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AUDIO TRANSCRIPTION

September 20, 2021

SC HOUSE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE

Aiken Redistricting Hearing

REPORTER: Barbara Ham

1 STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA

2 COUNTY OF AIKEN

3

4

HOUSE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE

5

REDISTRICTING AD HOC SUBCOMMITTEE

6

7 CHAIRMAN:

8 Jay Jordan

9

10 REPRESENTATIVES PRESENT:

11 Justin Bamberg Bamberg

12 Neal Collins Pickens

13 Pat Hennigan Marlboro

14 Beth Bernstein Columbia

15 Jason Elliott Greenville

16 Weston Newton Beaufort

17 Emma Dean, Esquire

18

19 DATE: September 20, 2021

20

21 LOCATION: Aiken Tech Amphitheater

22 2276 Jefferson Davis Highway

23 Building 700/800

24 Graniteville, South Carolina

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I N D E X

Chairman Jordan.....	3
Ms. Willbrand.....	9
Ms. Westby.....	14
Mr. White.....	17
Ms. Springstein.....	21
Ms. Sisk.....	27
Ms. Desisto.....	32
Ms. Chandler.....	33
Chairman Jordan.....	38
Certification of Reporter.....	40

1 MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you to the good folks here at
2 Aiken Tech for making this space available to us
3 so that we could come out tonight and discuss
4 such an important issue. I want to welcome or
5 introduce to you the members of our committee.
6 First up, literally walking down the aisle now to
7 much fanfare, my good friend, Justin Bamberg,
8 from Bamberg, South Carolina. I never knew you
9 were so popular in Aiken. Next up, Neil Collins
10 from Pickens. Pat Hennigan, my good friend from
11 Marlboro. Next to her, Mr. Weston Newton from
12 Bluffton, South Carolina. And then we have Ms.
13 Beth Bernstein from Columbia. And then, of
14 course, Jason Elliott from Greenville. And y'all
15 are the nicest crowd that we have met yet. So,
16 we are really excited to be with y'all this
17 evening. This is, I'll tell y'all, this is our
18 seventh meeting. We started in Myrtle Beach on
19 September the 8th. Before this meeting, we were
20 in Bluffton last week Representative Newton
21 hosted us down there, it was a beautiful place.
22 And then, of course, we have two more meetings
23 that are on our road tour. We'll go to Greenwood
24 tomorrow night and then Orangeburg and then,
25 actually, I'll go ahead and tell y'all, we're

1 going to add a meeting to the schedule on
2 September the 28th at 4:30 in Columbia, and then
3 we have our final meeting October the 4th at 4:30
4 in Columbia and both of those meetings will be
5 virtual opportunities. So, let me -- let's do
6 some housekeeping issues. First, thank y'all
7 again for participating in what truly is such an
8 important legislative process. These hearings
9 are really key ingredients in the process of
10 redistricting in South Carolina. As I've already
11 told you both here tonight and in other scheduled
12 public hearings, we, the members of this
13 committee, are seeking your input into the
14 insight and process of redrawing our districts in
15 order to accommodate the tremendous growth that
16 we've seen in South Carolina since the 2010
17 Census. Your input, the public input, is really,
18 as we go to formulate the proposed plan that we
19 will ultimately present to the House Judiciary
20 Committee and then onto the full House of
21 Representatives, as I say, is such a key
22 ingredient. Certainly, we recognize that this is
23 not an insubstantial task to redraw the
24 legislative and congressional lines here in South
25 Carolina. The Judiciary Committee may or may not

1 adopt the plan proposed by this committee and so,
2 too, the full House of Representatives may or may
3 not adopt the plan proposed by the Judiciary
4 Committee. Unlike prior redistricting cycles,
5 the plan that gains the approval of the House and
6 later the Senate is no longer subject to advanced
7 clearance by the United States Justice
8 Department. This is because of the decade since
9 the last redistricting cycle, the law surrounding
10 redistricting has continued to evolve and in
11 2013, the United States Supreme Court struck down
12 a requirement of the Voting Rights Act that
13 required some states to have Federal pre-approval
14 of redistricting plans. Although we no longer
15 have pre-clearance obligations, we do have the
16 benefit of working from a redistricting plan that
17 was both approved by the Department of Justice in
18 2011 and withstood challenge and scrutiny through
19 Federal litigation which resulted in an
20 affirmance of the district lines as currently
21 drawn. Another difference from prior
22 redistricting cycles that, of course, warrants
23 mentioning and is well known to all of us, are
24 the unprecedented times presented to us by the
25 Coronavirus pandemic that has so greatly affected

1 both our country and our state. Due to this
2 disruption of the pandemic, the Census Bureau
3 has, of course, been extremely delayed in the
4 release of the 2020 Census data which, of course,
5 has impacted redistricting here in South
6 Carolina. As I mentioned during our first
7 committee meeting in early August, once the
8 Census Bureau, which it actually released its
9 final data a little bit ahead of schedule just
10 very recently, we will then be in a position to
11 engage in the map process for the House.
12 Although we are certainly happy to receive
13 proposed planned submissions at our website, the
14 House will wait, of course, until we're able to
15 digest that final data and verify and put it
16 through the verification process that is
17 unchanged from the prior release before we begin
18 actually mapping and drawing and considering
19 plans. As the House undertakes the process of
20 redrawing district lines, public input is
21 indispensable to insuring that our districts best
22 represent the people of South Carolina. We are
23 truly the House of the people. We want your
24 input on specific issues or concerns in your
25 communities and in your neighborhoods. As in

1 previous redistricting cycles, our committee has
2 adopted a set of criteria to be used as
3 guideposts in the development of a proposed plan
4 in redrawing the district lines. The fundamental
5 goal of this committee and the House is to adopt
6 the plan that assures South Carolina's
7 legislative districts provide for equal voting
8 rights. Traditionally referred to as the one-
9 person-one-vote principle. As applied to the
10 redistricting plan, our district should be of
11 substantially equal population. While the
12 population directive is important, we are here
13 tonight because the committee needs to hear from
14 our constituents, the South Carolina voters, as
15 to how you identify or define your communities.
16 We welcome your input as to the important social,
17 cultural, historical context as to how you
18 describe your community so that we can better
19 understand the commonality and connections that
20 matter to you. This hearing is being recorded.
21 It will be transcribed and made available to the
22 public. For the sake of order and a clear
23 record, we ask that anyone desiring to speak
24 tonight first sign in, if you've not already done
25 so, and when you are called, please come to the

1 microphone, introduce yourself by your name,
2 address and the district or districts about which
3 you plan to speak. If you are present tonight on
4 behalf of a group, please identify the group on
5 whose behalf you're appearing be it a political
6 party, public interest group or other
7 organization. I also want to make sure everyone
8 understands in advance that we are here to
9 receive information and provide a forum for
10 public input to express -- express to the
11 committee what the issues or concerns that are
12 related to redistricting. While I and other
13 members of the committee may occasionally make a
14 comment or ask a question, we will strive to
15 limit our speaking so that we can maximize the
16 time available to you. Traditionally, we ask
17 folks that testimony be limited to five minutes.
18 I would just ask you to consider, we don't have a
19 huge crowd tonight, so I don't think we'll have
20 any trouble giving everyone the opportunity to
21 say what they need to say this evening.
22 Certainly, if you plan to leave any written
23 documentation with the committee, we're certainly
24 happy to include that in the permanent record.
25 We ask that, to insure you are identified on the

1 document along with your name, your mailing
2 address, please, and we have some sticky notes
3 available for that as well that are at the
4 submission box. And, certainly, testimony can be
5 emailed to our website. That's at
6 Redistricting@schouse.gov or you can mail it
7 directly to us and that's at House Judiciary and
8 that's 512 Blatt Building, 1105 Pendleton Street,
9 Columbia, South Carolina 29201. And I will wrap
10 up where I started by telling you how much we
11 appreciate you coming out and participating with
12 us. I forgot to introduce Emma Dean, and she
13 probably likes it that way, but she's our chief
14 Legal Counsel from House Judiciary Hearing
15 helping us out as well. I think that's it. So,
16 with that, first contestant this evening, first
17 batter up, Ann Willbrand.

18 MS. WILLBRAND: Thank you for having this hearing. I
19 am Ann Willbrand. I live at 2057 Dibble Road
20 Southwest in Aiken. I am in House District 81,
21 and I also want to make a few remarks about the
22 Second Congressional District. I am the Second
23 Vice Chair of the Aiken County Democratic Party
24 although I'm speaking tonight as an individual,
25 not representing the party. For all practical

1 purposes, I consider myself a disenfranchised
2 voter. I've lived in Aiken for 36 years and have
3 voted in almost every election. Usually, with
4 the exception of the top of the ticket, I go
5 through the motions and leave a lot of races
6 blank since the majority of the offices on my
7 ballot are uncontested. To me this means that
8 the candidates, particularly incumbents, have
9 just blocked their seat for that term when
10 they've paid their filing fees. They don't have
11 to campaign, attend candidate forums or debates
12 or do any work for the privilege of serving.
13 There is no real accountability to the voters.
14 This is not how a Democratic Representative
15 Constitutional Republic is supposed to work. I
16 know this arises to some extent from housing
17 patterns and non-political issues that we can't
18 do much about it in the short term. However,
19 some of it is due to intentional gerrymandering
20 which I believe is wrong. For example, in House
21 District 81, over the past 25 years, five people
22 have held that seat; yet, only one race in 2018
23 was contested, and it was hardly competitive
24 since there was a 26 point difference in the
25 outcome and 44 percent of the voters voted

