

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

Exhibit AP

Texas Senate Committee on Congressional Redistricting, Tuesday, July 29, 2025,
Transcript.

TRANSCRIPTION OF RECORDING

SENATE SPECIAL COMMITTEE ON REDISTRICTING

Tuesday, July 29, 2025

P R O C E E D I N G S

CHAIRPERSON KING: The Senate Special Committee on Congressional Redistricting will come to order. The Clerk will call the roll.

THE CLERK: Senator King?

CHAIRPERSON KING: Here.

THE CLERK: Senator Creighton?

VICE CHAIRPERSON CREIGHTON: Here.

THE CLERK: Senator Alvarado?

MS. ALVARADO: Here.

THE CLERK: Senator Hinojosa?

MR. HINOJOSA: Present.

THE CLERK: Senator Hughes?

MR. HUGHES: Here.

THE CLERK: Senator Miles?

MR. MILES: (No verbal response.)

THE CLERK: Senator Parker?

MR. PARKER: Here.

THE CLERK: Senator Paxton?

MS. PAXTON: Present.

THE CLERK: Senator Sparks?

MR. SPARKS: Here.

THE CLERK: That's eight.

CHAIRPERSON KING: There being eight present a quorum has been established.

1 Members, I know I've gone through these opening
2 remarks each day, but each day we've done a different part
3 of the state. And so, we've had different parties on here
4 each day. In fact, we had over 800 listening in yesterday,
5 over 800 participating by watching online.

6 So as posted, we will focus on West Texas today,
7 including the Panhandle and El Paso regions. If you're
8 interested in another part of the state, you're welcome to
9 participate as well.

10 These are statewide in there -- statewide
11 hearings, although each day, this being the fourth, has had
12 a different regional focus.

13 This is the last of our scheduled regional
14 hearings. Please note that registration for this hearing
15 has closed. But again, everyone is welcome today regardless
16 if your testimony focuses on West Texas or another region,
17 and everyone is focused, of course, to watch the streaming
18 live online.

19 Please bear with us throughout this hearing today
20 as we collect public testimony via this videoconference.
21 Almost all the time, it works just right, but every now and
22 then, we have to kind of help some people get online, and we
23 are certainly available to do that as those little technical
24 issues come up.

25 I do also want to point out that there is another

1 option for members of the public to provide input if they
2 are unable to testify today or didn't make the registration
3 cutoff for today.

4 You are able to submit written comments at any
5 time throughout the special session in the public input
6 portal that can be found on the committee website. The
7 portal will remain available throughout the redistricting
8 process.

9 Submitted comments are shared with the senators
10 and are posted on the committee's website for public viewing
11 as well.

12 This hearing is also, as I mentioned, being
13 livestreamed and will be archived indefinitely for public
14 viewing on the Senate's website.

15 So why are we here today? Initially because the
16 governor has added the subject of congressional
17 redistricting to the call. We're conducting these regional
18 information-gathering hearings in response to that charge.

19 I cannot speak to what the outcomes will be with
20 redistricting, but I do know that hearing from Texans is a
21 critical part of the process.

22 This is also following the traditional format
23 that's been used in previous redistricting cycles where
24 public testimony was taken before any map was considered by
25 the committee.

1 And then, of course, later if a map is considered,
2 we'll have public hearings here at the capitol. I want to
3 thank everyone here today for your participation. Also,
4 particularly the senators who have been here for all of
5 these meetings and special sessions are not in our normal
6 planned schedule for the summer I know.

7 Please note that since we are on a
8 videoconference, we are unable to hear in-person testimony
9 today as stated in the posting for this hearing. There will
10 be opportunity for in-person testimony, as I mentioned, if
11 and when a bill, a map is heard.

12 And I do firmly believe we'll have a map filed
13 sometime after these information-gathering hearings
14 conclude. And there will, as I said, always be the
15 opportunity 24/7 to submit written comments via the online
16 portal.

17 Now just for a brief preview of the logistics for
18 today's videoconferencing testimony, everyone that
19 registered to testify -- and as I mentioned, I think there's
20 about 130 -- and have -- and has signed onto the
21 videoconferencing link, you should be now in the Zoom
22 waiting room.

23 So if you registered to testify, you need to sign
24 onto the videoconferencing link, and you should now be in
25 the Zoom waiting room.

1 You cannot view the hearing from the waiting room,
2 so you should continue to view the livestream available on
3 the Senate website via the link that is visible in the
4 waiting room so you will know when you have been called to
5 testify.

6 And by the way, always remember there's just a
7 couple of second delay between when I speak and when you'll
8 hear it on the livestream.

9 For those in the waiting room, please make sure
10 your screen name matches the name you used to register. If
11 you need to step away from the hearing for any reason, you
12 may leave the waiting room and then simply rejoin when you
13 are able as long, of course, as the hearing is going.

14 When your name is called -- and I'll call people
15 up in panels. So I'll call, like, five or six names so
16 you'll know you're about to come up. And then I'll
17 individually call your name when it's your turn to testify.

18 When your name is called, turn on your video but
19 keep yourself muted until I recognize you to speak. It's
20 important to remember when you are called on to testify, you
21 should mute or close your livestream player. If you leave
22 the livestream going, there will be an echo. You'll hear
23 everything -- and we will as well -- twice.

24 Once recognized, you may unmute your microphone.
25 Your audio and your video will be heard and seen by both the

1 committee and the members of the public.

2 Once I call your name, you will have an
3 opportunity to provide your testimony to the committee. I
4 will have you state your name and whether you are testifying
5 on behalf of any organization. If you are, we want to make
6 sure we have that in the formal record.

7 So that everyone has opportunity to participate, I
8 ask the witnesses to limit their testimony to two minutes.
9 And I may, if you'll notice as you're testifying, in the
10 top, I think, right-hand side of your screen, there'll be a
11 little icon that pops up when you have 30 seconds left.

12 And although I don't want to cut anyone off, we
13 must be mindful of those witnesses that are still waiting,
14 so please try to be concise so we can hear from everyone.

15 The senators will have opportunity to ask
16 questions and their time of questions will certainly not be
17 counted against your two minutes.

18 Now when you're finished with your testimony, you
19 will be released from the videoconference and can watch the
20 rest of the hearing on the livestream.

21 Also note that if you're having technical
22 difficulties with your video or audio, the joke has been the
23 first thing you should do is find the youngest child in your
24 household and they can probably figure it out.

25 If that's not available, our committee staff will

1 move you back into the waiting room and give you an
2 opportunity to troubleshoot the issue, and we can call you
3 back into the room with the next round of witnesses.

4 If you need technical assistance, you can contact
5 Zoom customer support. Please visit zoom.us/join. That's
6 zoom.us/join or call Zoom customer service at 1-800-799-
7 9666, 1-800-799-9666.

8 You can also call our committee office, and we'll
9 try to help you. And that number is 512-463-0030, 512-463-
10 0030.

11 I particularly want to welcome Senator Blanco who
12 is joining us today for this regional hearing that
13 incorporates his district, and I understand that he has some
14 brief opening remarks that he would like to make.

15 I've got some remarks I would like to make this
16 morning as well. And Senator Blanco, we can proceed with
17 you. And then I'll see if any of the other members would
18 like to provide any comments.

19 MR. BLANCO: Chairman, members of the committee,
20 thank you so much for giving me the opportunity to join this
21 virtual hearing for West Texas and allowing me to
22 participate. I don't serve on the redistricting committee,
23 obviously, but I appreciate your willingness to allow me to
24 join.

25 Members, I'm very proud to represent Senate

1 District 29. It's a vast, diverse region stretching from El
2 Paso all along the Texas/Mexico border across through the
3 Big Ben, through rural farms, ranching communities, into the
4 Permian Basin's oil and gas heartland.

5 And, you know, we all have unique districts. I
6 always like to say ours is truly unique. It covers
7 thousands of square miles, multiple cultures, and economies
8 that fuel Texas.

9 And our district is home to six ports of entry
10 along the border serving a major -- as a major gateway for
11 international trade. We've got a major military
12 installation at Fort Bliss there that strengthens our
13 national security. And we're blessed with three Texas
14 universities that train our workforce and power West Texas
15 in terms of workforce.

16 So from urban centers to frontier communities, our
17 residents share a deep tie that's routed in family, that's
18 rooted in faith, that's rooted in hard work, and obviously,
19 the landscapes that we love.

20 Within my Senate district, there are two
21 congressional districts -- Congressional Districts 16 and 23
22 that must reflect the voices of people who live there.
23 These communities deserve congressional maps that ensure
24 that they can elect their candidate of choice, candidates
25 who understand our unique needs, candidates who are going to

1 go to Washington to fight for the resources, to fight for
2 the opportunities that our region deserves.

3 And I must also raise a serious concern. In the
4 last decennial redistricting, despite El Paso's population
5 growth, our region lost one of our Texas House of
6 Representatives, one of the districts that's no longer based
7 in El Paso.

8 For us, that meant fewer voices in Austin speaking
9 up for El Paso and for West Texas. So as this committee
10 redraws lines for these congressional districts, we cannot
11 allow history to repeat itself.

12 Growth should mean more representation, not less.
13 And that is why I think today's public participation is
14 absolutely critical, especially during this rare mid-decade
15 redistricting session.

16 These decisions that you-all are going to make
17 here in this committee and in our chamber are going to
18 affect our democracy for years to come. With over 7 million
19 Texans without broadband and many senior citizens not
20 familiar with technology or Zoom, it is my hope that this
21 committee will hold field hearings in every district in the
22 region of Texas from the Panhandle to the Rio Grande Valley,
23 from the Gulf Coast to West Texas so that state government
24 can meet our constituents where they are, to listen to their
25 stories, to make sure that no community is left behind or

1 left out of this process.

2 West Texas is growing. It's growing rapidly.
3 It's increasingly Latino, making it even more critical that
4 our representatives in Washington reflect the diversity in
5 the future.

6 And when you look across Senate District 29, you
7 see not just the geography but you also see the strength of
8 our border economy, the heritage of ranchers and farming,
9 the promise to our students and the hardworking families who
10 call this region home.

11 So as we draw the lines that are going to shape
12 that representation for the next decade, we must keep these
13 communities of interest together. We have to. Ensuring
14 that rural voices are not drowned out. That urban centers
15 are not carved apart. That border communities are given
16 fair representation.

17 This is about making sure that every west Texan --
18 and I know 130 are watching -- whether they're from El Paso,
19 all the way to the Big Bend to the Permian Basin, that we've
20 got a fair shot to choose our leaders, that we have an
21 opportunity to know who's going to fight for us in
22 Washington who understand us and who are going to do
23 everything they can to represent us well.

24 It's what our founding fathers believed in. It's
25 why we do this after a census, not mid-decade, not when a

1 president, regardless of party. It's applicable to both
2 parties. As a legislative body, it's our duty, our duty to
3 check the executive regardless of party, not give it more
4 power than it has.

5 It's what our founding fathers warned us against.
6 It's why I served our nation in uniform, to protect those
7 ideals.

8 Mr. Chairman, you're always a gentleman and I want
9 to thank you for allowing me to participate, to share the
10 priorities of Senate District 29. I look forward to working
11 with you to ensure fair maps that honor the people, that
12 honor the growth and the interest and the future of West
13 Texas. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

14 CHAIRPERSON KING: Well, thank you, Senator. And
15 that's one thing that always makes all the redistricting
16 cycles difficult and uncomfortable because all of us have
17 such respect for one another in the Senate regardless of
18 party and some very deep friendships.

19 Members, is there anyone else who wishes to give
20 comments? Senator Alvarado.

21 MS. ALVARADO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Good
22 morning. Welcome, Senator Blanco. You touched on something
23 about the 7,000 people that are without broadband; is that
24 right?

25 MR. BLANCO: Seven million.

1 MS. ALVARADO: I'm sorry, 7 million. So just to
2 give you a rundown how things have gone since we've been
3 holding virtual-only hearings, on Friday we had 118 people
4 sign in, but only 48 actually testified.

5 Saturday, 80 people signed up, but only 34
6 testified. Yesterday, 120 plus -- I don't have the exact
7 number -- signed up. Only 54 testified. Today, we have
8 130-ish that have signed up. So we'll see how many people
9 actually testify.

10 I would urge those who are on to please stay in
11 the queue and make your voices heard. Testify. In Houston,
12 we had well over -- this was an in-person hearing -- well
13 over 1,000, and I'm sure it was more than that, but that's
14 just the number I have.

15 And yesterday, I think the latest numbers we had
16 was well over 800 in person. So that's why Senator Miles
17 and I have been pushing for in-person regional hearings once
18 the maps are provided. So I'm glad that you're here,
19 Senator Blanco.

20 Mr. Chairman, we sent your office just a little
21 bit ago a letter. It's a follow-up letter to you clarifying
22 the committee -- about the committee being able to subpoena.
23 And I know and I appreciate the process that we're
24 following. We're going to let it play out.

25 But it is our understanding that there is no bar

1 to issuing -- issuing a subpoena versus enforcing a
2 subpoena. A federal officer may choose to testify or not at
3 their discretion. So I know we're going to wait until
4 Wednesday.

5 And I just wanted to get that over to you that
6 clarifies. And I think Senator Hughes touched on that
7 yesterday perhaps. It was issued but it was not enforced
8 because I think issuing it compels the urgency that we're
9 all under, especially given that that DOJ letter of July 7th
10 included an August 7th deadline. This letter is sent from
11 myself, Senator Miles, and Senator Hinojosa.

12 And the other ask that we made and I want to thank
13 you because I understand you-all have already responded to
14 this that you're going to have a formal hearing on
15 Wednesday, tomorrow, where we may take up a vote on the
16 subpoena. And we ask that that be in the Betty King Room or
17 someplace other than a member's desk.

18 And I understand your staff has already said that
19 you-all were looking at the Betty King Room. So thank you
20 for that. Want to make sure that it is on live stream. I
21 think it's extremely important that this whole process
22 considering its rarity, unusualness, unprecedented situation
23 that we be as transparent as possible.

24 So thank you to your team for responding to us so
25 promptly on the Betty King Room. So again, we just want to

1 make sure that it is on a live stream.

2 CHAIRPERSON KING: Certainly. And yes. I have
3 requested of leg counsel and asked them to have it to us by
4 the end of the day today a clarification on the authority of
5 the committee after the regional hearings are completed to
6 subpoena witnesses, particularly whether or not we can
7 compel a federal officer to attend and whether or not you
8 can compel someone to attend from out of state.

9 And I've -- as I said yesterday, I'll be happy to
10 entertain a motion regarding that at a formal meeting
11 tomorrow. We will -- we have reserved the Betty King Room
12 and we can talk about that in length then as soon as I get
13 an opinion from the from leg counsel, I'll be happy to share
14 that with anybody wishes to see it.

15 I simply don't know the answer to those questions.
16 I do know that the resolution under which we now operate
17 does say that we cannot subpoena during the regional
18 hearings, but those will be closed today.

19 I would also mention that after today we will be
20 on pretty close parity with having the number of people
21 testify that the House had testify. I think the House had
22 right at 250 people testify in their three days of hearing.

23 By the end of today -- and I'll give the numbers
24 at the end of the day on all the participation online and on
25 testimony -- but we should have around 200 have given direct

1 testimony to our committee as well.

2 So we're going to be on parity or pretty close to
3 it with -- not that there's a competition -- with the House
4 and the number of people that they've had actually testify.
5 And I know yesterday, we had viewing the livestream 802
6 people from across the State of Texas. So we're getting
7 some good attendance in that as well.

8 Members, any other remarks? Senator Hinojosa?

9 MR. HINOJOSA: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. And thank
10 you, Senator Blanco, for your comments. I think many of
11 your points were well made and they probably applied to all
12 the regions of the State of Texas.

13 If you look at the facts, the census the last 20
14 years, the population increases are driven by Hispanics and
15 blacks, but yet there's been a decrease in congressional
16 districts represented by people of color. So, it seems like
17 we're going backwards instead of making progress to increase
18 the proper representation and providing congressional
19 districts an opportunity and also minority-majority
20 districts. But I appreciate your comments. Thank you,
21 Mr. Chairman.

22 CHAIRPERSON KING: Thank you.

23 MS. ALVARADO: I wanted to ask --

24 CHAIRPERSON KING: Senator Alvarado.

25 MS. ALVARADO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I wanted

1 to ask you or just clarify something. You said that we
2 would be in -- on parity with the House, but let's make it
3 clear that was for virtual only; is that what you meant?

4 CHAIRPERSON KING: What I meant was the number of
5 people that have formally testified before the House
6 Committee on Redistricting and the number of people that
7 have formally testified before the Senate committee.

8 MS. ALVARADO: Okay. I -- maybe I'm missing
9 something here, but I know that they had well over 1,400,
10 yeah, that -- between Houston and --

11 CHAIRPERSON KING: Right. So let me draw a
12 distinction here. There's a distinction between the number
13 that attend just like in our committees we have during
14 session, you may have a room of 200 people with standing
15 room only, but you only have 30 that end up testifying.

16 And so there may have been 200 in attendance at
17 the hearing, but you had 30 testify. And so, we've had, by
18 the end of the day, we'll have 200 or more having testified.
19 And we haven't had -- in our virtual attendance, we just
20 know the numbers that we're monitoring the livestream.

21 Same thing in the House hearings. They've had, I
22 don't know what they had last night, 5- or 600, I think,
23 attend in Arlington, but they had 90, I believe, that
24 actually testified.

25 MS. ALVARADO: Mr. Chairman, I also want to

1 clarify, too, that the House, the committee limited their
2 testimony to five hours each time. I think if they had gone
3 longer and you allowed -- you haven't put a time limit on
4 this in terms of how long the meeting can go -- I think
5 everybody would have stayed.

6 As I mentioned, when we left here Saturday, both
7 Senator Miles and I and drove back to Houston and we were
8 there towards the end of the hearing and there were still a
9 few hundred people waiting to testify.

10 But the House committee cut it off. And thanks to
11 Senator Miles, there was, I guess, like an informal hearing,
12 the people's hearing at a church down the street where those
13 that were not able to testify walked over and testified.

14 So people that are showing up in person, these
15 regional hearings, they are waiting to testify. However,
16 the time has been cut off at five hours. So that -- that's
17 a difference there.

18 CHAIRPERSON KING: And we won't do that. And when
19 we're having in-person hearings, we won't do that either.
20 And, but -- and I know you can -- I think in terms of the
21 virtual and the in person as being complementing one
22 another.

23 Whereas not everybody lives in Arlington, Fort
24 Worth, and not everyone lives in Houston. That's the two
25 places the House has had hearings. We're hopefully reaching

1 out to people all across the State of Texas because everyone
2 can testify from any place in the state and everyone can
3 watch online from, I guess, anywhere in the world.

4 And so I see those as complementing each other.
5 But I do recognize and understand that there is a difference
6 with that question between virtual and between traveling to
7 a site. But there's also a difference in being able to
8 reach the whole state and let people testify from across the
9 state and people only testify if you can drive to Arlington
10 or drive to Houston.

11 And how many people have we had, say, like the
12 lady with a disability yesterday that I couldn't attend the
13 hearing so I can do it this way? And others who said, you
14 know, I'm down in the Valley, and I, as one young lady said,
15 and thank you that I'm able to participate this way.

16 Others who didn't get to testify at the House
17 hearing, so they were doing it here. And so I think there's
18 pros and cons to each side. And I really believe if we were
19 out traveling and we went to Amarillo and to Beaumont, we'd
20 be hearing from people say, I don't live in Amarillo or
21 Beaumont. How do I -- and I didn't get to participate.

22 So I think it's tradeoffs. And I really thought
23 in all earnest what we were doing by doing virtual was
24 really complementing the Fort Worth or Tarrant County and
25 Harris County live testimony that the House was doing. And

1 I thought it was a good complement.

2 And but there are pros and cons, and I just think
3 doing both of them has more pros than cons. But I certainly
4 understand your disagreement with that.

5 MS. ALVARADO: Yes, I mean, every committee
6 meeting we've started with Senator Miles and I talking about
7 the virtual versus the in person. And I'm sure my -- some
8 of my colleagues are getting tired of us talking about it,
9 but it's just a little frustrating because we've seen
10 firsthand in Houston, for example, people waiting to speak
11 and waiting beyond the five-hour limit. So thank you for
12 listening to me.

13 CHAIRPERSON KING: Thank you for your comments.
14 Senator Miles?

15 MR. MILES: You may want to show me here.

16 CHAIRPERSON KING: Oh, yes. Thank you. If the
17 Clerk would please show Senator Miles with us.

18 MR. MILES: Thank you, sir. Mr. Chairman, you're
19 talking about parity of the virtual and the in person.
20 Mr. Chairman, I personally witnessed over 200 people testify
21 unofficially at my church after the Republican House
22 committee members shut it down at the University of Houston,
23 over 200, Senator Parker, that testified unofficially.

24 So to try to make a parity of what we, you know,
25 what we've done here and to that, that's 200 people that

1 were off record. Okay. So, I mean, I know we would like to
2 think that this process has worked and that we're getting
3 the word out, but the truth of the matter is it hasn't
4 worked.

5 And I know you and I respect the fact that you
6 think that, you know, we did this virtual helped a lot of
7 people. Mr. Chairman, the reality of it is we missed a lot
8 of people, sir, on a very important issue that's important
9 to the democracy of this state and this country.

10 So, you know, no matter how we try to shape it,
11 yes, virtual had some positive aspects and reached into some
12 places where -- but we didn't grab the masses in these
13 virtual testimonies. And I personally witnessed this in my
14 district, at my church, in my district.

15 And that's just the reality of it. So if, you
16 know, let's not try to draw a happy face on a sad face. I
17 mean, the reality of it is it reached some people. Yes, it
18 did. It helped some people. Yes, it did. But it did not
19 grab the masses. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

20 CHAIRPERSON KING: Thank you.

21 Members, any other comments? Well, thank you. I
22 know we have some witnesses waiting, and we have some
23 invited testimony by a few of our members that we will get
24 to immediately.

25 I did -- and it's very uncomfortable, but I feel

1 very compelled to respond to a few things. We've sat here
2 for three days, and this is not directed toward any member
3 of the committee, nor is it directed toward any member of
4 the Senate.

5 But over the last three days of hearings, witness
6 after witness have said some what I believe are very
7 inappropriate and incorrect and frankly offensive comments
8 specifically directed at the Republicans on the committee
9 and just Republicans in general.

10 I don't know how many times we've been referred to
11 as racist, as a racist party, how many times we've been
12 referred to as the party of Jim Crow. And frankly, if you
13 read history, it was not the Republicans that passed and
14 enacted the Jim Crow laws. It was the Democrats,
15 particularly the Southern Democrat party. It was not the
16 Republicans that enacted the Jim Crow laws.

17 Been called unchristian more than one time.
18 Yesterday, even the party of pedophiles. Last night, I went
19 back to my apartment and watched some of the livestreaming
20 from the Arlington event and watched someone who's a very
21 dear friend, a black Republican, viciously heckled and booed
22 by hundreds of people, someone who is a retired Marine
23 chaplain, Afghanistan veteran, former department head at the
24 Department of Justice.

25 I watched him just heckled and booed simply

1 because he got up as a black Republican and testified at the
2 hearing in favor of redistricting. References to the Civil
3 Rights Act. You know, the Civil Rights Act was blocked
4 under Johnson by the Southern Democrat congressional
5 members. It was not going to pass.

6 And the only way it passed -- read history -- the
7 only way it passed was that the Republicans teamed up with
8 LBJ and pushed the Civil Rights Act over the top. It would
9 not have passed because it was being blocked by Southern
10 Democrats in the Congress.

11 And frankly, before the Republicans took a
12 majority, it's very evident that Republicans' votes were
13 suppressed by the Democrats in Texas controlling the
14 redistricting process. In 2003 when the Republicans took
15 majority, we held every statewide Republican office and yet
16 held a small -- had something like one-third of all, if not
17 less, of all the congressional seats.

18 Now, I just want to comment. I think these, that
19 we all need to be very careful about the rhetoric we use.
20 And we also should be very careful about correctly stating
21 history.

22 And I want to say right now, I don't think the map
23 that is in place for Congress today is discriminatory. I
24 don't agree with the DOJ letter, but I haven't seen their
25 underlying facts to it. I want to state that. I believe

1 the map I voted for in 2001 was a legal map.

2 I think the testimony that I've seen in trial
3 supports that. I certainly believe the testimony of Senator
4 Huffman supports that. But that doesn't mean that we don't
5 have the right to take up redistricting if we choose to do
6 so.

7 You can do that every session or any special
8 session that is put on the call. Now, I've also listened
9 very patiently and quietly to what I think are just not what
10 I think -- are what are very deriding and simply ugly
11 remarks about the president.

12 And frankly, I've always believed that even if you
13 don't like the person, you respect the office. But the
14 references yesterday that were made and have been made all
15 three days, I think are just inappropriate in any public
16 setting.

17 I will tell you that under his leadership and that
18 of the Republican majority in the U.S. Congress, I am
19 delighted that we now have a secure Texas border where an
20 estimated 10 million people that we don't know who they are,
21 had crossed.

22 We know many of them were members of violent
23 gangs, Venezuelan gangs and cartels, and other convicted and
24 dangerous criminals. I'm very -- I'm delighted that we're
25 seeing a dramatic reduction in the amount of fentanyl that's

1 coming across the Texas border now.

2 I'm delighted at the historic tax cuts that were
3 preserved, that we're seeing a badly-needed reset in world
4 trade, in the world trade imbalance. I'm delighted that our
5 national security is now focused, that we're beginning to
6 stand up to Iran and China and I believe Russia as well.

7 And I could go on and on. So there's a lot of
8 good things to say here that I believe are a direct result
9 of us having a strong Republican majority and a direct
10 result of President Trump.

11 But what we're here to talk about is the
12 redistricting process. And again, I would just encourage
13 everyone testifying please be respectful with your rhetoric.
14 Everybody on this committee has been respectful. And with
15 that, thank you for giving me my few minutes.

16 And if there's no one else that wishes to comment,
17 I'd be happy to call the witnesses that were requested by
18 our Democrat senators. Are you-all ready to go with them?
19 All right. Thank you.

20 Chair calls Nina Perales, Tania Chavez Camacho,
21 and Luis Figueroa.

22 And Ms. Perales, you are, if you will unmute, I
23 will say welcome. I was speaking with Senator Hinojosa and
24 I said, I think I first met you in the early 2000s. And so
25 welcome back.

1 And if you would, we'll ask all witnesses today to
2 please state their name and the name of the organization, if
3 any, that they represent, and then to proceed with your
4 testimony. If you would, try to keep it to two minutes, but
5 I know there's going to be a lot of questions that will
6 probably extend it well beyond that. So welcome.

7 MS. PERALES: Thank you very much. Good morning,
8 Chairman King, Vice Chair Creighton, and members of the
9 committee. My name is Nina Perales. I'm the vice president
10 of litigation for MALDEF, the Mexican American Legal Defense
11 and Educational Fund.

12 MALDEF is counsel for Latino voters and
13 organizations in the current litigation challenging the
14 Texas redistricting plans enacted in 2021, including the
15 current congressional redistricting plan.

16 As you know, we wrapped up a four-week trial last
17 month. Although we always appreciate the opportunity to
18 speak with you, the committee's hearings cannot be
19 meaningful unless the public can see and respond to a map
20 under consideration.

21 All of the recent hearings in both the House and
22 Senate have not been accompanied by a map. Without being
23 able to see a map under consideration, the public can't tell
24 you whether it follows traditional redistricting principles,
25 whether it respects their communities of interest, or

1 perhaps most importantly, whether it complies with the
2 Voting Rights Act and the Constitution.

3 We all know that a congressional map is being
4 drawn, and the committee should make that process public.
5 If the legislature is going to consider and vote on a new
6 congressional redistricting plan in this special session, a
7 draft of that map has to be almost done.

8 And you should insist on being a part of that
9 process as it occurs, not just after someone hands you a
10 completed map and tells you, you know, maybe at most you can
11 tweak it.

12 And for Texas voters, it's an empty exercise to be
13 asked to testify on redistricting when they can't share with
14 you the effects of that redistricting plan on them. If
15 you're left out of the map-drawing process, you cannot
16 ensure that the map complies with the Federal Voting Rights
17 Act.

18 We urge that you ask the necessary questions to
19 make sure that the legislature evaluates minority population
20 voting patterns and the totality of circumstances to create
21 the districts required by law. Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON KING: Thank you, Ms. Perales. And
23 again, it's good to see you. I will say my staff just
24 handed me a little note and said that I said 2001 map when I
25 meant 2021. My apologies.

1 Members, are there any questions for Ms. Perales?

2 MR. HINOJOSA: Yes.

3 CHAIRPERSON KING: Senator Hinojosa.

4 MR. HINOJOSA: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

5 Good seeing you again. You always testify at all
6 the redistricting committee hearings. Just a couple of
7 questions. You've been involved in these types of lawsuits,
8 I guess, for the last 20 years. And every time that Texas
9 has drawn a redistricting map, we've been challenged.

10 And I think all the time, the courts have made a
11 finding of discrimination and violation not only of the
12 United States Constitution, but also the Voting Rights Act.

13 CHAIRPERSON KING: Senator, we just lost
14 Ms. Perales.

15 THE CLERK: I think it was ours. We're back.
16 We're back.

17 CHAIRPERSON KING: Okay. We're back. Go ahead.
18 I'm sorry. Ms. Perales, are you still with us?

19 MS. PERALES: I am. I'm here, and I'm listening
20 to the senator.

21 CHAIRPERSON KING: It was on our end. I'm sorry.
22 Senator, go ahead.

23 MR. HINOJOSA: I think she -- that was my
24 question. Has that been your experience, or do I need to
25 repeat my question?

1 MS. PERALES: No, I believe I understand it.
2 Thank you, Senator. And thank you, Chairman. It has been
3 really a privilege to be able to participate in these
4 hearings and to get to know the members and to encourage
5 them to really look at the legal standards.

6 Unfortunately, since Texas has been regularly
7 redistricting, which started in the early 1970s, in every
8 redistricting cycle, Texas is found to have been
9 discriminatory against Latino voters, either in violation of
10 the Voting Rights Act or the U.S. Constitution, or both.

11 We really hope that Texas can get it right. And I
12 believe that key to that is senators and members of the
13 House asking the hard questions about compliance with the
14 Voting Rights Act at the time that the plan is being drawn,
15 as opposed to waiting for the plan to arrive, particularly
16 in the context of the congressional redistricting plan, as
17 opposed to waiting for the plan to arrive and then being
18 stuck, you know, trying to make, you know, what end up being
19 really not significant modifications.

20 MR. HINOJOSA: So Texas, quite frankly, has a
21 history of discriminating against minorities, people of
22 color. Would you agree with that statement?

23 MS. PERALES: It does. Yes, Senator, in every
24 redistricting cycle since the 1970s.

25 MR. HINOJOSA: And this has been done through

1 cracking or packing to minimize the representation of
2 minorities.

3 MS. PERALES: Yes, Senator, that's right. In
4 various plans, including the congressional plan over time.

5 MR. HINOJOSA: And during the last ten years, 15,
6 20 years, the population growth here in our state has been
7 driven by the growth of Hispanics and blacks and Asians.

8 MS. PERALES: Yes, Senator. In the most recent
9 decade, 95 percent of Texas' population growth was racial
10 minorities. Five percent was people who indicate that they
11 are white race alone on the U.S. census.

