

Argument Concludes in Federal Appeal of Challenge to Louisiana State Legislative Maps

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New Orleans, La. – Oral argument concluded today at the U.S. Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals in a case that will determine the future of Louisiana’s state legislative maps, *Nairne v. Landry*. Last year, a group of Black voters and advocacy organizations won their lawsuit in the Middle District of Louisiana challenging district lines for the Louisiana State Senate and House of Representatives, claiming the state’s legislative maps violated Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. The state appealed.

“Following a seven-day trial involving almost two dozen witnesses, the district court found that Louisiana’s House and Senate maps dilute the voting power of Black Louisianians and prevent them from having an equal opportunity to elect representation that is responsive to their needs,” said Megan Keenan, staff attorney with the ACLU Voting Rights Project. “The district court faithfully applied the law, and its decision was supported by the testimony and evidence at trial. That decision should be affirmed.”

“At every stage of the redistricting process, community members across Louisiana shared a clear and resounding message: They wanted fair maps that represent all of Louisiana’s communities and no longer deny Black voters an equal opportunity to elect candidates of their choice,” said Sara Rohani, assistant counsel for the Legal Defense Fund. “The district court’s thorough decision properly applied the tenants of the Voting Rights Act and demanded a new direction for representation in Louisiana’s state legislature. It should be affirmed.”

Following a full trial, the district court found that Louisiana’s state legislative maps pack Black voters into a small number of majority-Black districts and crack other Black communities across separate districts, denying Louisiana’s Black voters an equal opportunity to participate in the political process and elect candidates of their choice. On appeal, state defendants challenged these findings and questioned the ability of private litigants to bring challenges under Section 2. The U.S. Department of Justice intervened to address the latter question, and all parties participated in oral arguments today.

“Black Louisianians have faced generations of discrimination in political representation, but this case provides an opportunity for new hope,” said Michael McClanahan, president of the NAACP Louisiana State Conference. “Our state legislature makes decisions that impact every aspect of our communities’ lives — from our health, to our schools, and our safety. We are hopeful that we can move forward with this case and one step closer to realizing the promise of new, fair, and representative state legislative maps.”

The district court found the *Nairne* plaintiffs had successfully shown evidence that Black voters’ electoral strength was diluted in multiple regions across the state after plaintiffs provided alternative maps revealing multiple additional districts could be drawn across both chambers according to the population data from the last U.S. Census.

“Our win in the district court was a testament to our fight for fairness and inclusion in Louisiana’s political process,” said plaintiff Dr. Dorothy Nairne. “I know I speak not only for myself and the other plaintiffs, but also for so many Black community members across this state, when I say that new representation at our State Capitol would give us hope for justice. We want our voices to finally be heard at the ballot box and reflected in the decisions our lawmakers are making. For us, that is what is at stake in this case.”

“We are honored to represent Dr. Dorothy Nairne and our other clients in the ongoing fight for fair and equal representation of Black voters in Louisiana,” said Alanah Odoms, executive director of the ACLU of Louisiana. “A district court has already recognized that Black Louisianans’ votes were being unjustly diluted, undermining the principles of democracy in our state. We urge the Fifth Circuit to affirm this critical decision. This fight, driven by our unwavering commitment to justice and love for humanity, is a vital chapter in the ongoing civil rights movement of our era.”

The *Nairne* plaintiff-appellees Dr. Dorothy Nairne, Rev. Clee Earnest Lowe, Dr. Alice Washington, Pastor Steven Harris, the Black Voters Matter Capacity Building Institute, and the Louisiana State Conference of the NAACP. Plaintiff-appellees are represented by the American Civil Liberties Union, ACLU of Louisiana, Legal Defense Fund, Harvard Law School Election Law Clinic, and Cozen O’Connor, along with Louisiana attorneys Ron Wilson and John Adcock.

A recording of the argument can be found [here](#), and more background on the case can be found at www.aclu.org/cases/nairne-v-landry.

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