1 straight party Republican. In Aiken County,
2 about 80 percent of the ballots cast are straight
3 party, about 45 percent Republican, 35 percent
4 Democrat. Not only do the voters not have
5 choices for most races, but they are also
6 basically voting on autopilot since there's no
7 reason to be informed about or interested in
8 local elections and who is running when there are
9 no contests. Straight party voting should be
10 repealed. One party government is anti-
11 Democratic, silence is minority voices is more
12 likely to lead to a lack of accountability and
13 corruption, reduces the chance of compromise on
14 difficult issues and can lead to extreme
15 legislation that denies civil and human rights
16 based on flat ideologies. I hate to say it, but
17 it makes our elections look a lot more like the
18 phony show elections held in one party
19 authoritarian repressive regimes like Cuba and
20 Hungary, them being exemplary of how the
21 Democratic principles we espouse as citizens of
22 the United States. I would like to see all
23 districts from municipal to congressional drawn
24 by a non-partisan commission as proposed in
25 Senate 750 and House 40229 to provide the most

1 fair representation for everyone. The State
2 typically votes 55/45 to 60/40 Republican to
3 Democrat Presidential and Gubernatorial elections
4 yet there is only one Democrat and six
5 Republicans in our Congressional delegation.
6 Aiken County typically votes about 65/35
7 Republican to Democrat and the State House
8 delegation and County Council should reflect that
9 balance but neither does. In each cycle, there
10 are at most two to three truly competitive races
11 where the margin is less than five points out of
12 170 seats in the General Assembly. That is un-
13 Democratic, embarrassing, disgusting and totally
14 unacceptable. The only way to have free and fair
15 elections is to put the emphasis on having as
16 many competitive compact districts as possible
17 that represent the communities of interest and
18 don't split district lines. For example, why is
19 part of Orangeburg County in the second
20 Congressional District when Orangeburg and Aiken
21 Counties share little or nothing in common? The
22 border is out in the most rural part of the
23 county. They are not even in the same media
24 market. Why not put all of Orangeburg in the
25 sixth district and add Edgefield and perhaps

1 Saluda Counties to the second? Aiken and
2 Edgefield Counties share three State House seats
3 and many Edgefield residents, particularly in
4 North Augusta, work in Aiken County. That is a
5 connection that should be recognized by
6 representation when drawing the Congressional
7 district lines. Please do the right thing for
8 the citizens of South Carolina. Put petty
9 partisan politics aside and pass these bills that
10 require non-partisan commission to draw the most
11 competitive districts possible for every office
12 in an open process. Voters should be selecting
13 their elected officials in robust contested
14 elections and not the other way around where
15 elected officials select their contestants and
16 take them for granted. If you're doing your job
17 well, then you should be able to make the case
18 and shouldn't have to worry about being re-
19 elected even if you have opposition. But having
20 opposition can go a long way to call out
21 shortcomings and to require more accountability.
22 This is the least that every citizen should
23 expect and demand to preserve a Democratic
24 process. Thank you.

25 THE CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Donna Westby.

1 MS. WESTBY: Good evening. Good evening.

2 THE CHAIRMAN: Good evening.

3 MS. WESTBY: Thank you. My name is Donna Moore
4 Westby and I reside in District -- House District
5 81 and Congressional District 2 right here in
6 Aiken, South Carolina, and I certainly thank you
7 all for coming out on this rainy Monday evening.
8 I represent a fairly new organization entitled
9 Umoja Village which is a South Carolina charity
10 as well as a 501(c)(3) tax exempt organization.
11 Umoja Village is a strategic alliance of blacks
12 and African Americans united to leverage our own
13 gifts, talents, skills, votes, to improve the
14 lives specifically of those who have been
15 marginalized, disenfranchised, subjected to
16 inequalities as well as racial prejudice and
17 discrimination. I can stand here and tell you
18 that the Equal Protection Clause in the
19 Fourteenth Amendment limits racial gerrymandering
20 with regard to race, but I won't do that. I
21 could stand here and tell you that Section 2 of
22 the Voting Rights Act prevents the use of
23 district lines that deny minority voters an equal
24 opportunity to participate in the political
25 process and to elect representatives of their

1 choice, but I won't do that. I could also tell
2 you tonight that engaging in packing and cracking
3 with regard to drawing these lines definitely
4 does not lend itself to transparency and a good
5 redistricting plan, but I won't do that. But
6 what I will do is something perhaps you've not
7 heard in the other seven or eight meetings that
8 this body has participated in. For me,
9 everything I do, every decision I make, is one of
10 morality. Every decision that I made when I was
11 elected to the Aiken County Board of Education,
12 when I served on our Hospital Board here, when I
13 served on our College Board here and now as I run
14 an FM gospel radio station, has to deal with
15 morality. Because I have to be able to sleep at
16 night knowing that I have not done the right
17 thing, but I have done the righteous thing.
18 Because the word of God that I read and that I
19 believe and perhaps those of you who consider
20 yourselves a Christian would also have seen that
21 there is a way that seems right to man, but in
22 the end, it leads to destruction. What I
23 encourage you to do, as elected officials, is to
24 put others' needs above yourself, to not be
25 tempted to provide recommendations that limits

1 the possibility of minorities electing people of
2 their own interests, of their backgrounds. I ask
3 that you consider culture, that you consider
4 those boundaries that protect a community. That
5 you expand the opportunity for those who have
6 been disenfranchised to be a part of the process.
7 Why do you do what you do? Is it for power? Is
8 it for fame? Is it for fortune? Is it for
9 greed? That is for each of us in this room to
10 ask ourselves. But for those of you who are
11 elected officials, it is also for you to ask
12 yourself that question, because you are here to
13 represent what's best for the people as well as
14 what's best for the state of South Carolina. If
15 you have done your jobs, then you should not have
16 to worry about gerrymandering or drawing lines
17 that protect you as an incumbent, because the
18 voters will recognize that and will put you back
19 in office. So, for me, again, every decision I
20 make has to do with who I'm ultimately
21 accountable to and that is my God, because in the
22 end, there is a way that seems right to man, but
23 let it not lead to destruction. Please make
24 righteous decisions, not decisions that protect
25 you or your friends or buddies, but that's going

1 to be in the best interest of all citizens so
2 that everyone has an opportunity who wants to
3 participate in this process can and do it without
4 evading the law as, unfortunately, we've seen at
5 the very high level that there are those who
6 believe they are above the law. Thank you so
7 much for your time.

8 MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Ms. Westby. Eugene White.

9 MR. WHITE: Good evening. My name is Eugene White.

10 I am the President of the Aiken County branch of
11 the NAACP. I reside at 130 Stillwater Road in
12 Windsor, South Carolina, and I'm going to talk
13 about Congressional District 2, House District
14 81, House District 83 and House District 84.
15 Good evening, I'm Eugene White, the President of
16 the Aiken County branch of the NAACP and
17 appreciate this opportunity to testify this
18 evening. I certainly appreciate all the public
19 participation who felt it of value to come out
20 and participate in this discussion about this
21 very, very important issue. In particular
22 tonight, we appreciate the participation of our
23 partners, the League of Women Voters, the Umoja
24 Village and Delta Sigma Theta Sorority,
25 Incorporated. All of us together are going to

1 talk about various things. You just heard my
2 colleague talk about -- talk from Umjoa Village,
3 but at the end of it, the Ad Hoc Committee should
4 have a very comprehensive list of all the issues
5 of concern for our community. I'm personally
6 going to start off by talking about communities
7 of interest, one-person, one-vote and then,
8 finally, close out with some recommendations that
9 you may want to consider as you go forth and you
10 do your work. So, let's begin. Community of
11 interest is defined as a collection of
12 individuals with common legislative concerns and
13 goals. A community of interest should not be
14 based on political party, political candidates or
15 the protection of incumbents, but rather we'd
16 like the Ad Hoc Committee to consider communities
17 of interest to be and to respect the traditional
18 jurisdictional boundaries of our counties, of our
19 municipalities and our precincts, thus allowing
20 these communities of interest to address the
21 issues that are of interest to them, such as
22 gentrification, school choice, at-large voting,
23 senseless crime. Shifting gears, the one-person,
24 one-vote principle calls out the Equal Protection
25 Clause in the United States Constitution which

1 says that legislative voting districts should be
2 approximately the same size with respect to
3 population. This is based on the principle which
4 is generally accepted in our country which says
5 that one vote from one person is completely equal
6 to the vote of another person and no one vote
7 outweighs the other. And so we'd ask the Ad Hoc
8 Committee to do their best and fight against the
9 destruction of opportunity minority districts,
10 create new ones where possible and to protect
11 those communities of interest where applicable.
12 As it relates to Congressional District 2, the
13 current data says that there is a 1.28 percent of
14 deviation from the ideal as it relates to
15 population. We'd ask the Ad Hoc Committee to
16 resolve that deviation. We recognize that
17 adjoining districts have similar deviations, but
18 please do your best to resolve that deviation in
19 District 2. As it relates to House Districts,
20 there are several issues of concern. Number one,
21 the majority minority district in 82 must be
22 protected. In addition to that, when you look at
23 various districts across Aiken County, there are
24 several examples of the African community --
25 African American community, are being cracked and

1 divided. For example, in District 83 at the very
2 bottom, the Carolina Heights precinct is split
3 thus cracking an African American community.
4 Moving over to the Breezy Hill precinct. You see
5 the exact same dynamic that's happening in
6 Districts 81 and 84. The Ad Hoc Committee should
7 work very hard to resolve those issues. As it
8 relates to deviation from the ideal, District 82
9 must grow. It's currently outside of the
10 parameters so we ask you to work hard to resolve
11 that deviation. One idea may be to take the
12 southern part of 39 and adjoin it to 82 which may
13 help you to resolve that situation. We'd also
14 like you to take special attention to the valley,
15 the Midland Valley and North Augusta, because
16 those are our growth areas here in Aiken County.
17 And also pay special attention to FCI Edgefield,
18 because that correctional facility, the
19 inhabitants of that facility were counted as part
20 of the population on Census day, but we know with
21 the current voting laws in South Carolina on that
22 day, they will not be allowed the opportunity to
23 vote and that is so unfair on so many levels.
24 So, we ask the Ad Hoc Committee to do your very
25 best to address that issue. And so, finally, due

1 to the participation and the engagement that you
2 see this evening, we'd like for you to continue
3 to keep the public involved in this very
4 important process, because who better than the
5 public can decide that the maps that you draw and
6 propose whether they will or will not allow the
7 population of this community to choose their
8 elected official. We understand the issues.
9 We've been trained in data analysis, and we know
10 how to draw the maps. So continue to bring us
11 around the table as we work through this
12 redistricting issue together. Thank you very
13 much for the opportunity to testify, and we look
14 forward to working with you.

