



**For Immediate Release**  
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## **Civil Rights Groups File Lawsuit Challenging Louisiana Congressional Map**

Today, the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF), American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), ACLU of Louisiana, and Paul, Weiss, Rifkind, Wharton & Garrison LLP filed a lawsuit challenging Louisiana’s congressional map. Filed on behalf of the Louisiana State Conference of the NAACP, Power Coalition for Equity and Justice, and individuals Dorothy Nairne, E. René Soulé, Alice Washington, and Clee Ernest Lowe, the lawsuit alleges that Governor John Bel Edwards’ veto of the congressional redistricting plan passed by the Louisiana State Legislature leaves in place a decade old map that, because of shifts in the state’s population, now violates the United States Constitution. The governor vetoed the plan passed by the legislature because it violates Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 (VRA) and dilutes the votes of Black Louisianans. During the redistricting session, the groups submitted several maps for lawmakers to consider that would comply with the VRA by adding a second majority-Black district and urged them against passing a map that did not meet this requirement.

The lawsuit, which is pending in Louisiana’s Nineteenth Judicial District Court in East Baton Rouge Parish, charges that, despite being presented with these lawful alternative plans, the legislature, which goes back into session next week, is likely to simply pass another discriminatory map that could face another gubernatorial veto. Unless the court breaks the impasse, the groups assert, the 2022 congressional elections will be held under a plan that has not been updated to reflect population shifts since 2011.

“Louisiana lawmakers ignored their own constituents’ demands for a fair map,” said LDF Redistricting Counsel Kathryn Sadasivan. “They ignored their clear obligation to add a second majority-Black district, and the Governor rightfully vetoed their map. Now we are in a situation where we have a 10-year-old map with districts that are way out of balance. That needs to be fixed, and the resulting map must be fair. It is high time that Black voters are accurately represented in Louisiana’s congressional map. We look forward to helping make that happen.”

“By passing a racially discriminatory congressional map, the legislature completely ignored the testimony that they heard on the roadshow from hundreds who turned out and asked for fair, legal maps that increased opportunities for minorities to elect candidates of their choice,” said Power Coalition President and CEO Ashley Shelton. “This case is about ensuring that their testimony was not in vain and that we actually have a congressional map that fairly represents *all* of Louisiana.”

“This suit is about restoring the years that the locust has taken. Black people in this state have been suffering for decades under gerrymandered, racist maps,” said State NAACP President Mike McClanahan. “Our hope is that the Courts will restore to us all those years.”

“This proposed congressional map, drawn by the Louisiana Legislature, weaponizes race to undermine the political power of communities of color in Louisiana – it violates the Constitution and runs contrary to basic principles of fairness and representative democracy,” said ACLU of Louisiana Legal Director Nora Ahmed. “Louisiana’s steadfast refusal to address the rights of its Black residents is directly linked to its historical and present conditions of racial discrimination against Black people.

But it is finally time we turn the page on this chapter of inequity. The litigation filed today over the congressional maps should send the clear message that we will not stand idly by when such violative acts take place.

“In all 50 states, especially Louisiana, representation is important. It not only promotes the trust needed for the successful relationship between governors and the governed in any democratic society, but also promotes fairness,” said Sarah Brannon Managing Attorney ACLU Voting Rights Project. “To live up to the tenets of a representative democracy, the Louisiana State Legislature must reflect the richly diverse population it serves. We look forward to fighting these dangerous and discriminatory maps in court.”

Louisiana’s voting-age population is nearly one-third Black. Under the legislature’s proposed map, Black Louisianans comprise the majority in only one of the state’s six congressional districts, and candidates supported by Black voters are routinely outvoted in the five other districts. The result is underrepresentation of Black voters in Louisiana’s congressional delegation, with Black voters having an opportunity to elect candidates of their choice in one of the six congressional districts (i.e., 16.7% of the districts). Simultaneously, Louisiana’s white population is dramatically overrepresented. While only 58% of Louisiana’s population is non-Hispanic white, white voters control the outcome in five out of six (83.3%) districts under the maps. That control has meant that no Black candidate has won election to any of those seats since Reconstruction. Governor John Bel Edwards recognized this disparity and rightfully vetoed the legislature’s proposed map because it was “not fair to the people of Louisiana and does not meet the standards set forth in the federal Voting Rights Act.”

LDF and coalition partners have been deeply involved in the redistricting process in Louisiana and other key states to prevent discriminatory redistricting plans and ensure legislatures comply with their obligations under the Voting Rights Act and the U.S. Constitution. LDF and the coalition have submitted several maps, testified before the legislature, and sent multiple letters to legislators throughout the process. Learn more about LDF’s redistricting work in Louisiana and other states **[here](#)**.

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*Founded in 1940, the NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc. (LDF) is the nation’s first civil and human rights law organization. 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. 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 NAACP Legal Defense Fund or LDF. Follow LDF on [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#) and [Facebook](#).*