

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

Exhibit AJ

Texas House Committee on Congressional Redistricting, Saturday, July 26, 2025,
Transcript.

TRANSCRIPTION OF AUDIO VIDEO RECORDING
TEXAS HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
COMMITTEE ON CONGRESSIONAL REDISTRICTING
SATURDAY, JULY 26, 2025

TRANSCRIBED BY:

JULIE THOMPSON, CET

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

2 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: The time is 11:05
3 a.m. The House Select Committee on Congressional
4 Redistricting will come to order.

5 The clerk will call the role.

6 THE CLERK: Chair Vasut.

7 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Here.

8 THE CLERK: Vice Chair Rosenthal.

9 VICE CHAIR ROSENTHAL: Here.

10 THE CLERK: Representative Garcia.

11 REPRESENTATIVE GARCIA: Here.

12 THE CLERK: Representative Geren.

13 REPRESENTATIVE GEREN: Here.

14 THE CLERK: Representative Gervin-
15 Hawkins.

16 (No audible response)

17 THE CLERK: Representative Guerra.

18 (No audible response)

19 THE CLERK: Representative Guillen.

20 REPRESENTATIVE GUILLEN: Here.

21 THE CLERK: Representative Hefner.

22 REPRESENTATIVE HEFNER: Here.

23 THE CLERK: Representative Hickland.

24 REPRESENTATIVE HICKLAND: Here.

25 THE CLERK: Representative Hunter.

1 REPRESENTATIVE HUNTER: Here.

2 THE CLERK: Representative Manuel.

3 REPRESENTATIVE MANUEL: Here.

4 THE CLERK: Representative McQueeney.

5 REPRESENTATIVE MCQUEENEY: Here.

6 THE CLERK: Representative Metcalf.

7 REPRESENTATIVE METCALF: Here.

8 THE CLERK: Speaker Moody.

9 SPEAKER MOODY: Present.

10 THE CLERK: Representative Pierson.

11 REPRESENTATIVE PIERSON: Here.

12 THE CLERK: Representative Spiller.

13 REPRESENTATIVE SPILLER: Here.

14 THE CLERK: Representative Teppner.

15 REPRESENTATIVE TEPPER: Here.

16 THE CLERK: Dean Thompson.

17 REPRESENTATIVE THOMPSON: Here.

18 THE CLERK: Representative Turner.

19 REPRESENTATIVE TURNER: Here.

20 THE CLERK: Representative Wilson.

21 REPRESENTATIVE WILSON: Here.

22 THE CLERK: Representative Wu.

23 REPRESENTATIVE WU: Here.

24 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: A quorum is

25 present.

1 The Chair is pleased to welcome our
2 guests attending today's meeting. The Chair reminds
3 our audience that signs, placards, and verbal
4 expressions of support or disapproval are prohibited
5 under the House rules.

6 Now, I know some had signs in here
7 earlier. I'm not asking you to remove them. Just
8 keep them down at your feet, and that will be fine.
9 You might even want to use it as a fan.

10 Now, the Chair has asked to lower the
11 temperature in here and we're endeavoring to do that,
12 and I hope that that will take affect soon.

13 Yeah. Both. Now and also, you may
14 see the members on the dais remove their coats. Just
15 understand that's because we've got a whole bunch of
16 lights in front of us. It might get a little warm up
17 here.

18 So I want to thank you for being here
19 today and helping us preserve order and decorum at
20 today's hearing. You know, really, what this is
21 about is making sure that we hear from you, and so
22 when we maintain order and decorum, it ensures that
23 we're able to do that effectively, so thank you for
24 that.

25

1 Before we take up any revision to the
2 congressional redistricting plan or discuss such a
3 plan amongst ourselves, we are of course here today
4 in our second public hearing to hear about what
5 revisions should be made, if any.

6 As set out in the posting for today's
7 hearing, we will take public testimony regarding a
8 revised congressional redistricting plan pursuant to
9 the governor's July 9, 2025, proclamation calling a
10 special session of the 89th Legislature.

11 This hearing will focus on those
12 counties of the state lying wholly or partly within
13 Congressional Districts 2, 7, 8, 9, 14, 18, 22, 29,
14 36, and 38, for the 119th Congress. But the
15 committee will hear testimony about any region of the
16 state.

17 Today's hearing will feature in-person
18 public testimony only. For everyone in the audience,
19 thank you for being here today. In order to testify
20 in person today, you must register outside at the
21 table that's outside those doors back there. We have
22 staff there for you. If you have any questions,
23 please ask the staff there.

24 Be sure to fill out your blue sheet
25 all the way through and make sure to sign it at the

1 bottom. Some of you didn't sign, so when I call you
2 up to testify, I might flag that for you, and we're
3 going to need to have you sign it before you testify,
4 if that's okay.

5 We're going to be -- as you know,
6 we've had to kind of limit who can be in this room
7 because of fire code, and so I want to say that after
8 you testify, if you wouldn't mind exiting so that
9 somebody outside can come in, that would be
10 appreciated.

11 We're going to be closing registration
12 for in-person testimony today at 12:30 p.m. The
13 Chair will remind you all about that, and then we'll
14 close that at 12:30; so make sure to register
15 outside.

16 For everyone wishing to testify,
17 testimony will be limited to two minutes in length.
18 I'll have a timer up here at the dais, and I believe
19 there is one -- yes -- right in front of the four
20 Chairs up at the front here. The yellow light, I
21 believe, will indicate 30 seconds, and then you'll
22 have another chirp, I believe at 15. And then it
23 will really be at the end, and then I will kind of
24 ask you nicely, please wrap up your testimony. That

25

1 means basically kind of finish your sentence, and
2 then we'll go on.

3 Now, any questions you receive from
4 the members of the committee or on the dais here
5 today, that's not really an opportunity to just
6 extend your testimony without end. That's for
7 specific questions. The whole reason for that is we
8 want to be fair to everybody in this room and reach
9 as many (audio cuts out).

10 ...five-hour limit, I want you to
11 know. That five hours is just for the testimony
12 portion.

13 Now I want to drive home this point,
14 because we have such a great group of people here
15 today, that testifying at these Chairs and at the
16 microphones is not the only way that your testimony
17 can be recorded and given to the committee. And it's
18 very important that we hear from all of you.

19 Now, first, if you are testifying and
20 you have more to say than time allows, as was put
21 into the notice, you're encouraged to have a written
22 copy of your testimony, and you'll be able to turn
23 that in to our assistant clerk seated at this table
24 over here. And I'd encourage you to do that. That
25 testimony will be scanned in and given to all of the

1 members of the committee, who will have your
2 affirmation form that you filled out and can call you
3 or email you with any questions.

4 Second, if you have any handouts
5 today, we ask for 22 copies so that we can give one
6 to every member of the committee and then one for the
7 record that will be shared electronically. Please
8 feel free to give those, again, to the assistant
9 clerk up front if you have them.

10 Third, everyone in this room and
11 anyone watching online is welcome to submit an
12 electronic comment without testifying. You can do
13 that online on the electronic portal. It's linked in
14 today's hearing notice. It can be found at
15 comments.house.texas.gov. Again, that
16 comments.house.texas.gov. So even if you want to
17 just upload your testimony there too, even if you do
18 testify, you're welcome to do that. We'd love to
19 have it. And so the more, the merrier.

20 The Texas Legislative Council also
21 hosts a website for redistricting at
22 [redistricting.capitol](https://redistricting.capitol-texas.gov) -- now, that's with an O, c-a-
23 p-i-t-o-l. So just so you know, capitol with an O is
24 the building. Capital with an A is Austin. So
25 there's your trivia for today. So that's

1 redistricting.capitol.texas.gov. On that website you
2 can find information about submitting proposed maps
3 for consideration. I believe you click "2020s" and
4 then "Public participation," and then you can upload
5 that there.

6 Finally, every member of the public is
7 always welcome to email, contact, or call any member
8 of the legislature at any time, particularly your
9 state representative, and we welcome you to do so.
10 You can find out information about contacting your
11 member at house.texas.gov.

12 Finally, let's talk about logistics.
13 Since today is only in-person, we're going to take
14 in-person public testimony in panels of four. I'm
15 going to call four up to testify at the front, and
16 then I will read off four names that will be on the
17 next panel, or at least I'm going to try to do that.
18 If you hear your name called, just be ready. So if I
19 say, "on deck," just be ready. Make sure you're in
20 this room. And then that way when the first panel is
21 done and they're excused, you can come right up, and
22 we'll be moving pretty efficiently here.

23 Finally, since we have no bill before
24 this committee at any of these first three public
25 hearings, all testimony today will be neutral or on.

1 That's why you had to fill out your form that way.
2 It's just required by the rules. But guess what?
3 You can take any position you want at that microphone
4 or any position you want when you email us. So it's
5 just for the registration under the rules that you're
6 having to be on. We had a few questions about that;
7 I wanted to make sure that you knew.

8 With that, I believe we'll get
9 started. You got --

10 DEAN THOMPSON: Mr. Chairman, may I
11 have a point of information?

12 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: The Chair
13 recognizes Dean Thompson for a question.

14 DEAN THOMPSON: Mr. Chairman, I just
15 wanted to advise the public that they would not be
16 testifying on a revised congressional redistricting
17 plan because there is no revised congressional
18 redistricting plan.

19 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: The Chair would
20 note that the reason we're kind of reading it off
21 that way is a hyper technicality in the way the
22 hearing notice was done. Now, hyper technically it's
23 whether there will be a revised congressional
24 districting plan. But the Chair is going to just
25 reflect for the notes that it's on revised

1 congressional districting plan. Now, that testimony
2 of course can be anything that they want. But I
3 thank the Dean for the question.

4 DEAN THOMPSON: I just did want the
5 committee -- I just didn't want the audience to be
6 confused that there is a plan already in place.

7 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: That's a very fair
8 point. All of the congressional districts that were
9 mentioned in this notice or any of the other notices
10 are the current districts and you can find those
11 online in Plan C2193 on the redistricting website
12 DDR.capitol.texas.gov. But as Dean Thompson
13 correctly notes, there is no revised map in front of
14 the committee at this time.

15 Thank you, Dean.

16 Vice Chair Rosenthal for what purpose?

17 VICE CHAIR ROSENTHAL: I would like to
18 make a statement at the beginning.

19 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Chair recognizes
20 Vice Chair Rosenthal for a statement.

21 VICE CHAIR ROSENTHAL: Thank you,
22 Mr. Chairman, and thanks for helping to work with us
23 on invited testimony today.

24 Can you hear me now?

25 Can you all hear me?

1 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Good.

2 VICE CHAIR ROSENTHAL: All right. You
3 all, my name is John Rosenthal. I'm actually a state
4 representative in the Houston area. Northwest
5 Houston District 135. And I'm -- I often feel out of
6 place in these settings. I'm a career mechanical
7 engineer, and I seek practical solutions whenever
8 we're in this business. So to me this is kind of
9 anything but that. It's the exact opposite.

10 Now, for someone like me, this is an
11 incredible responsibility that I feel, and I'm
12 honored but also feel the gravity to serve as your
13 Vice Chair on this House select committee on
14 congressional redistricting. Listen, I've done some
15 big things as an oil field engineer, but nothing in
16 my life compares to this right here today. And thank
17 you for being here. There's a real fight in front of
18 us, and you can count on me and my colleagues to be
19 in it.

20 At the first hearing, I passed out the
21 letter from the Department of Justice that was sent
22 to Governor Abbott where he specifically mentions --
23 the Department of Justice specifically mentioned four
24 congressional districts. That is 9, 18, 29, and 33.

25

1 Before I even say anything else, I
2 would remiss -- I would be remiss if I didn't mention
3 that Congressional 18 is where we're sitting. It's
4 historic, iconic district. And when I say historic,
5 I mean historic. This district gave us Barbara
6 Jordon, Mickey Leland, Craig Washington, Sheila
7 Jackson Lee, and the late, great Sylvester Turner.
8 So when we -- when we look at what's going on right
9 now and the three of these four districts called out
10 just happen to be represented by African American
11 representatives. Tell me that that is not a racist
12 attack on our black reps.

13 And I'll note it's black and brown.
14 We've got Sylvia Garcia here who we're going to hear
15 from in a little bit. Mid-decade redistricting is
16 unusual. It's unnecessary. We actually are required
17 every 10 years to redraw our district boundaries
18 after the census, and we did that. There was a 2020
19 census, and we redrew the boundaries in 2021.

20 So this process is not about making
21 things fair, which is what it's supposed to be. It's
22 mostly about removing districts represented by people
23 of color. It's about taking power. It's about
24 taking the voice away from black and brown
25 communities. If they dismantle all four of these,

1 that is like almost two million voices silenced that
2 -- already Congressional 18 will go more than a year
3 without having a voice in Congress, so this effort
4 has nothing to do with representing people better.
5 It's the opposite of that.

6 Texas is growing. Between 2010 and
7 2020 we added almost exactly 4 million people.
8 3,999,9994 according to the United States census. I
9 can call that 4 million for practical purposes. Of
10 that growth, 187,252 were white, 550,887 were black,
11 1.98 million were Hispanic or Latino.

12 So let me just say, if 4 percent -- 4
13 and a half percent of our 10 year growth was white,
14 when we added the 2 new districts that was required
15 because we had so many new people here, how did they
16 manage to draw those both to be majority white
17 districts? That is not the purpose of the exercise,
18 right? We take the census, and then we draw the
19 districts to make sure everyone is fairly
20 represented.

21 So I'm just going to say, if we end up
22 trying -- if these folks end up trying to take away
23 seats, we will be fighting those. That is just
24 stealing voices, plain and simple.
25

1 So I'm going to point out -- for those
2 who haven't noticed, I'm a white guy. But I think
3 it's especially important for people that look like
4 me to speak out because when Desmond Tutu said, "If
5 you are neutral in situations of injustice, you have
6 chosen the side of the oppressor." Sign me up to
7 oppose the oppressor.

8 So it's on us, those of us -- and you
9 know who I'm talking to. The people that benefit
10 from this system, we need your help in this fight
11 because we cannot let our brothers and sisters, no
12 matter what race, or zip code, or ethnicity, or
13 anything else, we cannot let this system -- this
14 process silence their voices.

15 So with that, I'll yield back. But
16 thank you all very much.

17 DEAN THOMPSON: Mr. Chairman.

18 Mr. Chairman.

19 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Dean Thompson, for
20 what purpose?

21 DEAN THOMPSON: I'd like to respond.

22 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Chair recognizes
23 Dean Thompson for an opening statement.

24 DEAN THOMPSON: I'm the last person in
25 the United States that need to defend Ken Paxton and

1 Dan Patrick, but I'm going to defend them today.
2 When we drew the lines, and the DOJ sitting down here
3 and saying they were racial lines, here's what Ken
4 Paxton said. "The Texas Legislature did not pass
5 race space electoral districts for any of those three
6 political maps. Texas State Senator Joan Huffman,
7 who Chairs the Senate Redistricting Committee,
8 testified under oath that she drew Texas districts
9 blind to race and sought to maximize Republican
10 political advantage balanced against traditional
11 redistricting criteria. The Texas Legislature has
12 led the nation in rejecting race based decision
13 making in its redistricting process."

14 You all know that I'm the wrong person
15 to defend Dan Patrick, but there's no way in hell
16 that a racist map is going to come out of the Texas
17 Senate. And I resent that the United States Justice
18 Department would send a bogus letter down here to the
19 state of Texas accusing the people in this state of
20 doing such.

21 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

22 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Representative
23 Turner, for what purpose?
24
25

1 REPRESENTATIVE TURNER: Thank you,
2 Mr. Chairman. Would the Chair yield for a couple of
3 questions?

4 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Chair yields for
5 questions.

6 REPRESENTATIVE TURNER: Thank you,
7 Mr. Chairman. Just to follow up on the conversation
8 you and I had on the dais at our Thursday hearing in
9 Austin, I asked you at that time if the Chair had any
10 contact or if the committee had any contact with the
11 Department of Justice with respect to their July 7th
12 letter. You answered that you had not. Has that
13 changed since that time?

14 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: That has not
15 changed since our last conversation.

16 REPRESENTATIVE TURNER: Okay. You may
17 be aware, yesterday your Senate counterpart Senator
18 Phil King sent a letter to the Department of Justice
19 addressed to Harmeet Dhillon, who is the assistant
20 attorney general who signed the July 7th letter,
21 extending an invitation to Ms. Dhillon to testify
22 before the Senate Redistricting Committee so the
23 senators could hear the Department of Justice's
24 perspective on why that letter was sent, why it was
25 necessary, and what their legal rationale was for it.

1 My question is: would the House
2 committee also send a similar letter formally
3 inviting Ms. Dhillon to testify before our committee
4 so we can understand exactly what the Department of
5 Justice's position is with respect to this
6 redistricting process?

7 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: The Chair's
8 understanding is we extended an invitation to anyone
9 that wanted to come testify, which would include
10 Ms. Dhillon, at the first hearing that we had two
11 days ago. I understand the Vice Chair is willing to
12 invite them, and she's more than willing to come and
13 testify in person. And pursuant to the conversations
14 that I've had with the Vice Chair, happy to take her
15 out of order either today or at the hearing in
16 Arlington on Monday.

17 REPRESENTATIVE TURNER: Okay. So is
18 the Chair not prepared to send a formal letter from
19 -- I think -- I appreciate --

20 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: The Chair is happy
21 to consider that. I will. I'll consider that and
22 meet with you on this.

23 REPRESENTATIVE TURNER: Would the
24 Chair recognize me for a motion for us to -- for the
25

1 committee to vote to formally invite the assistant
2 attorney general to appear before the committee?

3 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Not at this time,
4 but I will get with you and I'm happy to consider
5 sending her a letter. And even just so it's clear
6 for the public right now, she's welcome to come
7 testify. I don't believe that I or the committee
8 have the power to subpoena her because she's a
9 federal official, but she's more than welcome to
10 come. And I know if the Vice Chair, or anyone, or me
11 wants to reach out to her, we'd be happy to have her
12 if she wants to come.

13 REPRESENTATIVE TURNER: I understand,
14 and I would just hope the Department of Justice would
15 respond positively to a formal invitation from you
16 and from our committee to come and testify. That's
17 why I think a formal invitation would be appropriate
18 and hopefully well received, and we'd get their
19 testimony here before our committee.

20 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Understood. I
21 will follow up with you on that for sure.

22 REPRESENTATIVE TURNER: Thank you,
23 Mr. Chairman. And I'm prepared to make that motion
24 at any time you deem is appropriate for me to offer
25 it.

1 Lastly, you had indicated the other
2 day that the house has retained a law firm for
3 purposes of redistricting. Butler Snow, I believe
4 you said?

5 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: That's correct.

6 REPRESENTATIVE TURNER: Okay. You
7 said you wanted to check to see if that law firm was
8 available to the entire committee for purposes of
9 redistricting. You weren't sure about that when we
10 talked about it Thursday. Did you have an answer on
11 that?

12 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Yes. The Chair
13 has looked into that. Butler Snow has been retained
14 to represent the speaker and his staff, the Chair and
15 his staff. And because of the litigation that was
16 ongoing at the time, Chairman Hunter and his staff as
17 well.

18 REPRESENTATIVE TURNER: Okay. So just
19 so I'm crystal clear on that, Butler Snow has been
20 retained by the House of Representatives to represent
21 the speaker and his staff, yourself and your staff --

22 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: And the committee
23 staff I guess would be indirectly under that too.
24 Yes. And then Chairman Hunter is --

25

1 REPRESENTATIVE TURNER: Your personal
2 staff and the committee staff.

3 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: That's correct.

4 REPRESENTATIVE TURNER: And Chairman
5 Hunter and his staff.

6 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: That is correct,
7 Representative Turner.

8 REPRESENTATIVE TURNER: And that's the
9 scope of their representation?

10 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: That is my
11 understanding of the scope. Yes, sir.

12 REPRESENTATIVE TURNER: Okay. Would
13 the committee be able to provide resources for
14 members of the committee -- I'm talking specifically
15 Democratic members and the political minority -- to
16 also retain our own counsel for purposes of
17 redistricting?

18 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: I'm happy to look
19 at that. I'm not sure if that's been done before,
20 but I'm happy to look at that. I do know that we all
21 have legislative counsel that's available to every
22 member, but I'm happy to look at that and get with
23 you.

24 REPRESENTATIVE TURNER: Okay. Thank
25 you very much.

1 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Thank you,
2 Representative Turner.

3 Members, any other questions?

4 Representative Wu, for what purpose

5 REPRESENTATIVE WU: Questions.

6 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Chair yields for
7 questions.

8 REPRESENTATIVE WU: Thank you,
9 Mr. Chairman. In the last hearing I had asked you if
10 you had any information from the governor's office on
11 exactly the governor's intent or rationale for
12 putting this on the call, thus giving the committee
13 some direction of what we're supposed to be doing,
14 what we're supposed to be looking at, more than just
15 naming a few -- naming an issue. Have you contacted
16 the governor's office since that last hearing?

17 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: I have not.

18 REPRESENTATIVE WU: Okay. Has anyone
19 in your office contacted them?

20 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Not to my
21 knowledge.

22 REPRESENTATIVE WU: Has anyone asked
23 him, "Could you clarify what exactly your intent is,
24 and reasoning is for putting this on the call?"

25

1 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Not beyond my
2 personal knowledge. I don't know.

3 REPRESENTATIVE WU: Okay. Have you
4 considered asking the governor to explain what
5 exactly he means when he's putting this issue on the
6 call?

7 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Not at this time.
8 I'll take that under advisement. I mean, I think
9 that the proclamation that we have received and that
10 we reviewed at the last hearing was, in my mind,
11 pretty clear in the sense that he's put this item on
12 the call, and that it is prudent for this committee
13 to take it up.

14 REPRESENTATIVE WU: Could you explain,
15 in your mind, what is the rationale that you
16 understand of what the governor is --

17 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: I'll give a little
18 leeway up at the front. I just want to make sure
19 that we understand that the audience is not to
20 respond, and it's going to be particularly important
21 when we get into witness testimony. I just want to
22 make sure that we know that now. That's okay.

23 If the gentleman would please repeat
24 his question.

25

1 REPRESENTATIVE WU: You explained that
2 you think that it's not necessary for you to ask the
3 governor to clarify his intent and his rationale for
4 placing this on the call -- for placing a mid-cycle
5 redistricting on the call. You said you understand
6 that, in your mind, it is clear to you what it is.
7 It is unclear to me and many other members on here.
8 Could you explain, in your own words, in your mind,
9 what you believe the governor's intent is in putting
10 this on the call.

11 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: I could not
12 speculate what the governor's intent is. The Chair's
13 position is that the governor has put an item on the
14 proclamation, and as is customary, when the governor
15 puts items on the proclamation, the legislature
16 responds with these hearings. And so on that basis
17 that the Chair has set up these public hearings,
18 including the one two days ago in Austin, the one
19 today here in Houston, and one on Monday in
20 Arlington.

21 REPRESENTATIVE WU: Okay. So now I'm
22 even more confused because just not more than two
23 minutes ago you said it was clear in your mind what
24 the governor intended, what he wants, and his logic,
25 even though you haven't talked to him. But now

1 you're saying that we don't know and that's why we're
2 having these hearings.

3 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: My statement was
4 that the proclamation itself was clear as to the
5 jurisdiction conferred upon the House of
6 Representatives under the constitution to take action
7 or not take action under the constitution. And on
8 that basis, because the governor has put it on the
9 call, as is customary, the Chair was going to take it
10 up. I believe that's the position that has been
11 taken in the Senate as well, and it's customary that
12 any time we have a special session proclamation, we
13 take up that legislation along with all the other
14 items.

15 REPRESENTATIVE WU: Do you know
16 whether or not the governor's true intent is to
17 remove coalition districts from Texas maps?

18 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: I do not, and I
19 struggle to know anyone's true intent. I'm not a
20 mind reader. I haven't been able to read my wife's
21 mind many times, and I can't read the governor's
22 necessarily.

23 REPRESENTATIVE WU: Sure.

24 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: So I can't
25 speculate on what anyone's intent is.

1 REPRESENTATIVE WU: Would you be
2 surprised if the governor specifically said, point
3 blank, "We have the ability now to draw maps that
4 don't have coalition districts"? Are you aware the
5 governor said that publicly?

6 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: I'm aware of the
7 governor making remarks. I'm not aware of the
8 specific details, but I true that you've done a
9 quote, so on that basis, I don't have a reason to
10 dispute the quote. But it's not the Chair's
11 intention to be taking action based off of the
12 expressed words of the governor in a private setting.
13 The governor has given a proclamation, and, as the
14 Chair has indicated, the Chair is going to act on
15 that proclamation.

16 REPRESENTATIVE WU: Well, that again
17 brings us back to my original point. I'm not clear
18 what the intent is and what the purpose of this is
19 and here -- I've read the proclamation. The
20 proclamation to me, as an attorney, provides no basis
21 of why we are redistricting under the law -- under
22 state and federal law -- other than you can, or you
23 have the legal ability to do it right now. But it
24 has not provided to me, as a sitting member of the
25 legislature, of why and for what purpose.

1 So all the other legislation, the
2 governor has provided information on what his
3 feelings are, what his intent is, and what kind of
4 law he would like to see passed. Now, he has not
5 provided that in writing to any of us as members of
6 this committee. Has he provided that in writing or
7 verbally to you?

8 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: He has not.

9 REPRESENTATIVE WU: Okay. So I would
10 assume that you are not a mind reader, as you just
11 said. That you are as in the dark as we are about
12 this.

13 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: I don't know if I
14 would use that terminology. The Chair's position is
15 that the proclamation --

16 REPRESENTATIVE WU: Okay.

17 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: The proclamation
18 was clear as to the jurisdiction conferred upon the
19 legislature under the constitution to take action on
20 items put on call and it has been the intention and
21 the practice of the House for the committees to take
22 up hearings and action on the items put on the call.

23 REPRESENTATIVE WU: Sure. Now, you're
24 an attorney as well. It's reasonable to say that
25

1 there is a distinction between jurisdiction and a
2 purpose. Would that be fair?

3 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: I think that
4 jurisdiction is obviously a legal terminology.
5 Purpose would be in the eye of the beholder, of
6 course.

7 REPRESENTATIVE WU: Sure. And just
8 like the legislature has a jurisdiction to either
9 increase school funding or decrease school fundings,
10 you would agree that those are very different things.

11 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: I would presume
12 that those are certainly different things.

13 REPRESENTATIVE WU: Okay. Now, that
14 would apply to this here and you have stated that we
15 have the clear jurisdiction to be sitting here based
16 on the governor's call, but we do not have any
17 purpose in being here. Could you explain -- could
18 you explain in your own words, in your mind, what the
19 purpose is of this committee? What are we looking to
20 do?

21 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: The purpose of the
22 hearings, as was announced two days ago, is a
23 proclamation has been issued where the governor has
24 put this item on the call. In accordance with the
25 historical practice, we're going to take it up in two

1 phases. The first phase is of course for the public
2 to provide testimony on whether to revise the
3 congressional plan or not and if so, what are things
4 that you would like to see and not see? And we've
5 received testimony at the last hearing on that basis.
6 I anticipate in a moment we'll be able to get to that
7 here today and in Arlington on Monday.

8 And then depending on that testimony,
9 we may or may not take action thereafter. And so
10 this is a two-phase process, and I think it's always
11 prudent when the governor puts an item on the call
12 that we take it seriously and we look into it and
13 that's exactly what we're doing.

14 REPRESENTATIVE WU: So what you're
15 saying is you don't have any idea of what you want to
16 do, correct?

17 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: I wouldn't say
18 that.

19 REPRESENTATIVE WU: You're waiting for
20 public testimony.

21 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Well, I think that
22 my main purpose here today is to hear from the
23 public, and I'd like to be able to do that.
24 Obviously, we've got to get through these questions
25

1 first to be able to hear from the people. And I'd
2 like to be able to go into public testimony.

3 REPRESENTATIVE WU: Thank you. In
4 your own mind have you already an idea or a plan of
5 what you would like to see done on these maps?

6 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: In the sense that
7 whether we take action or not, I've heard testimony
8 that would lead me to believe that perhaps some
9 revisions are necessary. I believe there was
10 testimony two days ago that some people didn't like
11 the current maps. But whether or not we do that is
12 still to be determined and I'd like to get to the
13 public testimony so we can hear that today and in two
14 days.

15 REPRESENTATIVE WU: All right. Let's
16 get to it.

17 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Members, any
18 other --

19 Speaker Moody, for what purpose?

20 SPEAKER MOODY: Just a couple
21 questions of the Chair.

22 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Chair yields for
23 questions.

24 SPEAKER MOODY: Since we took up
25 testimony on Thursday and we had a conversation at

1 that point about whether you had been provided any
2 proposed maps or had begun to prepare any at that
3 time, you said no. And I just want to, now that a
4 couple days have passed, some testimony has come
5 online, have you or your office begun to engage in
6 drafting a proposed map for this committee to
7 consider?

8 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: No.

9 SPEAKER MOODY: Has any -- I keep
10 hearing that maps are coming down from Washington,
11 D.C. Have any maps like that been provided to you or
12 your staff?

13 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: No.

14 SPEAKER MOODY: So we still -- you
15 don't have anything in front of you after one hearing
16 that would indicate what a potential redraw of
17 congressional districts in Texas would look like?

18 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: No. The only one
19 that I have seen was that one that was uploaded to
20 the public portal, and I believe there might have
21 been more uploaded. I haven't looked at them. So
22 that's it.

23 SPEAKER MOODY: Okay. I appreciate
24 it. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

25

1 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Thank you,
2 Mr. Speaker.

3 Members, any other questions?

4 REPRESENTATIVE WALLE: Mr. Chairman.

5 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Chair is going to
6 recognize on the dais with us today Representatives
7 Walle, Lalani, Morales Shaw, Jones, Perez, and
8 Simmons.

9 Did I miss anyone?

10 Okay. Mr. Walle, for what purpose?

11 REPRESENTATIVE WALLE: Thank you.
12 Just to ask a few questions of the Chairman.

13 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Chair yields for
14 questions.

15 REPRESENTATIVE WALLE: Thank you,
16 Mr. Chairman, for allowing the non-redistricting
17 committee members to at least sit on the committee
18 and allowing us to participate so that voices are
19 heard from every part of Harris County. Being a
20 member from Harris County for the last nine terms,
21 it's an honor to represent, not just my district,
22 House District 140 and North Harris County and Aldine
23 area. But I just don't represent North Harris
24 County. I get to vote on -- many of us get to vote
25 -- all of us, 150 members, get to vote on legislation

1 that impacts statewide issues. And so appreciate the
2 opportunity.

3 But as it pertains to any maps or
4 potential maps that would be presented by this
5 committee or identified by this committee, is the
6 Chair aware or how would this committee ensure that
7 committees of interest, like those in CD 29, 18, 9,
8 7, are not split or diluted during the redistricting
9 process?

10 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: It's the Chair's
11 intention, as he's previously stated, as far as it
12 depends on the Chair to comply with the Voting Rights
13 Act and -- at all times.

14 REPRESENTATIVE WALLE: And what
15 specifically will that criteria be -- how will that
16 criteria be used in redrawing these maps?

17 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: The Chair doesn't
18 have a particular plan in mind on specific districts.
19 As I mentioned, I haven't even seen a map. I haven't
20 prepared a map. And so it would be premature for me
21 to comment on that other than to say I'm going to
22 comply with the Voting Rights Act in everything I do.

23 REPRESENTATIVE WALLE: Okay. And so
24 to that point, how will the Chair and the committee
25 do that?

1 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: It's the Chair's
2 understanding that if a bill is filed after these
3 public hearings, we'll take it up and consider it.
4 At that time we'll have another public hearing, of
5 course, on any proposal, and then we will evaluate it
6 and ensure at all times that it complies with the
7 Voting Rights Act.

8 REPRESENTATIVE WALLE: And in
9 compliance with the Voting Rights Act, how will the
10 committee ensure that there are no gerrymandering or
11 racial gerrymandering of these districts?

12 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: The Chair
13 understands and part of the purpose of counsel is to
14 make sure that we get appropriate advice. I'm not an
15 expert on redistricting law, but we receive that
16 advice. And whoever, you know, moves forward with
17 anything would -- of course we have counsel in that
18 sense, and I would -- you know, my expectation is
19 that any map that is drawn will be reviewed for
20 compliance with the Voting Rights Act, and that it
21 will comply with the Voting Rights Act.

22 And of course throughout the process
23 we'll have a deliberative process for the members of
24 this committee on any proposal if one comes forward,
25 as well as on the floor of the House.

1 REPRESENTATIVE WALLE: Okay. And you
2 mentioned that you have hired outside counsel for the
3 committee on redistricting; is that correct?

4 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: As I mentioned to
5 Representative Turner, outside counsel has been
6 retained for the speaker and his staff, the Chair and
7 his staff. And because of the litigation that was
8 ongoing, for Chairman Hunter and his staff.

9 REPRESENTATIVE WALLE: Okay.

10 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Just so the record
11 is clear, he's the former Chair redistricting.

12 REPRESENTATIVE WALLE: Correct. And
13 as I understand it, there has been -- since there is
14 no map, we are -- are you aware that we recently had
15 a trial on the 2021 map? Is that -- are you aware of
16 that?

17 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: I'm generally
18 aware. The Chair was not involved in the lawsuit.

19 (Audio cuts out)

20 REPRESENTATIVE WALLE: And that map
21 was passed by the Texas Legislature, and who controls
22 the Texas Legislature?

23 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: The people of
24 Texas.

25

1 REPRESENTATIVE WALLE: Just to be
2 clear -- and I'm not trying to be cute here -- but
3 who is in control -- which political party is in
4 control of the Texas Legislature as we speak?

5 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: The Republican
6 party currently holds and held in '21 a majority of
7 the seats in the House and Senate.

8 REPRESENTATIVE WALLE: Okay. And they
9 are the ones that approved this particular map; is
10 that correct?

11 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: I don't recall
12 actually offhand, Representative Walle. I don't want
13 to lie to you about what the exact vote count was,
14 but I do know that it was approved by the House and
15 Senate in '21. I believe in the third special
16 session it passed Senate.

17 REPRESENTATIVE WALLE: You're aware
18 that the Republicans drew this map that now the
19 Republicans saying are now illegal; is that my
20 understanding?

21 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: All right. The
22 Chair will remind the audience that clapping or
23 outbursts in response to statements is not allowed
24 under the rules of decorum -- rules of decorum. And
25

1 I trust that the audience will help me comply with
2 the rules of decorum going forward.

3 To the gentleman's point -- and I
4 apologize if I have forgotten the exact question
5 asked. The votes in '21, I understand the
6 Republicans voted for the map, me included, because I
7 believed it complied with the Voting Rights Act.
8 Whether or not individuals believe it does or
9 doesn't, it is not the Chair's position that the map
10 drawn in '21 violates the Voting Rights Act.

11 REPRESENTATIVE WALLE: Okay. But it
12 wasn't until you got a -- well, the governor, Abbott,
13 received a letter from the Department of Justice that
14 now ironically says that these maps are now -- I'm
15 paraphrasing -- are discriminatory in a particular
16 way. Is that your understanding?

17 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: I don't
18 necessarily read into the proclamation that. If the
19 governor has made a statement, he'd have to defer to
20 the governor, right. The Chair has read the
21 proclamation. The proclamation says what it says and
22 as the Chair has mentioned, it's the customary
23 practice in the legislature when the governor puts an
24 item on the call to take it up.

25

1 REPRESENTATIVE WALLE: Okay. Are
2 you --

3 DEAN THOMPSON: Mr. Chairman.
4 Mr. Chairman.

5 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Dean Thompson, for
6 what purpose?

7 DEAN THOMPSON: May I respond just a
8 little bit to my colleague?

9 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: The Chair will
10 recognize Dean Thompson for a brief statement.

11 DEAN THOMPSON: It just --
12 Representative Walle, it seems to me that the DOJ is
13 accusing Texas of being racist. And I know you know
14 I don't need to defend Dan Patrick because he can
15 defend himself. And I don't need to defend the
16 legislature because they can defend themselves. And
17 I don't need to defend -- definitely don't need to
18 defend Ken Paxton because he can defend himself. But
19 he specifically stated that those maps was drawn, and
20 they were not racially -- race was not involved in
21 it. And I don't know why the United States Justice
22 Department is accusing us of drawing racist maps. I
23 just don't get it.

24 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Chair recognizes
25 Representative Walle for a brief statement, and then

1 if he wants to ask the questions to the Chair he
2 will. The Chair will yield for that.

3 REPRESENTATIVE WALLE: I think that's
4 what the perplexing, Dean Thompson, is really why
5 we're here. We don't know why we're here, honestly.
6 I'm kind of speechless on that fact.

7 But to Chair Vasut, are you aware that
8 -- and if the committee -- if you answered this
9 question at a previous (audio cuts out), I just want
10 to get this at least for our Harris County folk to
11 understand. Are you aware that the 2021 map
12 increased majority white districts?

13 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: I have not looked
14 at that -- the breakdown of every single one and
15 tabulate every single one. It's been four years,
16 Representative Walle, and I don't want to give you a
17 wrong answer. So I'm just going to say I'm not
18 advised at this time.

19 REPRESENTATIVE WALLE: Are you or any
20 of the committee members, but particularly you -- you
21 Chair this committee -- are you aware that the most
22 recent census data shows that most of Texas'
23 population growth in the past decade has come
24 communities of color. Is that a fair statement?

25

1 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: I'm not 100
2 percent sure, Representative Walle. I don't have
3 information in front of me to dispute that because I
4 haven't looked at the --

5 Ladies and gentlemen, the Chair will
6 admonish the audience to follow the rules of decorum.
7 The Chair wants to ensure that everyone remains and
8 has an opportunity to speak, so let's make sure that
9 we follow the rules of decorum.

10 To the gentleman's point, the reason
11 I'm not able to -- I have not looked at that census
12 in detail and I don't want to --

13 REPRESENTATIVE WALLE: Okay.

14 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Again, my rule is
15 I'm going to give you the straight answer I can, and
16 I'm going to answer your question. And so on that
17 basis, I don't have that census data in front of me.
18 I haven't looked at it.

19 REPRESENTATIVE WALLE: Okay. Well,
20 just --

21 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: I have no reason
22 to doubt your statement if that helps.

23 REPRESENTATIVE WALLE: Okay. So for
24 the Chairman's information, census data, also the
25 American Community Survey indicates that 80, 90

1 percent of the growth in the state of Texas has been
2 by -- the last decade by black, brown, Asian folks.
3 Just want to set that record straight.

4 And that you're sitting in the most
5 diverse county in the country. Are you aware of
6 that?

7 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: I believe, hyper
8 technically, gentleman Representative Lalani might
9 take issue with that because I believe that Fort Bend
10 County is the most --

11 REPRESENTATIVE WALLE: And where is
12 Fort Bend?

13 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Fort Bend County
14 is very close by.

15 REPRESENTATIVE WALLE: It abuts Harris
16 County; is that correct?

17 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: And the Houston
18 Metro area. You are absolutely right.

19 REPRESENTATIVE WALLE: It's in the
20 Houston Metro area. So this region is one of the
21 most diverse communities in the country; is that
22 correct?

23 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: I have -- I would
24 assume so I think we're better for it.

25

1 REPRESENTATIVE WALLE: And that would
2 be a strength. That diversity would be a strength
3 because we're all Americans; is that correct?

4 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Absolutely. I
5 think that unity and diversity is the strongest
6 principle that there is.

7 REPRESENTATIVE WALLE: Okay. And is
8 the Chair aware that this university campus is one of
9 the most diverse university campuses, the University
10 of Houston, in the country?

11 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: That's the Chair's
12 understanding. As Representative Walle knows, the
13 Chair is a graduate of this institution.

14 REPRESENTATIVE WALLE: You are. The
15 University of Houston Law Center, as I.

16 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Yes, sir.

17 REPRESENTATIVE WALLE: I appreciate
18 the time you've given us to answer, particularly
19 myself as a member of this body, and look forward to
20 hearing from our members of Congress and the
21 panelists. And I want all of you guys to know that
22 you're being heard, and we're going to do everything
23 we can to fight for you, your interests. You deserve
24 it. We're all Americans. Godspeed.

25

1 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Ms. Jones, for
2 what purpose?

3 REPRESENTATIVE JONES: I have
4 questions of the Chair.

5 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Chair yields for
6 questions.

7 REPRESENTATIVE JONES: Chair, as you
8 know, I represent this district, House District 147
9 where we are.

10 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: That's the Chair's
11 understanding. Yes.

12 REPRESENTATIVE JONES: Yes. And I
13 have two degrees from this institution. An
14 undergraduate degree and a law degree. The Chair
15 understands that?

16 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Chair understands
17 that. Chair understands that you might have been a
18 track star here at some point in time.

19 REPRESENTATIVE JONES: That too. And
20 the Chair would agree that when people are elected by
21 their constituents, we know what's going on in our
22 communities because we're here on the ground. Would
23 the Chair agree with that?

24 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: I believe the
25 Texas House of all, whether it's compared to the

1 Senate or U.S. Congress, is the closest to the
2 people. And so on that basis, I'd of course agree
3 with the --

4 REPRESENTATIVE JONES: Exactly. So my
5 colleague brought up the 2021 maps. Would you agree
6 that in 2021 the black and brown communities and
7 Asian communities were cracked, and packed, and baked
8 into districts that diluted their voting power to
9 create more Anglo-dominated districts, even though
10 the majority of the growth came from people of color?

11 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Again, the Chair
12 has not looked at the census data for the districts
13 that exist now. It's been four years since they were
14 drawn and back in '21. So I can't either -- I can't
15 answer that question in the affirmative.

16 REPRESENTATIVE JONES: And would the
17 Chair agree that we're repeating the same unjust
18 process only worse because it's mid-decade, mid-
19 census? Would the Chair agree with that?

20 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: The Chair would
21 not agree. Chair's position is that we're going to
22 always following the Voting Rights Act, and that's
23 the Chair's position and always will be the Chair's
24 position.

25

1 REPRESENTATIVE JONES: The Chair is a
2 lawyer, right?

3 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: The Chair has
4 engaged in what is known as the "practice" of law.

5 REPRESENTATIVE JONES: And the Chair
6 is familiar with due process, right?

7 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: The Chair is
8 absolutely familiar with due process.

