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AUDIO TRANSCRIPTION

September 21, 2021

SC HOUSE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE

Greenwood Redistricting Hearing

REPORTER: Kathryn Bostrom

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18
19
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STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA

HOUSE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE

REDISTRICTING HEARINGS

The within hearings, before the South Carolina House
Judiciary Committee, transcribed by Kathryn B Bostrom,
Court Reporter and Notary Public in and for the State of
South Carolina; said hearings were taken at Piedmont Tech,
620 North Emerald Road, Greenwood, South Carolina, on
Wednesday, the 21st day of September, 2021.

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APPEARANCES:

House Judiciary Committee:

- Wallace "Jay" Jordan, Chair
- Justin Bamberg
- Neal Collins
- Patricia Henegan
- Beth Bernstein
- Jason Elliot
- Weston Newton

House Representatives Present:

- John McCravy
- Anne Parks

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24
25

CONTENTS:

(Hearing)

	PAGE
Proceedings	4
Certification of Reporter	24
Word Index	

EXHIBITS

There were no exhibits marked during these hearings.

Court Reporter's Legend:

dashes [--] Intentional or purposeful]

interruption

[ph] Denotes phonetically written

[sic] Written as said

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

2 REPRESENTATIVE JORDAN: Ladies and gentlemen, welcome.

3 My name's Jay Jordan. I'm the chairman of our Ad
4 Hoc Redistricting Committee. It's a pleasure and
5 privilege to be with you. Thank you to the good
6 folks here in Greenwood Tech and here in
7 Greenwood for welcoming and allowing us to use
8 this great facility. Let me introduce my
9 colleagues to you this evening. In alphabetical
10 order, with no particular hierarchy and
11 preference -- well, maybe a little bit. Justin
12 Bamberg, from Bamberg; Neal Collins, from
13 Pickens; Pat Henegan, from Marlboro. Also, Mr.
14 Weston Newton, immediately to my left, from
15 Beaufort, South Carolina; Ms. Beth Bernstein,
16 from Columbia; Jason Elliott, from Greenville;
17 and tonight's winner for the most miles traveled
18 I believe is once again Weston Newton from
19 Bluffton.

20 Pat, you beat me by like 7 miles, and he
21 beat you by about 10 miles. So Weston wins
22 again.

23 Also in the audience I saw Representative
24 John McCravy. Thank you for being here this
25 evening. And Representative Anne Parks. Thank

1 you as well for welcoming us to Greenwood.

2 And most importantly, as I said before,
3 thank you, ladies and gentlemen, for taking time
4 out of your schedules to come out and participate
5 with us. I've said -- I've given this speech
6 many times, but it's true -- it's as true tonight
7 here in Greenwood as it was in Myrtle Beach two
8 weeks ago when we started this, that these
9 hearings are one of several keystones
10 underpinning the process of redistricting in
11 South Carolina. Both here tonight and in other
12 scheduled public hearings, we, the members of
13 this Redistricting Ad Hoc Committee of the House
14 of Representatives, are seeking your input and
15 insight into the process of redrawing our
16 districts in order to accommodate the tremendous
17 growth in South Carolina since the 2010 census.
18 The public's input is a key consideration of this
19 committee as we formulate a proposed plan for
20 presentation to the House Judiciary Committee,
21 and ultimately adopt a plan for consideration by
22 the full House of Representatives.

23 We recognize that this is not an
24 insubstantial task to redraw legislative and
25 congressional district lines. The Committee --

1 the Judiciary Committee may or may not adopt the
2 plan proposed by the Ad Hoc Committee. So, too,
3 the full House of Representatives may or may not
4 adopt the plan proposed by the Judiciary
5 Committee.

6 Unlike prior redistricting cycles, the plan
7 that gains approval of the House, and later of
8 the Senate, is no longer subject to advance --
9 excuse me -- to advance pre-clearance by the
10 United States Justice Department. This is
11 because in the decades since the last
12 redistricting cycle, the law surrounding
13 redistricting has continued to evolve; and in
14 2013, the United States Supreme Court struck down
15 a requirement of the Voting Rights Act that
16 required some states to have Federal pre-approval
17 of redistricting plans.

18 Although we no longer have pre-clearance
19 obligations, we do have the benefit of working
20 from a redistricting plan that was both approved
21 by the DOJ in 2011, and withstood a challenge and
22 scrutiny through Federal litigation, which
23 resulted in an affirmance of the district lines
24 as they are currently drawn.

25 Another difference from the prior

1 redistricting cycles that warrants mention -- of
2 course, is well known to us all -- and that is
3 the Coronavirus pandemic that has so affected our
4 country as well as our state. Due to this
5 disruption, the US Census Bureau has been
6 extremely delayed in the release of the 2020
7 Census data which, of course, has impacted
8 redistricting here in South Carolina.

9 As I mentioned during our first committee
10 meeting in early August, once the US Census
11 Bureau releases the final data, which actually
12 just recently occurred, we will then be in a
13 position to begin the map-drawing process for the
14 House; and certainly while we're happy to receive
15 proposed plan submissions at our website, the
16 House will wait until the final data has been
17 fully digested, I guess you'd say, in order for
18 us -- and we have verification -- know I say
19 "digested," that we verify that it's unchanged
20 from the prior release, then we could actually
21 open the House's map room and begin drawing or
22 considering proposed plans. As the House
23 undertakes the process of redrawing district
24 lines, public input is indispensable to ensuring
25 our districts best represent the people of South

1 Carolina as we truly are the House of the people.
2 We want your input on specific issues or concerns
3 in your communities and your neighborhoods.

