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LDF Media
media@naacpldf.org

LDF Concludes Supreme Court Oral Reargument Defending Louisiana Congressional Map

Today, Legal Defense Fund (LDF) President and Director-Counsel Janai Nelson argued before the U.S. Supreme Court in *Louisiana v. Callais*, a case about equal representation for Black voters in Louisiana and the role of race in redistricting. The case comes on appeal following a divided district court decision finding that Louisiana's map, which included an additional majority-Black congressional district to remedy a likely Voting Rights Act (VRA) violation, was a racial gerrymander.

A group of self-described "non-African American" voters asked the Supreme Court to strike down Louisiana lawmakers' 2024 map, which complied with the Constitution and the VRA.

However, instead of issuing a decision after initial oral arguments in March 2025, the Supreme Court set the case for reargument on the specific legal question of: "Whether Louisiana's creation of a second majority-minority congressional district violates the 14th or 15th Amendments to the U.S. Constitution." The supplemental question presented changed the scope of the case and raised new questions about the application of the VRA in Louisiana — and nationwide.

The framing of the question also gave the State Defendants an opportunity to abandon their commitment to defending Louisiana's map. This leaves the Black voters represented by LDF as the only party defending the application of the VRA in the redistricting process and Black voters' rights to fair and representative electoral maps.

"All voters have a right to an equal voice in our political process — that is the promise of the Voting Rights Act," said **LDF President and Director-Counsel Janai Nelson**. "Fair representation is foundational to democracy, but Black voters in Louisiana and around the country still face discrimination that dilutes the power of their vote. The Supreme Court has an opportunity to reaffirm this nation's commitment to a multiracial, multiethnic democracy by standing firm on its recent decision in *Allen v. Milligan* just two years ago, enforcing the Voting Rights Act to ensure fair districting free from racial discrimination. For the fourth term in a row, LDF proudly returns to the Court to ensure Black communities can participate in the electoral process on an equal

basis and have an equal say in how they are represented. There is no more fundamental civil rights issue facing America right now than the threat to the right to vote, without which every other right is illusory.”

In 2022, the Louisiana Legislature passed a discriminatory congressional map. In response, a [lawsuit](#) entitled *Robinson v. Landry* (formerly *Robinson v. Ardoin*) was filed that challenged the map as a violation of Section 2 of the VRA, arguing that Louisiana’s map weakened Black Louisianians’ voting power.

After years of litigation during which multiple federal courts found that Louisiana’s previous congressional map likely violated the VRA, the courts ordered the Louisiana Legislature to pass a map that complied with the VRA and included two majority-Black districts. In January 2024, the Legislature passed a map, SB 8, that included a second majority-Black district, which was quickly signed into law.

Shortly after SB 8 became law, a group of “non-African American voters” filed *Callais v. Landry*, challenging the newly enacted map as an unconstitutional racial gerrymander. The *Robinson* litigants quickly intervened in *Callais* to defend the rights of Black voters to have a fair and representative map, pointing to lawmakers’ stated political objectives when passing the map — including protecting incumbents such as Speaker Johnson — as evidence that race alone did not dictate the map’s district lines.

However, after a three-day trial, a divided panel of three federal court judges overturned SB 8 and held that legislators improperly prioritized race, and that the new map was not narrowly tailored to comply with the VRA, despite the previous rulings in *Robinson v. Landry* requiring the Legislature to pass a map with a second majority-Black district. The *Robinson* clients and state defendants then appealed to the Supreme Court.

Pending its resolution of the appeal, the Supreme Court stayed the lower court’s ruling, leaving SB 8 in place for the time being. As a result, the 2024 election went forward under SB 8, allowing Black Louisianians to elect their preferred candidate in two congressional districts.

The first oral argument took place on March 24. And on June 27, the Supreme Court issued the order for reargument, raising critical questions about how Section 2 of the VRA applies in Louisiana, specifically, and whether the VRA will continue to permit courts and lawmakers to use the law’s tools to remedy maps that dilute the voting power exercised by Black people and other voters of color nationwide.

The *Robinson* clients and counsel provided the following statements following the oral argument today:

“Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act has been a critical tool in safeguarding the promise that people of color can participate in our democracy on equal terms,” said **Sophia Lin Lakin, director of the ACLU’s Voting Rights Project**. “It has been our shield

against discriminatory maps and our answer to laws designed to suppress the vote. Congress passed the Voting Rights Act with overwhelming, bipartisan support — and reauthorized it again and again — because our leaders understood a fundamental truth: you cannot cure discrimination by pretending it doesn't exist. We asked the Court today to affirm that truth, and reaffirm Section 2 as it has for decades and just two years ago.”

“Yet again, we arrived at the Supreme Court today ready to continue our fight to secure fair opportunities for Black voters in Louisiana,” said **Ashley Shelton, President/CEO of Power Coalition for Equity and Justice**. “Fair maps don’t just mean better representation — they can mean safer streets, lower prices, and better schools for our communities. We will be relentless in our pursuit of real justice and meaningful representation. Our democracy cannot function unless all voters has fair opportunities to elect candidates of choice.”