9 REPRESENTATIVE JONES: And the Chair
10 understands that with due process we're entitled to
11 meaningful notice and hearing of rights that are
12 being taken away from us, correct?

13 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Due process -- the
14 due process that is owed depends upon the action
15 being taken and whether it infringes fundamental
16 rights, but in all cases due process is at the
17 minimum, notice and hearing.

18 REPRESENTATIVE JONES: Right. So at a
19 minimum, notice and hearing, do you not -- does the
20 Chair agree that the people that are coming to
21 testify in this hearing, at least at this point, are
22 unable to testify as to how they will be negatively
23 or positively affected by any maps because there are
24 no maps filed for anybody to testify to?

25

1 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: The question that
2 the members of the public will be able to address
3 whenever we get to public testimony will be whether
4 or not they believe the current maps are appropriate
5 or if they'd like to see changes.

6 REPRESENTATIVE JONES: Okay.

7 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: And so I cannot
8 speak for the members of the public and what their
9 opinion will be. I'd love to be able to hear it.

10 REPRESENTATIVE JONES: Okay. So to
11 your point, once the Chair hears what the public has
12 to say as to whether they think we should change the
13 current maps, if the Chair believes that maps should
14 be changed, is the public going to have the
15 opportunity to have public hearings on the maps that
16 are redrawn prior to us voting on them?

17 And second part of the question, will
18 the hearings after a map is filed be held across the
19 state, not in three places like we have now?

20 Third, will the maps also -- will
21 these public hearings, that I believe our
22 constituents are entitled to, be able to be via Zoom
23 like they were in Austin? Because I just find it
24 curious that in Austin, where the people that look
25 like us, people were allowed to testify via Zoom, and

1 here you have to be here present. And I'm concerned
2 about our disabled people who actually have opinions
3 about whether we should be mid-decade redistricting
4 don't have the opportunity to come before us because
5 they can't get here or whatever. Will they have the
6 opportunity to come before us and have us ask them
7 questions? So those are the questions I have for
8 now, Mr. Chair.

9 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: The answer to your
10 first question is 1000 percent. The answer to your
11 second and third questions --

12 REPRESENTATIVE JONES: Wait, wait.
13 For purposes of the people who weren't taking notes,
14 when you say --

15 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Yeah. It's a
16 compound question under Texas Rules of Evidence. I
17 had to answer it. It would have been objected form
18 if we were in a deposition. But I would say this --

19 REPRESENTATIVE JONES: But we're not
20 in a deposition.

21 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: -- the question
22 that you asked -- and correct me if I'm wrong,
23 Representative -- was will the public have an
24 opportunity to weigh in through a public hearing and
25 testimony on any proposal, if any, that this

1 committee hears. And the answer to that question is
2 1000 percent.

3 The second questions that you asked
4 about the method, and the timing, and the number of
5 places, the Chair will take those under advisement
6 when scheduling the public hearings, which have not
7 been scheduled at this time.

8 REPRESENTATIVE JONES: Right. So
9 would you agree with me, Mr. Chair, that right now
10 there's no new proposed map for anyone here
11 testifying today to speak to?

12 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: There is no
13 proposed map pending before the committee at this
14 time for which public testimony will be offered. But
15 we will have a hearing if such a map is filed.
16 And --

17 REPRESENTATIVE JONES: I'm sorry. I
18 thought you were finished.

19 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Representative, I
20 yield for questions.

21 REPRESENTATIVE JONES: So when will
22 the public receive the map of any proposed changes?

23 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: The Chair is not
24 sure at this time, but the Chair, as he previously
25 announced the first hearing, while the rules allow

1 for 24 hours' notice after a bill is referred to set
2 it for hearing, the Chair is going to give more
3 notice than that.

4 REPRESENTATIVE JONES: How much notice
5 is the Chair going to give?

6 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: The Chair is not
7 sure at this time. It depends on the calendar.

8 REPRESENTATIVE JONES: And so again,
9 once --

10 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: But it will be
11 more than 24 hours. You have the Chair's word on
12 that.

13 REPRESENTATIVE JONES: Okay. Right.
14 Will the Chair, in addition to giving more than 48
15 hours, give more than one hearing?

16 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Chair is not sure
17 at this time. Maybe. I don't know. I haven't made
18 a final determination on that.

19 REPRESENTATIVE JONES: And where will
20 that hearing be?

21 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: The Chair is not
22 sure at this time, but I will take your suggestions
23 under advisement as have been made by others as well.

24 REPRESENTATIVE JONES: And I'll just
25 say this, that some people have jobs to go to. Some

1 people have to make arrangements to get places if
2 it's not where they are. So I would respectfully
3 request for the people that live in Texas that we be
4 given sufficient notice -- or they be given
5 sufficient notice so that they can make arrangements
6 to come to any hearings that we hope are near them so
7 that they can give their testimony on the actual maps
8 that will absolutely affect their rights and their
9 representation in Congress.

10 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Thank you,
11 Representative.

12 Representative Simmons --

13 REPRESENTATIVE JONES: I'm sorry. I
14 had just one more question.

15 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Oh, I'm sorry.
16 Representative Jones, you're recognized for another
17 question.

18 REPRESENTATIVE JONES: Okay. So why
19 are we not waiting to hold these hearings until after
20 the current litigation about the 2021 maps are
21 resolved?

22 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: The Chair has
23 already answered the question that the governor has
24 placed an item on the call, and the committee will
25 respond to it.

1 REPRESENTATIVE JONES: And along those
2 same lines, in 2021, one of the proposed maps was
3 going to consolidate CD 9 and CD 18, which would have
4 wiped out one black district. Does this -- does the
5 Chair have any intention to do the same thing or
6 attempt to do the same thing in this redistricting
7 fiasco?

8 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: The Chair doesn't
9 have a map in front of him, hasn't seen a map in that
10 regards, and so I don't have any -- I can't tell you
11 one way or the other, but I can tell you this. We
12 will always follow the Voting Rights Act, and I would
13 like to hear the public testimony to see what they'd
14 like to do.

15 REPRESENTATIVE JONES: Thank you,
16 Mr. Chair.

17 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Thank you,
18 Representative --

19 REPRESENTATIVE SHAW: Chairman, I have
20 a procedural question, please.

21 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Point of
22 parliamentary inquiry is stated by Representative
23 Shaw. Please state your inquiry.

24 REPRESENTATIVE SHAW: Thank you,
25 Chairman. We're sitting here in front of hundreds of

1 my fellow Houstonians. Happy to be here. Many of
2 which are the target of this mid-decade
3 redistricting. And I just want to know, Chairman, is
4 it your intent that as the individuals testify and if
5 they leave the room that the other members who have
6 -- other public citizens who have signed up to
7 testify and are standing right outside of these
8 chambers are going to be allowed to come in to give
9 their testimony for which they have signed up for and
10 are waiting outside the doors to give?

11 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: It is the Chair's
12 intention, as he previously indicated, that when
13 individuals testify, if you'll please leave the room
14 so that individuals outside may be able to come in
15 and take your seat, so we can extend that courtesy to
16 our fellow citizens outside.

17 Thank you, Representative Shaw.

18 REPRESENTATIVE SHAW: Thank you for
19 that clarification, Chairman.

20 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Thank you.

21 Representative Simmons for what
22 purpose?

23 REPRESENTATIVE SIMMONS: Thank you,
24 Mr. Chairman. I just had a quick question. I know
25 it's very important for us to get to the public --

1 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Chair yields for
2 questions.

3 REPRESENTATIVE SIMMONS: -- testimony.
4 Thank you so much. Just for clarification, so
5 typically when we are -- the legislature is charged
6 with drawing maps it is due to a census that has been
7 taken, and new information has been made available.
8 In this case, this seems atypical, but has there been
9 new census data that has been given or shared? Is
10 there a new every five year census that has come out?
11 I'm just trying to get clarification as to why -- or
12 what new data will be used for these maps. Thank
13 you.

14 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: While the census
15 does provide estimates, I believe on an annual basis,
16 we have not, of course, received any new census.
17 That is done every 10 years. And any map that is
18 drawn, it's my understanding, will be based off the
19 2020 census. Thank you, Ms. Simmons.

20 REPRESENTATIVE TURNER: Mr. Chairman.

21 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Mr. Turner, for
22 what purpose?

23 REPRESENTATIVE TURNER: It's been
24 brought to my attention, Mr. Chairman, that
25 apparently, we've run out witness affirmation forms

1 outside the hearing room. Is the Chair aware of
2 that? Is there a plan to make sure we get more
3 witness affirmation forms so people can sign up to
4 testify?

5 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Chair has been
6 advised that that is the case, and we are printing
7 more. I thank you for bringing that to the Chair's
8 attention.

9 REPRESENTATIVE TURNER: Okay. There
10 have been more already printed?

11 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: They're printing
12 them right now. On that basis, the Chair will extend
13 registration by 30 minutes to 1:00 p.m. today.

14 REPRESENTATIVE TURNER: Very good.
15 Thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Thank you,
17 Representative Turner, for bringing that to my
18 attention.

19 REPRESENTATIVE TURNER: And
20 Mr. Chairman, just a quick follow up.

21 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Mr. Turner, for
22 what purpose?

23 REPRESENTATIVE TURNER: Your dialogue
24 with Representative Walle, you made mention of the
25 fact that you believe the plan -- the redistricting

1 plans that you voted for in 2021 complied with the
2 Voting Rights Act. Do you believe that those plans
3 complied with all applicable laws?

4 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Yes.

5 REPRESENTATIVE TURNER: All right.

6 Thank you very much.

7 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Thank you,
8 Mr. Turner.

9 Any other questions?

10 Mr. Wu, for what purpose?

11 REPRESENTATIVE WU: Just a brief
12 statement.

13 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Chair recognizes
14 Mr. Wu for a brief statement.

15 REPRESENTATIVE WU: Thank you,
16 Mr. Chairman. And I was just going back over in my
17 mind some of your comments from earlier. And you
18 made a statement that members of the public had said
19 that they were unhappy with the current maps, and I
20 think you're intentionally conflating that -- what is
21 happening today with what is happening in the
22 redistricting trial -- or what has happened at
23 redistricting trial.

24 That there -- by a lot of people on
25 this dais and a lot of people in this room accuse the

1 majority leadership of Republicans in the 2021
2 redistricting of racial gerrymandering. In fact,
3 that is why that map -- those maps, the 2021 maps,
4 went to trial in El Paso for three weeks.

5 And I think that people in the last
6 hearing, 100 percent -- 100 percent of the people,
7 including the people who testified afterwards, after
8 the five-hour mark and you shut the committee down,
9 those people also 100 percent testified against the
10 process of redistricting and also disliked the past
11 maps for the same reasons. That the past maps, the
12 2021 maps included racial gerrymandering.

13 Because we created a system where the
14 96 percent of the growth in the state was in minority
15 communities, but 100 percent of the growth of elected
16 positions occurred in non-minority communities. That
17 40 percent of the state basically governs the other
18 60 percent. And I think it is disingenuous and maybe
19 a little bit of a misstatement to say that people are
20 unhappy with the current maps in the way that I think
21 you're saying.

22 That I think that people are unhappy
23 with the current maps because they do include racial
24 gerrymandering as we alleged in the trial. But
25 people would rather accept the current racial

1 gerrymandering over the intensive racial
2 gerrymandering that the governor's proclamation calls
3 for.

4 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: The audience will
5 maintain decorum. If we get to the point where we're
6 distracting from our time here today, I'd hate to
7 have to take any action to maintain decorum. I don't
8 want to. I want to hear from everybody.

9 But did the gentleman complete his
10 statement?

11 REPRESENTATIVE WU: No.

12 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Chair recognizes
13 Mr. Wu to continue his statement.

14 REPRESENTATIVE WU: And I think it
15 would be important for witnesses when they testify
16 today that they can say that "I disapprove of racial
17 gerrymandering that I believe occurred in the past
18 maps, and I especially disapprove of the future
19 racial gerrymandering that's going to occur to make
20 this 5C Trump map occur." Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Any other
22 statements or questions from members of the
23 committee?

24

25

1 We will now proceed to public
2 testimony. I'll allow you to clap for that one. All
3 right.

4 Chair is going to call our first panel
5 and then give information for the second panel.
6 Again, if your name is called for the first panel,
7 please come down to the front. If your name is
8 called for the second to be ready, please be ready.

9 Chair calls Sylvia Garcia, Jasmine
10 Crockett (phonetic), Lizzie Fletcher (phonetic), and
11 Al Green.

12 Mr. Green has been called as well.

13 Now, if the gentleman -- I believe
14 that the gentleman may be sitting at the table right
15 now. Actually --

16 UNIDENTIFIED MALE: That's John Mata.

17 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: That's John Mata?

18 You want me to --

19 Is he in your list here?

20 UNIDENTIFIED MALE: He is. He is
21 (indiscernible).

22 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Okay. Congressman
23 Green, would you be so kind if I took this
24 gentleman's testimony first? Is that all right with
25 you?

1 CONGRESSMAN GREEN: That's fine with
2 me.

3 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: All right. Chair
4 will not call -- Congressman Green, please be ready.
5 You'll be on the second panel.

6 Chair calls Johnny Mata, who I believe
7 is seated already. Okay.

8 Now, joining Congressman Green on the
9 second panel will be Nick Lampson (phonetic), Sasha
10 Leggett (phonetic), and Dr. Sergio Lira. Please be
11 ready after this panel to come and testify.

12 Lira, I apologize.

13 And if I mispronounce a name at all,
14 please correct me. I don't intend to, and I want to
15 make sure that we call you correctly here. I'm
16 looking at these forms. Since we've done these in
17 paper form, if I could have -- could you take --

18 Congressman Crockett, we need you to
19 sign your affirmation form. That's going to be
20 brought to you momentarily. I'll come to you last so
21 that we can get going here.

22 Chair calls Johnny Mata. Mr. Mata, I
23 show you registered as Johnny Mata testifying on
24 behalf of Greater of -- Houston for Greater Justice.
25 You are, as required by the rules, on the revised

1 congressional redistricting plan. And place -- is
2 that correct?

3 JOHNNY MATA: I'm the Chair of the
4 Greater Houston Coalition for Justice.

5 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: And I did I read
6 everything about your name and your registration
7 correctly?

8 JOHNNY MATA: I've been called all
9 kinds of names, so don't feel bad.

10 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Chair will take it
11 as it's accurate. Please give us your testimony,
12 sir.

13 JOHNNY MATA: Okay. First of all, I
14 am very interested in and was listening to questions
15 to you as the Chairman of why are we having this
16 redistricting on a special session? Never heard an
17 answer. But I will say that the issue is, as you
18 know, (indiscernible) speaking about greed and power.

19 It's very funny, I've been doing this
20 for over 50 years, participated in many
21 redistricting, and we have to have -- this is on a
22 special session, when we just had a real major
23 tragedy in the river -- Gaudalupe River. And a lot
24 of lost lives, and a lot of people that still don't
25

1 have their life together. That's what this session
2 should be, not in redistricting.

3 Furthermore, let us not fool
4 ourselves. The governor, in whatever intent this
5 special session came, it came as a surprise. We've
6 been preparing for other things as groups, civil
7 rights groups. We are really faced with a lot of the
8 immigration issues that even U.S. citizens,
9 especially military people, are being deported.

10 And redistricting comes every 10
11 years. We weren't ready for this. And I think the
12 message should be there should not be a special
13 session on redistricting.

14 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Please finish your
15 testimony.

16 JOHNNY MATA: That message should go
17 to the governor. I would call the governor because
18 as a state judge, he made a decision on a man that
19 was accused of taking a lawnmower --

20 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Thank you.
21 Gentleman's time is expired. We may come back to you
22 for some questions. Members at the end of the panel
23 will come back to you.

24 JOHNNY MATA: Okay.

25 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Thank you, sir.

1 Chair calls Sylvia Garcia. I show you
2 registered to testify as Sylvia Garcia on behalf of
3 yourself and testifying on revisions to the
4 congressional redistricting plan. Is that correct?

5 SYLVIA GARCIA: Yes. But I want to be
6 on record that my answer is hell no, we don't need to
7 be doing this.

8 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: I understand.
9 Please give us your testimony.

10 SYLVIA GARCIA: Thank you.

11 As I testified in Austin, we should
12 not be here today. You all should really be back in
13 Austin, passing legislation to support families in
14 the Hill Country after the devastating flooding.
15 Instead, we're here today playing political games to
16 appease the fellow in the White House in his lust to
17 retain power.

18 We are pretending that the governor
19 did not approve the very maps he is now insisting
20 must be changed. This political theatre will hurt
21 communities in my district targeted in the DOJ
22 letter, CD 29, and it is just shameful.

23 So let me tell you about District 29.
24 Our shared values and cultures far outnumber our
25 differences. We're a community that values faith,

1 family, and hard work, and service. At nearly 75
2 percent Latino, this district was created to comply
3 with the Voting Rights Act which you, Mr. Chairman,
4 say you fully support. And any suggestion otherwise
5 by the Department of Justice is simply a lie.

6 From Lindale, to the East End, to
7 Aldine to Pasadena, to Galena Park, to Jacinto City
8 in South Houston, we are a community and we stick
9 together. We are home to the area's largest Dia de
10 Los Muertos celebration, award winning mariachis,
11 championship high school teams, and some of the
12 greatest people you'll ever have the privilege of
13 meeting here in Texas.

14 We drive the Texas economy by working
15 the Houston ship channel, and we would never, ever,
16 ever let a conman from New York tell us Texas what to
17 do.

18 Ripping up the 29th District will
19 silence the voices of this community and that is a
20 travesty. As has been said earlier, the population
21 growth in Texas is because of the Latino population.
22 The Voting Rights Act protects districts like the
23 29th with common interests, priorities, and
24 background. Given this, I urge you to reject this
25 partisan gerrymandering, reject the maps from the

1 fellow in the White House that no one has seen, end
2 the charade, and support the families who are
3 grieving and do what matters. Please stand up for
4 Texas. And with that, I yield back.

5 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Thank you for your
6 testimony.

7 Chair calls Lizzie Fletcher. I show
8 you registered to testify as Lizzie Fletcher on
9 behalf of yourself on the revised congressional
10 redistricting plan. Is that correct?

11 LIZZIE FLETCHER: It is correct that
12 I'm here to testify on behalf of myself and the
13 constituents of Texas' 7th Congressional District,
14 who I represent.

15 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Is it okay if we
16 keep your -- and I understand your position. Is it
17 okay if we keep your registration on behalf of
18 yourself just because that's not an organization, but
19 in your elected capacity, which we understand? Is
20 that okay?

21 LIZZIE FLETCHER: Yes. Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Understood.
23 Please give us your testimony.

24 LIZZIE FLETCHER: Good morning, Chair
25 Vasut, Vice Chair Rosenthal, and members of the

1 committee. I'm Congresswoman Lizzie Fletcher. I
2 have the privilege of representing Texas' 7th
3 Congressional (video/audio cuts out).

4 ...elected their candidate of choice
5 since this district was configured in 2021. I'm
6 proud to be their candidate of choice. It is the
7 honor of my life to serve the people of this
8 district. And it is my duty to defend them against
9 the harm that could come from this redistricting
10 process.

11 I'm disappointed to be here today for
12 a hearing purporting to get the views of Texans on a
13 congressional redistricting map and replacing it with
14 a map that no one has seen.

15 It is important for you to know,
16 however, that all but 1 of the 13 congressional
17 districts currently represented by a Democrat has a
18 majority minority population, including all 4
19 districts here in Houston. And in all 13 of those
20 district, minority voters elect their candidate of
21 choice. And those 13 districts are the only
22 districts where minority votes, who make up more than
23 60 percent of the population of our state,
24 consistently and reliably elect their candidate of
25 choice.

1 To dismantle any of these 13 districts
2 currently represented by Democrats would be
3 intentionally diluting the voting strength of
4 minority communities. You cannot do this without
5 harming Texans and you should not. It is against the
6 law, and it is against the fundamental organizing
7 principle of a democratic society that all citizens,
8 not just the privileged few, have the right and the
9 ability to have a say in our government.

10 We have a long and shameful history of
11 discrimination when it comes to voting in our beloved
12 state. From poll taxes to white-only primaries,
13 Texas has discriminated against voters of color for
14 generations.

15 THE CLERK: Please complete your
16 testimony.

17 LIZZIE FLETCHER: You have the power
18 to reject that, to reject the pressure from President
19 Trump and national Republican operatives urging you
20 to offset their anticipated electoral losses
21 elsewhere by redrawing the map in Texas to
22 discriminate against minority communities.

23 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Thank you for your
24 testimony. We'll come back to you.

25

1 Chair calls Jasmine Crockett. I show
2 you registered to testify as Jasmine Crockett on
3 behalf of yourself on the revisions to the
4 congressional redistricting plan. Is that correct?

5 JASMINE CROCKETT: Yes. As well as --

6 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Please give us
7 your testimony.

8 JASMINE CROCKETT: Okay. Thank you.

9 So I am Congresswoman Jasmine
10 Crockett. I am also testifying on behalf of the
11 people of Texas 30th and frankly, all the people that
12 have any sense or any compassion in the state of
13 Texas.

14 Now, it seems like we have
15 consistently heard the refrain that Michael Jackson
16 used to sing of "Why, why, why." And so, I just want
17 to be clear because I have an opportunity to see so
18 many people that I served with, and unlike the Chair,
19 I actually do recall a number of things, such as the
20 fact that the state was grown by 95 percent people of
21 color.

22 I also recall and I'm old enough to
23 remember when Texas lawmakers took pride in not being
24 D.C. I'm old enough to remember how you ignored the
25 voices of people during the last redistricting. I'm

1 old enough to remember that we were assured that we
2 would have our map done from the Texas House, yet we
3 didn't. Instead, we took the Texas Senate map.

4 I'm old enough to remember that we
5 were assured that we would have two new seats, one in
6 the DFW area and one in the Harris/Fort Bend area. I
7 am old enough to remember that we acknowledged that
8 the Latino community absolutely was entitled to
9 another seat under the Voting Rights Act.

10 I am old enough to remember when we
11 fought the current maps because while 95 percent of
12 the growth was due to people of color, not only did
13 they create two new Anglo-majority seats that are
14 approximately 766,000 people each, you all paired the
15 9th and 18th congressional districts, and we had to
16 fight to unpair them.

17 I am old enough to remember that I
18 testified in court about a month ago, and the state
19 took the position that they didn't consider race when
20 they created the maps that we're currently sitting
21 under. I am old enough to remember that this
22 legislature has consistently been found to be
23 intentionally racially discriminatory in the drawing
24 of these maps ever since the Voting Rights Act was
25 enacted.

1 I am also old enough to remember that
2 it was a great Texan that signed the Voting Rights
3 Act of 1965 into law. So --

4 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Please finish your
5 testimony.

6 JASMINE CROCKETT: Yes. To comply
7 with the Voting Rights Act, we should have 60 percent
8 of the seats that allow people of color to elect
9 their representatives. That would be 24 seats.
10 Instead, we currently only have 14. The ultimate
11 measure of a man is not where he stands in moments of
12 comfort and convenience but where he stands in times
13 of challenge and controversy. I am asking you in the
14 words of M.L.K., "Where will you stand?"

15 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Thank you for your
16 testimony.

17 The room will come to order. Thank
18 you. The gallery will come to order. The gallery
19 will come to order, or the Chair will have to clear
20 the gallery. The gallery will come to order, or the
21 Chair will have to clear the gallery. The Chair does
22 not want to do that. Remember, every time you're
23 taking away from other people talking.

24 Members of the committee, any
25 questions for this panel?

1 REPRESENTATIVE WU: Yes.

2 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Representative Wu,
3 you're recognized to question the panel.

4 REPRESENTATIVE WU: Thank you.

5 This question is for everyone here.

6 The preface is, we've been trying to find out why
7 we're here. The Chair says that he knows
8 jurisdictionally what the authority is that we're
9 here but not exactly what we're supposed to be doing.
10 The governor has not really said anything other than
11 he wants to eliminate coalition districts.

12 Could you tell us, do you support
13 districts made up of coalitions of all races that
14 black, white, Asian, Latino, everyone together coming
15 together to pick their people, pick the person that
16 they want, no matter who that person happens to be?
17 Do you support that, and do you think that should be
18 protected?

19 LIZZIE FLETCHER: Yes. Representative
20 Wu, I do support coalition districts, and as I
21 testified, all 13 districts currently held by a
22 democratic member of Congress are districts where a
23 coalition of minority voters elect their candidate of
24 choice. And therefore, if this panel does as
25 President Trump has suggested or stated, that he

1 would like to remove five Democratic members and
2 replace them with five Republican members, you will
3 be intentionally dismantling coalition districts in
4 violation of the Voting Rights Act and the needs and
5 desires of the people of Congressional District 7 and
6 districts throughout the state.

7 JASMINE CROCKETT: I echo the points
8 that were just made, but I want to say that while
9 we've been talking about law, and there's a number of
10 lawyers that are sitting here, we understand what the
11 Voting Rights Act stands for. We also understand
12 that there's a little thing called the Constitution
13 that some people in D.C. want to ignore.

14 The reality is that we are simply
15 seeking representation of all people in Texas. All
16 30 million people should have a voice in the policies
17 that are made. And frankly, when you live in a
18 democracy, if you have a problem because you don't
19 want to answer to your poor policies, then maybe come
20 up with better policies.

21 But at the end of the day, we
22 absolutely should not be going out of our way to do
23 what this legislature is consistently been found to
24 be guilty of doing, which is to make sure that they
25 can do an overemphasis of Anglo voices in this state.

1 Only 40 percent of this state is Anglo, yet somehow,
2 we have more than 60 percent of our seats that are
3 elected by Anglo-majority districts. As I said in
4 2021, as I argued against these maps, the math ain't
5 mathing.

6 SYLVIA GARCIA: Representative, thank
7 you for the question and I totally concur with both
8 of my colleagues, and I think that is the nature of
9 the Voting Rights Act. And it would, in fact, be
10 unlawful and unconstitutional to dismantle coalition
11 districts.

12 And I think it's interesting to note
13 that the DOJ letter quotes the coalition district
14 definition of a supreme court opinion. What they
15 failed to tell you, that it's a dissenting opinion,
16 not a majority opinion, and it's a dissenting opinion
17 by Justice Kavanaugh who has never been, in my mind,
18 a greater lawyer for justice.

19 But the bottom line here is, when you
20 ask yourselves why you're here, you're here because
21 Donald Trump wants to remain in power. The big ugly
22 bill that takes 17 million people off of Medicaid.
23 The big ugly bill that takes food away from hungry
24 children. The big ugly bill cuts some veteran's
25

1 benefits. That big ugly bill passed by just one
2 vote, and that was his signature agenda.

3 So he knows he's got to find seats
4 somewhere in the country to offset some of their
5 losses because there will be losses. So he picked
6 Texas because he can pick up the phone and talk to
7 our governor, our lieutenant governor, and when they
8 call and he says jump, they simply ask how high?
9 That's why we're here.

10 JOHNNY MATA: The answer is yes, yes,
11 yes. And why? Democracy, democracy, democracy.
12 That's what we're losing in America today. A lot of
13 my forefathers in (indiscernible), American GI form,
14 NAACP, that worked so hard for the Voting Rights Act
15 and equality are gone now. They're rolling up in
16 their tombs right now over what's happening here
17 today.

18 I said something about greed and power
19 and how to deal with House, I guess back then they
20 were talking about the House of Representatives of
21 Texas of what your job is. But let your conscious be
22 your guide because accountability begins in our
23 community. They decide whether you go back to your
24 position or not.

25

1 And let me say this. The pride of
2 America and the trust in the world is in decline. We
3 -- many of us are ashamed of how we're about to lose
4 democracy in all of these things. Don't let that
5 happen to us.

6 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Mr. Wu, any more
7 questions?

8 REPRESENTATIVE WU: And on that same
9 note, could you answer, for all of you, do you
10 support minority-majority districts just like
11 coalition districts? That means that like in Houston
12 in Harris County, we've been a minority-majority area
13 for quite a while now. And do you support in those
14 places where it's already minority-majority, do you
15 support keeping districts that are minority-majority?

16 SYLVIA GARCIA: Yes, I do.

17 LIZZIE FLETCHER: Yes, I do.

18 JOHNNY MATA: Yes, I do.

19 JASMINE CROCKETT: Yes, I do. And I
20 just want to add that we have levels to this.
21 Nevertheless, we have protections. I am also old
22 enough to remember the Texas 30 prior to me
23 representing it but during the redistricting battle
24 that we had on the floor, the citizen voting age
25 population of Texas 30 was 52 percent African

1 Americans. This legislature decided for no apparent
2 reason to take it down to 48 percent.

3 They also decided that they wanted to
4 wash out certain black folk and put other black folk
5 in because they just felt like that was enough
6 because it would give them the numbers. But we know
7 that if there is a district -- and I have the most
8 compact district in the state of Texas. We didn't go
9 drawing squiggly lines to find black folk to put them
10 in my seat. My seat is actually compact. It's these
11 other districts that look like some kid just decided
12 they were going to scribble whatever.

13 And so when we're looking at
14 compactness, that looks like not necessarily cutting
15 our urban centers that tend to be the most diverse
16 areas of this state into little pizza pieces. It
17 looks like making sure that you can hold those
18 communities of common interest together. That means
19 that if it's HISD, HISD people stay together, so that
20 when there are fights when they decide that they want
21 to do things like defund HISD, they have a federal
22 representative who understands that instead of giving
23 them HISD and giving them another ISD. It is
24 important that you keep these communities of common
25 interests, where they live together, where they play

1 together, where they go to church together, where
2 they go to school together, where they shop together,
3 and that's not what these maps have done.

4 And so do we need new maps? We do.
5 Do we need better maps? Yes. But your response has
6 nothing to do with the people regardless of what you
7 all say. Because the people told you all in 2021 not
8 to do this, and you did it.

9 The people are going to come up here
10 today, I can guarantee you, and tell you not to break
11 up their communities again because there's a target
12 on their back because they know that they're weak in
13 D.C. I am asking you all to do what you say you love
14 to do in this state which is to honor the people that
15 we serve. We are Texas. We are better than this.

16 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Ms. Garcia, for
17 what purpose?

18 REPRESENTATIVE GARCIA: May I ask the
19 panel some questions, Mr. Chair?

20 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: You may. You're
21 recognized for such purpose.

22 REPRESENTATIVE GARCIA: Thank you.

23 Thank you so much, Congresswoman, for
24 being here. I wish it wasn't under these
25 circumstances. Do you know how many Texas cities are

1 declared disaster areas? Or counties? Texas
2 counties are now nationally declared federal disaster
3 areas?

4 JASMINE CROCKETT: I don't because I
5 don't have any in mine currently.

6 SYLVIA GARCIA: Yeah. I don't know
7 the number, but I suspect that there is still some
8 disaster declaration in the Hill Country, either at
9 the state level or the national level.

10 JASMINE CROCKETT: As well as --

11 SYLVIA GARCIA: That's just a guess
12 but I don't know for a fact.

13 REPRESENTATIVE GARCIA: From
14 federally, just to talk federally, is there any
15 conversation about how many of our counties are
16 declared disasters?

17 JASMINE CROCKETT: No. But I can tell
18 you that we are aware of, obviously, the fires that
19 took place. We're aware of, obviously, the most
20 recent flooding. We're aware of the fact that -- we
21 have not been hit by any tornados recently. No.

22 So I don't know what the current
23 numbers are, especially since we have an
24 administration that just came in, and whether or not
25 they revoked any of those declarations or continued

1 any of those declarations. So I'm unsure, but I can
2 tell you for Texas 30, I currently don't have any.

3 LIZZIE FLETCHER: Thank you,
4 Representative Garcia, for the question. I think
5 it's an important question. We do know that, of
6 course, recently there has been the disaster in the
7 Hill Country, and I know that Kerr County, and I
8 believe there are five other counties that fall under
9 that disaster declaration. We also know that we have
10 ongoing disasters here in Harris County. We're
11 continuing to recover from Hurricane Beryl last
12 summer and the (indiscernible), which were also
13 federally declared disasters. We're still recovering
14 from Hurricane Harvey back in 2017.

15 So we have many challenges, and we
16 know the importance of ensuring that there is an
17 appropriate federal response; and that we have
18 advocates in Congress who are fighting for our
19 communities. Just this week, all the members -- all
20 the Democratic members of the congressional
21 delegation asked for a full federal report from the
22 GAO to examine the federal response from FEMA, and
23 the National Weather Service, NOAA, et cetera, to
24 understand the federal response and where there were
25 failures so that we can address those. And we also

1 submitted, just this week, supplemental disaster
2 funding requests to the appropriations committee for
3 \$15 billion to address the ongoing disasters in
4 Texas.

5 REPRESENTATIVE GARCIA: And how would
6 redistricting impact that?

7 SYLVIA GARCIA: Well, I would say that
8 it would have an impact because just listen to what
9 Representative Fletcher said. She's still dealing
10 with issues related to Harvey. So constituent work
11 related to FEMA requests, requests from the national
12 -- you know insurance from National Flood Control,
13 those never end.

14 I mean, it's not easy to just take
15 care of the constituent question, you know, within a
16 week or two. It's ongoing. So when you have
17 redistricting, if Lizzie is hoping to file on Jasmine
18 Crockett because she lost her home, then all of a
19 sudden, Lizzie gets put somewhere else, then somebody
20 else is going to have to start from scratch. The
21 institutional knowledge, the network, the
22 relationship with the constituent, all of that goes
23 away.

24 It's about constituent services and
25 access to your member of Congress. People want to be

1 able to know that you can go and say hello to them.
2 You're going to run into them at the grocery store.
3 You can't do that if you've got these squiggly
4 districts that go from, you know, Austin all the way
5 to the Valley or for me, you know, from Houston to
6 Orange, Texas. I mean, what relationship do I have
7 with Orange other than wearing orange on go Astro
8 days? You know, it just doesn't work.

9 REPRESENTATIVE GARCIA: Yes, ma'am.

10 SYLVIA GARCIA: And then be mindful,
11 Representative Garcia, that the fellow at the White
12 House has already said that he plans to do away with
13 FEMA after this next hurricane season. I think maybe
14 he may be changing his mind a little bit after he
15 went down to the Hill Country, but they're still set
16 on giving FEMA and recovery disasters to the states.
17 And you all are going to be faced with the issue of
18 how to fund that and how to administer that.

19 REPRESENTATIVE GARCIA: Are you aware
20 that in my day job I am a disaster recovery
21 humanitarian relief specialist?

22 SYLVIA GARCIA: No, I didn't. But
23 thank you for your service.

24 REPRESENTATIVE GARCIA: Are you aware
25 that I'm the first and only woman veteran to ever

1 service in the Texas House of Representatives or the
2 capitol?

3 SYLVIA GARCIA: I heard you say that
4 in Austin. Yes, ma'am.

5 REPRESENTATIVE GARCIA: My team has
6 been boots on the ground. We have over 1000 search
7 and rescue response personnel that I have organized
8 through my military contacts and Military City USA in
9 which I represent House District 124. We have been
10 boots on the ground since July 6th in these search
11 and recovery efforts. So much so that we collaborate
12 singlehandedly with the EOC and the Texas Department
13 of Emergency Management in recovering missing people
14 who are in the rivers.

15 It's not for me. Please don't clap.
16 Please don't clap. I'm saying this for a reason.
17 Out of every elected official that represents the
18 state of Texas, would it surprise you if I told you
19 I've heard of none from Congress, one from Senate,
20 and three from the House? Would it surprise you if I
21 told you that my team's actions are being reported to
22 the White House sit reps.

23 Sit reps, for those who aren't
24 military, are situational reports. Those are
25 firsthand accounts of the bodies we find. Firsthand

1 accounts of the thousands of tons of humanitarian
2 supplies that my network has put into the Hill
3 Country in its efforts. We are the number one
4 collaborator of law enforcement first responders from
5 all over this nation, and we have heard nothing.

6 Now, that's not for me. But when I've
7 been sitting here for two days while my team is out
8 in the field depending on me because they're getting
9 calls every day from residents who are saying,
10 "Please come find my daddy," and we talk about
11 political theatre and all these fun words. You know,
12 felon in the White House, political games,
13 pretending, shameful. These are all words that we
14 lovingly throw around.

15 I'm not a politician. I am a U.S. Air
16 Force retired combat veteran, and I'm the first for a
17 reason. Because the politics you all practice does
18 not translate to real service. And I love you all
19 dearly. I respect all my colleagues here. And I can
20 even -- I can tell you -- I can look you straight in
21 your face and say I can say with confidence that not
22 a colleague up here would ever say anything bad about
23 me to you.

24 And that is because from the day I was
25 elected two sessions ago, I remained mission focused.

1 That mission is connecting the dots of resources.
2 Connecting the dots of policy. Connecting the dots
3 of relationships, Colonel Wilson. Colonel Wilson, he
4 is a Republican. I am a Texas Democrat. That means
5 something different. Colonel Wilson and I
6 politically, night and day. I'm a civil rights
7 activist. I am the secretary of the Texas
8 Legislative Black Caucus. I am the whip of the
9 Mexican American legislative Caucus. I am the
10 secretary of the LGBTQ Caucus. And all of my
11 colleagues still love me.

12 So while we're sitting around here
13 entertaining the racism, we know it's alive and well.
14 Trust me. Our boots on the ground are witnessing it
15 with the very people that we try to help. We know
16 what it is already. But how are we going to navigate
17 from this point forward? And I'm telling you right
18 now, division is not the way. The only way is to
19 unify. Unify one Texan, one party.

20 My call is, please, Mr. Chairman, if
21 we could please -- and congresswomen, I need you.
22 We need our commander in chief right now in Texas.
23 People are hurting. We need it.

24 If I may say, Mr. Chairman, if we
25 could, please, I would love for us to get together,

1 finish out these hearings because Texans need to have
2 their say. We need to go to Monday, finish out our
3 hearings, and then ask to please have a brief hold so
4 we can focus on this disaster. Bring this up in the
5 next session. Set up appropriate tours across Texas
6 where we offer more people to be able to come to the
7 table and have their say. Thank you so much.

8 JOHNNY MATA: Let me respond to your
9 -- let me give you example of what happened. I got a
10 call last week thinking I was an attorney, and I
11 said, "No, ma'am." And she was calling the
12 coalition. She said she had a disaster in her home.
13 They put her in a hotel, and her grandchild wanted to
14 go swimming, but the swimming pool was broke.

15 And so to make a story short, there
16 was another hotel similar to her house, so they
17 moved. And when she got there, they said, "I'm
18 sorry. We can't take you because you complained
19 about the pool." So she went back to the place, and
20 they said, "I'm sorry. We're not going to take you."

21 I told her about HUD and Title VII of
22 the law, but I said, "We're going to -- we are going
23 to meet with you, and once we do a thorough
24 investigation, we're going to deal with the hotel and
25

1 embarrass them for such inhuman and unconscionable
2 action."

3 REPRESENTATIVE WALLE: Mr. Chair?

4 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Mr. Walle, for
5 what purpose?

6 REPRESENTATIVE WALLE: Chairman, I
7 respectfully ask if you'll allow me to ask a few
8 questions of the panelist.

9 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Absolutely. The
10 Chair has recognized Mr. Walle to question the panel.

11 REPRESENTATIVE WALLE: Thank you,
12 Chairman Vasut.

13 Congresswoman Garcia, I want to focus
14 on CD 29 because I just want to get some
15 clarifications. You mentioned some data about the
16 creation of CD 29, and that was created after the
17 1990 census; is that correct?

18 SYLVIA GARCIA: Correct.

19 REPRESENTATIVE WALLE: And that 1990
20 census, based on the Voting Rights Act, mandated that
21 we create CD 29; is that correct?

22 SYLVIA GARCIA: Correct.

23 REPRESENTATIVE WALLE: And that was
24 because of the growth of the Latino population in
25

1 Harris County, particularly in these particular parts
2 of Houston; is that correct?

3 SYLVIA GARCIA: Well, it's parts of
4 Houston but also, Representative, it includes part of
5 Galina, Pasadena. It includes almost all of Galena
6 Park, South Houston, Jacinto City, and then the upper
7 part of the Aldine area. So it's more than just
8 Houston. It's about -- maybe about 30 percent of
9 Houston.

10 REPRESENTATIVE WALLE: Correct. And I
11 was going to get to that because it's just not
12 Houston, it was mainly -- at the time. Now obviously
13 Latinos are everywhere in this county.

14 SYLVIA GARCIA: You can't draw a map
15 in Houston without touching the Latino community.
16 The Houston region or the state.

17 REPRESENTATIVE WALLE: Well, you can
18 find a taco truck in every corner in Houston or
19 Harris County.

20 SYLVIA GARCIA: Right next to the
21 Starbucks.

22 REPRESENTATIVE WALLE: So at the time
23 the size and compactness of the Latino community was
24 such that it mandated the creation of that district;
25 is that correct? And that was, as you mentioned,

1 parts of North Houston, parts of the Aldine area,
2 North Harris County, stretching over to East Harris
3 County along the ship channel; is that correct?

4 SYLVIA GARCIA: Right. The original
5 went all the way to parts of Baytown that got removed
6 this last census.

7 REPRESENTATIVE WALLE: Okay. And then
8 it kind of meandered over -- it kind of hugged the
9 Houston ship channel down to Southeast Houston and
10 the East End; is that correct?

11 SYLVIA GARCIA: Correct.

12 REPRESENTATIVE WALLE: And currently
13 you mentioned that the population of CD 29 is 70
14 percent Hispanic; is that correct?

15 SYLVIA GARCIA: 74.

16 REPRESENTATIVE WALLE: Okay. But the
17 citizen voting age population, to clarify, just to
18 make sure that that's on the record, and I think it's
19 been testified as such in many public settings, here,
20 and in legal settings, in courtrooms, that there's
21 about 64, 65 percent of CD 29 citizen voting age
22 population has a Spanish surname or they're Hispanic;
23 is that correct?

24 SYLVIA GARCIA: Correct.

25

1 REPRESENTATIVE WALLE: And there is
2 political cohesion in that CD 29; is that correct?

3 SYLVIA GARCIA: Correct.

4 REPRESENTATIVE WALLE: And overtime
5 they've also -- that community tends to vote as a
6 block; is that correct?

7 SYLVIA GARCIA: I would generally say
8 that, but Republican candidate gets between 20 to 22,
9 sometimes -- you know, 15 to 20 percent. I don't
10 think anyone has done better than that.

