IN THE UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
FOR THE MIDDLE DISTRICT OF NORTH CAROLINA

SHAUNA WILLIAMS, et al., *Plaintiffs*, v. REPRESENTATIVE DESTIN HALL, in his official capacity as Chair of the House Standing Committee on Redistricting, et al., *Defendants*	Civil Action No. 23 CV 1057
NORTH CAROLINA STATE CONFERENCE OF THE NAACP, et al., *Plaintiffs*, v. PHILIP BERGER, in his official capacity as the President Pro Tempore of the North Carolina Senate, et al., *Defendants.*	Civil Action No. 23 CV 1104

SUPPLEMENTAL JOINT STIPULATED FACTS

1. The following joint stipulated facts supplement those filed by the parties in June of 2025, *see* Doc. 148 (First Amended Joint Stipulated Facts), to address subsequent events related to the passage of Senate Bill 249 (S.L. 2025-95) ("S.B. 249").

2025 Trial Challenging the 2023 Congressional Plan

2. In June and July of 2025, this Court presided over a full trial on the merits of Plaintiffs' claims challenging the 2023 Congressional Plan.

3. Post-trial briefing on the 2023 Congressional Plan challenge was completed on August 5, 2025.

2025 Redistricting Process

4. On October 20, 2025, Senator Hise introduced S.B. 249 in the Senate Standing Committee on Elections (hereinafter the "Senate Elections Committee"). Along with S.B. 249, Senator Hise presented the 2025 Congressional Plan Criteria he stated were used to draw the congressional plan contained in S.B. 249. A true and accurate copy of the "2025 Congressional Plan Criteria" is provided at Doc. 184-10 (Klein Ex. 9).

5. On October 20, shortly after 10:00am, the Senate Elections Committee met to discuss the proposed S.B. 249. A true and accurate copy of the audio recording of this meeting is provided at Doc. 184-11 (Klein Ex. 10) and a true and accurate copy of the video recording is available on the North Carolina General Assembly's YouTube channel at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=67p7bbT8EYw. A true and accurate copy of the transcript of this meeting is appended as Exhibit A to these Supplemental Stipulated Facts.

6. At the end of the meeting, the Senate Elections Committee voted in favor of S.B. 249.

7. On October 20, 2025, S.B. 249 proceeded to the Senate floor for consideration. A true and accurate copy of the audio recording of the Senate Session is provided at Doc. 184-12 (Klein Ex. 11). A true and accurate copy of the transcript of this meeting is appended as Exhibit B to these Supplemental Stipulated Facts.

8. The Senate took up S.B. 249 for its third reading vote the next morning, on Tuesday, October 21, 2025. A true and accurate copy of the audio recording of this Senate Session is provided at Doc. 184-14 (Klein Ex. 13). A true and accurate copy of the transcript of this meeting is appended as Exhibit C to these Supplemental Stipulated Facts.

9. The bill next moved to the House Select Committee on Redistricting, where it was considered on Tuesday, October 21, 2025. A true and accurate copy of the audio recording is provided at Doc. 184-16 (Klein Ex. 15), and a true and accurate copy of the video recording is available on the North Carolina General Assembly's YouTube channel at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BX4SuqW0b5s. A true and accurate copy of the transcript of this meeting is appended as Exhibit D to these Supplemental Stipulated Facts.

10. The bill was placed on the House Floor calendar for the next day, October 22, 2025. A true and accurate copy of the audio recording of this meeting is provided at Doc. 184-18 (Klein Ex. 17), and a true and accurate copy of the video recording available on the North Carolina General Assembly's YouTube channel at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JW2v_F1tZ0U. A true and accurate copy of the transcript of this meeting is appended as Exhibit E to these Supplemental Stipulated Facts.

The 2025 Amendment to Congressional Districts 1 and 3

11. S.B. 249 became law on October 22, 2025. S.B. 249 amended Section 163-201(a) of the North Carolina General Statutes to change the configurations of Congressional Districts 1 and 3. No other changes to the 2023 Congressional Plan were introduced by S.B. 249.

Defendants

12. Defendants Senator Warren Daniel, Senator Ralph E. Hise, Jr., Senator Brad Overcash, Speaker Destin Hall, President pro *tempore* Philip E. Berger, North Carolina State Board of Elections Executive Director Sam Hayes, North Carolina State Board of Elections Chair Francis X. De Luca, and North Carolina State Board of Elections Member Robert Rucho all maintain the same titles and roles as stipulated in Doc. 148, and are all sued in their official capacities only.

13. Defendant Hugh Blackwell is sued in his official capacity as the co-chair of the House Select Committee on Redistricting.

Additional Joint Stipulations

14. The parties agree that the Court may consider expert reports and witness declarations submitted in support of or in opposition to Plaintiffs' motions for preliminary injunction regardless of whether that witness or expert testifies at the November 19, 2025, preliminary injunction hearing.

15. The parties agree that any documentary evidence presented during the November 19, 2025, preliminary injunction hearing will be limited to: (1) documents and transcription of any testimony already admitted on the trial record; and (2) materials filed

with the preliminary injunction papers on the deadlines set by the Court, and (3) any documents and recordings from the legislative record of S.B. 249 from the ncleg.gov website. The parties agree that they may ask the Court to consider documents deemed appropriate for judicial notice and/or statements by a party-opponent subject to objections by other parties.

Respectfully submitted this, the 18th day of November, 2025.

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NORTH CAROLINA GENERAL ASSEMBLY

SENATE ELECTIONS COMMITTEE

OCTOBER 20, 2025

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CHAIRMAN DANIEL: The committee will come to order. Members will take their seats.

I want to first thank our sergeant-at-arms: Gary Bridges, Tequila Cogdill, John Enloe, Dwight Green, Sherry Hedrick, Mike Norton. Thank you for being here. I appreciate your work.

We have one bill on the calendar today. First let's go ahead and -- sergeant-at-arms, go ahead and pass out the bill. Pass that out to the members.

What the members should be getting, you'll have a copy of a congressional map along with a bill. There should be a stat pack attached to that, and then you also receive a copy of the criteria.

Did they give you a copy?

Does every member of the committee have a copy of the materials?

All right. So the bill before the committee today will be Senate Bill 249. It's proposed committee substitute. Do I have a motion that the committee consider the PCS?

Senator Amy Galey.

All in favor of the motion say aye.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: All opposed no.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS: No.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: The ayes have it. Senate Bill 249 is before the committee.

Just for the schedule of today, we'll have -- Senator Hise will explain the bill, then, of course, we'll have member discussion, have the opportunity for members to present amendments, if desired. And then when that -- when we've gone through that, we'll have time for public comment.

We do have about I think 30 members of the public that have signed up to speak. So once we see how much time we have remaining in the committee, we'll determine how much time each speaker will get to speak. And for those of you who maybe wished to speak publicly but weren't able to sign up because of the cutoff, then I would just remind the public that the portal is still open online for public comments to be submitted through there.

So, Senator Hise, you are recognized to explain the bill.

SENATOR HISE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Members of committee, the motivation behind this redraw is simple and singular: Draw a new map that will bring an additional Republican seat to the North Carolina congressional delegation.

Republicans hold a razor-thin margin in the United States House of Representatives, and if Democrats flip four seats in the upcoming midterm elections, they will take control of the House and torpedo President Trump's agenda.

This is a political arms race that Republicans did not start. Democrat-controlled states across the country adopted far more aggressive gerrymanders that systematically diluted Republican votes. To take an example from last week alone, Barack Obama was featured in an ad campaign endorsing California Governor Gavin Newsom's efforts to double down on California's already severe political gerrymander.

President Trump has called on Republican-controlled states across the country to fight fire with fire. This map answers that call. In fact, on Friday, President Trump signaled his support for this plan.