12 MR. HINOJOSA: And during that same period of
13 time, it seems that the number of congressional districts
14 represented by minorities have decreased.

15 MS. PERALES: I'm not sure whether it's decreased
16 or not, but what we do know is that the Voting Rights Act
17 demands the creation of more majority-minority congressional
18 districts, majority Latino congressional districts in
19 particular, than we currently have. That's been a big issue
20 in the trial that we just finished.

21 MR. HINOJOSA: And as we take up public testimony
22 on redistricting in general, one of the key complaints, if
23 you will, is that we do not have any maps. The public
24 doesn't have any maps to look at to really make specific
25 their testimony to where they feel there is a need and a

1 breakup of minority, a majority congressional district or
2 majority minority or opportunities in congressional
3 districts.

4 And that's a big issue that I think most of us
5 have complained or at least brought to the attention of the
6 leadership that we don't have any maps before us. So we're
7 like testifying in the blind, in a sense. Do you agree with
8 that?

9 MS. PERALES: Yes, Senator, I agree. It's a
10 critical issue, not just because it deprives the public of
11 an opportunity to tell you how the maps affect them in their
12 communities, which is tremendously important, but it's also
13 critical for you, the senators.

14 Ultimately, you are responsible for passing a map
15 that is lawful and that complies with the constitution. But
16 if you are not at the table while the map is being drawn,
17 this map is being drawn by somebody. And if you are not
18 there at the table asking the difficult questions about
19 population, voting patterns, about minority communities, you
20 cannot ensure that the map will be lawful.

21 MR. HINOJOSA: And as you all know, and you stated
22 a while ago, that we here in the Texas legislature are not
23 drawing the maps ourselves. Somebody else is drawing those
24 maps out of Washington, D.C. or some other place. And we
25 have had no really say so or participation in the process

1 itself.

2 MS. PERALES: And Senator, I do believe it's an
3 untenable situation for you. And I only know what I see in
4 the news. And what I see in the news is that this map is
5 being drawn by somebody else, and that you are not at the
6 table.

7 I will say that as a lawyer, I would never let
8 somebody else draft a legal brief for me and then give it to
9 me and say that I can only fix the typos. I would not do
10 that. And I urge you to resist a process that leaves you
11 out of the initial drafting.

12 MR. HINOJOSA: And then what's really alarming,
13 and you are familiar with the letter sent by the Department
14 of Justice where they actually target just minority
15 districts, whether they're majority-minority or coalition
16 districts, they are intentionally targeted and discriminated
17 against Hispanics and blacks, minority groups in general.
18 Would you agree with that assessment?

19 MS. PERALES: I do, Senator. There are a host of
20 problems with the letter that came from the Department of
21 Justice. Not just that it's factually wrong. For example,
22 it describes a Latino-majority district, CD 29 in Harris
23 County as a coalition district. That's just factually and
24 legally wrong.

25 But also, in its pointing out -- in its taking of

1 certain districts and putting them in the letter and saying
2 that they are unconstitutional, that is based on a flawed
3 legal analysis.

4 MR. HINOJOSA: And that came from a Fifth Circuit
5 ruling dealing with claims by minority coalitions of Section
6 2 of the Voting Rights Act making claims that their vote was
7 being diluted.

8 And that ruling was only applied to those type of
9 claims, not any other constitutional claim under the
10 Fourteenth Amendment or the Fifth Amendment, oh, excuse me,
11 the Tenth Amendment.

12 MS. PERALES: Yes. Senator, I would say that the
13 letter claims that the reason the Department of Justice has
14 concerns is because of the Fifth Circuit's decision in
15 Petteway, but that decision was from last year. The
16 Department of Justice had seven months to absorb the
17 Petteway decision and decide whether it had concerns or not.

18 And at least two of those months were after the
19 change in presidential administration. And after all of
20 that time and all of that absorbing and all the briefing
21 that we had in the redistricting case, the Department of
22 Justice chose to dismiss out of the litigation.

23 MR. HINOJOSA: And it really seems to me --

24 MS. PERALES: And then --

25 MR. HINOJOSA: -- to represent the Petteway

1 decision and really distorts the ruling in such a way that
2 it is clear that what their intent is, is to eliminate race-
3 based congressional districts.

4 MS. PERALES: Senator, what I would say is that if
5 the Department of Justice had concerns and they knew how to
6 read Petteway as well as anybody else did, they would have
7 raised those concerns instead of dismissing all of their
8 claims in the litigation.

9 To come back now with a letter that is so riddled
10 with errors in its reading -- and a number of those errors
11 were pointed out by Attorney General Paxton in his response
12 -- it just doesn't appear to be a legitimate concern.

13 MR. HINOJOSA: And one more question. It seems
14 that the statements and the claims being made by the
15 Department of Justice letter contradicts Attorney General
16 Paxton's response to it in that the present districts that
17 are in litigation in El Paso under the three-judge panel,
18 that they were drawn race blind, not taking race as a factor
19 in considering the redrawing of those congressional
20 districts.

21 MS. PERALES: Yes, the letter from General Paxton
22 contradicts the letter from the Department of Justice and
23 only one of them can be true. There's either evidence of
24 race-conscious drawing or the maps were drawn race blind.
25 But those two things can't be true at the same time.

1 MR. HINOJOSA: It really puts into question the
2 real intention behind the letter from the Department of
3 Justice in that they're targeting minority groups, which is
4 clearly unconstitutional in our history and unconstitutional
5 by Supreme Court rulings.

6 MS. PERALES: I agree, Senator. The letter is
7 suspect on a number of grounds. And if it was intended to
8 provide a fig leaf for a process of re-redistricting, I
9 don't think it did a very good job.

10 MR. HINOJOSA: Thank you for your testimony.

11 MS. PERALES: Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON KING: Members, any other questions?

13 MS. ALVARADO: Yes, sir.

14 CHAIRPERSON KING: Senator Alvarado.

15 MS. ALVARADO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

16 Nina, thank you for joining us and for your
17 testimony in the House as well. You know, when we talk
18 about how unprecedented this is, some do say, well, it was
19 done in 2003. Can you tell us what is different from 2003
20 to now, what happened or did not happen in 2001 that
21 triggered 2003's reaction?

22 MS. PERALES: Well, the posture is somewhat
23 different because in 2003, the legislature was taking up
24 redistricting because the maps that were in place at that
25 time had been drawn by a court.

1 And so the re-redistricting that occurred in 2003
2 was essentially the legislature saying we didn't really have
3 a chance to redistrict and so we're going to do it now. And
4 that was the reason that was given. It was to replace a
5 court-drawn map with a legislative map.

6 What I would like to point out about 2003 though
7 is that the congressional map that the legislature passed
8 was discriminatory against Latino voters. The case went all
9 the way to the U.S. Supreme Court. And the U.S. Supreme
10 Court held that Texas had discriminated against Latino
11 voters in West Texas.

12 MS. ALVARADO: Thank you, Nina.

13 CHAIRPERSON KING: Members, any other questions?

14 Ma'am, if I could ask just a couple. Was MALDEF a
15 party to the current litigation that's going on before the
16 three-judge federal panel in El Paso?

17 MS. PERALES: No, we're not a party; we're a law
18 firm. We represent Latino voters and Latino organizations
19 in the lawsuit that is currently going on.

20 CHAIRPERSON KING: And were you one of the
21 attorneys on the pleadings?

22 MS. PERALES: I am, yes.

23 CHAIRPERSON KING: Did -- was it your position in
24 your pleadings that the congressional map is discriminatory?

25 MS. PERALES: Yes.

1 CHAIRPERSON KING: So your pleadings before the
2 Federal Court and that of MALDEF representing various
3 parties is that the current congressional map is
4 discriminatory?

5 MS. PERALES: Yes, that is correct. In Dallas,
6 Fort Worth, and in Harris County.

7 CHAIRPERSON KING: And the -- all right. Thank
8 you.

9 Members, any other questions?

10 Thank you. Thanks again for being here. I'm sure
11 we'll see you back when we have our future hearings.

12 MS. PERALES: Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON KING: Chair calls Tania Chavez
14 Camacho.

15 MS. CHAVEZ CAMACHO: Good morning, Chairman and
16 Senators. My name is Tania Chavez, and I am a resident of
17 Alamo, Texas, and I work in San Juan, Texas. I serve as the
18 President and Executive Director for La Union del Pueblo
19 Entero and I'm here to testify on the legislature's plan to
20 consider redrawing the current congressional redistricting
21 maps.

22 Down here in the Rio Grande Valley, where the
23 population is overwhelming Latino, past redistricting maps
24 have divided and weakened our community's political power.
25 This makes it harder for us to elect leaders who understand

1 and represent our needs.

2 According to data from the 2020 census, Texas
3 gained nearly 4 million residents over the past decade.
4 49.5 percent of that growth came from Latinos alone.
5 Despite this clear population growth, the current
6 redistricted maps do not reflect the reality on the ground,
7 and the plan to revise the current maps do not seem to be
8 focused on making the maps more fair.

9 Instead of expanding fair representation, the 2021
10 maps tend to separate and fragment Latino communities and
11 other communities of color. Historically, Texas has faced
12 repeated legal challenges related to racial gerrymandering
13 and discriminatory redistricting practices.

14 Federal courts have in multiple instances found
15 the maps intentionally discriminate against Latinos and
16 black borders. It is critical that Texas avoid repeating
17 such mistake and instead of draw maps that comply fully with
18 the Voting Rights Act and the U.S. Constitution.

19 In light of these concerns that directly affect
20 our community and communities of color across the state, I'm
21 here to make the following recommendations to the Committee.
22 If the Legislature is going to redraw the congressional
23 maps, redraw the map to reflect the Latino population growth
24 and the growth of the communities of colors, ensuring voters
25 have a real opportunity to elect candidates of their

1 choosing, ensure compliance with the Voting Rights Act,
2 especially its predictions against vote dilution.

3 Avoid dividing established communities, especially
4 those that have been historically marginalized or affected
5 by racial discrimination. Create a transparent and
6 participatory process, including meaningful opportunities
7 for public input by ensuring that the public has a
8 meaningful opportunity to comment on the proposed maps.

9 Redistricting is a foundational component of
10 representative democracy. It is important that the process
11 be conducted with transparency and fairness for all Texas,
12 regardless of race, ethnicity, or political affiliation.

13 Thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON KING: Thank you.

15 And members, any questions? Senator Hinojosa.

16 MR. HINOJOSA: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

17 And thank you, Ms. Camacho, for testifying. But
18 you're based out of the Rio Grande Valley; is that correct?

19 MS. CHAVEZ CAMACHO: That is correct, Senator.

20 MR. HINOJOSA: And the Valley is one of the
21 fastest-growing areas in the state. Hidalgo County alone
22 grew by over 100,000 people in the last ten years.

23 MS. CHAVEZ CAMACHO: That is correct. Over
24 121,000 people.

25 MR. HINOJOSA: And what's interesting now, just

1 from what I read in the papers, since we don't have any maps
2 before us, is that they may also target the 15th
3 Congressional District, where we presently have
4 Congresswoman Monica de La Cruz, and Congressional District
5 34, which is presently represented by Congressman Vicente
6 Gonzales.

7 And one of them, actually, it was pretty
8 interesting because I talked with Mrs. -- who ran for
9 Congress -- Viejos. The 15th Congressional District is
10 based out of the Valley, but it's drawn like a fajita.

11 We call it the Fajita Congressional District. It
12 goes all the way up north. It's pretty interesting. But do
13 you sense that maybe that the way it's being drawn is
14 gerrymandered in such a way that it really minimizes the
15 impact of the voters in the River and the Valley, Hispanic
16 voters?

17 MS. CHAVEZ CAMACHO: I cannot tell you that the
18 impact that it will have until we actually have maps to
19 consider. What I can tell you is that voters in South Texas
20 are able to vote contest by contest. And they make their
21 decision down the ballot and they elect their candidates of
22 they're choosing.

23 So it's a fact that for District 15 and Hidalgo
24 County, voters chose candidate Michelle Vallejo for Congress
25 in District 15, despite the fact that a different

1 representative was selected down District 15.

2 MR. HINOJOSA: And you would rather have the
3 congressional district more based out of the Rio Grande
4 Valley than going all the way up north?

5 MS. CHAVEZ CAMACHO: Not necessarily, Senator,
6 because that will be packing. What we need is fair
7 representation for Latinos who are part of the district or
8 for the different minorities who are part of the district.

9 MR. HINOJOSA: Well, and I certainly am not
10 pecking, but more of a, in terms of as it relates to the
11 population growth that's taking place in the Valley, to be
12 better represented in any congressional district.

13 MS. CHAVEZ CAMACHO: The community needs to be
14 able to have their candidate of their choosing. And so,
15 when selecting maps, we need to ensure that the lines are
16 drawn in a way that there is fair representation for the
17 Latino voters in the district.

18 Just because you have the majority population in
19 the district to be Latinos, it does not mean that it's drawn
20 fairly. What matters is that the population of U.S.
21 citizens of voting age are in compliance with the federal
22 voting rights when drawing the maps and that we closely
23 approximate those districts with eligible voters.

24 Some Latinos in South Texas are not U.S. citizens,
25 but we know that many community members who are. And so,

1 when we draw the maps, they need to be done within those of
2 the voting U.S. population.

3 MR. HINOJOSA: Thank you for your testimony.

4 CHAIRPERSON KING: Members, any questions?

5 Ma'am, I just have a couple. Was your
6 organization a party to the lawsuits that are ongoing now in
7 El Paso over the 2021 and 2023 redistricting?

8 MS. CHAVEZ CAMACHO: That is correct, Senator.

9 CHAIRPERSON KING: And was it your organization's
10 position in the lawsuit that the current congressional map
11 is discriminatory?

12 MS. CHAVEZ CAMACHO: That is correct. We believe
13 that maps from 2021 are illegal.

14 CHAIRPERSON KING: Okay. Thank you.

15 Members, any other questions?

16 Chair calls Luis Figueroa.

17 MR. FIGEROA: Yes, sir. Thank you, Senator.

18 Appreciate the opportunity. My name is Luis Figueroa, and I
19 am the Senior Director of Legislative Affairs for Every
20 Texan. I have 20 years of voting rights experience, both as
21 a policy analyst, an attorney, as a leg staffer, and as an
22 advocate.

23 I am also from El Paso and where the majority of
24 my family is from, so I really do appreciate this
25 opportunity. We essentially just have three recommendations

1 for the committee when it comes to redistricting.

2 Number one, we ask that the redistricting plan
3 should reflect population growth, particularly the growth
4 among communities of color. As pointed out, Latinos, Asian
5 Americans, and maybe to a lesser extent, African American
6 blacks have really fueled the growth in Texas, and the map
7 should reflect that growth if we are going to redraw them
8 and make changes. That growth should be reflected.

9 The growth has also happened largely in urban and
10 suburban areas and along the border communities. So that
11 should also be reflected if there are going to be changes.

12 Our recommendation number two is we should avoid
13 the mistakes of the past and honor the Voting Rights Act. I
14 think you're absolutely correct. The discrimination has
15 occurred by both parties over a long history in Texas.

16 Many of that history is very recent. Texas,
17 before Section 5 was found to be unconstitutional based on
18 its -- on congressional authority of its authorization
19 states Texas was leading the nation in Section 5 violations
20 and also, as Ms. Perales pointed out, has had a continual
21 violation of either intentional discrimination or Section 2
22 voting rights violations.

23 So we really should try to avoid those mistakes.
24 I think we have a real opportunity here to correct some
25 previous wrongs and really do right by the people of Texas.

1 And lastly, we will make a recommendation related
2 to the process. As been stated over and over, we fully
3 believe that there should be a transparent and meaningful
4 process and an opportunity to opine on proposed maps.

5 Just as an analogy, it's very difficult to vote on
6 school district, school finance reform when you don't have
7 the runs. It's the same thing here. We need to see the
8 maps and the impact before we can give meaningful input.

9 So those are our three recommendations and we hope
10 you take us up on it. And we appreciate this opportunity.

11 CHAIRPERSON KING: Thank you.

12 Members, any questions? Senator Blanco.

13 MR. BLANCO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

14 Thank you, Mr. Figueroa. I appreciate your
15 comments. My question to you are about communities of
16 interest. In your view, being from El Paso, can you
17 describe to the committee what unites our communities in our
18 area, whether culturally, economically, geographically? And
19 how should that be reflected in this redistricting decision?

20 MR. FIGUEROA: Thank you, Senator. I appreciate
21 that. Yes, I mean, as you know, being from El Paso, El Paso
22 has some very strong community connections.

23 First of all, our location in the corner of El
24 Paso has strong communities to our sister cities of Las
25 Cruces and Juarez to our south, very strong Latino

1 community, a very strong and proud Mexican American culture.

2 And then, of course, you mentioned some of the
3 institutions that bind us. Whether we're talking about UTEP
4 or Fort Bliss. El Paso's main industries are actually
5 government based for the most part. Whether you're talking
6 about the school districts, the military based, the
7 University of Texas at El Paso, and the state agencies that
8 are there.

9 My mother was a state agent, worked for the Texas
10 Department of Human Services as a part of the state agency.
11 And that is not uncommon in El Paso. We are very much
12 relied on a lot of the government institutions.

13 And we have, as you know, been in districts that
14 have spread out to far West Texas. At one point, we were
15 even connected to Lubbock. But I think it is important to
16 point out that the El Paso community deserves to have
17 representation to elect their candidate of choice.

18 It is a very large population. Many people forget
19 how large El Paso is and that it has continued to grow. It
20 is growing out towards the Socorro and east area. And the
21 district should reflect that growth.

22 MR. BLANCO: Thank you. And my last question to
23 you is, do you believe that the current map, obviously we're
24 -- we don't have a map before us right now, but the current
25 map that we're in, do you believe that it supports or do you

1 believe that it undermines the ability of our communities to
2 advocate effectively for the shared needs and the shared
3 priorities at the federal level?

4 MR. FIGUEROA: Yeah. And I will point out that we
5 are not a party to the current litigation, and we do not do
6 litigation. So I do want to point that out. But yes, we do
7 think the current maps, you know, do have some flaws in it,
8 as pointed out by the previous testimony.

9 As it pertains to El Paso, I know that there was
10 big concern about the loss of a Texas House district which
11 we understand this is mainly about congressional and not
12 about Texas House. But we did lose a Texas House district
13 in the last round, which did undermine our presence in the
14 Texas legislature.

15 It could have been drawn. They chose not to add
16 that Texas House. So it does, you know, those are just an
17 example of situations where the El Paso community loses a
18 little bit of voice in our systems of government. And we
19 hope that would not happen under a congressional map.

20 We have an important role in our federal
21 government and our border security and also in our national
22 security because of Fort Bliss, that that representation is
23 absolutely needed both at the state and federal levels.

24 MR. BLANCO: Thank you, Luis. Appreciate your
25 thoughts.

1 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

2 MR. FIGUEROA: Thank you, Senator.

3 CHAIRPERSON KING: Thank you.

4 Members, any other questions?

5 MS. ALVARADO: Yes, sir.

6 CHAIRPERSON KING: Senator Alvarado.

7 MS. ALVARADO: Hi, Luis. Thank you for joining us
8 and for your many times of appearing before the Senate.
9 You've been involved in voting rights since, well, early
10 2000s; is that right?

11 MR. FIGUEROA: That's right. Yes, Senator, since
12 2003.

13 MS. ALVARADO: Okay. What kind of opportunity
14 should the public have to give meaningful input on any map
15 and any amendments?

16 MR. FIGUEROA: Thank you for that question. Yes,
17 I think the most important part is, as I mentioned, is being
18 able to give meaningful commentary on proposed maps. I
19 think these hearings are important and it's great to get
20 community input before a map is proposed.

21 But if there's not an opportunity to give equal
22 testimony after a map is proposed, then it's not really
23 meaningful. And again, I give that example of a school
24 district financial. When we do our school finance reforms,
25 which we also do advocacy around at every Texan, if you ask

1 people to talk about what are some things that we need for
2 our schools, it's important to get that input.

3 But the most important input is after the bill is
4 proposed and we get to see what the impact is in our
5 individual communities. We get to know whether or not our
6 district is being diluted or packed, whether we'll have
7 equal representation or less representation.

8 And so, once the proposed map comes out, that's
9 the real opportunity for meaningful inputs. And I hope that
10 we have just as much a robust opportunity to testify after
11 the maps are proposed.

12 MS. ALVARADO: Have you ever known the legislature
13 to do redistricting in a 30-day period?

14 MR. FIGUEROA: We have had some special sessions,
15 but my experience with redistricting is that it takes longer
16 than 30 days. When we've done it in the past and special
17 sessions, it's usually taken a couple of sessions. And of
18 course, when we do it during the regular session, you know,
19 we have the full 140 days or so. So I think it's very
20 difficult to do it in a 30-day period and to get that
21 meaningful input.

22 MS. ALVARADO: Thank you.

23 CHAIRPERSON KING: Members, any other questions?

24 I would just like to say again that as soon as any
25 map becomes considered by the committee, which I would

1 suggest would be when a bill is filed, it'll be immediately
2 made available to all the public.

3 It'll also, of course, obviously be made available
4 to the Senate and we will have whatever the appropriate
5 amount of hearings is, public hearings on that map or maps.
6 There may be several proposed. I don't know. And as
7 always, there may be amendments proposed to it.

8 But all of those, whether it be maps or
9 amendments, will be made public at -- as soon as they are
10 received by the committee and then the members of the public
11 will be able to testify on them or if they wish, if they
12 can't come to Austin, they can certainly offer written
13 comments through the public portal. And we will make sure
14 that those get distributed to all the members of the
15 committee.

16 And with that, thank you, sir, for being here
17 today.

18 MR. FIGUEROA: Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON KING: I'm going to call up our first
20 panel. We have, I think, 65 people right now in the waiting
21 room waiting to testify. Sandra Villegas, Brian Murphy,
22 Deliris Montanez, Leopoldo Navarette, and Russell Ubinger.

23 And what you'll do now is be moved over. And at
24 this point, if you would -- if I just called your name in
25 the first panel, please turn on your video. Please stay

1 muted until you hear your name called.

2 As soon as you hear your name called, please
3 remember to turn down or off the audio on your livestream so
4 that we don't and you don't hear that echo that gets so
5 confusing.

6 And so, Sandra, are you with us? If you would
7 unmute, we'd be happy to have your testimony. I believe
8 you're still muted. Just push the unmute.

9 MS. VILLEGAS: Good morning.

10 CHAIRPERSON KING: There you are. Great. Thank
11 you for being here with us. Sorry for the delay this
12 morning. We do have a lot of people testifying. If you
13 would please, for our records, state your name and who you
14 represent, if any organization. We want that for the
15 records. And then please try to hold your testimony to two
16 minutes.

17 MS. VILLEGAS: Good morning, everyone. Members of
18 the committee. My name is Sandra Villegas and I represent
19 myself today. I am going to read my testimony. This is a
20 little intimidating, so thank you for your time, everyone.

21 As a proud resident of El Paso, Texas, I do oppose
22 the proposed mid-decade redistricting plan currently under
23 consideration. This effort to redraw congressional
24 boundaries poses a direct threat to the fair representation
25 for El Pasoans and undermines the democratic principles upon

1 which our state and nation are built.

2 Echoing Senator Blanco's comments a little bit.
3 The proposed changes would dilute the voice of El Paso's
4 diverse and vibrant community by shifting large portions of
5 our population into the sprawling 23rd Congressional
6 District.

7 This move would not only fragment our community,
8 but also diminish our ability to elect representatives who
9 understand and who advocate for our unique regional needs,
10 including border policy, transportation and infrastructure,
11 military affairs, and our binational trade.

12 Redistricting between census cycles disrupts the
13 continuity of representation and confuses voters, many of
14 whom suddenly find themselves in an unfamiliar district with
15 representatives who have little connection to our local
16 concerns.

17 El Pasoans have not asked for this change. El
18 Pasoans deserve to be represented by leaders who live in our
19 community and who are chosen by our community. Again,
20 echoing a little bit of the other testimony, having access
21 to the maps that are being already drafted, which seems to
22 be the case because of the short time span in which all of
23 this has taken place, is what I think all of us are asking.

24 We want to be part of that process. We want to be
25 informed, and we want this whole thing to be transparent.

1 So thank you-all for your time. Thank you for allowing me
2 to participate today.

3 CHAIRPERSON KING: And we're delighted you did.

4 Members, any questions? Hearing none.

5 The Chair calls Brian Murphy.

6 MR. MURPHY: All right. Good day to everyone. My
7 name is Brian Patrick Murphy. For Chairman King, definitely
8 appreciate you with the other chair members, especially
9 Senator Blanco.

10 I'm also from El Paso here as well, and I do have
11 a -- I do want to add in represent or Legislator Babin
12 because he's kind of involved with some of what I want to
13 discuss.

14 But yes, I'll follow up with the last person.
15 Yeah, this is a little intimidating, but I'm really happy
16 that Senator Blanco already discussed a lot of what I was
17 kind of thinking already in my head to talk about.

18 Likewise, with the attorney from MALDEF and some
19 of the other senators there. I definitely appreciate
20 everything everybody's doing to try to work this out today
21 as, yeah, a transparent process as possible so that we get
22 it done right.

23 Because as far as representation, I'm just
24 representing a Texan like you-all, too, and I'm a little bit
25 of a confused Texan. Some of my testimony is based on a

1 couple maps I found online, one from the El Paso Matters
2 website. But I believe it's now from listening to this
3 hearing, I'm glad to hear that it's confirmed that it's not
4 likely necessarily the maps that we're talking about to be
5 changed coming up this year and such, but it's probably the
6 one that got changed before.

7 But these things are a little confusing and just
8 the whole situation just seems confusing and honestly
9 bordering on a bit sheisty, you know what I mean? We hear
10 the word gerrymandering and it's like, nah, man, that's
11 usually not a good thing that happens.

12 Hearing the word redistricting, yeah, that sounds
13 a lot better until --

14 CHAIRPERSON KING: Sir, if I may, I'm going to
15 have to stop you at that point. But thank you so much for
16 your testimony.

17 And members, are there any questions for the
18 witness?

19 Hearing none, thank you again for being here.

20 Chair calls Deliris Montanez.

21 MS. MONTANEZ: Good morning, Chairman King. Can
22 you hear me?

23 CHAIRPERSON KING: We certainly can. Welcome.

24 MS. MONTANEZ: Thank you. My name is Deliris
25 Montanez, and I belong to El Paso District. I want to send

1 a shout out to Senator Blanco and appreciative of
2 Representative Hughes and Creighton. I've seen you many
3 times at the Talk Talks every month. I am here in support
4 of the redistricting. I am a Texas 16 congressional
5 candidate for 2026, and I have been since 2022.

6 First of all, our founding fathers would be very
7 disappointed at our nation right now. I know that it's rare
8 to implement changes on doing redistricting at the present
9 time, but changes are needed for our country to move forward
10 and to progress.

11 Our district, Texas 16, is underrepresented with
12 only one congressional representative at the House with the
13 amount of citizens and residents relocating to Texas 16 from
14 either California, Arizona, and the west side of the United
15 States.

16 We are getting close to almost 1 million
17 residents. And we need representatives to actually have a
18 voice for our minority and our Latinos and every single
19 constituent that we have in our congressional district.

20 I am cognizant of the three branches in our
21 government. But everything -- everything starts at the
22 legislative branch. So, redrawing the lines is urgent, is
23 urgently needed to be able to represent our constituents
24 fairly.

25 Texas 16 lost the El Paso International Airport in

1 a past election and we lost a part of the Fort Bliss
2 installation. And that is because I am a dual government
3 employee. I work for DHS and DOD, and many of our military
4 personnel are not from our district.

5 So we need representatives that speak for our
6 minorities and that speak for our constituents. Thank you
7 for your time.

8 CHAIRPERSON KING: Thank you.

9 And members, any questions?

10 Hearing none, thank you again for being here.

11 Chair calls Leopoldo Navarrette. Are you with us,
12 sir?

13 MR. NAVARRETTE: Yes. Good morning. Can you hear
14 me?

15 CHAIRPERSON KING: We certainly can. Welcome.

16 MR. NAVARRETTE: Okay. Good morning. Good
17 morning, everybody. Thank you for the opportunity to
18 testify in front of this committee. I just represent
19 another concerned citizen from El Paso. I am from El Paso.
20 I participated in the 2020 census.

21 I was a group supervisor and they were trying
22 times because it was during the pandemic. A lot of people
23 put in a lot of hours to do the work, and that work was
24 completed.

25 My question to you is that, you know, I've been

1 hearing a lot about, you know, the redistricting and the
2 proposals, et cetera. But I haven't heard where the data is
3 coming from to make the changes.

4 And I want to know what is being done with the
5 data that was recompiled during the census. And I think
6 that would be a pretty good start as to see what the
7 population, the different breakdown of races, which
8 obviously should not be considered into this redistricting.

9 But I'm just curious about the census and why,
10 like many people, the redistricting is being done, you know,
11 halfway and not being adhered by the rules that has been
12 done in the past.

13 So basically, that's it. You know, I know there's
14 another one coming up. And if there's no answers as to the
15 census data, I guarantee you many people in the next census
16 are not going to be willing to participate because they feel
17 that, one, they're not being heard; and two, the people that
18 are working to do the census, they feel that their work is
19 not being taken into consideration. Thank you for your
20 time.

21 CHAIRPERSON KING: Thank you.

22 And members, any questions?

23 Just in quick answer to your question, the -- any
24 redistricting has to be done using the 2020 data. Now, of
25 course, having been a part of that, you remember that all

1 the estimates that had been done in the years prior to by
2 the Census Bureau had Texas getting more seats than the 38
3 that it was apportioned.

4 And we were all kind of very surprised. The
5 census was delayed. And then when the numbers came out, it
6 didn't reflect the estimates of the previous years and Texas
7 received less seats than had been anticipated in the
8 apportionment. But those same, that same 2020 data was --
9 is what would be used to redraw any maps if we were to do
10 so.

11 With that, let me go ahead and call the next
12 panel. Minerva Torres Shelton, Ashley Candelaria, Carol
13 Bahmueller, Lucy Frost, and Apriel Powell Martin. Do those
14 names again. Apriel Powell Martin, Lucy Frost, Carol
15 Bahmueller, Ashley Candelaria, and Minerva Torres Shelton.

16 And Ms. Bahmueller, would you like to go ahead and
17 testify first? You'll just need to unmute and you should be
18 good to go. If you just go ahead and speak, that will
19 activate your camera. Ms. Bahmueller, if you'll just
20 unmute.

21 MS. BAHMUELLER: All right. Here I am.

22 CHAIRPERSON KING: There you are. Great. We're
23 glad to see you. And if you would please state your name,
24 tell us if you're representing formally any organization,
25 and then please proceed with your testimony.

1 MS. BAHMUELLER: My name is Carol Bahmueller. I
2 am representing myself. I'm a grandmother and senior
3 citizen living in El Paso. When I was in primary school, I
4 learned about the Declaration of Independence, about
5 governments deriving their just powers from the consent of
6 the governed.

7 I learned what a democracy is. As a Christian, I
8 learned Jesus' words -- love your neighbor as yourself. I
9 took all these words very seriously and worked hard to carry
10 them out, making my country a more equitable place.

11 During my lifetime, many improvements have been
12 made. The Voting Rights Act was passed. I worked hard for
13 these. But now I'm watching the trampling of these sacred
14 words and the rolling back of voting rights and disregard
15 for our constitution.