15 MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you for your testimony, Mr.
16 White. Next up, Representative Lonnie -- well,
17 I'm going to at least introduce you then. I was
18 going to do that, but we do want to recognize
19 Representative Lonnie Hosey who's a long-time
20 member of the House. Thank you for being here
21 tonight. Michelle Springstein.

22 MS. SPRINGSTEIN: I'm Michelle Springstein. I reside
23 at 518 Brewer Drive, Aiken, 29803, and I'm
24 speaking on behalf of myself and not the Aiken
25 County Democratic Party. I always thought I

1 lived in a Democratic Republic until that is I
2 moved to South Carolina. I always thought my
3 vote mattered, and I subscribed to the belief of
4 the Constitution's promise of one-man, one-vote.
5 I have since found out that, unlike the other 50
6 states, South Carolina has no law establishing
7 criteria for creating congressional and state
8 legislative districts. Rather, the legislature's
9 main criteria is to make sure incumbents always
10 win their seats. This is why State Legislators
11 are never worried about losing their seats and
12 don't feel accountable to their voters. By
13 gerrymandering their districts, they are, in
14 effect, picking the voters that will keep them in
15 the legislature. I testify as being in House
16 District 86 and Bill Taylor has been many years
17 with no opponent. An article in the state
18 newspaper on February 16th of this year says that
19 South Carolina is ranked in the bottom tenth of
20 the most educated states of all 50. According to
21 world population review, it may not surprise you
22 to note that South Carolina ranks ninth out of
23 the ten states with the lowest life expectancy.
24 Some of the factors considered are gender, access
25 to quality healthcare, diet and nutrition and

1 crime rates. Other statistics for South Carolina
2 include eleventh in the nation in deaths from
3 domestic violence and fourth worst state in the
4 nation for women's equality. Did you know that
5 the 19th Amendment, which gave women the right to
6 vote, was not ratified in South Carolina until 50
7 years later than adopted in 1919? US News ranks
8 South Carolina at 39th in economic opportunity.
9 Factors for that ranking include households
10 living below the poverty line, median income and
11 households with food and security. Those factors
12 indicate more than just lost economic
13 opportunity. They highlight the lost
14 opportunities, stability and health of the
15 population in this state. These results show
16 what decades of gerrymandering have done to this
17 state. When women comprise more than half the
18 population but are disproportionately under
19 represented in this legislature at only 17
20 percent in 2021, then South Carolina is
21 hamstringing its own ability to move into the
22 21st Century with a healthy, educated work force.
23 When incumbents know they will never lose an
24 election, this is what happens. Many legislators
25 have been indicted for corruption in the past ten

1 years since the last redistricting, yet they
2 still have raised lots of campaign cash. A 164
3 out of 170 legislative races in the 2020 election
4 were won by an incumbent. SC House and Senate
5 have different guidelines for redistricting with
6 the only caveat that incumbents win. But I
7 believe the devastating consequences of
8 gerrymandering are more than just these obvious
9 ones. In the middle of a pandemic that already
10 killed over 1000 of us in this state, the
11 legislature spent time enacting laws for guns and
12 against abortion. The legislature seems to care
13 more for unborn fetuses than live school
14 children. They enacted a ban on mask mandates
15 for all schools in the state and refused to
16 reconsider even when the deaths kept mounting.
17 The legislature tried to refuse Federal help for
18 housing, healthcare and jobs for those in the
19 state losing their jobs and their lives. There
20 are those in the legislature even now that say
21 getting the vaccine is a personal choice when
22 they have no problem making sure all school
23 children are routinely vaccinated against
24 measles, mumps, rubella, among other diseases. I
25 believe that gerrymandering is the root cause of

1 this crisis in South Carolina. When votes are
2 suppressed, the legislature is, in effect,
3 passing laws that are not in the interest of the
4 majority of South Carolinians. We need major
5 reform of this redistricting cycle. There are
6 two acts, S750 for the Senate and H4229 for the
7 House that will address gerrymandering and give
8 the power back to the voters to choose their
9 representatives. The Act is called the South
10 Carolina Fairness, Accountability and Integrity
11 in Redistricting Act. Specifically, they
12 establish an Independent Citizens Redistricting
13 Commission of qualified voters chosen like a jury
14 to draw election maps, mandate the state Ethics
15 Commission to oversee the application and
16 qualification process and randomly select members
17 that accurately reflect the geographic and
18 demographic makeup of the state. Mandate the
19 Selection Commission would be independent of
20 direct control or influence of any elected
21 government official, politician or party,
22 including the legislature and governor. Mandate
23 that no one with a conflict of interest could
24 serve in the commission. Mandate some strict
25 criteria that would be followed to insure no

1 political party is given a disproportionate
2 advantage. Mandate that the commission would be
3 provided with the latest technology to accurately
4 and fairly reapportion districts. So, I am
5 challenging each of you to support making the
6 redistricting guidelines the same for House and
7 Senate and making them statutory. I am
8 challenging you to apply redistricting guidelines
9 in a fair, equitable and mandatory manner to
10 insure that all votes have equal weight. Since
11 past redistricting cycles, you have packed and
12 cracked black districts to insure that black
13 votes don't carry equal weight. Let's do it as
14 right, fair and just in this state. Let's
15 support an increase in voter participation and
16 public debate on important state and local
17 issues. All of us voters need to weigh in on
18 mask mandates, vaccines, healthcare jobs and
19 housing. All of us voters should support this
20 fair process regardless of politics and party
21 affiliation. Let's move South Carolina into the
22 21st Century. Thank you.

23 MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Ms. Springstein. I want to
24 make sure that we are technically correct
25 technology-wise. I think that we had a little

1 problem, but I think we're back on track. I'm
2 getting a thumbs up so, great. Ms. Springstein,
3 I'll use you as an example, if you don't mind. I
4 think you had typed out your -- it would be
5 helpful, if you didn't mind, for you to submit
6 those.

7 MS. SPRINGSTEIN: And I have my name and address and
8 email.

9 MR. CHAIRMAN: Perfect. And everyone else that
10 wishes to do that, that would be helpful for the
11 committee in compiling the record of what we've
12 heard tonight, so. All right. Next, Karen Sisk.

13 MS. SISK: Hello.

14 MR. CHAIRMAN: Hello.

15 MS. SISK: I'm Karen Sisk. I reside at 4189 Snaffle
16 Bit Drive here in Aiken, and I'm very happy to be
17 before this committee today. It's an honor and a
18 privilege, and I'm here as a private citizen and
19 a representative of the League of Women Voters of
20 Columbia. We're the largest -- one of the
21 largest of the ten leagues here in South Carolina
22 all of which support the non-partisan
23 redistricting commission that has already been
24 ruled out and yet we persist. We persist because
25 in order for democracy to flourish, lines must be

1 drawn by people not by candidates. Because you
2 have and will hear the same suggestions from all
3 members of the audience and you already have
4 heard that I want to offer some of my own
5 thoughts to the committee about me personally.
6 First, why did a little old lady who moved to
7 Aiken to retire here with her husband of 50 years
8 and her two horses and her two cats just to ride
9 those horses, jump back into political life with
10 the league? Well, why did I do that? I had the
11 privilege and the time and the right to right
12 some wrongs here, and I had the time to do it
13 with the League of Women Voters, a non-partisan
14 organization and here is a fight that I'm willing
15 to take on, because it affected me personally.
16 And I want to tell you about those ways that it
17 affected me here in Aiken much in the same way
18 that you've heard from a lot of the members of
19 the audience. First, most elections here in
20 South Carolina are decided either in the primary
21 or they're unopposed. That's really, really
22 frustrating to me. Second, my elected
23 representatives have not really appeared that
24 interested in my views or opinions and have not
25 really been that available to me. You know, just

1 today I was looking on Facebook, and there was
2 this meme that said, it was really cute, it said,
3 what has ears but doesn't listen? Okay. Well,
4 everybody knows, I mean, if you taught school
5 like I did, that the answer is corn. Right? But
6 some smart wit had written on there, my elected
7 representatives. Well, that made me really,
8 really sad, as it should make everybody in this
9 room, because, you know, that's what the league
10 does. We're all about getting everybody to
11 participate, and I know that's what you're all
12 about, because we're all working on this
13 together, and that's what everybody in this room
14 is all about. We're all really trying to make
15 this happen, and that's what I'm really all about
16 here. And then third, my ability to vote has
17 been curtailed by election laws and parameters in
18 ways unlike anyplace I've ever lived, and I've
19 been really the beneficiary of a wonderful life.
20 I've been a military child and wife, and so, I've
21 lived all over the country and all over the
22 world. And everywhere that I've lived, it's been
23 easier to vote than in South Carolina, and it's
24 getting worse not better. So, I just wanted to
25 point that out. And number four, I've been

1 denied committee and commission posts and seen
2 far less qualified people appointed to those even
3 though I'm a non-partisan kind of person. And I
4 can't really figure that out, because I've lived
5 again a lot of other places and been very active
6 in my communities, but it seems like, and this
7 has gotten worse and it's not anybody's fault,
8 but in the last few years, things, as you know,
9 have gotten much more polarized and labeled. So,
10 you know, I want that to change as all of us do.
11 So, I found myself becoming more and more
12 involved and getting off my horses and into the
13 fray. Right? So, how do we, in the League of
14 Women Voters, arrive at the stands that we take?
15 Well, we do several things. First, we study.
16 That's really important. We do a lot of
17 studying. Then we come together and we discuss.
18 And the final thing we do is we arrive at a
19 consensus. Now, we've done this for 101 years.
20 You heard Michelle say something about the
21 Amendment in 1919 for women's right to vote, and
22 that's where the League of Women Voters comes out
23 of. And we've won a lot of lawsuits over the
24 years to increase people's abilities to be able
25 to vote, and we're going to win a lot more. We

1 persist. That's what we do. We do it to promote
2 good governance. That's what we're all about.
3 And you are all completely educated, the people
4 in this room, and all of you committee members in
5 the best practices of redistricting. I don't
6 have to tell you all about those things. You
7 know what you should be deciding. You know who
8 should be deciding those lines, protecting the
9 incumbencies is wrong and yet you do it. It
10 doesn't matter whether you're in one party or the
11 other. Everyone does it. Both parties do it
12 consistently and religiously, but it's time to
13 break that habit. The more people who can become
14 involved in our process, the stronger our
15 democracy will be. I ask you to make it possible
16 for all people by drawing lines that include for
17 the advice and consent of the minority and not
18 just the majority to be involved. We need that
19 non-partisan commission that everyone in this
20 room has been talking about. This is a paradise
21 of a state, and it needs to be protected from
22 itself by forming a set of checks and balances
23 that keeps all elected officials aware of their
24 constituencies in all of their many needs and
25 variants. I know this is a big ask, and the

1 political climate is all wrong. However, I also
2 have learned that South Carolina is so special in
3 many ways, and I believe that it can happen.
4 Now, I sit there every day on that beautiful
5 porch of mine and I watch my horses graze, and I
6 believe that all women and men deserve the chance
7 at that good life that I have been privileged to
8 have here, and that is why I work for all of us,
9 and I hope you will, too, by creating fair
10 districts. Thanks for listening.

