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AUDIO TRANSCRIPTION

September 14, 2021

SC HOUSE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE REDISTRICTING HEARING

Greenville

REPORTER: Sheila Smith

STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA
HOUSE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE
HOUSE REDISTRICTING AD HOC SUBCOMMITTEE

* * * * *

SUBCOMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

REPRESENTATIVE WALLACE JORDAN, JR. (Chairman)
REPRESENTATIVE NEAL COLLINS
REPRESENTATIVE PAT HENEGAN
REPRESENTATIVE JASON ELLIOTT
REPRESENTATIVE BETH BERNSTEIN
REPRESENTATIVE WESTON NEWTON
EMMA DEAN, CHIEF LEGAL COUNSEL
HOUSE JUDICIARY

REPRESENTATIVES PRESENT:

REPRESENTATIVE CHANDRA DILLARD
REPRESENTATIVE WES COX
REPRESENTATIVE JERRY CARTER
REPRESENTATIVE LEOLA ROBINSON
REPRESENTATIVE STEVEN LONG
REPRESENTATIVE ROSALYN HENDERSON-MYERS

* * * * *

DATE: September 14, 2021
TIME: 6:00 P.M.
LOCATION: Greenville Senior High School Auditorium
1 Vardry Street
Greenville, South Carolina

INDEX

	PAGE
Introduction by Chairman Jordan.....	3
Statement by Ruth Stanton.....	10
Statement by Lawson Wetley.....	12
Statement by Tonya Winbush.....	15
Statement by Teresa DeShields.....	16
Statement by Demetrius Carson.....	17
Statement by Austin Nichols.....	18
Statement by Stephanie Priester.....	20
Statement by Jason Spencer.....	24
Statement by Efia Nwangaza.....	28
Statement by Dr. Clemson Turregano.....	29
Statement by Adrian Atkinson.....	30
Statement by Takita Wallace.....	32
Statement by Jonah Simmons.....	35
Statement by Daniel Gamble.....	36
Statement by Derrick Quarrels.....	38
Statement by Amber Lang.....	41
Closing remarks by Chairman Jordan.....	42
Certificate.....	45

1 CHAIRMAN JORDAN:-- the chairman of this South Carolina
2 House Ad Hoc Redistricting Committee. I'm from
3 Florence. And I'm glad to be with you tonight.
4 Let me introduce our group here, our committee
5 actually.

6 Neal Collins to my left from Pickens. Also
7 to my left, Representative Pat Henegan from
8 Marlboro County. To my far right, native son to
9 Greenville -- you like that? Mr. Jason Elliott.
10 Also Representative Beth Bernstein from Columbia
11 and of course our Chief Legal Counsel for House
12 Judiciary, Ms. Emma Deen. Oh, I rode all the way
13 here with my good friend from Beaufort County, Mr.
14 Weston Newton, and so it was like you were still
15 with me in the car there. So he deserves a
16 mention as well.

17 MR. NEWTON: My hometown; good to be back.

18 CHAIRMAN JORDAN: And he went to school -- or grew up
19 here in Greenville. So that's how -- we used him
20 in lieu of GPS on the way to get here, or at least
21 in participation with GPS. And we want to say
22 thank you as well to Greenville High School for
23 their willingness to open the doors to this lovely
24 facility for us to be able to have everyone here
25 tonight.

1 Representative Dillard, also from right here
2 in this area, we welcome you tonight. Thank you
3 for being with us. And also I saw earlier I think
4 Representative Wes Cox waving back there and
5 Representative Jerry Carter from over in Clemson.
6 We won't hold that against you.

7 (INDISCERNIBLE)

8 CHAIRMAN JORDAN: Oh, and coming down the aisle right
9 now, Representative Leola Robinson. Thank you for
10 being here this evening.

11 REPRESENTATIVE ROBINSON: Thank you. (Indiscernible).

12 CHAIRMAN JORDAN: And Steven, you snuck in on me.

13 Representative Long on the front row. This is the
14 best attended -- attendance we've had from
15 representatives from across the local area. Did I
16 miss anyone? All right, well, thank you all for
17 being with us tonight as well. And of course,
18 thank you to the most people here tonight, the
19 public. This I can tell you as I've been going --
20 we've gone all around the state. As you can tell,
21 this is a bipartisan committee that is truly from
22 all over the state. And we are -- you are the
23 fourth stop out of I believe ten, as we go across
24 the state to hear from the citizens of South
25 Carolina. Tomorrow night we'll be in North

1 Charleston, and then we'll conclude in Columbia at
2 which time we'll welcome folks from Columbia, but
3 we'll also use technology as our primary tool in
4 that meeting as well. So if you know anyone that
5 couldn't be here tonight that wanted to be here
6 tonight, make them aware of that meeting that
7 we'll be having later in this process in which
8 they can participate via Teams, Microsoft Teams.

9 These hearings, as I have been going across
10 the state telling everyone, these are key
11 ingredients in the process of redistricting here
12 in South Carolina. Both here tonight and at other
13 scheduled public hearings, the members of this
14 Committee, the House of Representatives, are
15 seeking your input and insight into the process of
16 redrawing our districts in order to accommodate
17 the tremendous growth we've seen here in South
18 Carolina since our last census.

19 The public's input is a key ingredient, or
20 consideration of this Committee as we formulate a
21 proposed plan for presentation to the House
22 Judiciary Committee and ultimately adopt a plan
23 for consideration by the full House of
24 Representatives. We recognize that this is not an
25 insubstantial task to redraw legislative and

1 congressional district lines. The Judiciary
2 Committee may or may not adopt the plan proposed
3 by the Ad Hoc -- this Ad Hoc Committee. So to
4 the full House of Representatives may or may not
5 adopt the plan proposed by the full Judiciary
6 Committee. Unlike prior redistricting cycles, the
7 plan that gains approval from the House and later
8 of the Senate is no longer subject to advanced
9 clearance by the United States Justice Department.
10 This is because in the decades since the last
11 redistricting cycle, the law surrounding
12 redistricting has continued to evolve. And in
13 2013, the Supreme Court struck down a requirement
14 of the Voting Rights Act that required some states
15 to have federal preapproval of redistricting
16 plans. Although we no longer have pre-clearance
17 obligations, we do have the benefit of working
18 from a redistricting plan that was both approved
19 by the Department of Justice in 2011 and withstood
20 challenge and scrutiny through federal litigation,
21 which resulted in an affirmance of the district
22 lines as they are currently drawn.

23 Another difference from prior redistricting
24 cycles that warrants mention is of course the well
25 -- is well known to us all, and that is the

1 unprecedented times of the coronavirus pandemic
2 that continues to impact both our country and our
3 state. Due to this disruption, the US Census
4 Bureau has been very delayed in release of the
5 2020 census data, which of course has impacted and
6 continues to impact the timing of redistricting in
7 South Carolina.

8 As I mentioned during our first Committee
9 meeting in early August, once the US Census Bureau
10 releases the final data, sometime hopefully later
11 this month, we will begin the map drawing process
12 for the House. Although we are happy to receive
13 your proposed plan submissions at our Web site
14 that may use the Legacy format data, the House
15 will wait until the US Census Bureau publishes the
16 final data and we have verification that is
17 unchanged from the early release information
18 before we actually open the House map room and
19 begin drawing or considering proposed plans.

20 As the House undertakes the process of
21 redrawing district lines, public input is
22 indispensable to ensuring our districts best
23 represent the people of South Carolina. We truly
24 are the House of the People. We want your input
25 on specific issues or concerns in your specific

1 and particular communities, your neighborhoods.
2 As in previous redistricting cycles, our Committee
3 has adopted a set of criteria to be used as
4 guideposts in the develop of a proposed plan and
5 redrawing of district lines.

6 The fundamental goal of this Committee and
7 the House is to adopt a plan that assures South
8 Carolina's legislative districts provide for equal
9 voting rights, traditionally referred to as the
10 One Person One Vote principle. As applied to the
11 redistricting plan, our district should be of
12 substantially equal population. While the
13 population directive is important, we are here
14 tonight because the Committee needs to hear from
15 our constituents, the South Carolina voters, how
16 to -- how you identify or define your communities.
17 We welcome your input on the important social,
18 cultural, and historical context to how you
19 describe your community so that we can better
20 understand the commonality and connections that
21 matter to our citizens.

22 This hearing is being recorded, and it will
23 be transcribed and made available to the public.
24 For the sake of order and a clear record, we ask
25 that anyone desiring to speak tonight please first

1 sign in, if you have not already done so. And
2 when you are called, please come to the microphone
3 to introduce yourself by name, address, and the
4 district or districts about which you plan to
5 speak. If you are present tonight on behalf of a
6 group, please identify that group, be it a
7 political party, public interest group, or other
8 organization.

9 I also want to make sure everyone understands
10 in advance we are here to receive information and
11 provide a forum for you to express to the
12 Committee what issue -- what the issue or concerns
13 are that relate to redistricting. While I and
14 other members of the Committee may occasionally
15 make a comment or ask questions, we will strive to
16 limit our speaking so that we can maximize the
17 time available to you. We anticipate this hearing
18 -- excuse me. We want to hear everything that
19 everyone has to offer. We ask that individual
20 testimony be limited to about five minutes. I
21 would ask that each person offer testimony --
22 offering testimony keep in mind that others in
23 attendance also came out to offer their thoughts
24 and opinion as well.

25 As we get further into the evening, if

1 someone has used what you plan to say, please
2 don't hesitate to reference that comment rather
3 than going back down the same road. Also, if you
4 plan to leave any written documentation with the
5 Committee, we'll be happy to include it in the
6 permanent public record, and we ask to -- that you
7 ensure you are identified on the document, along
8 with your mailing address and we provided sticky
9 notes I believe at the submission box for
10 convenience in that respect. Also, and nearing
11 the end, you can of course provide that
12 information by way of e-mail to the -- and our Web
13 site. That's redistricting@schouse.gov. Or you
14 can mail us your submission to the House
15 Judiciary. That's at 512 Block Building, 1105
16 Pendleton Street, Columbia, South Carolina, 29201.
17 And I will end where I started, and that is to
18 thank you for your attendance tonight. And
19 without further delay, the first person up to
20 speak is Ms. Ruth Stanton.

21 MS. STANTON: Good evening. My name's Ruth Stanton, and
22 I live at 409 Cider Park Drive in Boiling Springs,
23 29316. My districts are State Senate District 11,
24 and House -- State House District 37.

25 I'm currently the President of the

1 Spartanburg County League of Women Voters. Thank
2 you for holding this hearing and giving citizens
3 an opportunity to speak. My marks are going to --
4 remarks are going to be brief, leaving plenty of
5 time for other speakers. The Spartanburg County
6 and the South Carolina State Leagues believe that
7 redistricting should achieve districts with
8 approximately equal populations that are
9 geographically contiguous and geographically
10 compact with integrity of municipalities,
11 counties, and current voting precincts, and all
12 of this while considering communities and
13 interests. And redistricting should not favor
14 parties, incumbents or candidates.