Before I discuss the specifics of the changes we propose, I will address one other preliminary matter. To be clear, consistent with our practices in 2003 and 2001, absolutely no racial data was used in the creation of this map. I stood before this committee two years ago and talked about our decision not to include racial data in the congressional and legislative plans. Those words are worth repeating today.

The predominant use of race to draw districts violates the US Constitution unless doing so serves a compelling government interest. In other words, if the legislature draws districts predominantly based upon race without a compelling interest, those districts would be declared illegal, racial gerrymanders.

As for the Voting Rights Act, in order for the predominant use of race to be justified under Section 2, there must be a strong basis in evidence of three Gingles preconditions. Even assuming the presence of three Gingles preconditions, the use of race to draw districts must also be supported by the totality of circumstances. This was true then, and it's true now.

Past decisions and court records demonstrate that there is no evidence of three Gingles preconditions in North Carolina. In fact, just weeks ago a federal court told us in a case concerning senate districts in the northeastern part of the state that there was no evidence of legally significant racially polarized voting that would require a majority-minority district.

In the absence of any evidence of the three Gingles preconditions, the chairs elected not to use race in the drawing of these proposed districts strictly to protect the state from lawsuits alleging illegal racial gerrymandering.

To be clear, the chairs do not believe that the use of racial data would have been helpful in reaching any political or other legislative redistricting goals. Any political consideration in line drawing have been informed by political data and not racial data.

Now, the plan before you.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Senator Hise, I think you may have said in your comments 2001, 2003, but I think you meant 2021 and 2023.

SENATOR HISE: Yes.

Now the plan before you. The new congressional plan makes no changes to 12 of the 14 districts. The only districts that are changed in the new proposal are NC 1 and NC 3.

The following changes in the new congressional plan consistent of the following: Greene, Lenoir, Wayne, and Wilson counties are moved from District 1 to District 3.

Beaufort, Carteret, Craven, Dare, Hyde, and Pamlico counties are moved from District 3 to District 1.

To balance population of the two districts, 4,853 people, according to the 2020 census numbers, out of the 204,576 in Onslow county, that is 2.4 percent, are moved from District 3 to District 1. The split occurs in Swansboro precinct, leaving much of the town in one district, NC 1, as possible minimizing the municipal split.

As I stated previously, the motivation behind this new plan is straightforward: The new congressional map improves Republican political strength in eastern North Carolina. It moves NC District 1 from a district where President Trump earned 51 percent of the vote in

2024 to 55 percent of the vote, an increase of four points.

To balance strength, NC 3 loses the same amount NC 1 gains, four points moving from a 60 percent President Trump performance in the previous map to a 56 performance in the new map.

The end result is a congressional map that should perform to elect 11 Republicans.

Not only does the new congressional map better improve Republican political strength in eastern North Carolina, giving Republican candidates a better opportunity to win in NC 1, the new map adheres to traditional redistricting principles. Importantly, it is more compact than the current districts in all recognized measures.

Here's a comparison of the overall map NC 1 and NC 3.

The Reock measure of compactness is always between 0 and 1, with 1 being the most compact. The 2023 congressional plan has a maximum Reock score of 0.59. The 2024 plan improves the maximum Reock score to 0.60.

The '23 congressional plan has a mean Reock score of 0.40. The 2024 plan improves the

mean Reock score to 0.42.

In NC 1, the 2023 congressional plan has a Reock score of 0.42. In the 2024 plan, the Reock score for NC 1 improves to 0.49.

NC 3 in the 2023 plan has a Reock score of 0.37. In the 2024 plan, the Reock score for NC 3 improves to 0.60.

The Polsby-Popper measure of compactness also is always between 0 and 1, with 1 being the most compact. The '2023 congressional plan has a max Polsby-Popper score of 0.29. The 2024 plan improves the max Polsby-Popper score to 0.33.

The 2023 congressional plan has a mean Polsby-Popper score of 0.24. The 2024 plan improves the mean Polsby-Popper score to 0.25.

NC District 1 in the 2023 plan has a Polsby-Popper score of 0.27. In this plan, the Polsby-Popper score for NC 1 improves to 0.33.

In NC 3 in the 2023 congressional plan has a Polsby-Popper score of 0.25. In the 2024 plan, the Polsby-Popper score for NC 3 improves to 0.26.

In both of the recognized measures of compactness, Reock and Polsby-Popper, both NC 1

and NC 3 as well as the map as a whole are more compact in the new plan than the 2023 plan.

I'd be happy to answer any questions you may have, and the map before us.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Senator Hise, I think a couple times you said the 2024 plan. Did you mean the 2025 plan?

SENATOR HISE: I mean the current plan that's before us.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: So anything you said 2024, you meant this map, 2025.

SENATOR HISE: Yes.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: All right. Just wanted to clarify that.

All right. Senator Batch.

SENATOR BATCH: Thank you, Chair. Just a preliminary matter so that we allow enough time for people who want to speak from the public.

Do you know how long you're allowing for this committee to go on today?

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: We potentially could be here for up to two hours.

SENATOR BATCH: Okay. Thank you.

And then I have a series of questions.

Do you want me to direct them individually and ask each time?

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Do you have an approximate number of questions?

SENATOR BATCH: Yes. I have about four.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: So why don't you just be recognized for a series of questions.

SENATOR BATCH: That would be fabulous. Thank you so much.

Good morning, Senator Hise.

When was the decision made to redraw the maps?

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Senator Hise, you're recognized to answer a series of questions.

SENATOR HISE: The decision has not yet been made to draw these maps. The proposal is before the committee, and the decision will be made by the full House and the Senate this week that's coming in.

We began drawing these districts, I believe it was Monday, October 13th is when we began looking at alternatives to propose before the committee, but the General Assembly as a whole is the one who will make decisions as to

changing the maps.

SENATOR BATCH: And what communications have the Senate Republicans had with the White House and the president regarding these maps, this map?

SENATOR HISE: I've had no direct communication with the White House or others. There are obviously some tweets out there and others that are in public domain. I think the president has endorsed -- as I said, the president has endorsed our proposal for doing it. There has been a broader public discussion, but I have not been connected directly by the president or by the White House staff.

SENATOR BATCH: Do you know if any of Senator Berger or leadership staff in the Senate Republican Caucus have had communication with the White House?

SENATOR HISE: I cannot speak to other people's communications.

SENATOR BATCH: The current congressional map, as you are aware, is being challenged in federal court, NAACP versus Berger. So my question is why draw a new congressional map now rather than wait on the

decision after this summer's trial concluded?

SENATOR HISE: To respond, I think clearly that California has moved ahead in an attempt to move multiple seats towards Democrats, and it is important in that timeline that we respond.

SENATOR BATCH: On that matter specifically, it's my understanding that California has sent it to the people of California to determine whether they want new maps.

Are you open to sending it to North Carolinians for the decision about whether or not we want new maps before drawing this?

SENATOR HISE: Our process in the State of North Carolina is that legislative districts are passed by the General Assembly. I think California had some process that involved independent redistricting commissions that were out there that they completely bypassed and chose another route to go for doing that.

We will remain consistent with how we pass maps in the State of North Carolina.

SENATOR BATCH: Was any effort made to remedy or litigate the alleged violations from

the 2023 map that were challenged in court?

SENATOR HISE: There are no violations. There is no such ruling.

SENATOR BATCH: And what is the committee doing to ensure public participation in drawing these new maps outside of public comment on the portal?

SENATOR HISE: We're open for public comment this morning. We've had the portal open I think since Thursday to receive comments from the public.

SENATOR BATCH: And will any public hearings be held as they have been in the past, prior to this map going to the Senate floor for a vote?