11 REPRESENTATIVE WALLE: Okay. And over
12 time, that district has -- it's grown but for the
13 most part it's been the Northeast/East Harris County,
14 Southeast Houston/East Ends parts of Houston and
15 they've been pretty compact as a community of
16 interest; is that correct?

17 SYLVIA GARCIA: Yes. As I said
18 earlier, it's a lot of common language, common
19 culture, you know, values. I mean, there's a true
20 community of interest not only between, you know,
21 Latinos in Houston but Latinos in Galena Park and
22 South Houston. I mean, there is a lot of pride and a
23 lot of strong work ethic and a lot of, frankly,
24 trusting government.

25

1 REPRESENTATIVE WALLE: And they -- and
2 that community has primarily -- it's grown with our
3 Central American brothers and sisters, but it's
4 primarily still a Mexican/Mexican American community
5 that have been here for generations; is that correct?

6 SYLVIA GARCIA: Many generations.

7 REPRESENTATIVE WALLE: Okay. And that
8 community -- actually, that community of -- that
9 community, CD 29, has elected you as their
10 representative of choice; is that correct?

11 SYLVIA GARCIA: Correct. And just to
12 note, I mean, you know, when I was elected together
13 with Veronica Escobar from El Paso, we were the first
14 Latinas to ever be elected to United States Congress
15 from Texas.

16 REPRESENTATIVE WALLE: Okay. And one
17 distinction that I'd like to also add, Congresswoman,
18 and for the committee to be aware that in the
19 creation of CD 29, did that community of interest --
20 who did they elect at the time?

21 SYLVIA GARCIA: It was not a Latino.

22 REPRESENTATIVE WALLE: It was not a
23 Latino.

24 SYLVIA GARCIA: The districts were
25 meant to give someone the opportunity --

1 REPRESENTATIVE WALLE: Correct.

2 SYLVIA GARCIA: -- to elect someone of
3 their choice and it's their choice. So again, I was
4 the first Latino, the first Hispanic elected in this
5 -- in District 29.

6 REPRESENTATIVE WALLE: And then how
7 long have you been in office as a member of Congress?

8 SYLVIA GARCIA: This is my seventh
9 year.

10 REPRESENTATIVE WALLE: Your seventh
11 term.

12 SYLVIA GARCIA: No. Seventh year.

13 REPRESENTATIVE WALLE: Your seventh
14 year. And prior to that, where did you serve?

15 SYLVIA GARCIA: I served in the Texas
16 State Senate.

17 REPRESENTATIVE WALLE: And then prior
18 to that I understand you were a county commissioner.

19 SYLVIA GARCIA: I was the Harris
20 County Commissioner.

21 REPRESENTATIVE WALLE: Okay. And you
22 were the first Latina to be elected in that position,
23 correct?

24 SYLVIA GARCIA: First Hispanic. Yes.
25

1 REPRESENTATIVE WALLE: Hispanic.
2 Period. And then you were also a city controller.

3 SYLVIA GARCIA: I was elected
4 citywide --

5 REPRESENTATIVE WALLE: Citywide.

6 SYLVIA GARCIA: -- in the City of
7 Houston back in the '80s.

8 REPRESENTATIVE WALLE: And then you
9 were a municipal court judge, correct?

10 SYLVIA GARCIA: Yes. I was a judge
11 before that.

12 REPRESENTATIVE WALLE: And then you
13 were, I understand a social worker; is that correct?

14 SYLVIA GARCIA: Yes, sir.

15 REPRESENTATIVE WALLE: Okay. And --

16 SYLVIA GARCIA: I'm like a cat. I
17 have many lives.

18 REPRESENTATIVE WALLE: And I want to
19 focus -- particularly your story is compelling in
20 that obviously you and Representative --

21 SYLVIA GARCIA: Escobar.

22 REPRESENTATIVE WALLE: -- Escobar in
23 El Paso were the first two Latinas. But your story
24 has been emblematic of the district as well; is that
25 correct?

1 SYLVIA GARCIA: Yes, sir.

2 REPRESENTATIVE WALLE: Okay. And the
3 distinction in the creation of the district was that
4 the district, that community of interest that was
5 majority Hispanic elected an Anglo Democrat in that
6 primary; is that correct?

7 SYLVIA GARCIA: Yes, sir. I in fact
8 was in that race. I came out third.

9 REPRESENTATIVE WALLE: Correct.

10 SYLVIA GARCIA: But I kept trying. I
11 didn't give up.

12 REPRESENTATIVE WALLE: But regardless,
13 that community, majority Hispanic/Mexican American,
14 they elected Gene Green from --

15 SYLVIA GARCIA: 20 plus years.

16 REPRESENTATIVE WALLE: -- 20 plus
17 years, correct? That was their candidate of choice.

18 SYLVIA GARCIA: Correct.

19 REPRESENTATIVE WALLE: And since we're
20 talking about numbers, your district is a majority
21 Hispanic opportunity district, correct?

22 SYLVIA GARCIA: Correct.

23 REPRESENTATIVE WALLE: And I know
24 we're talking about the power of Congress and the
25 powerful forces in the White House. But to the

1 average American, the average Texan, the average
2 person that lives in CD 29, why does that matter?
3 Why does it matter to the average family that's
4 trying to put food on the table, the average mother
5 that's trying to get healthcare, to the average
6 worker that's trying to get a job maybe at the ship
7 channel and doesn't have maybe adequate resources, or
8 childcare that we need? Why does it matter to those
9 families?

10 SYLVIA GARCA: Well, it matters,
11 especially in our district because they want to elect
12 someone who shares their values, shares their
13 communities of interests, shares their cultures,
14 shares their language. And it makes a huge
15 difference. I know it was pointed out to me when I
16 was working on the investigation to the first
17 missing, and later of course discovered that she had
18 been murdered, Vanessa Guillen case.

19 We always used as an example of -- her
20 mother was able to come and speak directly to a
21 member of Congress that was accessible, easy to get
22 to. Someone they could identify with and sit down
23 and talk in Spanish and hear her complaint, which was
24 something the Army had never done. And it was, you
25

1 know, I who insisted that we go to Fort Hood and see
2 what was going on.

3 It's possible that someone who would
4 not have been able to share her values, and her
5 language, and her cultures, and her -- being able to
6 just sit down and put yourself in their shoes is just
7 critical when you're doing constituent services. You
8 shouldn't just brush it off and just say, oh, well,
9 no, the Army said this and it's the Army. We can't
10 -- we can't question them. Or, oh, no, Social
11 Security said you're not disabled, so that's it.
12 Sorry.

13 So I think it matters when it's
14 someone who is committed to putting, you know, people
15 over politics and just fighting for them. People
16 want us to be out there and fight for them, and I
17 think that's what your candidate of choice will do.

18 REPRESENTATIVE WALLE: And you
19 mentioned Vanessa Guillen, and for the panelist, I
20 know those of us in Harris County know who she was.
21 But who was she?

22 SYLVIA GARCIA: Well, she was just a
23 -- she was a young soldier here from our
24 neighborhood. As a result of redistricting her
25 family no longer lives in my district. They now live

1 in Congressman Green's district. And, you know,
2 that's another issue about why it's important for
3 districts to stay together because they had to go to
4 Congressman Green and kind of -- not really start all
5 over because, obviously, she was already gone.

6 But she was sexually assaulted. She
7 was murdered and dismembered, and her remains were
8 buried by a river there in the Fort Hood area. And
9 initially the Army was not being aggressive enough,
10 in my view, in searching for her. They just
11 considered her missing.

12 REPRESENTATIVE WALLE: And --

13 SYLVIA GARCIA: So we really had to
14 push and get the White House involved and others to
15 make sure that they did the right thing and searched
16 for her, and then they discovered that she had been
17 murdered right there at Fort Hood.

18 REPRESENTATIVE WALLE: And Vanessa,
19 born in the United States.

20 SYLVIA GARCIA: Born in the United
21 States.

22 REPRESENTATIVE WALLE: Was trying to
23 serve her country.

24 SYLVIA GARCIA: Serving her country.
25 Yes. That's all she ever wanted to do.

1 REPRESENTATIVE WALLE: And was
2 brutally murdered. Was brutally murdered. But as I
3 understand it, her mother is from Mexico; is that my
4 understanding?

5 SYLVIA GARCIA: Correct.

6 REPRESENTATIVE WALLE: And she came
7 from a mixed status family; is that correct?

8 SYLVIA GARCIA: Correct.

9 REPRESENTATIVE WALLE: And many mixed
10 status families live in CD -- not just in CD 29, they
11 live everywhere; is that correct?

12 SYLVIA GARCIA: Correct.

13 REPRESENTATIVE WALLE: So it would be
14 important to have representation, not because maybe
15 they look like you, but they at least share and can
16 fight for their issues, and they can come to their
17 member of Congress, Ms. Crockett, or Ms. Fletcher, or
18 Mr. Al Green because they at least have empathy to go
19 to the DOD and fight for somebody that looks like
20 Vanessa Guillen. Is that correct?

21 SYLVIA GARCIA: Correct.

22 REPRESENTATIVE WALLE: Okay.
23 Representative Fletcher, you have a district that's
24 considered a coalition district; is that correct?

25

1 LIZZIE FLETCHER: That is correct.

2 Yes, Representative Walle.

3 REPRESENTATIVE WALLE: And in that
4 district, majority minority as mentioned -- and what
5 does that mean? Because we throw that around but
6 what does that mean?

7 LIZZIE FLETCHER: Well, Texas' 7th
8 Congressional District may be the most diverse
9 district in the entire United States. It covers
10 Southwest Houston, and it includes communities, black
11 families, Latino families, Asian American families.
12 If you think about what we all know in sort of
13 Southwest Houston, it goes everywhere from the heart
14 -- the historic heart of the LGBTQ community to
15 Gulfton down to Sugarland, Alief, Mission Bend. We
16 have the heart of the Jewish community in Meyerland.
17 We have so many different communities that come
18 together that work together collaboratively. And so
19 more than -- it's close to 65 percent of the citizen
20 voting age population is non-white.

21 REPRESENTATIVE WALLE: Right.

22 LIZZIE FLETCHER: But we have an
23 incredible coalition and community that works
24 together to support people throughout Southwest
25 Houston and the Greater Houston area.

1 REPRESENTATIVE WALLE: And prior to
2 your election, CD 7, who was elected to that
3 position?

4 LIZZIE FLETCHER: So I was elected for
5 the first time in November of 2018, and the prior
6 incumbent in that seat was John Culberson, who had
7 been the representative since the year 2000.

8 REPRESENTATIVE WALLE: And we redrew
9 that district since then; is that correct?

10 LIZZIE FLETCHER: That's correct. The
11 district as it's currently configured was configured
12 in the 2021 map.

13 REPRESENTATIVE WALLE: And that's the
14 current map that you distinguished members of
15 Congress are running under; is that correct?

16 LIZZIE FLETCHER: Yes, that's correct.

17 REPRESENTATIVE WALLE: Okay. And that
18 district, CD 7, rich in diversity, rich in language.
19 Different types of languages being spoken in that
20 community, correct?

21 LIZZIE FLETCHER: That's right. As
22 many --

23 REPRESENTATIVE WALLE: Not just
24 Spanish?
25

1 LIZZIE FLETCHER: Not just Spanish.
2 As many people know, throughout the city of Houston
3 there are more than 140 languages spoken in our city
4 and the 7th Congressional District includes one of
5 the most diverse areas where the most languages are
6 spoken. I get to represent the community in Gulfton,
7 which is its own version of kind of our Ellis Island
8 in Houston. There are so many languages spoken in
9 Gulfton.

10 And in the 7th Congressional District,
11 about 38 percent, give or take, are people who were
12 born outside of the United States, which is more than
13 twice the average in the state of Texas. And so
14 there's an incredible diversity of experience. I've
15 worked closely with folks. It's a big refugee
16 resettlement area which is, of course, really
17 struggling under this current administration and
18 cutting off the refugee resettlement funds and the
19 organizations that work in our district and across
20 our community. But there are people from all around
21 the world who call the 7th Congressional District
22 their home.

23 REPRESENTATIVE WALLE: And that part
24 of Houston, CD 7, rich in diversity, rich in culture,
25 rich in languages being spoken, rich in food.

1 LIZZIE FLETCHER: Yeah. I was going
2 to say, great restaurants.

3 REPRESENTATIVE WALLE: Yes. They have
4 collectively, in their size and compactness, in their
5 political cohesion, they voted as a block to elect
6 you as their candidate of choice; is that correct?

7 LIZZIE FLETCHER: That is correct.

8 REPRESENTATIVE WALLE: Obviously. And
9 so at the end of the day, it's not so much about you
10 individually as members of Congress, it's the
11 people --

12 LIZZIE FLETCHER: That is exactly --

13 REPRESENTATIVE WALLE: -- the people
14 that have elected you as their candidate of choice;
15 is that correct?

16 LIZZIE FLETCHER: That is exactly
17 right, Representative Walle, and I think it's the
18 most important point that we can take away from these
19 hearings. This is not about any particular member of
20 Congress. It is about the voters. It is about the
21 people we represent and giving them the opportunity
22 to elect their candidate of choice and to have a real
23 opportunity to do that.

24 And when we talk about what
25 historically has happened with redistricting efforts

1 in Texas and elsewhere, there are conventional ways
2 that people break up the voices of those communities.
3 Either packing them tightly into very compact
4 districts and minimizing their ability to have a
5 voice throughout multiple districts, or cracking them
6 so that they have such little presence in various
7 districts that they can't have enough political power
8 to choose their candidate of choice.

9 And so that's why this conversation
10 about coalition districts, that's why the
11 conversation about why it's so important to give
12 people that opportunity. I believe as Representative
13 Crockett said and in my original testimony, more than
14 60 percent of the population of this state is non-
15 white, and yet the Anglo population determines about
16 65 percent of the congressional seats in Congress.
17 And so it's very important not to further dilute
18 these districts.

19 And as I said, the 13 existing
20 congressional districts under this map all have
21 representatives who are elected by minority
22 communities as their candidate of choice. It's not
23 about the member. It is about the voters, and it is
24 about the people choosing their representatives
25 rather than politicians choosing their voters.

1 REPRESENTATIVE WALLE: And thank you,
2 Representative Fletcher. And I think you heard the
3 question that I posed to Congresswoman Garcia, and
4 it's unfortunate because I would ask the same line of
5 questioning to our member of Congress from CD 18, but
6 they haven't had representation in about a year. And
7 I'm sensitive to that only because I worked for
8 Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee for -- many years
9 ago. And loved my service in working for her as
10 well.

11 But why does it matter? Why does it
12 matter to the average Texan who loves this state like
13 anybody else? Why does it matter? Because we're
14 talking about a power struggle, right. A power
15 struggle that's occurring. But why does it matter to
16 average people that live in your district?

17 LIZZIE FLETCHER: Well, I think that
18 this matters and it should matter to every Texan.
19 Because what we're talking about are the fundamental
20 principles of democracy. It's about all of us having
21 not just the right to have a say but the ability to
22 meaningfully cast our ballots for the people we want
23 to represent us and to be able to know who they are.

24 As Congressman Garcia was saying, to
25 be able to reach out to them, to be able to know that

1 they're there to help you with all the kinds of
2 things we members of Congress can help with, whether
3 it's problems with the IRS. We've certainly helped
4 people with FEMA and with the Small Business
5 Administration following disasters, with veteran's
6 benefits. With the many things that members of
7 Congress can do to help.

8 And it takes a long time to build
9 those relationships, to know who your representatives
10 are and to be able to contact them, reach out to
11 them, and know that they're there, and that they're
12 listening to you.

13 And one of the most important things
14 we can do is be connected to our communities and be
15 present in our communities. And one of the
16 challenges that we see in some of the maps -- and
17 Representative Crockett talked about this too in past
18 maps where communities are broken up so that
19 communities don't have the same ability to have those
20 relationships and to have that contact.

21 But what we're talking about here, as
22 you mentioned, is so much bigger than any one
23 district. It is about the fundamental principles of
24 democracy, and it is about us being able to choose
25 our representatives and have our voices and our votes

1 count at the ballot box. And as Congresswoman Garcia
2 mentioned in her opening testimony, right now we know
3 that in the United States Congress that it's a very
4 slim majority and that, in part, the reason that the
5 Republicans are in the majority is because they
6 redistricted North Carolina and took away three
7 Democratic seats, which is the margin in the House.

8 The policies that this administration
9 is imposing and directing the House Republicans to
10 vote for are deeply unpopular, and they are going to
11 result in real harm to our constituents. And we're
12 talking about 17 millions Americans losing access to
13 healthcare. We're talking about cutting funding for
14 food assistance. People are going to be hungrier.
15 People are going to be sicker because of the policies
16 that this Congress is passing.

17 And so if we don't have the ability to
18 send the people that represent us and our values and
19 what we care about to Congress, we're going to
20 continue to see policies that people don't want
21 because they aren't actually able to change the
22 outcome of the election. We should all be
23 accountable to the votes, and we shouldn't change the
24 map and change the game and move the goalpost in the
25 middle.

1 We are in the middle of a
2 congressional session that is going to go down in
3 history as one of the most damaging to the American
4 people, and we need to be able to respond at the
5 ballot box next November and beyond. And this effort
6 is about taking away our ability to do that.

7 REPRESENTATIVE WALLE: Representative
8 -- and I --

9 And Chairman Vasut, I apologize. I'm
10 going to end my questioning here. But I'm going to
11 just ask a follow-up question.

12 At the end of the day though, you
13 mentioned legislation at the federal level that is
14 very unpopular. But what does that mean? Does that
15 mean children getting kicked off Medicaid?

16 LIZZIE FLETCHER: Exactly.

17 REPRESENTATIVE WALLE: Okay.

18 LIZZIE FLETCHER: It means children
19 losing their Medicaid. It means people losing the
20 subsidies that help them afford health insurance. It
21 means people not being able to go to Planned
22 Parenthood to get birth control. It means that
23 there's no food assistance for families. Millions of
24 families not getting \$6 a day to help keep them from
25 being hungry. It means not having school lunches in

1 schools. It means so many things and that's just --
2 that's the tip of iceberg.

3 I mean, there is so much that got
4 rolled up into that one big ugly bill, 1000 page
5 bill, and done in the dark of night. People are
6 still figuring out what's in it. I mean, our
7 electricity rates are going to go up. Our electric
8 bills are going to be higher. There are so many
9 terrible things coming out of that bill. And people
10 need to be able to say no to that.

11 Yeah. I mean, Congresswoman Garcia,
12 it wasn't covered in that particular bill, but the
13 immigration policies that we're seeing that people
14 across our community are devastated by and afraid of.
15 People who live in the 7th Congressional District are
16 afraid to go to church. They're afraid to go out.
17 They're afraid of what's going to happen. And I hear
18 that from my constituents because they know that I
19 share their values, and they know that I'm up there
20 fighting.

21 And they need to be able to continue
22 to have a voice in Congress, and we are talking about
23 taking away their voices. It's not about me. It's
24 not about my voice. It's about taking away their
25 voices and minimizing the number of people who can

1 carry the message from Texas that we don't like what
2 they're doing, and that we're going to change things.

3 And you have to be accountable to your
4 voters and when you talk about drawing these maps
5 this way to make sure that they don't need to worry
6 about whether they get reelected, that's a disservice
7 to every single Texan.

8 REPRESENTATIVE WALLE: Thank you to
9 the panelists.

10 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Members, are there
11 any other questions for the members of the panel? I
12 know we've been going awhile on this one.

13 REPRESENTATIVE PIERSON: I have a
14 question.

15 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: The Chair
16 recognizes Ms. Pierson for a question.

17 REPRESENTATIVE PIERSON: Thank you,
18 Chairman.

19 Thank you all for being here today and
20 sharing your passion on this issue. I will say
21 Representative Walle flushed out a little bit of what
22 my question was but not all the way. I'm a little
23 confused because the beginning of the testimony I
24 heard about -- and my question is for you,
25 Congressman Fletcher.

1 Your colleagues testified earlier that
2 it was important for people of color to have people
3 who look like them. Your other colleague mentioned
4 that it's important to have the same language and the
5 same culture. And then you testified that you have a
6 -- is it 65 percent non-white district?

7 LIZZIE FLETCHER: Non-white. That's
8 right.

9 REPRESENTATIVE PIERSON: And do you
10 agree with that? I'm just curious. Because for me
11 it sounds like in your position, black and brown
12 people just simply vote for someone who best
13 represents their value, not based on their race or
14 culture. So I'm just curious on what your position
15 is on this.

16 LIZZIE FLETCHER: Well, I think you've
17 heard many people say over the years, if you can see
18 it, you can be it. I think it is important to have
19 diverse representation in the United States Congress
20 of all kinds. And the geographic diversity is built
21 in, but the diversity of members of different racial
22 and ethnic backgrounds is absolutely essential. It's
23 critical that we have women in Congress and more
24 women in Congress.

25

1 Congresswoman Garcia and I came into
2 the largest class of women ever elected to the
3 Congress, and there will be more. It is important to
4 have diverse voices and that matters. In our
5 congressional district, it's an incredibly diverse
6 district. There is no one person that can be
7 everything that the 7th Congressional District is.
8 But what we do need is somebody who cares about
9 everybody in the 7th Congressional District. Who
10 prioritizes them and their needs and their values and
11 priorities and is accessible to them and is out in
12 the community and is working to understand the
13 experiences that are not necessarily my own personal
14 experiences, but the things that matter to the people
15 I represent.

16 And so I do agree, absolutely, that we
17 need diversity of representation. But the most
18 important thing that we're talking about today is
19 giving the people the opportunity to choose that
20 person. And when Donald Trump says, "I need five
21 more Republican seats," you are taking the ability
22 away from the people to decide who their
23 representative is going to be, and that is wrong.

24 REPRESENTATIVE PIERSON: Well, thank
25 you. Thank you for that response. It sounds like

1 you agree that minorities vote for the person that
2 best represent their values, not necessarily based on
3 their skin color, so I appreciate that.

4 And since you mentioned Donald Trump
5 -- I wasn't going to but since you did -- he actually
6 won the majority of the Hispanic vote in the state of
7 Texas. President Trump has actually increased his
8 numbers in black, and Hispanic, and Asian voters
9 since --

10 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: The gallery will
11 stay in order.

12 REPRESENTATIVE PIERSON: -- 2016. So
13 my question for you now, since you mentioned it --

14 REPRESENTATIVE JONES: I don't believe
15 that statement is true.

16 REPRESENTATIVE PIERSON: My question
17 for you now is: do you believe that those voters
18 should be accurately reflected in the state of Texas?

19 LIZZIE FLETCHER: I'm not sure I fully
20 understand your question, but I don't think anyone is
21 contesting that Donald Trump didn't win the state of
22 Texas. I don't have the breakdown.

23 REPRESENTATIVE PIERSON: I'm speaking
24 minority voters only.

25

1 LIZZIE FLETCHER: Well, I think
2 overwhelmingly minority voters across the state of
3 Texas elected -- or voted for Vice President Harris
4 as their candidate of choice.

5 REPRESENTATIVE PIERSON: That's not
6 accurate. But my question for you is: do those
7 voters deserve the same representation?

8 JASMINE CROCKETT: I'm going to just
9 jump in really quickly.

10 LIZZIE FLETCHER: Thank you.

11 JASMINE CROCKETT: I think earlier I
12 made it clear --

13 You said what?

14 I made it clear that the majority of
15 the state is minority; 60 percent of the state is
16 minority. So when you're drawing maps, just to be
17 clear, you should not be looking and trying to guess
18 and figure out who voted for who. It should be about
19 minority representation and then allowing -- and then
20 allowing them to elect their representation. If we
21 did right in this state -- regardless of who anybody
22 votes for because we don't have a magic wand, even
23 though I know that Trump is afraid of them black
24 votes.

25

1 But nevertheless -- so when I do the
2 math, 24 percent -- or 24 of the 38 seats that we
3 have in the state of Texas, they should be
4 represented -- it should be minorities that are
5 electing their representation. So if you all are
6 going to draw maps, I just want to be clear, instead
7 of us having 14 -- I think there's -- no, 14 total.
8 Because there's some --

9 Instead of having 14 seats that
10 minorities are allowed to elect their representation,
11 take it up to 24. If Donald Trump feels like he's
12 going to be real strong, if Abbott feels like he's
13 going to be real strong, if everybody sitting here
14 feels like they're going to be real strong with the
15 black, brown, Asian, whoever, that is perfectly fine
16 so long as their communities are not broken up.

17 So all I'm asking is that we do follow
18 the law, we follow the constitution, and we give
19 Texas 24 minority opportunity seats because 60
20 percent of this state is represented by people of
21 color.

22 And to go to your point, I do want to
23 be clear because it's not about who sits in the
24 seats, it's who does the electing.

25 REPRESENTATIVE PIERSON: Right.

1 JASMINE CROCKETT: One of those new
2 seats -- because we got two new seats in 2021 -- they
3 both are Anglo majority districts even though there
4 was no Anglo majority that we got information about
5 in the census.

6 One of those seats elected a black
7 man. The other seat elected a white man. One is a
8 Republican. One is a Democrat. So I want to be
9 clear that this is about race because when we start
10 to talk about the Voting Rights Act and we talk about
11 section two, that is what it's about.

12 It's about the state being reflective
13 of the minority voices in that state. And when I'm
14 talking minority, I am talking color. I don't care
15 who they elect, but it's up to them to do the
16 electing of who it is that they want to see. Not
17 allowing a minority of people -- which Anglos are the
18 minority in this state -- allowing them to have an
19 overrepresentation in D.C. That's it.

20 REPRESENTATIVE PIERSON: I agree with
21 you 100 percent. Let me just finish.

22 JOHNNY MATA: Let me add to that.

23 REPRESENTATIVE PIERSON: I agree with
24 you 100 percent. That is actually my point in asking
25 the question because we have a majority minority

1 district who did not elect a minority. So thank you
2 for your answer.

3 JOHNNY MATA: Let me add to that.
4 We've been locked out of the system for so many
5 years. Lack of representation of people of color.
6 That is the intent of the Voting Rights Act. And a
7 person like her that does a good job gets elected by
8 a majority of people of color. But the intent, we
9 must not forget, and I agree with my colleague here,
10 on the number of representation from Texas should be.
11 I agree 100 percent.

12 SYLVIA GARCIA: I just wanted to ask
13 the representative what her source for the statement
14 she made that the Latino population --

15 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Ma'am, questions
16 only come from the dais.

17 SYLVIA GARCIA: Well, she asked the
18 question of the panel, and I'm just responding. I
19 guess she doesn't want to answer. Well, enough said.

20 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Any other member
21 wishing to question this panel?

22 The Chair recognizes Ms. Jones to
23 question the panel.

24 REPRESENTATIVE JONES: This question
25 is to the congresspersons sitting out there because

1 you know your districts, you're boots on the ground.

2 So all three of you are lawyers, correct?

3 LIZZIE FLETCHER: Yes.

4 SLYVIA GARCIA: Correct.

5 JASMINE CROCKETT: Correct.

6 REPRESENTATIVE JONES: Okay. I

7 thought so. And have all three of you participated

8 in redistricting in your capacity as elected

9 officials ever?

10 SLYVIA GARCIA: I was on the special

11 committee on redistricting when I was on the Texas

12 Senate and I was on -- I've been through about every

13 redistricting since we redistricted city council back

14 in the '90s.

15 REPRESENTATIVE JONES: Okay. And --

16 JASMINE CROCKETT: And I was in the

17 State House in 2021 when we did that redistricting.

18 REPRESENTATIVE JONES: During that

19 redistricting.

20 JASMINE CROCKETT: Yes.

21 REPRESENTATIVE JONES: So you have or

22 you have not?

23 LIZZIE FLETCHER: I have not been

24 involved in redistricting in any official capacity.

25 I was a sitting member of Congress when the last map

1 was drawn, and so I observed the redistricting
2 process; but I have had no involvement in it.

3 REPRESENTATIVE JONES: Okay. So then
4 my question is to the two, Congresswoman Garcia and
5 Congresswoman Crockett. This redistricting process,
6 please explain to me if it's the same or different
7 than previous redistricting processes. Could you do
8 that, please.

9 JASMINE CROCKETT: I can tell you that
10 we noticed a lot of inconsistencies. And I was able
11 to testify about this because we are in litigation,
12 and it is so interesting that the state for four
13 years has been arguing how these maps were race
14 neutral and how great these maps were. And we do
15 know that every single Republican voted for these
16 maps. But now, all of a sudden, they don't like the
17 maps that the put into place.

18 But nevertheless, I will tell you that
19 there was some random person or persons that were in
20 some random room that were drawing maps. I never got
21 to see the person. We heard rumblings that it was a
22 guy that had messed up maps I believe in Colorado or
23 some other state he had been in. And so this was not
24 a matter -- just for the people that are sitting
25 here, we have the ability to draw maps as lawmakers.

1 There is this thing called Red Apple, and we actually
2 -- when it comes down to doing our maps for the State
3 House, we didn't let some random person in the room
4 come and draw those for us. We actually drew the
5 maps ourselves.

6 And so I participated. I offered an
7 amendment specifically on Texas 30 which I was not
8 representing or running for at that time. And in
9 order for me to get my amendment approved to even be
10 able to make the amendment, number one, we had to
11 pre-file, which that never happened. We had gone
12 through redistricting for our State House maps.
13 There was no pre-filing of the amendment required
14 before you could actually bring the amendment to the
15 floor.

16 So I had to pre-file with an
17 amendment, and then ultimately, before I could
18 actually bring the amendment on the floor, whoever
19 these random people were in the room, I never got to
20 go. I had to hand my amendment off to one of my
21 colleagues from the Republican side. They then went
22 to the people in the back somewhere. Then they came
23 back out and told me whether or not I could actually
24 present my amendment on the floor.

25

1 We also know that they did what
2 they're doing now, which is pretended as if they were
3 going to draw some maps but in actuality somebody
4 else is going to give them the maps. And then they
5 had people testifying as if they were listening. But
6 then there is no clear record for the courts about
7 how people feel when they directly impact their
8 districts because they weren't given an opportunity
9 to talk about the impact on their districts because
10 they don't know the impacts. But they get to say
11 that we just -- we did hear from them when you really
12 didn't.

13 REPRESENTATIVE JONES: So in order to
14 -- would you agree with me that in order to file an
15 amendment there's got to be something filed.

16 JASMINE CROCKETT: Yes.

17 REPRESENTATIVE JONES: And I have to
18 like it or not.

19 JASMINE CROCKETT: Yes.

20 REPRESENTATIVE JONES: And then if I
21 think something needs to be changed then I file an
22 amendment to change that. Would you agree with me on
23 that?

24 JASMINE CROCKETT: Yes. Yes.
25

1 REPRESENTATIVE JONES: Okay. So in
2 the process that we're having right now, there
3 literally is nothing to file an amendment on. Would
4 you agree with me?

5 JASMINE CROCKETT: Correct.

6 REPRESENTATIVE JONES: Right. And so
7 let me ask you this. Whenever there is a map
8 proposed, because -- whenever there is one filed --
9 and for purposes of people who don't understand, the
10 way that a bill looks for a map is it has a whole
11 bunch of like zip codes.

12 JASMINE CROCKETT: Yes.

13 REPRESENTATIVE JONES: It tells all of
14 the zip codes that are a part of whatever
15 congressional district it is. So it's hard to tell
16 what it looks like on the paper, right. So but
17 sometimes you can see the picture when you file what
18 the map actually looks like in Red Apple, correct?

19 JASMINE CROCKETT: Correct. So my
20 amendment, it had the picture of the district so you
21 could see the counties, you could see -- because my
22 -- because Texas 30 fell under the Voting Rights Act,
23 it was important to lay out what the citizen voting
24 age population was as well to make sure that there

25

1 were no violations. So it's a little bit more but
2 you get typically a picture.

3 REPRESENTATIVE JONES: But my point is
4 this. After you give them the picture and the people
5 in counsel redistricting put all the zip codes in
6 there, then you can tell. And would you say that's
7 -- and this is a yes or no question -- is it simple
8 or is it complicated?

9 JASMINE CROCKETT: Oh, the entire
10 process is very complicated.

11 REPRESENTATIVE JONES: Right. And the
12 reason I bring that up is the fact that we're not
13 having public hearings where people have time in
14 advance to look at these maps so that they can figure
15 out where all these zip codes are to see how it
16 affects them is definitely a lack of transparency for
17 the people that are fighting for their rights to stay
18 together. Would you agree with that?

19 JASMINE CROCKETT: Yes, I would. I
20 would say that this is not a flaw in the process but
21 instead this is --

22 REPRESENTATIVE JONES: A design --

23 JASMINE CROCKETT: Correct.

24 REPRESENTATIVE JONES: -- in the
25 process.

1 JASMINE CROCKETT: Correct.

2 REPRESENTATIVE JONES: And so that's a
3 problem. So are you asking this committee
4 specifically, who holds these public hearings, that
5 once the bill is filed that has everything divided up
6 that there be public hearings across the state so
7 that people will actually know how this bill/map
8 affects them, and only then can they make educated
9 testimony about how the maps will affect them? Do
10 you agree with that?

11 JASMINE CROCKETT: Oh, absolutely. I
12 mean, as we heard the Chairman say, we are here to
13 testify on this instead of for or against. And you
14 know as a representative that typically when we have
15 hearings you are testifying for or against. But when
16 we go to court -- because this ultimately will go to
17 court because I know how Texas likes to do --
18 ultimately when you're looking at the record, it
19 doesn't look like anybody was against it.

20 REPRESENTATIVE JONES: Exactly. Which
21 is why when you come up to testify -- and you
22 understand this because you used to sit in this seat
23 in the House -- they're asking you to be neutral.

24 JASMINE CROCKETT: Correct.

25

1 REPRESENTATIVE JONES: Right. Which
2 hurts us in court later.

3 JASMINE CROCKETT: Correct.

4 REPRESENTATIVE JONES: So are you
5 asking -- or are you three congresspeople asking that
6 after the bill with whatever map is shoved down our
7 throats is filed, are you asking for us to have
8 hearings -- public hearings (audio cuts out) evaluate
9 and reflect and figure this out and talk to our
10 constituents to allow our constituents of Texas to
11 come and testify about the specific harm or good that
12 these maps, or that this bill is going to do? Is
13 that what you're asking?

14 JASMINE CROCKETT: We're absolutely
15 asking for that.

16 SYLVIA GARCIA: Absolutely.

17 JASMINE CROCKETT: And I'll tell you
18 that as much time as they are spending during these
19 field hearings without a map, they should absolutely
20 invest even more time once they have the maps.

21 So the idea that they're going to
22 minimize the amount of time that people have to speak
23 on this and actually do less when they have more is a
24 problem, and that should be something seen as
25 irregular in this process as well.

1 SYLVIA GARCIA: Representative, my
2 experience of course with serving in the Senate --
3 and we did do -- during that period we did four field
4 hearings. And of course the biggest flaw in this
5 whole process is that we're letting the White House
6 dictate and prepare the maps in some backroom. We
7 don't have a map. It's difficult to speak about an
8 item that you haven't even seen. So that I think is
9 probably the biggest flaw.

10 And secondly, I think there should be
11 robust field hearings particularly in those districts
12 that are going to be impacted. But keep in mind,
13 four districts were named in the DOJ letter, but once
14 you go in there, the domino effect of what other
15 districts are impacted, because if you move something
16 here in Houston, it may move -- create a movement
17 somewhere in Fort Bend County or Galveston County.

18 So it impacts all of us, so they
19 should be robust. There's no reason why in my mind
20 that you couldn't have had a field hearing in the Rio
21 Grand Valley. It's a five county region with over a
22 million people, really important to our economy. El
23 Paso. Even San Antonio doesn't get one. You know,
24 what about the Port Arthur/Beaumont folks? You know,

25

1 I think it's just a disservice to Texas that we're
2 not allowing all Texans to be heard.

3 REPRESENTATIVE JONES: And speaking of
4 -- because you talked about it before -- communities
5 that have similar experiences.

6 SYLVIA GARCIA: Absolutely.

7 REPRESENTATIVE JONES: Right. So we
8 talked about that, and we talked about already why
9 it's important to have someone who understands what
10 you're going through. For example, for you,
11 Congresswoman Garcia -- and maybe everyone because
12 there are mixed status families everywhere -- don't
13 you think that in a -- I'm trying to look at you as I
14 speak.

15 Don't you think that in a community,
16 for example, if you have a mixed status family,
17 right, and you have people actually going through the
18 citizenship process. They have their documentation,
19 right. And then that you would be able to call a
20 congressperson like you, Congresswoman, who is going
21 to try to help you get your citizenship because
22 you're trying to go through the lawful process,
23 rather than have a congressperson, if they crack your
24 community, that is actually trying to deport you or
25 get your status in court dismissed.

1 And by that, I mean this. We had so
2 many people -- and people didn't understand what was
3 going on when President Trump was getting rid of all
4 those immigration judges. But now we see he wanted
5 an immigration system where they could dismiss the
6 cases and literally create undocumented people
7 because they no longer have a case where they're here
8 documented.

9 Don't you think your constituents are
10 entitled to have someone like you who understands the
11 struggles and who is going to try to help them get to
12 a path to citizenship, as opposed to if they call
13 their congressperson in a racially gerrymandered map
14 that is going to try to deport them and break up
15 their family? Is that an accurate concern?

16 SYLVIA GARCIA: Well, of course it's
17 always been a concern. And regretfully, I have to
18 tell you that we take many calls where people call us
19 from another district who tell us that they called
20 their member of Congress, but they were told over the
21 phone that there's no one who speaks Spanish to
22 really work with them. Or who will tell them, "Well,
23 we don't really handle those kind of cases. Call
24 Garcia in Houston."

25

1 So we do get those kind of calls, and
2 I say regrettably because it's shameful that those
3 members aren't doing full constituent services,
4 number one. But we have strict rules in Congress
5 that I can only spend resources, time, and personnel
6 within my district, which really limits some of the
7 things that I can do.

8 So I wish that there was more members
9 of Congress that looked like me and did constituent
10 services to everybody in English, Spanish, you know,
11 Vietnamese, whatever language.

12 REPRESENTATIVE JONES: So it
13 effectively disenfranchises people who don't look
14 like you.

15 SYLVIA GARCIA: Right. And it makes
16 them not have faith in government, not have faith in
17 the process and the system when they can't even get a
18 phone call returned.

19 REPRESENTATIVE JONES: And I'll say
20 this to -- would this be accurate? The only way to
21 create a majority Anglo district, right, when you
22 have a majority of minorities, is to literally crack
23 or split the majority-minority.

24 So what you'll have is you'll have
25 urban areas where minorities flock to because they

1 see discrimination against themselves in their little
2 towns that they're from, and so they'll have --
3 they'll get black, or brown, or Hispanic, or whatever
4 minority you are, and they'll drive it all the way
5 out to the rural areas that's majoritarily Anglo. Is
6 that accurate?

7 SYLVIA GARCIA: I think you're very
8 close to accurate. Yes, ma'am.

9 REPRESENTATIVE JONES: I'm sorry. Say
10 it again.

11 SYLVIA GARCIA: I think you're pretty
12 accurate.

13 REPRESENTATIVE JONES: Jones.

14 JASMINE CROCKETT: I'm going to say
15 you're spot on. That was one of the -- I mean,
16 that's what it is. That was one of the issues that
17 existed with my district, just to be clear.

18 REPRESENTATIVE JONES: Okay.

19 JASMINE CROCKETT: While my district's
20 number remain the same, what they did was, my
21 neighbor, Jake Ellzey, who is CD 6, Jake Ellzey
22 represented three counties. They ended up taking
23 Jake Ellzey's seat and making it about maybe seven
24 counties or so.

25

1 But what they did over in Tarrant
2 County, was Tarrant County, in one city, Grand
3 Prairie, they decided that Grand Prairie was getting
4 a little too colorful for them to potentially
5 maintain control over. So what happened is this one
6 city got split into three. One third came to me.
7 One third went to Ellzey. One third went to Burgess.

8 And so they cracked that community of
9 one city, and the next thing you know, they're paired
10 up with people that have no idea what their struggles
11 are in Grand Prairie versus what they are dealing
12 with in say farming areas of Texas.

13 REPRESENTATIVE JONES: Right. So --
14 and that's my last question. But the point is that
15 that's how they're able to create majority Anglo
16 districts. They crack the minority areas, and then
17 they put a small number of minorities in a district
18 with people who look nothing like them; and that's
19 how they're able to highjack, to terrorize, to kidnap
20 the United States Congress, and it's just not right.
21 Thank you for explaining that.

22 LIZZIE FLETCHER: And thank you,
23 Representative Jones. I just wanted to say -- people
24 say for the record all the time, but this time truly
25 for the record, I agree with my colleagues that we

1 should absolutely have more hearings on the maps for
2 precisely the reasons they just outlined. People
3 need to see what a new map is going to do to their
4 community and be able to come to all of you and talk
5 about why it should or should not -- and most likely
6 should not happen based on the things that we've
7 seen.

8 So it's really important that once
9 there is a bill and a map, that the public has an
10 opportunity to see it and to meaningfully give you
11 all input before you proceed.

12 And I would ask that you not proceed.
13 That you make the decision whether to do this or not,
14 that you choose to end this process and focus on the
15 real and urgent needs of our fellow Texans and our
16 great state. Thank you.

17 REPRESENTATIVE JONES: Thank you so
18 much.

19 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Members, Chair
20 will show Representative Barbara Gervin-Hawkins is
21 present. She was actually present at 12:45.

22 So Barbara, good to have you.

23 Any other questions for this panel?

24 Hearing none, the panel is excused.

25 Now for all in attendance --

1 SYLVIA GARCIA: Thank you,
2 Mr. Chairman.

3 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: You're welcome.

4 The witness affirmation forms were
5 printed, and individuals were able to sign those.
6 The Chair though didn't get an opportunity to
7 announce that they were closed. So what we're going
8 to do is we're going to stand at ease for about five
9 minutes to give our precious court reporter a break
10 here.

