

## **Louisiana Passes Map with Second Majority-Black Congressional District** ***Following years of litigation, Black voters finally set to achieve fair map***

BATON ROUGE, LA – Today, the Louisiana Legislature passed a map that creates a second majority-Black congressional district after being granted a final opportunity to pass a map before a federal court trial. The map comes as a direct result of years of litigation in *Robinson v. Landry*, a challenge under Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act (VRA) filed by Plaintiffs Power Coalition for Equity and Justice, the Louisiana State Conference of the NAACP, and individual voters Press Robinson, Edgar Cage, Dorothy Nairne, Edwin René Soulé, Alice Washington, Clee Earnest Lowe, Davante Lewis, Martha Davis, and Ambrose Sims. While Plaintiffs advocated in the courts and legislative process for an alternative map than the version passed, the map adopted finally provides Black voters in a second congressional district with an opportunity to elect their candidates of choice—the promise of Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act. The map now goes to Governor Jeff Landry, who is expected to sign it.

“Black Louisianians have faced generations of discrimination in political representation, and this map can finally chart a more hopeful direction for communities across the state,” said Legal Defense Fund senior policy counsel Jared Evans. “This map would not have been possible without years of organizing, lobbying, and litigation to ensure that the rights of Black voters are enforced. While we know the Legislature could have passed this map years ago or adopted the map offered by Plaintiffs, we also know that this map will finally provide Black voters with a true opportunity to elect their candidates of choice in two congressional districts. This is a momentous day for our clients, for the Legislative Black Caucus who stood with us at every phase of this process, for Black voters in Louisiana, and for our nation’s democracy.”

Filed in 2022, *Robinson v. Landry* argues that Louisiana’s congressional map dilutes Black Louisianians voting power by failing to create a second congressional district with a majority of Black voters. 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.” In a state with a population that is one-third Black, the lawsuit argued that two of six districts could easily be comprised of a majority of Black voters.

“Thousands of Louisianians mobilized to make their voices heard in this process,” said Power Coalition President/CEO Ashley K. Shelton. “Their call for fair and representative maps echoed through every stop of the redistricting roadshow in 2021, the redistricting session in 2022, the circuit court argument in 2023, and this special session now in 2024. This moment has been years in the making. Through every challenge and delay, we have been clear in our mission to achieve political power, equity, and justice for Black voters in this State.”

Plaintiffs in *Robinson v. Landry* advocated for an alternative map during the litigation and legislative process that would have created a new majority-Black district uniting north Baton Rouge with communities northward along the Mississippi River Delta. However, the Legislature’s conservative majority advanced an alternative map that cuts diagonally across the State along the Red River and I-49 highway, a configuration backed by Louisiana’s new governor, Jeff Landry. According to the map’s sponsors, the districts were designed to protect select congressional incumbents and achieve the political preferences of state leadership while complying with the mandate to abide by Section 2 prior to further court intervention.

“While justice was too long delayed, it is no longer denied,” said Louisiana NAACP State Conference President Mike McClanahan. “Black voters in Louisiana have long deserved an

equitable voice in our political process, and this new map finally provides relief from the dilution our communities face under the State's discriminatory map. All along, we had the law on our side, the math on our side, and the principle of fairness on our side. We celebrate this day and welcome this new direction for our State."

"The addition of a second majority-Black congressional district is a huge step forward for Louisiana in our fight for fair representation, but our work does not end there," said Nora Ahmed, ACLU of Louisiana legal director. "We must continue to uplift community mobilization efforts to get our fellow Louisianians to the polls to maximize the impact of this new district and to ensure that all constituents needs and concerns are heard."

"Today, we saw the Legislature finally do what is right and create two majority-Black districts," said Commissioner Davante Lewis, a named plaintiff. "It is sad that we had to fight tooth and nail for them to do what is just. But, as we have seen in history before, justice is never given—it is fought for. This is step one, but the struggle for fairness and righteousness continues."

"After years of fighting in the courts and at the statehouse, the Legislature has finally accepted what our clients and Black voters across the state have known all along: that the Voting Rights Act requires a second majority-Black congressional district in Louisiana," said Megan Keenan, staff attorney with the ACLU Voting Rights Project. "Although the Legislature did not adopt the map that our clients and experts supported, this new map will finally give Black voters an opportunity to elect congressional candidates of their choice."

"Black Louisianians have fought a long and hard battle for equal representation at the ballot box. This map provides an opportunity for their voices to be heard and their votes fairly counted," said Alora Thomas-Lundborg, senior counsel at Harvard Election Law Clinic.

Plaintiffs in *Robinson v. Landry* 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. The case remains live and will proceed into final conferences among parties given the Legislature's action.

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