15 In Spartanburg County, a major community of
16 interest is the City of Spartanburg. It is the
17 most urban area with different concerns than many
18 of the surrounding more rural areas. We would
19 recommend that it remain intact as much as
20 possible. Another concern is proportional racial
21 representation in the legislature. Currently in
22 Spartanburg County, there is one state
23 representative of color and zero state senators.
24 The proportion of people of color is increasing in
25 our county, and we recommend that at a minimum,

1 the lines be drawn to make it likely for at least
2 one, if not more than one, persons of color to be
3 elected to our State House Chamber.

4 I'm asking for the continued openness of your
5 Committee to allow for public response after you
6 are able to put together your initial maps. And
7 thank you very much for all your hard work for the
8 citizens of our state.

9 CHAIRMAN JORDAN: Thank you. Thank you very much. Next
10 up is Lawson Wetley. Did I say that correctly?

11 MS. WETLEY: Yes, sir.

12 CHAIRMAN JORDAN: Good.

13 MS. WETLEY: Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman, members of
14 the Committee. I appreciate this opportunity. My
15 name is Lawson Wetley. I live at 5 Wren Drive in
16 Greenville, South Carolina in US House District 4,
17 and in South Carolina House District 20, and I
18 appreciate the opportunity.

19 I'm testifying on behalf of the League of
20 Woman Voters of Greenville County. I've been
21 thinking about the purpose of systems of
22 government, about how those who created and shaped
23 our representative democracy saw the dangers of
24 self interest and the need for systemic checks on
25 it. Applying that lens to our current

1 redistricting system, a key problem leaps out
2 because the same people who have the most self
3 interest in how the lines are drawn, you, the
4 holders of elected office also have the power to
5 draw those lines. That's far from ideal, but here
6 we are. It's time to draw the lines, and that
7 power is in your hands, so I am asking you to put
8 self interest aside and to make your redistricting
9 decisions with the goal of helping us, the voters,
10 have a meaningful choice in who represents us.

11 One important element of that here in
12 Greenville County is representation for
13 communities of color. Gentrification has forced
14 many black community members out of city
15 neighborhoods and into other parts of the county.
16 It is vitally important that this population shift
17 not also result in a shift away from black
18 representation in our elected bodies.

19 Another element of a voice for voters is
20 having competitive districts. When the result of
21 a general election is a forgone conclusion, which
22 is true for my US House District and State House
23 District, just as it is across most of the state,
24 the winner has little incentive to listen to
25 voters as a whole. They can stay in power by

1 listening only to the small number of voters who
2 can hand them a victory in a primary election, if
3 there even is one. And primary voters are not
4 representative of the population as a whole. They
5 tend to come from the extremes of their parties.

6 In our current flawed system of safe
7 districts, primary voters have an outsized amount
8 of power in our elections. And the hyper
9 polarization that this creates makes governing
10 harder and does real damage to the fabric of our
11 civil society. I know you can't make all
12 districts competitive, but there is a lot of room
13 for improvement. You can do better, and I hope
14 that you will. Yes, our redistricting system is
15 flawed and moving forward we should address and
16 fix those flaws. But for now, in this
17 redistricting season, I ask you to use your power
18 in the system we have to do the right thing for
19 voters and to make our votes and our voices count.
20 Thank you.

21 CHAIRMAN JORDAN: All right, thank you very much. Next,
22 Tonya Winbush?

23 (INDISCERNIBLE)

24 CHAIRMAN JORDAN: Yes, ma'am. I've got Ms. Winbush,
25 followed by DeShields, then Carson and Nichols is

1 the next on the list.

2 (INDISCERNIBLE)

3 MS. WINBUSH: My name is Tonya Winbush.

4 CHAIRMAN JORDAN: Ms. Winbush?

5 MS. WINBUSH: Yes.

6 CHAIRMAN JORDAN: Perfect. I was about to tell you step
7 up just a little bit.

8 MS. WINBUSH: I am Tonya Winbush. I am from Anderson.
9 I am a lifelong Andersonian, born and raised in
10 School District 5. I am a 15-year combat veteran
11 and I work for the V.A.

12 So I want to first of all thank you all for
13 doing what you're doing. I appreciate your
14 leadership and I appreciate you taking the time
15 out to hear our voices because we really want to
16 have a input on these redistricting lines.

17 But being a part of Anderson School District
18 5, it covers about 85,000 people, which is the
19 equivalent of about two House Districts. Under
20 the current map from 2011, it's been split up into
21 five House Districts. So we want you all to work
22 to minimize the district so that the children, the
23 families, the taxpayers, the communities in those
24 districts can be reassured of strong
25 representation. That's number one.

1 Number two is the City of Anderson. The 2020
2 census population is about 28,021 -- 28,100, or
3 about 68 percent of one House District. Under the
4 current 2011 House map, the City of Anderson is
5 split among three House Districts. The same
6 thing, we're asking for you all to reduce that so
7 that it follows the traditional redistricting
8 principles of, you know, making the people that's
9 in the community have more of a voice so they can
10 come together and their voices can be heard.

11 So if it's possible to place the entire city,
12 which is only 68 percent of one district in one
13 House District and not three, that would be ideal,
14 and that is what I'm asking. Thank you for your
15 time, and I think I have someone that's going to
16 follow me. Ms. Teresa DeShields is also from
17 Anderson, and she'll come.

18 CHAIRMAN JORDAN: Ms. DeShields? She is next up.

19 MS. DESHIELDS: Hello, and thank you for the opportunity
20 to speak today. My name is Teresa DeShields. My
21 address is 813 Winston Drive, Anderson, South
22 Carolina. I am an original native of Clinton,
23 South Carolina, but I've been in Anderson for
24 about 19 years. I am also a community organizer
25 in Anderson through a nonprofit that I founded in

1 the Upstate.

2 My concern today is the Homeland Park area.
3 Homeland Park Water District serves -- is served
4 by multiple elected officers consisting of about
5 8,500 people, 28 percent of a one-House District.
6 It is currently split among three House Districts.
7 It is also four precincts, Homeland Park,
8 (indiscernible), South Fant, and Vereness (ph).
9 Please restore Homeland Park to a wholeness and
10 allow the small but yet vital community of about
11 8,500 people to speak with one voice through one
12 House member who can be responsive for the people
13 of Homeland Park. Thank you again for this
14 opportunity to speak with you today.

15 CHAIRMAN JORDAN: Thank you, Ms. DeShields. Next up,
16 Demetrius Carson?

17 MR. CARSON: Good afternoon. I'm Demetrius Carson from
18 Anderson County. County Council 2 is one of seven
19 county council districts in Anderson County. It
20 covers South Central Anderson County, including
21 much of the City of Anderson and Homeland Park.

22 Currently, it is split among five House
23 Districts, despite the fact that a single County
24 Council District is smaller than one House
25 district. On behalf of Council 2, I ask for no

1 special favor, no special treatment. Just treat
2 us as you would fairly treat anyone else. Restore
3 our voice because we cannot speak together when we
4 are dismembered in five pieces.

5 We know redistricting is full of difficult
6 choices, and we respect the difficulty of that
7 task. We only ask that we be represented by one
8 or perhaps two representatives instead of five.
9 Five state representatives for such a small,
10 compact area to me makes no sense and severely
11 damages the ability of our community to speak and
12 be heard in the halls of power in Columbia. Thank
13 you.

14 CHAIRMAN JORDAN: Austin Nichols. Mr. Nichols?

15 MR. NICHOLS: Yes. Good evening. Do you all mind if I
16 pull the mask down, just so I can breathe?

17 CHAIRMAN JORDAN: Of course not.

18 MR. NICHOLS: My name is Austin Nichols. I'm an
19 attorney here in South Carolina, but I'm a native
20 of Anderson, South Carolina. It's my home. It's
21 where my family all grew up, and it's near and
22 dear to my heart, much like everyone who is here.

23 I echo everything that was said by the people
24 before me. And I think what we're just all trying
25 to get at is we just want simple lines drawn. We

1 want simple districts. I'm not sure if the folks
2 that are here with me today recognize this, but as
3 we were talking, I was thinking things through.
4 We all live about eight minutes from each other
5 and each of us have a different House
6 representative. And I think that illustrates the
7 point that we're trying to make here.

8 And to further illustrate that -- and I think
9 that's really the only reason I'm here. If your
10 hometown is anything like Anderson, Main Street is
11 a coveted place. And so to give you a
12 illustration, if you stand on Main Street of
13 Anderson, and there's a newly built parking garage
14 -- or I say newly built; probably not, but there's
15 a parking garage. If you stand at that garage,
16 you're in House District 6. If you walk
17 immediately across the street on a one-way street
18 and go to the courthouse, you're in House District
19 8. If you stand in front of the statue of Mr.
20 Whitaker -- excuse me; Mr. Whitner, and go across
21 the street to the old courthouse, you're in House
22 District 9. Now from there, many of us eat at J.
23 Peters, which is right there around the
24 courthouse. If you get in your car and you drive
25 not even five minutes down South Main Street, you

1 then run into House District 7. If you then get
2 out of your car and walk across the interstate to
3 the CVS from the Bi-Lo, you're in House 11.

4 I think some of that illustrates the point.
5 What is simply being asked here, again, is just to
6 draw some fair districts that represent the people
7 of the City of Anderson, the County of Anderson,
8 of South Carolina. You know, we just want to be
9 able to vote with those who we go to church with
10 or go to the grocery store. We want to know who
11 we vote with, where we vote, and to be quite frank
12 for you all, who we vote for.

13 And so in your next few months and days, if
14 you could just take the time to think about those
15 things and think about what is fair to the people
16 of South Carolina and considering everything that
17 you're doing, that's all we can really ask for, so
18 thank you.

19 CHAIRMAN JORDAN: Thank you, Mr. Nichols. Next,
20 Stephanie Priester?

21 MS. PRIESTER: That would be me. Happy Tuesday, y'all.
22 Thank y'all so much for being here. Again, my
23 name is Stephanie Priester, and I live in Taylors,
24 South Carolina.

25 So who I represent is I would say people that

1 look like me. You know, the fact that I can look
2 up here across this auditorium here at this table
3 and there's no representation of anyone that looks
4 like me, so it's important that you keep in mind
5 the communities, the black and brown communities
6 that will be affected by this redistricting. You
7 know, as it was mentioned -- as Lawson said that
8 the fact that a lot of these communities are --
9 gentrification, you know, but I'm not going to go
10 there.

11 But what I really want to make clear is that
12 we're watching. We're watching. And when I
13 realized that South Carolina is the only state in
14 the country that does not have rules or
15 legislation as it relates to redistricting, that's
16 sad because the fact that we do this every ten
17 years -- and the way that coronavirus is out here
18 in this street, y'all don't know if you're going
19 to be here for ten years.

20 And so I encourage you, even as you're
21 preparing these lines, make sure you're creating a
22 roadmap for the ones that will follow you ten
23 years from now that may not understand exactly
24 what this whole redistricting really looks like.
25 So my voice -- my voice of what I want to be said

1 is that I know that it's been said that you're
2 going to try to avoid gerrymandering, try, but I'm
3 almost certain there's somebody within the camp
4 that gerrymandering is on their mind. We really
5 want the people to be able to pick the politicians
6 and not the politicians pick the people.