11 And just to remind everybody, when we
12 come back to, I'm going to close registration at that
13 time. So that's your warning. So on that, the House
14 Select Committee on Congressional Redistricting will
15 stand at ease for five minutes.

16 (Recess taken)

17 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: The House Select
18 Committee on Congressional Redistricting will come to
19 order, and that's all right if it takes a little bit
20 of time.

21 Is my audio on?

22 DEAN THOMPSON: The House Committee
23 will come to order.

24 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Thank you, Dean
25 Thompson.

1 Please take your seats. We'll give
2 you a little bit of time. And just so that the
3 record is clear -- I want to make sure everybody
4 hears me. Just so the record is clear, any time we
5 take one of these breaks where we're standing at
6 ease, that clock is not running. I just want you to
7 know that.

8 Oh, and just so you're aware as
9 well --

10 Thank you, Speaker Moody.

11 -- all the questions that we had at
12 the very beginning, none of that counted towards the
13 time at all. So that clock only runs when someone is
14 testifying or answering questions up here at the
15 front. All right. And just so the record is clear,
16 we've only used an hour and 22 minutes, okay.

17 So now, as the Chair previously
18 mentioned, the time for registration has been
19 reached. Is anyone else in this room that is present
20 wishing to register to testify that has not
21 registered to testify?

22 The Chair hears none. Registration is
23 closed.

24 All right. Members, we have one more
25 important announcement. Would Crystal Jordan -- is

1 Crystal Jordan here? If Crystal Jordon could make
2 her way into the room or up front. I have your
3 credit card. Now, I'm a man of honor, and I am not
4 going to use your credit card. But if you could come
5 claim it, I would feel much better about myself.
6 Either that or it's going to go to the police. So if
7 Crystal Jordan could come kindly pick up her credit
8 card, and it is in the safe keeping of the Chair
9 right up here at the front.

10 Now, with that we're going to go back
11 to our panelists here. Chair will call as our next
12 panel, Dr. Sergio Lira, Al Green, Nick Lampson, and
13 Sasha Legette, if you'll make your way up front now.

14 Now, Dr. Lira, we're going to have you
15 go last because I need you to sign your witness
16 affirmation form. I'm going to have them bring that
17 to you. I haven't started the clock.

18 And our next panel after this, so
19 please be ready, is going to be Bishop James Dixon,
20 Christian Menefee, and Augustin Pinedo. And I
21 apologize if I messed up any of those names.

22 With that, we're back on the clock.
23 Chair calls Al Green. Chair shows you registered to
24 testify as Al Green on behalf of yourself on
25 congressional redistricting plan. Of course you're

1 the congressman for the 9th District of Texas. Is
2 that correct, sir?

3 AL GREEN: It is.

4 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Please give us
5 your testimony.

6 AL GREEN: Before I give my testimony,
7 Mr. Chairman, I do have a document for the record.

8 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: And we have passed
9 those out for you, Congressman.

10 AL GREEN: Well, thank you very much.

11 Mr. Chairman, by way of further
12 introduction, I am Al Green, a liberated Democrat -
13 unbought, unbossered, and unafraid. And I stand and
14 sit here today because the Dean is correct. The
15 attorney general of the United States, by command of
16 the President of the United States, has indicated in
17 a letter -- and I shall just read one sentence -- it
18 says, "If the state of Texas fails to rectify the
19 racial gerrymandering of Texas 9, Texas 18, Texas 29,
20 and 33, the attorney general reserves the right to
21 seek legal action against the state, including
22 without limitation under the 14th Amendment."
23 Literally, the state has been ordered to do what
24 we're doing by the AG.

25

1 I'm not sure that that order has to be
2 fulfilled, but in so doing, the attorney general has
3 singled out four congressional districts, all of whom
4 are represented by people of color. The co-Chair is
5 imminently correct. This is about racism. It is
6 about people of color being denied the opportunity to
7 have representation.

8 I know there's some question now as to
9 why people have to have people of color. Because
10 I've walked the neighborhood. Government of the
11 people. I've played pool in the pool halls. I've
12 been on the buses. I know the bus lines. I kind of
13 think it's good to have somebody who has been in the
14 hood with you. It means something. It does.

15 And while my time is short, let me
16 just end with this, because I have much more I can
17 say, but I want to end with this, Mr. Chairman.
18 Mr. Chairman, if this plan is perfected, there will
19 be more white faces in Congress and fewer black and
20 Latino faces. I thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Thank you for your
22 testimony.

23 Chair calls -- and again, members,
24 we'll question the panel at the end. Chair calls
25 Nick Lampson. I show you're registered to testify as

1 Nick Lampson on behalf of yourself on the revised
2 congressional redistricting plan. Is that correct?

3 NICK LAMPSON: Yes, it is.

4 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Please give us
5 your testimony.

6 NICK LAMPSON: Thank you. I'm Nick
7 Lampson. I served Southeast Texas in Congress for a
8 decade and as the Jefferson County Tax Assessor
9 Collector for nearly two decades. I appreciate the
10 opportunity to be here today, and I thank the Chair
11 and the committee.

12 I've got to tell you, I'm experiencing
13 a troubling sense of deja vu. Governor Abbott has
14 called the special session to advance a mid-decade
15 redistricting plan just as the Department of Justice
16 (audio/video cuts out).

17 ...2003 I was a target of Tom DeLay's
18 mid-decadal redistricting scheme, the first in the
19 country. That plan was not about reflecting
20 population changes. It was about locking in partisan
21 power. I was approached and offered a deal. Switch
22 parties and they'll leave my district alone. I was
23 even promised a committee Chairmanship. I refused
24 because public service is about the people you
25 represent, not personal gain.

1 DeLay thought he had drawn himself a
2 safe seat, and I ran against him to prove that no
3 abuse of power goes unanswered; and I won.

4 Communities of interest deserve fair
5 and undiluted representation. The people of Texas
6 deserve maps that reflect who they are, not maps that
7 are designed to protect the powerful.

8 Now 20 years later the same playbook
9 is being reopened and Jefferson County, once an
10 anchor of a congressional district, still lives with
11 the consequences. Our influence was stripped away,
12 and we have yet to recover. This is not just about
13 redistricting. It is about equity, accountability,
14 and whether Texans choose their representatives or
15 politicians continue choosing their voters.
16 Democracy does not belong to a party, it belongs to
17 the people, and it is the responsibility of every --

18 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Please finish your
19 testimony.

20 NICK LAMPSON: -- person in this room
21 to protect it. I urge the committee to reject the
22 effort. Not because it is an inconvenience but
23 because it is wrong.

24 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Thank you for your
25 testimony.

1 Chair recognizes Sasha Legette. I
2 show you registered to testify as Sasha Legette on
3 behalf of Harris County Commissioner Rodney Ellis on
4 the revised congressional redistricting plan. Is
5 that correct?

6 SASHA LEGETTE: Yes, sir.

7 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Please give us
8 your testimony.

9 SASHA LEGETTE: Chairman, members, my
10 name is Sasha Legette, and I am here to read a
11 statement on behalf of Harris County Commissioner
12 Rodney Ellis.

13 I've been in this fight before. In
14 2003, I broke quorum and left the state to stop
15 discriminatory redistricting maps from becoming law.
16 The media called me a father in exile. I spent a
17 month away from my family after my youngest daughter
18 was born because I believed Texans deserved fair
19 representation, and now we are here again. But this
20 time, it's worse.

21 This isn't about redrawing maps. It's
22 about erasing progress. About dismantling the
23 constitution and destroying what remains of the
24 Voting Rights Act. Let's be honest. This process is
25 designed to break apart multiracial coalition

1 districts, undermine black and Latino voting power,
2 and concentrate control in the hands of a small
3 political minority.

4 Texans of all backgrounds have built
5 power together across race, region, and party. But
6 instead of honoring that process, it punishes it.
7 These maps being drawn are not to represent the
8 people but to insulate a shrinking group of
9 politicians from accountability. And make no
10 mistake, this is a political operation. A top-down
11 strategy driven by Donald Trump and his allies to rig
12 the rules, silence opposition, and turn racial
13 discrimination into law.

14 Even the process itself shows the
15 intent. Limiting hearings, cutting people off early,
16 and no in-person access in Austin. Nearly a quarter
17 of Texans don't have internet, and they are being
18 shut out. Let's not forget this. Nothing has even
19 been filed. Texans are being asked to testify on
20 something we can't see, we can't review, and we can't
21 trust. This is not representative government. It's
22 a coordinated assault on our democracy, and we will
23 fight it. Thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Thank you for your
25 testimony.

1 And if members of the audience could
2 please withhold your applause just because it takes a
3 little bit longer than for me to announce the next
4 witness. I want to be as efficient as we can.

5 Chair calls Dr. Sergio Lira on behalf
6 of the Greater Houston LULAC on the revised
7 congressional redistricting plan. That's your
8 registration; is that correct?

9 SERGIO LIRA: That is correct. And
10 also, I'm the Chair of LULAC redistricting task force
11 that was created after the 2020 census.

12 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Are you intending
13 to testify on behalf of them, or is it okay if your
14 form just says test "Testifying on behalf of the
15 Greater Houston LULAC"?

16 SERGIO LIRA: I'll go ahead and
17 testify on behalf of Greater Houston LULAC.

18 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Okay. Understood.
19 Please give us your testimony.

20 SERGIO LIRA: Yes. It's called the
21 courage to care. We ask -- I'm asking all the
22 Republican colleagues to have the courage to care and
23 let me explain why. Because the population boom in
24 Texas in 2020, according to AI and Google, was 95
25

1 percent folks of color. Mostly Latinos, Asian
2 Americans, and African Americans.

3 This population growth, as you know,
4 was rightfully -- every census and population growth,
5 we ask for new congressional seats. This is
6 democracy. However, a majority-minority district was
7 not created. In fact, as we know, two congressional
8 districts were Republicans. But I want you to know
9 that the Latino economic force that's happening in
10 our state contributes \$582 billion to the economy.

11 I know that your heart is in the right
12 place to do the right thing, and I know you want to
13 ensure fair representations to everyone in your
14 district, and you have voted for the previous map
15 that was considered race neutral. But you were
16 elected to serve all constituents and Latinos are now
17 the majority in many areas, and in particularly these
18 four districts.

19 But I want you to do know that Latinos
20 live in your community. Latinos attend your church.
21 Latinos go to your schools. Latinos built your
22 homes. Latinos are actually the essential workers in
23 this building, and they need representation.

24 Do not vote for the mid-decade
25 redistricting map. Let me tell you why. This is a

1 dangerous precedent. It will cause a snowball effect
2 where, in fact, Democrats may do the same thing in
3 the blue states, and in reality, we all lose.

4 Let's focus on savings lives. Let's
5 focus on flood litigation. Let's focus on the THC
6 legislations to no longer hurt and harm young
7 children. What's more at stake here are the lives
8 whether you're red or blue. But we have to save
9 lives and do what's right and have the courage to
10 care, and let's keep things as they are. Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Thank you for your
12 testimony.

13 Members, any questions for the members
14 of this panel?

15 The Chair recognizes Mr. Manuel to
16 question the witnesses.

17 REPRESENTATIVE MANUEL: Thank you.

18 Mr. Lampson, we're from the same area,
19 and we have a very different demographic than most
20 people. We are really a midsize rural, and we're
21 often grouped in with Harris County when it comes to
22 healthcare access. Can you tell me what has been the
23 consequences of not just Jefferson County but Orange
24 and Harden and those other East Texas places that we
25 used to have districts where we were -- we had things

1 more aligned then, what that's done to our rural
2 hospitals, to women trying to give birth, for people
3 who need healthcare access when we had those
4 districts of interest split in two?

5 NICK LAMPSON: It was a true community
6 of interest -- a community of interest. We have
7 primarily interests in coastal issues, industrial,
8 and agricultural. The district ran -- before it
9 turned to District 9 where Al is now. That district
10 ran down the coastline for a little over 100 miles.
11 There were a lot of issues that were very specific to
12 that area. The main one, the deepening and widening
13 of the Sabine-Neches ship channel.

14 We had worked -- my predecessor, Jack
15 Brooks -- not the immediate predecessor, Steve
16 Stockman -- but Brooks worked for years trying to
17 prepare the continuation of the development of that
18 ship channel. I picked it up, was on this
19 transportation committee, had won support from
20 members of Congress all over the country to be able
21 to move those activities forward.

22 And in 2001, we built the most
23 important piece of it, which is a saltwater barrier,
24 because as the channel gets deeper, saltwater comes
25 in. It would run up and could potentially kill off

1 the Davy Crockett forest to the north and other
2 environmental impacts.

3 That \$53 million project was
4 completed, and we were set to do the others. So the
5 redistricting then set that economic development
6 project back by at least 20 to 25 years. It has just
7 been put back on the list of the Corps of Engineers
8 for activity. That kind of chaos.

9 The community of interest that we were
10 attached to -- Northern Beaumont was attached to
11 North Houston, a white collar retail district. I
12 won't say a word about -- a negative word about the
13 member that took over the activity in that district
14 when I left. He is a good person, but he had a whole
15 different focus. I can't say he didn't care about
16 the Neches's River, but he was not there to
17 understand what the problems, and the needs, and the
18 concerns of industry, which is the economic driver of
19 the entire of East Texas, including Orange County.
20 It was a major problem for us.

21 REPRESENTATIVE MANUEL: And -- because
22 you touched on this. The way that we were trying to
23 improve our area was to make sure that we didn't get
24 the flooding that was happening from anywhere else
25 that was northern to us in Texas, but it was also

1 helping -- unless I'm wrong -- it was helping cities
2 like Houston and Dallas where they wouldn't have so
3 much flooding. Because what would happen is we had
4 done all the work for all of the water to come down
5 faster but without flooding our area as well. And a
6 lot of that stopped, unless I'm incorrect on that
7 one.

8 NICK LAMPSON: It takes a community.
9 People have to work together. Unity is required.
10 And yes, the things that we were doing in the 9th
11 Congressional District worked very closely with the
12 folks -- excuse me, the old 9th -- worked very
13 closely with the people here in Houston. The 9th
14 District had the southeastern portion of Harris
15 County in it at the time.

16 You're correct. There are many, many
17 issues that affect it. I now work for a hospital
18 system. That hospital will be impacted because of
19 the decisions that are going to be coming out the
20 Congress over the next several months. One of our
21 major demands -- we're a rural critical access
22 hospital in the middle of a rice field, and if it
23 goes down, most of our patients are Medicaid
24 patients. And if that goes into effect in the manner
25 in which we think it will, it very likely could drive

1 this company into bankruptcy, which is what we took
2 it from 11 years ago.

3 REPRESENTATIVE MANUEL: And then this
4 is my last question. When it comes to the Healthcare
5 Act, because we know that we have women who are
6 trying to get to the hospital in our area and just
7 dying because they're driving 40 minutes to an hour
8 just to give birth because there are no hospitals in
9 certain parts. Can you explain in a -- I guess as
10 fast as you can, explain have people's income in East
11 Texas gone up or down since they started busting up
12 districts with community interests, they're a
13 coalition district, or a majority-minority districts?
14 Has that helped people's income when we said we were
15 steady in the '90s, or has that made areas like ours
16 go down and become poorer?

17 NICK LAMPSON: Poorer. It has not
18 been helpful. And I was on a task force that
19 included folks as far up as Jasper. Actually, some
20 people from Lufkin came down and participated in it
21 as well. And the study was, is there something that
22 our hospital system and the hospitals in Beaumont
23 could do to assist those people up around Jasper, an
24 hour, hour and a half north of us, deep East Texas.

25

1 And what we found, that over -- I
2 forgot the exact number -- 600 -- approximately 600
3 women with their pregnancies could not find
4 assistance and had to drive for more than an hour and
5 a half to get prenatal or postnatal care or delivery
6 services. That area is a poor place to be, and it
7 needs improvement. It needs someone who cares enough
8 to inject themselves into the issues and make
9 something happen.

10 REPRESENTATIVE MANUEL: Thank you so
11 much.

12 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Ms. Jones, for
13 what purpose?

14 REPRESENTATIVE JONES: To ask one
15 question to Congressman Green.

16 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: So recognized.

17 REPRESENTATIVE JONES: Congressman,
18 can you tell why redistricting, specifically
19 Congressional District 18, is disadvantaged in this
20 process because it does not have a sitting
21 congressperson.

22 AL GREEN: Thank you for the question.
23 Let me start with this. District 18 has made a
24 difference, and when we had the vote on this big ugly
25 steal of a bill, it passed by one vote, one vote. If

1 the 18th Congressional District had been represented,
2 it would not have passed with those votes.

3 And the 18th is important because
4 Jackson Lee and I were partners. We worked together.
5 She did casework. If you had a problem and you were
6 a veteran, she would take up your calls. If you were
7 a person who was undocumented and out of the country,
8 she would try to get you back, if the law permitted.
9 If you were a person who literally had no air in your
10 home and you needed air conditioning, she would help
11 find it for you. She went above and beyond the call
12 of duty. This means something to people.

13 And let's not forget Sylvester Turner.
14 Sylvester Turner had a very brief tenure, but in that
15 period of time, it became intuitively obvious to even
16 the most casual observer that he was going to be a
17 great congressperson.

18 I was with him the night that he
19 transitioned. We were at the joint session of
20 Congress. Some of you may recall that I was there.
21 And after he and I talked, he traversed his way up
22 the aisle, and I saw him no more. He was no longer
23 there. But I want his legacy to be important too.
24 Because he didn't control that part of his destiny
25 but what he did in Houston as mayor was indicative of

1 what he would have done in Congress a United States
2 Congressman. So yes, the 18th Congressional District
3 means a lot. It does.

4 NICK LAMPSON: Mr. Chairman.

5 REPRESENTATIVE JONES: Thank you,
6 Congressman Green.

7 NICK LAMPSON: May I add one thing,
8 Mr. Chairman?

9 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Not at this time.
10 Members, any other questions for the
11 panel?

12 DEAN THOMPSON: Mr. Chairman, I'd like
13 to make a --

14 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Ms. Thompson, for
15 what purpose?

16 DEAN THOMPSON: Mr. Chairman, a lot of
17 people are here to testify and I know my colleagues
18 have a lot of questions. If they can shorten some of
19 those questions and get to the public testimony.

20 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Understood. Thank
21 you, Dean.

22 Members, any other questions to this
23 panel?

24 Seeing none, thank you for your
25 testimony. The panel is excused.

1 The next panel, as we've previously
2 mentioned, if you'll make your way up, Bishop James
3 Dixon, Christian Menefee, and Augustin Pinedo.

4 While they're making their way up, the
5 Chair recognizes Vice Chair Rosenthal for a brief
6 announcement.

7 VICE CHAIR ROSENTHAL: Thank you,
8 Mr. Chairman. And thank you all really for bearing
9 with us.

10 So first housekeeping item, we've
11 confirmed that if you need to get up and like go to
12 the restroom, get a water break, whatever, they will
13 let you back in. You won't lose your seat. So
14 that's first.

15 Second, we want to move through this
16 next panel quickly if we can because we came here to
17 listen to you, and we want your testimony. So I will
18 be moving at the -- at the end of -- when we reach
19 4:00 p.m., I'll be moving to extend time. We'll take
20 a vote on the objection to adjourn and stuff. Should
21 that end up being voted down, or even if we do extend
22 time, so many people have signed up to testify today
23 that we have arranged for you to speak directly to
24 us.

25

1 We're going to reconvene outside of
2 the formal hearing at Wheeler Avenue Church. So when
3 this is over, anybody who has not been able to be
4 heard yet, you are invited to come speak directly to
5 us. We will live stream it. We will record it.

6 The gym at the church. Wheeler Avenue
7 Baptist Church gymnasium after this.

8 Okay. Thank you very much.

9 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Thank you, Vice
10 Chair.

11 And as our panel is up here, our next
12 panel -- so please be ready to come up after this one
13 -- Lanita Robinson, Eric Ross, Ebony Raine Eatmon,
14 Deborah Allen (phonetic). Please be on deck.

15 All right. Turning now to our panel
16 here. Chair calls Augustin Pinedo. Is Augustin
17 Pinedo here?

18 Chair will show Augustin Pinedo
19 registered to testify on behalf of LULAC District 18
20 on revised congressional redistrict plan but not
21 testifying.

22 Okay. Chair calls Christian Menefee.

23 And before you testify, Bishop Dixon,
24 I have a signature on your form here but it's on the
25 line that I'm supposed to sign. Do I have your

1 permission to put a little arrow up from your
2 signature to the line you were supposed to sign?

3 BISHOP DIXON: No. Just sign yours
4 under mine.

5 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: There we go. Got
6 it. You got it. Thank you, Bishop

7 Mr. Menefee, I show you registered to
8 testify as Christian Menefee on behalf of yourself on
9 revised congressional redistricting plan. Is that
10 correct?

11 CHRISTIAN MENEFEES: That's correct.

12 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Please give us
13 your testimony.

14 CHRISTIAN MENEFEES: Good afternoon.
15 I'm Christian Menefee, and I'm here in the protection
16 and defense of the districts that were deemed the
17 minority. The black and brown districts that were
18 named by the Trump DOJ to try to steal their
19 political power. I'm here to say enough is enough.
20 Do not steal the political power of these districts.

21 Now, I live in the 18th Congressional
22 District, and the folks who live there know that
23 historically the reason that that district is what
24 we've known it to come to be is because of the severe
25 racism that existed in this country. Black folks in

1 this country couldn't register to vote, couldn't
2 vote, and if they did, they faced violence, and in
3 some instances, even worse.

4 But despite that -- despite that, we
5 know that over time, just because time has passed,
6 that doesn't mean that that racism has gone away.
7 You've got redlining. You've got blocking people's
8 access to capital. And over time you've seen that
9 the relics of that racism still exist today. That's
10 why if you go throughout the 18th Congressional
11 District, you'll see food deserts. That's why there
12 are communities in the 18th Congressional District
13 that have 9 or 10 concrete batch plants in a mile of
14 a single community.

15 That's why you have lower life
16 expectancy, and that's why you got cancer clusters
17 all across the 18th Congressional District.

18 Now, despite all that, the governor in
19 the state of Texas has targeted this district. When
20 we lost our Congressman, Sylvester Turner, the law
21 says that the governor is supposed to call the
22 special election immediately. But he set it for
23 November so that people in this district are going to
24 go more than a year without congressional
25 representation. That means that when there are votes

1 on the floor, nobody is there to vote for our
2 district. That means that when immigrants and
3 veterans need their cases worked, nobody is here to
4 do that work. That means that when SNAP benefits and
5 Medicaid are cut, there is no voice for this
6 district.

7 I'm here to say enough is enough.
8 State leaders have targeted this district for far too
9 long, and it's time for you to do the right thing.
10 Do not strip these folks of their political power.
11 Do not adopt a redistricting plan that does that.
12 Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Thank you for your
14 testimony.

15 Chair calls Mr. Dixon.

16 JAMES DIXON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

17 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Mr. Dixon, I show
18 you registered to testify on behalf of the NAACP and
19 Ministers of Houston. Is that correct?

20 JAMES DIXON: That's correct.

21 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: And that's on the
22 revised congressional redistricting plan?

23 JAMES DIXON: Yes, sir.

24 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Please give us
25 your testimony.

1 JAMES DIXON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
2 And to all of the representatives here, welcome to
3 Houston, and thank all of you for being here today.

4 I represent the Houston NAACP, and I'm
5 also privileged to speak for the state NAACP, along
6 with, of course, pastors across the city of Houston
7 and the Community of Faith Church, which has been in
8 District 18, long before it was a district. Our
9 church is 150 years old, founded by the formerly
10 enslaved Reverend Jack Yates, for whom the high
11 school is named, who helped purchase Emancipation
12 Park in District 18.

13 I want to say that because those
14 individuals who are making decisions about the future
15 of District 18 and 9 and the other districts
16 mentioned need to really understand the richness of
17 the history and the value that representation has
18 added, not just to people of color, but that everyone
19 who resides in the Greater Houston and Harris County
20 community. That's very important.

21 We are here today under unfortunate
22 circumstances, as it's been articulated multiple
23 times. We have a census every 10 years. The data
24 from which should dictate necessary changes to the
25

1 maps for Congressional representation. That is a
2 common-sense plan.

3 We are here today, not because the
4 data has dictated it. We are here today because
5 there is a decision that the people of this state
6 don't deserve to elect their own representatives.
7 And it's proven that political and racial
8 gerrymandering proves that the elected chooses their
9 voters as opposed to the voters choosing their
10 elected. And whenever that occurs, the people always
11 lose. I want to say to us very quickly --

12 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Yeah. Please
13 finish your testimony.

14 JAMES DIXON: I will. Very quickly
15 that what is being done is oppressive, it's racist,
16 and we need to be clear on this, that it's
17 unconstitutional and immoral.

18 As speaking as a prophet, the word of
19 God says in Zachariah Chapter 9, Subchapter 7, "When
20 you oppress God's people and your hearts are too hard
21 to change, the wrath of God will come." This is a
22 warning to Texas. Don't play with God's poor,
23 oppressed people taking their insurance, their
24 Medicare, and their healthcare because there is a God
25 who's bigger than anyone in the White House, the

1 Texas Senate, or the Congress, and judgment shall
2 come.

3 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Thank you for your
4 testimony.

5 Members.

6 REPRESENTATIVE MANUEL: I have one.

7 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Gallery will come
8 to order. Members, questions for the panel. Chair
9 recognizes Mr. Manuel to question the panel.

10 REPRESENTATIVE MANUEL: Mr. Menefee, I
11 know that you're a county official. I have one
12 question about CD 18 because I've brought this up
13 before. How long has Congressional District 18 been
14 without representation, and what have been the
15 implications on the county by not having
16 representation, even though apparently, we just need
17 to get a map done and redistrict right now, because
18 the governor gave us two and a half weeks and said,
19 let's get it done?

20 CHRISTIAN MENEFEES: The late
21 Congressman Sylvester Turner passed away on March
22 5th. An important point here is, under the law, the
23 governor is supposed to call the election as soon as
24 practical. Now, there have been Republican
25 districts, Filemon Vela in 2022, right. When that

1 district became vacant, Governor Abbott called the
2 election to take place in June. And one of the
3 reasons that he gave when he did so in the
4 proclamation was because hurricane season was
5 approaching, and people need access to their federal
6 representative to get resources from FEMA into their
7 communities, right. This is the governor of Texas
8 speaking.

9 That same governor then looked at the
10 black and brown folk in the 18th Congressional
11 District and said you get November; you don't get
12 June. So we're going to go more than a year without
13 congressional representation. When that's happening,
14 I'm telling you right now, when -- back when
15 Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee was in office, if
16 there was a hurricane that happened, she was on the
17 phone with the county working with FEMA to get
18 resources back into the community.

19 That's what's missing right now is we
20 don't have an advocate who can get those resources
21 directly into our community. And we don't have
22 people who are in place right now to handle new
23 veterans' cases, new immigrant cases, and of course,
24 we don't have a vote. It's a major, major impact to
25 our communities, and it's completely inhumane that

1 the governor did it; and he gave a nonsense reason
2 when he did it. He said -- he said it was a problem
3 with the county's elections. And everybody sitting
4 in this room knows that Tanisha (Indiscernible) is
5 doing a fantastic job running our elections.

6 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Ms. Gervin
7 Hawkins, for what purpose?

8 REPRESENTATIVE GERVIN-HAWKINS: Quick
9 question, Mr. Dixon.

10 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: You're so
11 recognized.

12 REPRESENTATIVE GERVIN-HAWKINS: I'd
13 like for you to repeat those four things so my
14 colleagues can understand. This is serious business,
15 serious business. And we do not need someone in D.C.
16 in the White House, where they're putting their arm
17 in Texas and destroying and dividing our community.
18 What are those four things you -- you just said?

19 JAMES DIXON: We're dealing with
20 oppressing poor people, taking their healthcare; this
21 is Medicaid, this is SNAP, oppressing our seniors.
22 This is life and death. And when you take away
23 people's healthcare, their food, oppress the poor,
24 God always responds on behalf of the oppressed.

25

1 And listen, Texas is about to
2 practice, politician politics to enact and legalize
3 politician policies in order to disenfranchise people
4 that some folk think belong back on the plantation.
5 We need to understand that this is against the laws
6 of God and not just the laws of the legislature.
7 It's a higher law than that.

8 And I'm asking every Texan, black,
9 white, brown, Democrat, Republican, if you say you
10 love God, you love people, you've got to love, the
11 right people right now, and enact the right policies,
12 or your name will be guilty of the blood that it will
13 cost.

14 JAMES DIXON: Thank you, Mr. Dixon.

15 DEAN THOMPSON: Mr. Chairman.

16 CHAIR VASUT: Dean Thompson, what
17 purpose?

18 DEAN THOMPSON: I'd like to ask
19 Mr. Menefee a question.

20 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: You're so
21 recognized.

22 DEAN THOMPSON: Mr. Menefee, if I'm --
23 I live in the 18th Congressional District. Are there
24 not cancer clusters there that's not being taken care
25 of?

1 CHRISTIAN MENEFEE: That's right.

2 DEAN THOMPSON: Are there not being
3 concrete batching plants? We have over 300 batching
4 plants in that area that we are -- people are
5 inundated with. Is that -- isn't that also a problem
6 there?

7 CHRISTIAN MENEFEE: Yes, there is.

8 DEAN THOMPSON: And there have also
9 been other EPA problems that impact the health and
10 safety, not only of the people, but all of the people
11 that live within that geographical area that are
12 impacted.

13 CHRISTIAN MENEFEE: That's 100 percent
14 right. When Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee was in
15 office, she was one of the people who was at the
16 table that got the EPA into Fifth Ward to start doing
17 additional testing to address the cancer clusters.
18 When we at the county filed a lawsuit against the
19 state over its failure to regulate concrete batch
20 plants in black and brown neighborhoods, it was
21 Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee who helped get the
22 EPA involved to get the TCQ to change the rules.

23 Time after time after time, you've
24 seen that having a fierce advocate in Congress who is
25 focused on environmental justice can really move the

1 needle for people. But right now, folks are dying
2 without a voice. Folks are sick without a voice
3 because the governor decided to play politics with a
4 seat, but he's playing politics with these people's
5 lives.

6 DEAN THOMPSON: And we've been denied
7 representation.

8 CHRISTIAN MENEFEE: No representation
9 right now.

10 DEAN THOMPSON: Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Members, any other
12 questions for the members of this panel?

13 Hearing none. Thank you for your
14 testimony. This panel is excused.

15 Chair calls Lynita Robinson, Eric
16 Ross, Ebony Rain Eatmon, and Debra Allen for our next
17 panel.

18 The panel after that, please be ready
19 - Mary Ham, Angela Ravin-Anderson, Patricia Garris,
20 and Maritza Wong. Please be ready.

21 All right. Chair calls Lynita
22 Robinson. Okay. I show you registered to testify as
23 Lynita Robinson on behalf of Pure Justice on revised
24 congressional redistricting plan. Is that correct?

25 LYNITA ROBINSON: Yes, sir.

1 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Please give us
2 your testimony. Is that mic working?

3 LYNITA ROBINSON: Is it working?

4 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: There. If you
5 just make sure you talk right into it. Thank you
6 very much.

7 LYNITA ROBINSON: Let me get right
8 into it. Good afternoon, honorable Chairs and
9 committee members. My name is Lynita Robinson, and I
10 am proudly representing Pure Justice, a grassroots
11 organization committed to economic justice, racial
12 justice, and criminal justice reform. I am also a
13 seventh-generation Texan and the granddaughter of a
14 100-year-old matriarch whose life spans from Jim Crow
15 to George Floyd, from poll taxes to voter ID laws.

16 The mid-decade redistricting effort is
17 not about population shifts or court mandates. It is
18 a calculated move that threatens to dismantle the
19 decades of hard-fought progress in black and brown
20 communities across Texas. When you fracture and
21 manipulate districts, you weaken our collective power
22 to push for economic opportunity for fair wages,
23 infrastructure, and education.

24 You undercut racial justice by
25 silencing every -- the very voices that continue to

1 call out discrimination in healthcare, housing, and
2 policing. You stall criminal justice reform by
3 reducing our ability to elect leaders who understand
4 what it means to be overpoliced and underserved.

5 This is not the first time black
6 Texans have seen power stripped away through
7 redistricting. After reconstruction, black
8 representation was legislated out of existence. Now
9 in 2025, that same suppression is addressed in legal
10 lease and wrapped in political strategy.

11 I call on this committee, do not be
12 the architects of another rollback. Protect the
13 democratic rights of Texans. Not just those with
14 wealth and influence, but those whose voices have
15 historically been ignored.

16 Let me close with the words of Fannie
17 Lou Hamer, a woman who never stopped demanding
18 justice in the face of politics. Nobody, nobody is
19 free, until we're all free. Let's not allow the maps
20 to become another tool of injustice. Let's make a
21 blueprint for equity. Thank you for your time. You
22 all have a blessed day.

23 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Thank you for your
24 testimony. Chair calls Eric Ross. I show you
25 registered to testify as Eric Ross on behalf of

1 yourself on revised congressional redistricting plan.

2 Is that correct?

3 ERIC ROSS: Yes, that's correct.

4 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Please give us
5 your testimony.

6 ERIC ROSS: Good afternoon, honorable
7 committee members. My name is Eric Ross from
8 Congressional District 18. I'd like to take a moment
9 of silence to remember the children and families
10 affected by the recent floods in Central Texas.

11 The United States is a republic, not a
12 democracy, but the DOJ and the current
13 administration's pressure on our governor to withdraw
14 districts mid-decade threatens our constitutional
15 foundation. Our founders created a republic where
16 authority flows from the people's concern,
17 Respublica, through carefully designed institutions,
18 not raw majority rule. They feared temporary and
19 prudent majorities, trampling minority rights, and
20 created checks and balances to prevent exactly what
21 we're witnessing.

22 As the late Congresswoman Sheila
23 Jackson Lee once declared, this is outrage when
24 districts lose their communities. Her words ring
25 true today. This manipulation violates both

1 Republican principles and constitutional law. This
2 mid-decade power grab represents everything our
3 system was designed to prevent, a narrow majority
4 using temporary power to permanently rig elections.

5 Madison warned of this in the
6 Federalist 10, factions terrorizing through
7 manipulation, through persuasion.

8 To conservatives - true republicanism
9 protects minority rights and prevents hasty
10 minorities from dominating. Fair redistricting
11 upholds constitutional safeguards.

12 To progressives - our republic's anti-
13 majoritarian features, protect vulnerable communities
14 from political manipulation.

15 To all Texans - we're witnessing the
16 abuse of power our fathers most feared. Federal
17 politicians, compelling states to rig elections for
18 partisan advantage.

19 Scripture reminds us, learn to do
20 right, seek justice, defend the oppressed. Isaiah
21 1:17. Our Republican system works through
22 deliberation and broad consensus, not backroom deals,
23 predetermining outcomes. When districts are rigged,
24 we lose competitive elections that make
25 representatives accountable to all constituents.

1 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Please finish your
2 testimony.

3 ERIC ROSS: Cultural and economic
4 diversity strengthens our republic. Gerrymandering
5 destroys it by silence and voices and predetermining
6 results.

7 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Thank you for your
8 testimony.

9 ERIC ROSS: Stand against the assault
10 on Republican institutions, reject federal pressure,
11 draw fair districts allowing democratic input within
12 our constitutional framework. God bless Texas, and
13 God bless the United States of America.

14 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Thank you for your
15 testimony.

16 Chair calls Ebony Rain Eatmon.

17 EBONY EATMON: Present.

18 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: I show you
19 registered to testify as Ebony Rain Eatmon on behalf
20 of yourself on revised congressional redistricting
21 plan. Is that correct?

22 EBONY EATMON: That is correct.

23 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Please give us
24 your testimony.

25

1 EBONY EATMON: Thank you all so much
2 for the opportunity. Once again, my name is Ebony
3 Rain Eatmon. I failed to mention this last time, but
4 I am one of the many candidates that are running for
5 the Congressional 18th District.

6 But I want to bring attention to this
7 moment. Representative Wu, Walle, and Turner
8 expressed that we are all unclear why we're here in
9 this particular process at this time. But the answer
10 is very evident. This administration is currently
11 being bullied into breaking procedure to appease a
12 fascist. Growing up, I was taught that giving in to
13 a bully doesn't stop them from tormenting you. It
14 makes you an easier target.

15 Your actions reflect a government that
16 does not understand what its true power is and where
17 it comes from. So let me help you understand where
18 it comes from. Your power comes from the consent of
19 the governed, not from threat of force. A government
20 --

21 We are not scared of a fascist
22 manchild. So why are you? Your mandate shouldn't
23 come from a felonious self-appointed king, but from
24 us. And we did not ask for this.

25

1 We, the people, demand that you remove
2 this agenda from the special session and disregard
3 the President's blatant attempt to rig our democracy.
4 Last time I spoke to you, I begged you to get a
5 spine. This time I'm echoing a warning from my
6 colleague, Isaiah Martin, when he mentioned in his
7 Thursday's remark before he was unceremoniously
8 removed from his speaking podium.

9 History will not remember you kindly
10 if you don't stand up for Texans. Fight like a
11 Texan. Fight back. And there is no reason why this
12 government has to kowtow once again to a felonious,
13 self-appointed king who has no intention of meeting
14 the needs of Texans.

15 His one resource is to say that he can
16 live and rule according to what the real people need,
17 but the real people have been telling you for the
18 last 72 hours, we did not want this. We did not want
19 this. We did not ask for this. We asked for help in
20 Kerr County. We asked for representation in District
21 18. We asked for leaders, our neighbors, to take our
22 words and represent us and fight for us, not just in
23 the state, but in the United States of America. And
24 you are blatantly disregarding our needs because
25 you're scared of a bully.

1 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Thank you for your
2 testimony.

3 EBONY EATMON: I yield my time.

4 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Chair calls --
5 come to order. Chair calls Debra Allen. I show you
6 registered to testify as Debra Allen on behalf of
7 yourself on the revised congressional redistricting
8 plan. Is that correct?

9 DEBRA ALLEN: That's correct.

10 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Please give us
11 your testimony.

12 DEBRA ALLEN: My name is Debra Allen.
13 I am not a d, an e, or an i, I'm a human being. I
14 live in the cancer cluster. I'm a senior citizen. I
15 live in Northeast Houston, and I'm a member of the
16 National Black Women Making a Difference.

17 But what I don't understand is when
18 you do these redistricting hearings -- and I
19 testified at the last hearing, so I'm confused as to
20 why I'm back here again asking you to do the same
21 thing again.

22 I'm here representing my children, my
23 grandchildren, my great-grandchildren, and my great-
24 great-grandchildren. So if you can please explain to
25 me why, when you draw the lines, my community stays

1 in the flood zone; why my neighborhood is in the
2 cancer cluster; why when it floods, it doesn't flood
3 in your area, but only in mine?

4 So I want to come to the table to ask
5 you if you can explain to me how this is happening in
6 my community in Congressional District 18, which I'm
7 a proud member of, and Representative District 142,
8 and the state Senate District 13.

9 So you'll see where I'm going with
10 this - 18, 13, 142. So when you're drawing these
11 lines, someone is deliberately drawing us inside of
12 basically death. It doesn't flood in your area like
13 mine, but your water flows down to where I live in
14 Northeast Houston. So you guys are safe. You don't
15 understand what it means to jump into a dump truck to
16 get out of flood water. You don't understand what it
17 means when I have to drive 20 and 30 miles out of my
18 community to get quality food.

19 You don't understand, and if you do,
20 please correct me, because I'm taking care of my
21 family and my neighbors. But if I came to your
22 house, would you feed me? If I came to your house,
23 would you help me? So when you draw those lines,
24 make sure that you are taking that into consideration
25 because where we live, in Northeast Houston, we help

1 everybody. We don't care if you're black, blue,
2 brown, or green.

3 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Thank you.

4 DEBORAH ALLEN: We help everyone.
5 Thank you very much.

6 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Thank you for your
7 testimony.

8 Members, any questions for this panel?

9 Seeing none, the panel is excused.

10 Thank you for your testimony.

11 Chair calls up for our next panel -
12 Mary Ham, Angela Ravin-Anderson, Patricia Garris, and
13 Maritza Wong. If you'll make your way up to the
14 front for these four seats.

15 The next panel after that's going to
16 be Benjamin Whitman, Marcus Emmanuel, Jacqueline
17 Santillana, and Jonathan Marcantel. If you will,
18 please ensure that you're ready here in the room, and
19 we'll come to you.

20 Chair calls Marita Wong. I show you
21 registered to testify as Marita Wong on behalf of
22 yourself on the revised congressional redistricting
23 plan. Is that correct?

24 MARITZA WONG: It's Maritza Wong.
25

1 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Maritza Wong.

2 Thank you. Please give us your testimony.

3 MARITZA WONG: Hello. My name is
4 Maritza Wong, and I am a resident of unincorporated
5 Brazoria County in Congressional District 9, formerly
6 CD 22.

7 I am here to ask this committee to
8 reject any further gerrymandering of our state. The
9 last election in which I felt that my vote made a
10 difference in determining my Congress person and my
11 state legislators was 2020. The gerrymandering that
12 -- gerrymandering that occurred in 2021 made the
13 outcome of those elections predetermined where I
14 live. The sad thing is that I'm not even here to ask
15 you to fix that. I'm just here to ask you to not
16 make it worse.

17 Gerrymandering is wrong, no matter
18 which party is doing it. I do not belong to any
19 political party. I vote for people who I see making
20 a genuine effort to make our communities, our state,
21 and our country better. Nothing about this proposed
22 redistricting is in good faith, and everyone knows
23 it. This is a blatant attempt by the Republican
24 Party to rule through total domination, but not even
25 a dictatorship can silence your voters.

1 In 1973, my grandfather became the
2 first Hispanic city council member in Alvin, Texas.
3 This room is probably full of people whose ancestors
4 were the first at something. So what you might not
5 understand about those you are trying to silence,
6 especially people of color, is that we have been in
7 this position before. We have been told we do not
8 count and we are not worthy, sometimes to the point
9 of violence at the hands of those in power.
10 Oppression is not new to us, and we carry those
11 stories deep inside of us, no matter how long ago
12 they happened, 5 days or 500 years. So we are not
13 afraid of the outcome here because we will persist as
14 we always have.