16 The president has ordered his minions, and
17 Governor Abbott is one of his minions, to find him some
18 votes before the next election which he fears will not go
19 the way he wants it to.

20 This is the only reason there is this special
21 legislative session. When I moved to Texas, I thought
22 people in this state prided themselves on being independent.
23 But now you've been ordered to find votes for the president
24 and you're just following his orders like a puppy follows
25 his master.

1 The way you're going to do it is to redraw the
2 legislative districts, and El Paso is in your crosshairs.
3 During my first election cycle after I moved here, I was
4 puzzled as to why I was seeing election ads targeting San
5 Antonio ten hours away. Then I found out.

6 So I ask you, are you really for democracy? Do
7 you want every citizen to have an equal voice? Do you want
8 to have equality of all citizens? Do you want your voice to
9 be the voice of your highest donors and to obey the whims of
10 would-be king president?

11 When you stand before God one day and you will,
12 who will you say you championed in your life? For those of
13 you who identify as Christians, how will you explain if you
14 acted for the richest and most powerful of these and not for
15 the least of these as Jesus commanded you to?

16 Where is your conscience if it's telling you to
17 find votes for the president? I would say you've sold your
18 conscience to the highest money bidder, and we all know who
19 that is. Thank you for listening.

20 CHAIRPERSON KING: Members, any questions?

21 Thank you. And your comment about the ten-hour
22 drive across many districts, that is one of the problems --
23 difficulties we have in Texas always in drawing maps is, is
24 once you get west of I-35, you have so many of the counties
25 that have populations of 5- or 10,000.

1 And of course, when you're trying to -- in fact, I
2 think the most recent numbers have only 14 and a half or 15
3 percent of the people in Texas live west of I-35. And it's
4 like 8 and a half or 9 percent east of the I-45 corridor.

5 And so when you get west or east, you have to put
6 together a whole lot of counties to come up with over
7 800,000 people for a congressional district. And it does
8 make for big districts. Thank you again.

9 Members, any questions?

10 Seeing none, Chair calls Ashley Candalaria.

11 MS. CANDELARIA: Hello. Good morning. Can you
12 hear me?

13 CHAIRPERSON KING: We certainly can.

14 MS. CANDELARIA: Okay. Thank you so much.

15 CHAIRPERSON KING: If you wish us to see you, just
16 click -- push on video and, but you don't have to.

17 MS. CANDELARIA: For some reason, it's not
18 allowing me to turn the camera on.

19 CHAIRPERSON KING: Okay. I'm sorry, but we can
20 certainly hear you very well.

21 MS. CANDELARIA: Okay. So, Chair and members of
22 the committee, thank you for the opportunity to speak today.
23 My name is Ashley Candalaria, and I am a proud Hispanic
24 woman born and raised in El Paso, Texas.

25 I'm here to strongly oppose the current

1 redistricting efforts that threaten to silence the voices of
2 diverse communities like mine. El Paso is vibrant,
3 culturally rich, with a strong Hispanic population and
4 diverse mix of people who deserve fair representation.

5 When district lines are redrawn to serve one
6 party's interest, the result not -- the result is not just
7 political advantage; it is the erasure of entire communities
8 from the decision-making process.

9 These maps are not about fairness or
10 representation. They are about control. If those in power
11 are confident in their leadership, they should not need to
12 redraw lines to secure votes. They should earn those votes.

13 Gerrymandering is not just unfair; it's dangerous.
14 It sends a message that only a select few matter and that
15 the rest of us can be disregarded. The Hispanic community
16 in Texas has contributed greatly to the culture, economy,
17 and progress of the state.

18 Yet we continue to be marginalized by political
19 tactics like this. Fair maps mean fair elections, and fair
20 elections are the backbone of a functioning democracy. This
21 isn't just a political issue; it's a moral one.

22 Redistricting to suppress communities like mine is
23 an insult to democracy. You cannot allow this to happen
24 because this is not about preserving power for a few. It's
25 about protecting the voice of many. We are the people, not

1 just a privileged percentage.

2 We deserve to be heard, to be represented, and to
3 participate in a free and fair elections. Please do the
4 right thing. Reject these maps and protect our democracy.
5 Thank you to Senator Blanco for representing El Paso and for
6 allowing us to come on and speak in this hearing.

7 CHAIRPERSON KING: Well, thank you.

8 Members, any questions for the witness?

9 Thank you for being here today.

10 Chair calls Minerva Torres Shelton. Ma'am, if
11 you'll just unmute.

12 MS. TORRES SHELTON: Yes, it's unmuted now. Can
13 you hear me?

14 CHAIRPERSON KING: We can. Thank you for being
15 here today.

16 MS. TORRES SHELTON: Thank you. Thank you,
17 Chairman. Good morning, members of the committee. It
18 really is an honor and an opportunity to be here and to
19 speak before you all. I am speaking here as an El Pasoan.

20 And just to give you a little bit of a background
21 of myself so you can choose whether to give merit -- to give
22 my words any merit, I served in the military. After the
23 military, I was an El Paso PD officer for five years.

24 And then after the attacks on 9/11, I joined the
25 FBI, where I served there 21 years. After I retired, I ran

1 for sheriff on the last election. So, I had the honor and
2 opportunity to travel all throughout my community, which
3 included the county.

4 And so, I'm kind of speaking based on what I saw
5 at that time. Again, I'm here as a just myself, but I want
6 to echo some words that Senator Blanco said, that we want to
7 be sure that we don't draw out some of the voices,
8 especially those in the community, because, as he said, they
9 don't have broadband.

10 They can't speak here because of that reason. But
11 I've had the honor and opportunity to speak to several of
12 them. I am in favor of redistricting. Right now, these
13 communities are represented by a congressional candidate
14 who's out of San Antonio. That is too far from them.

15 Many feel disconnected from their representation.
16 They want to go back to the way the congressional map looked
17 like before, where they fell under District 16. And I just
18 find it interesting that before, they were, they -- and when
19 I say they, I mean the Democrats, opposed the switching of
20 the maps.

21 But now that they're switched and we want to maybe
22 consider going back, they're opposed to it. And it's time
23 that we look at really what's happening in El Paso. And
24 this is why it's an honor for me to be here, because I
25 participate in city council meetings, county commissioners,

1 school boards, always going to speak on behalf of what is
2 going on in our community, and we don't get listened to.

3 Why? Because we don't have a fair representation.
4 There's no healthy -- in a democracy, we have a healthy
5 going back and forth, a competition. Not in El Paso. And
6 that's not against -- I'm not speaking bad against any of
7 the congressional candidates or representation, but our
8 voices are not heard.

9 Just like today. We are being represented by
10 representatives that are Democrat, and we deserve a voice.
11 That's all we're asking. We're asking that you make sure
12 that these communities are part of a congressional
13 candidate, District 16, that is a lot closer to them. Thank
14 you so much for the opportunity, and I'll wait to see if
15 there's any questions.

16 CHAIRPERSON KING: Thank you.

17 Members, any questions? Senator Blanco.

18 MR. BLANCO: More of just a comment, Mr. Chairman.

19 Thank you, Minerva, for elevating your voice and
20 participating in the process. And even though we're
21 different parties, we're still El Pasoans and know that
22 regardless of your political affiliation, it's an honor to
23 represent you, and we are listening. So thank you for your
24 participation today.

25 MS. TORRES SHELTON: Yes. Thank you. And I want

1 to echo just one more thing. Again, Senator Blanco, I
2 couldn't say more kind words, I guess, about you because
3 your office is always responsive, even though we're not of
4 the same party. And I think people know that we're not of
5 the same party.

6 But, you know, you being there to help me and make
7 me be a part of this, all I'm asking is that we deserve a
8 fair representation, and that is including communities of
9 the county to be part of District 16. Thank you so much.

10 MR. BLANCO: Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON KING: Any members, any other
12 questions?

13 Well, thank you again for being here. And it's
14 interesting. It's -- much of the testimony this morning has
15 been seemingly calling for redistricting with comments that
16 the -- this portion of West Texas that the map does not, if
17 I understand it right, properly reflect communities of
18 interest. And so thank you again for being here.

19 Chair calls Lucy Frost.

20 MS. FROST: Hi, can you hear me?

21 CHAIRPERSON KING: We certainly can. Welcome.

22 MS. FROST: Hi. Thank you. Mr. Chairman, members
23 of the committee, thanks. Looks like it's going to be a
24 long day for you-all. Hope your coffee's strong. I'm Lucy
25 Frost. I'm representing myself. I'm a native Texan. I

1 think that's what makes me an optimist.

2 Because I'd like to believe that by testifying
3 here, me and the other folks that are testifying could move
4 a few hearts and minds toward a better Texas. I want a
5 Texas where we finally take redistricting out of the hands
6 of self-interested politicians and put it where it belongs
7 with an independent citizens' commission. I believe that's
8 Senate Joint Resolution 3, if you want to look that up.

9 Because I hate to think we're stuck in this
10 endless game of partisan maps and tribal power grabs
11 considering a mid-decade redistricting not because the
12 majority of the people ask for it, because the wannabe king
13 wants five more lapdogs in Congress.

14 But folks who dance to the wannabe king's tune
15 don't realize he uses them only as long as they're useful to
16 him. It's like the political version of a lifelong cheater.
17 Every new mistress thinks she's the one he won't discard,
18 just like he did the last and the last and the last. Ask
19 Mr. Musk about that.

20 Texas is better than that. We deserve maps drawn
21 fairly by an independent citizen commission that reflect our
22 communities, like Ms. Torres Shelton says was her name, not
23 the ambitions of one man or one party.

24 Fair maps mean fair elections. Fair elections are
25 how the best ideas and the best candidates rise to the top,

1 not just the ones with the biggest donors or the best
2 gerrymander. Let's draw the line. Finally move Texas
3 forward. Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON KING: Members, any questions?

5 Thank you for being here.

6 Chair calls Apriel Powell Martin.

7 MS. POWELL MARTIN: Good morning. Can you hear me
8 okay?

9 CHAIRPERSON KING: Absolutely. Welcome.

10 MS. POWELL MARTIN: Wonderful. Good morning. My
11 name is Apriel Powell Martin, and I'm speaking on behalf of
12 myself. I'm actually a constituent of Senator Miles, so I
13 do want to recognize him and his work on this committee.

14 I may not have a U.S. representative at this time
15 in CD 18, but I do have a voice, and I'm going to use it
16 today. For over 50 years, Texas has repeatedly failed to
17 draw race-neutral maps.

18 Now, because I am an attorney and I nerd out on
19 case proceedings, I've actually reviewed the filings in the
20 current case there in the Western District Court of Texas in
21 El Paso.

22 The state's recent, very recent July 16th, just
23 under two weeks ago, 2025 filing in the case responding to
24 allegations of racial gerrymandering raised by the NAACP
25 includes testimony from Senator Joan Huffman.

1 She stated that she did not examine racial shading
2 when drafting the congressional maps and the Senate maps.
3 Now, this statement, of course, is in direct conflict with
4 the July 7th, 2025, letter from the U.S. Department of
5 Justice, which explicitly informs the governor and the
6 attorney general that illegal racial gerrymandering occurred
7 in the construction of these maps.

8 So I ask you, as many others have, how can this be
9 true? Sadly, ironically, but not surprisingly, the DOJ's
10 conclusions co-opt decades of advocacy by brilliant legal
11 minds who have fought to protect marginalized communities
12 from precisely this type of disenfranchisement.

13 And yet, here we are again fighting to protect
14 fair and lawful representation. So I want to echo
15 Representative Gene Wu's statements that he made in Houston
16 recently that we don't want more gerrymandering as a result
17 of this redistricting process.

18 This is an attempt of what I have now coined
19 redis-tricking. So these efforts to crack and pack are not
20 only blatant and unnecessary, they're also expensive.
21 Texans are footing the bill for legal battles that are
22 current and for maps that have not even been publicly
23 released.

24 Racial gerrymandering is not just a political
25 tactic. It's a direct assault on the rights of people who

1 live, work, raise families, pay taxes, and invest in the
2 well-being of these communities.

3 So I call on every elected official and the courts
4 to entrust us with integrity of democracy, put an end to the
5 tricks, put an end to the manipulation of our maps, and
6 respect the voices of black and brown Texans who deserve to
7 be heard, not silenced. Thank you for this opportunity.

8 CHAIRPERSON KING: Thank you.

9 Members, any questions?

10 Hearing none, I'm going to go ahead and call up
11 the next panel.

12 Thank you for being here, by the way.

13 David Griggs, Destiny Sumani, Cecilia Fernandez,
14 Kellye McGarry, and Alexandro Arnal. Let me try that again.
15 David Griggs, Destiny Sumani, Cecilia Fernandez, Kellye
16 McGarry, and Alexandro Arnal.

17 And Mr. Griggs, why don't we start with you?

18 THE CLERK: Cecilia Fernandez, Kellye McGarry, and
19 Alexander.

20 CHAIRPERSON KING: Okay. Ms. Fernandez, thank
21 you. If you would just mute yours for right now.

22 Chair calls David Griggs.

23 MR. GRIGGS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Can you
24 hear me?

25 CHAIRPERSON KING: We certainly can. Welcome.

1 MR. GRIGGS: Thank you. Good morning,
2 Mr. Chairman, members of the committee. My name is David
3 Griggs. I live in Dallas County, and I am an attorney
4 currently in private practice and a longtime adjunct
5 professor of political science at Dallas College and
6 currently an adjunct professor of election law at the
7 University of North Texas Dallas College of Law.

8 And it is from my experience teaching election law
9 and specifically in reviewing the case precedents
10 surrounding the issues of partisan gerrymandering and race
11 and redistricting that I draw my comments today opposing
12 this mid-decade redistricting effort.

13 My main point for testifying is to reiterate some
14 of the comments, previous comments that you have received
15 from other law professors and legal experts that the
16 Department of Justice letter is a deliberate
17 misrepresentation of case law governing these issues and
18 should not serve as any kind of legitimate justification for
19 this reconsideration.

20 There were three cases that were mentioned in that
21 letter, first of which was *Allen v. Milligan*. And this was
22 a 2023 Supreme Court case which actually upheld the
23 applicability of Section 2 of the VRA.

24 And this was after Sections 4 and 5 were decimated
25 by the *Shelby County v. Holder* case in 2012. It was widely

1 hailed as a positive case for the future of enforcement of
2 Section 2. But the DOJ lawyers in that letter distort dicta
3 in the concurrence by Justice Kavanaugh to somehow create an
4 argument that the 2021 maps that you-all passed were somehow
5 race-based, and thus Texas would have to show, excuse me, a
6 compelling state interest to keep them. Now this is an
7 absurd argument. And seriously, it's a misreading of the
8 majority opinion.

9 The second case was Petteway v. Galveston County
10 that has already been spoken of today and Senator Hinojosa
11 asked some questions about it. It's a Fifth Circuit case
12 that expounded on coalition districts and what it takes for
13 a successful claim. This has been distorted as well.

14 Obviously, coalition districts are not eliminated.
15 They still exist. And the final case was Bartlett where it
16 talked about crossover districts and created a numerical
17 test. I'll just end with this. The Bartlett case clearly
18 gives legislatures a choice that they can use these types of
19 crossover districts and coalition districts when they are --
20 then they're free to do so.

21 So concluding, I just believe that the DOJ letter
22 is a deliberate misrepresentation and should not be
23 justification for what you're doing.

24 CHAIRPERSON KING: Thank you.

25 Members, any questions?

1 Seeing none, we appreciate you being here today.

2 MR. GRIGGS: Thank you.

3 CHAIRPERSON KING: Chair calls Destiny Sumani.

4 MS. SUMANI: Hi. Can you hear me?

5 CHAIRPERSON KING: Absolutely. Welcome.

6 CHAIRPERSON KING: Thank you. Good morning. My
7 name is Destiny Sumani, and I'm a rising senior from Houston
8 and an advocate focused on education and health equity. I'm
9 here to speak about how redistricting decisions have long
10 impacted and in many cases undercut fair representation in
11 West Texas.

12 Take Congressional District 23, which historically
13 included part of western El Paso County. That district was
14 at the center of the Perez vs. Abbott case, where a federal
15 district court initially found that the way Texas drew lines
16 intentionally diluted Latino voting power.

17 While the Supreme Court later upheld the 2013 map,
18 the fact remains that CD 23 has become a national example of
19 how sprawling districts stretch from El Paso County all the
20 way to San Antonio can group together communities with
21 vastly different needs, and effectively weaken regional
22 voices.

23 In the Panhandle, it's a different but related
24 issue. Rural voters are packed into massive districts like
25 CD 13 covering over 40 counties. And what does that mean?

1 It means that smaller towns get lost in the shuffle.

2 We see that in underfunded rural schools and
3 closed hospitals, as well as gaps in broadband access, which
4 are all symptoms of communities without responsive
5 representation.

6 All these consequences show up in the work I do
7 outside of school too. So across the U.S., about 1 in 5
8 teen girls report trouble affording period products and two-
9 thirds of low-income women say they've lacked the money to
10 buy them at least once a year.

11 In places where poverty is already high and policy
12 attention is low, like many parts of West Texas, these rates
13 are even worse. And if this kind of redistricting
14 continues, splitting up high-need communities or burying
15 them in districts too large and disconnected to serve them,
16 that already high rate of period poverty will only grow.

17 That's what happens when district maps don't
18 reflect the people living in them. West Texas needs
19 districts that are drawn with integrity, not just to pass
20 legal scrutiny, but to serve the communities on the ground.
21 Thank you.

22 CHAIRPERSON KING: Thank you for being here.

23 Members, any questions?

24 With that, the Chair calls Cecilia Fernandez.

25 Ma'am, if you'll just unmute.

1 MS. FERNANDEZ: Hi. Good morning.

2 CHAIRPERSON KING: Good morning. If you would
3 just please state your name, tell us if you're representing
4 any organization formally, and please proceed with your
5 testimony. And please try to hold it to two minutes.

6 MS. FERNANDEZ: Thank you. Good morning, members
7 of the committee. My name is Cecilia Fernandez. I am a
8 retired citizen who has lived in Texas for 51 years. I'm
9 here today not as a politician or policy expert, but as a
10 deeply concerned member of the public, someone who has lived
11 long enough to see how political decisions shape people's
12 lives for generations.

13 Before I continue, I'd like to note something. It
14 seems the hearings are testimonial in format, and while it
15 may not change the outcome, I believe the public deserves a
16 clear explanation.

17 What is the sudden urgency driving this
18 redistricting effort and what criteria are guiding the
19 process? Transparency and justification should not be
20 optional when the stakes are this high.

21 I've worked hard, raised a family, paid my taxes,
22 and contributed to this state. But I never thought that in
23 my later years, I'd be standing here fighting for something
24 so basic -- a fair and functioning democracy.

25 I'm here today because I'm worried. Not just for

1 myself, but for my children, my grandchildren, and everyone
2 who calls Texas home. When redistricting is manipulated to
3 serve those already in power rather than the people, we all
4 lose. Communities are silenced.

5 Neighborhoods like mine are split and deluded, and
6 our trust in government weakens. We, the people, deserve
7 fair maps, maps that reflect our communities, not ones that
8 are drawn behind closed doors to protect incumbents or
9 political agendas.

10 Redistricting should never be a tool to divide
11 voters or disenfranchise people based on race, age, income,
12 or party affiliation. As a senior, I've seen what happens
13 when people give up hope in the system, and I refuse to let
14 that happen on my watch.

15 I want a future where every vote matters, where
16 our voices are heard equally, and where those in power are
17 chosen by the people, not the other way around. Please do
18 not draw lines that divide us. Draw lines that reflect --

19 CHAIRPERSON KING: Ma'am, I'm sorry. I'm going to
20 have to stop you at that point.

21 MS. FERNANDEZ: Thank you for your time. And
22 thank you for listening to the people of Texas.

23 CHAIRPERSON KING: Thank you.

24 And members, any questions?

25 Hearing none, Chair calls Kellye McGarry.

1 MS. MCGARRY: Hello.

2 CHAIRPERSON KING: Good morning.

3 MS. MCGARRY: Hi. Thank you for your time today.

4 I really do appreciate it. Forgive me. I'm a little
5 nervous. I am a native Texan.

6 CHAIRPERSON KING: Well, don't be. Believe me.
7 If you knew us, you wouldn't be.

8 MS. MCGARRY: Okay. Thank you, thank you. I am a
9 native Texan, born and raised in various parts of Texas. I
10 have not enjoyed living in El Paso. I did do a few swim
11 meets and diving competitions there though. So that is my
12 familiarity with that.

13 Today, I'd like to use my time to read a press
14 release that came across my desk yesterday. I am a PR
15 communications consultant that graduated from UT Austin with
16 a journalism background. And so, I do still have some
17 points of contact in the media.

18 So I did receive this press release yesterday,
19 July 28th. It reads, "Attorney General Ken Paxton has filed
20 a legal petition against the New York Acting County Clerk
21 for Ulster County, Taylor Brook, to ensure that the radical
22 abortionist who sent abortion-inducing drugs to Texas is
23 held accountable."

24 "In December 2024, Attorney General Paxton sued
25 Dr. Margaret Carpenter for sending abortion-inducing drugs

1 to a Collin County resident which resulted in the killing of
2 an unborn child and serious medical complications for the
3 mother."

4 "As a result of the lawsuit, Attorney General
5 Paxton received a \$100,000 penalty and permanent injunction
6 against Dr. Carpenter. However, the Ulster County Clerk's
7 Office in New York has plainly rejected any attempt by Texas
8 to enforce the judgment and authorize collection of the
9 penalty."

10 CHAIRPERSON KING: Ma'am, if I --

11 MS. MCGARRY: "Attorney General Paxton has now
12 submitted a petition seeking a writ of mandamus to ensure
13 that" --

14 CHAIRPERSON KING: Ma'am, if I may? Forgive me
15 for interrupting, but could you please restrict your
16 testimony to the subject matter before the committee, which
17 is redistricting?

18 MS. MCGARRY: Okay. I yield my time.

19 CHAIRPERSON KING: Okay. Thank you. And just for
20 the record, could you please tell us your name and if you're
21 representing any organization?

22 MS. MCGARRY: I'm not representing any
23 organization. My name is Kellye Pritchard McGarry.

24 CHAIRPERSON KING: Thank you very much.

25 Members, any questions?

1 Thank you.

2 Chair calls Alexandro Arnal.

3 MR. ARNAL: Good morning. Can you hear me?

4 CHAIRPERSON KING: We certainly can. Welcome.

5 MR. ARNAL: Thank you. So good morning, Chair and
6 committee members. I want to thank Senator Blanco for
7 advocating for West Texas input in this critical process.
8 My name is Alex Arnal, a machine-learning engineer and proud
9 El Paso resident.

10 I'm here today to speak on behalf of effective
11 representation for all our West Texas communities. I can
12 only guess what some of you might be thinking about El Paso
13 -- remote employee people often ask me if our city -- the
14 opportunity to share what El Paso is.

15 We're a unified community of interest. Our
16 680,000 residents share something special -- a border
17 economy, a vibrant bilingual culture, deep international
18 trade relationships with Mexico, and of course, unique
19 immigration and border security concerns that define our
20 daily reality.

21 So here is the problem. Stretching us hundreds of
22 miles to San Antonio or carving us up into multiple pieces,
23 the result is the same. Our community's voice becomes
24 diluted.

25 The Voting Rights Act and federal courts have

1 repeatedly ruled that communities of interest like ours
2 should be kept together, not split apart for political
3 convenience. And this isn't just bad for El Paso; it's bad
4 governance that sets a dangerous precedent for all Texas
5 communities.

6 This isn't some abstract exercise and drawing
7 lines on a map. This is ensuring communities can elect
8 representatives who actually understand their priorities. I
9 urge you to do the right thing. Respect community
10 boundaries and keep our districts compact and coherent.

11 Every Texas community, whether we're talking about
12 urban border cities or rural Panhandle towns, deserves
13 representations that understands and serves their unique
14 needs. Thank you for your time and consideration.

15 CHAIRPERSON KING: Thank you.

16 Members, any questions?

17 Hearing none, I'll go ahead and call our next
18 panel. Fainot Pierre, Rita Beving, Jenny Solo, Ayaan
19 Moledina, and Leonel Ortega. I'll say it again. Leonel
20 Ortega, Ayaan Moledina, Jenny Solo, Rita Beving, and Fainot
21 Pierre.

22 Fainot Pierre, would you like to go ahead and
23 speak?

24 MR. PIERRE: Sure.

25 CHAIRPERSON KING: We'll bring you up first.

1 Thank you. So glad you're here. If you would please state
2 your name, tell us if you're representing any organization
3 formally, and then please try to hold your testimony to two
4 minutes, and thank you.

5 MR. PIERRE: Good morning. My name is Fainot
6 Pierre. I'm here representing myself, and I'm calling from
7 El Paso, Texas, and I believe Senator Blanco is
8 representative for us.

9 I'm reaching out to express my strong opposition
10 to the congressional redistricting map being pushed by
11 Republican, which I believe will undermine El Paso, where I
12 currently live.

13 And I believe the Republican push to redraw the
14 map in Texas is influenced by racism and also evoking
15 memories of historical injustice such as the poll tax, which
16 we used to have in Texas.

17 I think it's really unfair practices against black
18 and Latino by using things like cracking and packing, which
19 you often divided community like El Paso and other places in
20 Texas. And I urge you all to vote against that map, even
21 though we don't have a map yet. So whatever the potential
22 map that we're going to have, I urge you all to vote against
23 it. Thank you.

24 CHAIRPERSON KING: Members, any questions for the
25 witness?

1 Hearing none, thank you for being here.

2 Chair calls Rita Beving.

3 MS. BEVING: Can you hear me?

4 CHAIRPERSON KING: We can. Please proceed.

5 MS. BEVING: Good morning, Chairman King and
6 committee members. My name is Rita Beving, and I'm
7 representing myself. I'm against redistricting as, A, it is
8 mid-decade from the census; and B, I see the DOJ's arguments
9 to the state as contradictory to the state's current
10 position as reflected in the '21 -- 2021 passage of SB 6 and
11 the current 2021 redistricting court case.

12 In the DOJ letter to the governor and the AG, it
13 refers to race-based decisions in the last drawing of
14 district maps. So I went back to the Senate archives.

15 On October 8th, 2021, Senator Huffman's SB 6 was
16 up for a final vote regarding new congressional maps.
17 Senator Huffman's repeated remarks at least eight times in
18 the first 40 minutes of that session on her bill layout and
19 in response to questions to Senators Menendez, West, and
20 Miles was that the maps were drawn race blind.

21 Fast track now to the current redistricting court
22 case in El Paso. On June 10th, 2025, Senator Huffman
23 reaffirmed that these maps were drawn race blind in
24 testimony to a judge in the redistricting court case.

25 Yet now, Governor Abbott has stated that a redraw

1 of the congressional map is justified due to constitutional
2 concerns raised by the U.S. Department of Justice. The
3 state cannot have it both ways.

4 It would be intellectually dishonest for the
5 legislature to acquiesce to the DOJ and now redraw districts
6 based on the agency's race-based assertions when it is
7 repeatedly documented that the state has declared the 2021
8 maps were drawn race blind.

9 I ask that this body stand up to the federal
10 government's act of coercion and not pursue the question of
11 redistricting any further. Thank you.

12 CHAIRPERSON KING: Thank you.

13 Members, any questions?

14 Hearing none, thank you for being here with us
15 today.

16 Chair calls Jenny Solo.

17 MS. SOLO: Hi, Chairman and members of Committee.
18 Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. My name is
19 Jenny Solo, and I'm a resident of El Paso. I'm representing
20 myself, but I do have over 100,000 followers on To Do El
21 Paso interested in this process and 82 million Google views.

22 I'm actually taking time off from the Google
23 Products Expert Panel right now to testify today because
24 it's that important. I'd like to begin by thanking Senator
25 Blanco for notifying the public and making sure that we can

1 participate in this process.

2 I'm a stay-at-home mom with two young kids and
3 being able to testify online is the only reason I can be
4 here today. Technology has given many of us, especially
5 caregivers and working families, the ability to finally have
6 a voice in spaces that were once out of reach.

7 I'm not here to defend party lines or protect
8 political strongholds, but to advocate for a more engaged,
9 better-served community, one that reflects the diverse
10 people who actually live here.

11 I want to acknowledge that I speak as a minority
12 in a majority-Hispanic district, which gives me a unique
13 perspective. I also want to add that I also lived in Harris
14 County before moving to El Paso, and I guess my point
15 applies there as well.

16 While in El Paso is seen as politically unified,
17 we are still richly diverse and not everyone feels equally
18 represented or heard. El Paso is home to approximately
19 679,000 residents, making it the sixth-largest city in
20 Texas.

21 While 81 percent of our population identifies as
22 Hispanic or Latino, our community is far more diverse than a
23 single statistic. We are home to military families through
24 Fort Bliss, to immigrants, multi-generational households,
25 and to black, Asian, indigenous, and multiracial Texans, all

1 of whom deserve a government that sees and serves them.

2 For decades, El Paso has been represented in ways
3 that they're considered a safe district, but political
4 safety hasn't always translated into real responsiveness.
5 We still face wasteful public spending on vanity products
6 that benefit few well-connected developers and contractors
7 like the proposed Deck Plaza, while basic public needs are
8 left underfunded, ongoing health care shortages, especially
9 in areas like mental health, maternal care, and pediatrics,
10 under-resourced schools, and limited access to meaningful
11 job opportunities for young adults, and a growing sense of
12 voter disillusionment because the outcomes feel
13 predetermined and stops people participating entirely.

14 This isn't about district lines; it's about
15 rebuilding trust. And redistricting, if done fairly and
16 transparently, can be a reset not to weaken our community
17 but to reengage it. And if this process creates more
18 competitive districts, it can bring accounting back to the
19 conversation and force leaders to earn, not inherit their
20 seats.

21 I don't support gerrymandering or pillow games
22 behind closed doors, but I also don't support a system where
23 elected officials protect their powers while ignoring the
24 people who gave them. And let's use it to build a system
25 that includes everyone, not just ones with the most money or

1 connections. Thank you so much.

2 CHAIRPERSON KING: Thank you.

3 Members, any questions?

4 Thank you for being here today.

5 Chair calls Ayaan Moledina, and I'm going to ask
6 that everybody try to be more attentive to keeping it to two
7 minutes. We want to make sure we get to everyone timely
8 today.

9 MR. MOLEDINA: Good morning.

10 CHAIRPERSON KING: Good morning. If you would,
11 please state your name, tell us if you're representing any
12 organization, and please try to hold your testimony to two
13 minutes.

14 MR. MOLEDINA: Yes, sir. My name is Ayaan
15 Moledina, and I am here on behalf of Students Engaged in
16 Advancing Texas, and I am a 16-year-old high school
17 sophomore from Austin.

18 I'm extremely concerned that the legislature is
19 choosing to redraw our congressional maps after just a few
20 years using the same census as in 2020. Asian Americans
21 like myself are the fastest-growing population in Texas, but
22 we don't have updated census data to use at this time to
23 ensure we are accurately represented.

24 Texas students who aren't of voting age also
25 deserve accurate representatives who are truly

1 representative of the community in which they come from.

2 That means similar identities, similar values, and people
3 who will listen to their constituents no matter if they
4 agree with you 100 percent or not.