11 MR. CHAIRMAN: Next up, Nancy Desisto.

12 MS. DESISTO: Good evening. My name is Nancy
13 Desisto. I live at 1597 Gray Mare Hollow Road in
14 Aiken. I am grateful to all of you for your
15 service and so grateful for you all being here
16 tonight. Respectfully, South Carolina, maybe
17 I'll put on my glasses, South Carolina is the
18 only state with no laws or constitutional
19 provisions to even set redistricting criteria.
20 The House and Senate have different guidelines,
21 neither of which they are required to follow.
22 With no oversight, there is no accountability.
23 No accountability allows incumbents to cherry
24 pick the whitest, wealthiest voters to insure
25 they win and keep their gravy train going. South

1 Carolina elections are among the nation's least
2 competitive. Non-competitive elections breed
3 corruption. The vast majority of over 170
4 legislative elections were won with no
5 opposition. Legislators who have been indicted
6 for corruption continue to raise lots of money
7 and keep their jobs because there is no
8 opposition. This cycle, the first one since the
9 year 1900, allows the district lines to be
10 approved before citizens can protest racially
11 discriminatory maps. We're going back to the
12 year 1900. South Carolina has pending
13 legislation and a Constitutional Amendment to
14 create a Citizens Redistricting Commission. I am
15 asking you to make House and Senate guidelines
16 the same. The Fair Act Legislation would change
17 current guidelines into laws. The process should
18 not begin until there are clear laws governing
19 the process which the House and Senate must
20 follow. Thank you for your time.

21 MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you. Shannon Chandler.

22 MS. CHANDLER: Good evening. My name is Shannon
23 Chandler. I reside at 264 Summercreek Drive,
24 Graniteville, South Carolina. I'm here this
25 evening representing the Aiken Alumni Chapter of

1 Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Incorporated. Delta
2 Sigma Theta has been committed to service through
3 social actions since our founding in 1913. Our
4 22 founders participated in the suffrage march of
5 1913 just two months after establishing the
6 sorority, and our members have been at the
7 forefront of social and political struggles ever
8 since. The central purpose of the Equal
9 Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment is
10 the prevention of official conduct discriminating
11 on the basis of race resulting in intentional
12 discrimination. The Reconstruction Congress
13 framed this provision so that the public policy
14 does not discriminate against citizens who are
15 entitled to full and equal enjoyment of rights.
16 Intentional discrimination, whether based on race
17 or other specific legal categories, violates this
18 principle. Although evidence of discriminatory
19 impact is relevant, it is not the touchstone of
20 the kind of discrimination forbidden by the
21 Constitution. Standing alone, it does not prove
22 a violation of the law. Instead the law or
23 official act must reflect an unjustified purpose
24 to classify people based upon race for a
25 plaintiff to find relief. In 1962, the United

1 States Supreme Court concluded in Baker v. Carr
2 that the unequal districts resulting from the
3 Tennessee legislative refusal to reapportion its
4 seats in the face of large population shifts gave
5 rise to a lawsuit under the equal protection
6 clause. A year later, the Court establishes
7 basic standard in Gray v. Sanders. The
8 conception of political equality from the
9 Declaration of Independence to Lincoln's
10 Gettysburg Address to the Fifteenth, Seventeenth
11 and Nineteenth Amendments can mean only one
12 thing: One-person, one-vote. Subsequently, the
13 Supreme Court determined that an individual's
14 right to vote for state legislators is
15 unconstitutionally impaired when its weight is in
16 a substantial fashion, diluted when compared with
17 votes of citizens living in other parts of the
18 state. We ask that the sub-committee, I'm sorry,
19 we ask that the committee recognize the existence
20 of racial polarization here in Aiken County, and
21 that voters of different racial or ethnic
22 backgrounds exercise distinct candidate
23 preferences in election -- in elections. It
24 means simply that voters of different groups are
25 voting in opposite directions rather than in a

1 coalition. Voting is polarized when the
2 political preferences of majority race and
3 minority race voters diverse substantially and
4 the racial majority votes with enough cohesion to
5 usually defeat the minority's candidates of
6 choice. These points are defined as preference
7 polarization in voting power requirements. We
8 recommend the following to the committee: Comply
9 with the Fourteenth Amendment and not drawing
10 districts based solely or predominately on race
11 except to comply with a compelling state interest
12 and then those districts must be narrowly
13 tailored to achieve that compliance. Two, comply
14 with the Voting Rights Act by not drawing
15 districts which dilute the opportunity of
16 minority voters to elect candidates of their
17 choice. Three, develop reasonably compact
18 districts and avoid strangely shaped districts to
19 dilute the vote giving advantage to a particular
20 part or to protect an incumbent. Four, avoid
21 drawing for partisan advantage by drawing other
22 party's voters into packed districts often based
23 on race or splitting concentrations of other
24 party's voters in cracked districts. We'd also
25 ask that you consider protecting incumbents by,

1 number one, insuring that incumbents, as much as
2 possible, aren't drawn into the same districts.
3 Number two, preserve cores of existing districts
4 which favors incumbents. Number three, allow
5 incumbents to draw potential opponents out of
6 their districts, and, number four, allow
7 incumbents to participate in drawing their own
8 districts. Thank you.

9 MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you, Ms. Chandler. So, I have a
10 lot of folks who signed in and did not indicate
11 if they wish to speak or not. Let's do it this
12 way. Was there anyone who signed in and wished
13 to speak but has not been called yet? All right.
14 Well, a few other issues real quick. Again,
15 thank y'all so much for coming out. Again, if
16 you have written testimony, please submit it to
17 us so that we can make it part of the record.
18 Thank you to the committee. As always, I look
19 across the table, and I see you either intently
20 listening or taking notes. I want to thank you
21 for that. Pat, I think you win tonight.

22 MR. HENNIGAN: I am the farthest away. I checked on
23 Bluffton and trust me I was pulling for you but -
24 -

25 MR. CHAIRMAN: Neal beat you

1 PAT: -- yeah, I was about 20 miles. I would much
2 rather he win the award.

3 MR. CHAIRMAN: Well, you win tonight for farthest
4 away, I believe. Next up, we will be, as I said
5 in the beginning of the meeting, we'll be going
6 to Greenwood tomorrow night at 6:00 o'clock.
7 Followed by Orangeburg on the 22nd at 6:00
8 o'clock and then, of course, as I stated earlier
9 in the meeting, we're going to have a meeting in
10 Columbia on September 28th. That will be at
11 4:30. That will be for a couple of reasons.
12 First off, I'm hopeful the committee will
13 consider the map room procedures we'll put in
14 front of y'all at that time, and as the public
15 input period, as we grow closer to the end of
16 that, we get closer to the opening of the actual
17 map room so that the mapping process can begin.
18 So, hopefully, we can review the procedures on
19 the 28th as well as another public input period.
20 And I'll say to the members of the audience
21 tonight, if you know someone that, for some
22 reason, whatever it may be, health or just had
23 something else going on tonight, wanted to be
24 here, wanted the opportunity to present to the
25 committee but couldn't, either that September

1 28th as well as the October 4th at 4:30 are
2 virtual opportunities and we'll be taking
3 testimony by way of Microsoft teams. So, I would
4 encourage you to make those folks that perhaps
5 wanted to be here tonight but couldn't be here
6 tonight. So, with that, that'll be the final
7 word. We are adjourned until we meet again
8 tomorrow night. Thank you, ladies and gentlemen.

9 (End of Recording.)

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STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA)
) CERTIFICATE
COUNTY OF LEXINGTON)

I, the undersigned, Barbara S. Ham, Notary Public in and for the State of South Carolina, do hereby certify that a digital recording was provided to me by Garber Reporting Service;

That the foregoing was transcribed by me, to the best of my ability.

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

In witness whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and seal this 1st day of October, 2021.

