

## **For Immediate Release**

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## **Supreme Court to Determine Future of Equal Protection and Voting Rights Act Claims in Louisiana Case**

WASHINGTON —The U.S. Supreme Court today agreed to review the case of *Robinson v. Callais*, which could determine how congressional maps are drawn in Louisiana.

The court will now consider whether Louisiana violated the U.S. Constitution’s Equal Protection Clause when the state legislature redrew Louisiana’s congressional map in January 2024, after a federal court found the state’s 2022 map violated the Voting Rights Act (VRA). The court may also determine how much latitude state lawmakers have in considering politics or other legislative preferences when they draw districts to comply with the VRA.

“We look forward to continuing to defend the rights of Black voters to elect their candidates of choice,” said **Stuart Naifeh, redistricting manager for the Legal Defense Fund (LDF)**. “Just in 2023, the Supreme Court recognized the ongoing vitality and necessity of the Voting Rights Act to protect voters of color from dilution of their votes in state redistricting decisions. Black voters have an unprecedented opportunity to make their voices heard in this year’s congressional elections because multiple federal courts, in our *Robinson v. Landry* litigation, applied that ruling and invalidated the state’s 2022 congressional map. Federal law requires Louisiana to have a fair map that reflects the power and voice of the state’s Black communities. The state recognized as much when it adopted a new map with a second majority-Black district in January. Now the Supreme Court must do the same.”

While oral arguments will not occur for several months, Louisiana voters will be able to cast their ballots this November under the 2024 map, known as SB8, which has two majority-Black districts.

SB8 was drawn in direct response to a separate lawsuit, *Robinson v. Ardoin*, where a district court judge found that the state’s 2022 map, which included only one majority-Black district, likely violated Section 2 of the VRA. The plaintiffs in that case are the NAACP Louisiana State Conference and Power Coalition for Equity and Justice, as well as nine individual Black voters: Dr. Press Robinson, Edgar Cage, Dr. Dorothy Nairne, Bishop Edwin René Soulé, Dr. Alice Washington, Reverend Clee Earnest Lowe, Commissioner Davante Lewis, Martha Davis, and Ambrose Sims.

Shortly after SB8 was passed, a group of self-described “non-African American voters” challenged the map as a racial gerrymander in violation of the Fourteenth Amendment in *Callais v. Landry*. The same *Robinson* litigants intervened in the case to protect their victory in *Robinson* and the new voting opportunities SB8 provided to Black Louisianans around the state.

The Supreme Court’s decision comes after a divided panel of three federal judges overturned SB8 as an improper racial gerrymander in April. That decision was put on hold temporarily in May, allowing SB8 to go into effect, while the court considered whether to take up the case. Today’s action means the temporary hold will continue while the Court considers the case.

“We will continue our fight for fair representation as long as it takes,” said **Michael McClanahan, president of the NAACP Louisiana State Conference**. “For generations, Black Louisianians have fought to have our voices heard in our political process. We look forward to having our voices heard again as we continue this case. We remain steadfast and unmovable.”

“This year, Black voters finally feel hope that their voices will be heard equally at the ballot box because we achieved a fair map,” said **Ashley Shelton, President and CEO of Power Coalition for Equity and Justice**. “We can’t turn back after this election. Our communities need the confidence that they will be respected in our political process, protected by our laws, and treated fairly by our courts. We will continue to fight to make sure that Black voters achieve a lasting map that continues to embody the principles of fairness and equity for the remainder of this decade — and beyond.”

“We remain undeterred in our fight for fair elections for Black voters in Louisiana,” said **Nora Ahmed, legal director, ACLU of Louisiana**. “The law is clear. The current map is fair and constitutional. We have every reason to believe the Supreme Court will keep it in place.”

“The Robinson Intervenors have stood firm for the right of Louisiana voters to elect representatives without their voting power being diluted,” said **Tracie Washington of the Louisiana Justice Institute**. “They intervened in this *Callais* case to ensure the fair Congressional map passed this year remains in effect, because it does not constitute an unlawful gerrymander, and maintains decades of VRA and Constitution precedence.”

“The Legislature enacted a map with two majority-Black congressional districts after numerous federal courts indicated it was required by the Voting Rights Act,” said **Sarah Brannon, deputy director of the ACLU’s Voting Rights Project**. “We believe the Supreme Court will find this map constitutional.”

“Louisiana voters’ voices deserve to be heard in the court room and at the ballot box. This decision presents an opportunity to ensure fair representation in Louisiana,” said **Alora Thomas, senior counsel, Harvard Election Law Clinic.**

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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*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 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.*