5 My concern is that when we start to unnecessarily
6 redraw maps that are already drawn in favor of one side, we
7 are going to end up with candidates who are picked by those
8 who draw the maps and feel that they don't have to serve
9 their constituents at all.

10 These congressional representatives are in charge
11 of casework to ensure that the needs of their citizens are
12 met, not just on policy issues, but on nonpartisan cases
13 involving federal agencies.

14 When I worked in the district office for my
15 congressman, I received calls from people desperate to get
16 their passports expedited to visit dying relatives, or to be
17 present for the birth of a grandchild. That's the kind of
18 work congressional offices do every day -- casework that
19 doesn't depend on politics, only on compassion.

20 But if we elect officials who feel invincible
21 because of unfair maps, what happens to those families when
22 their representative just doesn't care to help? As Texans,
23 we believe in fair play and doing what's right, not just
24 what's politically convenient.

25 I urge you to uphold your duty to all Texans,

1 especially the next generation of voters like myself.
2 Redrawing maps without updated census data undermines the
3 principles of equal representation guaranteed by the
4 constitution and threatens compliance with the Voting Rights
5 Act.

6 Any good political party would want more seats in
7 Congress, especially with the slim majority now. But
8 America is a democracy. Backroom dealings and dirty
9 politics are not how we achieve these goals. Hard work and
10 winning over voters in non-politically-drawn districts is
11 the way to ensure that.

12 I respectfully urge you to vote against any
13 attempts to redraw the congressional districts outside of
14 the --

15 CHAIRPERSON KING: Thank you. I need to stop you
16 at that point, sir.

17 MR. MOLEDINA: -- guided by the U.S. Census.
18 Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON KING: Thank you for being here.

20 Members, any questions for the witness?

21 Hearing none, Chair calls Leonel Ortega. If you
22 would just unmute.

23 MR. ORTEGA: Hello?

24 CHAIRPERSON KING: Yes, there you are.

25 MR. ORTEGA: Can you hear me?

1 CHAIRPERSON KING: We certainly can.

2 MR. ORTEGA: Yes. Good morning. My name is
3 Leonel Ortega. I am a veteran, a disabled veteran. And I
4 am a resident of El Paso, Texas. I've been a resident for
5 the last 14 years. And I know I heard -- I already heard
6 everyone give their arguments and everything.

7 And I don't want to waste much of your valuable
8 time, but all I'm going to ask you, I'm going to keep this
9 very simple. Number one, there was an astronaut that was in
10 space and he said something very beautiful.

11 And I hope that you guys don't ever forget. He
12 said, the planet looks beautiful from here. Why does it
13 look so beautiful? Because there's no lines between the
14 countries. You could -- you don't even -- you can't even
15 tell where the countries are because there's no lines.

16 The lines were made by human beings. And I wish
17 that there were no lines. I wish that we could all get
18 along without being so divisive and so polarized.

19 Like everybody else has said, everybody deserves a
20 fair treatment. Why can't we just get along and do what
21 we're supposed to be doing? Everyone that is here right now
22 listening to this panel, you are a civil servant. You are
23 here to serve us.

24 It doesn't matter what color you are, red or blue,
25 you're supposed to look past that color and serve us humbly,

1 ethically, and morally. Right. Don't ever forget that.

2 And the last thing I'm going to ask you is if
3 you're going to go in a ring and you're going to box, put
4 your gloves on and fight right. You don't need to redraw
5 the lines or nothing. Put on your gloves right and fight
6 right ethically and morally. Okay? Leave us alone.

7 Do not try to regroup us. Do not try to divide us
8 more than we already are. You are dividing us. Okay?
9 Thank you very much.

10 CHAIRPERSON KING: Thank you.

11 Members, any questions?

12 Thank you for being here today.

13 I'm going to call the next panel. Chair calls
14 Greg Ozimek, Jeremy Hendricks, Santos Limon, Cheryll Felder,
15 Eugenia Gonzalez. Let me do that again. Greg Ozimek,
16 Jeremy Hendricks, Santos Limon, Cheryll Felder, Eugenia
17 Gonzalez.

18 VICE CHAIRPERSON CREIGHTON: Okay. Greg, we'll
19 begin with you.

20 MR. OZIMEK: Yeah. Can you hear me?

21 VICE CHAIRPERSON CREIGHTON: Yes. You may begin.

22 MR. OZIMEK: Outstanding. I'm in West Texas here.
23 I'm in Congressional District 23. I used to be in
24 Congressional District 16. And this redistricting, the
25 previous redistricting divided El Paso County in half. And

1 now District 16 is controlled by Escobar, who describes her
2 district as Ellis Island.

3 And 50 percent of Congressional District 16 is
4 literally illegal aliens. Without a doubt, since I've been
5 here 15 years, and I do a little investigation at the ground
6 level, I would have to say that's an absolute probability.

7 However, Congressional District 23, where I'm
8 located, is entirely too huge. It's gigantic. It has --
9 it's not viable for the enormous size of it. It can't even
10 -- we can't be represented because of the enormity.

11 It's, like, over ten counties. And although Tony
12 Gonzales is doing his best, the limitations of the enormity
13 is causing problems. So, if you want to divide any district
14 or split any congressional district, 23 would be on the top
15 of the list here in West Texas somehow.

16 And we're not getting representation. I mean, I'm
17 at the farthest western edge of Congressional District 23,
18 and my neighbors and I don't like it. And again, maybe you
19 should consider dividing Congressional District 16, which is
20 right next to us, because it's basically run by the cartel.

21 Fort Bliss is run by the cartel, and the entire
22 territory is compromised. I'm not budging. That's my
23 opinion. I guess that's all I have to say. Can you reply
24 in confirmation, please?

25 VICE CHAIRPERSON CREIGHTON: Okay. Thank you for

1 your testimony.

2 Members, any questions?

3 Appreciate your testimony today.

4 MR. OZIMEK: Thank you very much.

5 VICE CHAIRPERSON CREIGHTON: Now the Chair will
6 recognize Jeremy Hendricks to testify next. Mr. Hendricks,
7 it looks like you're unmuted. You may begin.

8 MR. HENDRICKS: Good morning, Mr. Chairman and
9 members of the committee. Thank you for your time. I'm
10 Jeremy Hendricks and I'm with the Laborers International
11 Union of North America. LIUNA represents the hard-working
12 men and women who build, maintain, and serve every corner of
13 Texas.

14 They believe in hard work, honesty, and fairness.
15 And we truly hope that you still do too, because sadly, this
16 proposal doesn't reflect those values. It sidesteps the
17 census. It abandons transparency, disenfranchises minority
18 communities, and it reeks of another backroom deal with no
19 maps to review.

20 And this is happening when Texans are knee deep in
21 crisis and still mourning our dead, which is just absolutely
22 awe inspiring that this is happening. Families are
23 displaced by floods. They're scraping by without health
24 care. They're struggling to feed their kids, facing sky-
25 high utility bills.

1 And instead of help, they're getting maps and
2 motives, ulterior motives. And we know what happens when
3 you redraw lines for political gain. It slices up working
4 communities. It weakens their voice. It shifts power into
5 places disconnected from their struggle, folks who have had
6 to never rebuild with their own two hands or live paycheck
7 to paycheck or struggle for that next meal.

8 So let's be honest. This isn't about fairness.
9 There is no actual need here. No Texan, no matter their
10 politics, should ever kowtow to a tyrant and a tactic that
11 undermines our shared Texas values and hurts the good folks
12 of Texas.

13 This redistricting plan doesn't build trust; it
14 breaks it. So if you support this, you're telling workers,
15 you're telling flood victims, you're telling families in
16 need that partisan politics comes before people.

17 And to me, that's not a good look. We deserve
18 better. So please, let's roll up our sleeves. Let's get
19 together. Let's work together to rebuild the state, not
20 remap it. Thank you and take care.

21 VICE CHAIRPERSON CREIGHTON: Appreciate your
22 testimony.

23 Members, any questions?

24 Eugenia Gonzalez, if you will unmute and you may
25 begin your testimony. We need you to unmute. We can't hear

1 you just yet.

2 MS. GONZALEZ: Can you hear me now?

3 VICE CHAIRPERSON CREIGHTON: We can. You may
4 begin.

5 MS. GONZALEZ: Thank you. Yes, thank you for this
6 opportunity to speak for my community. I want to tell you
7 about my lived experiences being a citizen of this great
8 State of Texas. I was raised in El Paso where I have chosen
9 to live for the last -- for the majority of my life.

10 VICE CHAIRPERSON CREIGHTON: If you would --

11 MS. GONZALEZ: School and work have taken --

12 VICE CHAIRPERSON CREIGHTON: -- if you would,
13 please state your name --

14 MS. GONZALEZ: I'm sorry.

15 VICE CHAIRPERSON CREIGHTON: -- for the record.
16 Yes. And who you represent.

17 MS. GONZALEZ: Almost right. My name is Dr.
18 Eugenia Gonzalez.

19 VICE CHAIRPERSON CREIGHTON: Very good. Go ahead.

20 MS. GONZALEZ: Yes. I want to speak for my
21 community and for what I believe is right. I want to tell
22 you about the lived experiences being a citizen of this
23 great State of Texas. I was born and raised in El Paso
24 where I have been -- where I've chosen to live for the
25 majority of my adult life.

1 School and work have taken me to also live in
2 Galveston, Dallas, and Lubbock, Texas, as well as Fort
3 Collins, Colorado. I grew up knowing that El Paso was far
4 from all other cities in Texas.

5 I also knew that we have a very diverse population
6 that is influenced by the fact that we are a border city and
7 home to a very large army base. The city is located in the
8 desert southwest surrounded by many mountains that protect
9 us from many natural disasters that makes us different from
10 other regions in Texas.

11 The diverse population and geographical region are
12 but a few of the things that make the city very different
13 from other cities in Texas. The first time I left El Paso
14 was to attend school at the University of Texas Medical
15 Branch Health Sciences Center in Galveston, Texas,
16 approximately 850 miles away from home.

17 I was the only person in my class and in my dorm
18 who had traveled that distance to attend school. Some of my
19 classmates were quick to point out our differences and were
20 not shy to express their displeasure with these differences.

21 However, I also learned that we shared many of the
22 same concerns, goals, and aspirations in life. It was also
23 evident that there were significant differences between us
24 that went beyond the physical characteristics.

25 The differences I perceived influenced our

1 decisions and ultimately our actions. And I believe these
2 differences came from our lived experiences, the communities
3 in which we were raised.

4 Therefore, our differences were not just about
5 geographical distance or proximity. That's what makes this
6 process very wrong. Whether I lived in Galveston, Dallas,
7 or Lubbock, Texas, I came to understand that living within
8 any given community influences our decisions about what
9 matter to our community and to each of us personally.

10 VICE CHAIRPERSON CREIGHTON: Okay.

11 MS. GONZALEZ: One of the --

12 VICE CHAIRPERSON CREIGHTON: We'll have to stop
13 there, but thank you so much for your testimony.

14 Members --

15 MS. GONZALEZ: That's fine.

16 VICE CHAIRPERSON CREIGHTON: -- any questions.
17 Thank you for your testimony.

18 Cheryll Felder. The Chair recognizes you to begin
19 your testimony.

20 MS. FELDER: Good morning, Senator King and
21 senators. My name is Cheryll Felder. I'm a retired public
22 school administrator residing here in El Paso. I am asking
23 you to reconsider your vote for redistricting at this time
24 without knowing what the map will consist of.

25 I appreciate the fact that you're asking for

1 input, but to make an intelligent decision, we need to know
2 what the map is going to look like because El Paso has
3 already been disenfranchised at the state level by not
4 granting us an additional district to represent us in the
5 Texas House.

6 How can a map be withdrawn without a decision from
7 the current court case? Be nonpartisan in your thinking and
8 do what is best for all Texas. The redistricting efforts of
9 those specific districts outlined in the DOG letter will
10 affect all Texas.

11 And we have a long history of voter suppression
12 and discrimination. Let's not go back. Let's go forward
13 and think about the people of color who have been denied
14 access throughout history.

15 Vote no and stand up to the individuals who want
16 to disenfranchise us, the voters. Give us the
17 representation that we deserve based on population growth,
18 not on personal opinions. Thank you.

19 VICE CHAIRPERSON CREIGHTON: Appreciate your
20 testimony. Members, unless there are questions, we'll move
21 to Santos Limon. You may begin.

22 MR. LIMON: Good evening to everyone. Senators,
23 Senator King, thank you for the invite. My words are going
24 to be very, very simple.

25 VICE CHAIRPERSON CREIGHTON: Please state your

1 name again for the record, sir.

2 MR. LIMON: Yes, for the record, my name is Santos
3 Limon. As a former congressional candidate for District 23,
4 Texas largest congressional district and our nation's
5 toughest congressional district to run in. And but my
6 statement is real simple, real quick.

7 And I'll mention a few examples. My only thing,
8 my only question to the senators and everyone involved in
9 the redistricting of the congressional seats here in the
10 State of Texas is if we can just please just call it or name
11 it for the people to know the intention of the
12 redistricting, which, whether it's a real redistricting or
13 is it gerrymandering?

14 Those are the two questions I have. What is it?
15 What is the intention? And I'll use some references, some
16 case references.

17 In 1962, Baker v. Carr; in 1964, Reynolds v. Sims;
18 in 1964, Wesberry v. Sanders; in 1986, Thornberg v. Gingles;
19 in 1993, Shaw v. Reno; in 1995, Miller v. Johnson; in 1986,
20 Davis v. Bender; in 2004, Vieth v. Jubelirer; in 2013,
21 Shelby County v. Holder; in 2017, Cooper v. Harris; 2019,
22 Rucho v. Common Cause.

23 VICE CHAIRPERSON CREIGHTON: Mr. Limon, that's all
24 of your time today for your testimony. Thank you for being
25 with us today.

1 Members, any questions?

2 At this time, the Chair will call the next panel,
3 beginning with Kristin Hook, Maya Sanchez, Brian Canny, Tim
4 Dowling, Paola Ramirez-Santos. We'll begin with Kristin
5 Hook.

6 MS. HOOK: Thank you so much for this opportunity.
7 My name is Dr. Kristin Hook, and I'm here representing
8 myself. I'm a native Texan, a concerned scientist, and a
9 former congressional candidate for Texas' 21st Congressional
10 District, which includes Kerrville and the communities
11 devastated by the recent floods.

12 I oppose redistricting Texas maps based on
13 ideologies instead of data. I urge the members of this
14 committee not to aid and abet a political power grab that
15 harms Texans and our democracy.

16 Today I'm thinking of the flood victims. And when
17 I campaigned in Kerr County last year, residents told me
18 their top concern was the subversion of democracy. And
19 that's exactly what's at stake here.

20 This special session should be focused on flood
21 victims, but instead Trump and Abbott are exploiting this
22 natural disaster and the families still reeling from
23 devastating losses to ram through a partisan agenda that
24 allows them to cling to power in next year's elections.

25 This mid-census gerrymander attempt is a slap in

1 the face to Kerr County and Texans everywhere. I've seen
2 what happens personally when maps are gerrymandered.
3 Constituents have no one to show up to town halls to hear
4 their concerns and no one to advocate for them in the halls
5 of power.

6 Yeah, I'm looking at you, Chip Roy. Earlier,
7 Chairman King asked why people think Republicans are racist.
8 But did you know that every single decade since the Voting
9 Rights Act was passed in 1965, the State of Texas has been
10 found guilty of violating it by diluting the voices of black
11 and Latino Texans?

12 Right now, in El Paso, the last redistricting
13 plans by this legislature are in the courts being challenged
14 for the exact same thing. So if you approve this
15 redistricting plan, this committee could set a new record
16 for violating the Voting Rights Act not once, but twice in a
17 single decade.

18 Is that the legacy that you want to leave behind?
19 Everyone on this committee was elected by Texans, not Donald
20 Trump, not Greg Abbott. So ask yourself, who do you work
21 for? Are you here to serve democracy or to serve tyrants?

22 Instead of gerrymandering our maps to take a
23 wrecking ball to our democracy, this committee should work
24 to put an end to partisan gerrymandering by creating an
25 independent redistricting commission to produce fairer and

1 more competitive maps. Thank you for your time. We're
2 counting on you to do the right thing.

3 VICE CHAIRPERSON CREIGHTON: Appreciate your
4 testimony.

5 Members, any questions?

6 Maya Sanchez, we'll move on to your testimony. We
7 see that you've unmuted. And please begin.

8 MS. SANCHEZ: Good morning, Chair and committee.
9 Thank you for the time. And I want to give a special thanks
10 to Senator Cesar Blanco for making me aware of this hearing
11 today. I'm representing myself, again, Maya Sanchez.

12 I live in Congressional District 23 and of course,
13 Senator Cesar Blanco's District of 29. I used to work for a
14 city that was actually a brand-new city and was only
15 represented in this last census.

16 However, having our representative, our
17 congressional representative come and actually hear our
18 constituency was a very difficult thing to do simply because
19 the district was so large.

20 It took him a full two years to come and have a
21 town hall with the help of the City of San Elizario almost
22 at the end of his first term. And even at that, it was
23 right -- it was January 3rd, right after the holidays, so
24 nobody showed up.

25 So, yes. Does congressional redistricting need to

1 happen? Yes, absolutely. We are grouped with San Antonio
2 when I work in El Paso. However, doing it at almost a
3 directive of our president is not the best way to do this.

4 We should reconsider based on data, based on
5 communities, and not based on a directive. So I really hope
6 that you take into consideration all the voices you're
7 hearing today that are really urging you to do this in a
8 fair manner.

9 So doing it mid, you know, based on 2020 data is
10 -- I hope you can see why it seems a little fishy to your
11 constituency. So that's really all I wanted to say, is that
12 you really keep in mind making sure that the representation
13 is one vote, one person. Thank you for your time.

14 VICE CHAIRPERSON CREIGHTON: Thank you for your
15 testimony.

16 Senator Blanco.

17 MR. BLANCO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

18 Thank you, Mayor Sanchez, for your testimony. I
19 just have one question for you. Have you received any
20 feedback from residents or any stakeholders indicating that
21 their community has been split or their shared interests
22 have been diluted across multiple districts?

23 MS. SANCHEZ: Absolutely. And to be honest with
24 you, the way our community is represented in Congress, most
25 people are disenfranchised because they don't feel that

1 they're truly being represented.

2 Because, you know, like I said, when you're
3 grouped in with a city that's almost eight hours away from
4 your congressional district, it's very difficult to feel
5 like you're truly being represented.

6 MR. BLANCO: And can you speak to the need for
7 that federal representation? I know San Elizario has --
8 there's a lot of growth. It is traditionally a farm and
9 ranch community. However, there's a lot of development now
10 happening. Can you speak to that and how important it is to
11 have someone at the federal level that will address these
12 concerns?

13 MS. SANCHEZ: Absolutely. So it has traditionally
14 been known as a rural community. It isn't any longer. The
15 east side of the County of El Paso has grown exponentially.
16 There are many, many residential subdivisions, as well as
17 commercial and warehousing that has gone up in our
18 communities.

19 And so, we no longer consider ourselves
20 agricultural and farm and ranch in nature. We truly are a
21 suburb of El Paso. And so for the bulk of us to feel like
22 we just don't have representation in Congress, it's very,
23 very difficult.

24 Now, I will say, though, however, feeling very,
25 very disenfranchised, just recently, our congressman did

1 make an effort to show some input in our community, so we
2 are receiving appropriations on his behalf. But again, how
3 long has he been in office where this is the first time that
4 actual action is being taken on our behalf?

5 MR. BLANCO: Well, thank you, Mayor. I know
6 you're no longer serving, but you did an excellent job there
7 --

8 MS. SANCHEZ: I appreciate it. Thank you.

9 MR. BLANCO: -- at San Elizario. Thank you.
10 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

11 CHAIRPERSON KING: Thank you, Senator. Any more
12 questions for the witness?

13 Mayor, as Senator Blanco said, thank you so much
14 for being here with us today. And by the way, for everyone
15 who is watching online, you may see us get up and walk out
16 and come back in a little bit later. Please don't take that
17 as any reflection on our interest in the hearing.

18 We just have to stretch our legs every now and
19 then or grab a cup of coffee and -- but know that in the
20 back, we have monitors as well as audio so we can continue
21 to hear even if we're in the back room for a few minutes.

22 And again, we have a lot of people that are in the
23 queue to testify. And so, we're going to continue to try to
24 hold testimony to two minutes. And I appreciate that
25 everybody's been working hard at doing that.

1 Chair now calls Brian Canny, Brian Canny.
2 Mr. Canny, if you would, state your name and who you
3 represent, if an organization, and please try to hold your
4 testimony to the required two minutes.

5 MR. CANNY: All right. Thank you very much. My
6 name is Brian Canny, and I am here representing myself. Are
7 you able to hear me?

8 CHAIRPERSON KING: Oh, absolutely. Go ahead.

9 MR. CANNY: Okay. Great. Thank you. Okay. A
10 lot of great stuff has been said. So hopefully, this is --
11 I can hopefully bring a new angle to this. But in general,
12 I oppose this immoral and unjust mid-decade push to
13 redistrict.

14 We know why we're here. An unpopular billionaire
15 has weaponized the DOJ against Texas to give him five more
16 Republican seats that he can control, just so he does not
17 have to face any consequences for his bad policies and past
18 indiscretions.

19 So proceeding with this redistricting would invite
20 more chaos into the state. Our maps are already twisted and
21 contorted by ongoing Republican efforts to gerrymander this
22 state to hold on to power.

23 I've heard a few people testify in support of
24 gerrymandering, but you know, even those few conservative
25 citizens I've heard supporting -- testifying in support of

1 redistricting are doing so in hopes that you will fix past
2 gerrymandering actions.

3 You put Plantersville in the same district as Katy
4 and North Austin. You put Nacogdoches in the same district
5 as Round Rock, Krugerville, and Huntsville, all in an effort
6 to carve out safe Republican seats.

7 It is telling that your own supporters are calling
8 in asking for fairer and more representative maps. And I
9 understand their frustration. I'm in District 10, and our
10 representative is MIA. So, I mean, I'm at least hearing
11 some bipartisan support and gerrymandering in Texas in favor
12 of fair maps.

13 And fair maps are created by independent
14 redistricting committees, not bipartisan actors at the
15 bequest of outside influencers. If you proceed with this
16 immoral and unjust redistricting act, it will be remembered
17 as an inflection point, a point at which we all open up our
18 maps and the fundamental right to vote to hack and slash
19 undemocratic partisan politics.

20 And it will happen not just in Texas, but across
21 the nation. What you do now won't end here. You can be
22 remembered as one who undermined voting rights, who
23 effectively disenfranchised many of your fellow Texans and
24 supporters and precipitated in a decline in democracy
25 throughout the country.

1 Or you can be remembered as someone who held the
2 line and stood up for rights. I urge you to take that
3 latter path. Let's, you know, take the time to fix the
4 whole process by creating an independent redistricting
5 committee that will use data and understand, you know, the
6 communities that they're representing. Thank you very much.

7 CHAIRPERSON KING: Thank you.

8 Members, any questions?

9 Hearing none, the Chair calls Tim Dowling.

10 MR. DOWLING: Good morning, Senators. Can you
11 hear me?

12 CHAIRPERSON KING: We can. Please proceed.

13 MR. DOWLING: My name is Tim Dowling. I'm
14 testifying only on my own behalf. Before retirement, I
15 practiced law in Texas for 42 years. The DOJ letter caused
16 this redistricting. That letter is based on the Fifth
17 Circuit's Petteway decision.

18 The letter's Petteway analysis is flagrantly,
19 fatally flawed, so the reason for this redistricting
20 evaporates. This is the letter's key sentence. Quote,
21 "Post-Petteway, the congressional districts at issue are
22 nothing more than vestiges of an unconstitutional, racially
23 gerrymandered past."

24 Let's examine this conclusion. First, the
25 Petteway court twice said it was not reaching any

1 constitutional issue. The court emphasized this when it
2 sent the case back to consider, quote, "intentional
3 discrimination and racial gerrymandering claims," close
4 quote. Petteway simply did not address gerrymandering at
5 all.

6 Second, all Petteway held was that two or more
7 minority groups can't combine to create a viable unit that
8 can bring a vote dilution claim under the VRA. That,
9 however, does not mean that a district that was created in
10 2021 that has a majority of different minority groups when
11 combined violates the VRA or the constitution.

12 Third, the letter's assertion that racially-based
13 gerrymandering was done as a claim that Texas lied when it
14 told everyone that the lines were drawn race blind. Assume
15 you're one of the judges in the El Paso case. Texas has
16 vehemently argued that race was not considered.

17 Yet, Texas, almost immediately after it received
18 the letter contending otherwise, concludes, I've got to go
19 redistrict in light of the letter. Texas' proper response
20 to the letter was we didn't draw lines based on race, so go
21 away.

22 If I was one of the El Paso judges, I could
23 readily conclude that Texas deciding to redistrict now is an
24 admission that race was used to draw the 2021 lines. Since
25 the way those lines were drawn, with there being three

1 majority-Anglo districts for every Hispanic-majority
2 district, Hispanic Texans were harmed and that violates the
3 VRA.

4 And since that was done intentionally, Texas also
5 violated the constitution. So redistricting now, oddly
6 enough, will lead the federal court to ruling against Texas.
7 Redistricting now is six years early. If the governor's
8 call obligates you to redistrict, move a line 100 yards in
9 the middle of a desert or forest and call it a day. Thank
10 you. I'd be happy to answer any questions you have.

11 CHAIRPERSON KING: Members, any questions?

12 Hearing none, thank you for being here today.

13 Chair calls Paola Ramirez-Santos.

14 MS. RAMIREZ-SANTOS: Good morning, Chairman King
15 and committee members. My name is Paola Ramirez-Santos, and
16 I'm representing myself as a constituent. I'm an Air Force
17 veteran and proud resident of El Paso, Texas in
18 Congressional District 16.

19 I'm testifying today in strong opposition to the
20 legislature's attempt to redistrict our congressional
21 districts mid census. El Paso has long been overlooked and
22 marginalized when it comes to decisions made in Austin and
23 even at the federal level.

24 The fact that this hearing was called on such
25 short notice makes it feel like an afterthought and only

1 reinforces what many of us already feel, that our community
2 is not a priority.

3 You-all cannot claim accessibility and
4 transparency on this matter when we are given only four
5 hearings with no maps available for review. You mentioned
6 how critical it is to listen to Texans when it comes to
7 redistricting.

8 So let us be heard. Don't silence us. This
9 redistricting proposal is unlawful and a threat to the
10 rights, resources, and voices of black, brown, indigenous,
11 immigrant, and working Texas -- working class Texans.

12 El Paso is a unique and vibrant community with a
13 distinct cultural identity. Bills that are passed on the
14 federal level are directly impacting us. El Pasoans may
15 lose their health care coverage and we are seeing fear
16 instilled in our community as a result of the militarization
17 of the border due to immigration enforcement activity.

18 We deserve representation that understands us,
19 lives among us, and fights for us, not someone chosen
20 through manipulated maps that are designed to dilute our
21 political power.

22 I do not want to be represented by someone who
23 doesn't know my community or cares about our needs. We
24 already face that reality too often. Redrawing four
25 majority-minority districts using racial gerrymandering as a

1 justification is absurd and it contradicts claims in the
2 ongoing litigation.

3 District lines should preserve and protect the
4 needs of communities within them, especially historically
5 disenfranchised communities. Thank you all for your time
6 and consideration. Thank you, Senator Blanco, for your
7 efforts to inform and support the community.

8 CHAIRPERSON KING: Thank you.

9 Members, any questions?

10 Thank you for being here today.

11 Let me go ahead and call up the next panel. Jesus
12 Moreno, Deanna Maldonado -- looks like Rocha. Is that --
13 sorry. It's partly blocked off on the screen. Rocha.
14 Bianca Arvin-Eagle, Octavio Manzano, and Amy Donchey. I'll
15 say that again. Jesus Moreno, Deanna Maldonado-Rocha,
16 Bianca Arvin-Eagle, and Octavio Manzano, and Amy Donchey.

17 Mr. Moreno, do you want to go ahead and go first?
18 You'll simply need to unmute. Mr. Moreno, it's -- if you'd
19 make sure you're unmuted and then begin to speak, please.

20 MR. MORENO: Hello.

21 CHAIRPERSON KING: There you are. Perfect. If
22 you'd please state your name, who you represent, if you're
23 representing --

24 MR. MORENO: Yes. Can you-all hear me?

25 CHAIRPERSON KING: -- an organization, and try to

1 hold your testimony to two minutes.

2 MR. MORENO: Okay. Can you-all hear me now?

3 CHAIRPERSON KING: Absolutely. Go ahead. Are you
4 unable to hear us?

5 MR. MORENO: Hello?

6 CHAIRPERSON KING: Mr. Moreno, I think you may be
7 watching the livestream, which has a delay. If you would
8 please look at the video from the Zoom audio and that should
9 sync us up.

10 MR. MORENO: Sounds good.

11 CHAIRPERSON KING: You can go ahead and proceed.

12 MR. MORENO: Okay. All right. Good morning,
13 Chairman. Good morning, Senators. First and foremost, I
14 want to thank you-all for hearing us and allowing us to come
15 up here and speak. And shout out to Senator Blanco.

16 But let me speak real quickly because I have a lot
17 to say. My name is Jesus Moreno. I am communications
18 director for the College Democrats and a community advocate
19 across El Paso.

20 I want to speak to you-all on an article from the
21 Texas Tribune on July 11th, 2025. It speaks of that report
22 the DOJ concluded that the four congressional districts in
23 Houston and Fort Worth were unconstitutionally, racially
24 gerrymandered.

25 And even Governor Abbott acknowledged these

1 concerns, despite earlier claims that these maps were race
2 blind. I understand, Senators, that there was lots of
3 issues being discussed or offenses discussed prior to this
4 committee that offense was taken over race, but there's much
5 evidence proving that it is.

6 I say this because it matters that these districts
7 are not just a matter of partisan politics, but it's a
8 fundamental right of Texans, especially black and Latino
9 voters, when we have an equal voice in our government.

10 Secondly, I want to speak on accountability.
11 Instead of addressing these constitutional concerns with
12 transparency and integrity, this committee under Republican
13 leadership has moved forward as if nothing is wrong.

14 I understand that these are just discussions.
15 There's no official map, and that we're solely hearing. But
16 the narrative has consistently been that this is going to
17 take away more voting access, more rights, more
18 representation of those in minorities districts, of those
19 who live in areas that don't have enough representation.

20 I understand that there's previous people who have
21 spoken before and they don't have the right conception, but
22 there's ethical issues that's so loud. Senators, I speak to
23 you without any hats. In all serious seriousness, I have
24 not heard any positive actions, any pros to this
25 redistricting.

1 It is insane to believe that this is somehow going
2 to positively affect us without any proof. I agree that we
3 need secure borders, economic development, and fiscal
4 responsibility. But making it harder to choose my
5 representation is unjust.

6 And if the maps aren't amongst your body, then
7 what do we ask these questions for? I'll just ask that you-
8 all do not proceed with this. And if you do, make it fair
9 and reasonable, solely reasonable.

10 CHAIRPERSON KING: Okay.

11 MR. MORENO: Because most likely --

12 CHAIRPERSON KING: Let me stop you at that point,
13 sir. Thank you. I know it's hard to get it all in within
14 two minutes, but you made your point very clearly.