4 As in previous redistricting cycles, our
5 committee has adopted a set of criteria to be
6 used as guideposts in the development of a
7 proposed plan and redrawing of district lines.
8 The fundamental goal of this committee and the
9 House is to adopt a plan that assures South
10 Carolina's legislative districts provide for
11 equal voting rights, traditionally referred to as
12 "one vote -- one person, one vote principle." As
13 applied to the redistricting plan, our districts
14 should be of substantially equal population.
15 While the population directive is important,
16 we're here tonight because the committee needs to
17 hear from our constituents, the South Carolina
18 voters, as to how you identify or define your
19 communities. We welcome your input on the
20 important social, cultural, and historical
21 context as to how you describe your community so
22 that we can better understand the commonality and
23 the connections that matter to you.

24 This hearing is being recorded and it will
25 be transcribed and made available to the public.

1 For the sake of order and a clear record, we ask
2 that anyone desiring to speak tonight, please
3 first sign in -- as many of you've already done -
4 - and when you're called, please come to the
5 microphone, introduce yourself by your name,
6 address, and the district or districts about
7 which you plan to speak. If you're present
8 tonight on behalf of a group, please identify the
9 group on whose behalf you're appearing, be it
10 political party, public interest group, or other
11 organization.

12 Also, please understand in advance, we are
13 here to receive information and provide a forum
14 for the public to express to the committee what
15 issues or concerns are -- that relate -- that you
16 have that relate to redistricting. While I or
17 other members of the committee may occasionally
18 make a comment or ask questions, we will strive
19 to limit our speaking so that we can maximize the
20 time available to you.

21 If you plan to leave any written
22 documentation with the committee, we're certainly
23 happy to include that in the permanent record.
24 We ask that to ensure you're properly identified,
25 if you would write your name and your mailing

1 address -- and I think we have some sticky notes
2 provided for that -- on the document that you
3 leave. Testimony can also be emailed to our
4 website, and that's redistricting@schouse.gov or
5 mailed to the House Judiciary and that's located
6 512 Blatt Building, at 1105 Pendleton Street,
7 Columbia, South Carolina, 29201.

8 And ladies and gentlemen, I promise you the
9 members of this committee are tired of hearing
10 that speech. It started in Myrtle Beach a week
11 and a half ago, and y'all are the eighth stop.
12 We'll be in Orangeburg or -- tomorrow night, and
13 then we have two more meetings that will actually
14 be in Columbia that will be in-person as well as
15 virtual opportunities. If for some reason you
16 knew someone that could not be here tonight for
17 any reason, September 28th, at 4:30, will be an
18 opportunity for public input on a virtual -- via
19 Microsoft Teams, as well as October the 4th, at
20 4:30, is also an opportunity for input virtually.

21 All right. Ladies and gentlemen, our first
22 speaker tonight is Don Siosic, and I ask this at
23 every meeting: Did I get that right?

24 MR. SIOSIK: You got it darn close. You did. I've
25 left testimony in the box.

1 REPRESENTATIVE JORDAN: Thank you, sir.

2 MR. SIOSIK: Mr. Chairman, members of the committee,
3 first of all, my name is Don Siosik. I'm a
4 resident of Greenwood County, a constituent of
5 Congressional District 3, Senate District 10, and
6 House District 14. I want to thank you for doing
7 what you're doing. I don't know if you were too
8 slow and keep putting your hand down or you
9 volunteered for this, but it's a lot of work
10 driving around the state and doing these
11 hearings. So I want to thank you for that. I
12 don't think you get very many thank yous. Well,
13 in my view, and I think probably shared by most
14 people, the essence of a political contest should
15 be a contest of ideas and principles rather than
16 a pure political struggle or a personality
17 struggle; and in my view, the greatest cause in
18 doing this redistricting -- and it's in your
19 guidelines -- is finding a community of interest.
20 Now, that's a very broad subject and I dare say
21 that if we asked everyone here what "community of
22 interest" means, we'd get that many more
23 definitions. But community of interest is
24 extremely important, I think, and it's in your
25 guidelines. It was spelled out a little more

1 definitely I think in the Senate guidelines,
2 State Senate guidelines, but needless to say, the
3 task is a difficult one because people don't like
4 change. If you're an incumbent and you've been
5 elected a couple of times, I suspect you're not
6 too keen on seeing redistricting; but the fact is
7 that the population has grown and I'm sure it's
8 grown in certain areas and not in others and it
9 does require that change be made. And I'm also
10 aware that this ends up in a whack-a-mole
11 situation where, obviously, move a census block
12 here or move, you know, a precinct there, and
13 then something else has to happen and a domino
14 affect takes place. However, since the last
15 census and redistricting, computing hardware and
16 software has grown exponentially and we ought to
17 have, if we don't have, substantial power in
18 computing to take into consideration a variety of
19 aspects of community of interest. I would dare
20 say with the computing power and artificial
21 intelligence, we ought to be able to input 15 or
22 20 variables and give them weight and create
23 these districts and then move toward altering
24 them. Now, I may be something you already
25 know and you probably have one of these pieces of