7 You know, this is based on population. And
8 the fact that the census has already been done, so
9 the next decade really lies in your hand and what
10 that looks that for not only people that look like
11 me, but everyone here in this auditorium and who's
12 represented in South Carolina. I think about my
13 daughter, you know, the fact that if she's going
14 to remain in this area, what it's going to look
15 like for her ten years from now because people are
16 still continuing to move in this area. So it's
17 even growing much since the census was done when
18 you think about the people that didn't even
19 complete the census.

20 So my voice is saying to be fair. Be fair
21 and take into account that we do need a
22 legislation that maps out the rules and what you
23 all are doing. There's a lot of power in your
24 hands as it relates to redistricting and how this
25 is going to affect the new communities, the

1 communities that's been here long before I was
2 here. But ideally as it relates to redistricting
3 is to understand the importance of one person, one
4 vote, look to make sure that however these lines
5 are drawn and that it is mapped out, that people
6 really understand what's being done behind the
7 scenes because we want to trust you all, but we
8 don't trust you all.

9 And I think my final statement would be the
10 fact that we're here now, I mean it's really
11 nothing that we could do but let me -- let me just
12 say this statement one more time. The fact that
13 South Carolina is the only state in --

14 (INTERRUPTION IN AUDIO; APPROXIMATELY 28 SECONDS)

15 (AUDIO/VIDEO STARTS OVER FROM BEGINNING; APPROXIMATELY
16 28 MINUTES OF REPEAT)

17 (AUDIO/VIDEO CONTINUE)

18 MS. PRIESTER: -- the country that does not have the
19 rules concerning redistricting. That's sad.
20 Thank you.

21 CHAIRMAN JORDAN: Thank you, ma'am. Next I have M.
22 Edwards, I believe. Going once. All right. And
23 I've got an e-mail address, an AOL e-mail address,
24 but that's all I have. All right, if you get
25 missed and you meant to sign up, we'll have --

1 there's another sheet in the back, so go sign that
2 up so we can make sure we don't miss anybody.

3 Next up, Jason Spencer?

4 MR. SPENCER: Hello. My name is Jason Spencer. I'm
5 with SIREN, the Spartanburg Initiative for Racial
6 Equity Now, and I live at 206 Sharon Drive in the
7 City of Spartanburg, House District 31.

8 House District 31 is the only minority
9 majority legislative district in Spartanburg
10 County. That must be protected. Years of
11 gerrymandering have diluted the political power of
12 black and brown residents of South Carolina. The
13 ideal outcome of this year's redistricting process
14 would be to empower these communities by creating
15 districts where voters have a reasonable chance of
16 electing someone who looks like them. At the very
17 least, though, we need to make sure the outcome
18 isn't a step backward by weakening existing black
19 and brown voter blocks.

20 This is the first redistricting process in
21 decades where voters in minoritized communities do
22 not have the protections formerly offered under
23 the Voting Rights Act, protections put in place in
24 states with a history of racial discrimination.
25 Without those protections, it is incumbent on you

1 all to protect and elevate these voices, not
2 diminish them.

3 When I read the news coming out of Columbia
4 and talk to people who live on the south side of
5 Spartanburg, it's like two different worlds.
6 Open carry, for instance, was hailed in the State
7 House as a great victory for gun rights, but on
8 Spartanburg's south side, all I heard was worry
9 about how this would make more people targets.
10 Critical race theory has been the subject of
11 endless debate called indoctrinization or un-
12 American, but on the south side, people say teach
13 our history.

14 The consequences of a lack of diverse
15 perspectives in Columbia is evident in these
16 (indiscernible) policies, from the debate over
17 masks to outright discrimination against DACA
18 students who pay extra to get an education in this
19 state but are forced to move to another state to
20 get a professional job. That said, we do
21 appreciate the hours Representative Collins has
22 put in on the DACA legislation.

23 It's our hope that redrawn district lines
24 will lead to more diverse perspectives in the
25 house. One way to ensure an equitable outcome

1 would be to pass the South Carolina Fairness
2 Accountability and Integrity in Redistricting Act
3 proposed by Senator Mike Fanning and
4 Representative Gilda Cobb Hunter. Without an
5 actual law governing the redistricting process,
6 let alone an independent commission with
7 redistricting oversight, the door is wide open to
8 put personal and political party interest above
9 those of the people you're supposed to serve.

10 We have other house districts in Spartanburg
11 County that (indiscernible) a portion of the City
12 of Spartanburg but overwhelming favor the
13 unincorporated parts of the county. The City of
14 Spartanburg's Black Lives Matter mural is painted
15 in front of City Hall. The city itself has made
16 racial equity a focal point in policy and planning
17 decisions, but those sentiments aren't reflected
18 in the way our current House districts are drawn.
19 Between the city and county, we are two distinctly
20 different communities of interest, and we have
21 been grouped together in a way that gives the
22 unincorporated and rural parts of Spartanburg
23 County more political power than the city that is
24 its heart. It's not one person, one vote when the
25 deck is stacked against entire communities of

1 interest.

2 There's one more saying on the south side.
3 Don't do anything about us without us. We ask
4 that newly drawn maps be presented in each House
5 district so residents can give feedback, allowing
6 the maps to be changed to better reflect their
7 communities of interest. We ask that you and your
8 colleagues in the legislature pass a law to govern
9 this process in a fair and transparent way, and we
10 ask that you take into account that in the past,
11 district lines have been drawn so that one person,
12 one vote often doesn't apply in black and brown
13 communities. The most effective way to suppress
14 voters is to make a person or community's vote
15 irrelevant. It's time to correct that.

16 CHAIRMAN JORDAN: Next up, Meredith Hairston?

17 (INDISCERNIBLE)

18 CHAIRMAN JORDAN: Okay, thank you, ma'am. All right,
19 I'm going to butcher this, so I will apologize in
20 advance. Efia Nwangaza.

21 MS. NWANGAZA: Efia Nwangaza. If you all can say
22 General (indiscernible), you can say --

23 CHAIRMAN JORDAN: I promise I can't say that either. I
24 promise I was struggling --

25 MS. NWANGAZA: Efia.

1 CHAIRMAN JORDAN: Efia.

2 MS. NWANGAZA: Nwangaza.

3 CHAIRMAN JORDAN: Efia Nwangaza.

4 MS. NWANGAZA: Thank you.

5 CHAIRMAN JORDAN: Yes, ma'am.

6 MS. NWANGAZA: My name is Taxpayer Registered Voter Efia
7 Nwangaza, a resident of Greenville, South
8 Carolina, lawyer, and human rights advocate.

9 I'm here despite the fact that we all know
10 that this is little more than political theater,
11 myth making, and checking all the boxes. At
12 nearly 75 years of age, I have for more than 65
13 years worked to challenge the United States
14 government and its subsidiaries to become a
15 democracy. The struggle for one person, one vote
16 and count every vote has been our mantra.

17 This struggle has been forced on us black
18 people, forced on us to weather all manner of
19 violence from murder to guessing the number of
20 jellybeans in a jar. Today, we are forced to
21 survive computerized packing, stacking, and
22 cracking of black voters, continuing to render our
23 votes more symbolic than substantive.

24 I have served as international monitor for
25 elections in both Haiti and Venezuela. To

1 paraphrase former President Jimmy Carter, who
2 frequently observed the Venezuelan elections, the
3 United States, the people of the United States
4 would be fortunate to have such a process. You
5 hold in your hands the seeds of destruction or
6 democracy. An apartheid reconstructed USA white
7 supremacist government will not stand in years to
8 come. With the states changing demographics,
9 despite the hundreds of racist anti-abortion laws
10 being passed to force population change or turn
11 the tide from the browning of the USA, we will
12 ultimately win.

13 CHAIRMAN JORDAN: Thank you, Ms. Efia Nwangaza. Yes,
14 ma'am. Susan Turregano?

15 (INDISCERNIBLE)

16 CHAIRMAN JORDAN: Katie Jordan? We must have lost Ms.
17 Jordan along the way. All right, Darren Scott?

18 MR. SCOTT: I have nothing to add.

19 CHAIRMAN JORDAN: Nothing to add, yes, sir. Benjamin
20 Austin? Is it Clawson Turregano? It's either
21 Clemson or Clawson.

22 MR. TURREGANO: It is Clemson.

23 CHAIRMAN JORDAN: Okay. Clemson. Yes, sir.

24 MR. TURREGANO: I want to thank the Committee for their
25 hard work in putting this together. My name is

1 Dr. Clemson Turregano, Lieutenant Colonel, United
2 States Army, Retired, and I want to thank you very
3 much for your efforts to bring democracy back to
4 South Carolina.

5 We stand here in support of the League of
6 Women Voters for Spartanburg and Greenville, as
7 well as SIREN of Spartanburg. We'd like to also
8 state that we'd appreciate this type of committee
9 hearing in Spartanburg for those of us who didn't
10 have to drive an hour and a half and get stuck on
11 I-85 traffic. But thank you very much for being
12 here this evening and hearing the comments from
13 the public. Thank you.

14 CHAIRMAN JORDAN: Thank you, sir. Adrian Atkinson?

15 MS. ATKINSON: Good evening. I just want to say thank
16 you to the Committee as well for giving us an
17 opportunity to take part in these very important
18 hearings. My name is Adrian Atkinson. I reside
19 at 15 Crestfield Road, Greenville, South Carolina,
20 29605 in the heart of District 25 where the
21 Honorable Leola Robinson Simpson represents our
22 district proudly.

23 There's really not a whole lot that I can add
24 after Ms. Wetley and Ms. Priester so eloquently
25 stated that we really want to make sure that

1 people are picking instead of politicians. But I
2 will say, again, as Ms. Priester said, you know
3 it's unfortunately unbelievable that South
4 Carolina doesn't have any redistricting laws.

5 And so one thing I think to bring different
6 to the table is something personal when we're
7 talking about equality and fair representation.
8 So in my district lies Bell Meade, Lakeside Park,
9 Kennedy Park, Woodmont, Staunton Bridge, Crosby
10 Circle, Canterbury, Old Grove, Pleasant Valley,
11 Pine Hill, Moonville, so many different
12 communities within our district that need fair
13 representation, fair redistricting consideration.
14 We want to make sure that we are putting people
15 before politics.

16 I'm here representing a myriad of
17 organizations. For one, the National Council of
18 Negro Women, Greenville County Section. I am also
19 the first vice president of Democratic Women of
20 Greenville County. I'm the president of the Bell
21 Meade Community Group in District 25, and I'm also
22 a candidate for South Carolina House of
23 Representatives for next year. All of those
24 reasons -- all those organizations, the bottom
25 line is not myself or any of those people that

1 stands in the front of those organizations, but
2 the actual people in the community that deserve to
3 be heard, that deserve to be engaged to make sure
4 that redistricting laws are fair to everyone.