15 Members, any questions?

16 Thank you again.

17 Chair calls Deanna Maldonado-Rocha.

18 MS. MALDONADO-ROCHA: Hi. Good morning. Can you-
19 all hear me?

20 CHAIRPERSON KING: We certainly can.

21 MS. MALDONADO-ROCHA: Good morning, committee
22 members. My name is Deanna Maldonado-Rocha. I am a current
23 council member for the City of El Paso, but I come today
24 also as a resident.

25 I do appreciate the opportunity to speak to you

1 today in regards to the proposed redistricting that will
2 directly affect our city. The proposal at hand could have
3 wide implications to future representation for our beautiful
4 Sun City.

5 El Paso, as you know, is unique in that we have a
6 binational and bicultural appeal, but we also have that tri
7 state significance as well. And while I know that El Paso's
8 population growth has not kept up with the rest of the
9 state, I also know that we are making significant strides in
10 economic development, such as the creation of the advanced
11 manufacturing district, as well as a space, a little space
12 in the aerospace engineering world.

13 El Paso has really turned the corner and local and
14 regional leaders are working together to bring growth to our
15 area. We are making significant strides and currently have
16 that momentum pushing us.

17 The potential redistricting could have massive
18 implications if congressional and state leaders are several
19 hundreds of miles away, as they currently are in some
20 outside or outlying county.

21 We would love the opportunity to have leaders from
22 other parts of the state come to visit and see why it is
23 absolutely important to have our leaders come from our
24 beautiful city.

25 Representation is so important at every level.

1 Without that representation being local, that binational,
2 bicultural community is at risk of diminishing our economic
3 momentum and our future growth. I thank you so much for the
4 opportunity to speak with you today. Thank you again. Have
5 a wonderful day.

6 CHAIRPERSON KING: Well, thank you, Councilwoman,
7 and we appreciate you being here.

8 Members, are there any questions? Senator Blanco?

9 MR. BLANCO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

10 And thank you, Representative Maldonado-Rocha, for
11 testifying and providing your perspective. You serve on El
12 Paso City Council, and correct me if I'm wrong, but you
13 represent the airport. If not, you're right next to the
14 airport.

15 MS. MALDONADO-ROCHA: That is correct.

16 MR. BLANCO: But we've got two members of Congress
17 that come in and one that represents the airport. It was
18 mentioned earlier. So my question to you is obviously El
19 Paso, our region is geographically isolated but economically
20 integrated with multiple sectors, including international
21 trade, defense, and health care.

22 Because you represent the airport, do you believe
23 potentially splitting El Paso, as it's been done, into
24 multiple congressional districts could dilute its ability to
25 advocate for federal support on these priorities when

1 they've got competing interests?

2 MS. MALDONADO-ROCHA: Absolutely, I do. I think
3 it's very important to understand the complexity that El
4 Paso brings. A lot of the times I feel that obviously, we
5 know El Paso is quite isolated over in the western point of
6 the state.

7 However, I feel that it is absolutely important
8 that we have complete representation of the whole city. I
9 feel that that is absolutely necessary. I know that there
10 is some litigation that is currently going on.

11 I'd love for that to be seen through before
12 there's any potential discussion of additional
13 redistricting, because I fully believe that the airport
14 especially and parts of Fort Bliss should be reintegrated
15 within that congressional district, which is currently
16 Congressional District 16.

17 MR. BLANCO: We appreciate all you do and your
18 testimony. Thank you for participating today.

19 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

20 MS. MALDONADO-ROCHA: Thank you, Senator.

21 Appreciate. Thank you, Senators. Appreciate it.

22 CHAIRPERSON KING: Thank you.

23 Members, any other questions?

24 Hearing none, Chair calls Bianca Arvin-Eagle.

25 MS. ARVIN-EAGLE: Hi. Can you hear me?

1 CHAIRPERSON KING: Oh, we sure can. Please
2 proceed.

3 MS. ARVIN-EAGLE: Thank you. Hello, and thank you
4 to the committee for the opportunity to speak today. My
5 name is Bianca Arvin-Eagle. I'm representing myself, my
6 family. I live in Lago Vista, Texas. I am opposed to the
7 redistricting push that has hijacked this special session,
8 prioritizing the president's well-publicized agenda to find
9 him five more Republican districts over relief for victims
10 of the July 4th floods and mitigation of future flood
11 disasters.

12 I'd written a whole thing about how my own family
13 and house was destroyed -- not destroyed, but in 2018, Lago
14 Vista had a massive flood. And we were displaced for
15 months. And really, my story is nothing in comparison to
16 the at least 135 deaths that resulted from this month's
17 floods on July 4th.

18 So I don't disagree that Texans need fair and
19 better representation. However, the deaths of 135 Texans
20 needs to merit priority over political power grabs. Now is
21 the time to take care of flood victims and do everything in
22 your power to stop future flood disasters, not after
23 politically-motivated gerrymandering. And yeah, just thank
24 you for your time.

25 CHAIRPERSON KING: Thank you. And I want to

1 assure you that I think there were 18 matters put on the
2 call by the governor. And I am confident that every member
3 of the legislature, the flood victims and the issues are top
4 for everyone.

5 We divide up work here in the Senate, as does the
6 House, and there's a special committee dedicated to that
7 subject of the floods in Central Texas. And in fact, I
8 believe this Thursday, they'll be doing a hearing in Kerr
9 County.

10 So please understand, we certainly have that at
11 the top of our list, but we are capable of doing a number of
12 things at once. And that's -- this is one of the, I
13 believe, 18 subjects that committees are attending to
14 presently.

15 With that, members, are there any questions?

16 Thank you for being here today.

17 And Chair calls Octavio Manzano. And sir, if
18 you'll just unmute, we'll be able to hear you. We can see
19 your video. You just need to unmute.

20 MR. MANZANO: Thank you for --

21 CHAIRPERSON KING: There we go. Thank you.
22 Welcome.

23 MR. MANZANO: Okay. Thank you for giving me the
24 opportunity to express my opinion on this important for the
25 state and for the country, the redistricting. This is a

1 view of all the people in the United States years ago trying
2 to make fair the elections.

3 And it's very important we follow this principle.
4 It is part of the democracy. And I'm completely agreeing.
5 And the other thing I'd like to take this opportunity to ask
6 you, when you get a chance, please dedicate some time to
7 make a chapter on the credit bureaus for small businesses.

8 We don't have chapter for small businesses. And
9 the FICO score is killing us. We don't qualify for loans.
10 So hopefully, you can take this opinion to take some time in
11 your agenda. Thank you very much.

12 CHAIRPERSON KING: Thank you, sir. And just for
13 our record, would you please again state your name and if
14 you're representing any organization here today or just
15 yourself.

16 MR. MANZANO: My name is Octavio Manzano. I
17 represent myself and I represent my company, Apfelbaum
18 Industrial.

19 CHAIRPERSON KING: Great. Thank you again.

20 Members, are there any questions?

21 Thank you again for being here.

22 Chair calls Amy Donchey. Amy, if you'll just
23 unmute, we'll be able to hear you. Just if you can, ma'am,
24 just unmute on the Zoom. Tell you what. While you're
25 working on that, we're going to go ahead and call the next

1 panel up, and we'll call you back up in just a bit.

2 Chair calls Krystal Martinez, Reginna Lindsay,
3 Roxanne Tyroch, Saisri Petluru, and Tina Hester. I'll say
4 that again. Krystal Martinez, Reggina Lindsay, Roxanne
5 Tyroch, Saisri Petluru, Tina Hester.

6 And Amy, are you ready to go? Were you able to
7 unmute?

8 MS. DONCHEY: Yeah, I got that.

9 CHAIRPERSON KING: That's great.

10 MS. DONCHEY: Thank you.

11 CHAIRPERSON KING: Welcome. If you'll please just
12 state your name and if you are representing an organization
13 today, please tell us so we have that for the record. And
14 please try to hold your testimony to two minutes.

15 MS. DONCHEY: Yes. My name is Amy Donchey. I'm
16 not really representing anybody. I'm from Austin. I'd like
17 to talk about the redistricting. Okay?

18 CHAIRPERSON KING: Yes, ma'am. Please proceed.

19 MS. DONCHEY: First of all, about the
20 redistricting, it definitely is a problem. I feel like
21 Texas is really turning into a one-party kind of system and
22 that really should concern everybody.

23 This isn't just about one issue because you're
24 silencing a lot of voices, not just about one thing; it's
25 about a lot of voices. A lot of voices aren't getting

1 heard.

2 And just like we saw about the school voucher
3 system, a lot of people were being able to be ignored. I
4 mean, we had a lot of people who were professionals, a of
5 lot of people who were really experts in the field being
6 ignored because they got to be ignored because their voices
7 weren't being heard because there was nobody to listen to
8 their voices.

9 They were able to be ignored because of that. So
10 that is the concern. It is turning into a one-party system
11 where people don't have a voice, and we have a finite voice.
12 Those of us who live in the state have a finite voice and
13 you're taking it away.

14 We only get one chance to say anything. We don't
15 get a lot of times to say what is important to us. We only
16 get one point, one chance, and that's taken away. That's
17 not fair.

18 And I'm not sure how redistricting is going to
19 make that better for anybody. It's not something Texans do.
20 When UT plays football, they play an A&M. They don't play
21 Smithfield (phonetic). They like an even playing field.
22 Anything else is cheating.

23 We don't want cheating. We want things to be
24 fair. This isn't fair. And I just feel like my voice is
25 being taken away for no reason, and I'm being ignored, and

1 nobody has to listen to me.

2 CHAIRPERSON KING: Well, thank you.

3 Members, any questions?

4 Thank you for being here. Today. Sorry it was a
5 little -- we had a little complication on the muting there.

6 Chair calls Krystal Martinez. Krystal Martinez.

7 Ma'am, I think you may have placed your phone down. So
8 we're going to go to Tina Hester.

9 MS. HESTER: Hi. My name is Tina Hester, and I'm
10 representing myself. Thank you for allowing me to testify
11 today.

12 CHAIRPERSON KING: Glad you're here.

13 MS. HESTER: Thank you. While I currently live in
14 Congressional District 21 outside of Austin, I'm a fourth-
15 generation Lubbockite. My family has deep roots in Lubbock
16 and the High Plains. They farmed and started multiple
17 businesses, including Hester's Office Supply and Hester
18 Hardware for any old timers out there.

19 I still own property in Lubbock and have a lot of
20 family in the area. My -- in 1978, my father, David Hester,
21 ran as a Republican for the Texas House of Representatives
22 in a district that then included north and east Lubbock. He
23 didn't win, but he did better than any Republican up until
24 that point. I'm very proud of him.

25 I ask you to drop the effort to redistrict our

1 state, particularly given that we don't have maps and do not
2 have information on the changes to our population. Or, if
3 you must, please consider legislation to create an
4 independent committee to review maps.

5 There are rumors, and I don't know if they're
6 true, but there are rumors that areas south of Lubbock will
7 be drawn into a district which includes Rollingwood. The
8 farmers of South Lubbock have little in common with the
9 residents of Rollingwood here in Travis County.

10 And any way you look at that, that configuration
11 is just not right. As I mentioned, I am in CD 21, which
12 includes San Antonio and stretches of West Texas into
13 Kerrville and Medina.

14 Again, while I appreciate the good folks of
15 Kerrville and Medina, I highly doubt that we have
16 communities of interest. There's just no reason to bring up
17 redistricting now when we have pressing problems confronting
18 our state.

19 Many of them have been brought up this morning.
20 For example, why not focus on flood safety and weather
21 preparedness? Water supplies for the South Plains would be
22 something. And affordable health care, and just stop, you
23 know, stop the massacre of our young people because of our
24 gun laws. Again, please take your job seriously and don't
25 fold under the pressure from Washington.

1 CHAIRPERSON KING: Thank you for your testimony.

2 Members, any questions?

3 Thank you for being here today.

4 Chair calls Reggina Lindsay.

5 MS. LINDSAY: Hello.

6 CHAIRPERSON KING: There you are.

7 MS. LINDSAY: Hello. My name is Reggina Lindsay,
8 and I am a fourth-generation Houstonian actually. In recent
9 years, Texas has seen many severe weather events, like the
10 recent Hill Country floods that have highlighted how ill-
11 prepared we are when disaster strikes.

12 Governor Abbott has called this special session of
13 the Texas Legislature. But rather than focusing all of your
14 efforts on adding additional infrastructure, early warning
15 systems, or finding ways to prevent another catastrophic
16 loss of life like the one we just witnessed, you're
17 concerned about which toilets people use and rushing to
18 redraw congressional districts mid-decade, continuing to
19 disenfranchise minority voters and with no transparency as
20 to how this process for determining the proposed new
21 districts is going.

22 How is it that after four years of vehemently
23 denying in court suddenly the state acknowledges potential
24 racial gerrymandering of existing congressional maps? What
25 changed? Could it be that doing so creates a convenient

1 loophole to pander to the White House?

2 While that may be the catalyst, it's not the only
3 reason. This is the only way that many of you keep your
4 jobs, because you certainly can't stand on your stellar
5 performance for the Texas citizens.

6 Texas is ranked in the bottom ten states for
7 quality of life. We are second-worst place to retire.
8 We're 48th in literacy and 25th in education, despite buying
9 more textbooks than any other state in the union.

10 We are, however, first in the number of uninsured
11 adults. We have the largest medical center in the United
12 States, but the fewest family practice physicians. And we
13 have the highest maternal mortality rate in the country.

14 You swore an oath to represent the people of
15 Texas, and that means all of us, not just the wealthy white
16 ones, and not the president, who, the last I checked, is not
17 a Texan.

18 We have serious issues that need to be addressed.
19 People are literally dying. Stop the pathetic power grab.
20 Let the legal process finish and do your jobs. Thank you.

21 CHAIRPERSON KING: Members, any questions?

22 Thank you for being here today.

23 Chair calls Krystal Martinez. Let's go on to
24 Roxanne Tyroch.

25 MS. TYROCH: Good morning. My name is Roxanne

1 Tyroch from El Paso, representing myself, and I speak in
2 favor of redistricting. I wish to express my appreciation
3 to Chairman King and all of the committee members. I moved
4 to El Paso in 1997, and the entire time that I have lived
5 here, I felt that the voices of all members of all political
6 parties have not been heard in a proportional manner.

7 And this lack of proportional representation in
8 partisan-elected positions has seemed to intensify over
9 time. Now I realize we are speaking of congressional
10 redistricting.

11 El Paso is a very friendly community, and I'm
12 proud to say that I believe redrawing the maps to improve
13 diversity would be a positive change. It would have been
14 helpful to work with a proposed map prior to this hearing.

15 Nevertheless, again, I wish to express my
16 gratitude for this opportunity to express myself to the
17 committee. Thank you.

18 CHAIRPERSON KING: Thank you, ma'am. And I
19 promise that once there's a map before the committee, it'll
20 be public that day, and we'll hope that you'll come back and
21 participate again then.

22 Members, are there any questions?

23 Hearing none, Chair calls Saisri Petluru.

24 MS. PETLURU: Hi. Can you hear me?

25 CHAIRPERSON KING: We certainly can. Welcome.

1 MS. PETLURU: Great. Thank you. Good morning.
2 My name is Saisri Petluru, and I'm a high school student
3 from California. While I'm not from Texas, I'm here today
4 because I believe redistricting, when done fairly, can
5 strengthen democracy.

6 But when done poorly, it can silence entire
7 communities. Even as someone from another state, I care
8 because this isn't just about Texas. What happens here
9 signals to the rest of the country that redistricting can
10 become a tool of domination, not democracy.

11 It sends a message to youth across the country
12 about whether our voices matter, whether our vote is
13 protected, and whether lawmakers are truly accountable to
14 the people they serve.

15 West Texas, especially the Panhandle in El Paso,
16 has a long history of being overlooked in statewide policy
17 conversations. That's not because the people there are
18 disengaged. It's because the lines on the map have made it
19 harder for their voices to carry.

20 El Paso, for instance, is one of the most distinct
21 cultural and geographic regions in Texas. And yet it has
22 been split across districts that don't reflect the reality
23 of the people who live there.

24 It shouldn't be normal for a city on the border to
25 be grouped with districts hundreds of miles inland. That's

1 not representation. That's erasure. In 2021, during the
2 last redistricting cycle, House Bill 1 carved El Paso into
3 districts that diluted its cohesive identity and split
4 communities of interest.

5 Despite its majority-Hispanic population, district
6 lines failed to empower minority voices meaningfully,
7 raising serious concerns under the Voting Rights Act. That
8 decision not only weakened El Paso's ability to advocate for
9 border-specific policy, but also left many residents feeling
10 politically invisible.

11 And in the Panhandle, communities are dealing with
12 underinvestment in public schools, health care access, and
13 rural infrastructure. But when these towns are scattered
14 across massive gerrymandered districts, their specific needs
15 get buried under broader, more politically-convenient
16 agendas.

17 As we head into the 2025 redistricting process, I
18 urge this committee to revisit the consequences of past maps
19 and correct course. Texas is under demographic
20 transformation.

21 Youth, immigrants, and rural populations are all
22 shifting. The restricting decisions you make in 2025 won't
23 just redraw maps; they will define the voices that matter
24 for the next decade. Thank you.

25 CHAIRPERSON KING: Thank you for your testimony.

1 Members, are there any questions?

2 Hearing none. Just a matter of housekeeping. If
3 you have been admitted to the Zoom meeting, please always
4 remember to mute the livestream audio and only listen to the
5 Zoom audio to avoid a delay.

6 And Krystal Martinez, I wanted to try you one more
7 time. Are you with us? I'm so sorry you're having
8 difficulty. We'll try to call you again in a little bit.

9 And right now, I'll go ahead and call up the next
10 panel. Chair calls Elijah Graham, Terri Webster, Cathy
11 Fulton, Michael McPhail, Ana Reza. I'll say that again.
12 Elijah Graham, Terri Webster, Cathy Fulton, Michael McPhail,
13 and Ana Reza.

14 And members, by the way, we do have lunch in the
15 back if you want to go back. And of course, the monitors
16 are playing back there so you can continue to monitor the
17 hearing while you're grabbing a quick lunch.

18 Krystal, I want to try you one more time. Krystal
19 Martinez? All right. What we're going to go ahead and do
20 is put you back in the waiting room. And if you're having
21 difficulty, please, there are several help locations that we
22 mentioned earlier. The easiest one probably is to reach out
23 to Zoom directly from your site.

24 Chair calls Elijah Graham. Mr. Graham, looks like
25 your audio is still in the process of connecting, so let's

1 go to Michael McPhail.

2 MR. MCPHAIL: Hello. My name is Michael McPhail.
3 I am representing myself. Thank you for this opportunity to
4 testify. I agree with most of the testimony that's been
5 submitted today. This redistricting is not only unnecessary
6 and based on far out-of-date data, it's illegal and we all
7 know it.

8 But that being said, this committee does seem bent
9 on redrawing the congressional maps, so I'll offer some
10 advice. The Irving Mall and the eastern suburbs of Tyler
11 should not be connected in Congressional District 6.

12 We all know that the now-heavily Hispanic Irving
13 and almost as equally heavily-Hispanic and African American
14 Mansfield were drawn into CD 6 purely to blunt the voting
15 power of these minority groups.

16 I would ask that this committee remove Irving,
17 Arlington, Grand Prairie, and Mansfield from CD 6 and
18 instead tie them into congressional districts that are
19 entirely located in Dallas and Tarrant Counties.

20 For example, Grand Prairie, Irving, Coppell,
21 Carrollton, Farmers Branch, and Addison should be tied into
22 their own congressional district. That was blatantly
23 obvious from the 2010 census data that that Hispanic
24 opportunity district was needed.

25 Likewise, Mansfield should be tied with the rest

1 of southeastern Tarrant County as well as the area of
2 Tarrant County inside the Loop to form a minority
3 opportunity district as well.

4 I don't think that this committee should
5 redistrict at this time. But if they're going to do it,
6 they can at least do it well. Thank you for the opportunity
7 to testify.

8 CHAIRPERSON KING: Members, any questions for the
9 witness?

10 Hearing none, thank you for being here today.

11 Chair calls Cathy Fulton.

12 MS. FULTON: Hello, Chairman King. Do you hear me
13 okay?

14 CHAIRPERSON KING: Yes, ma'am. We do. Welcome.

15 MS. FULTON: Thank you, sir. My name is Cathy
16 Fulton, and I reside in Port Aransas, Texas, but I also own
17 a home in Fort Davis, Texas, where I spend a few weeks a
18 month. And that's in Senator Blanco's area.

19 And I have some observations. I did comment on
20 Friday, but I had some observations about these hearings.
21 And I just want to say before I make these observations, I
22 want to be clear that I do not adhere to any party. I do
23 not believe in really party line politics as much as I
24 believe in voting for candidates regardless of the party,
25 and I don't vote for a party.

1 What I've noticed about this committee is that it
2 is comprised of three Democrats and six Republicans, or if
3 you want to look at a ratio, 66 percent Republican versus 33
4 percent.

5 Right, that right there tells me a lot about how
6 this committee is already skewed in favor of a party. And
7 that should be a problem for everybody because that's not
8 trying to be balanced.

9 Having watched all the hearings and tried to keep
10 up with everybody and everybody's comments, one thing I will
11 say is that as of right now, I've only heard eight people,
12 and that includes the people today, speak in support of
13 redistricting, which, based on the numbers of speakers, that
14 comes out to about a 0.01 to 0.02 percentile in favor of the
15 redistricting, whereas that means that there is like 99.98
16 percent of the population not in favor of redistricting.

17 So my question to all the senators, especially the
18 ones that are on this committee that aren't even asking
19 questions or speaking, is who are you loyal to? Are you
20 loyal to Texas and Texan voters or are you loyal to one man
21 in Washington?

22 It is Texans that elected you and you represent
23 us, not Washington. And given what the percentages are, and
24 I'm sure that those will change, but I doubt you're ever
25 going to get past, say, 98 percent of the people that are

1 not in favor of this. Enough time has been wasted.

2 CHAIRPERSON KING: Ma'am, excuse me. Let me stop
3 you at that at this point. The two minutes is up, but we
4 thank you so much for being here today.

5 And members, are there any questions for the
6 witness?

7 Chairman -- not Chair -- Speaker Miles.

8 MR. MILES: Thank you. Ms. Fulton, I want to
9 thank you for your observation.

10 CHAIRPERSON KING: I said speaker, didn't I?
11 Senator -- boy, nothing's coming out right. I'm sorry, my
12 friend.

13 MR. MILES: Ms. Fulton, I want to thank you for
14 your testimony and your observation. Thank you.

15 MS. FULTON: Thank you very much, Senator Miles.
16 Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON KING: Members, any other questions
18 for the witness?

19 Thank you again for being here today.

20 Chair calls Terri Webster. Ms. Webster, I think
21 your camera is still off and so is your microphone. We'll
22 try to call you up again later.

23 Ana Reza. Chair calls Ana --

24 MS. REZA: Yes.

25 CHAIRPERSON KING: There we go.

1 MS. REZA: Hi. Good morning. My name is Ana
2 Reza, and I'm a citizen of El Paso, Texas. Good morning,
3 Chairman and member of the committee of congressional
4 redistricting. Like I said, my name is Ana Reza, and I'm a
5 resident of El Paso, Texas in the lower valley, 79907.

6 It is not time to redistrict. We should be giving
7 citizens the power of representation. Instead, throughout
8 the years, we have seen and felt the shift of power away
9 from our working families, the real builders of our
10 communities and our society.

11 We are putting the burden on them. We just want
12 to be happy. These kind of political strategies where we
13 quickly want to create a change as told from an unethical
14 person should be something we should say no to.

15 We have to think of our future of our children and
16 their children. Texas is not all the same. Some of us want
17 to serve and support all our communities, not only the rich
18 that get tax breaks.

19 Like I mentioned, the working class create the
20 system of wealth and community. Let's not remove their
21 voice. In Texas, we fight every day for our voices to be
22 heard. There is a threat of our voices to move to more
23 silence, and this will only lead to more unhappiness, more
24 poverty, and more the reality this with the poverty leads to
25 death for members in our community.

1 Let's make people happy by allowing them to be the
2 voice of their own needs and participate in our political
3 world. One of the voices that wants to be silent is
4 probably one like myself who's pro working class, pro
5 immigrant, pro LGBTQ+, pro women, pro family, pro living
6 wage, pro accessibility, and pro affordable housing and
7 health.

8 Don't silent my voice or our voices. Be -- don't
9 be pressured to do something who is -- who doesn't
10 understand us, who is giving big tax breaks to the rich.
11 Thank you for allowing me this time. And like I said, many
12 of us are saying no to this. Please listen to us. This is
13 our voice and our time. Thank you.

14 CHAIRPERSON KING: Thank you for being here today.
15 Members, any questions for the witness?

16 Hearing none, we're going to go ahead and try
17 Terri Webster one more time. Terri Webster. I can see you.

18 MS. WEBSTER: Good afternoon.

19 CHAIRPERSON KING: There we go.

20 MS. WEBSTER: I'm sorry.

21 CHAIRPERSON KING: Great. Welcome back.

22 MS. WEBSTER: I am here. Thank you so much. I
23 appreciate the opportunity. Chairman King, distinguished
24 members, I respect your service and your call for historical
25 accuracy.

1 I can tell you, Chairman King, my original
2 comments, I came prepared to compliment you on how you've
3 handled the hearing hearings thus far. But I was a bit
4 troubled by your opening statement and equally troubled that
5 none of the democrats on the panel welcomed your opportunity
6 to make any comments. So I just would like to state that.

7 In any event, I respect your service and your call
8 for historical accuracy. While we can debate the complex
9 history of both parties on civil rights, what matters today
10 is our constitutional obligation to all Texans.

11 As John Lewis said, when you see something that is
12 not right, not just, and not fair, you have a moral
13 obligation to speak up. Excuse me. Sorry. I moved my
14 mouth.

15 CHAIRPERSON KING: You're doing great.

16 MS. WEBSTER: Lord Acton's warning that power
17 corrupts and absolute power corrupts absolutely applies
18 regardless of which party holds power. That's why
19 redistricting requires extra scrutiny.

20 Across Texas, we face a stark reality. 95 percent
21 of our state's population growth has come from communities
22 of color. These Texans deserve representation that reflects
23 their growing voice in our democracy, not maps that appear
24 designed to minimize their political influence.

25 The 2003 precedent, while legally defensible,

1 created years of federal litigation, Supreme Court review,
2 and significant cost. Texas faced multiple court-ordered
3 map corrections because the process prioritized political
4 gain over constitutional compliance.

5 Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act remains the law
6 of the land, regardless of which party controls Congress or
7 the White House. Federal courts will review these maps
8 using that standard.

9 I urge you to consider whether mid-decade
10 redistricting truly serves Texas' future or merely preserves
11 current power structures. Our state deserves better. Thank
12 you so much.

13 CHAIRPERSON KING: Thank you. And just to
14 clarify, are you testifying on behalf of an organization
15 today or representing yourself?

16 MS. WEBSTER: I'm so sorry. I'm representing
17 myself.

18 CHAIRPERSON KING: Thank you. Thank you for your
19 testimony.

20 And members, are there any questions?

21 MR. MILES: Mr. Chairman.

22 CHAIRPERSON KING: Senator Miles.

23 MR. MILES: Ms. Webster, you reside in Missouri
24 City, Texas, don't you?

25 MS. WEBSTER: I do, sir.

1 MR. MILES: And I'm your state senator, correct?

2 MS. WEBSTER: No, actually, it is Joan Huffman.

3 MR. MILES: Joan. And you're in Missouri City?

4 MS. WEBSTER: Yes. Yes, I'm in the part of
5 Missouri City that is Sienna in Ron Reynolds' district.

6 MR. MILES: Got you, got you.

7 MS. WEBSTER: I'm right next to Al Green's
8 district. I'm Congressional District 22.

9 MR. MILES: Okay. Well, Ms. Webster, I'd ask that
10 you hold on and stay on the line and stay with us until the
11 end of the hearing today. Thank you.

12 MS. WEBSTER: Okay. Will do. Thank you.

13 CHAIRPERSON KING: Members, any other questions?
14 Thank you for being here with us today.

15 Chair calls Nancy -- this is going to be a new
16 panel.

17 THE CLERK: Yes, sir.

18 CHAIRPERSON KING: Let me go ahead and call up a
19 new panel then. Nancy Ruff, Marcos Velarde, Carl Dwyer,
20 Cynthia Gutierrez, Jennifer Barnes. I'll say that again.
21 Nancy Ruff, Marcos Velarde, Carl Dwyer, Cynthia Gutierrez,
22 and Jennifer Barnes.

23 And also, we have about 20 people left in the
24 waiting room. If you are registered to testify but are
25 watching from the livestream, please log into the Zoom

1 waiting room. We want to make sure we hear your testimony
2 today.

3 Chair calls Marcos Velarde.

4 MR. VELARDE: I'm here.

5 CHAIRPERSON KING: Great. Please proceed. If you
6 would, tell us your name and if you're representing any
7 particular organization, we'd like to know that. And then
8 also please try to keep your testimony to two minutes.

9 MR. VELARDE: Thank you very much. Good
10 afternoon. I want to thank Senator Blanco for inviting us
11 to this. My name is Marcos Velarde. I'm representing
12 myself and my wife. I was born in Fabens, Texas and lived
13 in El Paso County all my life.

14 I moved into El Paso in 1983 when I married my
15 beautiful wife. Both of us are retired from the state where
16 we were helping citizens of Texas. After retirement, I
17 worked as a comptroller for Family Service of El Paso for 20
18 years.

19 And we provided vital mental health counseling to
20 El Paso and victims of crime. My wife and I actively
21 participate in local, state, and federal elections. Both of
22 us strongly feel that this mid-decade redistribution,
23 redistricting is a power grab by Republicans to increase
24 their seats in Congress, further cultivating, diluting the
25 votes of minorities.

1 El Paso is a proud and diverse community and this
2 redistricting, it will minimize our input and decisions that
3 will affect our lives. Conducting redistricting after the
4 census is done to adjust representation of the Democratic
5 changes in our country, but there is no need to do it in the
6 mid-decade. Thank you.

7 CHAIRPERSON KING: Thank you for being here.

8 And members, are there any questions?

9 Again, thank you for your testimony.

10 Chair calls Carl Dwyer.

11 MR. DWYER: Good morning. Can you hear me?

12 CHAIRPERSON KING: We can. Is this Mr. Dwyer?

13 MR. DWYER: Yes, this is Carl Dwyer.

14 CHAIRPERSON KING: Yes, go ahead, please.

15 MR. DWYER: Well, good morning, Chair King, Vice
16 Chair Creighton, and committee members. I want to thank you
17 for this opportunity to be heard and to give testimony.

18 My name is Carl Dwyer, resident of El Paso, Texas,
19 District 16. I am also speaking on behalf of the El Paso
20 branch of the NAACP, the National Association for the
21 Advancement of Colored People.

22 Also want to thank Senator Blanco for his remarks,
23 his invitation, and his remarks thus far today. I'm a 31-
24 year army veteran who resides in El Paso. And I want to say
25 that I'm a concerned constituent and a proud resident of

1 Texas.

2 And I want to let you know that myself and my
3 organization are strongly opposed to the redistricting plan
4 that has been advanced by Governor Abbott in coordination
5 with our national leadership.

6 This plan, which seeks to create five additional
7 Republican districts through blatant gerrymandering, is both
8 unconstitutional and deeply harmful to the principles of
9 fair representation.