1 software if not more. I've seen several online.
2 One specifically, the reason I'm speaking tonight
3 is I noticed a few years ago in looking at
4 districts, that our district, House District 14,
5 is rather unique. There are approximately 30
6 precincts in House District 14, 7 of which are on
7 this side of Lake Greenwood, and I would maintain
8 that there is little community of interest
9 between those 7 precincts and the remainder of
10 the 23 precincts in House District 14. Now, I'm
11 really not complaining as much as I am pointing
12 to it as an example of why the redistricting
13 should take place and the whole issue of
14 community of interest. I would maintain there is
15 substantial difference in the historical, the
16 political, the cultural, the economic differences
17 between the seven precincts that are here in
18 Greenwood County and the remainder that's in
19 Laurens County. Really, there's only access from
20 Greenwood to Laurens County in a couple of roads.
21 It's not as if it's in the center of the state
22 where there is no divide like Lake Greenwood and
23 you have people going hither and yon. I speak
24 to people who rarely go to Laurens County. I
25 mean, if you ask them where they're looking for a

1 job, they're not looking for a job in Laurens
2 County and people probably residing in Laurens
3 County are looking for jobs in Laurens County,
4 not necessarily in Greenwood County. I live out
5 on the lake and I get people to say to me, "You
6 drive all the way into the center of Greenwood,
7 you know, to do your business?" And so a lot of
8 people don't like traveling. Let me just point
9 out a couple of differences or aspects of this
10 divide. Obviously, there are different county
11 governments. There are different registrars of
12 voters. There are different school districts.
13 There's a different library system. There's
14 different law enforcement in each of these
15 counties, different EMS, different utility
16 structures. Water treatment, Greenwood County
17 relies on Lake Greenwood. Laurens actually has
18 more sources, although they're lacking. So a
19 deal has been put together for Laurens to draw
20 from Lake Greenwood, which is owned by the
21 county. There are really different types of
22 zoning enforcement in each of the counties.
23 Highways are different. Laurens County has two
24 interstate highways bisecting it, Greenwood does
25 not. There are different economics in terms of

1 where people work.

2 So just in -- due respect to the committee
3 and the Legislature, I think a top-to-bottom look
4 has to, you know, be taken at the entire
5 structure, and I realize there are legal
6 constraints, certainly at the Congressional
7 level, and your job is going to be a tough one;
8 but I think House District 14's an example of why
9 a look-see has to take place with regard to
10 specifically House districts and Senate
11 districts. I mean, I think it would be great if
12 we could have, you know, more House districts fit
13 into a county and fit into a Senate district, so
14 that when House members or Senate members are
15 attempting to represent constituents, they aren't
16 in four or five different counties. I know
17 there's a Senate district that has -- State
18 Senate district that -- that's in six different
19 counties. I would think that's extremely
20 difficult to represent. And anyway, that -- those
21 are my remarks and I hear a buzzer, so I've
22 probably gone over time. Thank you.

23 REPRESENTATIVE JORDAN: Thank you very much, Mr.
24 Siosik. And you were right, the volunteers
25 requested and we didn't step back in time.

1 Next, Bill Kimler.

2 MR. KIMLER: Good evening. My name is Bill Kimler. I
3 am residing at 101 Tifton Drive East, in
4 Greenwood; and I'm here representing the
5 Greenwood County Democratic Party. First of all,
6 thank you so much for all the time and sacrifice
7 that you've put into this. I appreciate travel
8 that you do and the time away from your families
9 to pursue this. It truly does show the
10 dedication and seriousness to which you've given
11 this very important subject. Unfortunately, the
12 reality is that decades of precedent and
13 anecdotes has resulted in the perception that
14 what we, the voters, say here today, and have
15 been saying for the past few weeks, has zero
16 impact on the redistricting process. Now,
17 despite solemn and heartfelt assurances from this
18 committee, which come from a very honest place,
19 the only way to instill confidence in these types
20 of testimonial processes is to codify the
21 redistricting process. South Carolina is the
22 only state in this country that has no actual
23 legislation that governs redistricting, but you
24 know this already. This is nothing I'm sharing
25 that's new to you. The Fairness, Accountability,

1 and Integrity act that has been proposed by your
2 colleagues, Representative Mike Fanning and Gilda
3 Cobb-Hunter, sits waiting to be taken up by the
4 House which is a great start to establishing
5 transparency and trust in this process. If the
6 South Carolina legislative body could find time
7 somewhere between legislating guns and genitalia
8 to get this law out of committee or this proposal
9 out of committee and ultimately into the law
10 books of our great state, you would find a more
11 engaged electorate than the dozen or so bodies
12 that you see here behind me tonight. It is such
13 an important discussion that needs to be had, but
14 it needs the power and integrity of the law
15 behind it. Thank you very much for your time.

16 REPRESENTATIVE JORDAN: Thank you, sir. Denise
17 Waldrop.

18 MS. WALDROP: Hi. I'm Denise Waldrop, and I do want
19 to thank you so much for the enormous amount of
20 time and driving and listening that you've put
21 into this process. I have been listening to your
22 hearings online and that's just a smattering of
23 what you're getting. And I am getting an idea of
24 the repetition that you hear, and so again, thank
25 you for this. I am in South Carolina House

1 District 13 and I want to address the House
2 Districts in Greenwood County and I would
3 specifically like to talk about the fact that the
4 Town of 96 is included with Laurens County rather
5 than Greenwood County and I don't think that the
6 people in 96 share utilities or churches or
7 schools or tax laws or any of the criteria that
8 define communities of interest. So I would
9 definitely like to see that looked into. I do
10 realize that you have a certain number of voters
11 and residents that you have to achieve in each
12 district. You have to get equal population in
13 each one. So maybe that's part of the equation
14 here, but it -- a lot of people who live in 96
15 don't understand why they're being lumped in with
16 Laurens, and I would like to address that.