Barbara S. Ham

Barbara S. Ham
Notary Public for South Carolina
My Commission Expires: 04/13/2026

1	<p>2010 4:16</p> <p>2011 5:18</p> <p>2013 5:11</p> <p>2018 10:22</p> <p>2020 6:4 24:3</p> <p>2021 23:20</p> <p>2057 9:19</p> <p>21st 23:22 26:22</p> <p>22 34:4</p> <p>22nd 38:7</p> <p>25 10:21</p> <p>26 10:24</p> <p>264 33:23</p> <p>28th 4:2 38:10,19 39:1</p> <p>29201 9:9</p> <p>29803 21:23</p>	<p>20:12</p> <p>39th 23:8</p> <p style="text-align: center;">4</p> <p>40229 11:25</p> <p>4189 27:15</p> <p>44 10:25</p> <p>45 11:3</p> <p>4:30 4:2,3 38:11 39:1</p> <p>4th 4:3 39:1</p> <p style="text-align: center;">5</p> <p>50 22:5,20 23:6 28:7</p> <p>501(c)(3) 14:10</p> <p>512 9:8</p> <p>518 21:23</p> <p>55/45 12:2</p> <p style="text-align: center;">6</p> <p>60/40 12:2</p> <p>65/35 12:6</p> <p>6:00 38:6,7</p>	7	<p>750 11:25</p> <p style="text-align: center;">8</p> <p>80 11:2</p> <p>81 9:20 10:21 14:5 17:14 20:6</p> <p>82 19:21 20:8,12</p> <p>83 17:14 20:1</p> <p>84 17:14 20:6</p> <p>86 22:16</p> <p>8th 3:19</p> <p style="text-align: center;">A</p> <p>abilities 30:24</p> <p>ability 23:21 29:16</p> <p>abortion 24:12</p> <p>accepted 19:4</p> <p>access 22:24</p> <p>accommodate 4:15</p> <p>accountability 10:13 11:12 13:21 25:10 32:22,23</p>	<p>accountable 16:21 22:12</p> <p>accurately 25:17 26:3</p> <p>achieve 36:13</p> <p>act 5:12 14:22 25:9, 11 33:16 34:23 36:14</p> <p>actions 34:3</p> <p>active 30:5</p> <p>acts 25:6</p> <p>actual 38:16</p> <p>Ad 18:3,16 19:7,15 20:6,24</p> <p>add 4:1 12:25</p> <p>addition 19:22</p> <p>address 8:2 9:2 18:20 20:25 25:7 27:7 35:10</p> <p>adjoin 20:12</p> <p>adjoining 19:17</p> <p>adjourned 39:7</p> <p>adopt 5:1,3 7:5</p> <p>adopted 7:2 23:7</p> <p>advance 8:8</p>
2	3				
<p>2 14:5,21 17:13 19:12,19</p> <p>20 38:1</p>	<p>35 11:3</p> <p>36 10:2</p> <p>39</p>				

advanced 5:6	American 19:25 20:3	arrive 30:14,18	12:9	benefit 5:16
advantage 26:2 36:19,21	Americans 14:12	article 22:17	balances 31:22	Bernstein 3:13
advice 31:17	analysis 21:9	Assembly 12:12	ballot 10:7	Beth 3:13
affected 5:25 28:15,17	Ann 9:17,19	assures 7:6	ballots 11:2	big 31:25
affiliation 26:21	anti- 11:10	at-large 18:22	Bamberg 3:7,8	Bill 22:16
affirmance 5:20	anybody's 30:7	attend 10:11	ban 24:14	bills 13:9
African 14:12 19:24,25 20:3	anyplace 29:18	attention 20:14,17	based 11:16 18:14 19:3 34:16,24 36:10,22	bit 6:9 27:16
ahead 3:25 6:9	appeared 28:23	audience 28:3,19 38:20	basic 35:7	black 26:12
Aiken 3:2,9 9:20,23 10:2 11:1 12:6, 20 13:1,4 14:6 15:11 17:10,16 19:23 20:16 21:23,24 27:16 28:7,17 32:14 33:25 35:20	appearing 8:5	August 6:7	basically 11:6	blacks 14:11
aisle 3:6	applicable 19:11	Augusta 13:4 20:15	basis 34:11	blank 10:6
alliance 14:11	application 25:15	authoritarian 11:19	batter 9:17	Blatt 9:8
allowed 20:22	applied 7:9	autopilot 11:6	Beach 3:18	blocked 10:9
allowing 18:19	apply 26:8	avoid 36:18,20	beat 37:25	Bluffton 3:12,20 37:23
Alumni 33:25	appointed 30:2	award 38:2	beautiful 3:21 32:4	Board 15:11,12,13
Amendment 14:19 23:5 30:21 33:13 34:9 36:9	approval 5:5	aware 31:23	begin 6:17 18:10 33:18 38:17	body 15:8
Amendments 35:11	approved 5:17 33:10	<hr/> B <hr/>	beginning 38:5	border 12:22
	approximately 19:2	back 16:18 25:8 27:1 28:9 33:11	behalf 8:4,5 21:24	bottom 20:2 22:19
	areas 20:16	backgrounds 16:2 35:22	belief 22:3	boundaries 16:4 18:18
	aren't 37:2	Baker 35:1	beneficiary 29:19	box 9:4
	arises 10:16	balance		branch 17:10,16

break 31:13	19,22 23:1,6,8, 20 25:1,10	challenge 5:18	citizens 11:21 13:8 17:1	26:2 27:23 30:1 31:19 33:14
breed 33:2	26:21 27:21	challenging 26:5,8	25:12 33:10,14 34:14 35:17	committed 34:2
Breezy 20:4	32:2,16,17 33:1, 12,24	chance 11:13 32:6	civil 11:15	committee 3:5 4:13,20,25
Brewer 21:23	Carolina's 7:6	Chandler 33:21,22,23 37:9	classify 34:24	5:1,4 6:7 7:1,5, 13 8:11,13,23
bring 21:10	Carolinians 25:4	change 30:10 33:16	clause 14:18 18:25 34:9 35:6	18:3,16 19:8,15 20:6,24 27:11, 17 28:5 30:1
buddies 16:25	Carr 35:1	Chapter 33:25	clear 7:22 33:18	31:4 35:19 36:8 37:18 38:12,25
Building 9:8	carry 26:13	charity 14:9	clearance 5:7	common 12:21 18:12
Bureau 6:2,8	case 13:17	checked 37:22	climate 32:1	commonality 7:19
<hr/> C <hr/>				
call 13:20	cash 24:2	checks 31:22	close 18:8	communities 6:25 7:15 12:17 18:6,16,20 19:11 30:6
called 7:25 25:9 37:13	cast 11:2	cherry 32:23	closer 38:15,16	community 7:18 16:4 18:5, 10,13 19:24,25 20:3 21:7
calls 18:24	categories 34:17	chief 9:13	coalition 36:1	compact 12:16 36:17
campaign 10:11 24:2	cats 28:8	child 29:20	cohesion 36:4	compared 35:16
candidate 10:11 35:22	caveat 24:6	children 24:14,23	colleague 18:2	compelling 36:11
candidates 10:8 18:14 28:1 36:5,16	Census 4:17 6:2,4,8 20:20	choice 15:1 18:22 24:21 36:6,17	collection 18:11	competitive 10:23 12:10,16 13:11 33:2
can't 10:17 30:4	central 34:8	choices 11:5	College 15:13	compiling 27:11
care 24:12	Century 23:22 26:22	choose 21:7 25:8	Collins 3:9	completely 19:5 31:3
Carolina 3:8,12 4:10,16, 25 6:6,22 7:14 9:9 13:8 14:6,9 16:14 17:12 20:2,21 22:2,6,	Chair 9:23	chosen 25:13	Columbia 3:13 4:2,4 9:9 27:20 38:10	compliance 36:13
	CHAIRMAN 3:1 13:25 14:2 17:8 21:15 26:23 27:9,14 32:11 33:21 37:9,25 38:3	Christian 15:20	comment 8:14	comply 36:8,11,13
		citizen 13:22 27:18	commission 11:24 13:10 25:13,15,19,24	

comprehensive 18:4	constituencies 31:24	couldn't 38:25 39:5	Cuba 11:19	21:5
comprise 23:17	constituents 7:14	Council 12:8	cultural 7:17	decided 28:20
compromise 11:13	Constitution 18:25 34:21	Counsel 9:14	culture 16:3	deciding 31:7,8
concentrations 36:23	constitutional 10:15 32:18	counted 20:19	current 19:13 20:21	decision 15:9,10 16:19
conception 35:8	33:13	counties 12:21 13:1,2	33:17	decisions 16:24
concern 18:5 19:20	Constitution's 22:4	18:18	curtailed 29:17	Declaration 35:9
concerns 6:24 8:11 18:12	contestant 9:16	country 6:1 19:4 29:21	cute 29:2	defeat 36:5
concluded 35:1	contestants 13:15	county 9:23 11:1 12:6,	cycle 5:9 12:9 25:5	define 7:15
conduct 34:10	contested 10:23 13:13	8,19,23 13:4	33:8	defined 18:11 36:6
conflict 25:23	contests 11:9	15:11 17:10,16	cycles 5:4,22 7:1 26:11	delayed 6:3
Congress 34:12	context 7:17	19:23 20:16	<hr/> D <hr/>	delegation 12:5,8
congressional 4:24 9:22 11:23	continue 21:2,10 33:6	21:25 35:20	data 6:4,9,15 19:13	Delta 17:24 34:1
12:5,20 13:6	continued 5:10	Court 5:11 35:1,6,13	21:9	demand 13:23
14:5 17:13	control 25:20	cracked 19:25 26:12	day 20:20,22 32:4	democracy 27:25 31:15
19:12 22:7	cores 37:3	36:24	deal 15:14	Democrat 11:4 12:3,4,7
connection 13:5	corn 29:5	cracking 15:2 20:3	Dean 9:12	Democratic 9:23 10:14
connections 7:19	Coronavirus 5:25	create 19:10 33:14	deaths 23:2 24:16	11:11,21 12:13
consensus 30:19	correct 26:24	creating 22:7 32:9	debate 26:16	13:23 21:25
consent 31:17	correctional 20:18	crime 18:23 23:1	debates 10:11	22:1
consequences 24:7	corruption 11:13 23:25	crisis 25:1	decade 5:8	demographic 25:18
considered 22:24	33:3,6	criteria 7:2 22:7,9 25:25	decades 23:16	denied 30:1
consistently 31:12		32:19	decide	denies 11:15
		crowd 3:15 8:19		