10 This effort to manipulate boundaries for political
11 gain undermines the integrity of our electoral process and
12 erodes public trust in our democratic institutions.
13 Redistricting must be rooted in accurate population data,
14 conducted transparently, and shaped by public input, not
15 crafted behind closed doors or to -- used to entrench
16 political power.

17 If implemented, this current plan will dilute the
18 voting strength of communities of color, disenfranchise
19 urban and diverse constituents, undermine the credibility of
20 our democratic process, and invite costly legal challenges
21 and potential federal intervention.

22 As elected officials, we are entrusting you with
23 representing the people of Texas. We urge you to reject
24 this proposal, stand for fair maps, uphold voter equality
25 equity, and support a transparent redistricting process that

1 respects the Voting Rights Act and reflects the true
2 diversity of our state.

3 Again, we strongly oppose the Texas legislature's
4 mid-decade redistricting session. And I'd like to close
5 with a quote from Martin Luther King. "The time is always
6 right to do what is right." And we're asking on our elected
7 officials and our leaders to do what is right for the State
8 of Texas. I want to thank you for the opportunity to be
9 heard and for hearing my testimony.

10 CHAIRPERSON KING: Thank you for being here and
11 thank you for your 31 years of service in the army.

12 Members, are there any questions?

13 Well, thank you again for your testimony.

14 Chair calls Cynthia Gutierrez.

15 MS. GUTIERREZ: Good afternoon, everyone. Can you
16 hear me?

17 CHAIRPERSON KING: We certainly can. Please go
18 ahead with your testimony.

19 MS. GUTIERREZ: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.
20 Honorable Chairman and members of the committee, my
21 representative is Mr. Adam Hinojosa, but Mr. -- Honorable
22 Senator Hinojosa is a good friend of all of us here in South
23 Texas.

24 My name is Cynthia Gutierrez. I'm a lifelong
25 resident of the Rio Grande Valley, a public health expert,

1 an elected school board trustee, a proud product of South
2 Texas, and I have served the Democratic party in different
3 capacities at the local and state level.

4 I'm here today representing myself. I speak to
5 you not just as a professional, but as a mother, a public
6 servant, and a voice for thousands of residents who too
7 often go unheard.

8 I'm speaking in strong opposition to the proposed
9 congressional redistricting map. This topic is not about
10 fair representation. It's about political control and
11 bartering. And the people of South Texas, especially in the
12 Rio Grande Valley, will pay the price.

13 We're historically an underserved region facing
14 some of the deepest economic and medical vulnerabilities in
15 the state. As a former lead epidemiologist for the Hidalgo
16 County Health Department, I can attest that during the
17 COVID-19 pandemic, we experience some of the highest
18 mortality rates in the nation.

19 Today, we continue to battle chronic illness, lack
20 of specialty care, underfunded schools, and economic
21 challenges at a scale not seen in other regions of the State
22 of Texas.

23 Our rates of Alzheimer's, stroke, diabetes,
24 obesity, poverty, and uninsured residents will exceed state
25 and national averages. If you overlay maps of the rates of

1 the social determinants of health in Texas, most distressed
2 areas fall squarely in our area. That's no coincidence.

3 It is the result of decades of underinvestment and
4 political neglect. What we need is not to be carved apart.
5 We need unity and representation strong enough to demand
6 serious public health funding.

7 In the city of Pharr, where I served as director
8 of public health previously, we built a health department
9 from the ground up. But cities like Donna, San Juan, Alamo,
10 and many others still lack even the most basic public health
11 infrastructure. Dividing our representation weaknesses --
12 weakens our ability to collect and --

13 CHAIRPERSON KING: If I may, ma'am --

14 MS. GUTIERREZ: -- provide for those resources.

15 CHAIRPERSON KING: Forgive me, but I need to stop
16 you there. But your points were well -- clearly made.

17 Members, are there any questions?

18 MS. GUTIERREZ: Yes, sir.

19 CHAIRPERSON KING: Senator Hinojosa.

20 MR. HINOJOSA: Ms. Gutierrez, you also served --

21 MS. GUTIERREZ: Yes.

22 MR. HINOJOSA: -- on the school board, do you not?

23 MS. GUTIERREZ: Correct. I proudly serve the PSJ
24 school board as a board trustee. Correct. But I'm here
25 representing myself.

1 MR. HINOJOSA: Okay. So you're very familiar with
2 public office and what you do in terms of making sure that
3 the public gets -- our children get a good education.

4 MS. GUTIERREZ: Correct.

5 MR. HINOJOSA: Thank you for your testimony.

6 MS. GUTIERREZ: Thank you so much. I want to
7 thank you for the opportunity to speak on behalf of our
8 region, and I look forward to seeing the proposed maps and
9 possibly having some input. Everyone, have a wonderful rest
10 of your afternoon.

11 CHAIRPERSON KING: You as well. Thank you again.

12 MS. GUTIERREZ: God bless you. Bye. Bye.

13 CHAIRPERSON KING: Chair calls Jennifer Barnes.

14 MS. BARNES: Thank you to the committee. Hello,
15 my name is Jennifer Barnes. I'm representing myself. I
16 live in Travis County outside of Austin in Congressional
17 District 37.

18 And I was born and raised in Lubbock. I'm from
19 West Texas originally. I'm also a fifth-generation Texan,
20 and I am strongly opposed to any mid-district -- any mid-
21 decade redistricting.

22 There are only three weeks left in the special
23 session. Drawing congressional maps with appropriate
24 careful consideration takes a great deal of work and time.
25 How much time will Texans have to comment on these maps when

1 they finally come out?

2 How many hearings and will this committee make
3 sure that every Texan who wishes to do so gets to testify on
4 the maps? And if the legislature does redraw the maps this
5 special session, what happens to the ongoing lawsuit over
6 the 2021 map? I'm genuinely curious.

7 Is this an admission that Texas is guilty of
8 racial gerrymandering? Does the court get to redraw the
9 2021 map and order Texas to use it? Is the hypothetical map
10 from the special session then nullified?

11 With all of the inevitable lawsuits that will
12 happen, the legislature might as well put a gigantic pile of
13 millions of taxpayer dollars on fire. The reasons against
14 mid-decade redistricting are great -- from wasting tax
15 dollars to the illegality of new racial gerrymandering.

16 While the only reason for mid-decade redistricting
17 is a non-binding letter from a Department of Justice that
18 has in recent months fallen into frivolity and
19 capriciousness.

20 That and Governor Abbott and Republican
21 legislature's apparent fear of displeasing the man who has
22 severely abused the office of the president by publicly
23 calling to disenfranchise any Texans who are inconvenient to
24 his goals for the midterm elections.

25 If the committee does go ahead with this wasteful,

1 unethical scheme to fix the midterm elections, the committee
2 must be fully transparent. All communications on the
3 drawing of the maps made public, including any discussions
4 that have been had with members of Congress who do not
5 represent Texas.

6 Each altered line must be justified and in-person
7 hearings must be held across the state to allow a fair
8 chance for all Texans, including the rural areas with poor
9 Internet access, the opportunity to speak on the maps.

10 My friends and family in Lubbock and Amarillo have
11 a right as Texans to look the members of this committee in
12 the eye and to say their piece on the maps. And the people
13 of Kerr County, who are still -- the people of Kerr County
14 have the right to look at the committee in the eye and ask
15 you why you're spending time on this instead of helping
16 them. Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON KING: Thank you for being here with
18 us again today.

19 Members, any questions?

20 With that, I'm going to go ahead and call
21 Congressman Marc Veasey. Congressman, I understand you're
22 in with us. If you'll just push unmute, and we'll be eager
23 to hear your testimony.

24 MR. VEASEY: Okay. Thank you. I can begin?

25 CHAIRPERSON KING: Certainly. Welcome.

1 MR. VEASEY: Awesome. Thank you very much. I
2 appreciate the welcome and very grateful to be able to talk
3 before the committee today. My name is Marc Veasey,
4 Congressman from the 33rd Congressional District. I live in
5 Fort Worth.

6 But the district, which is one of the most diverse
7 in the state, spans Fort Worth, Arlington, Grand Prairie,
8 Irving, and Dallas. And it was created by court to fix past
9 racial gerrymandering.

10 And since its creation, minority voters, over 84
11 percent of the district have consistently elected their
12 candidate of choice. But now the district that I represent
13 is under threat, not to improve representation, but to serve
14 Donald Trump's demand for loyalty maps, maps designed not to
15 represent, but to erase black and brown voters.

16 And let me be clear. 95 percent of Texas
17 population came from communities of color in both Dallas and
18 Tarrant Counties. It was 100 percent of the growth. And
19 yet, only 13 of our 38 congressional districts consistently
20 allow minority voters to elect their preferred candidate,
21 all of them Democratic, of course.

22 And now those are the districts that are under
23 target. Just a few years ago, Greg Abbott and Republican
24 lawmakers swore under oath that their map was race blind.
25 And that was -- that's a quote. Race blind is quoted there.

1 And now they claim that the same map is illegal
2 because it was too race conscious. So which is it? Were
3 they lying then or are they lying now? Either way, they've
4 made one thing clear. They can't be trusted to draw the
5 lines that define our democracy.

6 We've seen this before, from poll taxes to
7 gerrymanders stripped down by courts. But today, they're
8 hiding the intent. The cruelty is the point. And to stay
9 silent is to betray the generations who bled the right, who
10 bled for us so we could have the right to vote.

11 As John Lewis said, my former colleague, "Our vote
12 is precious. It is almost sacred. And when you silence
13 that vote with partisan maps, you are not protecting
14 democracy, you are destroying it."

15 Texas doesn't need more backroom maps. We need a
16 democracy that honors every voice. This redraw is wrong.
17 Don't do it. Thank you very much. I appreciate the time
18 today and happy to answer any questions.

19 CHAIRPERSON KING: Thank you, Congressman.

20 Members, are there any questions?

21 Senator Alvarado.

22 MS. ALVARADO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

23 Congressman Veasey, it's good to see you. You
24 serve with many of us in the House, and --

25 MR. VEASEY: Yes.

1 MS. ALVARADO: -- I'm not sure if you were ever on
2 redistricting, but you were involved at some point in the
3 redistricting process. Aside from 2003 -- and we know why
4 that occurred in 2003, because the maps were not drawn by
5 the legislature in 2001, so then it prompted a Texan, Tom
6 Delay, to lead the efforts to get the legislature to re-
7 redistrict in 2003 -- do you know of any other time that the
8 legislative body that you served in has done mid-decade
9 redistricting?

10 MR. VEASEY: No, no. And I actually did serve on
11 the redistricting committee my last term in the state
12 legislature in 2011. I actually served on the committee.
13 And I cannot think of another time where mid-decade
14 redistricting was done just to do it, just to gain a
15 partisan advantage.

16 MS. ALVARADO: Were you on there in 2011?

17 MR. VEASEY: I was on there in 2011, yes.

18 MS. ALVARADO: Okay. Then you and I served
19 together on that committee. And I recall that we had
20 regional hearings around the state. Do you recall that?

21 MR. VEASEY: We did have regional hearings around
22 the state. Yes, absolutely. And those are great tools to
23 let people come and look at maps and proposals and really to
24 bring to the people the process.

25 Because everybody can't make it to Austin. We

1 live in a big state with 254 counties that spans two time
2 zones. And it is definitely very difficult for some people
3 to just be able to get up and come to Austin.

4 MS. ALVARADO: Okay. Because we will have had
5 four -- well, today's our last one -- but four virtual
6 regional hearings. And we're -- some of us have been asking
7 that we have regional hearings in person once the maps are
8 revealed. Do you feel that that's important, that we have
9 it after the maps have been released?

10 MR. VEASEY: Absolutely. I think that that's
11 hugely important. And I think that from a historical
12 standpoint, it's important too. We don't want to -- just
13 because it's not 19, you know, 50 something or 1960
14 something anymore, we don't want to slide back into bad
15 habits.

16 We don't want to say, well, things are different
17 now, so it's okay to bring some of those old bad habits back
18 when things used to not be so transparent and people really
19 didn't care whether or not the people that were trying to be
20 disenfranchised had a voice in any of the proceedings at
21 all.

22 It was just a norm that they were -- it was just
23 normal that they were going to be run over. I hate to say
24 it that way, but history is definitely not PC, and you have
25 to be blunt when you talk about history, but that was how

1 people felt back then.

2 And but we don't want to just repeat that today
3 just because, you know, things have changed. We want to
4 make sure that we're transparent and that we don't backslide
5 into any of those things and ways before the Voting Rights
6 Act was passed that actually help, you know, make the
7 country and Texas a better place.

8 MS. ALVARADO: Okay. So your district was one of
9 those specified in the DOJ letter, correct?

10 MR. VEASEY: Correct.

11 MS. ALVARADO: Okay. So Governor Abbott could
12 have just put redistricting on the call, but included in
13 that was the very specific letter that included the four
14 targeted districts.

15 MR. VEASEY: That is correct.

16 MS. ALVARADO: Why do you think your district was
17 included in that?

18 MR. VEASEY: I'm not sure why it was included in
19 that, other than an excuse to just redraw the map for
20 partisan purposes. To me, that's what it looked like. I
21 mean, most of the attorneys that have read that DOJ memo
22 said that it looked like AI probably put it together, that
23 it certainly was contradictory.

24 And I mentioned that in my comments of remarks
25 that were made by Republican, you know, state lawmakers when

1 the map was drawn. And of course, we had no say so in the
2 way that the maps were drawn.

3 It was Republicans that drew the map. So it
4 wasn't like it was, you know, Democrats that drew the map.
5 And now Republicans are saying that it was racially
6 discriminatory. They drew the maps. They said they weren't
7 racially discriminatory.

8 And so, I have no idea why my district would be
9 mentioned on there. And quite frankly, I don't understand
10 why any of them are.

11 MS. ALVARADO: What's the makeup of your district?

12 MR. VEASEY: My district is majority Latino,
13 African American, heavy South Asian presence in the Irving
14 area, and white.

15 MS. ALVARADO: Thank you.

16 CHAIRPERSON KING: Senator Miles.

17 MR. MILES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

18 Brother Veasey, it's good to see you --

19 MR. VEASEY: Good to see you.

20 MR. MILES: -- as well. Thank you for your
21 testimony today. You spoke a little bit earlier about the
22 makeup and how your district was formed. Can you elaborate
23 on that just a little bit?

24 MR. VEASEY: Yeah, no, absolutely. The way that
25 my district was formed, it was actually formed because of a

1 court order --

2 MR. MILES: Thank you.

3 MR. VEASEY: -- in 2011. The way the district was
4 originally drawn was to -- it basically would have been a
5 district that would have, you know, more or less empowered
6 parts of southwest Fort Worth and white voters and in Parker
7 County, the area that the chairman lives in and represents.

8 And it was redrawn in order to empower minority
9 voters in Fort Worth and in Dallas.

10 MR. MILES: And what year was that?

11 MR. VEASEY: That was in 2011.

12 MR. MILES: To empower minorities in 2011.

13 MR. VEASEY: Yes.

14 MR. MILES: And here in 2025, you're on the list
15 to separate and undo the work that was done in 2011; is that
16 correct?

17 MR. VEASEY: Yeah, that is correct. Yeah.

18 MR. MILES: And you -- you're saying that you have
19 no idea why, but Congressman Veasey, isn't your district one
20 of the largest Democratic voting blocks in the State of
21 Texas?

22 MR. VEASEY: Yeah, absolutely. There's no
23 question --

24 MR. MILES: And the country?

25 MR. VEASEY: -- about that. And probably in the

1 country. That is correct.

2 MR. MILES: So you think it's a coincidence that
3 your district is on the -- between the eyes of the DOJ and
4 leadership of this country?

5 MR. VEASEY: No, no, not at all. Yeah, it doesn't
6 surprise me. Like I said, we saw it in 2011 where they did
7 manage to figure out a way how to draw a district to not
8 draw an additional district in North Texas to empower
9 minority voters.

10 We saw that where my district was basically or the
11 district I represent now was basically split in between
12 Parker County and Tarrant County.

13 MR. MILES: So in reality, we know why your
14 district is on that list, don't we?

15 MR. VEASEY: Yeah, yeah, absolutely. Absolutely.
16 It's to undermine these voters, these voters that I
17 represent. There's no question about that.

18 MR. MILES: Okay. Keep up the good work, my
19 brother.

20 MR. VEASEY: Hey, thank you. Good to see you.

21 CHAIRPERSON KING: Members, any other questions?

22 Congressman, again, we're so grateful you're here
23 today. You and I share a lot of the same territory with our
24 districts overlapping. In fact, I think we've talked about
25 it before, but I grew up in Handley.

1 MR. VEASEY: Yeah, that's right.

2 CHAIRPERSON KING: Yeah. And your district is one
3 of the most unusually shaped, the way it tracks around was
4 -- I'm trying to remember. You said it went out into Parker
5 County. Was that Joe Barton's old district in the --

6 MR. VEASEY: No. If you look at the way that
7 Congress -- if you go back and look at the first map that
8 was passed in 2011 in the state legislature, it was
9 basically part of a big portion of Parker County. It came
10 through, like, southwest Fort Worth and ended up in
11 Arlington, close to UTA.

12 And if I'm not mistaken, Representative Williams
13 was going to run in that district before he ultimately ran
14 in District 25, after the courts redrew the districts.

15 CHAIRPERSON KING: Okay. I was trying to remember
16 how that came about. Well, thank you again for being here
17 and hope you'll come back as we continue through this
18 process in the coming weeks.

19 MR. VEASEY: Absolutely. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

20 CHAIRPERSON KING: Thank you. Good to see you.

21 MR. VEASEY: Good to see you.

22 CHAIRPERSON KING: All right. Did you have --
23 Senator Hughes? I'm sorry. I'm trying to remember. That's
24 what I was remembering, but I may be wrong. Yeah.

25 Let me go ahead and call up the next panel. I

1 wanted to make sure we got the Congressman in while he was
2 -- since he had just signed in. Elijah Graham, or have we
3 already called this panel? I guess we haven't. Elijah
4 Graham, Krystal Martinez, Patricia Garris, Nicolette
5 Ardiente, and Richard Dayoub.

6 And I know Krystal Martinez, you were on a former
7 panel. I wanted to make sure we tried you again. Krystal
8 Martinez, are you there with us? I think you just need to
9 unmute on the Zoom. Okay. Let me come back to you in just
10 a few minutes, if I may.

11 Let's go to Patricia Garris.

12 MS. GARRIS: Yes.

13 CHAIRPERSON KING: Welcome. And if you would,
14 please just state your name and tell us if you're
15 representing a particular organization. We always want to
16 have that for the record. And please try to keep your
17 testimony to two minutes.

18 MS. GARRIS: My name is Patricia Garris, and I am
19 representing myself. And I'm a victim of Congressional
20 District 38. As a point of privilege this morning, Senator
21 King, you shared your positions. As a point of privilege as
22 a citizen of Texas, I would like to share mine as well.

23 I'm confused. I was under the impression that the
24 redistricting hearings are listening sessions, and listening
25 is to gain insight rather than place judgment. Your

1 comments at the beginning of the redistricting session were
2 not well received.

3 Many people who have a racial bias will not admit
4 it unless that admission aligns with a guiding principle.
5 There are many racists who serve in key positions in the
6 U.S. government today. Racism fuels the power.

7 The president made his racist bent a question by
8 calling minority countries s-holes. I've been to Russia and
9 I know it's an s-hole country. Russians agree too. Yet the
10 current president does not call it that.

11 The current president is a convicted felon who
12 deserves the respect of a convicted felon. In many states,
13 he wouldn't be able to vote. The current president
14 routinely uses profanity in his public conversations, so he
15 objectively does not respect the office of the presidency.

16 The current president lies every day and lies
17 about his lies. He bears false witness daily. The current
18 president for 15 years openly associated with a convicted
19 pedophile and chose not to remove himself from that
20 relationship until they had a dispute over a real estate
21 deal.

22 Your comments about the accuracy of history are
23 obviously the result of your interpretation. There have
24 been many attempts to revise or eliminate history,
25 especially the history of people of color.

1 It was my understanding that listening is what
2 you've been asked to do. Not judge, dispute, verify or
3 scold. Thank you very much.

4 CHAIRPERSON KING: Thank you.

5 Members, any questions for the witness?

6 MR. MILES: Mr. Chairman.

7 CHAIRPERSON KING: Senator Miles.

8 MR. MILES: And Ms. Garris, can you hear me?

9 CHAIRPERSON KING: Mr. Graham, if I could get you
10 to mute just for a few minutes, we'll call you right back.

11 MR. MILES: Ms. Garrison, can you hear me?

12 MS. GARRIS: I certainly can.

13 MR. MILES: Once again today, I want to thank you
14 for your testimony and always keeping it plain and real.
15 And I want to thank you for all that you've done for the
16 community and for me personally, ma'am. You're always on
17 point. Thank you.

18 MS. GARRIS: Thank you.

19 CHAIRPERSON KING: Members, any other questions?

20 Thank you for being back with us again today.

21 Chair calls Elijah Graham. Mr. Graham, if you'll
22 just do what you did a minute ago and unmute.

23 MR. GRAHAM: Yes, sir. Can you hear me?

24 CHAIRPERSON KING: We certainly can. Please, if
25 you would, tell us your name and if you're representing an

1 organization. Let us know that and then please proceed with
2 your testimony.

3 MR. GRAHAM: Yes, sir. My name is Elijah Graham,
4 and I'm representing myself. I am a retired and disabled
5 veteran that lives in El Paso, Texas. I vote and is
6 represented by Congresswoman Escobar in the 16th District.
7 I have a state representative, Joe Moody from District 78.

8 And the reason for me wanting to participate in
9 and put my testimony on the record is because I'm totally
10 against the mid-decade redistricting. And there are several
11 reasons for it. And a lot of them have been stated already
12 by previous members that vote and participate and live in El
13 Paso.

14 And I might add quite elegantly, the one that
15 stuck out to me was Mrs. Frost. I agree wholeheartedly
16 with what she said, how she said it, and the things that go
17 on. And I just simply ask you, Chairman King and the
18 members of the board, to please realize that your
19 credibility and respect is on the line when you don't do the
20 things that your constituents asked you to do because they
21 watch and hear and listen to everything.

22 And I just wanted to make sure that you guys
23 understood that this is all on record. And at some point,
24 we will come back and revisit this. Look forward to when
25 the maps are done and completed and we can do it in person

1 to put our thoughts and opinions in person to you all. And
2 again, I appreciate it and thank you for your time.

3 CHAIRPERSON KING: Thank you for your testimony as
4 well.

5 Members, any questions?

6 With that, Chair calls Nicolette Ardiente.

7 MS. ARDIENTE: Hi, good afternoon.

8 CHAIRPERSON KING: Welcome.

9 MS. ARDIENTE: Can you hear me okay?

10 CHAIRPERSON KING: We certainly can.

11 MS. ARDIENTE: Awesome. Well, thank you again,
12 Chairman, all committee members. Good afternoon again. My
13 name is Nicolette Ardiente. I am a constituent of
14 Congressional District 23 in San Antonio, Texas that goes
15 all the way out to El Paso, Texas. And I'm testifying on
16 behalf of Asian Texans for Justice as the program's manager.

17 We are a statewide nonprofit, nonpartisan
18 organization that connects the 2 million Asian American
19 Pacific Islander Texan community to civic action through
20 personal and political power.

21 I'm here to testify on the proposed redistricting
22 and its attempt to intentionally racially discriminate and
23 redraw our congressional district lines during this special
24 session.

25 According to ATJ's polling report deep in the

1 heart of Asian Texas in 2022, approximately 70,000 Asian
2 Americans and 2,500 Native Hawaiian and other Pacific
3 Islanders resided in the San Antonio region and I am one of
4 them.

5 Many live in our medical center area or the Stone
6 Oak area and are also spread all over. This directly
7 correlates with the statistics that about half, 52 percent
8 of Asians in the San Antonio region are employed in
9 management, business, science, and arts occupations,
10 exceeding the rate for the region's population of 39.3
11 percent.

12 This is the fourth-largest concentration of AAPI
13 Texans after Dallas, Houston, and Austin. And despite being
14 a small portion of San Antonio's overall population, the
15 Asian diaspora is still very diverse with a quarter, 25.8
16 percent of Asians identifying as Filipino like me, and 19.3
17 Asian and Indian.

18 Like overall state trends and those of other metro
19 areas, Asians in the San Antonio region are more likely to
20 be born outside of the U.S., 67.4 percent, than in the than
21 in the U.S., 32.6 percent.

22 I share these statistics to highlight the highly
23 diverse community that I am a part of. Yet our community
24 members still don't have the representation they deserve.
25 And being within Texas 23, I only aspire to understand the

1 needs of my neighbors all the way towards El Paso.

2 So how can my elected officials do the same? I
3 don't believe the needs of my neighbors in San Antonio
4 reflect those in El Paso. And I want to further validate
5 with facts that the growing AAPI populations throughout
6 Texas deserve fair redistricting to serve our communities.

7 By me being here, I want to continue increasing
8 awareness and understanding of AAPI Texans. Asian Texans
9 for Justice seeks to enable community members,
10 organizations, policy makers --

11 CHAIRPERSON KING: Ma'am, if I may? I'm sorry. I
12 need to stop you at that point --

13 MS. ARDIENTE: Sure.

14 CHAIRPERSON KING: -- you made. But your
15 testimony is very clear.

16 And members, are there any questions for the
17 witness?

18 We thank you for being here with us today.

19 MS. ARDIENTE: Thank you so much. Take care.

20 CHAIRPERSON KING: Chair calls Richard Dayoub.
21 Sir, if you'll unmute and then begin to speak. Richard
22 Dayoub.

23 MR. DAYOUB: Yes, sir.

24 CHAIRPERSON KING: There you go. Great. Welcome.
25 We're so glad you're here. And please proceed with your

1 testimony.

2 MR. DAYOUB: Good afternoon. This is Rick Dayoub.
3 Yes, sir. Good afternoon, Chair, Mr. Chairman, members of
4 the commission. Thank you so much for your time. I'll be
5 brief.

6 CHAIRPERSON KING: I think you're listening to the
7 livestream. Sir, if you would turn it down and just listen
8 to the Zoom and that way, we'll be synced.

9 MR. DAYOUB: Can you hear me now?

10 CHAIRPERSON KING: We certainly can. I think
11 what's happening is I think you've got the livestream turned
12 up, and you're listening to it. If you would turn it down
13 and then listen to the Zoom, we'll be in sync.

14 MR. DAYOUB: Are you able to hear me now?

15 CHAIRPERSON KING: We certainly can. Sir, if I
16 may, I'm going to go ahead and call the next panel, and
17 we'll call you up in just a minute. If you would go ahead
18 and just mute, and I'll call you back up.

19 Chair calls -- it says Meyer Meyer. I think the
20 first name was typed twice. Or the first name was left off
21 rather. So try to pull it up again. I just lost the whole
22 panel. I'm sorry. There we go. But it says Meyer Meyer.
23 There's no first name. That's M-E-Y-E-R.

24 Chair calls also Elisa Tamayo, Kelsey Balaban,
25 Britni Cuington, and Sean Beecroft. And while that panel

1 comes up, let's try Mr. Dayoub again. Sir, I think if you
2 speak, you'll be right -- it'll come up.

3 I'm not sure he can hear us. All right. Again,
4 we'll come back to you in a moment, sir. Let's call --
5 who's up?

6 Let's call Sean Beecroft. Sean Beecroft.

7 MR. BEECROFT: There we go. Found the unmute.

8 CHAIRPERSON KING: Great.

9 MR. BEECROFT: Hi, I'm Sean Beecroft and I'm
10 representing myself today. I stand before you today not as
11 a partisan, but as a Texas resident deeply concerned about
12 the integrity of our democratic process. This redistricting
13 is not about representation; it's about power.

14 And it is happening when Texans are asking for
15 stability, not political gamesmanship. We are not here
16 because of new census data, but because of a court ruling,
17 Petteway v. Galveston County.

18 This ruling does not compel you to redraw maps in
19 a way that silences communities. You still have a choice.
20 And that choice matters because the districts targeted are
21 not just lines on the map. They are communities.

22 They are neighborhoods where black and Latino
23 families have built lives, businesses, and civic
24 institutions. To dismantle these districts is to dismantle
25 decades of hard-won representation.

1 Let's not pretend this is about compliance. The
2 DOJ raised concerns, yes, but the speed and secrecy of this
3 process suggests something else entirely. No maps have been
4 made public at hearings before the people can see what's
5 proposed. That is not democracy.

6 Texans didn't ask for this. Washington did. If
7 you proceed with redistricting, you will not be just
8 redrawing lines; you'll be redrawing the moral boundaries of
9 the state. You'll be telling millions of Texans, especially
10 black and Latino Texans, that their voices are expendable,
11 that their votes are inconvenient.

12 But you have the power to say no. And I urge you
13 to consider this. One day, your grandchildren will ask what
14 you did when the integrity of our democracy was on the line.
15 They will not ask whether you followed party orders. They
16 will ask whether you stood for fairness, whether you stood
17 for inclusion, whether you stood on the right side of
18 history.

19 Reject redistricting. Demand fairness. Represent
20 the people of Texas, not the ambitions of a political party.
21 Because if you do this, you will not just lose the trust of
22 your constituents, you will lose the moral authority to
23 govern. And that is a legacy no one should want to leave
24 behind. Thank you.

25 CHAIRPERSON KING: Thank you for your testimony.

1 Members, are there any questions?

2 Hearing none, Chair calls Elisa Tamayo. Elisa
3 Tamayo.

4 MS. TAMAYO: Good afternoon, Chairman King, Vice
5 Chair Creighton, and committee members. My name is Elisa
6 Tamayo, Governmental Affairs Manager for El Paso County.
7 I'm here today on behalf of El Paso County Precinct 1
8 Commissioner Jackie Butler. She asked me to read this
9 comment into the record.

10 CHAIRPERSON KING: Please go ahead.

11 MS. TAMAYO: Thank you. "I write to you as the El
12 Paso County Commissioner for Precinct 1, representing one of
13 the largest underserved regions in the state, to express my
14 strong opposition to the proposed redrawing of Texas
15 congressional districts during this special session."

16 "Let me be clear. There is no urgent need nor any
17 legal justification for this redistricting effort. There is
18 no new census data and no court mandate compelling action.
19 What we are seeing is the execution of a purely political
20 directive, one that undermines the legitimacy of this
21 process and sets a dangerous precedent for Texas and the
22 nation."

23 "Using redistricting as a tool to consolidate
24 power at the expense of voters is a betrayal of the public
25 trust. This special session should be focused on the real

1 and urgent challenges Texans are facing -- flood and
2 disaster mitigation, failing water systems, housing
3 shortages, and infrastructure deficits in communities like
4 mine."

5 "In El Paso County, families in colonias continue
6 to live without basic services, and our residents need to
7 have their voices heard, not silenced. Prioritizing
8 political gerrymandering over these real needs is an
9 unacceptable misuse of the legislative process."

10 "To add insult to injury, the redistricting will
11 undoubtedly target minority communities, notably Latino
12 communities along the U.S./Mexico border, such as those in
13 my precinct. No physical hearings will be held outside of
14 Houston, Dallas, Fort Worth, and Austin."

15 "Further, physical hearings thus far have not
16 offered a specific proposal to facilitate a discussion or
17 review. This is not public engagement. It is public
18 exclusion. I urge you to reject any redistricting proposal
19 that intentionally weakens the voice of El Pasoans and
20 border communities."