17 And then, the other thing I would like to
18 say tonight is that in all of the meetings that
19 I've been listening to, at least 6 to 12 times in
20 every meeting, somebody stands up and says, "We
21 would like an independent election commission to
22 handle redistricting," and I even have heard it
23 said in the opening of some of the meetings,
24 "This is not the place to address that." If this
25 isn't the place to address it, I don't know where

1 is. There are currently two bills stuck in
2 committee in -- one in the Senate and one in the
3 House, that would propose an independent way of
4 redrawing districts, and we really need people
5 who don't have skin in the game to draw these
6 district lines. And I know this isn't popular
7 for either party and I understand there are turf
8 wars and that -- this is part of how we stay in
9 power, but it is also how the voters become
10 disillusioned with the process and I -- after
11 watching so many of the hearings, I must confess
12 that I am teetering on the edge of being
13 disillusioned myself; but I'm fighting that and I
14 really want to know that this matters.

15 And I would like to put this in the public
16 record, this -- I would like it recorded that in
17 every meeting, there are several requests for
18 independent commissions for redistricting and
19 yet, this is not being acted upon by the General
20 Assembly. So please do take that under
21 consideration and thank you again for the
22 enormous effort that you are putting into this.
23 Thank you.

24 REPRESENTATIVE JORDAN: Thank you. Kristen Martin.

25 MS. MARTIN: Hi. I'm Christy Martin. I live in

1 District 12 and I really had some questions,
2 really not a comment. And I was told that the
3 questioning session would actually be held later;
4 is that --

5 REPRESENTATIVE JORDAN: We don't technically have a
6 question --

7 MS. MARTIN: Yes.

8 REPRESENTATIVE JORDAN: -- session. This is an
9 opportunity really for -- as you've kind of seen
10 for folks to tell us these are our communities of
11 interest and why some districts shouldn't be
12 incorporated geographically, for whatever reason,
13 together. That sort of thing --

14 MS. MARTIN: Yeah.

15 REPRESENTATIVE JORDAN: -- related to your home area.

16 MS. MARTIN: Right. Okay. Thank you.

17 REPRESENTATIVE JORDAN: But certainly, I -- you've got
18 two Representatives here --

19 MS. MARTIN: I -- I -- yeah.

20 REPRESENTATIVE JORDAN: Grab them afterwards.

21 MS. MARTIN: Yeah. I will. Thanks.

22 REPRESENTATIVE JORDAN: Thank you. Representative
23 Anne Parks.

24 REPRESENTATIVE PARKS: I want to thank you all for
25 coming to Greenwood. I hope you know that you're

1 in the middle of my district, best district in
2 the state, and as we face redistricting, I have
3 represented this district for a number of years. I
4 hope that we not -- will not have to dramatically
5 change the district; however, over the years, it
6 has had some changes because when I first got
7 this seat, this district included four counties:
8 Abbeville, Greenwood, Saluda, and McCormick. And
9 as it stands now, I have the southern part of
10 Greenwood County and all of McCormick County. So
11 I do understand that me having to expand that
12 district, the fact that I have all of McCormick
13 County, my district lies on the Georgia line. So
14 I could not go that direction. So it's going to
15 be -- it's going to be tough trying to decide
16 which direction that we will be allowed to go,
17 which direction we may have to go. But I do
18 appreciate you having these hearings throughout
19 the state. It's not going to be an easy job to
20 redraw these lines because of the numbers that
21 have come from the census report, but I am hoping
22 that we will be able to work together; and I
23 would like to see District 12 stay as close as it
24 is currently. I think when you spread maybe a
25 representative out and you've got four or five

1 counties that you've got to represent, that's a
2 lot, and there's always some difference in the
3 constituency when you get to having so many
4 counties in one district.

5 Of course, Representative McCravy has always
6 had it easy. He has nothing but Greenwood
7 County, and maybe he'll be able to stay just in
8 Greenwood County. But I've always had more than
9 one county and there are some similarities in the
10 counties, but when you get in the rural areas,
11 you do find some differences in the constituents
12 that are there.

13 So I know that everyone will be trying to
14 work together. It's not going to be easy. I
15 know we're going to clash at some point, some
16 people, but I just appreciate you doing the
17 hearings and coming out in the community and
18 listening to the people. And I trust that you
19 will take to heart what the citizens have told
20 you here today. Thank you.

21 REPRESENTATIVE JORDAN: Thank you, Representative
22 Parks, very much for --

23 REPRESENTATIVE PARKS: You got a question?

24 REPRESENTATIVE JORDAN: No. I was just going to say
25 thank you for your comments and thank you for

1 coming out tonight, and you might get to be the
2 last word on the subject. So I've got several
3 other people that signed up, but have indicated
4 they did not wish to speak. Is there anyone who
5 wish to speak that didn't get to sign up? All
6 right. Then Representative Parks will get to be
7 the final word on the subject this evening.