5 Thank you.

6 CHAIRMAN JORDAN: Thank you, Ms. Atkinson. Next up, I
7 believe this is Matt Cotner -- Connor?

8 MR. CONNOR: Nothing to add.

9 CHAIRMAN JORDAN: Nothing to add, yes, sir. Takita
10 Wallace?

11 MS. WALLACE: Hello. Thank you guys for giving me the
12 opportunity to be here. My name is Takita
13 Wallace. My address is 926 Second Avenue,
14 District 23.

15 I'm here to talk about accountability and
16 the so-called unintentional gerrymandering and
17 gentrification that has been a long-term problem
18 in the process of redistricting. I feel like no
19 longer can a politician say when we speak on
20 gerrymandering and gentrification in our
21 community, that it was unintentional. They can no
22 longer just say that they went off the census and
23 they did these things accordingly when we know
24 that year after year we have been having these
25 same hearing, voicing the same problems and

1 nothing has changed for the better, only for the
2 worse.

3 Everyone before me has already spoken on
4 these things in a manner which we all understand.
5 I want to go back a little bit because these
6 redistricting lines, they connect state, local --
7 they call connect. They all have something to do
8 with the land mass and how people are counted for.
9 And the district hearings in the local lines in
10 2011, Councilwoman Leola Gibson stated that 13,487
11 signatures were received from a petition drive
12 regarding the overturning of recommendations to
13 split Greenville County between congressional
14 districts, and this was submitted to the Justice
15 Department.

16 Later on, another meeting was held, a few
17 weeks later where Councilwoman Norris stated that
18 the redistricting coalition, who spearheaded the
19 petition, had heard from the Department of Justice
20 and it appeared that the wishes of the council
21 would not be adhered to. She even stated that the
22 council was so upset they were willing to go as
23 far as court sessions if necessary.

24 I use this for example to show how those who
25 draw the lines know our concern, know about our

1 needs, but yet they still intentionally deny us
2 our rights. During the redistricting process in
3 the State of Louisiana that followed the 2000
4 census, Louisiana adopted a discriminatory plan
5 for its State House representatives that worsened
6 the position of the black voters. The state
7 admitted that it eliminated the district in a
8 (indiscernible) effort to limit African-American
9 voting strength in New Orleans area and to
10 increase electoral opportunities for white voters.
11 Nevertheless, Louisiana sought judicial approval
12 to reappoint its plan under Section 5 of the
13 Voters Right Act, which South Carolina is under
14 that Act.

15 Needless to say, the state had to withdraw
16 the discriminatory redistricting plan and create a
17 new redistricting plan that did not dilute the
18 African-American vote. If they can do that in
19 Louisiana, y'all can do that here for us. You
20 cannot say that it is not reasonable and that you
21 cannot. I don't want to hear, we're going to try.
22 If you can do it and they can do it in Louisiana,
23 adopt whatever they did and bring fairness to us,
24 just like they brought to Louisiana. But in the
25 words of Ms. Norris, my District county woman, I

1 will go to court because it's no way y'all can say
2 gerrymandering and gentrification is unintentional
3 after we gathered here and told y'all what's going
4 on in our community. Thank you for hearing me
5 out.

6 CHAIRMAN JORDAN: Thank you, Ms. Wallace. Next, Jonah
7 Simmons?

8 MR. SIMMONS: Hello. My name is Jonah Simmons. I'm in
9 South Carolina Senate District 8, Ross Turner, and
10 South Carolina House District 24, Bruce Bannister.

11 I found out about this meeting at 5:20 today.
12 I know someone else who learned about the meeting
13 this morning, and someone else who learned about
14 it a few days ago. This process is opaque. We
15 don't know what's happening, where, or when. This
16 feeds into gerrymandering and is morally wrong.
17 It feeds into corruption.

18 No matter what political party you are a
19 member of, you should be trying to win reelection
20 only indirectly by passing good laws and
21 convincing the public, your constituents, that
22 these bills are good. How incredibly
23 nontransparent this process is makes me very much
24 question how important that is to you. I already
25 said this to the senate redistricting meeting a

1 month or so ago, but quite frankly neither you nor
2 they should need to be told. I am part of a
3 number of politically active groups, and I will be
4 posting on social media about how little
5 notification we were given about this meeting or
6 about how the process is as a whole. This will be
7 to inform the public on how shady this is and how
8 the decision making -- and how -- and who is on
9 the decision making council for this redistricting
10 process. I will encourage my friends and family
11 to share it as well. I very much hope that this
12 will encourage all of you to increase the
13 transparency and so that we can have more input,
14 people will know how to participate, and we can be
15 confident that you actually want to represent us,
16 that you want to work in our best interests
17 because quite frankly, right now me and countless
18 other people are not convinced. Thank you.

19 CHAIRMAN JORDAN: Thank you, Mr. Simmons. Next, Wayne
20 Borders? All right. Mr. Daniel Gamble?

21 MR. GAMBLE: Is it on? Mic's on?

22 CHAIRMAN JORDAN: Yes, sir.

23 MR. GAMBLE: Okay. Good evening, Chairman Jordan and
24 fellow House members on the Committee. My name is
25 Daniel Gamble. I live at 110 Springbrook Drive,

1 Greenville, 29605. I live in Congressional 4,
2 William Timmons; Senate 7, Karl Allen to my right;
3 and House 25, Ms. Leola Robinson two rows to my
4 right.

5 I'm here to -- the best interest for the
6 people in Greenville County. People have the
7 right to choose -- to pick their representation,
8 who their next representatives and their elected
9 officials. And in District 25, Donaldson Precinct
10 has two House districts, most of it in District 25
11 and a little part of District 28. For the
12 (indiscernible), Donaldson need to be in one House
13 district, Donaldson Precinct and for -- Greenville
14 County's grown in recent -- recent from time to
15 time.

16 The -- we have new housing developments going
17 up and we gaining more people in Greenville
18 County. And I -- again, the community best
19 interest people want to choose -- to pick their
20 representation and reshape their district lines
21 and would look like in coming months, coming --
22 the census numbers. That's all I have. Thanks.
23 Thanks for your time. Thank you.

24 CHAIRMAN JORDAN: Thank you, Mr. Gamble. Derrick
25 Quarrels?

1 MR. QUARRELS: Good evening. Good evening members of
2 the Redistricting Committee and to other elected
3 officials here tonight. My name is Derrick
4 Quarrels and I'm a resident of Greenville. I
5 stand here today at Greenville High literally feet
6 away from mass gentrification. There are people
7 here this evening who've already spoke about, but
8 they can tell you how unfairly communities of
9 color, the poor, and the less affluent have been
10 treated because of local, state, and federal
11 politics.

12 What we've done by electing state
13 representative is we've given you the power to
14 make decisions that will impact the entire state.
15 We've given you the authority to be our voice, but
16 a voice of soundness and a voice of reason. And
17 unfortunately, more often than not in South
18 Carolina, we are not represented by people whose
19 ideals align with ours, particularly those of us
20 who live in zip codes where the poverty line
21 increases each year.

22 You also have the power to redraw state,
23 legislative and congressional lines, and this is
24 why we're here. Redistricting historically has
25 been an exercise where (indiscernible) and

1 politics trumps reality. Lines have been drawn to
2 protect incumbents, and I get it. People want to
3 remain elected. But if you roll up your sleeves
4 like Representatives Henegan and Bernstein,
5 Collins, Robinson, and Dillard, who I witnessed
6 doing the real work, they don't have to manipulate
7 democracy.

8 Recently released data, census data shows
9 that we -- South Carolina grew over 500,000
10 people, yet we only have one person of color in
11 congress. Jim Clyburn cannot be the rep for every
12 person of color, but that's what he's had to be
13 because Republican congressmen and women do not
14 represent the interest of poor people. If they
15 did, we'd be a much better state. We'd have
16 better roads and not just in places where the
17 median income is \$80,000. The corridor of shame
18 would not exist. The 514,000 plus individuals in
19 this state without health insurance would have
20 health insurance. And our criminal justice system
21 would be one that cares more about rehabilitation
22 than incarceration.

23 This is why redistricting is important. The
24 State of Iowa, they've created a committee of
25 nonpartisan civil servants who draw the lines and

1 then present the maps to the legislature for a
2 vote. This is what we need in South Carolina.
3 We've had enough of the gerrymandering, enough of
4 partisan politics dominating and manipulating
5 democracy for the sake of power.

6 One of the reasons why voter turnout is so
7 low during nonpresidential cycles is because
8 people do not feel represented at the local and
9 state level. And so they don't -- and so they
10 vote for president, hoping someone will hear their
11 cry. And we know this is true because 85 percent
12 of the US House Districts are completely safe.
13 That means millions of Americans are represented
14 by politicians they oppose. And because of the
15 way lines are drawn, very little can change that.

16 My call to action is this: When you return to
17 Columbia and this Committee convenes to talk about
18 how fair you want this process to be, remember the
19 nurses and the doctors who are in the fight to
20 save millions of lives, yet don't have the support
21 of elected officials in Columbia and Washington.
22 Think about the classroom teachers who have to go
23 to work every day not knowing if they'll be
24 exposed to Covid, yet the greatest concern is not
25 having adequate funding to support the academic

1 persistence of their students. Think about the 42
2 men and women who all walked off their jobs at BMW
3 last night because our state legislature will tell
4 a woman what she can do with her body, but want to
5 enforce mandates and other key initiatives to
6 protect workers. Think about the single moms and
7 dads who live in low income communities, the ones
8 who struggle every night with insecurities because
9 they don't have the best jobs, the bills are
10 behind, but they're trying. They need your help.
11 Be fair, be thoughtful, and please be well. Thank
12 you.

13 CHAIRMAN JORDAN: Thank you, sir. Next up, Ms. Amber
14 Lang? Ms. Lang, I think you're going to get to be
15 our last contestant this evening.

16 MS. LANG: (Indiscernible).

17 CHAIRMAN JORDAN: At least that's according to my sheet.
18 If anybody didn't get a chance to sign up and
19 wishes to sign up, I think -- make sure you hurry
20 and do that. Yes, ma'am?

21 MS. LANG: Hello. My name is Amber Lang, and I'm a
22 resident of Easley, South Carolina. I actually
23 wasn't going to say anything. I came here to
24 support another speaker, but so many of the
25 passionate speakers that have gone before me have

1 inspired me to say just a few words.

2 I haven't yet heard one speaker say, keep
3 things the same. No one in this room has said, my
4 voice always feels heard. These people here have
5 actually given me hope that our voices can be
6 heard, especially when we come together. I don't
7 have all the answers and I will venture to say
8 that no one in this room individually does either.

9 However, when you think of a state that is 45
10 percent democrat, everybody calls us a red state,
11 but we have 45 percent democrats in this state.
12 And out of seven representatives and two senators,
13 we have one person standing up for our values and
14 our beliefs in Washington. Please tell me, after
15 hearing these speeches and thinking about this,
16 how that is not intentional. Of course we don't
17 always vote for the winner, but it gets very
18 discouraging when there isn't even anyone on the
19 ballot from your party because the way the
20 districts are set up and it is a no-win battle.

