

VIRGINIA:

August 17, 2015

CONGRESSIONAL REDISTRICTING

Afternoon Session

PUBLIC HEARING

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

1000 Bank Street

House Room D

Richmond, Virginia

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1 MR. CHAIRMAN: We are going to go ahead and
2 get started with the public hearing. I want to
3 welcome everybody to this meeting of the Privileges
4 and Election Committee.

5 This is the hearing to mainly hear from the
6 public regarding the redistricting. The way we are
7 going to run this public hearing is similar to how
8 I've seen it done in local governments.

9 I'm going to ask that each speaker as they
10 come to the podium, and I'll be calling off names on
11 the sign-up list. Please forgive me in advance if I
12 mispronounce your name. But I will call up the
13 name. I will ask that anybody come and identify
14 yourself. We are recording this session for the
15 record.

16 So I ask any of the speakers to identify
17 yourself. If you are representing a group, please
18 identify the group that you are representing and
19 also please give your locality of residence in the
20 Commonwealth.

21 Also just so we can maximize the number of
22 speakers that we have today, I'm going to ask that
23 you keep your comments to no more than three minutes
24 so that we can try to get as many people up to speak
25 as possible. So if you are making a point that

1 somebody else made, just feel free to say that you
2 agree with the previous speaker instead of
3 reiterating the point, and try to make your points
4 as concisely as possible.

5 The first person I have on my list is Peggy
6 Friedenber. Please come forward, Ms. Friedenber.

7 MR. CORBETT: I am not Peggy Friedenber.
8 Peggy Friedenber stepped out for a second. So on
9 behalf of AARP, my name is Alan Corbett, and I'm
10 from Henrico, Virginia. I am representing AARP and
11 I have a number of other people here, and we thank
12 you for this opportunity to speak.

13 AARP believes that the redistricting
14 process should be transparent and provide a
15 meaningful opportunity for interested parties and
16 for the public to participate effectively.

17 In terms of importance, redistricting
18 should result in the following; it should have equal
19 populations in accord with federal constitutional
20 standards complied with the Voting Rights Act
21 requirements on protecting minority populations.
22 The areas are contiguous. We should have respect
23 for communities of interest, city and county
24 boundaries and visible geographic features, and they
25 are geographically compact.

1 We thank you very much for your
2 consideration.

3 MR. CHAIRMAN: David Goodall.

4 MR. GOODALL: Thank you Mr. Chairman and
5 committee members. I'm David Goodall. I live in
6 Henrico County, the Fairfield district. I don't
7 necessarily represent any group other than people
8 who want to see fairness and justice when you're
9 considering redrawing the maps. I have been
10 researching this for several years, not just now.
11 As a matter of fact, in 2001 I wrote a letter to the
12 Department of Justice objecting to the 2001
13 submission from the General Assembly. And now we
14 come back and we are still dealing with the 2001
15 matter. I feel like the independent bipartisan
16 advisory commission of redistricting the
17 commonwealth of Virginia presented three, what I
18 consider, an excellent option -- not only that but
19 throughout their entire report that they have
20 submitted to the governor. It's an excellent
21 report. From my understanding, no one considered it
22 and the then governor did not push for it.

23 Finally I think I should have some choices.
24 Number one, I think you should do the right thing
25 and draw the maps without regard to political

1 affiliation of where they reside. I'm not a lawyer.
2 Maybe there is something in the law that says we
3 have to protect because they reside in a specific
4 location, but that goes back to the point of being
5 fair. It doesn't matter to me whether where a
6 person lives. I think the maps should be drawn
7 without regard to political affiliation.

8 And the second choice that, I think, you
9 have is to allow the federal court to draw the maps.
10 I don't think that many of you who served on this
11 committee wants the federal court to draw the maps.
12 But I think they will probably do a good job in
13 drawing it.

14 And, finally, I think you should strongly
15 consider the three maps that were presented by the
16 bipartisan advisory committee on redistricting. I
17 thank you for this opportunity.

18 MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

19 Mark Ailsworth.

20 MR. AILSWORTH: Very good, Mr. Chairman.

21 It's not often that anyone gets the pronunciation
22 correct. Thank you for the opportunity to be here
23 today. My name is Mark Ailsworth. I'm a resident
24 of the City of Richmond, Virginia. I reside in the
25 3rd congressional district. And that makes me a

1 real party of interest. I'm not in a position --
2 I'm not qualified to offer any of you specific
3 guides as to how we should be going about the
4 business of this redistricting. I will tell you
5 though I follow the litigation with some interest.
6 I found that it was some what amusing, but frankly a
7 little sad, that witness after witness consisting
8 the lines that are created by the general assembly
9 for the 3rd district were created with politics and
10 not race in mind. I found it humerus because it has
11 been my observation in the years that I've been
12 following Virginia politics that separated race and
13 politics, it's a little like trying to make a
14 cucumber out of a pickle, which doesn't work very
15 well. I will not repeat the comments that were made
16 by the prior speaker, but will only endorsed them
17 entirely. This issue is not going to go away. I am
18 convinced from the conversations that I have with
19 people around the Commonwealth of Virginia that they
20 are ready for an independent redistricting process.
21 The only plausible argument that I've heard against
22 such a process that when can I take the politics out
23 of the redistricting process, and I supposed to an
24 extent that it's very true. But I think that the
25 editorial page of the Richmond Times Dispatch this

1 morning made it to is it really going to be worse
2 than the situation that we have today. I don't say
3 that with the intention of insulting anybody here.
4 But it doesn't appear to me that it's working real
5 well. And I certainly do not think that any of us
6 want to see the federal court control the
7 redistricting process. It's time for an independent
8 process, a fair process, one that encourages rather
9 than discourages competition. We love competition
10 in the business world. We demand it. And, frankly,
11 if a group of business leaders were to get together
12 and split up markets, we wouldn't stand for it. We
13 would probably prosecute them for violations of the
14 law. And yet that is essentially the model we
15 follow in the redistricting process. Thank you,
16 gentlemen.