8 I will say as I said when we started, thank
9 y'all for taking time out of your schedule to
10 come tell us the issues that relate to your home
11 area and the considerations that need to be
12 looked at as we take input. Again, thank you to
13 the membership of the committee for our next to
14 last tour. As you've seen, this is a -- when I
15 introduced this group, this is truly a diverse
16 geographic, state-wide group, bipartisan group,
17 and has truly traveled the state together. Our
18 next meeting will be tomorrow night in
19 Orangeburg, at Orangeburg Tech, at six o'clock.
20 And so I will adjourn and we will reconvene
21 tomorrow night at six. Thank you, ladies and
22 gentlemen.

23 (End of Recording.)
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CERTIFICATE OF REPORTER

I, KATHRYN BOSTROM, COURT REPORTER AND NOTARY PUBLIC
IN AND FOR THE STATE OF SOUTH CAROLINA AT LARGE, HEREBY
CERTIFY THAT I TRANSCRIBED THESE HEARINGS HELD ON
WEDNESDAY, THE 21st DAY OF SEPTEMBER 2021, THAT THE
FOREGOING 23 PAGES CONSTITUTE A TRUE AND CORRECT, TO THE
BEST OF MY ABILITY, TRANSCRIPTION OF THE PRE-RECORDED
HEARING.

I FURTHER CERTIFY THAT I AM NEITHER ATTORNEY NOR
COUNSEL FOR, NOR RELATED TO OR EMPLOYED BY ANY OF THE
PARTIES CONNECTED WITH THIS ACTION, NOR AM I FINANCIALLY
INTERESTED IN SAID CAUSE.

I FURTHER CERTIFY THAT THE ORIGINAL OF SAID TRANSCRIPT
WAS THEREAFTER SEALED BY ME AND DELIVERED TO EMMA DEAN,
512 BLATT BUILDING, COLUMBIA, SOUTH CAROLINA, WHO WILL
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OR ANY HEARING WHICH MIGHT RESULT IN A FINAL ORDER ON ANY
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IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I HAVE SET MY HAND AND SEAL THIS
4TH DAY OF OCTOBER 2021.



KATHRYN B. BOSTROM, COURT REPORTER

MY COMMISSION EXPIRES AUGUST 28, 2022

1	3	Accountability 16:25	Anne 4:25 20:23	Beach 5:7 10:10
10 4:21 11:5	3 11:5	achieve 18:11	appearing 9:9	beat 4:20,21
101 16:3	30 13:5	act 6:15 17:1	applied 8:13	Beaufort 4:15
1105 10:6	4	acted 19:19	approval 6:7	begin 7:13,21
12 18:19 20:1 21:23	4:30 10:17,20	actual 16:22	approved 6:20	behalf 9:8,9
13 18:1	4th 10:19	Ad 4:3 5:13 6:2	approximately 13:5	benefit 6:19
14 11:6 13:4,6,10	5	address 9:6 10:1 18:1, 16,24,25	area 20:15 23:11	Bernstein 4:15
14's 15:8	512 10:6	adjourn 23:20	areas 12:8 22:10	Beth 4:15
15 12:21	6	adopt 5:21 6:1,4 8:9	artificial 12:20	Bill 16:1,2
2	6 18:19	adopted 8:5	aspects 12:19 14:9	bills 19:1
20 12:22	7	advance 6:8,9 9:12	Assembly 19:20	bipartisan 23:16
2010 5:17	7 4:20 13:6,9	affect 12:14	assurances 16:17	bisecting 14:24
2011 6:21	9	affected 7:3	assures 8:9	bit 4:11
2013 6:14	96 18:4,6,14	affirmance 6:23	attempting 15:15	Blatt 10:6
2020 7:6	A	allowed 21:16	audience 4:23	block 12:11
23 13:10	Abbeville 21:8	allowing 4:7	August 7:10	Bluffton 4:19
28th 10:17	access 13:19	alphabetical 4:9	aware 12:10	bodies 17:11
29201 10:7	accommodate 5:16	altering 12:23	B	body 17:6
		amount 17:19	back 15:25	books 17:10
		anecdotes 16:13	Bamberg 4:12	box 10:25