SENATOR HISE: This map is drawn under the same data and proposals that all the other previous maps in this decade were drawn, and so we continue to have all the public comment as to how maps should look and how they should be drawn in North Carolina.

We're receiving different -- additional input regards to this change, but nothing has changed in the data, and we do not intend to schedule additional public hearings outside of

the House committees that may take it up and may have public comment available at those as well.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Senator Batch, is that all your questions?

All right. Senator Smith.

SENATOR SMITH: Thank you. I would like to also be recognized for a series of questions.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Do you know about how many questions you have, Senator?

SENATOR SMITH: About three or four.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: All right. You're recognized for a series of questions.

And, Senator Hise, you're recognized to answer those.

SENATOR SMITH: Thank you so much.

So in listening to your answers, Senator Hise, I guess I'm hearing some semantics about the maps because we're looking at one right here in front of us that has been drawn for consideration.

So when and where was this map drawn?

SENATOR HISE: We set up software with staff in our committee room that's been the same since we drew before. I think it's the

conference room outside of my office at 301 for those software system. That's where we went in to draw the map. All the same data was available on the map that was available at the previous draws, excluding racial information. And we had multiple central staff members and others that assisted with that process.

SENATOR SMITH: Okay. And can you tell me when this happened.

SENATOR HISE: First we drew was on Monday of last week. I believe that was Monday the 13th, October, and had the room open through Thursday as we put out the proposals and those kind of things. And it was published online on the committee website.

SENATOR SMITH: Okay. Next question:

Did you collaborate with Democrats with this? Did you invite Democrats to the table to look at those maps? Because these maps affect Democrats and Republicans, right, constituents.

SENATOR HISE: On the Thursday at I believe -- I don't have -- I'm looking to see if I have a time we posted. I think it's around 3:00 p.m., 3:53 p.m. that we sent out and posted the map for all the public to see for this

proposal before the committee meeting today.

SENATOR SMITH: Okay. So, again, just for the public, but I'm saying for the Democratic members who represent like you do in the senate, did you invite them to the table to assist with this map that you put out on Monday the 13th for the drawing to happen?

SENATOR HISE: I do not represent Democrats in the senate. I represent nine counties in western North Carolina.

But, no, there were no Democrats involved in the process of the drawing.

SENATOR SMITH: Thank you.

So you talked about the numbers of constituents that were moved. How did the committee or the mapmaker, whoever that was, decide which counties to move between CD 1 and CD 3?

SENATOR HISE: It was a move for changing the directions. We looked at what the political outcome was of all of the counties as well as the VTDs in eastern North Carolina as we were trying to balance the electoral outcomes of the two districts coming in and trying to move that margin from a -- basically a 60/50 split

closer to a 55 split. That decision was made on that basis.

SENATOR SMITH: Okay. And was any outside consulting or law firm paid with public dollars to assist in these maps?

SENATOR HISE: I received no assistance from any outside consulting or other law firms in drawing these maps.

SENATOR SMITH: Last question: I was listening to some of the answers that you shared, and you personally did not speak with anyone from the White House.

SENATOR HISE: That is correct.

SENATOR SMITH: Your peers. You've seen some tweets that they put something out. I heard someone ask you about the citizens' feedback, and you said we're going to get that today.

And so in your opinion, is there a possibility that with citizen feedback that these maps will possibly change or based on what you received from your peers, speaking with whomever from the White House, it's going to stay the same regardless?

SENATOR HISE: I have reviewed comments

through I think it was this morning was the cutoff time with coming in. I am proposing no amendments or changes to the proposal that is before the committee.

What changes -- we are still open for amendments to come from the members of the committee here. Obviously, with any bill, amendments can come on the floor of the senate and whatever will convince the body to make its final decision will be part of that process.

SENATOR SMITH: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Senator Mayfield, same protocol?

SENATOR MAYFIELD: Yes, please.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Go ahead.

SENATOR MAYFIELD: Thank you.

Before I get to my questions -- well, actually, I guess this is a question.

Senator Hise, you just -- you just said that you do not represent Democrats. I know a lot of Democrats who live in your district. Are you suggesting that you don't represent them?

SENATOR HISE: I do not represent senators that are Democrats.

SENATOR MAYFIELD: Senators. Okay.

Sorry.

SENATOR HISE: That was a specific comment made from Senator Smith is that I represented the senators, and I do not represent the senators.

SENATOR SMITH: That is not what I said.

SENATOR MAYFIELD: I understand. Just want to be clear because -- about who we represent in our districts which in my view is everybody, whether they voted for us or not.

I would also like to make a preliminary point. You continue to reference that North Carolina is acting in response to California. I would like to make the point about who started this dance, and Texas started this dance in response to a request from our president. So we wouldn't be in this dance if it were not for our president having made a request to Texas, Texas having kowtowed and complied with that request, and California acting in response.

So just let's just do away with the fiction that California has started this process. They have not. Everybody in the

country knows that, and it is frankly shocking to me that the intelligent and thoughtful Republicans that I work with continue to perpetuate this fiction. So I hope we can just do away with that. It's a nice message. I get why you're doing it. It's the national message. It is also completely and utterly false and everyone knows it, including every Republican in this room.

All right. Now, on to my questions.

How long will the public portal be open for comment?

SENATOR HISE: For right now, as we don't have votes scheduled, the public portal I think is intended to be open until Thursday while we are in session.

SENATOR MAYFIELD: Thank you.

And I think Senator Batch asked this question. I'm just going to ask it again since this is all happening rapidly and both for me and for the public.

So was there any effort made to remedy the alleged violations in the 2023 map that were challenge in court?

SENATOR HISE: I think it is obvious as

part of that lawsuit that we did not find any violations with the 2023 map. No court has ruled that there are violations in the 2023 map, and I adamantly believe we complied with all federal and state laws in drawing the 2023 maps and see nothing that needs to be remedied by this process.

SENATOR MAYFIELD: Okay. Thank you.

And did the committee -- and you may have just answered this, but I'm going to ask it anyway.

Did the committee that draw this map identify any other issues with the prior congressional map that you attempted to address in this map?

SENATOR HISE: I did not identify any additional things that had to be remedied other than the breakdown of the districts within eastern North Carolina and how they would produce Republican representatives.

SENATOR MAYFIELD: Okay. I think you've also answered this question, but I'm going to ask it again.

Were partisan performance data included in the drawing of this map?

SENATOR HISE: Depending what you mean bipartisan performing data, the answer is yes. What we looked at particularly were election outcomes that are available in your stat pack for multiple races. Obviously, we focused most on this does have the 2024 data which we've not had in an opportunity to draw before, so there's a lot looking at the 2024, especially the presidential elections.

SENATOR MAYFIELD: Thank you.

And were incumbent addresses used in the drawing of this map?

SENATOR HISE: I do believe they are available. As I said, I did not put them on maps I was particularly drawing, but I am generally aware where Representative Murphy and others live.

SENATOR MAYFIELD: You mean Representative Davis?

SENATOR HISE: Yes.

SENATOR MAYFIELD: And again, I think you've said this, but can you explain why those political factors were relevant in the drawing of this map?

SENATOR HISE: Redistricting, as the

courts have ruled, is a political process that both the State Supreme Court and the North Carolina Supreme Court, and how we express that in data centers is the results of prior elections.

SENATOR MAYFIELD: Just three more questions, Mr. Chair.

You have passed out the criteria that you used. And if you -- so my question is, I guess, did you use all of these criteria, or which of these criteria did you use in terms of compactness, contiguity, equal population, all of that? And was there an order -- a priority order in your use of these criteria?

SENATOR HISE: The criteria are not listed in any type of priority. There are criteria that are part of this plan that are absolutes criteria. Whether a district is contiguous is something we've always considered as absolute. Whether or not it meets equal population is something that the district could not or should not be proposed without doing that.