deny 14:23	dilute 36:15,19	district 5:20 6:20 7:4,10	36:9,14,21 37:7	electing 16:1
Department 5:8,17	diluted 35:16	8:2 9:20,22	drawn 5:21 11:23 28:1	election 10:3 23:24 24:3
describe 7:18	direct 25:20	10:21 12:18,20, 25 13:7 14:4,5,	37:2	25:14 29:17
deserve 32:6	directions 35:25	23 17:13,14	Drive 21:23 27:16	35:23
desiring 7:23	directive 7:12	19:12,19,21	33:23	elections 11:8,17,18 12:3,
Desisto 32:11,12,13	directly 9:7	20:1,8 22:16	due 6:1 10:19 20:25	15 13:14 28:19
destruction 15:22 16:23	discriminate 34:14	33:9	dynamic 20:5	33:1,2,4 35:23
19:9	discriminating 34:10	districts 4:14 6:21 7:7	<hr/>	eleventh 23:2
determined 35:13	discrimination 14:17 34:12,16, 20	8:2 11:23 12:16	E	Elliott 3:14
devastating 24:7	discriminatory 33:11 34:18	13:11 19:1,9,17, 19,23 20:6 22:8,	<hr/>	email 27:8
develop 36:17	discuss 3:3 30:17	13 26:4,12	earlier 38:8	emailed 9:5
development 7:3	discussion 17:20	32:10 35:2	early 6:7	embarrassing 12:13
deviation 19:14,16,18	diseases 24:24	36:10,12,15,18, 22,24 37:2,3,6,8	ears 29:3	Emma 9:12
20:8,11	disenfranchised 10:1 14:15 16:6	diverse 36:3	easier 29:23	emphasis 12:15
deviations 19:17	disgusting 12:13	divided 20:1	economic 23:8,12	enacted 24:14
Dibble 9:19	disproportionate 26:1	document 9:1	Edgefield 12:25 13:2,3	enacting 24:11
didn't 27:5	disproportionate 23:18	documentation 8:23	20:17	encourage 15:23 39:4
diet 22:25	distinct 35:22	doesn't 29:3 31:10	educated 22:20 23:22	end 15:22 16:22
difference 5:21 10:24		domestic 23:3	31:3	18:3 38:15 39:9
difficult 11:14		Donna 13:25 14:3	Education 15:11	engage 6:11
digest 6:15		don't 8:18,19 10:10	effect 22:14 25:2	engagement 21:1
		12:18 22:12	elect 14:25 36:16	engaging 15:2
		26:13 27:3 31:5	elected 13:13,15,19	enjoyment 34:15
		draw 13:10 21:5,10	15:11,23 16:11	
		25:14 37:5	21:8 25:20	
		drawing 6:18 13:6 15:3	28:22 29:6	
		16:16 31:16	31:23	

entitled 14:8 34:15	10:4	fairly 14:8 26:4	finally 18:8 20:25	founding 34:3
equal 7:7,11 14:18,23 18:24 19:5 26:10,13 34:8, 15 35:5	excited 3:16	Fairness 25:10	find 34:25	Fourteenth 14:19 34:9 36:9
equality 23:4 35:8	exemplary 11:20	fame 16:8	flat 11:16	fourth 23:3
equitable 26:9	exempt 14:10	fanfare 3:7	flourish 27:25	framed 34:13
espouse 11:21	exercise 35:22	farthest 37:22 38:3	FM 15:14	fray 30:13
establish 25:12	existence 35:19	fashion 35:16	folks 3:1 8:17 37:10 39:4	free 12:14
establishes 35:6	existing 37:3	fault 30:7	follow 32:21 33:20	friend 3:7,10
establishing 22:6 34:5	expand 16:5	favours 37:4	food 23:11	friends 16:25
Ethics 25:14	expect 13:23	FCI 20:17	forbidden 34:20	front 38:14
ethnic 35:21	expectancy 22:23	February 22:18	force 23:22	frustrating 28:22
Eugene 17:8,9,15	express 8:10	Federal 5:13,19 24:17	forefront 34:7	full 4:20 5:2 34:15
evading 17:4	extent 10:16	feel 22:12	forgot 9:12	fundamental 7:4
evening 3:17 8:21 9:16 14:1,2,7 17:9, 15,18 21:2 32:12 33:22,25	extreme 11:14	fees 10:10	forming 31:22	<hr/> G <hr/>
evidence 34:18	extremely 6:3	felt 17:19	formulate 4:18	gains 5:5
evolve 5:10	<hr/> F <hr/>	fetuses 24:13	fortune 16:8	gave 23:5 35:4
exact 20:5	face 35:4	Fifteenth 35:10	forum 8:9	gears 18:23
examples 19:24	Facebook 29:1	fight 19:8 28:14	forums 10:11	gender 22:24
exception	facility 20:18,19	figure 30:4	forward 21:14	General 12:12
	factors 22:24 23:9,11	filing 10:10	found 22:5 30:11	generally 19:4
	fair 12:1,14 26:9,14, 20 32:9 33:16	final 4:3 6:9,15 30:18 39:6	founders 34:4	gentlemen 39:8

gentrification 18:22	33:24		helpful 27:5,10	21:20 22:15 24:4 25:7 26:6 32:20 33:15,19
geographic 25:17	granted 13:16	<hr/> H <hr/>	helping 9:15	households 23:9,11
gerrymandering 10:19 14:19 16:16 22:13 23:16 24:8,25 25:7	grateful 32:14,15	H4229 25:6	Hennigan 3:10 37:22	housekeeping 4:6
Gettysburg 35:10	gravy 32:25	habit 31:13	high 17:5	housing 10:16 24:18 26:19
gifts 14:13	Gray 32:13 35:7	half 23:17	highlight 23:13	huge 8:19
give 25:7	graze 32:5	hamstringing 23:21	Hill 20:4	human 11:15
giving 8:20 36:19	great 27:2	happen 29:15 32:3	historical 7:17	Hungary 11:20
glasses 32:17	greatly 5:25	happening 20:5	Hoc 18:3,16 19:7,15 20:6,24	husband 28:7
goal 7:5	greed 16:9	happy 6:12 8:24 27:16	Hollow 32:13	<hr/> I <hr/>
goals 18:13	Greenville 3:14	hard 20:7,10	honor 27:17	idea 20:11
God 15:18 16:21	Greenwood 3:23 38:6	hate 11:16	hope 32:9	ideal 19:14 20:8
good 3:1,7,10 14:1,2 15:4 17:9,15 31:2 32:7,12 33:22	group 8:4,6	health 23:14 38:22	hopeful 38:12	identified 8:25
gospel 15:14	groups 35:24	healthcare 22:25 24:18 26:18	horses 28:8,9 30:12 32:5	identify 7:15 8:4
governance 31:2	grow 20:9 38:15	healthy 23:22	Hosey 21:19	ideologies 11:16
governing 33:18	growth 4:15 20:16	hear 7:13 28:2	Hospital 15:12	impact 34:19
government 11:10 25:21	Gubernatorial 12:3	heard 15:7 18:1 27:12 28:4,18 30:20	hosted 3:21	impacted 6:5
governor 25:22	guidelines 24:5 26:6,8 32:20 33:15,17	hearing 7:20 9:14,18	House 4:19,20 5:2,5 6:11,14,19,23 7:5 9:7,14,20 10:20 11:25 12:7 13:2 14:4 17:13,14 19:19	impaired 35:15
Graniteville	guideposts 7:3	hearings 4:8,12		important 3:4 4:8 7:12,16 17:21 21:4 26:16 30:16
	guns 24:11	Heights 20:2		
		held 10:22 11:18		

improve 14:13	information 8:9	involved 21:3 30:12	14	latest 26:3
include 8:24 23:2,9 31:16	informed 11:7	31:14,18	jump 28:9	law 5:9 17:4,6 22:6 34:22
including 25:22	ingredient 4:22	issue 3:4 17:21 20:25 21:12	jurisdictional 18:18	laws 20:21 24:11 25:3 29:17 32:18 33:17,18
income 23:10	ingredients 4:9	issues 4:6 6:24 8:11 10:17 11:14 18:4,21 19:20 20:7 21:8 26:17 37:14	jury 25:13	lawsuit 35:5
Incorporated 17:25 34:1	inhabitants 20:19	it's 20:9 27:17 29:22,23 30:7 31:12	Justice 5:7,17	lawsuits 30:23
increase 26:15 30:24	input 4:13,17 6:20,24 7:16 8:10 38:15, 19	I'll 3:17,25 27:3 32:17 38:20	Justin 3:7	lead 11:12,14 16:23
incumbencies 31:9	insight 4:14	I'm 9:24 16:20 17:12,15 18:5 21:17,22,23 27:1,15,16,18 28:14 29:15 30:3 33:24 35:18 38:12	<hr/> K <hr/>	leads 15:22
incumbent 16:17 24:4 36:20	insubstantial 4:23	I've 4:10 10:2 29:18, 20,22,25 30:4	Karen 27:12,15	league 17:23 27:19 28:10,13 29:9 30:13,22
incumbents 10:8 18:15 22:9 23:23 24:6 32:23 36:25 37:1,4,5,7	insure 8:25 25:25 26:10,12 32:24	<hr/> J <hr/>	key 4:9,21	leagues 27:21
Independence 35:9	insuring 6:21 37:1	Jason 3:14	killed 24:10	learned 32:2
independent 25:12,19	Integrity 25:10	job 13:16	kind 30:3 34:20	leave 8:22 10:5
indicted 23:25 33:5	intentional 10:19 34:11,16	jobs 16:15 24:18,19 26:18 33:7	knew 3:8	legal 9:14 34:17
indispensable 6:21	intently 37:19	Judiciary 4:19,25 5:3 9:7,	knowing 15:16	legislation 11:15 33:13,16
individual 9:24	interest 8:6 12:17 17:1 18:7,11,13,17, 20,21 19:11 25:3,23 36:11		<hr/> L <hr/>	legislative 4:8,24 7:7 18:12 19:1 22:8 24:3 33:4 35:3
individuals 18:12	interested 11:7 28:24		labeled 30:9	legislators 22:10 23:24 33:5 35:14
individual's 35:13	interests 16:2		lack 11:12	legislature 22:15 23:19 24:11,12,17,20 25:2,22
inequalities 14:16	introduce 3:5 8:1 9:12 21:17		ladies 39:8	
influence 25:20			lady 28:6	
			large 35:4	
			largest 27:20,21	