17 MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

18 Carol Stephens.

19 MS. STEPHENS: Good afternoon. I'm Carol
20 Stephens, president of the Greater Richmond Branch
21 of the American Association of University Women of
22 Virginia. I am here today representing the 1,200
23 members of the AAUW of Virginia.

24 AAUW is a non-profit organization with
25 1,000 local branches and over 170,000 members and

1 supporters nationwide. And since 1881 we have been
2 the leading voice advocating for women and girls,
3 and have taken positions on the leading issues of
4 today.

5 The issue before today's special session of
6 the General Assembly is a leading issue of this day
7 and all days since the founding of our country. The
8 General Assembly's charge today strikes at the heart
9 of our democracy, -- districts a nonpartisan matter
10 based on objective criteria that enables citizens to
11 exercise their right to vote. The AAUW of Virginia
12 stands with 1 Virginia 2021 and other organizations
13 and citizens throughout the Commonwealth in
14 advocating that the General Assembly act in a fair
15 and transparent manner relying upon nonpartisan
16 criteria when redrawing the boundaries of the 3rd
17 congressional district, and when making any other
18 changes to ensure compliance with the federal
19 court's ruling.

20 The federal court has not only given us a
21 mission for today, but also an opportunity for the
22 future. There is ample time between now and 2021
23 when the next regularly scheduled legislative
24 redistricting will occur. To ensure that the
25 redistricting will be conducted under a nonpartisan

1 independent commission using objective criteria. We
2 owe this to the Virginia citizens. Thank you.

3 MR. CHAIRMAN: The next speaker is Sue
4 Lewis.

5 MS. LEWIS: Thank you. My name is Sue
6 Lewis. I am the first vice president of the Legal
7 Women Voters of Virginia and will be reading from a
8 statement that we have prepared for this committee.
9 I live in Charlottesville.

10 As the General Assembly meets in special
11 session to redraw the maps for Virginia
12 congressional districts, the Legal Women Voters of
13 Virginia calls on the General Assembly to ensure
14 that the process is as transparent as possible. We
15 also call on the General Assembly to respect the
16 Virginia constitution requirements for districts
17 that are compact, contiguous and equal in
18 population. Certainly the 3rd congressional
19 district, the subject of the litigation that brings
20 us here today, could in no way be judged as compact
21 or contiguous.

22 We also call on the General Assembly to
23 respect natural geographic boundaries, the
24 boundaries of local jurisdiction and communities of
25 interest. If redistricting is done in a way that is

1 fair and nonpartisan, it will ultimately produce a
2 result that permits democratic processors to
3 flourish in our state and reflect the true political
4 power of minority and other ethnic groups within our
5 increasingly diverse commonwealth.

6 The league continues to urge the General
7 Assembly to create a politically balanced and
8 independent redistricting commission to prepare all
9 future redistricting maps in the state.

10 Last year the bipartisan ethic's commission
11 chaired by former Lieutenant Governor Bill Bolling
12 and former US Representative Rick Boucher, also
13 endorsed the creation of such a commission. We were
14 further gratified when the US Supreme Court recently
15 upheld the constitutionality of such commissions in
16 a case involving Arizona's independent commission.

17 Because of the time pressures in responding
18 to the court order involving the boundaries of the
19 3rd congressional district, the General Assembly may
20 be tempted to dispense with any effort to keep the
21 public informed about its process or to seek their
22 input on proposed plans. That is why it is
23 important for it to promote transparency during this
24 special session. A number of potential starting
25 points have been suggested.

1 The league notes that some of these
2 including the plans developed by the -- and plans
3 suggested by then Governor Bob McDonald's bipartisan
4 advisory commission were developed in the 2010 cycle
5 as independent bipartisan approaches.

6 Consequently these may be a reasonable
7 starting point for the current discussion. It is
8 time to end the practice of letting politicians pick
9 their voters and instead let the voters of our state
10 choose the persons who will represent them. Thank
11 you.

12 MR. CHAIRMAN: Next we have Diane Egozcue.

13 MS. EGOZCUE: Hi, I'm Diane Egozcue. I'm
14 the president of Virginia Now. I will subscribe to
15 everything that has been said and I'm going to keep
16 it short. This is a very simple process especially
17 with all of the computers programs that are around
18 today that would be nonpartisan, if we just put them
19 in the computer and drew a simple map. Thank you
20 very much.

21 MR. CHAIRMAN: Thank you.

22 I apologize. But we got some bad news. I
23 just received word that the senate has adjourned
24 sine die, which means the special session is now
25 over. So I'm going to go ahead and bring this

1 meeting to a close. I apologize to everyone who has
2 traveled, but we are no longer in session. So we
3 can no longer take any action.

4 Again, this is because of the actions of
5 the senate. And I'm not sure what the vote was but
6 you can look that up online. So I'm going to bring
7 this public hearing to a close. I would encourage
8 all of those who didn't come out to go ahead and
9 contact your representatives and let them know how
10 you feel about this, also talk to your senators.

11 But, again, this is due to the actions of
12 the senate. They have adjourned, as I said, and the
13 special session is now over.

14

15 (Session has concluded.)

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CERTIFICATE OF COURT REPORTER

I, Anne M. Nelson, hereby certify that I was the Court Reporter in the General Assembly, Richmond, Virginia on August 17th, 2015.

I further certify that the foregoing transcript is a true and accurate record of the testimony and other incidents of the haring herein.

Given under my hand this 7th day of September, 2015.

/s/ Anne Marie Nelson