We have been through kind of all of these things like compactness. We've had two

scores that are out there. We improved on both, but obviously we're not creating districts with a compactness score of 1. That would be impossible. So we look at compactness as how it performs on those two scores, but it's not an absolute criteria that if it's not .47, no standard was set that it would have to meet.

So in that sense there is a priority to these, but there's nothing in the manner in which they are ordered in our criteria that lists what were priority, but there are innately some of those criteria that I see as absolutes.

SENATOR MAYFIELD: So maybe you can just elaborate on that a little bit. And I realize -- I think the way you answered it is that they're not listed in priority order here.

My question is more as you thought about drafting this map, can you give us, you know, a rundown of what you -- your priority in thinking about this map?

SENATOR HISE: I think that -- if I go through them individually, I think this committee has decided for several iterations of redrawing that not using racial data is an absolute and would not consider any map that had

used racial data.

Equal population is fairly defined, although Senator Blue has made some arguments that you could add variation, but I think we have a one-person-in-six-district variation that -- six districts are one person less than the ideal population number. That's with coming in.

We have seen no indication that any part of our maps don't apply with federal law. If we believe that, obviously, we're not doing things that would violate federal law.

We do look at traditional redistricting principles: Compactness, contiguity, respect for political subdivisions. Up for -- other than continuous, not having districts in two places, not -- I think all of those would be subjective to the drawers. And there are things we try to maximize more than absolutes. And I think that covers them. Sometimes we have to divide political subdivisions because of equal population, but we always try to minimize any of those divisions.

SENATOR MAYFIELD: And I assume political considerations with the first one on

this and the first one that you mentioned that was also an absolute.

SENATOR HISE: We did not set every district has to perform at X percentage. We took districts that were 60 percent Donald Trump performance and a 51 percent Donald Trump and tried to move those to even districts towards 55. I think we got them to 56, 54. So it is something we tried to maximize versus an absolute.

SENATOR MAYFIELD: And would you and the committee that you worked with to draw these maps support the use of these same criteria by an independent commission?

SENATOR HISE: The committee can speak for what the committee would support.

I do not support abdicating the authority of the General Assembly to an independent committee.

SENATOR MAYFIELD: You mentioned that the Swansboro precinct is split. Is that the only county and municipality that is split on this map?

SENATOR HISE: That is an additional split in this map from the --

SENATOR MAYFIELD: It's the only additional.

SENATOR HISE: -- from the previous map.

I think if you look at in Granville county, that county is split with District 1, but that's been the same split that's been there for multiple years. There may be others of those. That is the additional division that recurred when we shifted the counties.

SENATOR MAYFIELD: So just to follow up, the Swansboro is the only additional one.

SENATOR HISE: Correct.

SENATOR MAYFIELD: And can you talk about why that -- why Swansboro was chosen as opposed to any other place where you needed to pick up I think it was a little over 4,000 folks?

SENATOR HISE: For those -- for -- when you look at the border between the -- after you've shifted the counties and you have to balance population, when you look at those borders, it's political performance was most in line with trying to move the entire districts to the balance we were looking for.

SENATOR MAYFIELD: So again, it was political considerations that drove that?

SENATOR HISE: It was.

SENATOR MAYFIELD: Okay. Thank you.

Final question: And I know that you used 2020 census data to draw these maps. We're obviously aware of more recent census data.

So do you have a sense of which of these two districts is maybe overpopulated based on that new census data? Yeah, I guess that's my question.

SENATOR HISE: I would argue there is not new census data. The census is collected only once every ten years, and it is the actual only count of the population that we do. The census bureau does put out estimates from that point on, and we have never used estimates, and I would actually believe are not allowed to use estimates for that process. It's only the constitutionally mandated decennial numbers that drive this process.

SENATOR MAYFIELD: Agreed. That makes sense.

Were you -- and thank you for that correction on the census data.

Were you aware of or was anyone in the process of drawing this map aware of those population estimates done by the -- done by the federal government? And did -- were folks in the room drawing these maps aware of that whether -- regardless of whether it influenced the map at all?

SENATOR HISE: I am not aware of how those estimates have impacted what would be District 1 and 3 or how they would reset in 2030. I have not looked at any of that data. That data was not available as part of the data system that -- for this drawing.

SENATOR MAYFIELD: Thank you.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Senator Robinson.

SENATOR ROBINSON: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Do you have a series of questions as well?

SENATOR ROBINSON: Yes, and a statement.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Do you want to say your statement first?

SENATOR ROBINSON: Yes. Yes. It doesn't matter. I'll include it.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Do you know about how many questions you might have?

SENATOR ROBINSON: About six.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Okay. You choose your order, then.

SENATOR ROBINSON: Okay. I usually do.

Senator Hise, I know that you have said that no racial data was used, but did you consider using race in compliance with the voting act, Voting Rights Act?

SENATOR HISE: No. As I said earlier, all of our court rulings and others, there is no evidence of the Gingles preconditions that would require -- that would require the use of race in its totality, and we have made the decision on multiple draws of congress to not use race, and we continued with that process.

SENATOR ROBINSON: Are you aware that in the past the Supreme Court said that race could be a factor in drawing maps even though it didn't have to be the primary one?

SENATOR HISE: Assuming that the three Gingles preconditions are met and that the totality of the district requires the use of race that you could. We do not believe those

exist, therefore do not believe that we could or should use race for drawing maps.

SENATOR ROBINSON: Okay. Thank you.

Now, are you aware or do you consider that [unintelligible]. You cut my -- did you cut it off?

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: I don't even know how to do that, but I might -- let me see. There it went. I did it. I turned it back on.

SENATOR ROBINSON: Okay. Did you consider that you diluted the representation of the black population in terms of having a representative that actually is a person of their choice?

SENATOR HISE: I did not. We have not considered any racial data in the drawing of these maps or any implications as to how particular race groups have voted or selected as a candidate of their choosing.

SENATOR ROBINSON: You do know that there are only three black representatives in congress. Aren't you aware of that?

SENATOR HISE: I am aware it's a low number.

SENATOR ROBINSON: Okay. You made it a

low number.

The other thing is did the mapmaker or whoever drew the maps have access to racial data?

SENATOR HISE: I did not, and I am the one who drew the maps.

SENATOR ROBINSON: You are. Okay. Okay.

What partisan -- I think Senator Mayfield asked a question about partisan data in terms of drawing the map.

Was socioeconomic data included in drawing these maps, or did you consider any socioeconomic data?

SENATOR HISE: As far as I'm aware, socioeconomic data, we didn't have a specific prohibition from that, but it is not part of the data system, is not included in the stat pack reports that you have depending on how you're defining socioeconomic data, but, right, it's not part of the process.

SENATOR ROBINSON: I think you define it in a way that the federal government defines it.

SENATOR HISE: We looked at political

data. We look at geographic boundaries. We look at municipal boundaries, all that information is in there. I think we include campuses, where the campuses are and how those maps are available. Age is part of the breakdown so -- but we don't have votes and compelled in age. So that's the data we have. It's all available in the stat pack, everything that's in the system.

SENATOR ROBINSON: So you did include socioeconomic data?

SENATOR HISE: In partial, I'm not aware of any income data that's available in the system.

SENATOR ROBINSON: Okay. Under the current political map, how many of the 14 districts are now competitive based on what you've done?

SENATOR HISE: Wherever you set the standards of competitive. If it's at 56, 57 percent, does that make it a competitive district, then the answer is up to 11 districts that are competitive within the system. If you lower that number to 51, then none of the districts would be considered competitive.

SENATOR ROBINSON: Considering that North Carolina is basically a 50/50 state or 40/40, you know, plus independent, how does this 11/3 plan reflect the fact that our state's overall electorate is evenly distributed?