15 We will continue to speak the truth so
16 that it does not die beneath the lies coming from the
17 halls of power. The actions this committee is
18 considering make it very clear who is actually
19 afraid, and that is every lawmaker who is abandoning
20 Texas and bending to the will of Washington D.C.

21 In this moment, I ask you to consider
22 what your legacy will be. Did you stand for anything
23 at all, or did you just do as you were told? Because
24 one day, all of our descendants will be telling this
25 story. What will they say about you? Thank you.

1 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Thank you for your
2 testimony.

3 Chair calls Patricia Garris. I show
4 you registered to testify as Patricia Garris on
5 behalf of yourself on the revised congressional
6 redistricting plan. Is that correct?

7 PATRICIA GARRIS: That is correct.

8 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Please give us
9 your testimony.

10 PATRICIA GARRIS: The year is 2040.
11 Harry holds his elderly mother's hand, and even with
12 long care Â- long-term care coverage, she must live
13 with him. The 2025 budget bill forced the closing
14 and consolidation of skilled nursing homes. The
15 nearest one is now four hours away. The home nurse
16 wait is six to nine months, so he must start the bath
17 that's embarrassing for her and difficult for him.

18 Immigrants, who used to make up 40
19 percent of health professionals, don't come to the
20 United States anymore. After driving two hours to
21 the nearest hospital last month, Harry's daughter
22 endured an emergency hysterectomy. Although his
23 daughter survived, his grandbaby died with a cord
24 around his neck.

25

1 Harry's son and his wife earn \$170,000
2 a year. Since 17 million Americans lost their
3 healthcare, his son's cost is now \$2500 a month with
4 an \$8000 deductible and 25 percent copay. The
5 tariffs keep costs high, and Harry worries that he
6 may need to delay his retirement to help his son.

7 Harry checks the bath temperature; his
8 breathing is labored. Pollution has turned his
9 asthma into emphysema, and the doctor can't see him
10 for four months. Anti-immigration and student loan
11 restrictions have decimated. The number of new
12 doctors and older ones are retiring out. Harry feels
13 a small, sharp pain in his chest. He walks, locks
14 eyes with his mother, then falls back.

15 Having served as a Texas
16 representative for many years, Harry suddenly begins
17 to think about his votes. As his eyes close, Harry
18 mouths, forgive me. He knows his votes caused the
19 deaths, the shattered dreams, and suffering of people
20 who simply didn't look, act, or think like him.
21 Harry got what he voted for. The pain and the misery
22 he voted for others has come for him and his family.

23 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Thank you for your
24 testimony.

25

1 Chair calls Angela Ravin-Anderson. I
2 show you registered to testify as Angela Ravin-
3 Anderson on behalf of Wheeler Avenue Baptist Church
4 and -- and yourself, and testifying on revised
5 congressional redistricting plan. Is that correct?

6 ANGELA ANDERSON: Yes.

7 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: All right. Please
8 give us your testimony.

9 ANGELA ANDERSON: Good afternoon. I
10 am Reverend Dr. Angela Ravin-Anderson with Wheeler
11 Avenue Baptist Church. I live in Congressional
12 District 9. And my business home, instead, is
13 located in Congressional District 18.

14 I rise today in defense of democracy
15 and dignity. During the American Revolution, our
16 fore-parents declared a simple yet profound truth, no
17 taxation without representation. That cry was not
18 just about taxes; it was about power, voice, and
19 justice. It was a demand that the people, not the
20 privileged few, should shape the future of this
21 nation.

22 This is a democracy. We decided a
23 long time ago that no king, no one person, no ruling
24 class would govern over us. We would govern
25 ourselves through fair and free representation.

1 Today in 2025, that same cry echoes in our hearts as
2 we confront the deliberate racist assault on
3 Congressional Districts 18 and 9 and others like
4 them, districts that have long served as platforms of
5 power for black and brown communities.

6 Let's be clear, every line that is
7 drawn on a map determines more than political
8 boundaries. It determines the flow of resources, the
9 funding of schools, the protection of civil rights,
10 and access to quality healthcare. These lines either
11 open the door to progress or slam it shut. The
12 proposed redistricting isn't about fairness. It is
13 -- it's about fear. It's about racism. It's about
14 diluting the voices of communities that have
15 historically been denied power and are now standing
16 in it.

17 We see the tactic. We know the
18 playbook, and we refuse to be silent. We pay taxes.
19 We serve this country. We build this economy, and we
20 demand that what we have earned, which is fair
21 representation.

22 So to close, I close with this call.
23 Stop the steal. Hands off our districts. Let the
24 people choose their leaders, not the other way. We
25 demand fair maps.

1 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Thank you for your
2 testimony.

3 Chair calls Mary Ham. I show you
4 registered to testify as Mary Ham on behalf of the
5 Texas Democratic Party CD 2, or is that where you
6 reside?

7 MARY HAM: Congressional District 2, I
8 am the SDEC committee woman.

9 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Okay. So you're
10 testifying on behalf of Texas Democratic Party CD 2.

11 MARY HAM: Yes.

12 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: On the revised
13 congressional redistricting plan. Is that correct?

14 MARY HAM: Yes.

15 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Please give us
16 your testimony.

17 MARY HAM: Okay. And I'm going to be
18 very brief. Part of what I was going to say already
19 got covered by Congressman Lapmson.

20 Looking at the numbers, Republicans
21 hold over two-thirds of the congressional delegation
22 in Texas. When you look at statewide races, this
23 does not correlate. And actually, in state-wide
24 races, they're very closely matched. About 48
25 percent -- about 5 percent difference between

1 Republicans and Democrats. So you would think that
2 there would be a -- you know, the maps would be a
3 little more generous to Democrats; that we would have
4 more seats, but that's simply not the case.

5 Given in partial lines, the numbers
6 will be more even. A representative would actually
7 have to work for the betterment of people. When you
8 make a district so forth in one direction, you
9 prevent -- well, actually, you don't prevent. You
10 make it so that the Congress person doesn't have to
11 do much of anything unless it's in their nature. And
12 we see in some of the congressional districts, it's
13 not in the nature of the Republicans, just being
14 honest.

15 Now times change. When you look at
16 demographics on how you'd do the map, since you don't
17 have a recent -- since you don't have a recent
18 census, basically redistricting is going to be a crap
19 sheet, okay. So you would basically be looking at
20 the numbers from the last election, who voted what,
21 to draw lines. And what you've got to understand is
22 people move. Times are changing. People are
23 changing jobs, and we are moving quickly. So what
24 you've got to understand is what you think is there
25 may not be there.

1 And I'll tell you a quick story, and
2 it was told to you very, very, very little while ago.
3 In the early 2000s, I worked for like the best boss
4 in the world, Congressman Nick Lampson. And as he
5 said, did a redistricting led by Tom DeLay. He lost
6 his seat.

7 Well, he didn't let that faze him. He
8 then moved to family property, and he won DeLay's
9 seat that should have been set for a Republican. So
10 you cannot guarantee outcomes. People are fed up.
11 We're tired of the games. The people need --

12 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Please finish your
13 testimony.

14 MARY HAM: You need to go back, and
15 you need to tell Abbott, it's time to work on
16 progress for the people of the state of Texas, and
17 not more power grabs that are not helping anybody.

18 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Thank you for your
19 testimony.

20 Members, any questions for this panel?

21 Seeing none, the panel is excused.

22 Thank you for your testimony.

23 Chair calls up our next panel -

24 Benjamin Whitman, Marcus Emmanuel, Jonathan
25 Marcantel, and Jacqueline Santillana.

1 Benjamin, I'm going to need you to
2 sign your witness affirmation form. If you don't
3 mind taking this to Benjamin. So we're going to come
4 to you last if that's okay.

5 Our next panel after that, so please
6 be ready, is Ashley Tabor, Michael Anthony Watson,
7 Tiffany Hill, and Jesus Mepel or Medel. I apologize.
8 It's a little ambiguous on the DRP.

9 All right. Chair calls Marcus
10 Emmanuel. Okay. I show you registered to testify as
11 Marcus Emmanuel on behalf of yourself on the revised
12 congressional redistricting plan. Is that correct?

13 MARCUS EMMANUEL: Yes, sir.

14 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Please give us
15 your testimony.

16 MARCUS EMMANUEL: Now, under normal
17 circumstances, I would thank this committee for the
18 opportunity to speak, but considering that this
19 committee hearing shouldn't be happening in the first
20 place, I don't feel like that's very appropriate.

21 Epstein's wingman literally went on
22 live TV and admitted that the reason he wanted Texas'
23 congressional map to be redistricted is for the sake
24 of picking up five seats in this upcoming -- in this
25

1 upcoming midterm because he knows it's going to be a
2 blue wave. The corruption is so blatantly obvious.

3 Now, I'm not going to sit here and
4 waste my time talking about the detriments and harms
5 of redistricting for two reasons. One, because the
6 speakers before me already gave a good synopsis, but
7 secondly, because Republicans will go about pushing
8 for initiatives, already being conscious of the
9 detriments and harms. They just don't care.

10 We can see it with the Big Beautiful
11 Bill that took away -- or it's going to take away,
12 Medicare from 17 million Americans. And we can also
13 see it with the voucher scam that recently was passed
14 in Texas, that's going to defund our public schools.

15 That's why I'm more focused on making
16 sure or encouraging voters to go out and vote in this
17 upcoming midterm election, specifically vote
18 Democrat. Because my prerogative is to make sure
19 that bad actors don't hold office anymore, rather
20 than trying to beg and plead with bad actors to vote
21 against their own immoral self-interest, although we
22 know they're not going to.

23 Americans have to realize that
24 democracy is being torn down right before our very
25 eyes. What the Republican Party currently stands for

1 needs to be completely eradicated, and hopefully,
2 something more moderate rises from the ashes. And if
3 not, then it needs to be eradicated again and again
4 and again, as many times as it takes. Because if the
5 Republican Party keeps moving in the direction that
6 it currently is, under this fascist dictator, there
7 won't be an America to speak of anymore. That will
8 be my testimony.

9 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Thank you for your
10 testimony.

11 Chair calls Benjamin Whitman. I show
12 you registered to testify as Benjamin Whitman on
13 behalf of the Cameron County Democratic Party and
14 yourself on the revised congressional redistricting
15 plan. Is that correct?

16 BENJAMIN WHITMAN: Yes. That's
17 correct, sir.

18 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Please, give us
19 your testimony.

20 BENJAMIN WHITMAN: Good afternoon. My
21 name is Benjamin Guillermo Whitman. I'm a resident
22 of Harlingen in Cameron County and a constituent of
23 House District 37 -- of House District 37 and
24 Congressional District 34. I'm here today because I
25 care about the Rio Grande Valley, and I'm against the

1 current redistricting efforts. I travel across the
2 state regularly advocating for RGV-focused policies
3 and greater investment in South Texas. But it's
4 frustrating that to participate in this process, I
5 had to leave at 3:00 a.m. from my home in Harlingen
6 to get here and testify.

7 So I've looked at many of those
8 proposed maps, but among the most radical, plan 2202,
9 which stretches CD 34 from Cameron County all the way
10 up to the coastline, just literally the coastline to
11 Brazoria County. Another plan, 2201, shoots inland,
12 but reaches all the way up to Woden again, hundreds
13 of miles from the valley. I wouldn't be left
14 speculating if I just saw what the map that's being
15 proposed.

16 So many of these proposals, as well,
17 do not reflect the communities of -- of Texas.
18 They're blatant attempts to gerrymander us into
19 Republican pickups and dilute the voices of Latinos.
20 It combines border towns like where I'm from, in
21 Harlingen, with rural counties near Houston that have
22 vastly different needs and cultural identities. For
23 years, I've heard Republicans say that areas where
24 I'm from are forgotten, that border communities are
25 under-invested. And yet this process and these

1 proposals actively undermine our voice by -- by
2 diluting it across hundreds of miles.

3 Cameron County -- Cameron County
4 deserves dedicated representation. Our -- our
5 challenges require a member of Congress to be focused
6 on our area, not having to balance rural areas
7 hundreds of miles north. In March, for example,
8 Harlingen was hit by hard flooding, where I myself
9 was trapped. But redistricting -- redistricting like
10 this could very well cost us funding and attention we
11 need for things like critical infrastructure.

12 And I want to take a moment to speak
13 directly to my fellow South Texans. Republicans are
14 trying to dilute your voice and our region's
15 importance in Congress. I'm still going to show up
16 for my community even if it's designed to discourage
17 our participation, but I urge you to make your voice
18 heard and to join me in -- in rejecting this current
19 partisan mid-decade redistricting effort. Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Thank you for your
21 testimony.

22 Chair calls Jacqueline Santillana. I
23 show you registered on behalf of yourself on the
24 revised congressional redistricting plan. Is that
25 correct?

1 JACQUELINE SANTILLANA: Yes.

2 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Thank you. Please
3 give us your testimony.

4 JACQUELINE SANTILLANA: Good
5 afternoon. My name is Jacqueline Santillana. I live
6 in Willesee County, and I am a constituent of
7 Congressional District 34. I have lived in the Rio
8 Grande Valley for most of my life. I care deeply
9 about my community having fair representation and
10 their voices being heard, which is why I'm here
11 today.

12 In 2021, I testified to urge that the
13 redistricting process be conducted fairly and
14 transparently. It is concerning that we are once
15 again having to testify, especially when this process
16 is happening five years early and while the 2021
17 Congressional District maps remain under review in
18 federal court. I'm also disappointed that no public
19 hearings have been scheduled in or near the Rio
20 Grande Valley, leaving our community with more
21 barriers to speak here today.

22 Our community deserves the opportunity
23 to participate within their proximity and not be
24 limited to five hours online or in person. I've also
25 seen maps proposals that stretch as far, as north as

1 Warren County areas with vastly different needs,
2 cultural identities, infrastructure, projects, and
3 priorities. Redrawing these maps risks diluting the
4 voices of communities in the Rio Grande Valley,
5 taking away resources, and effectively stripping us
6 of fair representation.

7 We should be able to elect leaders who
8 have the same lived experiences and understand our
9 needs. Instead of stripping power away from
10 communities of color, our focus right now should be
11 on delivering relief and support to those still
12 struggling from the recent floods, not on
13 redistricting that further divides us. Thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Thank you for your
15 testimony.

16 Chair calls Jonathan Marcantel. I
17 show you registered to testify on behalf of the Texas
18 Democratic Caucus and yourself on the revised
19 congressional redistricting plan. Is that correct?

20 JONATHAN MARCANTEL: Yes, sir.

21 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Please give us
22 your testimony.

23 JONATHAN MARCANTEL: Mr. Chairman, if
24 you'll permit it. I have provided written testimony
25

1 to the committee, and I will let that stand in my
2 testimony in the interest of time.

3 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Well, we accept it
4 and thank you and appreciate your help earlier.
5 Members, any questions for this panel?

6 Dean Thompson.

7 DEAN THOMPSON: Would you like for
8 that testimony to be a part of a written -- the
9 written --

10 JONATHAN MARCANTEL: Yes, ma'am. I'd
11 like you to be part of the written record.

12 DEAN THOMPSON: Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Perfect. And we
14 -- I believe you've handed that to the assistant
15 clerk?

16 JONATHAN MARCANTEL: Yes, sir.

17 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: We'll -- we'll
18 make sure that the members get it.

19 Members, any other questions? Mr.
20 Marcantel, thank you. Panel, thank you for your
21 time. You're excused.

22 Chair calls up our next panel - Ashley
23 Tabor, Michael Anthony Watson, Tiffany Hill, and
24 Jesus Medel or Mepel. I apologize. I'm not sure
25 which one.

1 Our next panel, just so you'll be
2 ready, is going to be Karin Knapp, Jerome Wald,
3 Christopher Camporeale, and Victoria Salin.

4 Okay. Ma'am, on the end, what's your
5 name?

6 ASHLEY TABOR: Ashley Tabor.

7 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Okay. Chair calls
8 Ashley Tabor. I show you registered to testify as
9 Ashley Tabor on behalf of yourself on the revised
10 congressional redistricting plan. Is that correct?

11 ASHLEY TABOR: Yes, indeed. That's
12 correct.

13 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Please -- please
14 give us your testimony.

15 ASHLEY TABOR: All right. So let's
16 address the elephant in the room. The sole reason
17 why Texas is considering redrawing its maps is at the
18 behest of our president. It's also true that many
19 people voted for this man because they believe him to
20 be a good businessman.

21 I'm not a politician, but I know a
22 thing or two about business. I've been with the same
23 employer for almost 11 years, and I've traveled
24 around the globe in order to do my work. I can tell
25 you that what's happening here and what our president

1 and governor hope to achieve is the antithesis of
2 good business.

3 At its core, good business is
4 customer-focused. When companies prioritize their
5 internal and external stakeholders, they often do
6 well with their KPIs, their key performance
7 indicators, their customer satisfaction scores, and
8 revenue. On the flip side, when your company's
9 leaders cater to the whims and delusions of the CEO,
10 trust in the system begins to erode, and the mission
11 of the business can no longer be one of integrity.

12 We live in a country that celebrates
13 crony capitalism, but let's make one thing clear.
14 Good businessmen and women embrace the free market.
15 They welcome competition because they believe that
16 their ideas have merit and are innately persuasive.

17 As soon as they start to cheat, one
18 has to wonder whether their mission was ever noble or
19 in the best interest (audio/video cut out).

20 They're content to cook the books and
21 not win you over with good ideas, but with force and
22 potentially intimidation tactics, they would rather
23 rig the market and sacrifice accountability in order
24 to appease a corrupt and irreparably immoral CEO.

25

1 The message I have here is for the
2 dais, but also for everybody in this room, especially
3 my fellow Texans. If you believe in the business of
4 our democratic republic, do not let the politicians
5 forget the mistakes that they might be making by
6 redrawing these political maps. Hold them
7 accountable every chance you get at every turn.

8 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Thank you for your
9 testimony.

10 ASHLEY TABOR: Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Mr. Watson.

12 MICHAEL WATSON: Michael Anthony
13 Watson.

14 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Perfect. Chair
15 calls Michael Anthony --

16 MICHAEL WATSON: There are two Michael
17 Watsons in Fort Bend.

18 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: All right. Chair
19 calls Michael Anthony Watson, not the other Michael
20 Anthony Watson.

21 MICHAEL WATSON: That's right.

22 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: I show you
23 registered to testify on behalf of yourself on the
24 revised congressional redistricting plan. Is that
25 correct?

1 MICHAEL WATSON: That's correct.

2 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Please give us
3 your testimony.

4 MICHAEL WATSON: Okay. Good
5 afternoon. My name is Michael Anthony Watson. I
6 live at 1800 FM 1092 --

7 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Mr. Watson, would
8 you mind getting that mic just a little bit closer?

9 MICHAEL WATSON: Oh, sorry.

10 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: No, you're fine.

11 MICHAEL WATSON: Because I'm normally
12 --

13 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: I'll give you a
14 lecture time too. You're fine.

15 MICHAEL WATSON: Okay. Can you all
16 hear me now?

17 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Yes, sir. Good.

18 MICHAEL WATSON: Okay. I'll have to
19 go back. My name is Michael Anthony Watson. I live
20 at 1800 FM 1092, in Missouri City, Texas. That's TX
21 9, House District 27, and Senate District 13.

22 We, the people, my people, black
23 people, have been in the fabric of Texas since 1528,
24 when Estevanico set foot on Galveston Island. He was

25

1 an African Moor and a very skilled ship navigator,
2 according to the Texas Historical Society.

3 Voting is the essence of our
4 democracy. The 15th Amendment enshrined the right to
5 vote for African Americans at the rebirth of our
6 nation. I grew up on the Gulf Coast in Mobile,
7 Alabama. My grandmother's house was firebombed by
8 the Ku Klux Klan because she had the audacity to help
9 black World War II veterans study for literacy tests
10 so they could attempt to register to vote. So free
11 and fair elections are in my DNA.

12 This Texas mid-decade redistricting is
13 clearly racially motivated. Res ipsa loquitur. The
14 thing speaks for itself. Anglos make up merely 40
15 percent of Texas, but control 28 of the 38
16 Congressional seats. Forty percent of one group
17 taking 70 percent of the seats is not fair. The
18 black, brown, and Asian populations grew much faster
19 than the Anglo population in the last decades.
20 However --

21 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Please complete
22 your testimony.

23 MICHAEL WATSON: However, Texas
24 awarded two seats derived from the 2020 census to the
25

1 white population, clearly not there. Just one last
2 thing.

3 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: You bet.

4 MICHAEL WATSON: The Roberts Supreme
5 Court in the Millman case, Alabama, just affirmed
6 that black people may not be intentionally
7 discriminated with -- when you're drawing new
8 congressional maps. So my people are merely asking
9 for the opportunity to be heard and to secure the
10 blessings of liberty in this nation. Thank you. And
11 I thank my forebearers.

12 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Thank you for your
13 time.

14 MICHAEL WATSON: Absolutely.

15 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Hold for just a
16 second, panelists.

17 Chair calls Jesus Medel or Mepel. Is
18 he here? Chair will show him registered to testify
19 on behalf of LULAC, but not testifying on revised
20 congressional redistricting plan.

21 Chair is going to call Tiffany Hill.
22 Is Tiffany Hill here? Chair will show Tiffany Hill
23 registered to testify on behalf of herself on the
24 revised congressional redistricting plan but not
25 testifying.

1 Members, any questions for the members
2 of this panel?

3 Ms. Jones is recognized to question
4 the panel.

5 REPRESENTATIVE JONES: Sorry. I don't
6 -- I don't remember your name. What's your name
7 again, ma'am?

8 ASHLEY TABOR: Ashley Tabor.

9 REPRESENTATIVE JONES: So this is what
10 I want to say to you.

11 ASHLEY TABOR: Yeah.

12 REPRESENTATIVE JONES: Donald Trump is
13 running this country the way he ran his bankrupt
14 businesses into the ground, and I appreciate the
15 clear and powerful way that you explained why this
16 redistricting is wrong and racist in a way that
17 people pay attention to business could understand.
18 Thank you.

19 ASHLEY TABOR: With all due respect, I
20 have been living in Texas for five years. I'm
21 originally from New Jersey, and I know all too well
22 that he is not the good businessman that people think
23 he is. So you can put that on the record.

24 UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Two casinos ran
25 bankrupt.

1 ASHLEY TABOR: Yeah. Atlantic City
2 speaks for itself.

3 UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Right.

4 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Members, any other
5 questions for the members of this panel? Chair hears
6 none. Thank you for your testimony. Panel is
7 excused.

8 Chair calls Christopher Camporeale,
9 Jerome Wald, Karin Knapp, and Victoria Salin.

10 Christopher, we're going to need you
11 to sign your witness affirmation form. We're going
12 to bring that to you.

13 Our next panel is going to be Karen
14 Washington, Cynthia Drabek, Dawn Marshall, and
15 Thurman Bartie. Please be ready.

16 All right. And ma'am, what's your
17 name on the far end? Yes.

18 KARIN KNAPP: Karin Knapp.

19 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: All Right. Chair
20 calls Karin Knapp. Chair will show you registered to
21 testify as Karin Knapp on behalf of yourself on the
22 revised congressional redistricting plan. Is that
23 correct?

24 KARIN KNAPP: That is correct. Thank
25 you very much.

1 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: And -- and
2 Ms. Knapp, I showed you, you had signed the very
3 bottom where I'm supposed to sign. Can I put a
4 little arrow that you signed the other line?

5 KARIN KNAPP: Yes. Please do.

6 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Okay. No worries.
7 We're just getting this right. Please give us your
8 testimony.

9 KARIN KNAPP: Okay. Thank you. As a
10 resident of Congressional District 18, I have a
11 message for Donald Trump and Greg Abbott. If you
12 want to flip this district, earn our votes. Don't
13 steal them. Listen to all of your constituents.
14 Abbott has silenced CD 18 for months now to serve
15 Trump's agenda. CD 18 is a majority black and brown
16 district, as are other Harris County districts you're
17 targeting. We see exactly what you're doing.

18 Make our streets safer. Poll after
19 poll shows that the majority of Texans are tired of
20 gun violence in this state. Fully fund public
21 education. Stop destroying it. Get out of HISD and
22 stay out. Feed hungry children in the summer. Texas
23 can fund summer meal programs for children all by
24 itself. No federal funding needed.

25

1 Keep people healthy by making
2 healthcare affordable and accessible. Stop passing
3 laws that put Texas at the top of the medically
4 uninsured states in this nation. Get out of OB-GYN
5 offices and delivery rooms. Strengthen environmental
6 protections. Stop favoring polluters over human
7 beings. Fortify the grid, hold CenterPoint
8 accountable for their negligence. Stop making us pay
9 for their failures.

10 Stop putting up barriers to voting.
11 And by the way, you're making it harder for
12 Republicans to vote, especially elderly Republicans.
13 Support LGBTQ youth and their families. Don't
14 persecute and criminalize them. In fact, support all
15 families and children. Stop abducting people off the
16 streets who aren't criminals. And finally, stop
17 teaching Texas children that the only way to get what
18 you want is to cheat.

19 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Thank you for your
20 testimony.

21 Chair calls Victoria Salin.

22 VICTORIA SALIN: Thank you, Chair.
23 Victoria Salin.

24 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Salin. And I show
25 you registered to testify on behalf of yourself on

1 the revised congressional redistricting plan. Is
2 that correct?

3 VICTORIA SALIN: Yes, sir.

4 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Please give us
5 your testimony.

6 VICTORIA SALIN: Greetings to the
7 committee. My name's Victoria Salin. I come from
8 College Station. What's the rush? We don't have a
9 map. After people and experts get the map, please, I
10 ask you to provide notice and hearings so that
11 everyone can carefully consider the redistricting
12 issue. I understand the time in this special session
13 is really short, but I encourage the legislature not
14 to use time constraints as an excuse to exclude the
15 public from deliberations. And we can really only
16 fairly make deliberations once we have the map.

17 If you do go forward, what will be the
18 impact? The time spent now on redistricting -- and
19 it's your time as our representatives -- takes away
20 from considering other really important issues such
21 as flood recovery and improving flood prevention.
22 Not to mention all the other issues.

23 From my own perspective, I've been a
24 volunteer voter registrar for Brazos County for a
25 couple of cycles now, and I know firsthand that

1 county elections committees and officials have a lot
2 on their plate.

3 Counties also don't have a lot of
4 extra money to spend on the work it would take to
5 implement new maps, and it will put a big burden on
6 county staff, not to mention the confusion among our
7 fellow voters who may lose their representation if
8 the lines are moved. I've personally been
9 redistricted a couple of times in the 30 years that
10 I've been a Texas voter, and I know it can be
11 confusing for voters who depend on federal programs,
12 who are very vulnerable people.

13 We all need to know how to access
14 services, and with cuts in the federal government,
15 we, the people, need to be represented effectively.
16 New maps might well harm many, many people, and
17 especially this would be a bad outcome if the new map
18 is motivated by a racially motivated political power
19 grab. Please don't rush into redistricting.

20 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Thank you for your
21 testimony.

22 Chair calls Jerome Wald. I show you
23 registered as Jerome Wald testifying on behalf of
24 yourself on the revised congressional redistrict
25 plan. Is that correct?

1 JEROME WALD: That is correct.

2 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Glad to have you
3 here today. Good to see you again. Please give us
4 your testimony.

5 JEROME WALD: Thank you. So again,
6 good afternoon, committee members. Thank you for
7 this hearing. My name is Jerome Wald, and I'm a
8 native Houstonian. I am a retired state -- Texas
9 state employee. I'm 75 years old, and I've been
10 involved with politics since I was 14. And so, I am
11 a proud constituent of Congressional District 7.

12 As a Texan, I wish that this
13 legislature were working on redistricting fairness
14 rather than gerrymandering. Instead, I'm here to
15 testify against this harmful attempt to withdraw --
16 to redraw our congressional districts in the middle
17 of the decade. I have about seven talking points I'd
18 like to address. I hope I get to them all.

19 First of all, one is, show voters the
20 maps by holding a public hearing as you're doing now
21 with testimony on any proposed maps that have been
22 drawn, but before they're voted on.

23 Point two, do not discriminate against
24 voters of color. It's a blatant racial
25 discrimination.

1 Number three, do not limit public
2 testimony to five hours. Our voices deserve to be
3 heard. People have taken time away from their work
4 and their families so they can address their
5 representatives.

6 Point four, we need at least five days
7 to review the maps. Maps must be made public at
8 least five days in advance of any public hearings
9 during a special session or votes in order to allow
10 sufficient time for the public to review the maps,
11 prepare testimony, and propose alternative maps.

12 Number five, we also need at least
13 five days to review any proposed changes in the maps.
14 Any amendments or changes offered to a map proposal
15 must be presented at least five days in advance of
16 any vote to allow for public to analyze the proposed
17 amendments and advocate for or against them.

18 Point six, provide an analysis of how
19 the new maps impact historically disenfranchised
20 communities of color and VRA-protected language
21 minorities to elect candidates of their choice.

22 My last statement, which is not going
23 to be included, number seven, but I will say, to
24 remember to do unto others as you would have them do
25

1 unto you because the titles can turn. And that's
2 quotations from the Talmud and Leviticus 19:18.

3 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Thank you for your
4 testimony.

5 JEROME WALD: Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Chair calls
7 Christopher Camporeale. Don't see him. I show
8 Christopher Camporeale registered to testify on
9 behalf of himself on the revised congressional
10 redistricting plan but not testifying.

11 Members, any questions for the members
12 of this panel?

13 Chair hears none. Thank you again,
14 all, for your testimony. Panel is excused.

15 JEROME WALD: Thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Chair calls up our
17 next panel - Cynthia Drabek, Dawn Marshall, Thurman
18 Bartie, and Karen Washington.

19 The panel after that is going to be
20 Carmela Walker, Judson Robinson, Demethra Orion, and
21 Lucy Reyna. So please be ready.

22 Okay. Chair calls Thurman Bartie.

23 THURMAN BARTIE: Yes, sir.

24 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Good to see you
25 again.

1 THURMAN BARTIE: Okay. I'd like to
2 say good afternoon to this (indiscernible) body and
3 these great panelists.

4 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Let me make sure I
5 get your registration right. I show you registered
6 to testify as Thurman Bartie on -- you have citizen
7 support, Arthur. I know you're a former mayor there
8 and --

9 THURMAN BARTIE: Yes.

10 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: But I think since
11 that's not an organization theoretically or
12 technically, we have to say on behalf of yourself on
13 revised congressional redistricting plan.

14 THURMAN BARTIE: I'll say I represent
15 myself and --

16 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Sure.

17 THURMAN BARTIE: -- a great number of
18 individuals who may not want to be recognized at this
19 point.

20 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Sure. So is it
21 okay if I have your registration show that you were
22 testifying on behalf of yourself on the revised
23 congressional redistricting plan?

24 THURMAN BARTIE: Yes, sir.
25

1 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: All right. Please
2 give us your testimony.

3 THURMAN BARTIE: Okay. And again, as
4 you stated, I am Thurman Bill Bartie, former mayor --
5 past mayor of the great city of Port Arthur, Texas.
6 I just stepped down, turned out a few weeks ago.

7 And I'm speaking, however, as a
8 resident of Congressional District 14, which is
9 situated in a very large portion of Jefferson County,
10 Texas. And Port Arthur, Texas, happens to be a part
11 of Jefferson County, the second largest city there.
12 And again, I represent unofficially a very
13 significant population situated in Congressional
14 District 14.

15 And with that in mind, I pray upon
16 each of you for consideration to not, please, do not
17 gerrymander the district any more than it already is.
18 Presently, a large portion of the population is
19 systematically disenfranchised because of political
20 ideology interference. But there are certain other
21 issues that this special legislative session can
22 actually be addressing besides polluting the
23 political atmosphere with more disgusting maneuvers.

24 So please consider not changing the
25 description, the boundaries, or anything that deals

1 with Congressional District 14. And for that reason,
2 any of the Congressional districts here in our great
3 state of Texas. Allow Texans throughout this great
4 state to be proud participants of the governance in
5 our great state without regard for political
6 ideological interference on all levels.

7 So again, I pray upon you, we've
8 learned to live with what we have since '21. Don't
9 change it. I cannot remember in 71 years that we've
10 gone through a change in four years or three years
11 simply because it might be constitutionally correct,
12 but just think it's not morally proper. And for sure
13 it's not politically sound to do this right now and
14 hurt this country. And might I add to hurt
15 minorities --

16 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Please finish your
17 testimony.

18 THURMAN BARTIE: -- to hurt blacks and
19 browns just because you have a leader -- or we have a
20 leader who doesn't care about anybody but himself.
21 Because if you think he cares about you, get in the
22 tight. God bless you.

23 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Thank you for your
24 testimony.

25

1 Chair calls Cynthia Drabek. Okay. I
2 show you registered to testify as Cynthia Drabek on
3 behalf of yourself on the revised Congressional
4 redistricting plan. Is that correct?

5 CYNTHIA DRABEK: That is correct.

6 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Please give us
7 your testimony.

8 CYNTHIA DRABEK: Absolutely. And
9 thank you for your time today. American attempts to
10 tailor district lines for political gains stretch way
11 back to the country's very origin. Patrick Henry,
12 who opposed the new constitution, tried to draw
13 district lines to deny a seat in the first Congress
14 to James Madison, the constitution's primary author.

15 Henry assured that Madison's district
16 was drawn to include counties politically opposed to
17 Madison. The attempt failed and Madison was elected,
18 but American gerrymander had begun. Here are my
19 districts. I'm in United States Rep, District 2, and
20 then here are my other two gerrymandered districts,
21 as you can see. They look like pieces of a puzzle.

22 These maps should reflect communities,
23 not be driven by racial quotas or political
24 manipulations. Based on the population growth and
25 the problems currently presented in the currently

1 drawn districts, redistricting into neighboring
2 districts should be considered. These hearings
3 should continue. I'm humbly asking for
4 representative districts to be concise, to adequately
5 represent contiguous neighborhoods, schools,
6 businesses, infrastructure, and constituents. Thank
7 you for your time.

8 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Thank you for your
9 testimony.

10 Chair calls Dawn Marshall. I show you
11 registered to testify as Dawn Marshall on behalf of
12 yourself on the revised congressional redistricting
13 plan. Is that correct?

14 DAWN MARSHALL: Yes, it is.

15 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Please give us
16 your testimony.

17 DAWN MARSHALL: My name is Dawn
18 Marshall. And although I'm running for the 10th --
19 Texas 10th U.S. Congressional District, I'm here
20 today to give testimony as is my right as a citizen
21 of Texas in opposition to this unconstitutional
22 redistricting proposal.

23 Our elected officials are not rulers. They
24 are representatives. They hold office not by divine
25 right or family name, but by the faith and support of

1 we, the people. And that faith must be earned and
2 re-earned through transparency, accountability, and a
3 profound respect for our will.

4 Freedom means that we, the people, choose
5 our leaders, and we must terminate their employment
6 when they no longer reflect our values, our
7 struggles, or our hopes. It means that no one, no
8 governor, no senator, no president is above the law
9 or beyond the reach of a ballot box.

10 But freedom only works when we exercise it,
11 when we show up, when we raise our voices, when we
12 hold elected officials accountable for what they do,
13 not for what they say. For how they vote, who they
14 protect, and whether they stand with the people or
15 stand in our way.

16 So let us be very clear. In a free
17 country, democracy doesn't end on election day. It
18 begins there because freedom is not a gift. It is a
19 responsibility, and the will of the people is not a
20 whisper. It is a force.

21 I urge this committee to do what they know
22 to be right. It is time to do your job and not just
23 keep your job. Say no to gerrymandering and stop the
24 redistricting. Thank you for your time.

25

1 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Thank you for your
2 testimony.

3 Chair calls Karen Washington. I show
4 you registered to testify as Karen Washington on
5 behalf of yourself on the revised congressional
6 redistricting plan. Is that correct?

7 KAREN WASHINGTON: That is correct.

8 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: And I had you
9 signed at the bottom. Is it okay if I do a little
10 arrow up there, and I sign under you?

11 KAREN WASHINGTON: That is fine.

12 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: All right.

13 KAREN WASHINGTON: And if you'll also
14 notice on that application, I did not agree with
15 neutral.

16 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Understood.

17 KAREN WASHINGTON: So I check that I
18 am against redistricting.

19 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Understood.

20 KAREN WASHINGTON: I want that to be
21 noted.

22 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: And absolutely as
23 part of your testimony, it will. Technically, for
24 the minutes, it will have to just say neutral. But
25 again, that's just because the rules require it. And

1 I understand completely. Please give us your
2 testimony.

3 KAREN WASHINGTON: So this morning at
4 7:00 o'clock a.m., I am a part of an organization
5 that gathered to collect items to send to Kerr
6 County. I was not available to participate in that
7 because I had to be here, because I vehemently do not
8 agree with what's happening here today.

9 I wanted to work with my grandchildren
10 because I'm teaching them to learn to be a volunteer
11 regardless of -- in helping others in our community,
12 regardless of race, color, or creed. It is important
13 to me that we help one another. That is what I teach
14 my children. I teach them integrity, and I teach
15 them to have morals.

16 So with that being said, I'm wondering
17 why we are here today. Because it appears to me that
18 someone did not have the intestinal fortitude to say,
19 no. There are no maps. What are we looking at, and
20 what are we discussing? So when that event occurs,
21 that we do get redistricting maps, I certainly want
22 to be here to talk about it again. All my life, I've
23 had to fight. I'm not stopping now.

24 Normally, I roll up my sleeves, but
25 this time I'm taking the jacket off. I'll be

1 considering calling all of my friends and all of the
2 districts where you guys sit and say, listen, we've
3 got to get people who are going to speak for us.
4 That is very critical to the survival of democracy.
5 You guys were voted into position to speak for us.
6 We shouldn't have to sit at this table and beg you to
7 speak on our behalf.

8 So with that being said, I worked in a
9 corporation for over 30 years, where there typically
10 were dog and pony shows. In case you don't know what
11 that means, dog and pony show is where you go out and
12 you pretend to want to hear genuinely what your
13 constituents have to say, and then all along knowing
14 what the plan's going to be.

15 Just so you know and are very clear,
16 we know what that is, and we're not going to sit
17 back, lay back, and allow that to happen. We'll be
18 back here. And what I like about what's happening
19 now is that strategically, you guys are forcing us to
20 lock arms. You know, before the last election, we
21 were divided, but now we're collectively joining
22 together to say this will not happen. We are against
23 gerrymandering. It is racist. It is racist. It is
24 racist.

25

1 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Please finish your
2 testimony.

3 KAREN WASHINGTON: So with that being
4 said, I'd like you to know that it's a tactic that we
5 are not -- it's divide and conquer. We're not going
6 to allow that to happen. 100 years from now, history
7 is being written today about you and your stance.
8 What will it say, that you had a spine or spine list?

9 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Thank you for your
10 testimony.

11 KAREN WASHINGTON: You write that.

12 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Members, any --
13 any questions -- any questions for this panel?

14 Chair recognizes Representative Jones
15 to question the panel.

16 REPRESENTATIVE JONES: Mr. Chair, this
17 is actually a question for you. I'd like to know --

18 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Chair, you have a
19 question.

20 REPRESENTATIVE JONES: Yes.
21 Mr. Chair, why wasn't this hearing set up to let
22 witnesses speak their truth for or against instead of
23 forcing them to say they're neutral?

24 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: As the lady should
25 be aware that's required by the rules.

1 REPRESENTATIVE JONES: Well --

2 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Because the rules
3 require when there is no bill before the body at a
4 hearing that the testimony is always on.

5 REPRESENTATIVE JONES: Right. So I
6 guess -- so I guess that's my question. Why are we
7 having hearings before we have a bill where we can
8 actually say for or against?

9 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: The Chair -- the
10 Chair has repeatedly answered that. It has always
11 been the practice of the redistricting committee, to
12 my knowledge, to first have hearings before even
13 considering a map, and then to have a hearing on the
14 map. And that is for that reason, we're doing it
15 this way.

16 REPRESENTATIVE JONES: Okay. So all
17 I'll say is this. Slavery used to be legal, and it's
18 not anymore. Just because something was done a way
19 doesn't mean we should just do it that way. And I
20 believe that people are really struggling here with
21 being forced to say that they're neutral because of
22 how we, the legislature, decided to have this hearing
23 when we could have done it where they could actually
24 put how they truly feel about what's going on, and
25

1 know in advance of hearings how potential maps will
2 actually affect us. Thank you.

3 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Members, any
4 questions for the members of this panel?

5 Hearing none, thank you for your
6 testimony. The panel is excused.

7 Gallery, stay in order.

8 Chair calls Carmela Walker, Judson
9 Robinson, Demethra Orion, and Lucy Reyna.

10 Ma'am, what is your name on the end
11 there?

12 CARMELA WALKER: Carmela Walker.

13 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Okay. Chair calls
14 Carmela Walker. I show you registered to testify as
15 Carmela Walker on behalf of yourself on the revised
16 congressional redistricting plan. Is that correct?

17 CARMELA WALKER: Yes, it is.

18 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Please give us
19 your testimony.

20 CARMELA WALKER: Thank you to the
21 Chair, Vice Chair, and members. Really appreciate
22 this opportunity today. I worked the 83rd
23 legislative session with Honorable Sylvester Turner
24 through the -- the legislative internship program
25

1 under Senator Ellis when he was senator. Now he's
2 commissioner.

3 And you know, he was a master at
4 bipartisanship, but what we're seeing today is not
5 bipartisanship. It's very partisan. And I wanted to
6 say that we don't need packing and cracking and
7 stacking issues, what we need -- or jacking the --
8 our constituents and our community, you know, and
9 robbing them of inalienable rights in due process.

10 We need a process that's going to
11 work, and this is not working. What we're seeing
12 here is a partisanship position that's literally
13 ripping Texas apart. And so we're asking you just to
14 keep the maps the way that they are. I'm not quite
15 sure if you're aware, but District 9 and the issues
16 that they have there, the infrastructure, aging
17 roads, and public transportation systems require
18 upgrades. Public safety concerns about crime rates
19 and police community relations persisted -- persist.

20 District 18, the economic disparities
21 prevalent poverty rates affecting access and
22 services, housing, affordable housing, and
23 improvements in existing structures need help.
24 Health services.