21 I hope you remember the passion you've heard
22 today and use it to inspire your decisions in the
23 next months. Thank you.

24 CHAIRMAN JORDAN: Thank you, Ms. Lang. Let me remind
25 you of a few things before we call the meeting to

1 a close. If you had written comments and you wish
2 for us to take those into consideration, as I said
3 earlier, please e-mail us those. Those will be
4 very helpful as we -- once we go back to Columbia
5 and start the actual drawing process.

6 Also, if you don't have access to e-mail and
7 want to mail those, you can do that as well. And
8 as I said, we'll be heading on down the road.
9 Next stop is North Charleston tomorrow night at 6,
10 and of course, as I also mentioned, we will be
11 having a final hearing in Columbia at the end of
12 our road tour. And that one -- if you know anyone
13 that, like I said earlier in the meeting, that
14 couldn't come tonight and would like to
15 participate in that via technology through
16 Microsoft Teams, please let them know that as
17 well.

18 I think Representative Henderson Myers came
19 in while we were having our meeting. We welcome
20 you, Representative Henderson Myers. Thank you
21 for being here tonight. Thank you to the other
22 members of the General Assembly that made time to
23 be here tonight.

24 Also, Representative Dillard, did you
25 recently -- were you recently awarded the

1 Greenville High Wall of Fame?

2 (INDISCERNIBLE)

3 CHAIRMAN JORDAN: Congratulations. First female

4 African-American, so -- a tremendous honor; would
5 be remiss if we didn't offer our congratulations
6 as well on behalf of the Committee.

7 And also, again, the most important people
8 were the public tonight who came out and told us
9 their feelings, concerns as it relates to the
10 redistricting process. We thank you for being
11 willing to come out tonight and do that. So with
12 that, we'll call the meeting to a close. And
13 Committee members, look forward to seeing you all
14 in Charleston tomorrow.

15 (END OF AUDIO)

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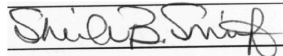
C E R T I F I C A T E

I, the undersigned, Sheila B. Smith, Notary Public in and for the State of South Carolina, do hereby certify that the foregoing transcript was prepared by me at my hand;

That I was not present at said proceeding; That the within statements are an accurate transcription of the audio file transcribed, to the best of my ability;

I further certify that I am neither counsel nor solicitor to any of the parties in said action, nor interested in the event of the cause.

In witness whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and seal this 29th day of September, 2021.



Sheila B. Smith, CVR-CM-M
Notary Public for South Carolina
My Commission Expires: 2/25/2024

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39:17	37:3,9,10	514,000	<hr/>	34:23
<hr/>	28	39:18	ability	adopted
1	17:5 23:14,16	5:20	18:11	8:3 34:4
<hr/>	37:11	35:11	academic	Adrian
11	28,021	<hr/>	40:25	30:14,18
10:23 20:3	16:2	6	access	advance
110	28,100	<hr/>	43:6	9:10 27:20
36:25	16:2	6	accommodate	advanced
1105	29201	19:16 43:9	5:16	6:8
10:15	10:16	65	account	advocate
13,487	29316	28:12	22:21 27:10	28:8
33:10	10:23	68	accountability	affect
15	29605	16:3,12	26:2 32:15	22:25
30:19	30:20 37:1	<hr/>	achieve	affected
15-year	<hr/>	7	11:7	21:6
15:10	3	<hr/>	Act	affirmance
19	<hr/>	7	6:14 24:23 26:2	6:21
16:24	31	20:1 37:2	34:13,14	affluent
<hr/>	24:7,8	75	action	38:9
2	37	28:12	40:16	African-
<hr/>	10:24	<hr/>	active	american
2	<hr/>	8	36:3	34:8,18 44:4
17:18,25	4	<hr/>	actual	afternoon
20	<hr/>	8	26:5 32:2 43:5	17:17
12:17	4	19:19 35:9	Ad	age
2000	12:16 37:1	8,500	3:2 6:3	28:12
34:3	409	17:5,11	add	aisle
2011	10:22	813	29:18,19 30:23	4:8
6:19 15:20 16:4	42	16:21	32:8,9	align
33:10	41:1	85	address	38:19
2013	45	40:11	9:3 10:8 14:15	Allen
6:13	42:9,11	85,000	16:21 23:23	37:2
2020	<hr/>	15:18	32:13	allowing
7:5 16:1	5	<hr/>	adequate	27:5
206	<hr/>	9	40:25	Amber
24:6	5	19:22	adhered	41:13,21
23	12:15 15:10,18		33:21	
32:14	34:12			

American 25:12	4:2,15 11:17 17:2 18:10		35:22 41:9	brown 21:5 24:12,19 27:12
Americans 40:13	22:14,16 34:9	<hr/> B <hr/>	bipartisan 4:21	browning 29:11
amount 14:7	areas 11:18	back 3:17 4:4 10:3 24:1 30:3 33:5 43:4	bit 15:7 33:5	Bruce 35:10
Anderson 15:8,17 16:1,4, 17,21,23,25 17:18,19,20,21 18:20 19:10,13 20:7	Army 30:2	backward 24:18	black 13:14,17 21:5 24:12,18 26:14 27:12 28:17,22 34:6	Building 10:15
Andersonian 15:9	Assembly 43:22	ballot 42:19	Block 10:15	built 19:13,14
answers 42:7	assures 8:7	Bannister 35:10	blocks 24:19	Bureau 7:4,9,15
anti-abortion 29:9	attendance 4:14 9:23 10:18	based 22:7	BMW 41:2	butcher 27:19
anticipate 9:17	attended 4:14	battle 42:20	bodies 13:18	<hr/> C <hr/>
AOL 23:23	attorney 18:19	Beaufort 3:13	body 41:4	call 33:7 40:16 42:25 44:12
apartheid 29:6	AUDIO 23:14 44:15	begin 7:11,19	Boiling 10:22	called 9:2 25:11
apologize 27:19	AUDIO/VIDEO 23:15,17	BEGINNING 23:15	Borders 36:20	calls 42:10
appeared 33:20	auditorium 21:2 22:11	behalf 9:5 12:19 17:25 44:6	born 15:9	camp 22:3
applied 8:10	August 7:9	beliefs 42:14	bottom 31:24	candidate 31:22
apply 27:12	Austin 18:14,18 29:20	Bell 31:8,20	box 10:9	candidates 11:14
Applying 12:25	authority 38:15	benefit 6:17	boxes 28:11	Canterbury 31:10
approval 6:7 34:11	Avenue 32:13	Benjamin 29:19	breathe 18:16	car 3:15 19:24 20:2
approved 6:18	avoid 22:2	Bernstein 3:10 39:4	Bridge 31:9	cares 39:21
approximately 11:8 23:14,15	awarded 43:25	Beth 3:10	bring 30:3 31:5 34:23	Carolina 3:1 4:25 5:12,18 7:7,23 8:15 10:16 11:6 12:16,17 16:22,
area	aware 5:6	Bi-lo 20:3	brought 34:24	
		bills		

<p>23 18:19,20 20:8,16,24 21:13 22:12 23:13 24:12 26:1 28:8 30:4, 19 31:4,22 34:13 35:9,10 38:18 39:9 40:2 41:22 Carolina's 8:8 carry 25:6 Carson 14:25 17:16,17 Carter 4:5 29:1 census 5:18 7:3,5,9,15 16:2 22:8,17,19 32:22 34:4 37:22 39:8 Central 17:20 chairman 3:1,18 4:8,12 12:9,12,13 14:21,24 15:4,6 16:18 17:15 18:14,17 20:19 23:21 27:16,18, 23 28:1,3,5 29:13,16,19,23 30:14 32:6,9 35:6 36:19,22, 23 37:24 41:13, 17 42:24 44:3 challenge 6:20 28:13 Chamber 12:3</p>	<p>chance 24:15 41:18 change 29:10 40:15 changed 27:6 33:1 changing 29:8 Charleston 5:1 43:9 44:14 checking 28:11 checks 12:24 Chief 3:11 children 15:22 choice 13:10 choices 18:6 choose 37:7,19 church 20:9 Cider 10:22 Circle 31:10 citizens 4:24 8:21 11:2 12:8 city 11:16 13:14 16:1,4,11 17:21 20:7 24:7 26:11, 13,15,19,23 civil 14:11 39:25 classroom</p>	<p>40:22 Clawson 29:20,21 clear 8:24 21:11 clearance 6:9 Clemson 4:5 29:21,22,23 30:1 Clinton 16:22 close 43:1 44:12 Clyburn 39:11 coalition 33:18 Cobb 26:4 codes 38:20 colleagues 27:8 Collins 3:6 25:21 39:5 Colonel 30:1 color 11:23,24 12:2 13:13 38:9 39:10,12 Columbia 3:10 5:1,2 10:16 18:12 25:3,15 40:17,21 43:4, 11 combat 15:10 comment 9:15 10:2</p>	<p>comments 30:12 43:1 commission 26:6 committee 3:2,4 4:21 5:14, 20,22 6:2,3,6 7:8 8:2,6,14 9:12,14 10:5 12:5,14 29:24 30:8,16 36:24 38:2 39:24 40:17 44:6,13 commonality 8:20 communities 8:1,16 11:12 13:13 15:23 21:5,8 22:25 23:1 24:14,21 26:20,25 27:7, 13 31:12 38:8 41:7 community 8:19 11:15 13:14 16:9,24 17:10 18:11 31:21 32:2,21 35:4 37:18 community's 27:14 compact 11:10 18:10 competitive 13:20 14:12 complete 22:19 completely 40:12 computerized 28:21</p>	<p>concern 11:20 17:2 33:25 40:24 concerns 7:25 9:12 11:17 44:9 conclude 5:1 conclusion 13:21 confident 36:15 congratulations 44:3,5 congress 39:11 congressional 6:1 33:13 37:1 38:23 congressmen 39:13 connect 33:6,7 connections 8:20 Connor 32:7,8 consequences 25:14 consideration 5:20,23 31:13 43:2 consisting 17:4 constituents 8:15 35:21 contestant 41:15 context 8:18 contiguous</p>
--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