broad 11:20	9:1	concerns 8:2 9:15	10,16,21,23 15:13 16:5 18:2,	Democratic 16:5
Building 10:6	close 10:24 21:23	confess 19:11	4,5 21:10,13 22:7,8,9	Denise 17:16,18
Bureau 7:5,11	Cobb-hunter 17:3	confidence 16:19	couple 12:5 13:20 14:9	Department 6:10
business 14:7	codify 16:20	congressional 5:25 11:5 15:6	Court 6:14	describe 8:21
buzzer 15:21	colleagues 4:9 17:2	connections 8:23	create 12:22	desiring 9:2
<hr/>				
C				
<hr/>				
called 9:4	Columbia 4:16 10:7,14	consideration 5:18,21 12:18 19:21	criteria 8:5 18:7	development 8:6
Carolina 4:15 5:11,17 7:8 8:1,17 10:7 16:21 17:6,25	comment 9:18 20:2	considerations 23:11	cultural 8:20 13:16	difference 6:25 13:15 22:2
Carolina's 8:10	comments 22:25	constituency 22:3	cycle 6:12	differences 13:16 14:9 22:11
census 5:17 7:5,7,10 12:11,15 21:21	commission 18:21	constituent 11:4	cycles 6:6 7:1 8:4	difficult 12:3 15:20
center 13:21 14:6	commissions 19:18	constituents 8:17 15:15 22:11	<hr/>	
chairman 4:3 11:2	committee 4:4 5:13,19,20, 25 6:1,2,5 7:9 8:5,8,16 9:14, 17,22 10:9 11:2 15:2 16:18 17:8, 9 19:2 23:13	constraints 15:6	D	
challenge 6:21	commonality 8:22	contest 11:14,15	dare 11:20 12:19	direction 21:14,16,17
change 12:4,9 21:5	communities 8:3,19 18:8 20:10	context 8:21	darn 10:24	directive 8:15
Christy 19:25	community 8:21 11:19,21, 23 12:19 13:8, 14 22:17	continued 6:13	data 7:7,11,16	discussion 17:13
churches 18:6	complaining 13:11	Coronavirus 7:3	deal 14:19	disillusioned 19:10,13
citizens 22:19	computing 12:15,18,20	counties 14:15,22 15:16, 19 21:7 22:1,4, 10	decades 6:11 16:12	disruption 7:5
clash 22:15		country 7:4 16:22	decide 21:15	district 5:25 6:23 7:23 8:7 9:6 11:5,6 13:4,6,10 15:8, 13,17,18 18:1, 12 19:6 20:1 21:1,3,5,7,12, 13,23 22:4
clear		county 11:4 13:18,19, 20,24 14:2,3,4,	dedication 16:10	districts 5:16 7:25 8:10,
			define 8:18 18:8	
			definitions 11:23	
			delayed 7:6	

13 9:6 12:23 13:4 14:12 15:10,11,12 18:2 19:4 20:11	easy 21:19 22:6,14	equal 8:11,14 18:12	final 7:11,16 23:7	17:2
diverse 23:15	economic 13:16	equation 18:13	find 17:6,10 22:11	give 12:22
divide 13:22 14:10	economics 14:25	essence 11:14	finding 11:19	goal 8:8
document 10:2	edge 19:12	establishing 17:4	fit 15:12,13	good 4:5 16:2
documentation 9:22	effort 19:22	evening 4:9,25 16:2 23:7	folks 4:6 20:10	governments 14:11
DOJ 6:21	eighth 10:11	evolve 6:13	formulate 5:19	governs 16:23
domino 12:13	elected 12:5	excuse 6:9	forum 9:13	Grab 20:20
Don 10:22 11:3	election 18:21	expand 21:11	full 5:22 6:3	great 4:8 15:11 17:4, 10
dozen 17:11	electorate 17:11	exponentially 12:16	fully 7:17	greatest 11:17
dramatically 21:4	Elliott 4:16	express 9:14	fundamental 8:8	Greenville 4:16
draw 14:19 19:5	emailed 10:3	extremely 7:6 11:24 15:19	<hr/> G <hr/>	Greenwood 4:6,7 5:1,7 11:4 13:7,18,20,22 14:4,6,16,17,20, 24 16:4,5 18:2,5 20:25 21:8,10 22:6,8
drawing 7:21	EMS 14:15	<hr/> F <hr/>	gains 6:7	group 9:8,9,10 23:15, 16
drawn 6:24	end 23:23	face 21:2	game 19:5	grown 12:7,8,16
drive 14:6 16:3	ends 12:10	facility 4:8	General 19:19	growth 5:17
driving 11:10 17:20	enforcement 14:14,22	fact 12:6 18:3 21:12	genitalia 17:7	guess 7:17
due 7:4 15:2	engaged 17:11	Fairness 16:25	gentlemen 4:2 5:3 10:8,21 23:22	guidelines 11:19,25 12:1,2
<hr/> E <hr/>	enormous 17:19 19:22	families 16:8	geographic 23:16	guideposts 8:6
early 7:10	ensure 9:24	Fanning 17:2	geographically 20:12	guns
East 16:3	ensuring 7:24	Federal 6:16,22	Georgia 21:13	
	entire 15:4	fighting 19:13	Gilda	