SENATOR HISE: It doesn't, quite simply, that's with coming in. Map drawing is much more of a district and land based that's with coming in. By no stretch of the imagination would 50 percent of the VTDs in the state. It would be a 50/50 VTD divided state.

If you looked at it in that manner, what you find if you look at the entire North Carolina is Democrats have very concentrated distributions into smaller areas of the state. The vast majority of the state would be red or would be a Republican area.

As you divide geographies and up, it doesn't necessarily balance to population unless you were to start breaking and cracking all of those highly concentrated areas for the sole purpose of balancing that number.

I think every court we've seen have rejected to this point any concept that we set some predetermined goal of balance and that we

are required to meet that.

SENATOR ROBINSON: Okay. So that cracking is why fast-growing and diverse populations like in Wake, Guilford, and Mecklenburg have been fractured rather than kept intact.

SENATOR HISE: In general, it means that they are concentrated into more congressional districts -- fewer congressional districts.

What we have done in the past is that the --

SENATOR ROBINSON: I don't understand that. Tell me. Guilford has three congressional districts in it as opposed to one or two, two at most. So tell me --

SENATOR HISE: Yes. As I've said before on previous maps, nothing is changing in Guilford on this particular map. I do need to emphasize that, but our intent is to keep as many counties whole as possible and by therefore putting additional divides into larger counties means that more counties are kept whole as then the map in its entirety. And, for example, with Mecklenburg, it must be divided, so dividing it

twice means the number of counties divided are less.

SENATOR ROBINSON: So my final question: Did anyone give you input regarding how races might be impacted regarding this map?

SENATOR HISE: No, we have received no information regarding specifically legally significant racially polarized voting. And so I think the committee in multiple meetings over drawing the previous maps asked for that on multiple occasions. Nothing was ever submitted. And, no, we've not received any information regarding race on this map.

SENATOR ROBINSON: Okay. Well, my final comment is did you consider that North Carolina -- or your Republicans consider that President Trump is actually doing what's unconstitutional?

SENATOR HISE: President Trump has made a request. We are fully within our constitutional rights to redraw the congressional districts of the state of North Carolina, as the Democrats have historically as far back at least as the '60s we can find mid decade draws from the Democrats.

This is fully within our constitutional authority, and we are exercising it. The president can make requests and supports and others, but we're making the choice to move forward.

SENATOR ROBINSON: Was this ever done by a president before?

SENATOR HISE: It's not being done by a president now.

SENATOR ROBINSON: Did president Obama do this?

SENATOR HISE: It's not being done by a president now either.

SENATOR ROBINSON: Yes, it is.

Thank you, Mr. Chair.

SENATOR HISE: I drew these maps.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Senator Mohammed, do you have a series of questions?

SENATOR MOHAMMED: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Yes, a series of questions for the sponsor.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Do you know about how many questions you have?

SENATOR MOHAMMED: Probably three or four.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: All right. You're recognized.

And, Senator Hise, you're recognized to respond.

SENATOR MOHAMMED: Thank you, Senator Daniel.

So first of all, Senator Hise, thank you so much for coming out bluntly and acknowledging the scheme of this body to essentially give President Trump a 11th yes man from this General Assembly and this congressional map.

With that being said, my question to you is did you as -- as you acknowledge as the mapmaker, did you reach out to legislative counsel or outside experts and get a written opinion about does this map actually comply with the United States Constitution, the North Carolina Constitution?

SENATOR HISE: I have multiple conversations with our counsel about what we're doing. I've been involved with them in multiple cases up to this point about what are the authorities of North Carolina.

Outside of our counsel, I have

consulted -- we have consulted with no one independent district people or whatever else in regard to that process.

SENATOR MOHAMMED: Thank you, Senator Hise.

Senator Hise, question for you. And my apologies if I don't know this about your background, but can you tell me, are you from North Carolina? Were you born and raised in this state?

SENATOR HISE: I was.

SENATOR MOHAMMED: You're pretty aware of this state and the demographics of this state, I would say.

SENATOR HISE: I was born and raised in western North Carolina. I have general knowledge of the demographics of this state, not specific memorized data that would be utilized for any of those purposes.

SENATOR MOHAMMED: But you essentially have basic common knowledge of where people live in this great state.

SENATOR HISE: Sometimes you would agree I have basic common knowledge, sometimes you wouldn't, but I appreciate the compliment.

SENATOR MOHAMMED: With that being said, Senator Hise, and I'm so thankful for your intelligent mind and that you're so familiar with this wonderful state.

So that being said, I'm pretty sure that you have common knowledge that there's a heavily black voting bloc in eastern North Carolina which would be Congressional District 1.

SENATOR HISE: I would say that I am aware that District 1 has a higher minority population than the state average that's coming in, but to any specifics beyond that and whether or not I would characterize it as heavy or anyone else would characterize it as heavy for an entire congressional district.

Congressional District 1 is not and was not a majority-minority district.

SENATOR MOHAMMED: So, Senator Hise, you've brought up again and again that you haven't taken any racial data in the drawing of this map, correct?

SENATOR HISE: That is correct.

SENATOR MOHAMMED: So my question for you is just looking at the clear review of this

map based on your previous map where you had a ten Republican map and four Democratic map, and you look at the new numbers on this map, it's clear that you've diluted the black voting population in this new map. It's just a fact.

So with that being said, I just want to get from you, are you telling me essentially you've provided no safeguards to make sure that we are complying with the Voting Rights Act, specifically Section 2, to ensure that we are not diluting a specific group's voting population?

And the reason I say that is that because the people in this room and people outside of this room probably need to understand that the whole reason you have the Voting Rights Act is to make sure that people -- people, not politicians, have a meaningful opportunity to influence the outcome of an election, not predetermine as this map does.

So I just want to get from you that you're telling me that there are essentially no safeguards with your line of answers that you've previously made to my colleagues and myself.

SENATOR HISE: What I will repeat, as

I've said multiple times, there is no evidence submitted to this committee or others that the Gingles criteria were met and that therefore we were required to draw a district that met the majority-minority standards that's coming in. Therefore we did not consider it at all in that -- in that process.

What we did is that we created -- we took a map that had performed with one district 60 percent for the Republican presidential candidate, the other district at 51, we've created new districts that were closer to 55 and have no specific information on to what move of minorities or not move of minorities may have changed that even at this [unintelligible].

SENATOR MOHAMMED: My next question, Senator Hise, is so in the past I've been appreciative of this body where we've had public hearings and we've been able to get feedback from constituents in different parts of the state and get their thoughts on the proposed maps that you've set forth, the criteria.

Why not follow that process? What's the rush? Why do we have -- why do we have to see this map I believe on Friday and here we are

on Monday without an opportunity to have public hearings, especially in District 1 and District 3 where these people are directly impacted through their representation that they may or may not like or want and would want to share with you their thoughts? Why not have that public hearing.

SENATOR HISE: I would say it was actually on Thursday that those were put out and available, not Friday, and the public comment portal has been open. Comments about the map in general or proposed maps in general have been made multiple times since we drew the maps in 2022. There is no need to reengage in that process again.

I think we can put out the public comments that have come in to this point. I'm not aware of any them as I have been through them that actually dealt with any specific information about what a district should look like or what communities of interest should be preferred or anything around traditional redistricting principles.

There's a lot of partisan comments that are in those comments or how bad and evil we are

for doing things that are there, but I will leave it at that.

SENATOR MOHAMMED: Senator Hise, again, I appreciate the public portal that you've made available to the public, but as leaders, we're supposed to be stewards.

So don't you believe that it's incumbent upon us to go out to the people and hear from them before we just make decisions about the future of their life?