<p>11:9 CONTINUE 23:17 continued 6:12 12:4 continues 7:2,6 continuing 22:16 28:22 convenes 40:17 convenience 10:10 convinced 36:18 convincing 35:21 coronavirus 7:1 21:17 correct 27:15 correctly 12:10 corridor 39:17 corruption 35:17 Cotner 32:7 council 17:18,19,24,25 31:17 33:20,22 36:9 Councilwoman 33:10,17 Counsel 3:11 count 14:19 28:16 counted 33:8</p>	<p>counties 11:11 countless 36:17 country 7:2 21:14 23:18 county 3:8,13 11:1,5, 15,22,25 12:20 13:12,15 17:18, 19,20,23 20:7 24:10 26:11,13, 19,23 31:18,20 33:13 34:25 37:6,18 County's 37:14 court 6:13 33:23 35:1 courthouse 19:18,21,24 covers 15:18 17:20 coveted 19:11 Covid 40:24 Cox 4:4 cracking 28:22 create 34:16 created 12:22 39:24 creates 14:9 creating 21:21 24:14 Crestfield 30:19</p>	<p>criminal 39:20 criteria 8:3 Critical 25:10 Crosby 31:9 cry 40:11 cultural 8:18 current 11:11 12:25 14:6 15:20 16:4 26:18 CVS 20:3 cycle 6:11 cycles 6:6,24 8:2 40:7</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">D</p> <hr/> <p>DACA 25:17,22 dads 41:7 damage 14:10 damages 18:11 dangers 12:23 Daniel 36:20,25 Darren 29:17 data 7:5,10,14,16</p>	<p>39:8 daughter 22:13 day 40:23 days 20:13 35:14 dear 18:22 debate 25:11,16 decade 22:9 decades 6:10 24:21 decision 36:8,9 decisions 13:9 26:17 38:14 42:22 deck 26:25 Deen 3:12 define 8:16 delay 10:19 delayed 7:4 Demetrius 17:16,17 democracy 12:23 28:15 29:6 30:3 39:7 40:5 democrat 42:10 Democratic 31:19</p>	<p>democrats 42:11 demographics 29:8 deny 34:1 Department 6:9,19 33:15,19 Derrick 37:24 38:3 describe 8:19 deserve 32:2,3 deserves 3:15 Deshields 14:25 16:16,18, 19,20 17:15 desiring 8:25 destruction 29:5 develop 8:4 developments 37:16 difference 6:23 difficult 18:5 difficulty 18:6 Dillard 4:1 39:5 43:24 dilute 34:17 diluted 24:11 diminish 25:2</p>
-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

<p>directive 8:13</p> <p>discouraging 42:18</p> <p>discrimination 24:24 25:17</p> <p>discriminatory 34:4,16</p> <p>dismembered 18:4</p> <p>disruption 7:3</p> <p>distinctly 26:19</p> <p>district 6:1,21 7:21 8:5, 11 9:4 10:23,24 12:16,17 13:22, 23 15:10,17,22 16:3,12,13 17:3, 5,24,25 19:16, 18,22 20:1 24:7, 8,9 25:23 27:5, 11 30:20,22 31:8,12,21 32:14 33:9 34:7, 25 35:9,10 37:9, 10,11,13,20</p> <p>districts 5:16 7:22 8:8 9:4 10:23 11:7 13:20 14:7,12 15:19,21,24 16:5 17:6,19,23 19:1 20:6 24:15 26:10,18 33:14 37:10 40:12 42:20</p> <p>diverse 25:14,24</p> <p>doctors 40:19</p>	<p>document 10:7</p> <p>documentation 10:4</p> <p>dominating 40:4</p> <p>Donaldson 37:9,12,13</p> <p>door 26:7</p> <p>doors 3:23</p> <p>draw 13:5,6 20:6 33:25 39:25</p> <p>drawing 7:11,19 43:5</p> <p>drawn 6:22 12:1 13:3 18:25 23:5 26:18 27:4,11 39:1 40:15</p> <p>drive 10:22 12:15 16:21 19:24 24:6 30:10 33:11 36:25</p> <p>Due 7:3</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">E</p> <hr/> <p>e-mail 10:12 23:23 43:3,6</p> <p>earlier 4:3 43:3,13</p> <p>early 7:9,17</p> <p>Easley 41:22</p>	<p>eat 19:22</p> <p>echo 18:23</p> <p>education 25:18</p> <p>Edwards 23:22</p> <p>effective 27:13</p> <p>effort 34:8</p> <p>efforts 30:3</p> <p>Efia 27:20,21,25 28:1,3,6 29:13</p> <p>elected 12:3 13:4,18 17:4 37:8 38:2 39:3 40:21</p> <p>electing 24:16 38:12</p> <p>election 13:21 14:2</p> <p>elections 14:8 28:25 29:2</p> <p>electoral 34:10</p> <p>element 13:11,19</p> <p>elevate 25:1</p> <p>eliminated 34:7</p> <p>Elliott 3:9</p> <p>eloquently 30:24</p> <p>Emma 3:12</p>	<p>empower 24:14</p> <p>encourage 21:20 36:10,12</p> <p>end 10:11,17 43:11 44:15</p> <p>endless 25:11</p> <p>enforce 41:5</p> <p>engaged 32:3</p> <p>ensure 10:7 25:25</p> <p>ensuring 7:22</p> <p>entire 16:11 26:25 38:14</p> <p>equal 8:8,12 11:8</p> <p>equality 31:7</p> <p>equitable 25:25</p> <p>equity 24:6 26:16</p> <p>equivalent 15:19</p> <p>evening 4:10 9:25 10:21 18:15 30:12,15 36:23 38:1,7 41:15</p> <p>evident 25:15</p> <p>evolve 6:12</p> <p>excuse 9:18 19:20</p>	<p>exercise 38:25</p> <p>exist 39:18</p> <p>existing 24:18</p> <p>exposed 40:24</p> <p>express 9:11</p> <p>extra 25:18</p> <p>extremes 14:5</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">F</p> <hr/> <p>fabric 14:10</p> <p>facility 3:24</p> <p>fact 17:23 21:1,8,16 22:8,13 23:10, 12 28:9</p> <p>fair 20:6,15 22:20 27:9 31:7,12,13 32:4 40:18 41:11</p> <p>fairly 18:2</p> <p>fairness 26:1 34:23</p> <p>Fame 44:1</p> <p>families 15:23</p> <p>family 18:21 36:10</p> <p>Fanning 26:3</p>
------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

Fant 17:8	follow 16:16 21:22	fundamental 8:6	goal 8:6 13:9	grown 37:14
favor 11:13 18:1 26:12	force 29:10	funding 40:25	good 3:13,17 10:21 12:12 17:17 18:15 30:15 35:20,22 36:23 38:1	growth 5:17
federal 6:15,20 38:10	forced 13:13 25:19 28:17,18,20	<hr/> G <hr/>	govern 27:8	guessing 28:19
feedback 27:5	forgone 13:21	gaining 37:17	governing 14:9 26:5	guideposts 8:4
feeds 35:16,17	format 7:14	gains 6:7	government 12:22 28:14 29:7	gun 25:7
feel 32:18 40:8	formulate 5:20	Gamble 36:20,21,23,25 37:24	guy 32:11	<hr/> H <hr/>
feelings 44:9	fortunate 29:4	garage 19:13,15	hailed 25:6	
feels 42:4	forum 9:11	gathered 35:3	Hairston 27:16	
feet 38:5	forward 14:15 44:13	general 13:21 27:22 43:22	Haiti 28:25	
fellow 36:24	found 35:11	gentrification 13:13 21:9 32:17,20 35:2 38:6	half 30:10	
female 44:3	founded 16:25	geographically 11:9	Hall 26:15	
fight 40:19	fourth 4:23	gerrymandering 22:2,4 24:11 32:16,20 35:2, 16 40:3	halls 18:12	
final 7:10,16 23:9 43:11	frank 20:11	Gibson 33:10	hand 14:2 22:9	
fix 14:16	frankly 36:1,17	Gilda 26:4	hands 13:7 22:24 29:5	
flawed 14:6,15	frequently 29:2	give 19:11 27:5	happening 35:15	
flaws 14:16	friend 3:13	giving 11:2 30:16 32:11	happy 7:12 10:5 20:21	
Florence 3:3	friends 36:10	glad 3:3	hard 12:7 29:25	
focal 26:16	front 4:13 19:19 26:15 32:1		harder 14:10	
folks 5:2 19:1	full 5:23 6:4,5 18:5		heading 43:8	

health 39:19,20	history 24:24 25:13	36:24 37:3,10, 12 40:12	7:5	37:12 38:25 41:16 44:2
hear 4:24 8:14 9:18 15:15 34:21 40:10	Hoc 3:2 6:3	housing 37:16	importance 23:3	indispensable 7:22
heard 16:10 18:12 25:8 32:3 33:19 42:2,4,6,21	hold 4:6 29:5	human 28:8	important 8:13,17 13:11, 16 21:4 30:17 35:24 39:23 44:7	individual 9:19
hearing 8:22 9:17 11:2 30:9,12 32:25 35:4 42:15 43:11	holders 13:4	hundreds 29:9	improvement 14:13	individually 42:8
hearings 5:9,13 30:18 33:9	holding 11:2	Hunter 26:4	incarceration 39:22	individuals 39:18
heart 18:22 26:24 30:20	home 18:20	hurry 41:19	incentive 13:24	indoctrinization 25:11
held 33:16	Homeland 17:2,3,7,9,13,21	hyper 14:8	include 10:5	inform 36:7
helpful 43:4	hometown 3:17 19:10	<hr/> I <hr/>	including 17:20	information 7:17 9:10 10:12
helping 13:9	honor 44:4	I-85 30:11	income 39:17 41:7	ingredient 5:19
Henderson 43:18,20	Honorable 30:21	ideal 13:5 16:13 24:13	increase 34:10 36:12	ingredients 5:11
Henegan 3:7 39:4	hope 14:13 25:23 36:11 42:5,21	ideally 23:2	increases 38:21	initial 12:6
hesitate 10:2	hoping 40:10	ideals 38:19	increasing 11:24	Initiative 24:5
High 3:22 38:5 44:1	hour 30:10	identified 10:7	incredibly 35:22	initiatives 41:5
Hill 31:11	hours 25:21	identify 8:16 9:6	incumbent 24:25	input 5:15,19 7:21,24 8:17 15:16 36:13
historical 8:18	house 3:2,11 5:14,21, 23 6:4,7 7:12, 14,18,20,24 8:7 10:14,24 12:3, 16,17 13:22 15:19,21 16:3,4, 5,13 17:6,12,22, 24 19:5,16,18, 21 20:1,3 24:7,8 25:7,25 26:10, 18 27:4 31:22 34:5 35:10	illustrate 19:8	incumbents 11:14 39:2	insecurities 41:8
historically 38:24		illustrates 19:6 20:4	independent 26:6	insight 5:15
		illustration 19:12	indirectly 35:20	inspire 42:22
		immediately 19:17	indiscernible 4:7,11 14:23 15:2 17:8 25:16 26:11 27:17,22 29:15 34:8	inspired 42:1
		impact 7:2,6 38:14		instance 25:6
		impacted		