legislature's 22:8	5:19	9:6	33:11	31:4 34:6 38:20
lend 15:4	live 9:19 24:13 32:13	mailing 9:1	march 34:4	meme 29:2
let's 4:5 18:10 26:13, 14,21 37:11	lived 10:2 22:1 29:18, 21,22 30:4	main 22:9	Mare 32:13	men 32:6
level 17:5	lives 14:14 24:19	major 25:4	margin 12:11	mentioned 6:6
levels 20:23	living 23:10 35:17	majority 10:6 19:21 25:4 31:18 33:3 36:2, 4	marginalized 14:15	mentioning 5:23
leverage 14:12	local 11:8 26:16	make 8:7,13 9:21 13:17 15:9 16:20,23 22:9 26:24 29:8,14 31:15 33:15 37:17 39:4	Marlboro 3:11	met 3:15
life 22:23 28:9 29:19 32:7	long 13:20	makes 11:17	mask 24:14 26:18	Michelle 21:21,22 30:20
likes 9:13	long-time 21:19	makeup 25:18	matter 7:20 31:10	microphone 8:1
limit 8:15	longer 5:6,14	making 3:2 24:22 26:5,7	mattered 22:3	Microsoft 39:3
limited 8:17	Lonnie 21:16,19	man 15:21 16:22	maximize 8:15	middle 24:9
limits 14:19 15:25	lose 23:23	mandate 25:14,18,22,24 26:2	means 10:7 35:24	Midland 20:15
Lincoln's 35:9	losing 22:11 24:19	mandates 24:14 26:18	measles 24:24	miles 38:1
lines 4:24 5:20 6:20 7:4 12:18 13:7 14:23 15:3 16:16 27:25 31:8,16 33:9	lost 23:12,13	mandatory 26:9	media 12:23	military 29:20
list 18:4	lot 10:5 11:17 28:18 30:5,16, 23,25 37:10	map 6:11 38:13,17	median 23:10	mind 27:3,5
listen 29:3	lots 24:2 33:6	mapping 6:18 38:17	meet 39:7	mine 32:5
listening 32:10 37:20	lowest 22:23	maps 21:5,10 25:14	meeting 3:18,19 4:1,3 6:7 38:5,9	minorities 16:1
literally 3:6	<hr/> M <hr/>		meetings 3:22 4:4 15:7	minority 11:11 14:23 19:9,21 31:17 36:3,16
litigation	made 7:21 15:10 29:7		member 21:20	minority's 36:5
	mail		members 3:5 4:12 8:13 25:16 28:3,18	minutes 8:17
				Monday 14:7

<p>money 33:6</p> <p>months 34:5</p> <p>Moore 14:3</p> <p>morality 15:10,15</p> <p>motions 10:5</p> <p>mounting 24:16</p> <p>move 23:21 26:21</p> <p>moved 22:2 28:6</p> <p>Moving 20:4</p> <p>mumps 24:24</p> <p>municipal 11:23</p> <p>municipalities 18:19</p> <p>Myrtle 3:18</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">N</p> <hr/> <p>NAACP 17:11,16</p> <p>Nancy 32:11,12</p> <p>narrowly 36:12</p> <p>nation 23:2,4</p> <p>nation's 33:1</p> <p>Neal 37:25</p>	<p>neighborhoods 6:25</p> <p>Neil 3:9</p> <p>News 23:7</p> <p>newspaper 22:18</p> <p>Newton 3:11,20</p> <p>nicest 3:15</p> <p>night 3:24 15:16 38:6 39:8</p> <p>Nineteenth 35:11</p> <p>ninth 22:22</p> <p>Non-competitive 33:2</p> <p>non-partisan 11:24 13:10 27:22 28:13 30:3 31:19</p> <p>non-political 10:17</p> <p>North 13:4 20:15</p> <p>note 22:22</p> <p>notes 9:2 37:20</p> <p>number 19:20 29:25 37:1,3,4,6</p> <p>nutrition 22:25</p>	<hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">O</p> <hr/> <p>obligations 5:15</p> <p>obvious 24:8</p> <p>occasionally 8:13</p> <p>October 4:3 39:1</p> <p>offer 28:4</p> <p>office 13:11 16:19</p> <p>offices 10:6</p> <p>official 21:8 25:21 34:10,23</p> <p>officials 13:13,15 15:23 16:11 31:23</p> <p>one- 7:8</p> <p>one-man 22:4</p> <p>one-person 18:7,23 35:12</p> <p>one-vote 18:7,24 22:4 35:12</p> <p>open 13:12</p> <p>opening 38:16</p> <p>opinions 28:24</p> <p>opponent 22:17</p> <p>opponents 37:5</p>	<p>opportunities 4:5 23:14 39:2</p> <p>opportunity 8:20 14:24 16:5 17:2,17 19:9 20:22 21:13 23:8,13 36:15 38:24</p> <p>opposite 35:25</p> <p>opposition 13:19,20 33:5,8</p> <p>Orangeburg 3:24 12:19,20, 24 38:7</p> <p>order 4:15 7:22 27:25</p> <p>organization 8:7 14:8,10 28:14</p> <p>outcome 10:25</p> <p>outweighs 19:7</p> <p>oversee 25:15</p> <p>oversight 32:22</p> <p>o'clock 38:6,8</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">P</p> <hr/> <p>packed 26:11 36:22</p> <p>packing 15:2</p> <p>paid 10:10</p> <p>pandemic 5:25 6:2 24:9</p>	<p>paradise 31:20</p> <p>parameters 20:10 29:17</p> <p>part 12:19,22 16:6 20:12,19 36:20 37:17</p> <p>participate 14:24 17:3,20 29:11 37:7</p> <p>participated 15:8 34:4</p> <p>participating 4:7 9:11</p> <p>participation 17:19,22 21:1 26:15</p> <p>parties 31:11</p> <p>partisan 13:9 36:21</p> <p>partners 17:23</p> <p>parts 35:17</p> <p>party 8:6 9:23,25 11:1,3,9,10,18 18:14 21:25 25:21 26:1,20 31:10</p> <p>party's 36:22,24</p> <p>pass 13:9</p> <p>passing 25:3</p> <p>past 10:21 23:25 26:11</p>
---	---	--	--	---

Pat 3:10 37:21 38:1	32:24	20:20 21:7	preserve 13:23 37:3	promote 31:1
patterns 10:17	Pickens 3:10	22:21 23:15,18 35:4	President 17:10,15	propose 21:6
pay 20:17	picking 22:14	porch 32:5	Presidential 12:3	proposed 4:18 5:1,3 6:13 7:3 11:24
pending 33:12	place 3:21	position 6:10	prevention 34:10	protect 16:4,17,24 19:10 36:20
Pendleton 9:8	places 30:5	possibility 16:1	prevents 14:22	protected 19:22 31:21
people 6:22,23 10:21 16:1,13 28:1 30:2 31:3,13,16 34:24	plaintiff 34:25	posts 30:1	previous 7:1	protecting 31:8 36:25
people's 30:24	plan 4:18 5:1,3,5,16 7:3,6,10 8:3,22 15:5	potential 37:5	primary 28:20	protection 14:18 18:15,24 34:9 35:5
percent 10:25 11:2,3 19:13 23:20	planned 6:13	power 16:7 25:8 36:7	principle 7:9 18:24 19:3 34:18	protest 33:10
Perfect 27:9	plans 5:14 6:19	practical 9:25	principles 11:21	prove 34:21
period 38:15,19	point 10:24 29:25	practices 31:5	prior 5:4,21 6:17	provide 7:7 8:9 11:25 15:25
permanent 8:24	points 12:11 36:6	pre-approval 5:13	private 27:18	provided 26:3
persist 27:24 31:1	polarization 35:20 36:7	pre-clearance 5:15	privilege 10:12 27:18 28:11	provision 34:13
person 19:5,6 30:3	polarized 30:9 36:1	precinct 20:2,4	privileged 32:7	provisions 32:19
person-one-vote 7:9	policy 34:13	precincts 18:19	problem 24:22 27:1	public 4:12,17 6:20 7:22 8:6,10 17:18 21:3,5 26:16 34:13 38:14,19
personal 24:21	political 8:5 14:24 18:14 26:1 28:9 32:1 34:7 35:8 36:2	predominately 36:10	procedures 38:13,18	pulling 37:23
personally 18:5 28:5,15	politician 25:21	preference 36:6	process 4:8,9,14 6:11, 16,19 13:12,24 14:25 16:6 17:3 21:4 25:16 26:20 31:14 33:17,19 38:17	purpose 34:8,23
petty 13:8	politics 13:9 26:20	preferences 35:23 36:2	promise 22:4	purposes
phony 11:18	popular 3:9	prejudice 14:16		
pick	population 7:11,12 19:3,15	present 4:19 8:3 38:24		
		presented 5:24		