21 "You have the opportunity to stand for fairness
22 and democracy or to participate in its erosion. Choose the
23 work Texans are actually asking for, and please reject this
24 proposal and return your focus to the issues that matter
25 most to the people we serve. Thank you. Jackie Butler,

1 County Commissioner, Precinct 1."

2 CHAIRPERSON KING: And thank you for delivering
3 that on behalf of the commissioner.

4 Members, are there any questions?

5 Hearing none, thank you again for being here.

6 Chair calls Britni Cuington. I'm sure I --

7 MS. CUINGTON: Cuington, yeah.

8 CHAIRPERSON KING: I said that terribly wrong, I'm
9 sure.

10 MS. CUINGTON: Oh, it's --

11 CHAIRPERSON KING: We had you there. Go ahead and
12 speak. Let's see if we've got your back. What you might do
13 -- I think you're on a phone, so I think if you would try
14 turning off the video, that should give you some more
15 bandwidth and we should be able to hear you.

16 MS. CUINGTON: Are you able to hear me now?

17 CHAIRPERSON KING: Oh, we can hear you perfectly.
18 Thank you.

19 MS. CUINGTON: Perfect. Okay. Good afternoon.
20 My name is Britni Cuington. I'm an Air Force veteran, and I
21 am representing as a Texas lead organizer for Common
22 Defense, the largest grassroots veterans' organization in
23 the country.

24 I first want to respond to comments made earlier
25 about broadband access and the idea that virtual testimony

1 is more equitable. As a union Internet technician and a
2 member on the Workforce and Economic Development Board for
3 the Texas Broadband Development Office, I can tell you
4 that's simply not true.

5 Broadband access in Texas is still deeply unequal.
6 Many working class, rural, disabled, and minority
7 communities across Texas still don't have reliable Internet
8 or even a safe place to log in.

9 Virtual testimony helps, but it does not level the
10 playing field. That digital inequity mirrors what's
11 happening with this map situation. And honestly, if I felt
12 like the intent of this redistricting was not an attempt to
13 silence communities and pick up partisan seats, I would
14 probably be speaking in favor of this effort.

15 Texas has over 1.5 million veterans, more than any
16 other state. In El Paso County alone, there are over 40,000
17 veterans. That's about 25 percent of the adult population,
18 many connected to Fort Bliss.

19 And they are counting on that new VA facility
20 being built. When maps are redrawn, they bury these, both
21 urban and veteran-heavy communities into rural districts.
22 You weaken their representation and open the door wide open
23 to underfunding and privatization.

24 I work with veterans across the state every day
25 who are not lobbyists. They are caregivers, workers, and VA

1 benefit recipients who deserve real care because they earned
2 it, not profits masquerading as policy. The VA is not for
3 sale. El Paso veterans aren't either. Our political
4 representation should not be carved up for political gain.
5 Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON KING: Well, thank you as well.

7 And members, are there any questions for the
8 witness?

9 Well, thank you again for being here. And just to
10 confirm, because it was -- I had a little bit of trouble
11 understanding you. Did you say you were representing Common
12 Defense?

13 MS. CUINGTON: Yes, sir, that is correct. Common
14 Defense.

15 CHAIRPERSON KING: All right. Great. And there,
16 we've got your video back. That's great. Thank you.

17 Next witness, let's try Richard Dayoub again.
18 Sir, I think if you just begin to talk, it'll work. We can
19 see your video and it shows you that -- shows us that you're
20 unmuted. Well, why don't you try to hit your mute again. I
21 think you're ready to go if you just speak, sir.

22 MR. DAYOUB: Good afternoon. This is Richard
23 Dayoub. Can you hear me okay?

24 CHAIRPERSON KING: Yes, sir.

25 MR. DAYOUB: Excellent. Thank you very much. I

1 won't take but a moment of your time. As the record
2 indicates, I'm Richard Dayoub, and I am, for the record, a
3 registered Republican and have been for several decades.
4 But I've prided myself in always voting not for the person
5 based on whether they are an R or a D, but on the principles
6 they stand for and on the representation that they provide
7 for their constituents.

8 Sadly, at this point in time, I find it more
9 challenging each time an election comes about to be able to
10 vote for an R because of some of the conduct we've seen
11 witnessed.

12 We've heard testimony from a number of people
13 today thus far talking about the priorities that should be
14 set during a special session, and I would couldn't agree
15 more with the majority of those individuals.

16 We have much more pressing issues to address in
17 this special session with now only about three weeks
18 remaining before it terminates. Given that we just had a
19 census done in 2021, we barely have four years under our
20 belt, and so nearly six years remaining before the next
21 census can be conducted.

22 So until we know what exactly has changed in our
23 population and how it's shifted from one area to another,
24 let alone the very issue that we don't even have
25 redistricting maps presented to us to review, you're asking

1 us to provide testimony on something we don't even know what
2 we're testifying to.

3 So, with all due respect to the chairman and the
4 commission, and I thank you all for your service in
5 following through with your obligations to the governor and
6 this appointment, could we possibly prioritize things in the
7 right chronological order and first allow us to review maps,
8 and therefore critique them, so that when we provide
9 testimony to you, it's testimony that has some validity? I
10 thank you for your consideration, and I sincerely thank
11 Senator Blanco for your continued support of our community
12 and your constituents.

13 CHAIRPERSON KING: Thank you, sir. And just to
14 confirm, I believe you're representing yourself today?

15 MR. DAYOUB: I am. I have a private company, a
16 consulting firm, but I am representing myself. I apologize
17 for not clarifying that at the outset.

18 CHAIRPERSON KING: No, we're delighted you're
19 here.

20 Members, any questions for the witness? Senator
21 Blanco.

22 MR. BLANCO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

23 And Richard, thank you so much for your testimony.
24 My question to you is, you had served as the Greater El Paso
25 Chamber of Commerce president for many years. No longer do.

1 But my question is, is this. How do you believe, in your
2 opinion, shared economic drivers, such as aerospace,
3 advanced manufacturing, energy production, agriculture, or
4 cross-border trade, all industries important to our region,
5 how do those shared economic drivers help define a community
6 of interest in our region, and do current district lines
7 support or fragment those shared economies?

8 MR. DAYOUB: Excellent question, and a fairly
9 complex one, but I'll try to give you as brief a response as
10 I can. Yes, I served as the CEO of the Chamber for 14
11 years, during which time you and I developed a friendship
12 and a working relationship.

13 The point to your question very simply is without
14 a concerted effort across party lines to try and support
15 these initiatives that are ongoing in not only our region,
16 but across the state, I think we become our own worst
17 enemies because there's so much to be done and so much
18 investment to be made in order to make sure that we have the
19 infrastructure in place.

20 I don't mean just the physical infrastructure,
21 which is important, but critically, also talent, the
22 education component of the process to make sure we have a
23 pipeline of educated and trained employees to serve those
24 industries. It becomes inseparable.

25 And unless we put aside some of these political

1 differences and focus on what's so important to the growth
2 of this state economically, then we're setting ourselves up
3 for failure at the very least not achieving some of the
4 goals we could easily accomplish if we work better together.

5 MR. BLANCO: Thank you, Richard, for your
6 friendship and your perspective. I think it's important to
7 identify how economic interdependence shapes communities of
8 interest and whether or not those districts, how those
9 districts are drawn reflect those links. So thank you so
10 much for your insight and your service to our business
11 community in El Paso.

12 MR. DAYOUB: Thank you, sir.

13 CHAIRPERSON KING: Thank you.

14 Members, any other questions?

15 Well, thank you, sir, again for being here.

16 I'm going to go ahead and call up the next panel.
17 And by the way, if you did sign up to testify today, and you
18 have not already, please link and go on into the Zoom
19 waiting room so that we can call you up on a panel.

20 The next panel is Nancy Ruff, Wesley Lawrence,
21 Kathleen Staudt, Vicki Rushton, and Asulema Reyna.

22 And let me go ahead and call up Wesley Lawrence.
23 Mr. Lawrence, if you'd please tell us your name and if
24 you're representing an organization and please try to keep
25 your testimony to two minutes.

1 MR. LAWRENCE: Will do. Good morning, Chairman
2 King and members of the Texas Senate Congressional District
3 Committee. My name is Wesley Lawrence. I'm representing
4 myself. I proudly serve on the State Democratic Executive
5 Committee serving the great people of Congressional District
6 23, and have previously served the people of Senate District
7 29.

8 But most importantly, I'm a community advocate who
9 has served on a redistricting committee as someone who
10 understands the issues that face everyday Texans.

11 I'd like to begin by saying I wish I could stand
12 before you today focused on what truly matters, delivering
13 for the hard-working people of Texas. But instead, it seems
14 like both chambers have a deliberate choice to hold as few
15 in-person hearings across the state as possible, a
16 deliberate move to silence working class families who simply
17 cannot afford to take time off to speak with you today.

18 Instead, we're here talking about redistricting.
19 We're once again being forced to defend our communities, our
20 voices, and our democracy from another shameless
21 redistricting ploy led by the Texas GOP, Governor Abbott,
22 and President Trump and his allies.

23 I want to be crystal clear. When your team is
24 down in the last quarter, you don't move the goalpost. You
25 campaign better. All in an effort to flip five seats in

1 Texas in order to help President Donald Trump skirt
2 accountability with the Epstein files, continue his vicious
3 ICE raids against migrants in communities like mine, and to
4 continue his crusade against affordability, which is only
5 strengthening inflation just so we can protect Donald Trump
6 from what's going to be one of the worst midterms in
7 American history after you-all just passed the big BS bill.

8 This isn't about fair maps, and, in fact, it never
9 has been in the State of Texas. It's about desperation and
10 power grabs to rig an election, to carve up communities of
11 interest, and to protect the powers that be.

12 I've seen a majority of the maps submitted by some
13 of the Texans across this great state, and the plan is clear
14 -- to ignore communities of interest, crack the districts to
15 death, abandon representation, and silence and dilute
16 communities of color across the RGV, Dallas, Houston, and
17 anywhere Republicans see a threat to their power.

18 The presidential decree is simple and once these
19 state-ordered maps are redrawn, it's going to be to keep the
20 Republican party in the majority party in the U.S. Congress,
21 no matter the cost to hardworking Texans or what we have to
22 sacrifice to get there.

23 Here in El Paso, we know this fight all too well.
24 We lived it the last redistricting process, and we've stood
25 against it, and we're going to continue to stand against it.

1 Thank you.

2 CHAIRPERSON KING: Thank you.

3 And members, are there any questions?

4 Thank you for being here with us today.

5 Chair calls Ms. Kathleen Staudt. Ma'am, I think
6 all you have to do is unmute and you'll be able to testify.
7 While we're waiting, we'll come right back to you, ma'am.

8 Let's go to Vicki Rushton. Vicki Rushton.

9 Welcome. And -- well, was that Kathleen?

10 MS. STAUDT: Yes, it is.

11 CHAIRPERSON KING: Okay. All right. Vicki, we'll
12 come right back to you. Ma'am, if you want to go ahead and
13 begin your testimony.

14 MS. STAUDT: Thank you. Good afternoon. Thanks
15 for the opportunity to testify. I am an El Pasoan in
16 District 16, a retired professor of political science for 40
17 years and cofounder of the Community First Coalition after I
18 retired.

19 I oppose the mid-decade redistricting, and I focus
20 here on three issues. Number one, districts should be based
21 on geographic coherence, communities of interest, and
22 population size.

23 I closely watched the city and county local
24 process here a few years back. They did a good, methodical,
25 and fair job. It was not a rushed job.

1 Number two, we in Texas should adhere to long-
2 established principles to redistrict every ten years after
3 the census.

4 And number three, Texans should drive the process
5 of redistricting, not Washington D.C. To elaborate a bit,
6 while I haven't seen alternative maps, like everybody else,
7 and while I recognize flaws in the last set of maps, we who
8 live in the 16th Congressional District experience relative
9 geographic coherence with our large county in the Texas
10 borderlands.

11 Yet parts of District 16 were gutted last time
12 around and added to District 23, which is the textbook
13 example of gerrymandering. It's even in political geography
14 books.

15 In closing, my recommendations are for you to
16 refuse, number one, refuse the mid-decade redistricting
17 process. Number two, develop courage, which I know some of
18 you have, to resist Washington D.C. pressure. But if you
19 proceed, to use the principles of geographic coherence,
20 population size, and communities of interest instead of
21 short-term opportunism.

22 Hopefully, our future will be less polarized and
23 we can develop something like an independent redistricted
24 committee. Thank you.

25 CHAIRPERSON KING: Thank you for being here with

1 us.

2 Members, are there any questions?

3 Seeing none, Chair calls Vicki Rushton. Chair
4 calls Vicki Rushton. And all you have to do is unmute at
5 this point and begin to speak. I know you're in your
6 vehicle, it looks like, but if you just unmute, we should be
7 able to hear you.

8 No, ma'am. I'm sorry. I can see you asking, but
9 we cannot hear you. You probably have to push unmute.

10 Is she unmuted?

11 THE CLERK: She's not.

12 CHAIRPERSON KING: You need to push unmute on the
13 video feed. Tell you what we'll do. We'll come back to you
14 in just a little bit.

15 Ms. Reyna?

16 MS. REYNA: Hello. My name is Asulema Reyna, and
17 I'm representing myself today. I'm calling from the El Paso
18 County, and I want to clarify something very important. I
19 have been hearing a lot of people calling from El Paso, but
20 it matters more when you are in the El Paso County District
21 23.

22 District 16, we have Congresswoman Veronica
23 Escobar, who's local. So District 16 is not very much
24 impacted by this redistricting. So I support the
25 redistricting of El Paso and these are my reasons.

1 We need someone local to represent our district at
2 a congressional level. In February of this year, my
3 stepfather, who is 84 years old and he suffered dementia, he
4 misplaced his green card. And this was an urgent matter as
5 he drives across the border to visit his wife.

6 We needed another stamped urgently. We reached
7 out to the local office for Mr. Congressman Tony Gonzales.
8 We were given a phone number to call with the area code in
9 San Antonio. We did call the office. We talked with some
10 -- they took our -- they never --

11 CHAIRPERSON KING: Ma'am, I know you're in your
12 vehicle. And I want to make sure we hear everything you
13 have to say. What you might do is turn off the video on the
14 Zoom, and that'll open up bandwidth for your audio because
15 we want to make sure we can hear everything. And you're
16 cutting out quite a bit.

17 MS. REYNA: Okay. I apologize for that. Can you
18 hear me better?

19 CHAIRPERSON KING: Great. Oh, it's much better.
20 Go ahead. And I'll go ahead and let you kind of start over
21 and let's give you the time back.

22 MS. REYNA: Okay. Oh, okay. No, I'm so sorry
23 about that and thanks for pointing that out to me. So I'm
24 calling from the El Paso County area. And I've been hearing
25 a lot of people from El Paso, which is great. We want to

1 clarify something.

2 If you're calling from El Paso and you're in
3 District 23 under Congresswoman Veronica Escobar, this whole
4 redistricting is not really going to impact this District 16
5 because District 16 has someone local representing them.

6 And I'm calling because I'm District 23. We get
7 represented by Mr. Tony Gonzales. So this really is
8 necessary and I support it. And these are my reasons.

9 We really need someone local here such as
10 Ms. Escobar and I'm going to explain to you two situations
11 that I had just recently.

12 CHAIRPERSON KING: I'm sorry, ma'am. We have just
13 lost you again. And I know you're in your vehicle, but let
14 me try to call you back up later.

15 Let me try Vicki Rushton one more time.
16 Ms. Rushton. All right. Well, let's go ahead and call up
17 our next panel.

18 And Ms. Reyna, let me call you back in a little
19 bit when you get a little bit better area.

20 MS. REYNA: Okay. Yes, thank you, sir.

21 CHAIRPERSON KING: And we'll pull you right back
22 up.

23 MS. REYNA: Yes, sir. I apologize.

24 CHAIRPERSON KING: And Ms. Rushton, we'll try to
25 call you up during the next panel as well. Okay.

1 Chair calls Roger Daily, Gabriel Gonzalez, Sarah
2 Roberts, Neha Veera, and Ramon Rodriguez. And then I have -
3 - there's no first name, but the last name is Meyer, M-E-Y-
4 E-R. So, Roger Daily, Gabriel Gonzalez, Sarah Roberts, Neha
5 Vera, Ramon Rodriguez, and Meyer, M-E-Y-E-R.

6 And Mr. Gonzalez, I see you're already up. If
7 you'd like to go ahead and introduce yourself and begin your
8 testimony. All you need to do is unmute. We have your
9 video feed.

10 MR. GONZALEZ: Hello. Can you hear me now?

11 CHAIRPERSON KING: Oh, we certainly can.

12 MR. GONZALEZ: All right. My name is Gabriel
13 Gonzalez, and I am a constituent of District 29 in San
14 Elizario, Texas. And I just wanted to voice my opposition
15 to this mid-decade redistricting by Governor Abbott by proxy
16 for Donald Trump.

17 Make no mistake, I believe that this is
18 politicians choosing their voters and not voters choosing
19 their representatives. It weakens our democracy. If this
20 motion passes, it will silence the voices of our voters and
21 leave us without true representation.

22 This will continue to fracture not only our state,
23 but also our country. With almost all certainty, we
24 unfortunately know this will pass. But I'd like to remind
25 my fellow like-minded Texans that we can still vote with our

1 dollars, and I encourage you to do so. I appreciate your
2 time.

3 CHAIRPERSON KING: Well, thank you. We appreciate
4 your testimony.

5 Members, are there any questions?

6 Hearing none, Chair calls -- and thank you again
7 for being here -- Chair calls Sarah Roberts.

8 MS. ROBERTS: Hi. Thank you. I'm here today just
9 because Texas, we're not doing the right thing right now.
10 It's very disappointing. Our state has always been proud of
11 our independence, our uniqueness. And though we are
12 obviously proud Americans, we've always relied on doing the
13 right thing.

14 But this is not doing the right thing. I am a
15 firm believer that what is going on here is a directive from
16 D.C. violating the rights of many Americans, but most
17 importantly, our community.

18 This is not the way we want things run. I know
19 you said earlier not to mention certain things in D.C., but
20 it's a directive from D.C. When you're skewing the lines,
21 skewing the rules of how things should be under a felonious
22 president, you-all just doing his bidding, I just wonder how
23 you sleep at night.

24 You know, you're not looking at improving things.
25 Right now, we should be looking at protecting communities,

1 protecting the people, to protect our state, to protect our
2 country. And that's not what I'm seeing here. It's
3 extremely disappointing to myself as an American. Taking
4 away the voices of many, many proud Americans is not the way
5 we want to do business.

6 We want to see improvement. That's not what we're
7 seeing these days. We're seeing the destruction of
8 everything that we've known and everything that we love,
9 everything that makes America great. Taking away rights
10 from virtually anybody -- women, bipop communities.

11 We're attacking the trans community. This is
12 nonsense. Look at working towards improvement, not looking
13 towards destruction. This is really just a power grab. And
14 if you're willing to bend to the will of your president, we
15 have a problem. Stand by the constitution and do what you
16 were voted into doing. Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON KING: Thank you for your testimony.
18 It's always so interesting to me, the different locations
19 we're having people testify from, from vehicles and one
20 grandmother said she was at her granddaughter's 16th
21 birthday and stepped out. And looks like you've stepped out
22 of your office as well for that.

23 MS. ROBERTS: Well, I -- yeah, I was at work
24 today. And then I left work, and I had to get some supplies
25 from my local Costco for more stuff for work. And, you

1 know, I was in Houston, couldn't speak there. I've been
2 dropped from the waiting room numerous times today.

3 Working at an event, trying to testify. It's
4 crazy. We had over a thousand people there Houston
5 Saturday, and they were shut out. They were stopped. It's
6 not right.

7 CHAIRPERSON KING: Were you in Houston on
8 Saturday, may I ask?

9 MS. ROBERTS: Yes, I was. Yes, I --

10 CHAIRPERSON KING: Were you able to testify?

11 MS. ROBERTS: No, sir, I was not.

12 CHAIRPERSON KING: Okay. Well, we're glad you
13 were able to be with us today.

14 MS. ROBERTS: In fact, trying to testify, I kept
15 getting broken links. And that's another thing, because all
16 of this is hidden from the general public. It's hard to
17 find.

18 CHAIRPERSON KING: Well, we're glad you're able to
19 be with us today from, I guess, from Houston.

20 And members, are there any questions?

21 MR. MILES: Mr. Chairman.

22 CHAIRPERSON KING: Senator Miles.

23 MR. MILES: Ms. Roberts, what part of Missouri
24 City do you live in?

25 MS. ROBERTS: I'm in your district, sir. Missouri

1 City.

2 MR. MILES: You're in Missouri City. What part of
3 Missouri City?

4 MS. ROBERTS: Yes, sir. Sienna.

5 MR. MILES: Sienna. And you're --

6 MS. ROBERTS: Yes, sir.

7 MR. MILES: -- represented by Senator Lois
8 Kolkhorst?

9 MS. ROBERTS: Pardon me?

10 MR. MILES: You're represented by Senator Lois
11 Kolkhorst?

12 MS. ROBERTS: I didn't think so.

13 MR. MILES: You're in the back of Sienna
14 Plantation?

15 MS. ROBERTS: Okay. When I type in who represents
16 me, you come up.

17 MR. MILES: Oh.

18 MS. ROBERTS: I know -- yeah.

19 MR. MILES: So you're in the front of Sienna
20 Plantation.

21 MS. ROBERTS: Yes, sir. The front of Sienna.

22 MR. MILES: Well, let me apologize for you not
23 being able to testify, but we appreciate you, your tenacity
24 and testifying today. We apologize --

25 MS. ROBERTS: Thank you. I appreciate that very

1 much.

2 MR. MILES: -- as the chairman said. Okay. Thank
3 you.

4 MS. ROBERTS: Appreciate what you do.

5 MR. MILES: Thank you.

6 CHAIRPERSON KING: Thank you again.

7 Members, any questions for the witness?

8 Hearing none, Chair calls Neha Veera.

9 MS. VEERA: Hello. Can you hear me?

10 CHAIRPERSON KING: Yes, we can. If you would
11 please, tell us your name and if you're representing an
12 organization, the organization. And please try to hold your
13 testimony to two minutes.

14 MS. VEERA: Yes, sir. My name is Neha Veera. I'm
15 located in Fort Worth, CD 12, and I'm representing myself
16 today. I'm 19. I'm not an expert on complex political
17 issues, but it doesn't take an expert to see what this call
18 for redistricting really is.

19 This, at its core, is a bully punching down. This
20 is an abuse of power on behalf of the Trump administration,
21 who has convinced our state leaders to redistrict for no
22 other conceivable reason than to pad their narrow majority
23 in the House right in time for the next midterms at the
24 expense of the voting power of black and brown communities,
25 communities which we all know have fueled Texas economic

1 expansion within the last ten years.

2 By trying to disenfranchise these people, Texas is
3 simply biting the hand that feeds it. But since a young
4 brown girl condemning these efforts is unlikely to hold much
5 weight in the minds of many, take it from the Founding
6 Fathers themselves.

7 At the Constitutional Convention, James Madison
8 warned against the very efforts taking place today, stating,
9 "Whenever the state legislatures had a favorite measure to
10 carry, they would take care so to mold their regulations as
11 to favor the candidates they wish to succeed."

12 Framers of the constitution were keenly aware of
13 the corruption of the English system of parliamentary
14 elections and scorned the British notion of virtual
15 representation or the idea that Parliament would act wisely
16 even if it was not directly representative.

17 Instead, the Founding Fathers embraced the true
18 representation of the people as a central principle of the
19 constitution and intended for elected representatives to
20 have close ties to their constituents, unimpeded by
21 contrived barriers between the electorate and its
22 representatives.

23 This is not only a blatant display of political
24 greed and racism, but it's consistent with the -- sorry --
25 it's inconsistent with the very democratic ideals enshrined

1 in the document our political system is founded on.

2 It is regressive, racist, and it is un-American.

3 For these reasons, I oppose the unconstitutional

4 redistricting of CD 9, 33, 18, and 29 and urge you to do so

5 as well. Thank you for the opportunity to testify today.

6 CHAIRPERSON KING: Thank you for testifying. Now,

7 you said CD 12. Are you in the Parker or Tarrant County

8 portion?

9 MS. VEERA: Tarrant County, sir.

10 CHAIRPERSON KING: Okay. Great.

11 Members, any questions?

12 MR. MILES: Mr. Chairman.

13 CHAIRPERSON KING: Senator Miles.

14 MR. MILES: Young lady, you're 19 years old?

15 MS. VEERA: Yes, sir.

16 MR. MILES: And you at 19 can see the racism in

17 these acts you spoke of?

18 MS. VEERA: Absolutely, sir. Yes.

19 MR. MILES: Thank you for being so observant and

20 keeping it plain. And you have a bright future ahead of

21 you.

22 MS. VEERA: Thank you very much, sir.

23 CHAIRPERSON KING: Thank you for testifying.

24 Chair calls Ramon Rodriguez.

25 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Good afternoon. Can you-all hear

1 me clearly?

2 CHAIRPERSON KING: Yes, we sure can.

3 MR. RODRIGUEZ: Awesome. My name is Ramon
4 Rodriguez, and I am the county chair for the Presidio County
5 Democratic Party. So I'm representing all of the
6 constituents in Presidio County.

7 So this current redistricting proposal raises some
8 serious concerns, not because the process itself is
9 unfamiliar, but because of the timing, the speed, and the
10 potential consequences.

11 Redistricting is traditionally tied to the census.
12 That's because we use population data to ensure fairness.
13 But what's being considered now is a mid-decade redrawing of
14 lines before new data is available and without a clear
15 statewide demand for change.

16 That makes people worry, and they should. We all
17 know how these lines are going to affect the voices that are
18 heard and affects which communities have access to the
19 resources and representation they need.

20 When the process moves quickly, and when proposed
21 maps appear to favor one political outcome over general
22 representation, it risks undermining public trust and our
23 institutions as a whole. Let's be honest.

24 Right now, Texans are dealing with a record-
25 breaking flooding and real-life emergencies. That would be

1 the priority and that should. People need resources, not
2 redistricting. They need roads fixed, homes rebuilt, and
3 leadership that's focused on recovery, not political lines.
4 This isn't just a map; it's a message. And the message we
5 need to send is to every community, regardless of state or
6 ZIP code matters equally.

7 I urge the community -- the committee to slow
8 down. Let the people be heard. Let this process reflect
9 not just legal requirements, but democratic values, because
10 people are watching. And if this map moves forward the way
11 it's being proposed, without fairness, transparency or real
12 community input, Texans will not forget. They will remember
13 who listened and who didn't. Thank you for your time.

14 (Spanish spoken, not translated herein).

15 MR. RODRIGUEZ: And thank you, Senator Blanco, for
16 all you do for us. I'm happy to answer any questions.

17 CHAIRPERSON KING: Thank you.

18 Members, any questions?

19 Seeing none, Chair calls -- and again, there's no
20 first name, but the last name is Meyer.

21 MS. MEYER: Hello, this is Ye Meyer.

22 CHAIRPERSON KING: Welcome. If you would just
23 please tell us your full name, and if you're representing an
24 organization, let us know that organization and please
25 proceed with your testimony.

1 MS. MEYER: This is Ye Meyer from Austin, Texas.
2 I cannot see myself so I'm not sure if I -- my video is
3 working.

4 CHAIRPERSON KING: We can hear you very well.

5 MS. MEYER: Okay. Great. I representing myself
6 as on regarding redistricting. Four years ago, this body
7 adopted new congressional maps which the majority of the
8 members claim were drawn fairly and without racial
9 precedence.

10 Today this map are still being challenged by the
11 court. Now suddenly, the Department of Justice is claiming
12 that four districts in Texas were racially gerrymandered and
13 they must be withdrawn.

14 Even worse, this redistributing effort is taking
15 place without even having the map that are visible to the
16 public now. This is not what democracy look like. The
17 people of this state are not being fully represented in this
18 process.

19 I'm not okay with this and neither would you be.
20 We just experienced a catastrophic flood in Texas. Sadly,
21 my neighbor lost their daughter. Instead of making the
22 catastrophic floods the top priority, our legislature is
23 focusing on redistricting today, an expensive and
24 unnecessary issue at this time. This is not okay.

25 Thank you.

1 CHAIRPERSON KING: Well, thank you.

2 And members, are there any questions?

3 Well, thank you for being here today.

4 I want to call the next panel and -- well, let me
5 call Roger Daily first. Mr. Daily?

6 MR. DAILY: Thank you, members of the Senate
7 Special Committee on Congressional Redistricting. My name
8 is Roger Daily from Kingwood, Texas, representing myself. I
9 am here today because I was not able to speak this past
10 Saturday in Houston after waiting for five hours with my
11 fellow -- over a thousand Texans agreeing with me that there
12 should not be redistricting midterm between censuses.

13 This is purely a political move, not what is best
14 for Texans. When politicians are elected, they are done so
15 because they know the community, they understand the unique
16 issues, concerns, and problems of their people. They got to
17 this point because they are part of the history to make the
18 needed changes required.

19 They make a stand, they become advocates, and they
20 fight for us. Such was the case of legislator Dan Huberty
21 who showed up and stood firm. When redistricting occurs,
22 that history and advocacy is ripped out.

23 District boundary lines are manipulated,
24 stretched, and contorted like a Stretch Armstrong toy. It's
25 not a logical configuration of common interest, but some odd

1 puzzle piece. There are many critical issues our
2 communities have.

3 Do the right thing for Texans. Preserve
4 meaningful representation for our communities and its
5 residents. They have the right to know that their
6 representative truly gets them. They have the right to know
7 that the same things that keep them up at night are shared
8 by those representing them.

9 This is a distraction of our leadership's time and
10 energy to solve real Texas problems. Flooding, health
11 concerns, and economic decisions are all higher on our
12 critical priorities list. Like many I know, we are not
13 happy that the Governor Abbott has chosen the president's
14 concerns to be more important than those of Texas. Do not
15 support redistricting. This is not a matter of need, but a
16 matter of greed. Thank you.

17 CHAIRPERSON KING: Thank you.

18 Members, any questions?

19 Thank you for your testimony.

20 This last panel is we have four left and I know
21 we've had with each of you difficulty in connecting, but I
22 wanted to try one more time before we closed out the day.
23 So let me call again Nancy Ruff, Vicki Rushton, Asulema
24 Reyna, and Krystal Martinez.

25 And let's go first with Ms. Reyna. Why don't we

1 go ahead and go with you again?

2 MS. REYNA: Okay. Yes. Thank you.

3 CHAIRPERSON KING: There we are.

4 MS. REYNA: Thank you for your patience. So I'm
5 Asulema Reyna, and I'm from the El Paso County District 23.
6 And I wanted to clarify something. I'm happy that a lot of
7 El Pasoans have called today, but I want to clarify
8 something.

9 If you're on the -- in El Paso under District 16,
10 you have somebody local representing you versus District 23.
11 We have someone out there in San Antonio, and that is a big
12 issue. So it's a different way of seeing it.

13 I support this redistricting for that same reason.
14 We need somebody local that knows our community and that can
15 engage with us and help us. And I will just say this
16 briefly so that you can have a better understanding of how
17 it is when you have someone local versus when you have
18 someone very far away, like 500 miles away from El Paso.