<p>insubstantial 5:25</p> <p>insurance 39:19,20</p> <p>intact 11:19</p> <p>integrity 11:10 26:2</p> <p>intentional 42:16</p> <p>intentionally 34:1</p> <p>interest 9:7 11:16 12:24 13:3,8 26:8,20 27:1,7 37:5,19 39:14</p> <p>interests 11:13 36:16</p> <p>international 28:24</p> <p>INTERRUPTIO</p> <p>N 23:14</p> <p>interstate 20:2</p> <p>introduce 3:4 9:3</p> <p>Iowa 39:24</p> <p>irrelevant 27:15</p> <p>issue 9:12</p> <p>issues 7:25</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">J</p> <hr/> <p>jar 28:20</p>	<p>Jason 3:9 24:3,4</p> <p>jellybeans 28:20</p> <p>Jerry 4:5</p> <p>Jim 39:11</p> <p>Jimmy 29:1</p> <p>job 25:20</p> <p>jobs 41:2,9</p> <p>Jonah 35:6,8</p> <p>Jordan 3:18 4:8,12 12:9,12 14:21, 24 15:4,6 16:18 17:15 18:14,17 20:19 23:21 27:16,18,23 28:1,3,5 29:13, 16,17,19,23 30:14 32:6,9 35:6 36:19,22, 23 37:24 41:13, 17 42:24 44:3</p> <p>JORDAN:-- 3:1</p> <p>judicial 34:11</p> <p>Judiciary 3:12 5:22 6:1,5 10:15</p> <p>justice 6:9,19 33:14,19 39:20</p>	<hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">K</p> <hr/> <p>Karl 37:2</p> <p>Katie 29:16</p> <p>Kennedy 31:9</p> <p>key 5:10,19 13:1 41:5</p> <p>knowing 40:23</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">L</p> <hr/> <p>lack 25:14</p> <p>Lakeside 31:8</p> <p>land 33:8</p> <p>Lang 41:14,16,21 42:24</p> <p>law 6:11 26:5 27:8</p> <p>laws 29:9 31:4 32:4 35:20</p> <p>Lawson 12:10,15 21:7</p> <p>lawyer 28:8</p> <p>lead 25:24</p> <p>leadership 15:14</p> <p>League 11:1 12:19 30:5</p>	<p>Leagues 11:6</p> <p>leaps 13:1</p> <p>learned 35:12,13</p> <p>leave 10:4</p> <p>leaving 11:4</p> <p>left 3:6,7</p> <p>Legacy 7:14</p> <p>Legal 3:11</p> <p>legislation 21:15 22:22 25:22</p> <p>legislative 5:25 8:8 24:9 38:23</p> <p>legislature 11:21 27:8 40:1 41:3</p> <p>lens 12:25</p> <p>Leola 4:9 30:21 33:10 37:3</p> <p>let alone 26:6</p> <p>level 40:9</p> <p>lies 22:9 31:8</p> <p>lieu 3:20</p> <p>Lieutenant 30:1</p> <p>lifelong</p>	<p>15:9</p> <p>limit 9:16 34:8</p> <p>limited 9:20</p> <p>lines 6:1,22 7:21 8:5 12:1 13:3,5,6 15:16 18:25 21:21 23:4 25:23 27:11 33:6,9,25 37:20 38:23 39:1,25 40:15</p> <p>list 15:1</p> <p>listen 13:24</p> <p>listening 14:1</p> <p>literally 38:5</p> <p>litigation 6:20</p> <p>live 10:22 12:15 19:4 20:23 24:6 25:4 36:25 37:1 38:20 41:7</p> <p>lives 26:14 40:20</p> <p>local 4:15 33:6,9 38:10 40:8</p> <p>long 4:13 23:1</p> <p>long-term 32:17</p> <p>longer 6:8,16 32:19,22</p> <p>lost 29:16</p>
--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------

lot 14:12 21:8 22:23 30:23	mandates 41:5	meant 23:25	minimum 11:25	myriad 31:16
Louisiana 34:3,4,11,19,22, 24	manipulate 39:6	media 36:4	minoritized 24:21	myth 28:11
lovely 3:23	manipulating 40:4	median 39:17	minority 24:8	<hr/> N <hr/>
low 40:7 41:7	manner 28:18 33:4	meeting 5:4,6 7:9 33:16 35:11,12,25 36:5 42:25 43:13,19 44:12	minutes 9:20 19:4,25 23:16	name's 10:21
<hr/> M <hr/>	mantra 28:16	member 17:12 35:19	missed 23:25	National 31:17
made 8:23 26:15 43:22	map 7:11,18 15:20 16:4	members 5:13 9:14 12:13 13:14 36:24 38:1 43:22 44:13	moms 41:6	native 3:8 16:22 18:19
mail 10:14 43:7	mapped 23:5	men 41:2	monitor 28:24	Neal 3:6
mailing 10:8	maps 12:6 22:22 27:4, 6 40:1	mention 3:16 6:24	month 7:11 36:1	nearing 10:10
Main 19:10,12,25	marks 11:3	mentioned 7:8 21:7 43:10	months 20:13 37:21 42:23	Needless 34:15
major 11:15	Marlboro 3:8	Meredith 27:16	Moonville 31:11	Negro 31:18
majority 24:9	mask 18:16	Mic's 36:21	morally 35:16	neighborhoods 8:1 13:15
make 5:6 9:9,15 12:1 13:8 14:11,19 19:7 21:11,21 23:4 24:2,17 25:9 27:14 30:25 31:14 32:3 38:14 41:19	masks 25:17	mentioned 7:8 21:7 43:10	morning 35:13	newly 19:13,14 27:4
makes 14:9 18:10 35:23	mass 33:8 38:6	Meredith 27:16	move 22:16 25:19	news 25:3
making 16:8 28:11 36:8, 9	Matt 32:7	microphone 9:2	moving 14:15	Newton 3:14,17
	matter 8:21 26:14 35:18	Microsoft 5:8 43:16	multiple 17:4	Nichols 14:25 18:14,15, 18 20:19
	maximize 9:16	Mike 26:3	municipalities 11:10	night 4:25 41:3,8 43:9
	Meade 31:8,21	millions 40:13,20	mural 26:14	no-win 42:20
	meaningful 13:10	mind 9:22 18:15 21:4 22:4	murder 28:19	nonpartisan 39:25
	means 40:13	minimize 15:22	Myers 43:18,20	nonpresidential 40:7
				nonprofit

16:25	officials	oversight	29:10	39:10,12 42:13
nontransparent	37:9 38:3 40:21	26:7	passing	personal
35:23	one-house	overturning	35:20	26:8 31:6
Norris	17:5	33:12	passion	persons
33:17 34:25	one-way	overwhelming	42:21	12:2
North	19:17	26:12	passionate	perspectives
4:25 43:9	opaque		41:25	25:15,24
notes	35:14	P	past	Peters
10:9	open		27:10	19:23
notification	3:23 7:18 25:6	packing	Pat	petition
36:5	26:7	28:21	3:7	33:11,19
number	openness	painted	pay	ph
14:1 15:25 16:1	12:4	26:14	25:18	17:8
28:19 36:3	opinion	pandemic	Pendleton	pick
numbers	9:24	7:1	10:16	22:5,6 37:7,19
37:22	opportunities	paraphrase	people	Pickens
nurses	34:10	29:1	4:18 7:23,24	3:6
40:19	opportunity	Park	11:24 13:2	picking
Nwangaza	11:3 12:14,18	10:22 17:2,3,7,	15:18 16:8 17:5,	31:1
27:20,21,25	16:19 17:14	9,13,21 31:8,9	11,12 18:23	pieces
28:2,3,4,6,7	30:17 32:12	parking	20:6,15,25 22:5,	18:4
29:13	oppose	19:13,15	6,10,15,18 23:5	Pine
	40:14	part	25:4,9,12 26:9	31:11
O	order	15:17 30:17	28:18 29:3 31:1,	place
	5:16 8:24	36:2 37:11	14,25 32:2 33:8	16:11 19:11
obligations	organization	participate	36:14,18 37:6,	24:23
6:17	9:8	5:8 36:14 43:15	17,19 38:6,18	places
observed	organizations	participation	39:2,10,14 40:8	39:16
29:2	31:17,24 32:1	3:21	42:4 44:7	plan
occasionally	organizer	parties	percent	5:21,22 6:2,5,7,
9:14	16:24	11:14 14:5	16:3,12 17:5	18 7:13 8:4,7,11
offer	original	partisan	40:11 42:10,11	9:4 10:1,4 34:4,
9:19,21,23 44:5	16:22	40:4	Perfect	12,16,17
offered	Orleans	parts	15:6	planning
24:22	34:9	13:15 26:13,22	permanent	26:16
offering	outcome	party	10:6	plans
9:22	24:13,17 25:25	9:7 26:8 35:18	persistence	6:16 7:19
office	outright	42:19	41:1	Pleasant
13:4	25:17	pass	person	31:10
officers	outsized	26:1 27:8	8:10 9:21 10:19	plenty
17:4	14:7	passed	23:3 26:24	11:4
			27:11,14 28:15	

point 19:7 20:4 26:16	38:13,22 40:5	26:5 27:9 29:4	put 12:6 13:7 24:23 25:22 26:8	reassured 15:24
polarization 14:9	pre-clearance 6:16	32:18 34:2	putting 29:25 31:14	receive 7:12 9:10
policies 25:16	preapproval 6:15	35:14,23 36:6, 10 40:18 43:5 44:10	<hr/> Q <hr/>	received 33:11
policy 26:16	Precinct 37:9,13	professional 25:20	Quarrels 37:25 38:1,4	recent 37:14
political 9:7 24:11 26:8, 23 28:10 35:18	precincts 11:11 17:7	promise 27:23,24	question 35:24	recently 39:8 43:25
politically 36:3	preparing 21:21	proportion 11:24	questions 9:15	recognize 5:24 19:2
politician 32:19	present 9:5 40:1	proportional 11:20	<hr/> R <hr/>	recommend 11:19,25
politicians 22:5,6 31:1 40:14	presentation 5:21	proposed 5:21 6:2,5 7:13, 19 8:4 26:3	race 25:10	recommendatio ns 33:12
politics 31:15 38:11 39:1 40:4	presented 27:4	protect 25:1 39:2 41:6	racial 11:20 24:5,24 26:16	reconstructed 29:6
poor 38:9 39:14	president 10:25 29:1 31:19,20 40:10	protected 24:10	racist 29:9	record 8:24 10:6
population 8:12,13 13:16 14:4 16:2 22:7 29:10	previous 8:2	protections 24:22,23,25	raised 15:9	recorded 8:22
populations 11:8	Priester 20:20,21,23 23:18 30:24 31:2	proudly 30:22	read 25:3	red 42:10
portion 26:11	principle 8:10	provide 8:8 9:11 10:11	real 14:10 39:6	redistricting 3:2 5:11 6:6,11, 12,15,18,23 7:6 8:2,11 9:13 11:7,13 13:1,8 14:14,17 15:16 16:7 18:5 21:6, 15,24 22:24 23:2,19 24:13, 20 26:2,5,7 31:4,13 32:4,18 33:6,18 34:2,16, 17 35:25 36:9 38:2,24 39:23 44:10
position 34:6	principles 16:8	provided 10:8	reality 39:1	
posting 36:4	prior 6:6,23	public 4:19 5:13 7:21 8:23 9:7 10:6 12:5 30:13 35:21 36:7 44:8	realized 21:13	
poverty 38:20	problem 13:1 32:17	public's 5:19	reappoint 34:12	
power 13:4,7,25 14:8, 17 18:12 22:23 24:11 26:23	problems 32:25	publishes 7:15	reason 19:9 38:16	
	process 5:7,11,15 7:11, 20 24:13,20	pull 18:16	reasonable 24:15 34:20	
		purpose 12:21	reasons 31:24 40:6	