25

1 District 29, flooding -- is prone to
2 flooding and damage -- drainage damages.
3 Environmental concerns.

4 District 33 has transportation issues,
5 public amenities, social service -- services and --
6 and resources are needed.

7 So we don't need anyone to redistrict
8 anything. What we need are our representatives to do
9 their jobs so that we can address some of these
10 issues that are on behalf of the public. That's what
11 we're asking.

12 And lastly, I'm going to say to you,
13 between 1899 and 1867, we had a 68-year gap with no
14 representation. And that was before -- that was
15 actually after Representative Robert L. Smith of
16 Colorado County. And then after that, we had Senator
17 Barbara Jordan of Harris County. We had
18 Representative Curtis Graves and Representative Joe
19 Lockridge of Dallas, and they were sworn in in 1967.
20 So what I'm saying to you is, is that we need
21 representatives right now who can represent Texas in
22 a way that's equitable. Represent us, do the job.
23 Thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Thank you for your
25 testimony.

1 Chair calls Judson Robinson. I show
2 you registered to testify on behalf of, is it HAUL?

3 JUDSON ROBINSON: Yes. The Houston
4 Area Urban League.

5 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Houston Area Urban
6 League. Short for HAUL. Okay. And on the revised
7 congressional redistricting plan. Is that correct?

8 JUDSON ROBINSON: Correct.

9 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: All right. And do
10 I have your permission to write out the -- what was
11 that title? Houston --

12 JUDSON ROBINSON: Area.

13 UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Urban League.

14 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: -- Area Urban
15 League.

16 JUDSON ROBINSON: Correct.

17 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Okay. Is it okay
18 if I update your registration to spell that out?

19 JUDSON ROBINSON: Correct.

20 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: All right.

21 Perfect. Please give us your testimony,

22 JUDSON ROBINSON: Mr. Chairman, thank
23 you. Members of the community, thank you for being
24 here and listening to this testimony. I think you've
25 heard kind of conclusively where this audience

1 stands, where this city stands, where this District
2 18, 29, 33, and 10 stand as it relates to
3 redistricting.

4 We don't want any redistricting. We
5 are comfortable with the lines as they are drawn. We
6 don't want to make a decision on any new map that we
7 have not even seen. We don't want to do it within 30
8 days. We don't want redistricting in our community.
9 We are built on a community that has seen Barbara
10 Jordan rise to a position of prominence that has made
11 the 18th Congressional District something to be proud
12 of.

13 I come from a small community called
14 Pleasantville. Many of the people from Pleasantville
15 are here. I've seen members of our guild that are
16 here. I've seen members of the Urban League Young
17 Professionals that are here. Many of those folks
18 have lived in Pleasantville.

19 When Pleasantville was formed, we
20 didn't have streetlights. We didn't have a bus stop
21 that came to that community. But thanks to the 18th
22 Congressional District and Barbara Jordan, she was
23 able to work with people like Judson Robinson,
24 Junior, who was the first African American to be
25 elected to Houston City Council since reconstruction.

1 But it took people working together,
2 people who had common likeness, common causes, common
3 experiences, that could understand why it was
4 important to have streetlights in a community like
5 Pleasantville when our current council member didn't
6 think that was important. When our current council
7 member didn't think it was important that we have a
8 bus line so that people could get to work. When our
9 current council member didn't think it was important
10 that we have a healthcare center in the neighborhood
11 that we could get to when we need it.

12 You see, it takes experiencing and
13 walking in the shoes of others that you have common
14 ground with to appreciate where they come from, to
15 see things through their lens. I hope that you, as
16 our leaders, will put yourselves in the shoes of
17 others, put yourselves into the shoes of the people
18 that are (audio cut out) things through our lens.
19 It's fair. It's important, and that's what we
20 elected you to do. Thank you for your time.

21 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Thank you for your
22 testimony.

23 Would the panel remain right there for
24 a moment.

25

1 Chair calls Lucy Reyna. Is Lucy Reyna
2 here? Chair will show Lucy Reyna registered to
3 testify on behalf of herself on the revised
4 congressional redistricting plan but not testifying.

5 Chair calls Demethra Orion. Demethra
6 Orion. Chair will show Demethra Orion registered to
7 testify on behalf of herself on the revised
8 congressional redistricting plan but not testifying.

9 Members, any questions for the members
10 of this panel? Chair hears none.

11 Thank you for your testimony. The
12 panel is excused.

13 CARMELA WALKER: Thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Chair call our
15 next panel - Kia Baptist, Manuel Cohen, Bill
16 Robinson, and Patrick Logan. Please make your way up
17 to the front.

18 The next panel after that, which we'll
19 do -- we'll do one more after this next one, and then
20 we'll take another little break - Andrea Hubert, Lisa
21 Hunt, Makia Thomas, and Stephanie Foy. Please be
22 ready.

23 Okay. Chair calls Patrick Logan. Is
24 Patrick Logan here?

25 PATRICK LOGAN: Yes, I'm here.

1 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Okay. I show you
2 registered to testify as Patrick Logan on behalf of
3 yourself on the revised congressional redistricting
4 plan. Is that correct?

5 PATRICK LOGAN: That is correct.

6 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Please give us
7 your testimony.

8 PATRICK LOGAN: Thank you for the
9 opportunity to testify in front of this hearing
10 committee. My name is Patrick Logan. I'm a U.S.
11 Navy veteran who served on two different aircraft
12 carriers. So if I can't hear some of your responses,
13 it's probably because of jets and flight decks and
14 noises and other stuff.

15 Anyway, I live in Congressional
16 District 18 in an unincorporated neighborhood. My
17 neighborhood, Greenwood Forest, has almost 1600
18 families. And that neighborhood also, is almost 50
19 years old. It's so large that we're split into two
20 different precincts. However, we're a single
21 community. As a member of the Greenwood Forest
22 Social Club, I help plan events for the entire
23 neighborhood.

24 We have an Easter egg hunt for the
25 children with family movie night, family game night.

1 And on the 4th of July, we have a parade that
2 stretches almost a mile long that goes down the
3 boulevard that divides the two precincts, and the
4 streets are lined with neighborhood people. We had
5 over 1000 people this year.

6 Our swim team is also comprised solely
7 of residents at Greenwood Forest and competes
8 regionally, and recently won the district
9 championship.

10 The reason I'm here is, I'm concerned
11 about this process because we don't know what the new
12 districting map will be. If you draw a new
13 congressional map, you need to ensure you do not
14 divide communities such as mine.

15 I'm also testifying because I've
16 reviewed the more than 40 different redistricting
17 maps that have been proposed. They appear to have
18 one thing in common. The people who drew these maps
19 have absolutely no understanding of the Texas
20 Constitution. Every map that I've reviewed is
21 complete garbage and is openly violating Section 26
22 of the Texas Constitution.

23 Knowing these proposals will not pass
24 even the weakest of court challenges. I have to ask,
25 why did she even propose these ridiculous maps in the

1 first place? You know, your policies are unpopular.
2 You know your proposals are unfair, and you know
3 you'll be swept from power if you do not rig the
4 vote.

5 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Thank you for your
6 testimony.

7 PATRICK LOGAN: Thank you.

8 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Chair calls Manuel
9 Cohen. I show you registered to testify as Manuel
10 Cohen on behalf of yourself on the revised
11 congressional redistricting plan. Is that correct?

12 MANUEL COHEN: Yes, sir.

13 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Please give us
14 your testimony.

15 MANUEL COHEN: My name is Manuel
16 Cohen. I'm a longtime resident of Congressional
17 District 9, represented by the Honorable Al Green.
18 In my first election that I ever voted for, 2024, I
19 already knew I was going to be represented in a
20 gerrymandered district. That's been the history of
21 this state as long as I know is gerrymandering,
22 gerrymandering, gerrymandering. But even still, the
23 people of the 9th District chose to elect someone
24 that represented them.

25

1 These future maps are going to divide
2 our community so badly that we will no longer have a
3 fair representation in Congress. We are going to be
4 deprived of our vote simply because Texas Republicans
5 want to defend a pedophile. This is it. It's plain
6 and simple. The man in office right now was Jeffrey
7 Epstein's best friend. And the only way to protect
8 him from any congressional subpoenas is if we put
9 more Republicans in Congress.

10 I don't know why you would seek to
11 defend a pedophile, sir. It doesn't make any sense.
12 You are the party of supposed family values. I don't
13 think of family values as being a pedophile. I want
14 to make an appeal to you to at least try to draw a
15 fair map. You know it's possible. I know all of you
16 on this committee have the power to do so. Draw a
17 fair map that repudiates this disgusting criminal in
18 the White House and actually represents Texas voters.

19 To the Democrats in this committee,
20 you all have said for a long time that every option
21 is on the table. I want to make it clear to you,
22 that should include breaking the quorum. When the
23 time comes, you all need to be prepared to break the
24 quorum so that way you defend our voices in Congress.

25

1 We understand that the Republicans
2 here are going to do everything in their capacity to
3 gerrymander the state more and more, and you all are
4 in the minority. The one thing that you all have
5 left is to break that quorum. Please, for the state,
6 break the quorum and actually force the Republicans
7 to create a map that represents us.

8 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Thank you for your
9 testimony.

10 Chair calls Kia Baptist. I show you
11 registered to testify as Kia Baptist on behalf of
12 yourself on the revised congressional redistricting
13 plan. Is that correct?

14 KIA BAPTIST: That's correct.

15 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Please give us
16 your testimony.

17 KIA BAPTIST: My name is Kia Baptist,
18 and you're probably looking at me thinking, she's one
19 in a long line of people who've come up here and sat
20 in this room all day, some of us from very early to
21 say what needs to be said. A lot -- I have a script.

22 A lot of it has already been said.
23 Who am I? I'm not a politician. I am the hope and
24 the dream of people who are named in my family and
25 ancestors I don't even know.

1 I think it is very important for you
2 to understand, because I suspect a whole lot of you
3 all are sitting at your house frustrated at the news
4 every day the same way that I am, the same way that a
5 lot of us are, and wondering when on earth is
6 somebody going to not be afraid of speaking truth to
7 power and speaking truth to anarchy and oligarchy.
8 AAnd this is not an autocracy.

9 We are a democratic republic. That
10 means, no oligarchy, no kings, no people who just
11 said, I want five more seats, and I want Texas to go
12 get them. Now I have lived in Texas for 20 plus
13 years, and not one of those years has any Texan
14 decided that they were going to go along to get along
15 if they didn't agree with what was going on. Why are
16 we doing it now? Why now?

17 It used to be that bipartisanship was
18 something that was lauded. People were elected
19 because they were able to work across the aisles and
20 work together to see that the right things were done.
21 Where did that go? We are relying on you all to make
22 sure that that happens. Don't give in to fear. They
23 are trying to --

24 We know why we're here. I know you
25 said -- we've asked the question. We know why we're

1 here. Because the person in the White House has said
2 this is what he wants, and he's going to figure out
3 how to get it from our governor. And if the governor
4 is not going to stand up for us, darn it, I expect
5 for you to. Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Thank you for your
7 testimony.

8 Chair calls Bill Robinson. Is Bill
9 Robinson here? Chair will show Bill Robinson
10 registered to testify on behalf of himself on the
11 revised congressional redistricting plan but not
12 testifying.

13 Members, questions for the panel?

14 Chair recognizes Vice Chair Rosenthal
15 to question the panel.

16 VICE CHAIR ROSENTHAL: Thank you,
17 Mr. Chairman. Ms. Kia, thank you for being here
18 today. Sometimes you just walk out of a neighborhood
19 and into a room like this with 1000 of your dear
20 friends and make a difference, and my dear, you have
21 made a difference there. A lot of people have said a
22 lot of powerful things in this room. Nobody said it
23 as clearly and concisely as you did right now. So
24 thank you for bringing that.

25

1 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Members, any other
2 questions for the members of this panel?

3 Chair hears none. Thank you for your
4 testimony. The panel is excused.

5 Chair will call up our next panel -
6 Stephanie Foy, Makia Thomas, Lisa Hunt, and Andrea
7 Hubert. When we're done with this panel, of course,
8 we'll take a brief break.

9 And just a reminder, Crystal Jordan,
10 we're still looking for you. Got your credit card up
11 here. Promise not to -- not to do anything with it,
12 but if you wouldn't mind coming to get it. If not,
13 it's going to go to the police. I think that's
14 right. Yes.

15 All right. Ma'am, what's your name on
16 the end?

17 LISA HUNT: I'm Reverend Lisa Hunt.

18 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Lisa Hunt. Chair
19 calls Lisa Hunt. I show you registered to testify as
20 Lisa Hunt on behalf of yourself on the revised
21 congressional redistricting plan. Is that correct?

22 LISA HUNT: Yes, that's correct.

23 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Please give us
24 your testimony.

25

1 LISA HUNT: Thank you. Hello, members
2 of the committee and Mr. Chair. Thank you for coming
3 to Houston in person to hear our remarks. My name is
4 Lisa Hunt. I'm a resident of House District 29, an
5 Episcopal priest, and a target of this rushed
6 gerrymandering effort.

7 In the biblical book of Proverbs, we
8 find, where there is no vision, the people perish,
9 but those that keep the law are happy. The effort to
10 disappear thousands of Texas voters of color by
11 redrawing congressional districts is a cynical
12 attempt to undermine any possibility of a vision for
13 the common good of our state and our nation.

14 Income inequality, lack of access to
15 healthcare, hunger, cancer clusters, housing
16 shortages, fear of immigration raids, and food
17 deserts rack my community. My neighbors and I do not
18 have a million dollars to contribute to your election
19 campaigns, but we do have a vote, if you will let us
20 exercise it.

21 Texas has one of the lowest rates of
22 voting in the nation. Voter apathy and disengagement
23 is one result of the current and historic
24 gerrymandering and stems from the experience that our
25 votes don't make a difference. The perception is

1 that you, our elected leaders, only represent the
2 rich and powerful business interests of this state
3 and country.

4 Now, I want to believe that you are
5 capable of casting a vision of a more just Texas,
6 where all voters have access to the polls, where
7 minorities are represented in elected office, and
8 where the needs of our citizens take precedence over
9 the lust for ever greater power. We have major
10 issues to address, and we need leaders like you who
11 reflect the experience of all of us.

12 I urge you to reject this immoral
13 effort and to -- this immortal -- immoral effort to
14 further marginalize my community and others like it.
15 Don't even consider this redistricting effort. Thank
16 you.

17 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Thank you for your
18 testimony.

19 Ma'am, what's your name? What's your
20 name?

21 MAKIA THOMAS: Makia Thomas.

22 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Okay. Makia,
23 we're going to need you to fill out -- to sign your
24 witness information form. She's going to bring that
25 to you real quick.

1 MAKIA THOMAS: Okay.

2 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: While she's doing
3 that, I'm going to go ahead and call the other two
4 who -- unless they're Casper, the Friendly Ghost, are
5 not here.

6 Stephanie Foy. Stephanie Foy. Chair
7 will show Stephanie Foy registered to testify on
8 behalf of herself on the revised congressional
9 districting plan but not testifying.

10 Chair will call Andrea Hubert. Andrea
11 Hubert. Chair will show Andrea Hubert registered to
12 testify on behalf of herself on the revised
13 congressional redistricting plan but not testifying.

14 Okay. Let that, YF, as it's commonly
15 known, make its way back up here. I show you
16 registered to testify as Makia Thomas on behalf of
17 yourself on the revised congressional district plan.
18 Is that correct?

19 MAKIA THOMAS: Yes. It's Makia
20 Thomas.

21 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Makia, Makia.

22 MAKIA THOMAS: Yes.

23 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: I see it's an A.
24 Okay. I thought it was an E. My apologies. Makia,
25 please give us your testimony.

1 MAKIA THOMAS: All right. Thank you.
2 Good afternoon, Chairs and committee members. My
3 name is Makia Thomas, and I'm a proud resident of
4 Congressional District 9. I'm here to speak about a
5 critical issue impacting the democratic integrity of
6 our state. The stark disparity between Texas's
7 diverse population and composition of its
8 congressional delegation.

9 This isn't a partisan debate. It's a
10 fundamental fight for political power in ensuring who
11 gets to wield it. Texas is a vibrant, diverse state
12 where 60 percent of our population identifies as
13 people of color, yet our congressional delegation
14 only reflects 34 percent. This imbalance isn't an
15 accident. It's a direct consequence of redistricting
16 process that appears to employ racial discrimination
17 to dilute the voice and power of communities of
18 color.

19 Our district should be designed to
20 elect candidates who genuinely reflect the rich
21 diversity of our state. Ultimately, we need
22 representation that is truly responsive to the needs
23 of all Texans, not just a wealthy or special interest
24 groups. When districts reflect our diversity, our
25 government can effectively address the real problems

1 faced by ordinary people, affordable housing, food
2 access, living wages, quality public schools, and
3 accessible healthcare.

4 Our election should amplify the voices
5 of all citizens, not just a select few. In closing,
6 I hope this is the first of many opportunities for
7 the community to provide testimony on this issue. We
8 currently do not have any maps to respond to, and we
9 will need an opportunity to do so. Thank you for
10 your time today, committee members.

11 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Thank you for your
12 testimony. Members, any questions for the members of
13 this panel? Chair hears none.

14 Thank you for your testimony. The
15 panel is excused.

16 At this time, we're going to take a
17 brief break for our wonderful court reporter and for
18 the members of the public in this room. The House --

19 Chair recognizes Mr. Rosenthal for
20 what purpose?

21 VICE CHAIR ROSENTHAL: Mr. Vasut,
22 quick question for the Chair.

23 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: State your
24 question.

25

1 VICE CHAIR ROSENTHAL: How much time
2 do we have left for public testimony?

3 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: I am pausing the
4 timer right now. We have used 3 hours and 14
5 minutes.

6 VICE CHAIR ROSENTHAL: And so that
7 leaves?

8 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: One hour and 46
9 minutes.

10 VICE CHAIR ROSENTHAL: Okay. Very
11 good. Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Thank you.
13 Members, any other? Okay.

14 With that, the House Select Committee
15 on Congressional Redistricting will stand at ease for
16 five minutes.

17 (Recess taken)

18 The time is 3:48, and the House Select
19 Committee on Congressional Redistricting will come
20 back to order. The Chair will show Representative
21 Dutton up here on the dais with us today.

22 REPRESENTATIVE DUTTON: Now you're in
23 trouble.

24 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Now you're in the
25 record, Harold. And all as we left timer now at 3

1 hours, 14 minutes, and 8 seconds. What's our next
2 chapter? Okay. I'm going to call up four people,
3 and then I'm going to read the names of four people
4 if those would be on deck.

5 So Chair is going to call up Dana Foy,
6 Natalie King, Alan Foster, and Darice Huyen. That
7 will be our next panel.

8 And then if we can have Vienna Huynh,
9 Bill Kelly, Robert Slater, and Charity Flores
10 available to be for our next panel. So be ready. So
11 Darice Nguyen, Alan Foster, Natalie King, and Dana
12 Foy. And I won't start the timer until we get that
13 first panel up here.

14 All right. We're going to go ahead
15 and get started on the timer here.

16 Chair calls Darice Nguyen. Darice
17 Nguyen. Chair will show Darius Nguyen registered to
18 testify on behalf of himself on the revised
19 congressional redistricting plan but not testifying.

20 Chair calls Alan Foster. Alan Foster.
21 Chair shows Alan Foster registered to testify on the
22 revised congressional redistricting plan but not
23 testifying.

24 Chair calls Natalie King. Natalie
25 King. Chair shows Natalie King registered to testify

1 on behalf of herself on the revised congressional
2 redistricting plan but not testifying.

3 Chair calls Dana Foy. Dana Foy.

4 Chair shows Dana Foy registered to testify on behalf
5 of herself on the revised congressional redistricting
6 plan but not testifying. That was a fast panel.

7 All right. Chair calls up our next
8 panel - Vienna Huynh, Bill Kelly, Robert Slater, and
9 Charity Flores. Please make your way up to those
10 seats.

11 The next four, please be ready -
12 Jessica Campos, Carrie White, Misha Lesley Burkins,
13 and Patty Cwacinski. I'd apologize if I
14 mispronounced any name.

15 Okay. Let's take it. Sir, on the
16 right over here. What's your name?

17 ROBERT SLATER: Oh, Robert Slater.

18 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Robert Slater.

19 Okay. Chair calls Robert Slater. I show you
20 registered to testify as Robert Slater on behalf of
21 the Culture Commission Coalition on the revised
22 congressional redistricting plan. Is that correct?

23 ROBERT SLATER: Yes, sir.

24 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Please give us
25 your testimony.

1 ROBERT SLATER: Thank you for having
2 us. With all due respect, I kind of find it very
3 audacious, Mr. Chairman, for you guys to have this
4 hearing in an underrepresented district as District
5 18, underfunded. And with all due respect you have,
6 the great Mrs. Thomas -- Thomas next to you, that for
7 you not to have a lot of information for the people,
8 is just unsatisfactory, respectfully.

9 I do believe that it's not about what
10 we're saying, but what is not being said here. I do
11 believe that this hearing is a mere notion for future
12 legal challenges, if you will, so you can say that
13 you have the input of the community. I want to say
14 also as a candidate of District 18 running, that it
15 is fair to say that when we have this special
16 election in November 4th and then possibly a runoff
17 in January, and then the primary right there in
18 March, this new map that may probably going to go in
19 effect for March primary (indiscernible) these
20 district maps are only going to have two months to
21 really know their candidate of choice. And so not
22 only are we without representation for a year, it's
23 possible that another year may pass before you really
24 have true representation.

25

1 We are undoing, we are in trouble, and
2 we have been hurting. We saw what happened with FEMA
3 as the Culture Commission, we have mobilized
4 privately to get funding and trucks, and food
5 prepared because we just can't trust FEMA to come in,
6 or the government, or you.

7 With all due respect, when Donald
8 Trump called the Secretary of State in Georgia, I
9 believe, and asked for 11,001 votes to -- for
10 election interference, that Secretary of State stood
11 ground, and he was a Republican.

12 Now that he's not running for re-
13 election, he's calling for a special election per se,
14 of interference on behalf of our congressional
15 racists. And I ask that you stand forth also, not
16 only is this racially motivated, it also seems that
17 it's election interference. So please have the gall
18 and the spine to stand forward and represent Texas.
19 Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Thank you for your
21 testimony.

22 Chair calls Bill Kelly. I show you
23 registered to testify as Bill Kelly on behalf of
24 yourself on the revised congressional redistricting
25 plan. Is that correct?

1 BILL KELLY: Yes, sir.

2 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Please give us
3 your testimony.

4 BILL KELLY: Thank you to the members
5 of the Select Committee on redistricting for being
6 here today. My name is Bill Kelly. I'm a precinct
7 chair for Precinct 0001 here in Houston's first ward.
8 And as others have rightly stated, this December will
9 mark a full year of not having a congressional
10 representative with the deaths of Congresswoman
11 Sheila Jackson Lee and Congressman Sylvester Turner.

12 During this time, Congress has passed
13 significant national legislation, including changes
14 to federal healthcare. One of the provisions passed
15 will require re-enrollment in Medicaid every six
16 months. The last recorded words of Congressman
17 Sylvester Turner were, "Don't mess with Medicaid."
18 We have seen the harm this policy caused in Texas
19 when our state adopted that six-month enrollment
20 policy for CHIP back in 2003.

21 Then through Representative Turner's
22 House Bill 109, Texas repealed it. Representative
23 Guillen, you are a co-author of that bill.
24 Representative Geren, you voted for it, as did 126
25 members of the Texas House. I say this to remind

1 members of the majority on this committee how you
2 would stop when Sylvester Turner stood up on the
3 House floor. You would listen to what he had to say
4 because you knew who he represented. You were his
5 friends, not his work colleagues, his friends.

6 Representative Hunter, you are his
7 classmate. I know how close you were.

8 I am asking you today to stop and
9 listen to what your friend would be saying right now.
10 He would take out his abacus and say you cannot go to
11 one district without pulling from another.

12 Running for Congress, he put on his
13 signs, the historic 18th Congressional District,
14 because of the pride that African Americans felt for
15 the seat of Barbara Jordan and Mickey Leland. The
16 elimination of districts where black and brown
17 residents have the chance to elect a representative
18 of their choice is both undemocratic and
19 disrespectful.

20 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Please complete
21 your testimony.

22 BILL KELLY: Today. We are meeting at
23 the same university that Mayor Turner graduated from,
24 and where he learned so much. I hope you learn
25 something here today. Tearing apart minority

1 districts is wrong and certainly something that your
2 friend Sylvester Turner would speak against. I ask
3 you, his friends, to stop.

4 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Thank you for your
5 testimony.

6 The panelists will stay right there.
7 Chair calls Vienna, H-u-y-n-h. Are you here?

8 Oh, hang on, panel. One sec. One
9 sec. I show Vienna Huynh registered to testify on
10 behalf of herself on the revised congressional
11 redistricting plan but not testifying.

12 Chair calls Charity Flores. Is
13 Charity Flores here? Chair will show Charity Flores
14 registered to testify on behalf of the Culture
15 Commission Coalition but not testifying actually. In
16 her defense, she did check the box not to testify, so
17 that's just fine.

18 Okay. Members, any questions for this
19 panel?

20 Chair recognizes Representative Jones
21 to question the panel.

22 REPRESENTATIVE JONES: Yes. Comment
23 to one of the speakers.

24 Mr. Kelly, I just want to tell you
25 that I think you spoke very well to explain why

1 coalitions matter. And as a black person in CD 18
2 and the state representative for House District 147,
3 I appreciate the allyship that you just showed to
4 know your history, which is not like bad, but to
5 remind people who may not receive it from us about
6 why CD 18 and why not having a representative is so
7 important. So thank you so very much.

8 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Members, any other
9 questions for the members of this panel?

10 Chair hears none. Thank you for your
11 testimony. The panel is excused.

12 Chair calls up our next panel = Patty
13 Cwacinski, Misha Leslie Burkins, Carrie White,
14 Jessica Campos.

15 Our next panel is going to be Melissa
16 Allala, Michelle Ebrahimi, Mary Koch, and Alexia
17 Hodge. Please be ready.

18 Ma'am, what's your testimony? You
19 might be up by yourself.

20 MISHA BURKINS: Okay then. Well, I am
21 Misha Leslie Burkins.

22 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Okay.

23 MISHA BURKINS: Misha Leslie Birkins.

24 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: All right. I show
25 you registered to testify as Misha Leslie Burkins on

1 behalf of yourself on the revised congressional
2 redistricting plan? Is that correct?

3 MISHA BURKINS: That is correct.

4 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Please give us
5 your testimony.

6 MISHA BURKINS: Thank you for
7 recognizing me. I am Misha Leslie Burkins, a
8 lifetime resident of the 18th Congressional District,
9 a member of the Good Hope Missionary Baptist Church,
10 the 153-year-old historic church in this district,
11 and the home of Barbara Jordan. I'm also a 1993
12 graduate of the University of Texas at Austin, as
13 well as my husband and my daughter. We are lifelong
14 Texans, and we are standing here today asking you to
15 not redistrict.

16 It was said earlier that a majority of
17 minorities voted in the last election for the
18 Republican who was running. And that may be true.
19 However, the 18th Congressional District did not.
20 And so we're not talking about statewide elections.
21 What we're talking about are our representatives in
22 Congress who are representing people who have common
23 interests.

24 We've been here a long time, and I
25 know many of you are tired. But I'm asking you to

1 please, as, Texans, stand up for everyone in Texas,
2 regardless of their political party, their political
3 affiliation, whether they are Democratic, Republican
4 voters, independent voters, or not voting at all
5 because they're fed up with this system. Stand up
6 for Texans and say no to the power grab, the racially
7 motivated, racist power grab that's coming from the
8 White House. Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Thank you for your
10 testimony.

11 Chair calls -- let me ask real quick.
12 Members, any questions for this witness?

13 Chair hears none. The witness is
14 accused. Thank you, ma'am.

15 Chair calls Patty Cwacinski. Patty
16 Cwacinski. Chair shows Patty Cwacinski registered to
17 testify on behalf of herself on the revised
18 congressional redistricting plan but not testifying.

19 Chair calls Jessica Campos. Jessica
20 Campos. Chair will show Jessica Campos registered to
21 testify on behalf of herself on the revised
22 congressional redistricting plan but not testifying.

23 Chair calls Carrie White. Carrie
24 White. Chair shows Carrie White registered to
25

1 testify on behalf of herself on the revised
2 congressional redistricting plan but not testifying.

3 Chair is going to call our next panel
4 - Alexia Hodge, Mary Koch, Michelle Ebrahimi, Melissa
5 Allala.

6 For our next panel, it's going to be
7 Roy Sanchez, Amethyst James Nwaonicha. Where's -- I
8 was just talking to Amethyst. We got you in.
9 Andreina Keller and Julie Marinucci. Please be
10 ready. Okay.

11 Ma'am, what's your name on the end?

12 ALEXIA HODGE: Alexia Hodge.

13 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: All right. I show
14 you registered to testify as Alexia Hodge on behalf
15 of yourself on the revised congressional
16 redistricting plan. Is that correct?

17 ALEXIA HODGE: Yes, sir.

18 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Please give us
19 your testimony.

20 ALEXIA HODGE: Of course. Thank you
21 for being here. My full name is Alexia Sabine Hodge,
22 and I'm a resident of Houston. I'm here to argue for
23 fair district maps.

24 UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Ma'am, if you get
25 closer to the mic, please.

1 ALEXIA HODGE: Of course. Hi.

2 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: We can hear you
3 now. Thank you. Please continue.

4 ALEXIA HODGE: Okay, great. I'm here
5 to argue for fair district maps. I have amended my
6 statement to reflect the crowd is still waiting and
7 be brief. I implore this committee to schedule
8 future hearings in districts you all propose to
9 change when there are maps to see so constituents may
10 speak again.

11 Whatever the proposed maps look like,
12 this committee is likely planning for Houston
13 districts, including my district, CD 29, to be
14 gerrymandered and have less political power in a
15 clear violation of the Voting Rights Act.

16 I ask you to adhere to the Voting
17 Rights Act because if not, you're only inviting more
18 litigation against your own drawn districts, costing
19 Texan taxpayers money and our fair representation.
20 All of this money and time should go to the needs of
21 constituents, and we do not need this. Thank you for
22 your time.

23 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Thank you for your
24 testimony.

25 Chair calls Mary Koch.

1 MARY KOCH: Yes.

2 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: I show you
3 registered to testify as Mary Koch on behalf of
4 yourself on the revised congressional districting
5 plan. Is that correct?

6 MARY KOCH: Yes. Except I pronounce
7 my name Koch, Mary Koch.

8 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Koch. I apologize
9 for that. Mary Koch.

10 MARY KOCH: It's all right.

11 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Well, Ms. Koch, if
12 you wouldn't mind, give us your testimony.

13 MARY KOCH: Yes. I'm glad to be here,
14 and thank you for being here. I'm a resident of
15 Houston for about 30 years. And as you may notice,
16 I'm an old white woman, and I am a proud constituent
17 of District 9. I've been well represented by
18 Representative Al Green.

19 A lot of what I have in this piece of
20 paper has already been said. So my first statement
21 is going to be to answer the Chairman's question. We
22 are here -- or a statement. We're here to hear what
23 you have to say. I'm here to say, don't do
24 redistricting. It's not necessary. Nobody except
25 President Trump and Governor Abbott have asked for

1 it. I haven't seen an upsurge in any journal,
2 newspaper reporting that says, please redistrict this
3 year. So please don't do that.

4 Secondly, while you're taking the
5 time, all of you here for 4, 5, 6 hours, you
6 travelled, we'll say, just 12 hours each, in terms of
7 traveling, listening, and going home. How much time
8 have you spent where you could be working on flood
9 mitigation, climate control?

10 This big bill that was passed has
11 taken away healthcare and food for millions of
12 Texans, mostly children. We need your help on that.
13 We need your attention. Texas has resources. We
14 have gaps to fill.

15 I don't know about your churches. My
16 church is working hard to raise money to get to
17 school children this summer and also school children
18 next year when they go back to school, and there is
19 no -- or there is far less funded food programs for
20 them. We need your help on that kind of stuff.

21 This, in my opinion, is a waste of
22 your time, not only my time. I mean, I've been here
23 since 9 o'clock this morning. We need you working on
24 our priorities, please. Just a few other things I
25 want to say.

1 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Please finish your
2 testimony briefly.

3 MARY KOCH: Okay. Basically, we
4 cannot unsee what we have seen, nor can we unhear
5 what we have heard. This effort to redistrict this
6 year is a blatant power grab by President Trump and
7 supported by Governor Abbott. Please do not do it.
8 Thank you.

9 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Thank you for your
10 testimony.

11 What's your name?

12 MELISSA ALLALA: Melissa Allala.

13 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Okay. I show you
14 registered to testify as Michelle -- Melissa Allala?

15 MELISSA ALLALA: Allala.

16 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Allala. Okay.

17 MELISSA ALLALA: The double l makes a
18 y?

19 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: No. I got you.
20 And I show you registered to testify on behalf of
21 yourself on the revised congressional redistricting
22 plan. Is that correct?

23 MELISSA ALLALA: Correct.

24 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Please give us
25 your testimony.

1 MELISSA ALLALA: Thank you. Good
2 afternoon, Chair and committee members. My name is
3 Melissa Allala. And I am a proud constituent of
4 Congresswoman Sylvia Garcia in Congressional District
5 29, Senator Carol Alvarado in Senate District 6, and
6 State Representative Armando Wally in House District
7 140.

8 I am submitting this testimony to
9 strongly oppose any attempt by the Texas legislature
10 to redraw congressional district maps at this time.
11 There is no legal demographic or constitutional
12 justification for redistricting before the next
13 decennial census. Any efforts to reopen or revise
14 the maps, particularly outside the normal 10-year
15 cycle, raises serious concerns and political
16 motivations and the potential for violation of this
17 vote -- the Voting Rights Act, especially Section 2,
18 which prohibits actions that dilute the voting
19 strengths of communities of color.

20 As a former senior partnership
21 specialist for the U.S. Census Bureau during the 2020
22 census, I witnessed firsthand how fear-based
23 political messaging and disinformation caused real
24 harm in undercounted and historically marginalized
25 communities. Those same communities, Latino, Black,

1 Asian, and immigrant populations across Texas, are
2 now at risk of being further silenced if this
3 legislature chooses to move forward with
4 redistricting that is not mandated by severe
5 population shifts or legal necessity.

6 I'd like to note that the same
7 president who was fearmongering in 2020 is the same
8 one trying to influence the governor and those who
9 support him to gerrymander these congressional
10 districts.

11 Let me be clear. Revisiting the maps
12 now under the guise of legislative convenience or
13 partisan interest is both unnecessary and dangerous.
14 It would undermine public trust, invite costly legal
15 challenges on top of the already costly special
16 session, and erode the foundational principle of
17 equal representation.

18 CD 29 and other districts with strong
19 cultural, geographic, and community cohesion must not
20 be used as bargaining chips for political gain.

21 I urge this committee not only to
22 reject any proposed mass, but to refuse to entertain
23 the process all together. This is not the time for
24 redistricting. It is time to protect democracy,
25 honor the integrity of the 2020 census data, as many

1 of us worked so hard to ensure that all work counted,
2 so funding could go into their communities, and
3 ensure that every Texas -- Texan's voice remains
4 fairly represented.

5 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Please complete
6 your testimony.

7 MELISSA ALLALA: Please include my
8 testimony in the official record. Thank you for your
9 attention in this vital matter.

10 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Thank you for your
11 testimony.

12 Panel, stay right there.

13 Chair will call Michelle Ebrahimi.
14 Michelle Ebrahimi, I show she registered to testify
15 on behalf of herself on revised congressional
16 redistricting plan but not testifying.

17 Members, any questions for the members
18 of this panel? Chair hears none.

19 Thank you for your testimony. The
20 panel is excused.

21 Chair calls Roy Sanchez, Amethyst
22 James Nwaonicha, Andreina Keller, and Julie
23 Marinucci.

24 While they're making their way up
25 here, our next panel, so be ready, will be Kiran

1 Pashikanti, Tanya Rollins, Latoya Jarrett, and
2 Michael Knight. Please be ready.

3 Mr. Sanchez, we'll talk with -- start
4 with you. I show you registered to testify as Roy
5 Sanchez on behalf of yourself on the revised
6 congressional redistricting plan. Is that correct?

7 ROY SANCHEZ: Yes, sir.

8 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Please give us
9 your testimony.

10 ROY SANCHEZ: Thank you, Mr. Chairman
11 and the committee. I know it's been a long day. I'm
12 kind of hungry. I haven't eaten. But anyway, my
13 name is Roy Sanchez. I'm a proud member of HOPE
14 AFSCME Local 123. And I'm a resident and voter in
15 Congressional District 29.

16 I just want to let you know that I'm
17 against past and future gerrymandering. As we
18 discussed -- as we discussed redistricting, shouldn't
19 we be more focused on life safety issues that could
20 have saved those souls on the Guadalupe River and any
21 future disasters?

22 I strongly encourage you to consider
23 the potential impact on communities of color. Can we
24 prioritize transparency, inclusivity by sharing maps
25 and engaging in a collaborative discussion? We don't

1 have any maps, right. By doing so, we can ensure
2 that the voices of all constituents are heard and
3 valued.

4 Currently, we have a Congresswoman
5 Garcia who is a huge part of our community.
6 Everybody respects her. She's everywhere in our
7 community. So -- I'm sorry. By focusing the -- what
8 we need to do is build a safer and more equitable
9 future for all Texans. As a community, we have a
10 unique opportunity to shape our collective future. I
11 urge you to preserve the integrity of the
12 congressional districts and protect the voting rights
13 of all Texans regardless of race, ethnicity.

14 Together, we can create a brighter
15 future for our state and uphold the principles of
16 democracy. One thing I remember is Abe Lincoln
17 mentioned that the government is of the people by the
18 people for the people. And I'll add this part. It's
19 not for a political party. Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Thank you for your
21 testimony.

22 Chair calls Amythest James. Now, how
23 do I pronounce your last name?

24 AMETHYST NWAONICHA: Nwaonicha.

25

1 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Perfect. I show
2 you registered to testify on behalf of yourself --

3 AMETHYST NWAONICHA: Yes, sir.

4 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: -- on the revised
5 congressional redistricting plan. Is that correct?

6 AMETHYST NWAONICHA: Yes.

7 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Please give us
8 your testimony.

9 AMETHYST NWAONICHA: Okay. So my name
10 is Amethyst James Nwaonicha, and I live in
11 Congressional District 7, which borders CD 9. I
12 serve on the executive board of HOPE AFSCME Local
13 123. That's the American Federation of State,
14 County, and Municipal Employees. The union
15 representing the frontline public workers across
16 Houston - 311 operators, solid waste collectors,
17 nurses, custodians, park rangers, librarians, and so
18 many more who keep this city functioning every day.

19 I'm here because what happens in CD 9
20 doesn't just stay in CD 9. These proposed
21 redistricting efforts would directly impact
22 communities like mine, working-class black, brown,
23 and immigrant neighborhoods that share services,
24 schools, and issues. When communities are
25 represented -- are represented by electeds who are

1 from the community and who are chosen by the voters
2 like Congressman Al Green, who spent his time in
3 office to address issues of our communities. Who is
4 -- who is -- I'm sorry about that. Who is -- who
5 responds to the community needs.

6 We need -- we in the community feel
7 heard and seen when we have members like this who
8 represent us. My union brothers and sisters and
9 siblings, many of whom live or work in CD 9, deserve
10 to have a representative who understands their value
11 and defends their dignity. Without seeing these
12 proposed redistricted maps, communities could be
13 broken up. Redrawing this district in a way that
14 divides our people and weakens our voices does real
15 harm.

16 In conclusion, I urge this committee
17 and all lawmakers to reject any map that weakens the
18 power of communities of color or undermines the right
19 to fair representation. Texas belongs to all of us,
20 and the maps we draw must reflect diversity, dignity,
21 and democratic voice of every Texan.

22 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Thank you for your
23 testimony.

24 Ma'am, what's your name?

25 ANDREINA KELLER: Andreina Keller.

1 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Okay. Chair calls
2 Andreina Keller. I show you register to testify on
3 behalf of yourself on the revised congressional
4 redistricting plan. Is that correct?

5 ANDREINA KELLER: That is correct.

6 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Please give us
7 your testimony.

8 ANDREINA KELLER: Hi. My name is
9 Andreina Keller, and I live in Texas 18th
10 Congressional District. This is my first time
11 testifying for anything, and I'm really nervous. But
12 there's nowhere else I'd rather be today.

13 I was born and raised in Texas.
14 Growing up like in junior high school, one of my
15 favorite topics was Texas history, and I used to love
16 to spit out little Texas facts like, did you know
17 that the word Texas comes from the indigenous word
18 that means friend? I believe that name stuck for a
19 reason, that Texans do good by one another. That we
20 stood up for what is right, even when it was hard.
21 That is the Texas I believe in, but that is not the
22 Texas I see before me.

23 The nearly 800,000 people of the Texas
24 18th, including myself, have been without a voice,
25 without a friend in Congress. Governor Abbott could

1 have called a special election much sooner, but he
2 didn't, and now we have no one to speak for us on
3 critical legislation or advocate for us in times like
4 this hurricane season. That isn't just a delay.
5 That's a denial, and it's not very friendly.

6 Now you have been asked to redraw our
7 congressional maps mid-decade, which will further
8 silence my district and other communities of color as
9 part of an unfair, undemocratic power grab. That is
10 not Texas.

11 Texans deserve a process that honors
12 us, and that means a transparent process with ample
13 opportunity for community input and also an
14 independent redistricting commission and fair maps
15 that reflect all Texans, including communities of
16 color, who make up 60 percent of our state. Texas
17 should be drawing more districts that empower a
18 community of color -- communities of color, not
19 fewer. Every Texan's voice matters, and it should
20 count equally. Thank you for your time and for
21 choosing to be a friend to all Texans and a defender
22 of democracy.

23 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Thank you for your
24 testimony.

25 Panel, stay right there.

1 Chair calls Julie Marinucci. Julie
2 Marinucci. Chair will show her registered to testify
3 on behalf of herself on revised congressional
4 redistricting plan but not testifying.