17:7	historical 8:20 13:15	importantly 5:2	23:15	knew 10:16
<hr/> H <hr/>	Hoc 4:4 5:13 6:2	in-person 10:14	issue 13:13	Kristen 19:24
half 10:11	home 20:15 23:10	include 9:23	issues 8:2 9:15 23:10	<hr/> L <hr/>
hand 11:8	honest 16:18	included 18:4 21:7	<hr/> J <hr/>	lacking 14:18
handle 18:22	hope 20:25 21:4	incorporated 20:12	Jason 4:16	ladies 4:2 5:3 10:8,21 23:21
happen 12:13	hoping 21:21	incumbent 12:4	Jay 4:3	lake 13:7,22 14:5,17, 20
happy 7:14 9:23	House 5:13,20,22 6:3,7	independent 18:21 19:3,18	job 14:1 15:7 21:19	Laurens 13:19,20,24 14:1,2,3,17,19, 23 18:4,16
hardware 12:15	7:14,16,22 8:1,9	indispensable 7:24	jobs 14:3	John 4:24
he'll 22:7	10:5 11:6 13:4, 6,10 15:8,10,12, 14 17:4,25 18:1 19:3	information 9:13	Jordan 4:2,3 11:1 15:23 17:16 19:24 20:5,8,15,17,20, 22 22:21,24	law 6:12 14:14 17:8, 9,14
hear 8:17 15:21 17:24	House's 7:21	input 5:14,18 7:24 8:2,19 10:18,20 12:21 23:12	Judiciary 5:20 6:1,4 10:5	laws 18:7
heard 18:22	<hr/> I <hr/>	insight 5:15	Justice 6:10	leave 9:21 10:3
hearing 8:24 10:9	idea 17:23	instill 16:19	Justin 4:11	left 4:14 10:25
hearings 5:9,12 11:11 17:22 19:11 21:18 22:17	ideas 11:15	insubstantial 5:24	<hr/> K <hr/>	legal 15:5
heart 22:19	identified 9:24	integrity 17:1,14	keen 12:6	legislating 17:7
heartfelt 16:17	identify 8:18 9:8	intelligence 12:21	key 5:18	legislation 16:23
held 20:3	immediately 4:14	interest 9:10 11:19,22, 23 12:19 13:8, 14 18:8 20:11	keystones 5:9	legislative 5:24 8:10 17:6
Henegan 4:13	impacted 7:7	interstate 14:24	Kimler 16:1,2	Legislature 15:3
hierarchy 4:10	important 8:15,20 11:24 16:11 17:13	introduce 4:8 9:5	kind 20:9	level 15:7
highways 14:23,24		introduced		library 14:13

lies 21:13	map 7:21	21:1	occurred 7:12	Pendleton 10:6
limit 9:19	map-drawing 7:13	Mike 17:2	October 10:19	people 7:25 8:1 11:14
lines 5:25 6:23 7:24 8:7 19:6 21:20	Marlboro 4:13	miles 4:17,20,21	online 13:1 17:22	12:3 13:23,24
listening 17:20,21 18:19 22:18	Martin 19:24,25 20:7, 14,16,19,21	move 12:11,12,23	open 7:21	14:2,5,8 15:1
litigation 6:22	matter 8:23	Myrtle 5:7 10:10	opening 18:23	18:6,14 19:4 22:16,18 23:3
live 14:4 18:14 19:25	matters 19:14	<hr/> N <hr/>	opportunities 10:15	perception 16:13
located 10:5	maximize 9:19	name's 4:3	opportunity 10:18,20 20:9	permanent 9:23
longer 6:8,18	Mccormick 21:8,10,12	Neal 4:12	Orangeburg 10:12 23:19	person 8:12
look-see 15:9	Mccravy 4:24 22:5	necessarily 14:4	order 4:10 5:16 7:17 9:1	personality 11:16
looked 18:9 23:12	means 11:22	needless 12:2	organization 9:11	Pickens 4:13
lot 11:9 14:7 18:14 22:2	meeting 7:10 10:23 18:20 19:17 23:18	neighborhoods 8:3	owned 14:20	pieces 12:25
lumped 18:15	meetings 10:13 18:18,23	Newton 4:14,18	<hr/> P <hr/>	place 12:14 13:13 15:9 16:18 18:24,25
<hr/> M <hr/>	members 5:12 9:17 10:9 11:2 15:14	night 10:12 23:18,21	pandemic 7:3	plan 5:19,21 6:2,4,6, 20 7:15 8:7,9,13 9:7,21
made 8:25 12:9	membership 23:13	notes 10:1	Parks 4:25 20:23,24 22:22,23 23:6	plans 6:17 7:22
mailed 10:5	mention 7:1	noticed 13:3	part 18:13 19:8 21:9	pleasure 4:4
mailing 9:25	mentioned 7:9	number 18:10 21:3	participate 5:4	point 14:8 22:15
maintain 13:7,14	microphone 9:5	numbers 21:20	party 9:10 16:5 19:7	pointing 13:11
make 9:18	Microsoft 10:19	<hr/> O <hr/>	past 16:15	political 9:10 11:14,16 13:16
	middle	obligations 6:19	Pat 4:13,20	popular 19:6
		occasionally 9:17		

population 8:14,15 12:7 18:12	10:8		referred 8:11	requested 15:25
position 7:13	properly 9:24	<hr/> R <hr/>	regard 15:9	requests 19:17
power 12:17,20 17:14 19:9	proposal 17:8	rarely 13:24	registrars 14:11	require 12:9
pre-approval 6:16	propose 19:3	reality 16:12	relate 9:15,16 23:10	required 6:16
pre-clearance 6:9,18	proposed 5:19 6:2,4 7:15, 22 8:7 17:1	realize 15:5 18:10	related 20:15	requirement 6:15
precedent 16:12	provide 8:10 9:13	reason 10:15,17 13:2 20:12	release 7:6,20	resident 11:4
precinct 12:12	provided 10:2	receive 7:14 9:13	releases 7:11	residents 18:11
precincts 13:6,9,10,17	public 5:12 7:24 8:25 9:10,14 10:18 19:15	recently 7:12	relies 14:17	residing 14:2 16:3
preference 4:11	public's 5:18	recognize 5:23	remainder 13:9,18	respect 15:2
present 9:7	pure 11:16	reconvene 23:20	remarks 15:21	resulted 6:23 16:13
presentation 5:20	pursue 16:9	record 9:1,23 19:16	repetition 17:24	rights 6:15 8:11
previous 8:4	put 14:19 16:7 17:20 19:15	recorded 8:24 19:16	report 21:21	roads 13:20
principle 8:12	putting 11:8 19:22	Recording 23:23	represent 7:25 15:15,20 22:1	room 7:21
principles 11:15		redistricting 4:4 5:10,13 6:6, 12,13,17,20 7:1, 8 8:4,13 9:16 11:18 12:6,15 13:12 16:16,21, 23 18:22 19:18 21:2	representative 4:2,23,25 11:1 15:23 17:2,16 19:24 20:5,8,15, 17,20,22,24 21:25 22:5,21, 23,24 23:6	rural 22:10
prior 6:6,25 7:20	<hr/> Q <hr/>	redistricting@ schouse.gov 10:4	Representatives 5:14,22 6:3 20:18	<hr/> S <hr/>
privilege 4:5	question 20:6 22:23	redraw 5:24 21:20	represented 21:3	sacrifice 16:6
process 5:10,15 7:13,23 16:16,21 17:5, 21 19:10	questioning 20:3	redrawing 5:15 7:23 8:7 19:4	representing 16:4	sake 9:1
processes 16:20	questions 9:18 20:1			Saluda 21:8
promise				schedule 23:9
				scheduled 5:12