redistricting@schouse.gov. 10:13	remember 40:18 42:21	requirement 6:13	roll 39:3	6:20
redraw 5:25 38:22	remind 42:24	reshape 37:20	room 7:18 14:12 42:3,	season 14:17
redrawing 5:16 7:21 8:5	remiss 44:5	reside 30:18	8	SECONDS 23:14
redrawn 25:23	render 28:22	resident 28:7 38:4 41:22	Ross 35:9	Section 31:18 34:12
reduce 16:6	rep 39:11	residents 24:12 27:5	row 4:13	seeds 29:5
reelection 35:19	REPEAT 23:16	respect 10:10 18:6	rows 37:3	seeking 5:15
reference 10:2	represent 7:23 20:6,25 36:15 39:14	response 12:5	rules 21:14 22:22 23:19	senate 6:8 10:23 35:9, 25 37:2
referred 8:9	representation 11:21 13:12,18 15:25 21:3 31:7, 13 37:7,20	responsive 17:12	run 20:1	Senator 26:3
reflect 27:6	representative 3:7,10 4:1,4,5,9, 11,13 11:23 12:23 14:4 19:6 25:21 26:4 38:13 43:18,20, 24	restore 17:9 18:2	rural 11:18 26:22	senators 11:23 42:12
reflected 26:17	representatives 4:15 5:14,24 6:4 18:8,9 31:23 34:5 37:8 39:4 42:12	result 13:17,20	Ruth 10:20,21	sense 18:10
Registered 28:6		resulted 6:21	<hr/> S <hr/>	sentiments 26:17
rehabilitation 39:21		Retired 30:2	sad 21:16 23:19	servants 39:25
relate 9:13		return 40:16	safe 14:6 40:12	serve 26:9
relates 21:15 22:24 23:2 44:9		rights 6:14 8:9 24:23 25:7 28:8 34:2	sake 8:24 40:5	served 17:3 28:24
release 7:4,17		road 10:3 30:19 43:8, 12	save 40:20	serves 17:3
released 39:8		roadmap 21:22	scenes 23:7	sessions 33:23
releases 7:10		roads 39:16	scheduled 5:13	set 8:3 42:20
remain 11:19 22:14 39:3		Robinson 4:9,11 30:21 37:3 39:5	school 3:18,22 15:10, 17	severely 18:10
remarks 11:4		rode 3:12	Scott 29:17,18	shady 36:7
			scrutiny	shame 39:17

shaped 12:22	sleeves 39:3	Spartanburg's 25:8 26:14	standing 42:13	Stephanie 20:20,23
share 36:11	small 14:1 17:10 18:9	speak 8:25 9:5 10:20	stands 32:1	Steven 4:12
Sharon 24:6	smaller 17:24	11:3 16:20	Stanton 10:20,21	sticky 10:8
she'll 16:17	snuck 4:12	17:11,14 18:3, 11 32:19	start 43:5	stop 4:23 43:9
sheet 24:1 41:17	so-called 32:16	speaker 41:24 42:2	started 10:17	store 20:10
shift 13:16,17	social 8:17 36:4	speakers 11:5 41:25	STARTS 23:15	street 10:16 19:10,12, 17,21,25 21:18
show 33:24	society 14:11	speaking 9:16	state 4:20,22,24 5:10 7:3 10:23,24	strength 34:9
shows 39:8	son 3:8	spearheaded 33:18	11:6,22,23 12:3, 8 13:22,23 18:9	strive 9:15
side 25:4,8,12 27:2	sought 34:11	special 18:1	21:13 23:13	strong 15:24
sign 9:1 23:25 24:1 41:18,19	soundness 38:16	specific 7:25	25:6,19 30:8	struck 6:13
signatures 33:11	south 3:1 4:24 5:12,17 7:7,23 8:7,15 10:16 11:6 12:16,17 16:21, 23 17:8,20 18:19,20 19:25 20:8,16,24 21:13 22:12 23:13 24:12 25:4,8,12 26:1 27:2 28:7 30:4, 19 31:3,22 34:13 35:9,10 38:17 39:9 40:2 41:22	speeches 42:15	33:6 34:3,5,6,15 38:10,12,14,22 39:15,19,24 40:9 41:3 42:9, 10,11	struggle 28:15,17 41:8
Simmons 35:7,8 36:19		Spencer 24:3,4	stated 30:25 33:10,17, 21	struggling 27:24
simple 18:25 19:1		split 15:20 16:5 17:6, 22 33:13	statement 23:9,12	stuck 30:10
simply 20:5		spoke 38:7	states 6:9,14 24:24 28:13 29:3,8 30:2	students 25:18 41:1
Simpson 30:21		spoken 33:3	statue 19:19	subject 6:8 25:10
single 17:23 41:6		Springbrook 36:25	Staunton 31:9	submission 10:9,14
sir 12:11 29:19,23 30:14 32:9 36:22 41:13	Spartanburg 11:1,5,15,16,22 24:5,7,9 25:5 26:10,12,22 30:6,7,9	Springs 10:22	stacked 26:25	submissions 7:13
SIREN 24:5 30:7		stacking 28:21	stand 19:12,15,19 29:7 30:5 38:5	submitted 33:14
site 7:13 10:13			stay 13:25	subsidiaries 28:14
			step 15:6 24:18	substantially 8:12

substantive 28:23	19:3 31:7	25	tour 43:12	
support 30:5 40:20,25 41:24	targets 25:9	thinking 12:21 19:3 42:15	traditional 16:7	<hr/> U <hr/>
supposed 26:9	task 5:25 18:7	thoughtful 41:11	traditionally 8:9	ultimately 5:22 29:12
suppress 27:13	Taxpayer 28:6	thoughts 9:23	traffic 30:11	un- 25:11
supremacist 29:7	taxpayers 15:23	tide 29:11	transcribed 8:23	unbelievable 31:3
Supreme 6:13	Taylors 20:23	time 5:2 9:17 11:5 13:6 15:14 16:15 20:14 23:12 27:15 37:14,15,23 43:22	transparency 36:13	unchanged 7:17
surrounding 6:11 11:18	teach 25:12	times 7:1	transparent 27:9	understand 8:20 21:23 23:3, 6 33:4
survive 28:21	teachers 40:22	timing 7:6	treat 18:1,2	understands 9:9
Susan 29:14	Teams 5:8 43:16	Timmons 37:2	treated 38:10	undertakes 7:20
symbolic 28:23	technology 5:3 43:15	today 16:20 17:2,14 19:2 28:20 35:11 38:5 42:22	treatment 18:1	unfairly 38:8
system 13:1 14:6,14,18 39:20	telling 5:10	told 35:3 36:2 44:8	tremendous 5:17 44:4	unincorporated 26:13,22
systemic 12:24	ten 4:23 21:16,19, 22 22:15	tomorrow 4:25 43:9 44:14	true 13:22 40:11	unintentional 32:16,21 35:2
systems 12:21	tend 14:5	tonight 3:3,25 4:2,17,18 5:5,6,12 8:14,25 9:5 10:18 38:3 43:14,21,23 44:8,11	trumps 39:1	United 6:9 28:13 29:3 30:1
<hr/> T <hr/>	Teresa 16:16,20	Tonya 14:22 15:3,8	trust 23:7,8	Unlike 6:6
table 21:2 31:6	testifying 12:19	tool 5:3	Tuesday 20:21	unprecedented 7:1
taking 15:14	testimony 9:20,21,22		turn 29:10	upset 33:22
Takita 32:9,12	theater 28:10		Turner 35:9	Upstate 17:1
talk 25:4 32:15 40:17	theory 25:10		turnout 40:6	urban 11:17
talking	thing 14:18 16:6 31:5		Turregano 29:14,20,22,24 30:1	USA 29:6,11

<hr/> V <hr/>	<p>vote 8:10 20:9,11,12 23:4 26:24 27:12,14 28:15, 16 34:18 40:2, 10 42:17</p> <p>voter 24:19 28:6 40:6</p> <p>voters 8:15 11:1 12:20 13:9,19,25 14:1, 3,7,19 24:15,21 27:14 28:22 30:6 34:6,10,13</p> <p>votes 14:19 28:23</p> <p>voting 6:14 8:9 11:11 24:23 34:9</p>	<p>Water 17:3</p> <p>waving 4:4</p> <p>Wayne 36:19</p> <p>weakening 24:18</p> <p>weather 28:18</p> <p>Web 7:13 10:12</p> <p>weeks 33:17</p> <p>Wes 4:4</p> <p>Weston 3:14</p> <p>Wetley 12:10,11,13,15 30:24</p> <p>Whitaker 19:20</p> <p>white 29:6 34:10</p> <p>Whitner 19:20</p> <p>who've 38:7</p> <p>wholeness 17:9</p> <p>wide 26:7</p> <p>William 37:2</p> <p>willingness 3:23</p> <p>win 29:12 35:19</p> <p>Winbush 14:22,24 15:3,4,</p>	<p>5,8</p> <p>winner 13:24 42:17</p> <p>Winston 16:21</p> <p>wishes 33:20 41:19</p> <p>withdraw 34:15</p> <p>withstood 6:19</p> <p>witnessed 39:5</p> <p>woman 12:20 34:25 41:4</p> <p>women 11:1 30:6 31:18, 19 39:13 41:2</p> <p>Woodmont 31:9</p> <p>words 34:25 42:1</p> <p>work 12:7 15:11,21 29:25 36:16 39:6 40:23</p> <p>worked 28:13</p> <p>workers 41:6</p> <p>working 6:17</p> <p>worlds 25:5</p> <p>worry 25:8</p> <p>worse 33:2</p> <p>worsened 34:5</p>	<p>Wren 12:15</p> <p>written 10:4 43:1</p> <p>wrong 35:16</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">Y</p> <hr/> <p>y'all 20:21,22 21:18 34:19 35:1,3</p> <p>year 31:23 32:24 38:21</p> <p>year's 24:13</p> <p>years 16:24 21:17,19, 23 22:15 24:10 28:12,13 29:7</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">Z</p> <hr/> <p>zip 38:20</p>
<p>V.A. 15:11</p> <p>Valley 31:10</p> <p>values 42:13</p> <p>Venezuela 28:25</p> <p>Venezuelan 29:2</p> <p>venture 42:7</p> <p>Vereness 17:8</p> <p>verification 7:16</p> <p>veteran 15:10</p> <p>vice 31:19</p> <p>victory 14:2 25:7</p> <p>violence 28:19</p> <p>vital 17:10</p> <p>vitality 13:16</p> <p>voice 13:19 16:9 17:11 18:3 21:25 22:20 38:15,16 42:4</p> <p>voices 14:19 15:15 16:10 25:1 42:5</p> <p>voicing 32:25</p>	<hr/> W <hr/>			