10:1 put 6:15 12:15,24 13:8 15:24 16:18 32:17 38:13	randomly 25:16 ranked 22:19 ranking 23:9 ranks 22:22 23:7 rates 23:1 ratified 23:6 re- 13:18 read 15:18 real 10:13 37:14 reapportion 26:4 35:3 reason 11:7 38:22 reasons 38:11 receive 6:12 8:9 recently 6:10 recognize 4:22 16:18 19:16 21:18 35:19 recognized 13:5 recommend 36:8 recommendatio ns 15:25 18:8 reconsider 24:16	Reconstruction 34:12 record 7:23 8:24 27:11 37:17 recorded 7:20 Recording 39:9 redistricting 4:10 5:4,9,10, 14,16,22 6:5 7:1,10 8:12 15:5 21:12 24:1,5 25:5,11,12 26:6, 8,11 27:23 31:5 32:19 33:14 Redistricting@ schouse.gov 9:6 redraw 4:23 redrawing 4:14 6:20 7:4 reduces 11:13 referred 7:8 reflect 12:8 25:17 34:23 reform 25:5 refusal 35:3 refuse 24:17 refused 24:15 regard 14:20 15:3	regimes 11:19 related 8:12 relates 19:12,14,19 20:8 release 6:4,17 released 6:8 relevant 34:19 relief 34:25 religiously 31:12 remarks 9:21 repealed 11:10 represent 6:22 12:17 14:8 16:13 representation 12:1 13:6 representative 3:20 10:14 21:16,19 27:19 representatives 4:21 5:2 14:25 25:9 28:23 29:7 represented 23:19 representing 9:25 33:25 repressive 11:19 Republic 10:15 22:1 Republican	11:1,3 12:2,7 Republicans 12:5 require 13:10,21 required 5:13 32:21 requirement 5:12 requirements 36:7 reside 14:4 17:11 21:22 27:15 33:23 residents 13:3 resolve 19:16,18 20:7, 10,13 respect 18:17 19:2 Respectfully 32:16 resulted 5:19 resulting 34:11 35:2 results 23:15 retire 28:7 review 22:21 38:18 ride 28:8 righteous 15:17 16:24 rights 5:12 7:8 11:15 14:22 34:15
Q				
qualification 25:16 qualified 25:13 30:2 quality 22:25 question 8:14 16:12 quick 37:14				
R				
race 10:22 14:20 34:11,16,24 36:2,3,10,23 races 10:5 11:5 12:10 24:3 racial 14:16,19 35:20, 21 36:4 racially 33:10 radio 15:14 rainy 14:7 raise 33:6 raised 24:2				

36:14	schedule	service	simply	space
rise	4:1 6:9	32:15 34:2	35:24	3:2
35:5	scheduled	serving	Sisk	speak
road	4:11	10:12	27:12,13,15	7:23 8:3 37:11, 13
3:23 9:19 17:11	school	set	sit	speaking
32:13	18:22 24:13,22	7:2 31:22 32:19	32:4	8:15 9:24 21:24
robust	29:4	Seventeenth	situation	special
13:13	schools	35:10	20:13	20:14,17 32:2
room	24:15	seventh	sixth	specific
16:9 29:9,13	scrutiny	3:18	12:25	6:24 34:17
31:4,20 38:13, 17	5:18	Shannon	size	specifically
root	seat	33:21,22	19:2	14:14 25:11
24:25	10:9,22	shaped	skills	spent
routinely	seats	36:18	14:13	24:11
24:23	12:12 13:2	share	sleep	split
rubella	22:10,11 35:4	12:21 13:2	15:15	12:18 20:2
24:24	Section	she's	smart	splitting
ruled	14:21	9:13	29:6	36:23
27:24	security	Shifting	Snaffle	Springstein
run	23:11	18:23	27:15	21:21,22 26:23 27:2,7
15:13	seeking	shifts	social	stability
running	4:13	35:4	7:16 34:3,7	23:14
11:8	select	short	solely	stand
rural	13:15 25:16	10:18	36:10	14:17,21
12:22	selecting	shortcomings	sorority	standard
	13:12	13:21	17:24 34:1,6	35:7
	Selection	shouldn't	South	Standing
S	25:19	13:18	3:8,12 4:10,16, 24 6:5,22 7:6,14 9:9 13:8 14:6,9 16:14 17:12 20:21 22:2,6,19, 22 23:1,6,8,20 25:1,4,9 26:21 27:21 28:20 29:23 32:2,16, 17,25 33:12,24	34:21
S750	Senate	show	solely	stands
25:6	5:6 11:25 24:4	11:18 23:15	36:10	30:14
sad	25:6 26:7 32:20	Sigma	sorority	start
29:8	33:15,19	17:24 34:1,2	17:24 34:1,6	18:6
sake	senseless	sign	South	started
7:22	18:23	7:24	3:8,12 4:10,16, 24 6:5,22 7:6,14 9:9 13:8 14:6,9 16:14 17:12 20:21 22:2,6,19, 22 23:1,6,8,20 25:1,4,9 26:21 27:21 28:20 29:23 32:2,16, 17,25 33:12,24	3:18 9:10
Saluda	September	signed	southern	state
13:1	3:19 4:2 38:10, 25	37:10,12	20:12	6:1 12:1,7 13:2 16:14 22:7,10, 17 23:3,15,17 24:10,15,19
Sanders	serve	silence	Southwest	
35:7	25:24	11:11	9:20	
SC	served	similar		
24:4	15:12,13	19:17		

25:14,18 26:14, 16 31:21 32:18 35:14,18 36:11	sub-committee 35:18	<hr/> T <hr/>	35:3	8:16 17:7 24:11 28:11,12 31:12 33:20 38:14
stated 38:8	subject 5:6	table 21:11 37:19	tenth 22:19	times 5:24
states 5:7,11,13 11:22 18:25 22:6,20, 23 35:1	subjected 14:15	tailored 36:13	term 10:9,18	today 27:17 29:1
station 15:14	submission 9:4	taking 37:20 39:2	testify 17:17 21:13 22:15	told 4:11
statistics 23:1	submissions 6:13	talents 14:13	testimony 8:17 9:4 21:15 37:16 39:3	tomorrow 3:24 38:6 39:8
statutory 26:7	submit 27:5 37:16	talk 17:12 18:1,2	that'll 39:6	tonight 3:3 4:11 7:13,24 8:3,19 9:24 15:2 17:22 21:21 27:12 32:16 37:21 38:3,21, 23 39:5,6
sticky 9:2	subscribed 22:3	talking 18:6 31:20	that's 9:5,7,8,15 16:25 20:5 28:21 29:9, 11,13,15 30:16, 22 31:1,2	top 10:4
Stillwater 17:11	Subsequently 35:12	task 4:23	there's 11:6	totally 12:13
straight 11:1,2,9	substantial 35:16	taught 29:4	Theta 17:24 34:1,2	touchstone 34:19
strangely 36:18	substantially 7:11 36:3	tax 14:10	they're 28:21	tour 3:23
strategic 14:11	suffrage 34:4	Taylor 22:16	they've 10:10	track 27:1
Street 9:8	suggestions 28:2	teams 39:3	thing 13:7 15:17 30:18 35:12	traditional 18:17
strict 25:24	Summercreek 33:23	Tech 3:2	things 18:1 30:8,15 31:6	Traditionally 7:8 8:16
strive 8:14	support 26:5,15,19 27:22	technically 26:24	thought 21:25 22:2	train 32:25
stronger 31:14	supposed 10:15	technology 26:3	thoughts 28:5	trained 21:9
struck 5:11	suppressed 25:2	technology-wise 26:25	thumbs 27:2	transcribed 7:21
struggles 34:7	Supreme 5:11 35:1,13	telling 9:10	ticket 10:4	transparency 15:4
study 30:15	surprise 22:21	tempted 15:25	time	tremendous
studying 30:17	surrounding 5:9	ten 22:23 23:25 27:21		
		Tennessee		

4:15	united	34:22	wanted	White
trouble	5:7,11 11:22	violence	29:24 38:23,24	17:8,9,15 21:16
8:20	14:12 18:25	23:3	39:5	whitest
trust	34:25	virtual	warrants	32:24
37:23	unjustified	4:5 39:2	5:22	who's
typed	34:23	voices	watch	21:19
27:4	unlike	11:11	32:5	wife
typically	5:4 22:5 29:18	vote	ways	29:20
12:2,6	unopposed	19:5,6 20:23	28:16 29:18	Willbrand
<hr/>	28:21	22:3 23:6 29:16,	32:3	9:17,18,19
U	unprecedented	23 30:21,25	wealthiest	win
<hr/>	5:24	35:14 36:19	32:24	22:10 24:6
ultimately	<hr/>	voted	website	30:25 32:25
4:19 16:20	V	10:3,25	6:13 9:5	37:21 38:2,3
Umjoa	vaccinated	voter	week	Windsor
18:2	24:23	10:2 26:15	3:20	17:12
Umoja	vaccine	voters	weigh	wished
14:9,11 17:23	24:21	7:14 10:13,25	26:17	37:12
un-	vaccines	11:4 13:12	weight	wishes
12:12	26:18	14:23 16:18	26:10,13 35:15	27:10
unacceptable	valley	17:23 22:12,14	Westby	wit
12:14	20:14,15	25:8,13 26:17,	13:25 14:1,3,4	29:6
unborn	variants	19 27:19 28:13	17:8	withstood
24:13	31:25	30:14,22 32:24	Weston	5:18
unchanged	vast	35:21,24 36:3,	3:11	women
6:17	33:3	16,22,24	we'd	17:23 23:5,17
unconstitutional	verification	votes	18:15 19:7,15	27:19 28:13
ly	6:16	12:2,6 14:13	20:13 21:2	30:14,22 32:6
35:15	verify	25:1 26:10,13	36:24	women's
uncontested	6:15	35:17 36:4	we'll	23:4 30:21
10:7	Vice	voting	3:23 8:19 38:5,	won
understand	9:23	5:12 7:7 11:6,9	13 39:2	24:4 30:23 33:4
7:19 21:8	views	14:22 18:22	we're	wonderful
understands	28:24	19:1 20:21	3:25 6:14 8:23	29:19
8:8	Village	35:25 36:1,7,14	27:1,20 29:10,	won't
undertakes	14:9,11 17:24	<hr/>	12,14 30:25	14:20 15:1,5
6:19	18:2	W	31:2 33:11 38:9	word
unequal	violates	wait	we've	15:18 39:7
35:2	34:17	6:14	4:16 17:4 21:9	work
unfair	violation	walking	27:11 30:19,23	10:12,15 13:4
20:23		3:6	what's	18:10 20:7,10
			16:13,14	

21:11 23:22

32:8

working

5:16 21:14

29:12

world

22:21 29:22

worried

22:11

worry

13:18 16:16

worse

23:3 29:24 30:7

wrap

9:9

written

8:22 29:6 37:16

wrong

10:20 31:9 32:1

wrongs

28:12

Y

year

22:18 33:9,12

35:6

years

10:2,21 22:16

23:7 24:1 28:7

30:8,19,24

you're

8:5 13:16 29:11

31:10

you've

7:24 15:6 28:18

y'all

3:14,16,17,25

4:6 37:15 38:14