“This case will test whether the arc of our universe still bends toward justice — or whether it has bent back upon itself,” said **Alanah Odoms, Executive Director of the ACLU of Louisiana**. “For generations, Black Louisianans have fought, bled, and sacrificed for the right to participate equally in our democracy. Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act is a core living legacy of that struggle. Without it, states could carve up Black and brown communities like puzzle pieces until our votes no longer matter. Weakening Section 2 would open the door to rampant racial gerrymandering and take us back to a pre-1965 America, where discrimination was the rule, not the exception.”

“Black voters in Louisiana have had a long, arduous road to the ballot box, and we have earned every step forward with the blood, sweat, and tears of the advocates that came before us,” said **Michael McClanahan, President of the NAACP Louisiana State Conference**. “We have endured decades of discrimination in voting, and we must never become complacent when our vote is diluted. I am so proud of the steps we have taken to arrive at the Supreme Court today, and I can only hope the Court knows what’s right and allows fair maps to stand in Louisiana.”

“The Voting Rights Act is one of the seminal pieces of civil rights legislation, ensuring the vote for millions of Americans, including thousands of Louisianians,” said **Alora Thomas-Lundborg, Senior Counsel at Harvard Election Law Clinic**. “Today, the Supreme Court has the opportunity to ensure that legacy continues into the future.”

“Our fight for fair maps has taken years and builds on the legacy of generations of Black voters who have demanded an equal voice in our democracy,” said **Dr. Press Robinson, lead named plaintiff in *Robinson v. Ardoin* and appellant in *Louisiana v. Callais***. “We hope that the Supreme Court will recognize and cement the right of all Black voters to a fair electoral map. And we are proud to be before the court yet again, fighting for our communities, our state, and our democracy.”

“In order for our democracy to work, it is critical that the Supreme Court reaffirms Louisiana’s right to a fair congressional map,” said **Edgar Cage**. “Today, we stand on the shoulders of so many champions of civil rights who fought for the protections of the

Voting Rights Act and the promise of a representative democracy. It is in that legacy that we continue to fight for our foundational rights.”

“We are proud to continue this important work after facing many twists and turns in our fight for fair maps,” said **Martha Davis**. “But no matter the outcome, we will continue organizing our communities around policies that matter, holding our elected officials accountable, and fighting for a more hopeful future for the generations that follow us. Louisiana deserves nothing less.”

“Today marks a moment of deep pride and hope for me as someone born and raised in Louisiana and a graduate of Louisiana’s flagship university,” said **Ambrose Sims**. “For far too long, Black residents of Louisiana have been denied fairness and opportunity in our political process. I have seen this firsthand. But last year, we saw a moment of change when our state legislature passed a fair congressional map. Today, we embrace another moment of renewed hope as the Court considers our case for a second time.”

“Our cause has always been greater than one case or one map,” said **Bishop Edwin René Soulé**. “Black people faced generations of discrimination in political representation across our nation — a reality we have known all too well in Louisiana. Enacting a map with fair and representative districts marked a more hopeful direction for the state, our country, and our democracy. We look forward to continuing to mobilize our communities to realize the true power of fair representation.”

“For Black communities across the State of Louisiana, our power has been on the line, our representation has been on the line, justice has been on the line,” said **Reverend Cleo Earnest Lowe**. “That is why we stood up to make sure our voices counted. Upholding our right to a fair congressional map is imperative because our communities need to have representatives who will champion the issues and the causes that are dear to us, who will be accountable to our communities and the hopes of the generations who follow us. That is why we continue to fight for a fair map.”

“This case was about unlocking what has been withheld for generations — the ability to elect leaders who represent all communities in Louisiana, from the cities to the rural parishes, from the cane fields to the bayous,” said **Dr. Dorothy Nairne**. “When we join together as one, with a just and righteous mission, we are powerful and we can make real change for our communities. We implore the Supreme Court to do the right thing and affirm that fair representation will persist for our state.”

“Each of us who joined this case simply asked to be seen, to be heard, and to be valued in our political process,” said **Louisiana Public Service Commissioner Davante Lewis**. “We must never back down in the fight to ensure that our communities will continue to be reflected in our nation’s legislature, and our needs will be weighed in important political decision-making. This is a necessary fight for all who believe in a fair, free, and equitable democracy.”

“I am proud to stand beside Black voters in my community, in this case, and across our state who have demanded a fair vote and an equal voice,” said **Dr. Alice Washington**.

“Our call has been clear: we wanted new districts to provide greater equity in representation. We wanted the opportunity to elect representatives who care — who would pledge to work for a better world and equity in the electoral process. It was our collective effort that led the Legislature to finally pass a fair map last year, and our enduring fight together that led us to the Supreme Court yet again today.”

The *Robinson* appellants — the NAACP Louisiana State Conference, the Power Coalition for Equity and Justice, and nine individual Black voters — are represented by the Legal Defense Fund, American Civil Liberties Union, ACLU of Louisiana, Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison LLP, and Louisiana attorneys John Adcock and Tracie Washington.

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Founded in 1940, the Legal Defense Fund (LDF) is the nation’s first civil rights law organization. LDF’s Thurgood Marshall Institute is a multi-disciplinary and collaborative hub within LDF that launches targeted campaigns and undertakes innovative research to shape the civil rights narrative. In media attributions, please refer to us as the Legal Defense Fund or LDF. Please note that LDF has been completely separate from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) since 1957 — although LDF was originally founded by the NAACP and shares its commitment to equal rights.