19 In the beginning of this year in February, my
20 stepfather, he's 84 years old, he suffers dementia, and he
21 misplaced his green card. We needed urgently an added stamp
22 for his passport because he crosses the border weekly to
23 pick up laundry and precooked meals from his wife.

24 Well, we contacted the office of Tony Gonzales
25 here locally, Congressman Tony Gonzales. They gave us a

1 phone number with area code to San Antonio. We called the
2 office. They heard our situation, took our name down, phone
3 number. Never called back till this day. They haven't
4 called back.

5 We waited a couple of days, but due to the
6 circumstances, I had to reach to Ms. Veronica Escobar's
7 office. And within ten days, we were able to get a USCIS
8 appointment here locally through Mrs. Escobar's office.

9 The second thing that I want to share with you is
10 this. Just last month, parts of the El Paso County in the
11 Socorro area, residents are facing a major big proposal road
12 that will possibly demolish 13 homes.

13 When I'm talking about low-income people, seniors
14 that are disabled, facing their houses being torn down just
15 because there's a new idea of coming down here and building
16 warehouses.

17 If eminent domain is going to play in this
18 situation, we need somebody local to help us navigate in
19 that. Again, I personally visited Congressman Tony
20 Gonzales' office here in San Elizario.

21 The person that's there representing him,
22 Mr. Garza, he told me that Mr. Gonzales had not gotten back
23 to him regarding that matter, that he was very busy between
24 Washington and San Antonio.

25 CHAIRPERSON KING: Well, I --

1 MS. REYNA: So with that said --

2 CHAIRPERSON KING: Okay.

3 MS. REYNA: I'm sorry. Is my time up?

4 CHAIRPERSON KING: It is. And --

5 MS. REYNA: Okay.

6 MS. REYNA: -- we actually went over quite a bit.

7 But I do want to thank you for your testimony and I'm glad
8 that you were able to get the situation worked out for your
9 stepfather as well.

10 Members, are there any questions?

11 Well, thank you so much for being here.

12 MS. REYNA: No, thank you so much for your
13 patience.

14 CHAIRPERSON KING: And that document, if that was
15 something that you wanted us to see, you can certainly post
16 it on the Senate portal. Just go to the Senate Committee's
17 portal. And if you post it there, it's an easy way to
18 attach, and we'll make sure it gets distributed to all the
19 members of the committee.

20 MS. REYNA: Okay. Thank you so much for that.

21 CHAIRPERSON KING: Thank you.

22 MS. REYNA: Thank you.

23 CHAIRPERSON KING: Chair calls Vicki Rushton.

24 MS. RUSHTON: Hello. Can you hear me?

25 CHAIRPERSON KING: We certainly can. If you would

1 please just tell us your name and if you're representing an
2 organization and proceed with your testimony.

3 MS. RUSHTON: Okay. Howdy. My name is Vicki
4 Rushton, and as a native Texan and a retired Texas public
5 school teacher, I represent myself. I urge you today to
6 resist federal interference in the ability of Texas citizens
7 to have their voices heard.

8 Today's comments focus on West Texas and the Texas
9 Panhandle. I spent the first 21 years of my life in the
10 Texas Panhandle. And I still farm 92 acres of Carson County
11 wheat that has been in my family for over 100 years.

12 I have lived in Texas for 69 years. Not only do I
13 care about Hutchinson, Potter, and Carson counties, I have
14 also lived in Tarrant, Dallas, Harris, Brazos, and Bastrop.
15 I care about all the voices in these counties. In fact,
16 every citizen in every county in Texas. And you did too.

17 Every citizen deserves to have their voice count.
18 The federally-promoted redistricting will negate many of our
19 fellow citizens' voices. I urge you to oppose the attempt
20 of forces outside our great state to deprive our citizens of
21 fair representation.

22 I think that furthermore, I urge you, any proposed
23 map should be shared in detail, in advance, early and freely
24 with the general public. I oppose redistricting that has
25 already eroded representation. And I urge you to resist

1 further eroding that representation. I urge you to stand up
2 for every Texan. Thank you.

3 CHAIRPERSON KING: Thank you, Ms. Rushton. And
4 again, where are you testifying from? Where are you
5 located?

6 MS. RUSHTON: I live in Bastrop currently.

7 CHAIRPERSON KING: But you had spent --

8 MS. RUSHTON: Kind of close to Columbus and
9 Rozanski.

10 CHAIRPERSON KING: Okay. But you'd previously
11 lived in the Panhandle. I wanted to clarify.

12 MS. RUSHTON: That is right. And I still own 92
13 acres of wheat in the Panhandle. I care vitally about the
14 Panhandle --

15 CHAIRPERSON KING: Absolutely. I understand.

16 MS. RUSHTON: -- and the very dispersed farmers
17 there.

18 CHAIRPERSON KING: I understand. Thank you.
19 We're very glad we were able to get you connected. I'm
20 sorry there was a little bit of difficulty.

21 Members, are there --

22 MS. RUSHTON: Yeah, thank you for your patience.

23 CHAIRPERSON KING: -- are there any questions for
24 Ms. Rushton?

25 Seeing none, Chair calls Nancy Ruff. Ms. Ruff.

1 Nancy Ruff.

2 Ms. Ruff, let's try one more time. If you would
3 unmute?

4 MS. RUFF: Unmute. Yes, this is Nancy Ruff. Can
5 you hear me?

6 CHAIRPERSON KING: Yes, we certainly can.

7 MS. RUFF: Okay.

8 CHAIRPERSON KING: You might turn down the audio
9 on your livestream --

10 MS. RUFF: I just did.

11 CHAIRPERSON KING: -- so you don't hear that
12 double -- great.

13 MS. RUFF: Sir.

14 CHAIRPERSON KING: Great.

15 MS. RUFF: Yeah, right. So good afternoon. My
16 name is Nancy Ruff. I have been bounced. Can you hear me
17 now?

18 CHAIRPERSON KING: Oh, absolutely.

19 MS. RUFF: Okay. I've been bounced in and out of
20 the waiting room probably 20 times this morning. So if I
21 lose you again, there's some sort of technical issue
22 ongoing. And I guess what's confusing to me, I see the
23 chairs kind of speaking. So am I on some sort of time
24 delay?

25 CHAIRPERSON KING: I think -- I'm not sure what

1 you're looking at. I think you may be watching the
2 livestream video instead of the Zoom video.

3 MS. RUFF: Oh, okay. All right. Let me just say
4 what I need to say and hopefully you-all can hear me. My
5 name is Nancy Ruff. I live in Congressional District 10. I
6 strongly oppose this legislature's attempt to redraw
7 congressional districts mid-decade.

8 This redistricting effort is not only unnecessary,
9 it is potentially illegal. It appears designed to dilute
10 the voting power of black, Latino, and poor communities in
11 clear violation of Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act and
12 the 14th Amendment's equal protection clause.

13 Drawing lines that strip representation from
14 communities of color for partisan gain is racial
15 gerrymandering, plain and simple. Governor Abbott added
16 redistricting to this special session's agenda only after
17 direct pressure from Donald Trump, whose goal is to secure a
18 larger Republican majority in the U.S. House, not fair
19 representation for Texan voters.

20 That's not democracy. That's a calculated effort
21 to diminish the voting strength of communities of color,
22 which again constitutes racial gerrymandering under federal
23 law.

24 To make matters worse, this legislature is
25 proceeding without even releasing proposed maps to the

1 public. It is deeply troubling to me that you are asking
2 the people of Texas to weigh in on the redistricting process
3 without even showing us what the new districts would look
4 like.

5 Transparency is essential for public trust, and
6 this process clearly lacks such transparency. When maps are
7 manipulated like this, communities like mine lose our voice
8 on everything from health care to education to economic
9 relief. Texans deserve representations that reflects the
10 diversity of our state --

11 CHAIRPERSON KING: Ms. Ruff --

12 MS. RUFF: -- not racially gerrymanded districts
13 that diminish our ability to elect the candidates of our
14 choice. I urge the committee to reject this redistricting
15 plan and to comply with all applicable federal laws --

16 CHAIRPERSON KING: Ms. Ruff, I'm going to have to
17 go ahead and --

18 MS. RUFF: -- and to respect the rights of all
19 Texans.

20 CHAIRPERSON KING: I'm going to --

21 MS. RUFF: Thank you for the opportunity for me to
22 provide my comments on this critical issue.

23 CHAIRPERSON KING: Thank you very much.

24 Members, are there any questions for the witness?

25 Well, thank you for being here. I'm sorry there

1 were some connection problems. I think they were probably
2 Internet issues on your end, but we're glad we're able to
3 get that worked out. Most of them today have gone okay. If
4 it was on our end, I certainly apologize for that.

5 Do we have anyone else in the queue?

6 THE CLERK: No, sir.

7 CHAIRPERSON KING: All right. That is our last
8 witness that we had for today. Just looking. We had 134
9 that were registered to testify. We heard testimony from 67
10 and which is a very good showing for today. And we really
11 appreciate everyone taking time to testify as well as
12 everyone who participated in just viewing through the
13 livestream.

14 That ends our public testimony for today.
15 Members, is there any other business to come before the
16 committee?

17 Senator Alvarado?

18 MS. ALVARADO: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I have a
19 series of questions I'd like to ask, and then I want to talk
20 a little bit about the redistricting process in general.

21 So again, we go back to why are we here? What is
22 the purpose, Mr. Chairman, of the public hearings? If it's
23 to assess whether to conduct congressional redistricting,
24 the testimony from last week through today have been
25 overwhelmingly not to conduct mid-decade congressional

1 redistricting under the current circumstances.

2 Whether you agree with that or not -- well, with
3 the position of individual witnesses, you would agree,
4 though, that most of the -- overwhelmingly most of the
5 testimony has been not supportive of this redistricting
6 process in mid-decade. Would you agree with that?

7 CHAIRPERSON KING: So the reason the committee was
8 created and convened initially was because the Governor
9 Abbott added to the special session the following charge.
10 It says, the governor's special session proclamation states,
11 "Legislation that provides a revised congressional
12 redistricting plan in light of constitutional concerns
13 raised by the U.S. Department of justice."

14 The purpose of the public hearings has been to
15 gather public information on the subject of congressional
16 redistricting. The -- there -- I -- there has been -- there
17 is no map currently before the committee.

18 The committee can consider a map at any time one
19 is filed. I am confident one will be filed at some point.
20 But the purpose of the committee hearings is the same reason
21 that we've done all hearings in the past before bills are
22 filed and that is to simply solicit testimony on the subject
23 matter.

24 MS. ALVARADO: Well, back to my original point,
25 though, that if it's to assess whether or not based on what

1 we're hearing at the four regional hearings we've had, would
2 you agree that an overwhelming majority of those that have
3 testified of the 200 -- I'm not sure what the number was
4 after today -- that most of the witnesses testified opposing
5 this entire process?

6 CHAIRPERSON KING: Well, yes and no. We heard a
7 lot of people particularly today say that that they were
8 unhappy with the current congressional maps. They felt that
9 they weren't fair for one reason or another.

10 We heard the early invited testimony today testify
11 that they had pled and defend and prosecuted in court as
12 plaintiffs' attorneys and that the current map
13 discriminated.

14 The DOJ letter, I have said myself, I do not
15 believe the maps that we passed in 2021, the map,
16 congressional redistricting map, violated the Voting Rights
17 Act in any way.

18 But I think the testimony has been mixed in that
19 regard because we have had people testify that the
20 congressional map did discriminate. We've had people
21 testify that they were very unhappy with the way their
22 districts were drawn for various reasons. And --

23 MS. ALVARADO: Well, I think on each day that
24 we've had the hearing from Friday, Saturday, I think there
25 have been one or two, and these weren't individuals that

1 were involved in the 2021 court case. These were just
2 members of the public.

3 And so, if you count from Friday to today, maybe
4 it's a handful or maybe a little bit more than a handful
5 that said they support the process of redistricting in mid-
6 decade.

7 My next question is, is it already decided that we
8 will redraw the congressional lines in this session? Is
9 there an option that based on the testimony and what the
10 outcome of the maps look like, that maybe this body says,
11 you know what, we're just -- we're not going to do it this
12 time?

13 CHAIRPERSON KING: I don't think anything is
14 predetermined. I think that I'm very confident there'll be
15 one or more maps filed here and in the House. We will take
16 those through the process. It'll be this committee's
17 decision as to whether they want to adopt a map and
18 recommend it for favorable consideration by the full Senate.

19 The committee, of course, it'll go through the
20 normal process of possible committee amendments. But at
21 this time, there's no map before us. I do expect one to be
22 before us. And when it does, we'll immediately make it
23 available to the public and begin public testimony on that,
24 just like we would any matter that comes before any
25 committee.

1 MS. ALVARADO: Do you know who is drawing the map?

2 CHAIRPERSON KING: I know we mentioned -- we
3 talked about this the other day on the floor. I understand
4 that the -- you mentioned the name earlier, Adam Kincaid. I
5 understand he is drawing a map on behalf of the
6 Redistricting Trust.

7 I think that's on behalf of the Congressional --
8 Republican Congressional delegation, but I'm actually not
9 sure of that. But I haven't seen any map yet. No one has
10 presented a map to me, and I haven't been trying to draw one
11 myself.

12 MS. ALVARADO: I would imagine when he drew the
13 last maps in 2021, he probably had buy in from Republican
14 members of Congress. Do you anticipate he's getting that
15 same kind of enthusiasm and buy in this time around?

16 CHAIRPERSON KING: I don't know. And I wasn't on
17 the redistricting committee in 2021 in the Senate.

18 MS. ALVARADO: Okay. Will the redraw focus be on
19 districts across the entire state like we typically do in
20 redistricting, or is it just specific ones?

21 CHAIRPERSON KING: You know, I can't state that.
22 I said I believe if there's any interest on the Republican
23 side, it would be in trying to create more Republican
24 districts to add support to the Republican majority in the
25 U.S. Congress so that some of the really good policies that

1 we've seen implemented in the last seven months could
2 continue and be furthered.

3 MS. ALVARADO: Okay. I'm just curious because the
4 DOJ letter, which was included in the governor's call, you
5 know, very specifically about those four districts, if that
6 is going to be the desire of the leadership here, that it is
7 just focused on those four districts, or if it's the entire
8 state?

9 CHAIRPERSON KING: Well, it's my hope that
10 anything that the committee takes up, that we'll take it up
11 from a race-blind perspective. And I don't have any
12 intention of looking at racial data myself.

13 MS. ALVARADO: Speaking of racial blind, I mean,
14 that that was said time and time again in the -- during the
15 debate on the Senate floor and that the maps were drawn
16 without any racial bias and that they were VRA compliant and
17 legal.

18 CHAIRPERSON KING: Which is another point of
19 confusion because the lawsuits have all alleged that they
20 were just the opposite, and some of the testimony from some
21 of their lawyers this morning reaffirmed that. But my
22 opinion is that the map that we passed in 2021 out of the
23 legislature did not violate the VRA.

24 MS. ALVARADO: Okay. Do you have any idea when
25 these maps may come down? I mean, we hear and, you know,

1 out there in the rumor mill that possibly the end of this
2 week?

3 CHAIRPERSON KING: Like I said, I haven't had one
4 presented to me. If one's presented to me, I'll make a
5 decision on whether I want to file it. And if I file it, it
6 will be available to everyone immediately.

7 MS. ALVARADO: And what will you base your
8 decision on whether or not to file it?

9 CHAIRPERSON KING: Well, the first question I'll
10 have is, does this map, does it comply with the Voting
11 Rights Act in every way? And if it does, then I'll consider
12 filing it, but I'm not even going to study it in detail
13 until I'm told that it's had a solid legal scrub and that
14 counsel has told me that it does not in any way violate the
15 Voting Rights Act.

16 MS. ALVARADO: Okay. What will you and the
17 committee do with the maps that have already been submitted
18 by the public? I think as of yesterday, perhaps there have
19 been as many as a hundred maps that have been submitted by
20 the public. What will happen with those maps?

21 CHAIRPERSON KING: Well, they're -- as you know,
22 they're available to any senator to look at, to be advised
23 by or take into consideration. And I guess if a senator
24 wanted to, they could take one of those maps and have it
25 drafted by leg counsel and file it as a bill.

1 MS. ALVARADO: Okay. Well, I'm just concerned
2 that we're asking for proposed plans when we were not given
3 specifics on a map that we have. So what do you plan to do
4 with all the public testimony, specifically that that has
5 been submitted in writing and oral statements after the
6 public hearings?

7 CHAIRPERSON KING: Well, again, that is all a
8 matter of public record. It's all available to each member
9 of the committee and to each member of the Senate and to any
10 member of the public that wishes to go through and review
11 that. It is all public data and can be accessed through the
12 Senate committee portal.

13 MS. ALVARADO: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I
14 wanted to ask what's next after the -- after we conclude
15 this hearing and then there -- there's a map, and then
16 you're going to call another hearing. Is that right? And
17 that will be here in Austin?

18 CHAIRPERSON KING: So the very next thing, I
19 believe, would be at your request, and we'll have a hearing
20 after we wrap up. Today's Tuesday. So after we recess on
21 the floor Wednesday, we'll have a formal meeting in I
22 believe it's going to be in the Betty King room.

23 And we'll take up what I believe is going to be a
24 motion from you or Mr. Miles or Mr. Hinojosa to consider a
25 subpoena of the author of the DOJ letter.

1 MS. ALVARADO: Okay. Let's just say
2 hypothetically that the maps come out on Friday. How soon
3 do you think after that that the next hearing, which you
4 said would be in person and here at the Capitol, when do you
5 anticipate that would occur?

6 CHAIRPERSON KING: That's a really good question.
7 And I was trying to work through a timeline mentally last
8 night. You know, the Senate may desire to wait and see what
9 the House passes out. I think because of the shortness of a
10 special session, it's probably certainly wise.

11 Even if we just, we're waiting on a House map,
12 it's still wise to go ahead and have a hearing. So I'd want
13 to talk it over Senate leadership and with members of the
14 committee and but I would think at some point in the near
15 future, after that bill is filed, we would want to have a
16 public hearing or hearings on it.

17 MS. ALVARADO: And speaking of public hearings, in
18 regional hearings that we've been talking about, Senator
19 Miles and I, in the 2011 redistricting process, field
20 hearings -- this is the Senate -- field hearings occurred in
21 2010 before the 82nd legislature began.

22 So under a normal -- and there's nothing normal
23 about what we're doing here -- but to squeeze all of this in
24 into 30 days is impossible, even if we just did half or a
25 quarter of is what's typically done in a regular session of

1 redistricting.

2 Senator Hinojosa was on that committee, and there
3 were regional hearings from September the 1st to November
4 the 20th. And those hearings occurred in Austin, Dallas,
5 Amarillo, Midland, Edinburgh, San Antonio, and Houston.

6 In fact, the Houston hearing was at the University
7 of Houston on November the 20th. We have the -- in case
8 anybody doesn't believe me, there are attachments, exhibits
9 here of the information about those hearings.

10 So again, I want to reemphasize the need for those
11 in-person regional hearings and just highlight what some of
12 you-all are trying to do here is to -- is just impossible to
13 squeeze in what takes months and months and months into 30
14 days.

15 CHAIRPERSON KING: And you're correct. The
16 tradition has been before a regular redistricting session
17 after the census, usually both the House and the Senate have
18 had field hearings in anticipation of that census data until
19 it comes out.

20 I would say this, though, that the census data
21 that we're operating off of during this special session is
22 the same census data upon which testimony was taken by the
23 Senate in 2019 -- I'm sorry -- in 2020, in preparation for
24 the 2021 redistricting cycle.

25 And it's also the same data that all the hearings

1 were upon during the special session on redistricting in
2 2021. And again, it's the same data that hearings were
3 taken upon in 2023, at least on House and Senate.
4 Congressional wasn't taken up in 2023.

5 But by that, I mean the same census data that we
6 would be relying upon for any map that was considered in
7 this special session is the same census data upon which
8 there have been many hearings in the field and at the
9 Capitol since beginning in 2020.

10 And so it's a little, I think, unfair, not
11 intentionally unfair, but I think looking at the totality of
12 all the circumstances, there have been a lot of hearings
13 over a period now of five years on this census data all
14 across the state by both the House and the Senate.

15 So I think we've had a great deal of public
16 testimony. I think having it now in this special session
17 served as kind of a refresher to that. But there's a lot of
18 data out there, and I would refer people back to those
19 hearings, which are still archived, still available online,
20 and still use the -- are based on the same data that we
21 would be considering in this committee.

22 MS. ALVARADO: Well, and there have been a lot of
23 changes just in the last four years. Demographics change,
24 people moving here. You just --

25 CHAIRPERSON KING: But we're not allowed.

1 MS. ALVARADO: Right.

2 CHAIRPERSON KING: And that's what's confusing to
3 me, too, and I had to get clarification on that from -- but
4 we're not allowed to take that into consideration, the
5 estimates provided by the Census Bureau where any maps that
6 are drawn one census to another has to take -- has to be
7 based on the current census, which for us is the 2020 census
8 data.

9 MS. ALVARADO: Okay. Thank you for answering my
10 questions.

11 CHAIRPERSON KING: And I hope I did. I'm really
12 trying to answer them as straightforwardly as I can.

13 Senator Miles.

14 MR. MILES: Mr. Chairman, you know, I say what I
15 mean and mean what I say, and I've said this before a lot,
16 that I have a lot of respect for you, Mr. Chairman. But
17 members, I can't move from this day without responding to
18 some things that you said in your opening speech,
19 Mr. Chairman.

20 You can accept it or not accept it, but people of
21 Texas are upset and they have every right to be upset,
22 Mr. Chairman. These witnesses have every right to call the
23 process racist because it is racist, Mr. Chairman.

24 Four minority districts were targeted to be
25 redistricted. You have no right to admonish them, as you

1 did this morning, about how they feel about their actions
2 that are being taken -- their communities being taken away
3 and divided up.

4 If you do racist things, Mr. Chairman, people will
5 call it racist as it is. It is your actions, not your
6 words. Majority-minority communities have been targeted,
7 and that's a racist act, Mr. Chairman, point blank period.

8 Four districts have been targeted. All minority
9 majority, majority African American. I feel the need to say
10 this to you, Mr. Chairman, and I'm going to say it as
11 respectfully as I can.

12 You as a white man in America and in Texas, have
13 no right to tell me or anyone else, a black man in America
14 in Texas, that this process is not racist or discriminatory.
15 Too often you-all want to tell minorities how to feel about
16 things aimed at them.

17 Mr. Chairman, as your friend, as your colleague,
18 and as a Christian brother, it is so totally disrespectful
19 for you to try to tell us what's right for us. I mean that
20 sincerely, Mr. Chairman. It's totally disrespectful.

21 Senator King, Mr. Chairman, you said in your
22 opening remarks that you felt the current congressional maps
23 are not discriminatory, that you voted for the map, that you
24 didn't agree with the DOJ letter. So why are we here?

25 You're the chairman of this committee,

1 Mr. Chairman. You can just say no. To my colleagues and
2 the Chairman, I know you all know this. When you lay down
3 with dogs, you wake up with fleas. You all know that. And
4 you all know what I'm referring to. Thank you,
5 Mr. Chairman.

6 CHAIRPERSON KING: Thank you, Senator.

7 And Senator Miles, I know you and I have some
8 disagreements, but I have the deepest respect for you
9 personally and as a friend and we've worked together for a
10 long time.

11 MR. MILES: Mr. Chairman, I was thoroughly
12 disappointed in your comments this morning.

13 CHAIRPERSON KING: I understand you were. I felt
14 very compelled to respond to some of the just very ugly
15 things that were said yesterday. Calling the party a party
16 of pedophiles and things of that nature --

17 MR. MILES: Well --

18 CHAIRPERSON KING: -- was totally inappropriate --

19 MR. MILES: I do agree with you on that.

20 CHAIRPERSON KING: -- and I had to respond to.

21 MR. MILES: I agree with you on that.

22 CHAIRPERSON KING: Okay.

23 MR. MILES: But to say this is not a racist act,
24 it's totally incorrect.

25 CHAIRPERSON KING: Well, I --

1 MR. MILES: To tell us -- to tell African
2 Americans what's best for them is totally disrespectful.

3 CHAIRPERSON KING: I believe, I really tried to be
4 very specific to some of the comments yesterday. I didn't
5 think it was appropriate to lay Jim Crow laws at the feet of
6 the Republican Party, which was said repeatedly over the
7 last three days when the Democrats were the majority party
8 that passed those laws in primarily the Southern states.

9 And those were the types of things I tried to very
10 specifically respond to.

11 MR. MILES: As you heard --

12 CHAIRPERSON KING: As well as I wanted to point
13 out that the Civil Rights Act would not have been passed
14 without the support of Republicans, and it would have
15 Republican support today I know as well. But I understand
16 that.

17 MR. MILES: As you heard several of the African
18 Americans testify today, there also, too, were disappointed
19 in your comments this morning.

20 CHAIRPERSON KING: I understand. Such is
21 unfortunately the nature of redistricting, I know.

22 But with that, members is there -- Senator
23 Hinojosa.

24 MR. HINOJOSA: Thank you, Mr. Chairman and
25 members. I'd just like to make a brief statement. I know

1 it's been a very challenging four committee hearings that we
2 held in different regions of the state. But the reality is
3 it was very difficult to pinpoint some of the arguments and
4 concerns that many of our constituents of the State of Texas
5 had because we have no map.

6 And I understand, and I'll try to just focus on
7 factors from the Fifth Circuit and some of the testimony.
8 But I understand and recognize that redistricting is one of
9 the most partisan and politicized issues that we undertake
10 every so often.

11 I also understand that it's naked political power
12 used by the party in control, whether Republican or
13 Democrat. It happens in different states and different
14 parties when different parties are in charge and have the
15 majority.

16 I also acknowledge the motivation by the Trump
17 administration to redistrict in the middle of the
18 traditional ten-year census cycle. The difference is that
19 this redistricting special session goes to the heart of our
20 democracy and equal protection of all citizens to have a
21 voice.

22 The redistricting special session is in line with
23 the orders and commands of the Department of Justice and
24 make clear the intent of the Trump administration and that
25 is to silence the voice of U.S. citizens based on color of

1 their skin, black, brown, or Asian.

2 And I will explain that just based on the
3 Department of Justice letter, which has been represented and
4 distorted the Fifth Circuit opinion in Petteway v. Galveston
5 in that the Fifth Circuit never declared minority coalition
6 districts unconstitutional. The opinion was narrow in
7 scope, related and focused on Section 2 of the Voting Rights
8 Act.

9 The opinion stated that a coalition minority
10 district could not claim border dilution in a redistricting
11 challenge. The Department of Justice letter grossly
12 misinterprets the Fifth Circuit ruling. And the Department
13 of Justice makes it clear it wants to wipe out four
14 congressional districts represented by minority members or
15 elected by the minority-majority voters.

16 This is targeted racial discrimination. That is
17 unconstitutional. The Trump administration did not target
18 any other Republican congressional districts. The DOJ
19 letter targets only minority districts which are represented
20 by either Hispanic or African Americans or their
21 representative of choice.

22 They are targeting race so that you do not have to
23 have minorities being elected. I mean, there's a whole
24 target. If we move forward with redrawing our congressional
25 maps, we risk further marginalization of minority voters and

1 setting the state for lengthy and costly litigation that
2 will burden Texas taxpayers for many years.

3 But more concerning, we are undermining our
4 democratic principles for the benefit of one individual and
5 one administration. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

6 CHAIRPERSON KING: Thank you, Senator.

7 Any other members?

8 Senator Blanco. And by the way, you got so many
9 accolades today from your constituents, I thought it I may
10 have been at a campaign event. I'm not sure.

11 MR. BLANCO: Well, Chairman, thank you so much for
12 the opportunity to join you-all and the members for giving
13 me the opportunity to listen to our folks in West Texas.

14 You know, Senator Sparks and I have the honor of
15 representing magnificent people, as do you all. But I think
16 today, the tone and to your comments earlier, I mean, it was
17 respectful, and I think we need more of that in our
18 government.

19 I think it goes a long way to be able to empathize
20 and understand each other rather than attack each other.
21 And unfortunately, we see that here. But I think West
22 Texans represented us well today here in this hearing.

23 So I want to thank all of the folks who signed up
24 today from West Texas. Very proud of you. You represent us
25 well. And I want to thank you for voicing your concerns as

1 we draw the lines that are going to shape representation for
2 the next decade.

3 And we've got to make sure that we're keeping
4 these communities of interest together. We've got to make
5 sure that rural voices remain present. We've got to make
6 sure that we're not carving up urban communities as well.
7 And importantly, we've got to make sure that our border
8 communities have a voice in this process as well.

9 So I want to thank you-all for giving me the
10 opportunity to join you today. I think we heard a lot of
11 good information today. My hope is that we can take this
12 show on the road at some point to hear from more folks.

13 And -- because the more we hear from folks, the
14 more people participate, it only strengthens our democracy.
15 So thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, members, for
16 giving me the opportunity to be here.

17 CHAIRPERSON KING: And thank you, Senator.

18 Any other comments, questions?

19 I did want to mention, Senator Alvarado, you'd
20 asked me a couple of times if I had hired legal counsel yet.
21 I'm hoping I can tell you in a couple hours that I will
22 have. You know, leg counsel manages the contracts between
23 outside counsel, and we did find a law firm, and they are
24 negotiating that contract.

25 And I thought it would have been signed and worked

1 out by now, but I'm hoping it will be by the end of the day.
2 And I'll email each member of the committee and let them
3 know who the counsel is that we've hired to represent me in
4 the process.

5 MS. ALVARADO: Is that -- okay. You said to
6 represent you, so is that --

7 CHAIRPERSON KING: So it would be --

8 MS. ALVARADO: -- law firm going to be --

9 CHAIRPERSON KING: -- representing --

10 MS. ALVARADO: -- representing you, the committee,
11 Republicans only or --

12 CHAIRPERSON KING: It would be representing just
13 me in the position of chairman of the committee.

14 MS. ALVARADO: Okay. And is that something that
15 the Senate absorbs those costs?

16 CHAIRPERSON KING: I think they're actually paid
17 through leg counsel so --

18 MS. ALVARADO: Okay.

19 CHAIRPERSON KING: -- probably the House and the
20 Senate all together in that one big budget. But that's
21 typically how it's been done in the past --

22 MS. ALVARADO: Okay.

23 CHAIRPERSON KING: -- is they've hired someone to
24 represent the chair of the committee in the Lieutenant
25 Governor's office. And then, of course, the Attorney

1 General's Office is available to give legal counsel to any
2 member, as is leg counsel.

3 MS. ALVARADO: Okay. Thank you.

4 CHAIRPERSON KING: Any other business before the
5 committee? If not, we will stand, I guess, in recess.
6 Yeah, we'll -- there's no further business. The Senate
7 Special Committee on Congressional Redistricting will stand
8 in recess subject to the call of the chair, and I guess that
9 will be for Wednesday. Thank you.

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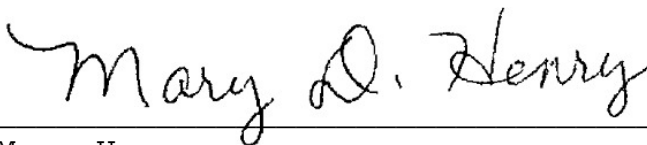
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Mary Henry
Integrity Legal Support Solutions
Firm Registration No. 528
9901 Brodie Ln., #160-400
Austin, Texas 78748
512-320-8690
www.integritylegal.support