5 Members, any questions for the members
6 of this panel? Chair hears none.

7 Thank you for your testimony. The
8 panel is excused.

9 Chair calls Michael Knight, Latoya
10 Jarrett, Tanya Rollins, and Kiran Pashikanti. Please
11 come up to the front.

12 Our next panel is going to be
13 Elizabeth Winston Jones, Ayaan Melodina, Corisha
14 Rogers, and Deddrick Wilmer. Please be ready.

15 Okay. I show you registered to
16 testify as Kiran Pashikanti on behalf of yourself on
17 the revised congressional redistricting plan. Is
18 that correct?

19 KIRAN PASHIKANTI: Yes.

20 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Please give us
21 your testimony.

22 KIRAN PASHIKANTI: Thank you for
23 accepting my testimony. I've been sitting here since
24 about 10:00 this morning, and wondering why we're
25 here, as most of this room is. And I think the

1 simple -- the answer is very simple. It's because
2 congressional Republicans are afraid. They're afraid
3 of their own actions and want Texas to help them
4 blunt the consequences of their actions.

5 If Republicans are so proud of their
6 historic victory with minority voters in 2024, why
7 does anything need to change? Certainly, National
8 Republicans need no help with their -- with all their
9 historic success, unless they think that cheating is
10 the only way that they can retain their majority.

11 Fair redistricting must be
12 transparent, nonpartisan, and must comply with the
13 Voting -- Voting Rights Act, to protect communities
14 of color from being split apart and packed into
15 districts to minimize their influence.

16 The right to vote is sacred, and when
17 maps are drawn to favor one party or to silence
18 certain voters, it undermines our trust in elections.
19 I urge those responsible for redistricting to
20 prioritize fairness, not political gain, hold public
21 hearings with meaningful community input, use
22 independent commissions to reduce gerrymandering, and
23 ensure the maps reflect the true diversity of Texas.
24 Our state is growing because of minority communities.
25 Their voices must be heard, not erased. Thank you.

1 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Thank you for your
2 testimony.

3 And what's your name?

4 AYAAN MOLEDINA: Ayaan Moledina.

5 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Okay. Ayaan, I do
6 not have you -- go ahead and take it in. Chair calls
7 Ayaan Moledina. I show you registered to testify on
8 behalf of Students Engaged in Advancing Texas and
9 yourself on the revised congressional redistricting
10 plan. Is that correct?

11 AYAAN MOLEDINA: That's correct, sir.

12 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Please give us
13 your testimony.

14 AYAAN MOLEDINA: Good afternoon. My
15 name is Ayaan Moledina, and I'm a 16-year-old high
16 school sophomore from Austin. I'm extremely
17 concerned that the legislature is choosing to redraw
18 our congressional maps after just a few years using
19 the same census as before. Texas students who aren't
20 of voting age also deserve accurate representatives
21 who are truly representative of the community in
22 which they come from. That means similar identities,
23 similar values, and people who will listen to their
24 constituents, no matter if they agree with you 100
25 percent or not.

1 My concern is that when we start to
2 unnecessarily redraw maps that are already drawn in
3 favor of one side, we are going to end up with
4 candidates who are picked by those who draw the maps
5 and feel that they don't have to conserve their
6 constituents at all. These congressional
7 representatives are in charge of case work to ensure
8 that the needs of their citizens are met, not just on
9 policy issues but on non-partisan cases involving
10 federal agencies.

11 When I worked in the district office
12 for my congressman, I received calls from people
13 desperate to get their passports expedited, to visit
14 dying relatives, or to be present for the birth of a
15 grandchild. That's the kind of work congressional
16 offices do every day - case work that doesn't depend
17 on politics, only on compassion. But if we elect
18 officials who feel invincible because of unfair maps,
19 what happens to those families when their
20 representative just doesn't care to help?

21 As Texans, we believe in fair play and
22 doing what's right, not just what's politically
23 convenient. I urge you to uphold your duty to all
24 Texans, especially the next generation of voters like
25 myself. Redrawing maps without updated census data

1 undermines the principle of equal representation
2 guaranteed by the Constitution and threatens
3 compliance with the Voting Rights Act. Any good
4 political party would want more seats in Congress,
5 especially with the slim majority now, but America is
6 a democracy.

7 Backroom dealings and dirty politics
8 are not how we achieve these goals. Hard work and
9 winning over voters in non-politically drawn
10 districts is the way to ensure that. I respectfully
11 urge you to vote against any attempts to redraw the
12 congressional districts outside of the regular
13 decennial process is guided by the U.S. census. We
14 have to keep the fire of democracy alive, not let it
15 blow out. Thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Thank you for your
17 testimony.

18 Chair calls Michael Knight. I show
19 you registered to testify as Michael Knight on behalf
20 of yourself on the revised congressional
21 redistricting plan. Is that correct?

22 MICHAEL KNIGHT: Yes, sir. Please
23 give us your testimony.

24 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Thank you,
25 Mr. Chairman, Mr. Vice Chairman, and members of the

1 committee. I really appreciate you guys giving up
2 your Saturday to perform this additional service.
3 I'm a Houston native. I'm a lifelong Republican.
4 I'm a business owner, and I'm a leader of my
5 community. I reside in House District 38.

6 My message today is that I care far
7 more about protecting the cohesiveness of my
8 community and it being properly represented than I do
9 about trying to marginalize anyone I might disagree
10 with, so that one party or another can exert
11 disproportionate influence. And I have a solution to
12 propose to you.

13 I am proud to live in one of the most
14 diverse cities in America. My neighbors and I may
15 have diverse ideologies, but we are all neighbors.
16 And as soon as you try to predict who might vote for
17 whom and attempt to jiggle districts along those
18 lines, you defy common sense, encourage divisiveness,
19 and erode the foundations that make our country
20 strong.

21 I am tired of gerrymandering at all
22 political levels, and it needs to stop. We'd all do
23 well to take a lesson from bees, arguably one of the
24 most successful species on earth. There's a reason
25 their hives are arranged in neat little hexagons.

1 The further you get from round, the less efficient
2 you are. Only circles don't pack well, so the
3 hexagon is the best possible compromise. I always
4 tell my managers, when in doubt, do the math. And
5 I'm sure the engineers among you will appreciate
6 this.

7 When you next take up redistricting, I
8 propose you establish a rule that the perimeter of
9 any district not exceed the square root of its area
10 by more than a factor of five. Now I know that's a
11 little wonky, but if anyone is wondering, the ratio
12 for a perfect circle is 3.54, for a hexagon is 3.72.
13 The closer you get to those numbers, the better. For
14 some of the gerrymandered districts we have today is
15 probably 15 or more. Monkey around with this limit
16 all you want. But if it goes beyond five, you best
17 have a good reason for it, and it better not have
18 anything to do with how much or how little anyone
19 resembles you or how you think they will vote.

20 Just as bees instinctively build
21 efficiently for the health of the hive, democracies
22 function best when political boundaries are drawn
23 with the health of the electorate in mind. If you
24 want to make the world better, make sure our
25 perimeters aren't longer than the folks in the area

1 inside can make sense of, benefit from, or support.

2 Better symmetry and simplicity will absolutely lead
3 to better outcomes for everyone. Please keep this in
4 mind as you consider redistricting. Thank you.

5 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Thank you for your
6 testimony.

7 Chair calls Latoya Jarrett. No.
8 Latoya Jarrett.

9 TANYA ROLLINS: Tanya Rollins.

10 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Chair shows Latoya
11 Jarrett was registered to testify on behalf of
12 herself on revised congressional redistricting plan
13 but did not testify.

14 Chair calls Tanya Rollins.
15 Ms. Rollins, I show you registered to testify on
16 behalf of yourself --

17 TANYA ROLLINS: Yes.

18 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: -- on the revised
19 congressional redistricting plan. Is that correct?

20 TANYA ROLLINS: That's correct.

21 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Please give us
22 your testimony.

23 TANYA ROLLINS: Sure. My name is
24 Tonya Rollins. I am the daughter of a retired
25 sergeant -- Army Sergeant Major. I am the daughter

1 of a retired civil servant, and I myself am a retired
2 state employee. I've been taught to respect the
3 government. I've been taught to respect the flag.
4 I'm sitting here today because most importantly, I've
5 been taught to do what is right, and I question what
6 is being -- what is going on currently.

7 On July 12, 2025, the State filed the
8 State's defendant's (audio cut out) Western District
9 of Texas El Paso Division in the League of United
10 Latin American Citizens et al., plaintiffs v. Greg
11 Abbott et al., defendants. This is a direct quote
12 from the filing. "The Texas legislature did not
13 racially discriminate in drawing the current
14 congressional electoral districts full stop." This
15 statement is consistent with Texas's assertions in
16 previous lawsuits that Texas redistricting actions
17 are race blind. Yet Governor Abbott added
18 redistricting to the special session, essentially
19 contradicting previous race blind assertions.

20 The only thing that appears to have
21 changed in the State's apparent desire is the State's
22 apparent desire to act as a co-conspirator in the
23 current federal administration's power grab. Or the
24 State is now admitting that black and brown
25 communities have, in fact, been disenfranchised in

1 the voter process. So here we are, participating in
2 hearings under the guise of fairness, participating
3 in hearings without published drafts of the proposed
4 lines, limiting our ability to craft arguments based
5 on the evidence.

6 Perhaps the legislator's times would
7 be better used dealing with the infrastructure issues
8 so that Texans can stop wondering if the power grid
9 will hold out during winter storms and hurricanes,
10 and making sure children don't go hungry and ensuring
11 that state retirees get cost-of-living raises. Yes.
12 I stuck that in there for myself.

13 The list would be longer, but I only
14 have two minutes. Since it is not likely that the
15 governor will shift focus to issues pertinent to the
16 well-being of Texans, I'm asking that this committee
17 to commit to holding a public hearing after the maps
18 have been drawn but before they pass through the
19 committee. You must also give the public a minimum
20 of five days -- I see the red light.

21 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Please complete
22 the testimony.

23 TANYA ROLLINS: -- notice and
24 capability to review the maps before this hearing. I
25 also want the legislators who draw the maps to

1 explain the rationale chosen. I like yours. Thank
2 you. I am strongly opposed to these redistricting
3 actions. Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Thank you for your
5 testimony.

6 Members, questions for the members of
7 this panel?

8 Chair recognizes Representative
9 Rosenthal -- Vice Chair Rosenthal to question the
10 panel.

11 VICE CHAIR ROSENTHAL: Thank you,
12 Mr. Chairman.

13 Michael. So as far as I know, I'm the
14 only engineer on this panel. I'm the only mechanical
15 engineer in the state legislature career oil field
16 worker. My dad was a mathematician, so thanks for
17 bringing the math. Is it your --

18 MICHAEL KNIGHT: Dennis Paul.
19 Representative Paul, I believe, was an engineer.

20 VICE CHAIR ROSENTHAL: So he's a civil
21 engineer? We build weapons. They build targets.

22 So is it your contention that -- so
23 while I would love to use geometry, the
24 constitutional language around redistricting says,
25

1 collect communities of common interest along
2 geographic boundaries. Does that make sense to you?

3 MICHAEL KNIGHT: Certainly.

4 VICE CHAIR ROSENTHAL: I agree with
5 you about the perimeter to area ratio though. We
6 should be making these fat little blobs instead of
7 long stringy spirally, whatever, you know. My
8 district looks like a sea dragon. So thank you
9 again.

10 MICHAEL KNIGHT: Please, thank you
11 very much.

12 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Members, any other
13 questions for the members of this panel? Chair hears
14 none.

15 Thank you for your testimony. This
16 panel is excused.

17 Chair is going to call our next panel
18 - Corisha Rogers, Elizabeth Winston Jones, Deddrick
19 Wilmer, and I'm going to add Sara Jacobson. Sara
20 Jacobson, please go ahead and join them. Sara, we'll
21 wait for you a little while. We'll do you last, so
22 you have a little time to get over here.

23 Our next panel after this one's going
24 to be Janae Branch, Arnetta Murray, Toy Halsey, and
25 Allen Pro -- Allen Provost. Actually, Allen and Toy

1 are not testifying, so we're not going to call them.

2 Let me add two more here. And Jennifer Hernandez and

3 Richard Gilmore. You'll be on the next panel.

4 Please be ready.

5 Okay. Chair calls Corisha Rogers. I

6 show you registered to testify as Corisha Rogers on

7 behalf of yourself on the revised congressional

8 redistricting plan. Is that correct?

9 CORISHA ROGERS: Correct.

10 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Please give us

11 your testimony.

12 CORISHA ROGERS: All right. Good

13 evening -- good afternoon, Chairman and members of

14 the community. My name is Corsha Rogers. I'm a

15 lifelong Houstonian. I'm a resident of Third Ward

16 and OST South Union. I'm a community advocate, and

17 I'm working to build power in my district.

18 I'm here because the priorities of

19 this body are completely disconnected from the

20 reality that Texans are facing. You're holding this

21 hearing in a district that's been left without real

22 representation for nearly a year because of political

23 games. And now, instead of focusing on flood

24 recovery, housing, or the everyday needs of our

25 communities, you're fast-tracking redistricting in

1 the middle of important issues we face. To us, the
2 people, that feels intentional.

3 So yes, we're upset and we're ready to
4 hold you guys accountable, because let's be honest
5 about this, it's not about fair maps, it's about
6 clinging to power.

7 Texans are tired of backroom deals and
8 power grabs. Redrawing lines in mid-decade just
9 because one man in Washington doesn't like the change
10 that's coming as a result of his own doing, it's a
11 direct -- direct threat to our democracy.

12 And I want to be very clear, I
13 strongly advise against redistricting our current
14 congressional maps unless it can be done in a truly
15 nonpartisan matter. I was in this Capitol -- I was
16 in the Capitol building in the 2021 and 2023
17 legislative sessions alongside a handful of the
18 members of the board, and I saw firsthand how this
19 body operates.

20 That's exactly why I and so many
21 members of this district being targeted do not have
22 confidence that this legislator will produce fair and
23 equitable maps.

24 So let me be crystal clear about this.
25 If this body chooses to ignore the will of the

1 people, we will use every bit of power we have to
2 vote you out. Our power is growing block by block,
3 voice by voice, and we'll use it to remove anyone who
4 makes redistricting a priority over the needs of its
5 constituents. We deserve better, and we're not going
6 anywhere. Thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Thank you for your
8 testimony.

9 Chair calls Elizabeth Winston-Jones.
10 Elizabeth Winston-Jones. Chair will show her
11 registered to testify on behalf of herself on the
12 revised congressional redistricting plan but not
13 testifying.

14 Chair calls Sara Jacobson. Sara
15 Jacobson. Chair will show Sara Jacobson registered
16 to testify on behalf of herself on revised
17 congressional redistricting plan but not testifying.

18 Chair calls Deddrick Wilmer.
19 Mr. Wilmer, I show you registered to testify on
20 behalf of yourself on the revised congressional
21 redistricting plan. Is that correct?

22 DEDDRICK WILMER: That's correct.

23 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Please give us
24 your testimony.

25

1 DEDDRICK WILMER: Good afternoon,
2 Chairman Cody Vasut, also to Vice Chairman John
3 Rosenthal, and members of the committee. My name is
4 Deddrick T. Wilmer. I reside in Harris County. I'm
5 a father, a community leader, and currently serve as
6 director and board secretary of Harris County
7 Municipal Utility District 248. And also, I'm a
8 candidate for Congress for the Texas 9th District.

9 I'm here today because redistricting
10 is not just about maps and math; it's about people.
11 It's about whether we draw lines to reflect today's
12 Texas or to protect yesterday's politics. Houston is
13 the most diverse city in this country and the last of
14 middle-class America. We are black. We are white.
15 We are Hispanic. We are Asian. We are immigrants.
16 We are working families. We are entrepreneurs, and
17 we're everything that between, as Texans, as always
18 Americans. We're also not confined to just the inner
19 city anymore.

20 The idea that minorities and working-
21 class voters only live in urban areas is outdated.
22 Many now live in suburban districts in places like
23 Katy and Cypress, which have dramatically changed
24 their makeup. If I was running in a redistrict area
25 that includes Katy and the Cypress-Fairbanks

1 independent school districts, likely voters today
2 will be approximately 44 percent Democrat and 39
3 percent Republican, and 17 percent independently --
4 independents. Racially, that population is a 34
5 black and Hispanic mix combined with 24 percent
6 white. That is a clear reflection that this is not a
7 monolithic community, and it deserves representation
8 that reflects its true diversity.

9 But redistricting has too often been
10 used to secure seats, not serve the people. But we
11 ignore -- ignore these Democrat shifts, we silence
12 emerging communities and deny -- deny the voters the
13 right to competitive and responsive representation.

14 I say this firmly, change is always
15 good. Texas is evolving, so should our districts
16 evolve as well. Representation should be based on
17 the people, not party, but on neighborhoods, not
18 nostalgia. I urge this committee to draw the lines
19 that reflect who Texas truly are today, not who we
20 were decades ago. Thank you for your time away from
21 your families. And again, thank you for your service
22 for this process.

23 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Thank you for your
24 testimony.

25

1 Members, any questions for the members
2 of this panel? Chair hears none.

3 Thank you for your testimony. The
4 panel is excused.

5 Chair calls Janae Branch, Arnetta
6 Murray, Jennifer Hernandez, and Richard Gilmore.

7 The next panel, be ready - Sameeha
8 Rizvi, Carmen Maria Montiel, Nabila Mansoor, and
9 Bernadine Gatling.

10 Chair calls Richard Gilmore. I show
11 you registered to testify as Richard Gilmore on
12 behalf of yourself on the revised congressional
13 redistricting plan. Is that correct?

14 RICHARD GILMORE: Yes, sir.

15 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Please give us
16 your testimony

17 RICHARD GILMORE: Chair, members, I'm
18 Richard Gilmore. I live here in the Second Ward in
19 U.S. Congressional District 29. I'm fortunate to
20 only be two miles away from this hearing. I come
21 today to voice my opposition for this redistricting
22 process. There's been no published maps to make
23 comment on. It's not appropriate to now redistrict
24 using data from the census five years ago. And most
25 importantly, there's a gross lack of public

1 engagement as we rush through three public comment
2 sessions for the entire state.

3 Like I said, I'm fortunate enough to
4 be able to be here today, but those who live further
5 out and with such short notice have no chance to
6 ensure their voice is heard in this process. With
7 only five hours allocated into perfect two-minute
8 blocks, that's 150 speaking blocks. If it's
9 allocated into perfect 32nd blocks, that's 600
10 speaking blocks for public comment. Houston alone
11 has over 2 million people. Five hours of public
12 comment from hopefully a few hundred folks is not
13 sufficient. I'm lucky to have representatives such
14 as Sylvia Garcia and Jolanda Jones who advocate for
15 me and issues that are important to me.
16 Redistricting my community will damage
17 representation. Thank you for your time.

18 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Thank you for your
19 testimony. Chair calls Jennifer Hernandez. I show
20 you registered to testify on behalf of the
21 International Union of Printers and Allied Trades DC
22 10.

23 JENNIFER HERNANDEZ: That's Painters

24 --

25 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Painters.

1 JENNIFER HERNANDEZ: -- and Allied
2 Trades.

3 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: International
4 Union of Painters and Allied Trades, DC 10.

5 JENNIFER HERNANDEZ: Yes, sir.
6 Mr. Chair, I'd also like to add to that, testifying
7 on behalf of myself.

8 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: And on behalf of
9 yourself. And I show you're on the revised
10 congressional redistricting plan. Is that correct?

11 JENNIFER HERNANDEZ: Yes, sir.

12 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Please give us
13 your testimony.

14 JENNIFER HERNANDEZ: Thank you. Good
15 afternoon, Chair, Vice Chair, and members of the
16 committee. My name is Jennifer Hernandez with the
17 IUPAT. We represent glazers, painters, and trade
18 show workers in Houston and throughout the state.
19 I'm here today not just as a labor leader, but as a
20 proud Houstonian and as a community advocate who's
21 been on the ground walking our neighborhoods,
22 organizing workers, and standing with families after
23 floods, blackouts, and attacks on our rights.

24 Today, I speak for the working people
25 of Houston, the backbone of this city, and I speak

1 out against this dangerous proposed redistricting
2 process that threatens to divide our communities and
3 deny us a voice.

4 Let's be clear, this proposed
5 redistricting is not about fairness; it's about
6 power. Houston has three congressional districts up
7 for possible redrawing, and the lines being
8 considered would fracture brown, black, and working-
9 class neighborhoods, splitting us apart just to
10 protect political careers that don't represent us.

11 People deserve to elect leaders who
12 come from our communities, who know our schools, our
13 streets, and our struggles not -- excuse me -- not
14 politicians, forcibly drawn in. That's
15 gerrymandering, and it violates the Voting Rights
16 Act, plain and simple.

17 We need representatives who understand
18 Houston because they live in Houston, because they've
19 knocked on doors here, because they've stood in food
20 lines during storms and marched alongside us when our
21 rights were under attack, time and time again.

22 Governor Abbott is using the special
23 session to push Trump's agenda, focusing on political
24 control instead of recovering from catastrophic
25 floods, funding our schools, rising housing costs,

1 and failing infrastructure. While Texas families are
2 still rebuilding, our governor is proposing to redraw
3 maps that lock us out of power. This isn't just
4 political. It's personal. And when you silence a
5 district, you silence its future.

6 And in Houston, we're not going to be
7 silent. We take care of each other when the system
8 fails, and we will fight for districts that keep our
9 communities together and make sure our votes count.

10 Texas belongs to the people, and we
11 demand maps and policies that reflect us, not repress
12 us. So today, don't erase our voices. Stand with
13 Houstonians and stand with Texas. Stand for fair
14 maps and put Texans first. I'm a constituent of CD
15 18, and I don't need redistricting. I need
16 representation. Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Thank you for your
18 testimony.

19 Panel, stay right where you are.

20 Chair calls Arnetta Murray. I show
21 you registered to testify as Arnetta Murray on behalf
22 of herself on the revised congressional redistricting
23 plan but not testifying. She told me she's driving
24 home.

25

1 Chair calls Janae Branch. Janae
2 branch. Chair will show Janae Branch registered to
3 testify on behalf of herself on the revised
4 congressional redistricting plan but did not testify.

5 Members, questions for the members of
6 this panel? Hearing none.

7 Thank you for your testimony. Panel
8 is excused.

9 Chair calls Bernadine Gatling, Nabila
10 Mansoor, Carmen Maria Montiel, and Sameeha Rizvi.
11 That's going to be our next panel.

12 The one after that, please be ready -
13 Serena Arzu, Ruben Salazar, Al Castillo and Graciela
14 Saenz.

15 We'll start on this end. And what's
16 your name, ma'am?

17 BERNADINE GATLING: Bernardine
18 Gatling.

19 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Okay. I show you
20 registered to testify as Bernadine Gatling on behalf
21 of yourself on the revised congressional
22 redistricting plan. Is that correct?

23 BERNADINE GATLING: That is correct.

24 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Please give us
25 your testimony.

1 BERNADINE GATLING: Good afternoon,
2 Mr. Chair, and members of the committee. My name is
3 Bernadine Gatling, and I thank you for this
4 opportunity to speak. I am here to express strong
5 opposition to the redistricting of Congressional
6 Districts Texas 9th and Texas 18th. First, I want to
7 emphasize that our communities deserve to be
8 represented, not erased. I sincerely hope that our
9 state representative have already draft a
10 congressional map that protects our voting power and
11 ensures our voices -- and ensures our voices are
12 heard in any future debates or discussion around
13 redistricting.

14 Splitting our community across
15 different districts strips us from the collective
16 power of our vote. It undermines the integrity of
17 our representation and further diminishes what
18 remains of the Voting Rights Act, particularly
19 Section 2, which was designed to protect minority
20 voting strength. District 18 has already suffered a
21 devastating loss with the passing of Representative
22 Sylvester Turner earlier this year.

23 During this fragile time when jobs,
24 education, and healthcare hang in the balance, the
25 majority chose to pass a legislation without input

1 from our community. This not only violates the
2 spirit of fair governance but also echoes past
3 injustices. In the landmark case, Baker vs Carr
4 (1962), the United States Supreme Court declared that
5 unequal representation is unconstitutional. Yet that
6 is exactly what would happen if these districts are
7 divided and weakened.

8 Texas 9th is a community of interest,
9 and Texas 18th, Texas -- I'm sorry. Texas 9th is a
10 community of interest. We share neighbors, schools,
11 churches, and struggles. We do not want to be moved
12 outside the bonds of the people we know and who
13 understand our needs. To quote Barack Obama, "Real
14 power is not in domination, but in compassion." I
15 ask you to show the compassion today and not just in
16 word but in action. Do not dilute our vote. Do not
17 divide our voice. Protect the integrity of Texas 9th
18 and Texas 18th. Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Thank you for your
20 testimony.

21 Ma'am, what's your name?

22 CARMEN MONTIEL: My name is Carmen
23 Maria Montiel.

24 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: I show you
25 register to testify as Carmen Maria Montiel --

1 CARMEN MONTIEL: Yes.

2 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: -- on behalf of
3 yourself --

4 CARMEN MONTIEL: Yes.

5 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: -- on the revised
6 congressional redistricting plan. Is that correct?

7 CARMEN MONTIEL: Yes.

8 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Please give us
9 your testimony.

10 CARMEN MONTIEL: Good afternoon,
11 panel. As is said, my name is Carmen Maria Montiel.
12 I'm here today as a legal immigrant, concerned
13 citizen, mother, and U.S. Congressional District 18
14 candidate. I'm for it as I am against
15 gerrymandering. I believe the new lines should truly
16 represent the reality of Texas as Texas have changed.

17 Let's be clear with the demographics
18 in Harris County and Houston. They are as follow:
19 Latinos represent between 43 to 45 percent, white
20 between 24 to 27 percent, blacks or African Americans
21 between 18 to 22 percent, Asians 7 percent, and the
22 rest a little bit of everything.

23 For far too long, Latinos has been
24 disenfranchised. In fact, conservative Latinos has
25 been disenfranchised. Today, Latinos are the

1 majority in the city of Houston and Harris County,
2 and we will keep on growing in the future. However,
3 we're not represented well in government.

4 For example, District 18 became
5 majority Latino with 45 percent after the census in
6 2020. However, it has been impossible to change the
7 representation of the district, and the same faces do
8 nothing and still control the district, city, and the
9 county, with no action taken for the betterment of
10 the people in our community. For 30 years, District
11 18 has been neglected. Latinos were conservative.
12 Our values are faith, family, love of country,
13 economic opportunities, and better education.

14 The few and very few people that
15 represent Latinos in this town do not represent our
16 values. Also, Latinos are another culture. We're
17 not another race. The Democrats keep on trying to
18 put us in a black -- I mean, a brown box. When they
19 put us in a brown box, they're discriminating against
20 80 percent of us because we're black, brown, white,
21 yellow, copper, and red.

22 It is time the district lines in Texas
23 truly represent the values and interests of all of
24 us.

25

1 Little history. The Republican Party
2 of Texas was founded by the black community. When
3 people represent us, they should represent us to not
4 disrupt. If you go to office to disrupt, you're
5 working for yourself, not for the people. My name is
6 Carmen Maria Montiel, and I love Texas. Thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Ma'am, what's your
8 name?

9 SAMEEHA RISVI: Sameeha Rizvi.

10 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Chair calls
11 Sameeha Rizvi.

12 SAMEEHA RISVI: Yes, sir.

13 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: I show you
14 registered to testify on behalf of the Council of
15 American Islamic Relations Action --

16 SAMEEHA RISVI: Uh-huh.

17 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: -- and yourself as
18 well.

19 SAMEEHA RISVI: Yes, sir.

20 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: On the revised
21 congressional redistricting plan. Is that correct?

22 SAMEEHA RISVI: Yes, sir.

23 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Please give us
24 your testimony.

25

1 SAMEEHA RISVI: Chairs and members, my
2 name is Sameeha Rizvi, and I'm the Texas Policy and
3 Advocacy Coordinator for the Council on American
4 Islamic Relations Action. I'm testifying on behalf
5 of Care Action and as a Texan deeply concerned by the
6 direction this body continues to take.

7 I may be one of the few South Asian
8 Muslims testifying today, but I've only felt more
9 connected and seen because of those who've come
10 before me and spoken in front of you. Our diversity
11 is our strength, especially when we come together to
12 unite our power.

13 This past legislative session caused
14 real harm. Muslim and Palestinian voices, along with
15 so many others, were dismissed, ignored, and
16 silenced. Muslim voter participation in Texas is
17 already low, and actions like these only deepen that
18 disenfranchisement. The Trump administration's
19 decision to block the Middle Eastern and North
20 African, also known as MENA category, in the 2020
21 census led to an undercount of these communities.
22 Although the Biden administration approved the
23 category, it will not be implemented until the 2030
24 census. That means the data you're using to redraw
25 maps is flawed, and the Trump administration's

1 proposed changes will only worsen representation for
2 Muslim and MENA Texans, especially in Houston.

3 I've submitted maps showing mosque
4 locations in Congressional Districts 9 and 7. In
5 District 9, where our communities are concentrated,
6 representation reflects that reality. But in
7 District 7, my own district, my community, while
8 strong, is politically invisible. And this is more
9 -- this is about more than just maps. As
10 Palestinians are starved before our eyes and public
11 support shifts towards justice, Congress ignores its
12 constituents.

13 Gerrymandering is part of a broader
14 pattern of hoarding power at the expense of black,
15 brown, Asian, many of whom are Muslim here and
16 abroad. Mid-decade redistricting is unjust and
17 unnecessary. Rather than caving to Donald Trump's
18 demands, I urge you to put Texas lives over party
19 lines. If you continue down this road, you risk
20 forfeiting both public trust and your seat.
21 Ultimately, fair representation is judged at the
22 ballot box. I hope you choose to earn it. Thank
23 you.

24 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Thank you for your
25 testimony.

1 Panel, stay right where you are for a
2 second.

3 Chair calls Nabila Mansoor.

4 SAMEEHA RISVI: She's not here.

5 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Yes. I show her
6 registered to testify as Nabila Mansoor on behalf of
7 Asians, Texans for Justice, on the revised
8 congressional redistricting plan but not testifying.

9 Members, any questions for the members
10 of this panel? Chair hears none.

11 Thank you for your testimony. This
12 panel is excused.

13 Chair calls Graciela Saenz, Al
14 Castillo, Reuben Salazar, Serena Arzu to come up to
15 the front here.

16 Our next panel is going to be
17 Stephanie Wilkins, Jo Ann Foster, Chrishian Thomas,
18 and Nicole Orellana.

19 Real quick. Chair is going to call
20 two that he's been advised they're not here.

21 Is Jo Ann Foster here? Jo Ann Foster?
22 Chair will show Jo Ann Foster registered to testify
23 on behalf of herself on the revised congressional
24 redistricting plan but not testifying.

25

1 Chair calls Stephanie Wilkins. Is
2 Stephanie Wilkins here? Chair shows Stephanie
3 Wilkins registered to testify on behalf of the Pure
4 Justice Action Fund and herself on the revised
5 congressional redistricting plan but not testifying.

6 Okay. Let's go to our panel here.
7 Ma'am, you're all alone. What's your -- what's your
8 name?

9 SERENA ARZU: Serena Arzu.

10 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Hey, got you right
11 up here. I show you registered to testify as Serena
12 Arzu on behalf of yourself on the revised
13 congressional redistricting plan. Is that correct?

14 SERENA ARZU: That is correct.

15 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Please give us
16 your testimony.

17 SERENA ARZU: Beautiful. So, hello.
18 I am here today to testify against the racist order
19 of redistricting our districts that mainly contain
20 black and brown folks. This is blatant racism and is
21 not legal. Let's start there. I am appalled at what
22 is happening right now. I am appalled that
23 Republicans in the Texas legislature lack a backbone.
24 Trump can tell you all to jump, and you'll just say,
25 how high.

1 These policies are so unpopular that
2 you are actively trying to help turn our next
3 congressional election into a sham. I am urging you
4 to stand up for all Texans. Texans in these
5 districts that are targeted did not ask for this. No
6 one, not one constituent, asked for this. There
7 isn't even a map to look at, which I personally think
8 is ridiculous. That's bananas, okay. You all need
9 to start standing up for Texans. And when I say
10 that, I mean everyone, not just your base.

11 And one could argue that some folks
12 don't support what's happening right now with Trump,
13 and they voted for you all, right. They voted for
14 Texas Republicans, but that doesn't necessarily mean
15 that they agree with everything that Trump is doing
16 or with everything that Greg Abbott is doing. They
17 expect for you all to represent the people, okay, not
18 Trump.

19 Hispanics are the majority in this
20 state, and you all are actively trying to silence
21 their votes. Again, if these policies are so
22 popular, leave these districts alone, right. And
23 allow for these folks to vote how they vote. Stop
24 trying to silence the black and brown community.
25 Thank you.

1 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Thank you for your
2 testimony.

3 Members, any questions for this
4 witness? Chair hears none.

5 The witness is excused.

6 Chair calls Ruben Salazar. Ruben
7 Salazar. Chair shows Ruben Salazar registered to
8 testify on behalf of himself on the revised
9 congressional redistricting plan but not testifying.

10 Chair calls Al Castillo. Al Castillo.
11 Chair shows Al Castillo registered to testify on
12 behalf of himself on the revised congressional
13 redistricting plan but not testifying.

14 Chair calls Graciela Saenz. Graciela
15 Saenz. Chair shows her registered to testify on
16 behalf of herself on the revised congressional
17 redistricting plan but not testifying.

18 Chair is going to call up our next
19 panel - Nicole Orillana, Chrishian Thomas, Slate
20 Lawson, and Tina Brady. Please come up to the front.

21 The next panel after that is going to
22 be Zoe Cadore. We're going to assume Meochea Money.
23 Could be Meochea Money. Anybody with the last name
24 of Money, just be ready. Amanda Edwards and Jennifer
25 Finch, please be ready on the next panel.

1 Okay. All right. What's your name
2 down here on the end?

3 CHRISHIAN THOMAS: Oh, me?

4 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Yes.

5 CHRISHIAN THOMAS: Chrishian A.
6 Thomas.

7 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Okay. I show you
8 registered to testify as Christiana.

9 CHRISHIAN THOMAS: Chrishian. A
10 Thomas. I think I misspelled it. Yeah.

11 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Okay. Do I have
12 permission to correct your registration to be, is it
13 C-h-r-i-s-h-i-a-n?

14 CHRISHIAN THOMAS: Yes.

15 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Okay. And then
16 delete the extra n. Pretend we never saw that. And
17 then an A for your middle name, and then Thomas.

18 CHRISHIAN THOMAS: Yes.

19 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Okay. We've
20 adjusted your form. I show you registered to testify
21 on behalf of yourself on the revised congressional
22 districting plan. Is that correct?

23 CHRISHIAN THOMAS: Yes.

24 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Please give us
25 your testimony.

1 CHRISHIAN THOMAS: I'm a young
2 advocate in Congress District 7. I'm a sophomore in
3 high school and shouldn't be spending my Saturday
4 pleading to have representation in my own district.
5 I'm represented by the Congresswoman Lizzie Fletcher.
6 The most disturbing thing about this proposed
7 districting isn't about the drawing of the lines or
8 the vague language of past gerrymandering, but I'm
9 personally deeply disturbed with the circumvention of
10 democratic practices and the erosion of every single
11 rule made to keep America in check.

12 Democratic values shouldn't be upheld,
13 but in the status quo. They're consistently being
14 threatened by the idiots at the GOP and current
15 president and the Republicans that continue to bow to
16 him. This is a genuine concern. I ask the committee
17 and the people today to not make people, students,
18 and young people inherit this bad political agenda,
19 but this culture is encouraging radical action from
20 both sides.

21 The redistricting battle has already
22 proved to me that no side is willing to stay by the
23 Constitution in order to meet their goals. But the
24 fact of the matter is that Republicans are the main
25 people pushing it. If you ignore what I have to say,

1 like the majority of partisans in Texas, stop handing
2 Texas to Greg Abbott and Donald Trump on a silver
3 platter.

4 When we prioritize partisans to color
5 lines where they see fit, when we allow Republicans
6 to abuse their power simply -- simply because they
7 want to have more seats, it distorts representation.
8 It erodes the core values that this country was built
9 on, and it sparks a vicious cycle when people of your
10 age come to us, young people for hope. You
11 perpetuate that by making equitable, ingrained
12 policies that makes your representation happens all
13 across the vote -- all across the board, and voting.
14 Voters should be chosen -- voters should choose and
15 not be chosen.

16 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Thank you for your
17 testimony.

18 What's your name, ma'am?

19 NICOLE ORELLANA: Nicole Orellana.

20 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Okay. Chair calls
21 Nicole Orellana. Registered to testify on behalf of
22 yourself on the revised congressional redistricting
23 plan. Is that correct?

24 NICOLE ORELLANA: Yes.
25

1 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Please give us
2 your testimony.

3 NICOLE ORELLANA: Good afternoon,
4 everyone. My name is Nicole Orellana. I'm a rising
5 junior at Cypress Creek High School. And just about
6 a month ago, I had never even heard of
7 gerrymandering. But once I learned it, I couldn't
8 unsee it. Redistricting isn't just about the lines
9 on a map; it's about power. It decides who gets a
10 voice and who gets ignored. Young people are paying
11 attention. And what we see is that these maps aren't
12 being drawn for fairness. They're being drawn for
13 control.

14 In a recent interview, when Donald
15 Trump was asked about redrawing the Texas
16 congressional map, he said, no, just a simple
17 redrawing. We'll pick up five seats. But it's not
18 simple. Not simple for the communities being split.
19 Not simple for our voters being silenced, and not
20 simple for our black and brown Texans whose districts
21 are being carved up so their voices matter less.

22 When you break apart majority of black
23 districts, you're not just shifting boundaries.
24 You're gutting out our representation. And that's
25 why this moment matters, because an American, it's

1 just not about where you're born. It's about
2 believing in the idea that everyone deserves a voice.
3 Former President Obama once said, "What makes someone
4 an American is not just blood or birth, but
5 allegiance to our founding principles and the faith
6 in the ideas that anyone from anywhere can write the
7 next great chapter of our story."

8 I believe the next great chapter of
9 our story belongs to us, the youth. No matter where
10 you come from, find your voice and speak up because
11 these maps shape everything - our school, our
12 healthcare, our safety, and our votes. To those in
13 power, don't be the generation that steals from the
14 next. Keep our communities whole, draw maps that
15 tell our story and not ones where we're erased, but
16 where we're finally seen and heard and belong. Thank
17 you.

18 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Thank you for your
19 testimony.

20 Ma'am, are you -- are you Tina Brady?

21 (No audible response)

22 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Okay. Chair shows
23 you registered to testify as Tina Brady on behalf of
24 yourself on the revised congressional (audio cuts
25 out) testimony.

1 TINA BRADY: Hello. Good afternoon,
2 redistricting committee members. My name is Tina
3 Brady. I'm a Houstonian and live in Congressional
4 District 29. I'm opposed to the redistricting
5 Governor Abbott has added to the special session
6 agenda. Governor Abbott approved the current
7 congressional district map less than four years ago,
8 October 2021.

9 He's calling for redistricting now
10 because President Trump ordered him to find five more
11 Republican seats. I'm asking you not to spend your
12 time and our money redistricting in 2025 when we'll
13 be required to do it again after the 2030 census.
14 I'm asking you that you not rush redistricting on us
15 with no advance notice, no explanation of the
16 reasoning, and no review of proposed district maps.
17 At the least, take a moment to think about the people
18 you represent.

19 I'm also asking that you help us to
20 build a system that hears us and where our votes
21 matter. There are better methods than to redefine
22 districts than gerrymandering. Your constituents are
23 being cheated by a system in which our votes don't
24 count. We feel it, and you all know it. I thank you
25 for your attention today.

1 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Thank you for your
2 testimony.

3 Hold one sec. Panel, stay where you
4 are. Is Slate Lawson here? Chair calls Slate
5 Lawson. Oh, please come on up.

6 SLATE LAWSON: I couldn't tell if you
7 called me (indiscernible).

8 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Oh, you're --
9 you're just fine. That's why we're going to do it
10 again. I show you registered to testify as Slate
11 Lawson on behalf of yourself on the revised
12 congressional redistricting plan. Is that correct?

13 SLATE LAWSON: Yes, sir. That is
14 correct.

15 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Please give us
16 your testimony.

17 SLATE LAWSON: My name is Slate
18 Lawson. I'm a student here at the University of
19 Houston. I am a resident of Texas' 7th Congressional
20 District. I'm claiming my right as a citizen of this
21 country and state to express my dissent against this
22 highly irregular redistricting agenda. I do
23 apologize. I soiled my shirt as soon as I got here.
24 Didn't expect to be up here in a sports bra.

25

1 While Kerr County is still recovering
2 from the horrific loss of life due to the Guadalupe
3 River flood, and the federal agency, ICE, invading
4 our state, disappearing people in our communities as
5 we speak. You are here today with the goal of
6 continuing to disenfranchise Texans that you believe
7 will vote against the Republican Party. One
8 convicted -- or excuse me -- one worse, you attempt
9 to do it all on the behest of a convicted felon.

10 Now, I know a certain flag we hold
11 very dear to this state, and that flag says don't
12 tread on me. This legislative body and our governor
13 seem to have forgotten this core value of Texas
14 culture. Over 100 people have died, dozens of
15 children have died. Mothers, fathers, grandparents,
16 and children are being snatched off the street, given
17 zero due process, and yet here you all are on a
18 mission to redivide a voter district map. Also, the
19 map you seek to redraw is still an active state of
20 judicial contention.

21 An opinion on that map's
22 constitutionality has still not yet been provided,
23 and we know damn well that the changes saw are not to
24 make it more fair to anyone besides the GOP.

25

1 You still have the opportunity to not
2 allow that puny man in the White House to tread on
3 our state. Texans deserve better representation than
4 that facilitated by our current legislative body. Do
5 not try to play coy. We, the people of this assembly
6 are not foolish. We were raised and educated while
7 critical thinking was still something our government
8 wanted us to be taught.

9 Our state district's map already looks
10 like an Etch A Sketch on psychedelics, and you are so
11 eager to get on your knees for Trump that you seek to
12 twist it even further.