Because what folks needs to understand, and I'm sure you understand, the whole reason we're here, it's not about these maps, it's because this specific decision is going to impact education, it's going to impact opportunity, jobs, access to healthcare and a whole host of things.

And we can defer on opinions on how we go about certain issues, but I would think as a leader, you would want to go out to the people that are going to be affected by this map and directly hear from them, do you not?

SENATOR HISE: We are open to hear from them. When we have talked about the maps in general, there were multiple occasions in 2022,

2023. Occasions in '23 to hear public comments. We had those all over the state.

With the exception of the availability of 2024 election data, the data has not changed since any of the those. The population data is the same for those areas which is the basis of drawing the maps. We did not feel that having additional public forums was necessary.

SENATOR MOHAMMED: So, Senator Hise, my last comment and question for you:

As a proud citizen and taxpayer of this great state, I'm extremely bothered that my hard-earned tax dollars, like I'm sure you do, go to costly litigation instead of going to education and roads and infrastructure and so many different things that we could do for this great state.

So how confident are you that this plan, once again, won't lead you to costly litigation, tax dollars, hard-earned tax dollars that are going to be used for litigation defending these maps instead of using our money and being good stewards again and using those hard-earned tax dollars the right way?

SENATOR HISE: All I can say is that I

am confident that these maps will be upheld by the courts, by the federal courts. I'm assuming that's where someone would try to bring cases. By the rulings of the US Supreme Court, by the panels we've had, I'm confident that these meet the laws. I can't determine beyond that.

Once we're in compliance, why I'm responsible for defending litigation when our maps are perfectly legal, I don't understand, but we will defend these maps, and I am confident that they will be upheld by the courts.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Senator Batch.

SENATOR BATCH: Thank you. I just have a few -- be recognized for a series of questions. I have about three follow-ups.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: You're recognized for a series, and Senator Hise is recognized to respond.

SENATOR BATCH: Thank you.

Senator Hise, did you consult with either congressman Davis or Murphy regarding this map?

SENATOR HISE: I did not and have spoken with neither.

SENATOR BATCH: And who else was involved in helping you draw this map?

SENATOR HISE: Staff support, central staff. There were several members of central staff that were there while we were drawing as well as pro tem staff which generally assists us on all the drawings.

I was the only member involved in the drawing of the map in the room.

SENATOR BATCH: Did you consult with any of your Senate Republican colleagues or House Republican colleagues in drawing the map?

SENATOR HISE: The map was available to them before it was posted to the public, but I did not have those consultations before drawing.

SENATOR BATCH: And there are several times that you said "we" throughout your remarks. Who is the "we" when you speak of this? Is this the general Republican caucus, et cetera?

SENATOR HISE: When things like what you have here for the criteria and others would be discussing with the "we" as the chairs. When I'm discussing about actual drawing in the room, it is myself who directs the drawing as well as

central staff that implements it and legal counsel that advises me that are part of our staff.

SENATOR BATCH: And you made a comment before that you were within your constitutional right to draw maps even if it's mid decade.

But isn't it true that this is the first time mid decade that congressional maps have been drawn without a mandate from a court?

SENATOR HISE: I believe the last time it occurred without a mandate from the court was in the '60s. That's actually an article I read. The Democrats redrew mid district in the 1960s. I believe that was on WRAL. That's as far as I could verify that concept.

But obviously redriven -- redone many times. For example, in '22, there was -- after the 2022 maps there was no court order to redrawn them, but the maps the court had drawn expired after two years when they had put in temporary interim maps, there was no court order requiring us to redraw them. We obviously did redraw those maps, so there may be some other iterations for that if you go back in history, but I'm sure someone in research or the

staff could give us better information, but I can't really give you a lot before I was born.

SENATOR BATCH: And just a comment. I think that there's a lot of back and forth that we have in this building of Democrats used to do it this way, Democrats used to do it this way.

What I would say is it's incumbent upon all of us to learn from history and to do the right thing. Historically speaking, slavery was legal, right. Smoking inside buildings was legal. We have changed the laws because we have realized that the actions in the past have been very detrimental to our democracy.

And so when want to go ahead and say what has happened in history, all of us can come up with examples in history of which we were wrong and that we have tried to correct those harms. I think this is now a time in history where we will look back when this map is passed because we cannot stop it and find that this was absolutely against every single democratic principle that this country was founded on.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Senator Mayfield.

SENATOR MAYFIELD: Sorry. One follow-up question.

Was the public notified that the map drawing room was open? And were they -- was the public -- would the public have been allowed into that room to watch this process?

SENATOR HISE: No. The drafting process of any bill has never been public. We have in the past opened up I believe it was this room where we did drawing and had it broadcast in others and allowed viewers in the back of the room. We did not do that in the previous iterations of the map and have not done it with these maps here.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Senator Robinson.

SENATOR ROBINSON: Just a couple of questions, Mr. Chair.

When did -- Senator Hise, when did the Republican caucus review this map?

SENATOR HISE: The map was sent out publicly last Thursday. That's when they would all have received it as well. That's with coming in. Without getting into caucus business, we have not sat down as a group and reviewed the map.

SENATOR ROBINSON: Did they have any previous notice of it?

SENATOR HISE: Not aware of any that -- whether the map was drawn between Monday and Thursday, there was nothing that could have -- between that drawing because we hadn't -- decisions weren't made as to what map was going on, but once they were, they went out to the caucus, they went out to the House, they went out to the public in general in a matter of hours of each other.

SENATOR ROBINSON: Okay.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Any other questions from the committee or comments?

All right. Seeing none, we'll move to the public comment period.

Given the amount of speakers we have and the amount of time we have remaining, I think we will limit speakers' comments to one minute. So we'll try to get to every member or every member of the public that wishes to speak. So I'm going to ask two at a time to come up just so we'll kind of get through the queue faster.

So let's start with Mark Swallow and Reyna Walters Morgan. If you'll identify yourself, who you're with, and then address the

committee, please.

PUBLIC SPEAKER: Good morning. My name is Mark Swallow with Democracy Out Loud.

First, I'd like to remind the senators that you are selected to serve the citizens of North Carolina, not Donald J. Trump, and what we really need you to do is pass a budget.

Last year, 51 percent of all the votes went to Democrats; 48 percent went to Republicans, yet the senators have a supermajority -- Republicans have a supermajority in the Senate and one seat shy of a supermajority in the House. You also have 10 out of 14 elected officials in congress. How did this happen? Surgical gerrymandering.

Now you're saying this is all because of California action. As we heard earlier, California hasn't redistricted a thing. What they've done is they've responded to Texas, which started this fiasco for our country, and they put an initiative on the ballot to ask Californians if they should be redistricted.

You should do the same, but I doubt that you will because you know that North Carolinians would never approve this

scheme. So you're liars and cheats. That's what this boils down to, liars and cheats. You can prove me wrong. You can turn this aside and deny this bill passage.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Reyna Walters Morgan. Next would be Karen Ziegler.

PUBLIC SPEAKER: Hello. My name is Reyna Walters Morgan. I currently serve as the vice chair for civic engagement in voter participation with the Democratic National Committee, but most importantly I am a North Carolina resident.

We need to tell the truth that this started when President Trump asked the governor of Texas to find seats. Republicans in Texas indicated they hadn't used race in their maps previously but changed their story, lied under oath when they were asked to find these extra seats.

And also for California context, this referendum is for voters to decide whether to give legislators the ability to redraw those maps. They are not drawing them on their own. Voters are very much involved in the process in California, unlike what's happened here in

North Carolina.

This map in North Carolina puts Washington, DC, over the people of North Carolina.

