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Trial Wraps Up in Voting Rights Case Challenging South Carolina's Congressional Map

CHARLESTON, S.C. — A federal court in South Carolina heard closing arguments today in a major voting rights case challenging the state's new congressional map.

The Legal Defense Fund (LDF), American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), ACLU of South Carolina, Arnold & Porter Bryant Legal, LLC., and General Counsel's Office of the NAACP filed a [second amended complaint](#) in February 2022 on behalf of the South Carolina State Conference of the NAACP and Taiwan Scott, who allege the General Assembly adopted an unconstitutional and racially gerrymandered map — S.865 — that intentionally discriminates against Black voters and denies Black voters' equal opportunity to participate in the political process and elect candidates of their choice.

“If we are to believe that America is and should be a multi-racial democracy and that racial minorities should have equal political participation, this court should invalidate South Carolina's congressional map and provide Black South Carolinians a fair chance at participating in the business of the nation through the enactment of a constitutionally compliant map,” said **Brenda Murphy, president of South Carolina State Conference of the NAACP, the organizational plaintiff in this case.** “The Black community and our allies presented the General Assembly with various fair and non-discriminatory maps that reflect the communities of interest and geography of where Black people reside and work in South Carolina. The General Assembly ignored us and enacted one of the worst options for a congressional map that dilutes our vote and stifles our ability to elect a representative to address healthcare inequality, broadband internet access, Medicaid expansion, education funding, and gun reform in the halls of Congress. This court should restore the seat at the table the General Assembly attempted to steal from us.”

“The Gullah Geechee community — my community — has long been disenfranchised and ignored by South Carolina,” said **plaintiff Taiwan Scott.** “We have distinct concerns and priorities that will be entirely left out with the current congressional map because it separates us into different districts. My community does not currently have a responsive voice in Congress to advocate for federal funding to help my people maintain our land, improve our infrastructure or create economic growth and development. These maps deprive us of even having a fair shot — not even a guarantee — at electing a representative who can champion our needs in Congress. These maps are anti-democratic, and all we are asking for are constitutional and nondiscriminatory maps.”

During an eight-day trial, fact and expert witnesses provided a robust recording demonstrating the flawed and non-transparent redistricting process and the resulting new congressional map's harmful effects on Black voters' electoral opportunity.

Plaintiffs highlighted how the state’s legislature engineered its new map cutting through Black communities to suppress Black voting power — and demonstrated how white lawmakers hid behind arbitrary, shifting, and tenuous justifications to achieve their discriminatory actions. And among the abundant evidence, experts in demography, political science, redistricting, and mathematics described the unique harm that the current congressional map has on Black voters’ ability to elect their candidates of choice compared to race-neutral alternative map options, lending further support to the strong evidence of unconstitutional line-drawing by the state.

“At trial, plaintiffs’ fact and expert evidence demonstrated that South Carolina’s congressional map is an unconstitutional racial gerrymander that was also enacted to intentionally dilute Black South Carolinians’ voting power,” said **Leah Aden, LDF’s deputy director of litigation**. “The majority-white General Assembly engineered the movement of Black voters to deny them a chance to elect congressional members outside of one lone district for another decade that is inconsistent and not mandated based on current demographics, communities of interests, voting patterns, and other evidence. Black communities and legislators forewarned of this harm; they and their allies also worked to propose fair, nondiscriminatory, and workable alternatives that white legislators rejected based on pretextual and tenuous reasons. The Constitution protects against this type of dilution, and S.865 cannot stand.”

“We are in court fighting this new map because it clearly discriminates against Black voters and is unconstitutional,” said **ACLU attorney Adriel Cepeda Derieux**.

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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.