schedules 5:4	Siosic 10:22	specific 8:2	structures 14:16	20:5
school 14:12	Siosik 10:24 11:2,3	specifically 13:2 15:10 18:3	struggle 11:16,17	teetering 19:12
schools 18:7	15:24	speech 5:5 10:10	stuck 19:1	terms 14:25
scrutiny 6:22	sir 11:1 17:16	spelled 11:25	subject 6:8 11:20 16:11	testimonial 16:20
seat 21:7	sits 17:3	spread 21:24	23:2,7	testimony 10:3,25
seeking 5:14	situation 12:11	stands 18:20 21:9	submissions 7:15	thing 18:17 20:13
Senate 6:8 11:5 12:1,2 15:10,13,14,17, 18 19:2	skin 19:5	start 17:4	substantial 12:17 13:15	Tifton 16:3
September 10:17	slow 11:8	started 5:8 10:10 23:8	substantially 8:14	time 5:3 9:20 15:22, 25 16:6,8 17:6, 15,20 23:9
seriousness 16:10	smattering 17:22	state 7:4 11:10 12:2 13:21 15:17 16:22 17:10 21:2,19 23:17	Supreme 6:14	times 5:6 12:5 18:19
session 20:3,8	social 8:20	state-wide 23:16	surrounding 6:12	tired 10:9
set 8:5	software 12:16 13:1	states 6:10,14,16	suspect 12:5	today 16:14 22:20
share 18:6	solemn 16:17	stay 19:8 21:23 22:7	system 14:13	told 20:2 22:19
shared 11:13	sort 20:13	step 15:25	<hr/> T <hr/>	tomorrow 10:12 23:18,21
sharing 16:24	sources 14:18	sticky 10:1	takes 12:14	tonight 5:6,11 8:16 9:2, 8 10:16,22 13:2 17:12 18:18 23:1
show 16:9	South 4:15 5:11,17 7:8,25 8:9,17 10:7 16:21 17:6, 25	stop 10:11	talk 18:3	tonight's 4:17
side 13:7	southern 21:9	Street 10:6	task 5:24 12:3	top-to-bottom 15:3
sign 9:3 23:5	speak 9:2,7 13:23 23:4,5	strive 9:18	tax 18:7	tough 15:7 21:15
signed 23:3	speaker 10:22	struck 6:14	Teams 10:19	tour 23:14
similarities 22:9	speaking 9:19 13:2	structure 15:5	Tech 4:6 23:19	Town
			technically	

<p>18:4 traditionally 8:11 transcribed 8:25 transparency 17:5 travel 16:7 traveled 4:17 23:17 traveling 14:8 treatment 14:16 tremendous 5:16 true 5:6 trust 17:5 22:18 turf 19:7 types 14:21 16:19</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">U</p> <hr/> <p>ultimately 5:21 17:9 unchanged 7:19 underpinning 5:10 understand 8:22 9:12 18:15 19:7 21:11 undertakes 7:23 unique 13:5</p>	<p>United 6:10,14 Unlike 6:6 utilities 18:6 utility 14:15</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">V</p> <hr/> <p>variables 12:22 variety 12:18 verification 7:18 verify 7:19 view 11:13,17 virtual 10:15,18 virtually 10:20 volunteered 11:9 volunteers 15:24 vote 8:12 voters 8:18 14:12 16:14 18:10 19:9 voting 6:15 8:11</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">W</p> <hr/> <p>wait 7:16</p>	<p>waiting 17:3 Waldrop 17:17,18 warrants 7:1 wars 19:8 watching 19:11 Water 14:16 website 7:15 10:4 week 10:10 weeks 5:8 16:15 weight 12:22 welcoming 4:7 5:1 Weston 4:14,18,21 whack-a-mole 12:10 winner 4:17 wins 4:21 withstood 6:21 word 23:2,7 work 11:9 15:1 21:22 22:14 working 6:19 write 9:25</p>	<p>written 9:21</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">Y</p> <hr/> <p>y'all 10:11 23:9 years 13:3 21:5 years.i 21:3 yon 13:23 yous 11:12</p> <hr/> <p style="text-align: center;">Z</p> <hr/> <p>zoning 14:22</p>
---	--	---	---