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Trial Set to Begin in Case to Defend Louisiana Congressional Map with Two Majority-Black Districts

SHREVEPORT, LA. – A crucial test of the movement toward equal voting rights will unfold at a [hearing and trial](#) to be held from April 8 to 10 at the U.S. District Court for the Western District of Louisiana in Shreveport, La. The case being heard, [Callais v. Landry](#), will determine the fate of Louisiana’s congressional map. The original map enacted in 2022 included only one majority-Black congressional district in a state with six districts. A new map enacted in January includes a second majority-Black district, reflecting that one-third of Louisiana’s population is Black. Now, Plaintiffs in *Callais* are seeking to turn back the clock and force Louisiana to revert to a map that would unjustly dilute Black voters’ representation.

“Black people in the state of Louisiana have fought tirelessly in the courts and the state house for fair representation for decades, despite state-sanctioned hostility to Black people’s right to participate fully in the political process,” said **Legal Defense Fund (LDF) Assistant Counsel Kathryn Sadasivan**. “Today, we continue the legacy of resilience in the face of hostility to fight for a map the state legislature enacted that is, finally, a congressional map that gives one third of the population of Louisiana an opportunity to elect candidates of their choice in the state’s congressional delegation.”

The 2020 Census revealed Louisiana’s Black population increased while the white population decreased. Still, the Louisiana Legislature’s response was to pass a congressional map in 2022 that limited Black voters’ representation to only one out of six congressional districts. A group of Black voters and civic organizations immediately filed *Robinson v. Landry* (then *Robinson v. Ardoin*), arguing that the map violated Section 2 of the federal Voting Rights Act (VRA). Section 2 prohibits state and local governments from using any voting procedure that “results in a denial or abridgement of the right of any citizen...to vote on account of race or color.” Plaintiffs argued that the 2022 map did exactly that by weakening Black Louisianians’ voting power.

After years of litigation, the federal courts gave the Louisiana Legislature until the end of January 2024 to pass a map that complied with the Voting Rights Act. The result was a map with a second majority-Black district. The Governor signed the map into law on January 22, 2024. Unlike the simpler map proposed by the *Robinson* plaintiffs, the 2024 map creates a new majority-Black district by connecting communities in Baton Rouge and up along the Red River, from Alexandria to Shreveport along the I-49 corridor. Legislators cited political priorities for this choice.

On January 30, 2024, a group of “non-African American voters” challenged the newly enacted map as an unconstitutional racial gerrymander in the lawsuit *Callais v. Landry*. Plaintiffs claimed that “race

was the sole reason” for the passage of the map. Plaintiffs in *Robinson* quickly intervened in the *Callais* litigation to defend the rights of Black voters to have a fair and representative map in 2024.

“Our years-long fight for fair maps has proven time and time again that it is possible, reasonable, and just that Louisiana’s congressional map fairly reflects all our state’s communities,” said **President Mike McClanahan of the NAACP Louisiana State Conference**, “That means a map where Black voters—one-third of our state’s population—have a chance to elect their candidates of choice in two districts. We can no longer be siloed and silenced. This trial is just one more step in our enduring march towards equal representation for our communities.”

“We are eager to continue the hard work of ensuring voters are able to realize the power of their collective votes and voices under the new congressional map,” said **Ashley Shelton, President/CEO of Power Coalition for Equity and Justice**. “The voters we serve have expressed new hope for fair representation under the enacted map. We are fighting to defend this map in court to ensure that hope is sustained.”

“We are back in court to make sure Louisiana’s congressional map stays fair and equitable for all of Louisiana’s voters,” said **Alora Thomas-Lundborg, Senior Counsel, Harvard Election Law Clinic**.

“The Black voters who intervened in this case have been fighting for fair and equitable districts for years now,” said **Attorney Tracie Washington of the Louisiana Justice Institute**. “Their resilient fight did not stop after any court win or set back thus far, nor did it end when the legislature enacted the new congressional map in January. They have shown that they are willing to fight until the promise of fair representation is realized.”

“In a democracy striving for equity, the pursuit of justice cannot be misconstrued as oppression,” said **Sarah Brannon, Managing Attorney, ACLU Voting Rights Project**. “Equal representation is not a zero-sum game; it is the cornerstone of a fair and inclusive society. This new map complies with the Voting Rights Act, and it is what Louisiana voters deserve after decades of misrepresentation. We are confident the court will uphold the map.”

“The legislature passed a Voting Rights Act compliant map that should govern the upcoming Congressional elections,” said **Nora Ahmed, Legal Director, ACLU of Louisiana**. “To claim that map is a racial gerrymander defies logic, as race did not predominate in its creation. The clock is ticking until the November election and Louisianians deserve fair and representative districts for their vote to count.”

The *Robinson* Intervenor-Defendants are represented by the Legal Defense Fund, American Civil Liberties Union, ACLU of Louisiana, Harvard Election Law Clinic, Louisiana Justice Institute, Louisiana attorney John Adcock, and Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison LLP.

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