immediately.

20 REP. VASUT: Thank you for your
21 testimony.

22 Members, any questions for this panel?

23 Chair calls Collin Steele. Is Collin
24 Steele present? Chair will show Collin Steele
25 registered to testify, on behalf of himself, on the

1 Revised Congressional Redistricting Plan, but not
2 testifying.

3 This panel is excused. Thank you very
4 much.

5 Members -- not at this time. Members,
6 the time for public testimony of today's hearing has
7 concluded. I want to thank you for all who testified.
8 We had set out in the notice, and the intent is to
9 treat every in-person hearing that we have here, both
10 in Austin and in Houston and in Arlington, equally.
11 And so, that is the reason that we're ceasing public
12 testimony today, pursuant to the notice.

13 [Speaking from the Gallery]

14 REP. VASUT: The gallery will maintain
15 decorum.

16 The electronic portal for today's hearing
17 will close right after we adjourn. Now, if you
18 registered to testify but we were not able to reach you
19 today or you had more to say, please bring your written
20 testimony, that was set out in the notice, please bring
21 it up to the clerk. That will be scanned and given to
22 the members of the committee who also have your contact
23 information and can ask you any questions. So I
24 welcome you at this time or at any time. We'll stick
25 around for a little while. Please bring your written

1 testimony up front. We would love to have that to you.
2 Again, we're going to scan that and give that to all
3 the members of the committee.

4 I want to thank you all for being here,
5 thank all the members for being here. I appreciate the
6 questions and the decorum. There being no further
7 business before the committee -- Mr. Rosenthal, for
8 what purpose?

9 REP. ROSENTHAL: I'd like to move -- Mr.
10 Chairman, I'd like to formally move to extend time by
11 at least one hour to allow more Texans --

12 REP. VASUT: The gentleman is not
13 recognized -- maintain decorum. The gentleman is not
14 recognized for that motion at this time.

15 The Chair moves that the -- the Chair
16 moves that the House Select Committee on Congressional
17 Redistricting stand adjourned subject to the call of
18 the Chair.

19 UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Objection.

20 REP. VASUT: Is there objection?

21 UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Object.

22 REP. VASUT: Objection has been made.

23 The question occurs on whether the House Select
24 Committee on Congressional Redistricting will stand
25 adjourned subject to the call of the Chair. This is

1 not a debatable motion. The Clerk --

2 REP. ROSENTHAL: I don't want to debate,
3 but I would like to say something right quick before we
4 actually do that.

5 REP. VASUT: We can't -- while I've
6 called for a vote and a motion is pending, we can't
7 speak on anything. It's a non-debatable motion --

8 UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Mr. Speaker -- Mr.
9 Chair --

10 REP. VASUT: -- under Rule 7, Section
11 1(a).

12 UNIDENTIFIED MALE: We had requested to
13 speak before you had called --

14 REP. VASUT: You are not recognized at
15 this time.

16 REP. ROSENTHAL: I just want to make an
17 announcement to the public. I don't want to actually
18 debate the motion.

19 REP. VASUT: I can't. The Clerk will
20 call the roll. So just so we're clear, the question
21 before the body is a motion to adjourn. A vote yes is
22 to adjourn; a vote no is not to adjourn. The Clerk
23 will call the roll.

24 THE CLERK: Chair Vasut?

25 REP. VASUT: Aye.

1 THE CLERK: Vice Chair Rosenthal?

2 REP. ROSENTHAL: Nay.

3 THE CLERK: Representative Garcia?

4 REP. GARCIA: Nay.

5 THE CLERK: Representative Geren?

6 Representative Geren?

7 Representative Gervin-Hawkins?

8 REP. GERVIN-HAWKINS: Nay.

9 THE CLERK: Representative Guerra?

10 Representative Guerra?

11 Representative Guillen?

12 REP. GUILLEN: Aye.

13 THE CLERK: Representative Hefner?

14 REP. HEFNER: Aye.

15 THE CLERK: Representative Hickland?

16 REP. HICKLAND: Aye.

17 THE CLERK: Representative Hunter?

18 REP. HUNTER: Yes.

19 THE CLERK: Representative Manuel?

20 REP. MANUEL: Nay.

21 THE CLERK: Representative McQueeney?

22 REP. MCQUEENEY: Aye.

23 THE CLERK: Representative Metcalf?

24 REP. METCALF: Aye.

25 THE CLERK: Representative Moody?

1 REP. MOODY: No.

2 THE CLERK: Representative Pierson?

3 REP. PIERSON: Aye.

4 THE CLERK: Representative Spiller?

5 REP. SPILLER: Aye.

6 THE CLERK: Representative Tepper?

7 REP. TEPPER: Aye.

8 THE CLERK: Representative Thompson?

9 Representative Turner?

10 REP. TURNER: No.

11 THE CLERK: Representative Wilson?

12 REP. WILSON: Aye.

13 THE CLERK: Representative Wu?

14 REP. WU: No.

15 We will be meeting downstairs in the
16 legislative conference center for anyone else who wants
17 to testify.

18 UNIDENTIFIED FEMALE: What's the room
19 number?

20 REP. WU: It's on the first floor, one
21 floor down.

22 UNIDENTIFIED MALE: E2.002 is the room
23 number.

24 REP. WU: It's on the first floor. You
25 can go downstairs in the extension.

1 REP. VASUT: Okay. There being 11 votes
2 in favor, 7 votes against, the motion prevails, and the
3 House Select Committee on Congressional Redistricting
4 stands adjourned subject to the call of the Chair.

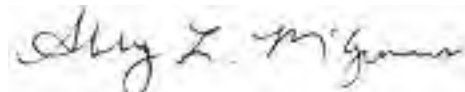
5 (End of proceedings.)
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C E R T I F I C A T E

I, Abby McGinnis, certify that the foregoing is a correct transcription from the audio recording provided to me in connection with the above-entitled matter.

I further certify that I am neither attorney or counsel for, nor related to or employed by any of the parties to the action in which this transcription is taken, and further that I am not a relative or employee of any attorney or counsel employed by the parties hereto, or financially interested in the action.

Certified to by me this 15th day of September 2025.



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