There was a study recently that -- a survey recently that found that 84 percent of North Carolinians do not think it's acceptable for politicians to draw districts to give their party more power. We need to do more to protect the voters of North Carolina. Thank you very much.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Thank you.

Next will be Karen Ziegler, and then next would then be Angela Floyd.

PUBLIC SPEAKER: Karen Ziegler, Democracy Out Loud.

You all took an oath, all of you legislators, to support and defend the constitution of the United States, and you swore your allegiance to the state of North Carolina.

You are doing this for a president who is shredding the constitution and the rule of law every single day, a president who put on an AI-generated image of himself flying over the country, wearing a crown, dropping excrement on

the United States, on people in the United States, and that is what he's doing every single day.

Immigrants and United States citizens are being brutally assaulted by ICE. The troops that he is sending in our teargassing families, children, peaceful protestors. That is what is happening here.

And if you pass this, your legacy will be shredding the constitution, destroying democracy, the last shred of democracy that is allowed in North Carolina.

We should have seven Republicans and seven Democrats in the congress representing us, and we're letting Donald Trump decide who represents the people of North Carolina, and that's why we're going to have 307,000 people in North Carolina lose Medicaid and 375,000 people in North Carolina lose food aid.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Next is Angela Floyd and then Kathy Martin.

PUBLIC SPEAKER: My name is Angela Floyd, and I am a North Carolina citizen.

As a North Carolina voter, I ask that you refrain from introducing any mid-decade

redistricting in 2025. That would further distort North Carolina's federal voting maps and erode North Carolina's power to elect candidates of their choice.

A September 2025 survey of North Carolina voters conducted by a Republican polling firm found that 84 percent of North Carolinians oppose gerrymandering under any circumstances, including 78 percent Republicans.

Just because you think you can redraw North Carolina's congressional voting maps to manipulate our upcoming 2026 election does not mean you should.

Please represent all North Carolinians and refrain from further gerrymandering of voting maps. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Kathy Martin will be next, followed by Hanna Gibbs.

PUBLIC SPEAKER: My name is Kathy Martin, and obviously I'm here again to talk against redistricting effort.

First of all, the people of North Carolina elected you to serve North Carolina. We don't have a budget. Where

is our budget? When are you going to do your job for North Carolina?

Instead, you're talking about, on the behest of a would-be dictator, to rig our election maps yet again.

I've already been the victim of redistricting twice. It was one time the redistricting came after I voted; therefore my vote was negated. As a citizen, as a voting citizen of North Carolina, I am angry. And you're going to do it again. I don't think so. Show some courage. Stand up to the tyrant. Vote no.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Thank you.

Next is Hanna Gibbs.

And just to remind the speakers, tell us who you're with before you speak.

PUBLIC SPEAKER: Hi. I'm Hanna Gibbs, and I'm here as a citizen of North Carolina.

I just want to say that North Carolina already has a sordid history of gerrymandering. This bill continues that history and takes away people's ability to peacefully express their political will.

I implore the legislature to do better

by their citizens and give us the opportunity to practice democracy peacefully via the ballot.

Voting in favor of gerrymandering is a vote against citizens, against North Carolina, and against a peaceful democracy. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Thank you.

I forgot to tell who the next speaker is. I think Khalil D. Thomas, and then after that would be Caitlin Metzguer, I think.

PUBLIC SPEAKER: My friend sitting next to me, her name was before mine on the list. Elena Ceberio. Should I wait for her to speak?

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: No. I'm not necessarily going in order of signing.

PUBLIC SPEAKER: Okay. I just didn't want to intrude.

My name is Khalil D. Thomas. I am with Democracy Out Loud. And I want to ask, have public comments been considered when you're looking at this map? Are you going to consider the public comments that were released a short time ago? I know I commented.

The bill sponsor said the majority of the land mass in North Carolina contains red voters and Democrats are concentrated in small

areas, and I want to point out that if this were true, all of these gerrymandered maps, all of these districts would be the same size. They're not. You see little tiny districts in Wake and Mecklenburg.

I want to say it's disingenuous to claim that race was not considered when computer crunching multitudes of data can easily manipulate data to address race without race being a unique category.

Let's say the quiet part out loud: This is the southern agenda. History will remember these votes. This is a racist map. Do Republicans believe that you all will continue to be electable when you don't listen to constituents? Be brave.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Next will be Caitlin Metzguer and then Robert Uhl.

PUBLIC SPEAKER: Good morning. I'm Caitlin Metzguer of You Can Vote, and we are a nonpartisan organization that works year-round to make sure that voters know their rights.

I'm here today to speak out against this process for a new congressional map. Generally, redistricting only is to happen in

North Carolina for two reasons: a new census or a court order. Neither of those things is true today, and so I want to make sure that everyone understands that what we're doing is not normal and this is not a normal activity for us to be doing in 2025.

I also want to use the rest of my time to talk about what we're actually talking about which is people, right. We're talking about congressional representation or the lack thereof. We're talking about people who need access to services, families who need access to clean air, clean water, good nutrition, good schools. What we're talking about is North Carolinians and people who want to rely on their representatives.

2025 is an election year. We're talking about municipal government, and my role at You Can Vote we talk to students about what we're voting for. 2025 is when we vote for mayor and city council. This process should not be happening right now. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Robert Uhl, then next would be Greg Flynn.

PUBLIC SPEAKER: Good morning. My name

is Robert Uhl. I am from Raleigh and a resident of Wake county.

I stand before you today vehemently against this redistricting plan. And based on what I've heard today, the scheme seems to have been put together by one elected official and some staff members without any consultation from other -- from any of his colleagues in the House or the Senate. That doesn't sound very Democratic to me.

Redistricting cheats the people of North Carolina out of anything that resembles fair representation. The plan would further erode North Carolinians' power to elect candidates of their choice. It flagrantly violates core principles of accountability and throws out the constitutional promise of equal representation, and it is another tool that is being applied to accomplish voter suppression as it would help to keep the powerful in power at the expense of those with the least power.

It makes more sense to me for the legislature to do what the people elected it to do, and that is to conduct business for the people and not conduct activities as ordered by

a convicted felon.

This partisan gerrymandering should be illegal, and it cheats the people, and I stand firmly against it. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Next is Greg Flynn and then Cheryl Tung.

PUBLIC SPEAKER: Greg Flynn, citizen, voter.

This weekend, the president circulated a video of himself dropping excrement on American people. This is the God you worship, the dictator you appease, the king you would pander to, while thousands of North Carolina citizens are on track to lose health insurance, while civil rights guaranteed by the constitution are now daily trampled on. No one is safe from his retributions, not even you.

I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America and to the Republic for which it stands, a republic if you can keep it, not to a felonious monarch in a gilded house on Pennsylvania Avenue.

Are you monarchists? Are you not Republicans? Absolute power is corroding the Republic. Just because you can legally eat

everything at a buffet doesn't mean it's a good idea.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Next is Cheryl Tung, followed by Ron Osborn.

PUBLIC SPEAKER: Good afternoon, members of the Senate Elections Committee. My name is Cheryl Tung, and I am speaking today on behalf of the League of Women Voters of North Carolina.

84 percent of North Carolinians across political parties say it's unacceptable for politicians to draw districts to help their own side win more seats. Yet here we are again facing another partisan redraw.

The League of Women Voters has long opposed mid-decade redistricting unless required by court order because it undermines stability, it confuses the voters and erodes trust in our elections. Voters deserve consistency and fairness, not political manipulation.

Instead of passing a budget or meeting the state's constitutional duty to provide every child with a sound, basic education, this legislature has focused on protecting power. That is not serving constituents. It's serving

a party.

I urge you to restore transparency, fairness, integrity to redistricting and put voters, not politicians, first. North Carolinians deserve a democracy worthy of their trust. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Ron Osborn, followed next will be Elena Ceberio.