13 I do not approve of the racially based
14 gerrymandering the state has historically engaged in,
15 and I do not believe this gerrymandering venture to
16 be proposed today, to be any different. This mid-
17 decade redistricting is highly partisan, highly
18 rushed, and an act of hollow character. Continuing
19 with this redistricting indicates a severe lack of
20 moral character, and anyone who votes in favor of it,
21 it is sinful.

22 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Please complete
23 your testimony.

24 SLATE LAWSON: To top everything off,
25 just two days ago, you chose to arrest Texas Congress

1 -- congressional candidate, Isaiah Martin, within the
2 Capitol's chambers, reminding you that history will
3 not remember you kindly, if at all, for what you're
4 attempting to do.

5 We, the people, will not stand for
6 this grotesque impropriety. We do not -- we demand
7 you not allow this new map division to move forward
8 and get back to the immediate matter at hand, taking
9 care of everyone in Texas equally.

10 To close my testimony, I'd like to
11 direct a statement to the Republican on -- the
12 Republicans on this panel. If you're able to exhibit
13 any genuine humanity, you would not need to
14 gerrymander your way into office. Thank you all for
15 your time.

16 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Thank you for your
17 testimony.

18 VICE CHAIR ROSENTHAL: Mr. Chairman.

19 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Mr. Vice Chair for
20 what purpose?

21 VICE CHAIR ROSENTHAL: I have
22 questions for this panel.

23 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: You're so
24 recognized.

25

1 VICE CHAIR ROSENTHAL: So first, thank
2 you all for coming. We have a high school sophomore
3 and a rising junior. Is that correct?

4 SLATE LAWSON: Yes.

5 VICE CHAIR ROSENTHAL: You literally
6 should be able to just do something else with this
7 day, this Saturday afternoon, but you chose to use
8 your time and bring your voice here to this room and
9 bring some of the most powerful testimony we've heard
10 today. So I just want to say, you all give me hope.
11 Thank you for sticking it out and -- and bringing,
12 really, great testimony today.

13 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Members, any other
14 questions for this panel? Chair hears none.

15 Thank you for your testimony. The
16 panel is excused.

17 Chair calls up Jennifer Finch, Amanda
18 Edwards, Meochea Money, and I apologize if I
19 mispronounce that, and Zoe Cador.

20 Our next panel after that -- so these
21 four, please be ready - Obes Nwabara, Meg Barnes,
22 Joel Abramowitz, and Carly Durham.

23 Ms. Cador on this end? Nope. Okay.

24 UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Ms. Edwards.

25 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Ms. Edwards.

1 AMANDA EDWARDS: Yes.

2 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: I show you
3 registered to testify as Amanda Edwards on behalf of
4 yourself on the revised congressional redistricting
5 plan. Is that correct?

6 AMANDA EDWARDS: That is correct.

7 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Please give us
8 your testimony.

9 AMANDA EDWARDS: Good afternoon, and
10 thank you all for having this opportunity for us to
11 speak. My name is Amanda Edwards. I have served as
12 an at-large Houston City council member and also, am
13 running to serve as the next congresswoman for the
14 18th Congressional District. As I had an opportunity
15 to do, I spoke in Austin this past week and offered
16 testimony regarding the tragedy that has taken place
17 within the 18th.

18 You see, we've lost Congressman
19 Sylvester Turner and Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Lee
20 within less than one year of each other. But what we
21 also know is that the 18th Congressional District is
22 a district that has stood on the shoulders of giants
23 like Barbara Jordan, like Mickey Leland, Craig
24 Washington, Sheila Jackson Lee, and Sylvester Turner,
25 all of whom who fought for people and for justice.

1 We have this moment in time where our
2 seat, the 18th Congressional seat that is now
3 representing the area in which we are now having this
4 meeting, is now vacant. And what we are choosing to
5 do with this moment is to kick it while it's down.
6 And I implore you not to be an example of what not to
7 do with power.

8 There's an adage that goes like this,
9 If you're not at the table, you're what's on the
10 menu. And right now, with this hearing, with this
11 special session to seek redistricting, we are placing
12 the 800,000 people of the 18th Congressional district
13 on the menu. And to do so in a moment where we have
14 no voting representation, to do so in a moment when
15 we have not had voting representation. And it will
16 be a year and a half before that special election
17 runoff is resolved. That's unconscionable. That's
18 unacceptable.

19 John F. Kennedy has a book, and it was
20 about profiles and moral courage. I encourage each
21 and every single one of you, when you're thinking
22 about this special session and what to do with the
23 redistricting, let us not lead by fear. Let's not
24 lead by political convenience and expediency.
25 Instead, let us lead with courage to do the right

1 thing, no matter what the consequences. That is my
2 charge to you all today. Please stop the
3 redistricting of the 18th Congressional District.

4 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Thank you for your
5 testimony.

6 Ma'am, what's your name?

7 ZOE CADOR: Cador. Zoe Cador.

8 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Okay. I show you
9 registered to testify as Zoe Cador --

10 ZOE CADOR: Yes.

11 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: -- on behalf of
12 yourself on the revised congressional redistricting
13 plan. Is that correct?

14 ZOE CADOR: Yes, sir.

15 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Thank you for
16 coming. Please give us your testimony.

17 ZOE CADOR: Good afternoon,
18 Mr. Chairman and members of the committee. My name
19 is Zoe Cador. I am the daughter of an immigrant.
20 I'm also a fifth-generation Texan, a resident of
21 Third Ward, an attorney from the University of
22 Houston, a former Ms. Houston, and I am also a
23 congressional candidate in District 18.

24 I believe in the promise of democracy
25 when it is allowed to function fairly. Today, I

1 speak not just for myself, but for the thousands of
2 Texans who show up, speak up, and still wonder why
3 their communities are pushed to the margins when maps
4 are redrawn. Make no mistake, America and Texans see
5 this process for what it is - a desperate, partisan
6 attempt to hold onto power.

7 The Republican Party is increasingly
8 unpopular, and this panel exemplifies that. If your
9 party focused more on improving life for working-
10 class people, instead of firing government workers,
11 eliminating FEMA, terrorizing immigrant communities,
12 detaining innocent citizens, increasing the deficit
13 by trillions, attacking reproductive freedom, and
14 stripping healthcare from the poor, you wouldn't need
15 to rely on lies to justify racist gerrymandering to
16 hold power in 2026.

17 Let me be clear, we do not need this
18 redistricting, but if this committee insists on
19 moving forward, you have a responsibility to do no
20 harm. Redistricting should be about ensuring that
21 every Texan, regardless of race, zip code, or party,
22 has access to equal power. But too often it becomes
23 a tool to preserve power instead of sharing it, and
24 the people who pay the price are communities like
25 mine, black, brown immigrant, working-class Texans,

1 who are more than just voting blocks. We are the
2 heart and the soul of this state.

3 So I urge you to keep communities of
4 color intact, to keep our district intact, and not
5 divide us just to dilute our power. That means that
6 maps that reflect Texas should reflect them as it is,
7 not as it once was or as some wish it to be. Thank
8 you.

9 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Thank you for your
10 testimony.

11 Panel, stay right there.

12 Chair calls Jennifer Finch. Jennifer
13 Finch. I show her registered to testify on behalf of
14 herself on the revised congressional redistricting
15 plan but not testifying.

16 Chair calls, again, it looks like an M
17 to me, Meochea Money. Meochea Money. I show her
18 registered to testify on behalf of herself on the
19 revised congressional redistricting plan but not
20 testifying.

21 Members, any questions for the members
22 of this panel?

23 Dean Thompson.

24 DEAN THOMPSON: Mr. Chairman, I just
25 want to make a statement.

1 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Chair recognizes
2 Dean Thompson for a brief statement.

3 DEAN THOMPSON: Nobody -- none of us
4 have seen the -- seen what the map look like. We're
5 still trying to find out what it is that we're
6 supposed to be holding a hearing on. So I don't
7 (indiscernible).

8 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Thank you, Dean.

9 Members, any other questions for the
10 members of this panel? Hearing none.

11 Thank you for your testimony. The
12 panel is excused.

13 AMANDA EDWARDS: Thank you.

14 ZOE CADOR: Thank you.

15 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Chair is going to
16 call up Carly Durham, Joel Abramowitz, Meg Barnes,
17 and Obes Nwabara.

18 The next panel is going to be Lillian
19 Jeanette Sexton, Andrew C. Burks Jr, Timothy White,
20 and Isaiah Martin. Please be ready, those last four.

21 Okay. Sir, on the end, what's your
22 name?

23 JOEL ABRAMOWITZ: My name is Dr. Joel
24 Abramowitz.

25

1 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Okay. I show you
2 registered to testify as Dr. Joel -- and how do you
3 pronounce your last name?

4 JOEL ABRAMOWITZ: Abramowitz.

5 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Abramowitz, on
6 behalf of yourself, on the revised congressional
7 redistricting plan. Is that correct?

8 JOEL ABRAMOWITZ: That's correct, sir.

9 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Please give us
10 your testimony.

11 JOEL ABRAMOWITZ: Ladies and
12 gentlemen, thank you for allowing this testimony. My
13 name is Dr. Joel Abramowitz. My wife and I live in
14 the Museum District of Houston, Lizzie Fletcher's
15 District number 7.

16 As a doctor, I'm appalled. Our rich
17 state already has the worst healthcare access and
18 affordability in the nation, along with some of the
19 worst maternal and infant mortality rates.

20 The big ugly bill will now make
21 healthcare worse for Texans, especially for rural
22 Texans. Cowardly and cynically, your colleagues in
23 Washington had the healthcare changes start after the
24 midterms. Really? Do they think that Americans are
25 stupid? President Trump orders Texas Republicans to

1 redistrict in between census, and you immediately
2 acquiesce.

3 He is clearly afraid, as many people
4 have said here, that the Republican Congress will no
5 longer have a majority, so he wants to stack the
6 deck. Republican congressmen didn't care about
7 Texans' health then. Why would electing more of them
8 help Texans now? You ask us to make comments about
9 redistricting without even seeing the proposed maps.

10 We all suspect that these changes, due
11 to blatant gerrymandering, will further
12 disenfranchise many of our citizens whose healthcare
13 will already be affected by the big ugly bill.
14 What's the rush? Why can't we see the maps before
15 you ask for public comments?

16 We know that you all went into
17 politics because you wanted to serve Texans. Please
18 do the right thing and serve them all. Serve Texans
19 and not Trump. Thank you.

20 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Thank you for your
21 testimony.

22 Carly Durham?

23 CARLY DURHAM: Yes. I'm Carly Durham.

24 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Okay. I show you
25 registered to testify as Carly Durham on behalf of

1 yourself on the revised congressional redistricting
2 plan. Is that correct?

3 CARLY DURHAM: Correct.

4 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Please give us
5 your testimony.

6 CARLY DURHAM: Hi. I'm Carly. Thank
7 you all for your time. I see you all are fading. So
8 I'm going to try to be quick. I live in District 22.
9 I'm a nurse practitioner. I'm a disability advocate,
10 and most importantly, a proud mom of three. My
11 husband and I are raising our multiracial family in a
12 state we were born and raised in and love, but
13 lately, guys, it doesn't seem like it loves us back.

14 I have a 12-year-old with Down
15 syndrome, and he's on the Medicaid waiver wait list
16 since 2016. And you all are going to think this is
17 made up, but he's number 56,034. It does not line up
18 for him to get services in time when he's 18.

19 I also have an 11-year-old daughter
20 with Down syndrome, autism, and a stroke survivor
21 that we adopted through Texas DFPS. And then our
22 youngest is seven, bright, helpful, but already knows
23 how hard our family has to fight in this state for
24 access, education, and dignity.

25

1 You've heard so much about the legal
2 arguments, the census data, and the contradictory DOJ
3 letter, and I'm not an expert in those areas. I'm an
4 expert in my story, and my story is about access.
5 And today I saw in real time disability access fail
6 and what it's like for communities to not be
7 represented.

8 We had a deaf and hard-of-hearing
9 constituent here today to participate, who did not
10 have ASL interpretation. Two volunteers stayed
11 behind after the rally to help her participate in
12 this event. That should, according to ADA, which
13 today is also the 35th anniversary of, have that
14 ability to participate in without having to provide
15 her own interpreters.

16 So this is an example of how, in real
17 time communities without representation get impacted.
18 Their access, their needs, and their voices, that's
19 important, guys. If they're not at the table, they
20 don't get seen, and they don't get served.

21 So I'm asking you to remember that
22 when you're drawing these lines, that having your
23 stories heard is not just about your story, it's
24 about access. And please remember families like mine
25 as you make these decisions.

1 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: The Chair will
2 note that we did not receive a request for that. The
3 notice, I think, had information to be able to
4 request those services. We're happy to provide
5 those. I'm just not aware of that request being
6 made. But let's talk offline.

7 And so, Chair -- your name is Obes
8 Nwabara; is that correct?

9 OBES NWABARA: It's Obes Nwabara.

10 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Obes Nwabara.

11 OBES NWABARA: Yes.

12 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: I show you
13 registered to testify on behalf of yourself on the
14 revised congressional redistricting plan? Is that
15 correct?

16 OBES NWABARA: Yes, that's correct.

17 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Please give us
18 your testimony.

19 OBES NWABARA: Hello. My name is Obes
20 Nwabara. I'm running to be your next Houston City
21 Council member in At-Large Position 4. And I live
22 right here in Congressional District 18.

23 Normally, I'd say good afternoon, but
24 it isn't a good afternoon when the state seeks to
25 remove my agency as a voter. It's not a good

1 afternoon when the state governor walks in lockstep
2 with our so-called president to steal congressional
3 seats. And it's definitely not a good afternoon when
4 the good people of CD 18 have gone months without
5 congressional representation. This is wrong.

6 It was bad enough when the governor
7 delayed the special election in this district to
8 maintain a slim Republican majority in the House of
9 Representatives. Now you're talking about making so
10 our voices can never be heard again. And for what?
11 to satisfy the giant ego of a tiny little man. It's
12 downright un-Texan.

13 But there's good news. You can say
14 no. You can tell the president that Texans will
15 control our own destiny and our own representation.
16 We're at a crossroads. We can fall deeper into chaos
17 and madness. We can push back, turn back, and
18 reclaim the ideals that we claim to hold so near and
19 dear. I implore you, each and every one of you, to
20 choose wisely. Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Thank you for your
22 testimony.

23 Is Meg Barnes here? Meg Barnes?
24 Chair will show Meg Barnes registered to testify on
25

1 behalf of herself on the revised congressional
2 redistricting plan but not testifying.

3 Members, any questions for the members
4 of this panel? Chair hears none.

5 Thank you for your testimony. This
6 panel is excused.

7 Chair calls Isaiah Martin, Timothy
8 White, Andrew Burks, and Lillian Janette Sexton.
9 Please go ahead and come up to the front.

10 Our next panel after that, if these
11 four will be ready - going to be Karla West, Chelsea
12 Erickson, Charlene Shafer, and Callton Halt.

13 And then, actually, if Kevin Joachin
14 can also -- or Joachin can also be ready for the next
15 panel, I'd appreciate it.

16 Okay. Chair calls -- want to go left?
17 What's your name, ma'am?

18 LILLIAN SEXTON: Lillian Janette
19 Sexton.

20 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Okay. Chair calls
21 Lillian Janette Sexton. I show you registered to
22 testify on behalf of yourself on the revised
23 congressional redistricting plan. Is that correct?

24 LILLIAN SEXTON: Correct.
25

1 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Please give us
2 your testimony.

3 LILLIAN SEXTON: Good afternoon.
4 Thank you for the opportunity to testify. This mid-
5 decade redistricting scheme was dreamed up in
6 Washington, DC. The president is terrified that the
7 One Big Beautiful Bill Act is so unpopular with
8 Americans. Irrespective of political affiliation,
9 the Democrats stand a good chance of regaining
10 control of the U.S. House in the midterm elections.

11 I am on Social Security and Medicare,
12 and the bill triggered the statutory Pay as You Go
13 Act of 2010, which is designed to ensure that new
14 spending or tax cut legislation does not increase the
15 federal deficit. It requires that any legislation
16 increasing mandatory spending or reducing revenues
17 must be offset by spending cuts or revenue increases
18 elsewhere. The bill will cut Medicare provider
19 payments, which could lead to reduced access to care
20 for us beneficiaries. Medicare will be cut by 535
21 billion, which will weaken the program and cause an
22 earlier collapse of the safety net.

23 I repeatedly called my U.S.
24 representative, a Republican, but he ignored my pleas
25 to vote no on the bill. It is important to allow

1 voters to choose representatives who have their
2 values rather than to allow politicians to choose
3 their voters.

4 My concerns are that this process is
5 too rushed. The 2021 maps are still being litigated.
6 There is limited opportunity for public
7 participation. The process disadvantages communities
8 of color. If redistricting passes, we will need five
9 days to review the new maps, and all comments and
10 public records must be retained. Thank you very
11 much.

12 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Thank you for your
13 testimony.

14 Chair calls Isaiah Martin. I show you
15 registered to testify as Isaiah Martin on behalf of
16 yourself on the revised congressional districting
17 plan. Is that correct?

18 ISAIAH MARTIN: That is correct.

19 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Please give us
20 your testimony.

21 ISAIAH MARTIN: I'm Isaiah Martin, and
22 as I was saying a couple of hours ago, you
23 Republicans tried so hard to silence me. You had me
24 thrown in jail, and I wanted to come here to look
25 every single one of you in the eye and let you know

1 personally that you failed. You tried and you
2 failed. Just like you will try and fail when it
3 comes to this gerrymandering scheme that you're about
4 to pull off.

5 It's amazing to me how, more than 36
6 to 40 hours later, you're still here singing the same
7 song, pretending like you don't know why you're here.
8 You're here because Donald Trump told you to be here.
9 You are desperate for his endorsement, which is why
10 you are still sitting here singing the same song that
11 you were a couple of hours ago.

12 But as a result of what you have done,
13 millions more are now talking about this sham that
14 you guys are perpetuating. More states have come
15 forward saying that they are going to gerrymander
16 Republicans out of their seats. That is the cost of
17 what you have done.

18 So I look forward to more people
19 joining in on that momentum. I look forward to more
20 states making sure that your failed, see now,
21 dilapidated, out of shape, nobody listens to,
22 president, fails again when Democrats take back the
23 House very soon. And I look forward to every single
24 one of you looking at this state rising up
25 unapologetically against your failed policies that

1 have destroyed this economy, that have destroyed this
2 state, because the people will rise up whether you
3 like it or not.

4 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Thank you for your
5 testimony.

6 Chair will -- Chair calls -- the panel
7 will stay right there. Chair calls Timothy White.
8 Is Timothy White here? Chair shows Timothy White
9 registered to testify on behalf of himself on the
10 revised congressional redistricting plan but not
11 testifying.

12 Chair notes -- this is a special one.

13 Chair notes under the House Policies
14 and Procedures manual, an employee of a member of the
15 House may not register to testify or testify before a
16 committee except by leave of the committee. Chair is
17 a strong believer in the First Amendment. I believe
18 everybody ought to be able to testify. It's the
19 Chair's intention at this time to move to permit
20 Timothy White to be able to register to testify. Is
21 there objection? Chair hears none.

22 Timothy White is recognized to
23 testify, but did not testify today. Thank you very
24 much.

25

1 All right. Is Andrew Burks here?
2 Andrew Burks. Chair shows Andrew Burks registered to
3 testify on behalf of himself on the revised
4 redistricting plan but not testifying.

5 Members, any questions for the members
6 of this panel?

7 Just so the record reflect that when
8 we -- I did that without objection on, works for
9 State Representative Charlene Ward Johnson, according
10 to the form. I don't know that for sure, but that's
11 the one I gave.

12 All right. Any questions? Chair
13 hears none.

14 Thank you for your testimony. The
15 panel is excused.

16 Chair calls --

17 REPRESENTATIVE WU: Mr. Chair.

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

20 REPRESENTATIVE WU: May I be
21 recognized for a statement while the next group is
22 coming up?

23 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Chair recognizes
24 Mr. Wu for a brief statement. Before you start, let
25 me read these names.

1 If Kevin Joachin can come up, Callton
2 Halt, Charlene Shafer, Karla West, and Chelsea
3 Erickson. Please go ahead and make your way up to
4 the front.

5 Chair recognizes Mr. Wu for a brief
6 statement while they come up.

7 REPRESENTATIVE WU: Thank you,
8 Mr. Chair.

9 And for the audience out there, we
10 strongly believe in your right to come testify and
11 have your peace and make your statements about your
12 communities. I know that our time is almost up. We
13 only have maybe like 10 minutes left. But to know
14 that we will be having a people's hearing, a people's
15 meeting, after this. We will continue to hear your
16 voices and record it and to save it, and to bring it
17 to others so they can watch it as well.

18 We will be walking over to Wheeler
19 Baptist Avenue Church after this. If you want to
20 drive, feel free to drive, but we'll be heading over
21 there, and you will have your two minutes to say and
22 explain what's happening in your community. Thank
23 you.

24 VICE CHAIR ROSENTHAL: Mr. Chairman.
25

1 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Mr. Rosenthal, for
2 what purpose?

3 VICE CHAIR ROSENTHAL: May I follow
4 that with a brief statement?

5 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Chair recognizes
6 Mr. Rosenthal for a brief statement. Chair will also
7 add two minutes on the timer because I forgot to
8 pause. So we're going to add two minutes to that.

9 Mr. Rosenthal.

10 REPRESENTATIVE WU: It's going to be
11 at the gym of the church. It's going to be at the
12 gym of the church.

13 VICE CHAIR ROSENTHAL: At the gym of
14 the Wheeler -- at Wheeler Avenue Baptist Church. At
15 the gym is where we're going to be.

16 Here's what I want to say right quick.
17 You all, thank you for being here. Well over 700
18 people signed up to testify in this place today. So
19 many people came to testify that we literally ran out
20 of forms, and they had to print more. So while
21 Houston was ready for this committee, the committee
22 was not ready for Houston.

23 Mr. Chairman, I would like to ask if
24 we can get an official count for the number of people
25

1 that's registered and registered to testify, and all
2 that.

3 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Absolutely. That
4 will be in the minutes that will be posted. I don't
5 have it in front of me. We've got the stacks here
6 that we'll have to go through, but yes, absolutely.
7 They'll be in the minutes, Mr. Vice Chair.

8 VICE CHAIR ROSENTHAL: Very good. So
9 if we just did the math and everybody had two minutes
10 and we were perfectly efficient and there was no
11 breaks, you would have had 24 hours of testimony.
12 And that's why we are prepared. I'll stay all night.
13 Anybody that comes over there to speak, I will stay
14 to listen to you. We'll record it, and we'll show it
15 to others. Thank you again.

16 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Thank you, Vice
17 Chair.

18 Okay. Chair is going to restart the
19 timer. Go back to public testimony.

20 Ma'am, what's your name on the end?

21 KARLA WEST: Karla West.

22 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Okay. Did I see
23 you in the hallway earlier?

24 KARLA WEST: Yes, you did.
25

1 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Oh, good. I'm
2 glad to have you. I show you registered to testify
3 as Karla West on behalf of yourself on the revised
4 congressional redistricting plan. Is that correct?

5 KARLA WEST: That is correct.

6 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Please give us
7 your testimony.

8 UNIDENTIFIED MALE: And you can get
9 closer to the mic?

10 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Yes, it -- it.
11 Yeah. I apologize. That one's a little finicky.
12 Just speak.

13 KARLA WEST: Is that better?

14 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: That's perfect.
15 Thank you, ma'am.

16 KARLA WEST: Okay.

17 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Go for your
18 testimony.

19 KARLA WEST: Distinguished ladies and
20 gentlemen of the committee. First, thank you for
21 your public service. As stated earlier, I am
22 Minister Karla West, and I serve as Precinct Chair of
23 16, which is -- I am proud to say, which is in
24 Congressional District 18. I come today with good
25 vibes. I do not believe that there's anything that I

1 could say that you haven't already heard, other than
2 the fact that I think that out of all this testimony,
3 there may be something that I might say that you have
4 not heard.

5 I know that a mandate has been issued
6 that many people deem not only unfair but
7 unnecessary. The President does not seem to care
8 about wasting taxpayer money to promote his own
9 agenda. What I will say is this: I urge you to
10 remember the oath that you took to serve in
11 government office, to serve in a government of the
12 people, by the people, and for the people.
13 Therefore, I ask you to remember us, the people.

14 Remember that in a democracy, us, the
15 people, expect fair representation, honest
16 representation, and just representation. You are
17 well capable of doing so. I believe that. So be
18 fair, be honest, and be just.

19 I do not agree with redistricting of
20 any congressional maps at this time, and certainly
21 not the ones that are in question. Doing so is not
22 fair. It is not honest, and it is not just. Stop
23 wasting our time and taxpayer money. Just because
24 the DOJ asks you to do something does not mean you
25 have to deliver. Just say no.

1 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Thank you for your
2 testimony.

3 And what's your name, sir?

4 KEVIN JOACHIN: Kevin Joachin.

5 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: I show you
6 registered to testify as Kevin Joachin?

7 KEVIN JOACHIN: Joa like H-w-a, and
8 then Chin like Cheeto.

9 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Exactly what he
10 said. So you registered to testify on behalf of the
11 Workers' Defense Action Fund. Are you registered to
12 testify on behalf of yourself as well?

13 KEVIN JOACHIN: Yes, sir.

14 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Okay. All right.
15 On behalf of yourself as well. On the revised
16 congressional redistricting plan. Is that correct?

17 KEVIN JOACHIN: Yes, sir.

18 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: All right. Please
19 give us your testimony.

20 KEVIN JOACHIN: Hello, my name is
21 Kevin Joachin from Workers Defense Action Fund, an
22 organization that organizes predominantly Latino
23 people. I would first like to mention that in
24 District 7, I have visited families whose doors was
25 knocked down by ICE and police collaboration without

1 a judicial warrant, without prior conviction, zip
2 tying some of the women in the family, and arrest and
3 deportation of their loved ones. That is what's
4 going on in my district, and we are wasting time here
5 today.

6 Just to add another part, I wouldn't
7 necessarily like to listen to appeals to ordinary
8 voters, reducing Latinos to taco trucks on every
9 corner. But what is happening on every corner are
10 that essential workers and day laborers are being
11 rounded up.

12 Working immigrants are being hunted by
13 police. I'm speaking on behalf of community members
14 who live in Congressional District 7 and 8, who just
15 went to go get their Uber, but I told them to come
16 back. So hopefully they make it for the rest of
17 this. And I'm testifying in response to the
18 legislature's attempt to redistrict our congressional
19 districts mid-census.

20 This move would take away
21 representation from communities of color. Our
22 residents, like those I'm speaking on behalf of
23 today, who are already subject to inequity, racism,
24 would see every area of their lives impacted, from
25 their finances to their health to their children's

1 education at a time when they are subjected to low
2 pay, skyrocketing costs for groceries, lights, and
3 attacks based on color of their skin. Our parents
4 are being hunted and deported. The last thing they
5 need to worry about their congressional
6 representatives taking away their voice.

7 Having public hearings hosted by both
8 the House and Senate Redistricting Committee without
9 visible maps only builds public distrust from the
10 government. If you're going to make drastic changes
11 with severe consequences for communities of color,
12 then you need to make the public input process valid.
13 One where you listen and take our feedback into
14 account. If you say you don't have the intention of
15 discriminating against our communities, then show it
16 in your actions. Do what's right. Let the current
17 court case play out, hold fair and transparent
18 hearings after the maps have been drawn and before
19 they pass through the committees --

20 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Please complete
21 your testimony.

22 KEVIN JOACHIN: -- and visit all
23 regions of Texas. Thanks.

24 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Thank you for your
25 testimony.

1 Chair -- if the panel will stay right
2 there, Chair calls Chelsea Erickson. Is Chelsea
3 Erickson here? Chair will show Chelsea Erickson
4 registered to testify on behalf of herself on the
5 revised congressional redistricting plan but not
6 testifying.

7 Chair calls Charlene Shafer. Charlene
8 Shafer. Chair will show Charlene Shafer registered
9 to testify on behalf of herself on the revised
10 congressional redistricting plan but not testifying.

11 Chair calls Callton Halt. Callton
12 Halt. Chair will show him registered to testify on
13 behalf of himself on the revised congressional
14 redistricting plan but not testifying.

15 Members, any questions for the members
16 of this panel? Chair hears none.

17 Thank you for your testimony. This
18 panel is excused.

19 Chair is going to call up our next
20 panel - Deborah Harris, Alverna Austin, Lizette
21 Fernandez Prestwich, Christina Valentine. If those
22 four will make their way up.

23 The panel after that, which I -- we
24 will for sure get to this panel that I'm going to
25 call out, and then we're going to evaluate in a

1 second - Barbara Mckinney, Kathy Hughes, Claudia
2 Schneider, and Solomon Ni. If you will please be
3 ready, we'll come to you. Okay.

4 Ma'am, what is your name?

5 ALVERNA AUSTIN: Alverna Austin.

6 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Okay. I show you
7 registered to testify as Alverna Austin --

8 ALVERNA AUSTIN: Yes, sir.

9 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: -- on behalf of
10 yourself on the revised congressional redistricting
11 Plan. Is that correct?

12 ALVERNA AUSTIN: Yes, sir.

13 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Thank you very
14 much. Please give us your testimony. And if you
15 would just pull that microphone just a little bit
16 closer to you.

17 ALVERNA AUSTIN: Thank you so much,
18 committee. Everything has been so eloquently said by
19 everyone that has come before you today. I am a
20 graduate of Texas Southern University and University
21 of Houston. I attended Jack Yates Senior High
22 School, I attended Cullen, I attended Lockhart, I
23 attended Turner, I attended Pleasantville, and Nacu
24 Henderson.

25

1 I wasn't raised to be prejudiced, so
2 for me, it's all, you know, as I -- as I get older,
3 it's mind-boggling to me. My mother raised me that
4 we are all God's people. So when you use people's
5 lives as a chessboard and manipulate for power, God
6 help us all. I want to read something if I have
7 time. "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled
8 masses yearning to breathe free. The wretched refuse
9 of your teeming shore. Send these, the homeless,
10 tempest, tossed to me. I lift my lamp beside the
11 golden door." Now that's what's on our Statue of
12 Liberty.

13 Do we have integrity? Are we going to
14 stand up? Are someone's bank accounts overflowing
15 right now? I don't know, but it's sad. It's scary,
16 but I put my faith in God. He's in control.
17 Everything is happening for a reason. We have the
18 present leadership to wake us up because some of us
19 will sleep, but we are not asleep now. We're not
20 asleep at all. We are the people of the United
21 States of America.

22 I don't know how much time I have
23 left. We, the people of the United States. This
24 phrase establish that the Constitution's authority
25 comes directly from the citizens of the United

1 States, not from the states individually. In order
2 to form a more perfect union. This highlights the
3 desire to improve upon the existing system of
4 government under the Articles of Confederation, which
5 has seen us -- has seen as too weak.

6 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Please complete
7 your testimony.

8 ALVERNA AUSTIN: Establish justice.
9 This emphasizes the importance of fairness in the
10 rule of law in the new nation. Provide for the
11 common defense. This underscores the need for a
12 unified military to protect the nation from external
13 threats. Promote the general welfare. This
14 expresses the attention to improve the well-being of
15 all citizens --

16 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Please complete
17 your testimony. Last sentence.

18 ALVERNA AUSTIN: -- and secure the
19 blessings of liberty to ourselves and our prosperity.
20 This signifies the desire to protect individual
21 freedoms from both the current generation and future
22 generations. Do ordain and establish this our
23 constitution for the United States of America.

24 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Thank you for your
25 testimony, ma'am.

1 Oh, if you hold for one moment, I want
2 to make sure -- members, any questions for this
3 witness? The Chair hears none.

4 Thank you, ma'am. You're excused.
5 I'm going to go through these three.

6 I don't know if they're here. Chair
7 calls Deborah Harris. Deborah Harris. Chair will
8 show her registered to testify on behalf of herself
9 on the revised congressional redistricting plan but
10 not testifying.

11 Chair calls Christina Valentine.
12 Christina Valentine. Chair will show her registered
13 to testify on behalf of herself on the revised
14 congressional redistricting plan but not testifying.

15 Chair will call Lizette Fernandez
16 Prestwich. Lizette Fernandez Prestwich. Chair will
17 show her registered to testify on behalf of herself
18 on the revised congressional redistricting plan but
19 not testifying.

20 We're going to go to our next panel, I
21 think, based off of our time. This will be our last
22 panel, and I'll have some notes for you. If we could
23 have Solomon Ni, Claudia Schneider, Kathy Hughes, and
24 Barbara McKinney, please come forward. I'd love to
25 receive your testimony.

1 Okay. And ma'am, what's your name?

2 CLAUDIA SCHNEIDER: My name is Claudia
3 Schneider.

4 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Okay. I show you
5 registered to testify as Claudia Schneider on behalf
6 of yourself and -- on the revised congressional
7 redistricting plan. Is that correct?

8 CLAUDIA SCHNEIDER: That's correct.

9 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Please give us
10 your testimony.

11 CLAUDIA SCHNEIDER: Thank you. I'm a
12 native Houstonian and a native Texan. I'm
13 Congressional District 18. And no -- I say no to
14 this special session redistricting. Redrawing while
15 current maps are under litigation -- active
16 litigation undermines judicial oversight. It
17 reinforces vote dilution. It denies the pending
18 plaintiffs a remedy, and it erodes public trust.

19 And we all know this redistricting
20 push is unprecedented and dangerous. In fact, it
21 echoes the democratic backslides from the post-
22 Reconstruction South to 1930s Germany and 2017
23 Myanmar. And it's not just another attempt to dilute
24 minority representation and a coordinated power grab.
25 It is an extending pattern of racial discrimination

1 that we have been seeing happening consistently since
2 Trump's inauguration. Advancing Project 2025 as
3 well, which is, as we all know, an extremist agenda
4 drafted by racists outside operatives at the Heritage
5 Foundation.

6 At a time when Texas should be
7 healing, Trump aligned operatives are unleashing a
8 deliberate deluge of harm, meant to drown our voices
9 out, erase political expression, erode equal
10 protection, and de facto nullify the Voting Rights
11 Act. These same officials just suspended two months
12 of federal legislative work, not to help the people,
13 but allegedly to shield perpetrators of child sexual
14 abuse.

15 Meanwhile, Texas flood survivors still
16 need help, and many lost everything due in part to
17 failed leadership. Now, even their voices are shut
18 out of this process that will determine their
19 political power for years.

20 Yet we have some elected officials,
21 clearly in lockstep with an administration that is
22 dismantling FEMA's disaster recovery role, weakening
23 our weather, climate and disaster protections,
24 consistently spreading lies and misinformation,
25 beholden to billionaire interests, and is now

1 diverting relief funds to expand detention centers,
2 yet this is the priority. While Texans suffer,
3 democracy gasps for breath. And as you know, our
4 votes are our voice.

5 This is no benign act. It's part of
6 an escalating pattern of constitutional violations.
7 But I see you all clearly know that this, because I
8 heard the questions asked about which firm had been
9 engaged and to whom the scope of representation for
10 this committee extends. And as you know, local
11 officials are not shielded when they knowingly
12 violate our constitutional rights.

13 This is striking us deep in our
14 hearts. This shows us there are some who want to
15 drown us again, but we won't. And they won't. Come
16 elections, come hell or high water, we, the people,
17 will be the flood. Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Thank you for your
19 testimony.

20 Members, any questions for this
21 witness? Chair hears none.

22 Thank you for your testimony. The
23 witness is excused. I'm going to check in on these
24 three we have here on this last panel.

25

1 Is Barbara Mckinney here? Barbara
2 Mckinney. Chair will show Barbara Mckinney
3 registered to testify on behalf of herself on the
4 revised congressional redistricting plan but did not
5 testify.

6 The Chair calls Kathy Hughes. Kathy
7 Hughes. Chair will show Kathy Hughes registered to
8 testify on behalf of herself on the revised
9 congressional redistricting plan but not testifying.

10 Chair calls Solomon Ni. Solomon Ni.
11 Chair shows Solomon Ni registered to testify on
12 behalf of himself on the revised congressional
13 redistricting plan but did not testify.

14 Members the time --

15 UNIDENTIFIED MALE: Before you move to
16 --

17 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: I will. Yes.

18 UNIDENTIFIED MALE: All right.

19 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: You have my word.

20 Members, the time of public testimony
21 at today's hearing has concluded. Thank you for all
22 who testified today. The electronic portal for
23 today's hearing will close right after we adjourn,
24 but just so everybody knows, the electronic portal
25 for Monday's hearing is still open. And so I want to

1 make sure you understand you got two ways, just
2 sitting here right now to submit your written
3 comments and testimony, and the committee will
4 receive those.

5 First, if we were unable to reach you
6 today or you had more to say than time allowed, we
7 would welcome you to provide a written copy of your
8 testimony. If you'll turn it into our assistant
9 clerk right over here, we'd love to receive that. We
10 will provide that to every member of the committee.
11 We also will have the registration forms with your
12 contact information if we have any questions.

13 You can also go and provide comments.
14 I always want to make -- make sure we have that link
15 correctly. You can provide comments, electronic
16 comments for the next hearing in Arlington at
17 comments.house.texas.gov. I encourage you to do
18 that.

19 Of course, our next hearing will be in
20 Arlington at 5:00 o'clock p.m. on Monday. The
21 posting is online.

22 I want to thank you all for being
23 here. I appreciate you working with us, and I
24 appreciate really the panels, I thought did an
25

1 excellent job of moving very, very efficiently
2 through that. Thank you for that.

3 Thank you for the University of
4 Houston for hosting us. And I thank you, Houston,
5 for having us. We got the Astros playing here in
6 about a half hour. Let's hope that they win. That
7 may be selfish for some of us on the panel who like
8 the Astros over the Rangers.

9 Is there any further business before
10 the committee?

11 Chair recognize --

12 VICE CHAIR ROSENTHAL: Mr. Chairman?

13 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Mr. Rosenthal, for
14 what purpose?

15 VICE CHAIR ROSENTHAL: I'd like to --
16 to make a statement

17 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Chair recognizes
18 Mr. Rosenthal to make a statement.

19 VICE CHAIR ROSENTHAL: Very good.
20 Thank you.

21 So first, as you know, we're going to
22 walk over to Wheeler Avenue Baptist Church to the
23 gymnasium for anybody that wants to be heard. I want
24 to hear you. And I'm going to invite all of my
25 colleagues, whether you're Republicans, Democrats, or

1 however you identify. If you want to listen to these
2 people that are willing to stay, not all -- not just
3 all day, but walk over the church with us, you are
4 more than welcome to join us for that.

5 We have -- pizza has been sponsored by
6 state Senator Molly Cook, and I believe Rodney Ellis
7 as well. And I will -- and Borris Miles.

8 UNIDENTIFIED MALE: It is his church.

9 VICE CHAIR ROSENTHAL: It's Borris
10 Miles church.

11 UNIDENTIFIED MALE: He made the
12 arrangements.

13 VICE CHAIR ROSENTHAL: And Borris made
14 the arrangements for us. So I do want to thank our
15 state Senator, Borris Miles, for that.

16 And with that, I will be objecting to
17 the motion to adjourn because I would love for you
18 all to be able to keep going here for a little while.
19 And I'll ask for a record vote on that --

20 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Understood.

21 VICE CHAIR ROSENTHAL: -- objection.

22 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Members, at this
23 time, the Chair moves that the House Select Committee
24 on Congressional Redistricting stand adjourned
25 subject to the call of the Chair, and the Chair has

1 heard an objection. Under the rules, this is a non-
2 debatable motion. We will proceed to a vote. The
3 clerk will call the roll.

4 THE CLERK: Chair Vasut.

5 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: Aye.

6 THE CLERK: Vice Chair Rosenthal.

7 VICE CHAIR ROSENTHAL: Nay.

8 THE CLERK: Representative Garcia.

9 REPRESENTATIVE GARCIA: Nay.

10 THE CLERK: Representative Garen.

11 (No audible response)

12 THE CLERK: Representative Gervin-
13 Hawkins.

14 REPRESENTATIVE HAWKINS: No.

15 THE CLERK: Representative Guerra.

16 (No audible response)

17 THE CLERK: Representative Guillen.

18 REPRESENTATIVE GUILLEN: Aye.

19 THE CLERK: Representative Hefner.

20 REPRESENTATIVE HEFNER: Aye.

21 THE CLERK: Representative Hickland.

22 REPRESENTATIVE HICKLAND: Aye.

23 THE CLERK: Representative Hunter?

24 REPRESENTATIVE HUNTER: Yes.

25 THE CLERK: Representative Manuel?

1 REPRESENTATIVE MANUEL: No.

2 THE CLERK: Representative McQueeney.

3 REPRESENTATIVE MCQUEENEY: Aye.

4 THE CLERK: Representative Metcalf.

5 (No audible response)

6 THE CLERK: Representative Moody.

7 (No audible response)

8 THE CLERK: Representative Pierson.

9 REPRESENTATIVE PIERSON: Aye.

10 THE CLERK: Representative Spiller.

11 REPRESENTATIVE SPILLER: Aye.

12 THE CLERK: Representative Tepper.

13 REPRESENTATIVE TEPPER: Aye.

14 THE CLERK: Representative Thompson?

15 REPRESENTATIVE THOMPSON: No.

16 THE CLERK: Representative Turner.

17 (No audible response)

18 THE CLERK: Representative Wilson.

19 REPRESENTATIVE WILSON: Aye.

20 THE CLERK: Representative Wu.

21 REPRESENTATIVE WU: No.

22 CHAIRPERSON VASUT: There being --

23 there being 10 ayes, 6 nays, the motion is carried.

24 Crystal Jordan, we're leaving your

25 credit card with the University Police Department.

1 And on that -- after that, the House
2 Select Committee on Congressional Redistricting
3 stands adjourned subject to the call of the Chair.
4 Thank you.

5 (MEETING ADJOURNED)

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CERTIFICATE OF TRANSCRIPTIONIST

I certify that the foregoing is a true and accurate transcript of the digital recording provided to me in this matter.

I do further certify that I am neither a relative, nor employee, nor attorney of any of the parties to this action, and that I am not financially interested in the action.

SUBSCRIBED AND SWORN TO under my hand and of office on this 17th day of September, 2025.



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