PUBLIC SPEAKER: My name is Ron Osborn. I'm from Alamance county. I'm a 13th generation North Carolinian.

I came from my farm this morning, fed the animals and was hoping to work on my barn, but it was more important to be here and, frankly the manure is deeper here than in my barnyard.

The non-answers, the half truths, and the outright lies about the intent of this bill is disgusting. You can do what you want to do, but it's the same effect as poll taxes, grandfathered laws, and literacy tests on the population.

We're a 50/50 state, and it hurts Republicans too because it takes away the competitiveness and nobody has a real choice in

voting.

In 2022, the data showed that 30 percent of North Carolinians didn't have a choice because it was such a skewed electorate. We can be 50/50 where everybody has a choice and we have moderate representatives and not we have today. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Elena Ceberio and then Marc Lavarin.

PUBLIC SPEAKER: My name is Elena Ceberio. I am with Democracy Out Loud.

I believe the statistics to others, and I will speak from my heart which is breaking today. I am dressed in black to match my mourning and to replicate the hearts of the legislators that decided to disenfranchise the black voters of District 1 with this proposed racist map which is being submitted outside of the established norm timing and only undermines the people's belief in free and fair impartial elections.

As per your description, Senator Hise, the current resident of the White House approves of these changes, so it is clear and unambiguous that this map is bending the knee to an

authoritarian leader who is a convicted felon, and you, sir, are on the wrong side of history.

I can never fully understand the impact of what it is like being a black person in America. However, I do know I made a commitment to use my white privilege to stand in the gap and stop any harm I am able to as I am doing here today.

It is a clear manipulation of this voting district in the middle of what you agreed is a heavily populated black vote area. So I clearly call these changes as purely racial disenfranchisement, depriving people who have historically been stepped on by white domination of their chance to be heard.

You are rigging the maps to hurt black people. It is shameful, undemocratic, and immoral, and there are no other words to describe it. Shame on you and your lack of humanity.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Next will be Marc Lavarin and then Libby Johnson.

PUBLIC SPEAKER: My name is Reverend Marc Lavarin. I am the senior pastor of the First Calvary Baptist Church in Durham.

As a man of the cloth, I have not come to ask you to do anything for you all have shown that you are not going to listen to the people of North Carolina, so today I've come to issue a warning.

Whoa unto you who do evil and call evil good. Whoa unto you who enrich the wealthy at the expense of the poor. Whoa unto you who use the name of Jesus and hate justice. For the prophet Micah told us what the Lord requires of us, and that is to do justice, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with our God.

And I've come merely as a person of the cloth to ask you to remember that you will not have to stand before Trump, but you will have to stand before a greater throne. And I pray -- and what tragedy that would be, rather, to gain Trump's approval and lose your own sole.

May God bless you and may God have mercy on your souls.

Whatever time I have, I yield it for a moment of silence for death of democracy in the state of North Carolina.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Next is Libby Johnson, followed by Joseph Lazar.

PUBLIC SPEAKER: I'm Libby Johnson, Democracy Out Loud representative.

Today is about a tale of two sides that begs the question which side are you on? On one side there are those that seek to deny the power to hold collections of people across North Carolina the right to determine their future. I stand on the side of justice and love that strengthens the right of being representative shaping futures.

We the people here and across North Carolina are not blind to what's happening here, the weaponizing of the redistricting. Redistricting has always been about keeping the powerful in power at the expense of those with the least power, the people of color, the marginalized. This is about racism.

Stop messing with our maps. Stop creating racist maps. Let the people decide.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Joseph Lazar, followed by Amy Van Wyk.

PUBLIC SPEAKER: Hello. Joseph Lazar. I'm not here with any organization.

I am well aware that there is probably nothing that I can say or that anyone else here

can say to change your minds and to convince you not to pass this map -- to pass these maps, but let me remind you that we still don't have a budget, our teachers and law enforcement are still not getting paid what they're supposed to, yet you find time to redraw these maps to steal more seats from us again.

How can you feel so shameless in doing this? You may feel invincible, but let me tell you something: We are coming for you.

When Democrats held the majority on the North Carolina Supreme Court, partisan gerrymandering was ruled illegal. And we're going to reelect Anita Earls to the supreme court in 2026, and in 2028 we're going to kick your partisan hacks off the supreme court, including Phil Berger's son. And when we do, you all are going to be out on your ass because you know that you can't win when you play fair.

You wouldn't be cheating if you could win if you played fair. So heed this warning: When we're back in power, we're going to remember how you treated us.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Amy Van Wyk, followed by Matt Bullard.

PUBLIC SPEAKER: Amy Van Wyk, and I am a public resident of North Carolina and a voter of Cumberland county. I am going to have a very simple message and a very short one. It's on our state seal. Esse Quam Videri. To be rather than to seem.

Are we a democracy? Are we a democratic representative or are we not? Those are the only two questions you have to ask yourself. If you vote for this map, we are not.

Are you representing the people or one in power? Which are you going to choose, the many or the one?

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Matt Bullard, followed by Dr. Tanneshia Dukes.

PUBLIC SPEAKER: I'm Matt Bullard, a resident of Raleigh, born and raised in this state. My parents were, their parents were and so on.

I have enjoyed feeling rise in me the admiration for my fellow citizens who have spoke earlier, and I recognize in light of their comments the gross understatement in what I'm about to say. Nevertheless, Senator Robinson has already said, and others of the citizens

have acknowledged, that this is a 50/50 state. The action you consider now is for the purpose of lynching our congressional delegation around to 80/20. It is for the purpose of stripping effectively voting rights from citizens.

Compliance with the law is not the same thing as being right. What you are doing is not right. It is not for the people of North Carolina. It is fealty to a wannabe dictator president.

I ask you to reject the action that you're considering today. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Dr. Tanneshia Dukes, and then next will be Cynthia Morrison.

PUBLIC SPEAKER: Good morning. I'm Dr. Tanneshia Dukes from Guilford county.

And although I would love to stand before you today as an educator to talk about the budget or the lack thereof one, I am here discussing the state of our democracy.

What you are proposing is unethical and an assault on the fair representation we deserve in our state. It is impossible to talk redistricting without the mention of race and socioeconomic demographics.

You're not protecting people. You're protecting power. Let's call it what it is, a calculated effort to silence communities and erase affluence which is voter suppression.

This map strips the fair representation of the black and brown communities not for fairness but for control.

We know that your oath is forgotten when power becomes the prize. We will remember that you sought this out. Silence is not neutrality, it's complicity, and we refuse to be complicit. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Cynthia Morrison, and then next would be Rebecca Warren.

PUBLIC SPEAKER: Good morning. My name is Cynthia Morrison. I'm a citizen of North Carolina. I've lived here for 56 years. I'm a taxpayer, a voter, a mother, and a grandmother.

I'm also the proud mother of a 2016 United States Air Force Academy graduate who proudly served this nation. He defended our constitutional freedoms that allow every citizen to have a voice in their government. He didn't serve to protect a party. He served to protect

the principles of our constitution.

He honorably separated last year to pursue his next mission and serve us in a different way. He planned to run for public office and hoped to make a positive impact. I'm beyond devastated to share that he tragically passed away from a very rare and extremely aggressive bile duct cancer in July after a short but valiant battle.

A week before he left us, he asked me and our family to continue with his mission since he would not be able to, so today I stand before you honoring my son and the oath he took and the promise I made to him.

Drawing voting maps behind closed doors undermines the rights of all North Carolinians. A bipartisan poll shows overwhelmingly that 87 percent of Democrats, 78 percent of Republicans in North Carolina opposed gerrymandering. That means the people have already spoken. This is not a Republican issue, it's not a Democrat issue, it's a moral issue, it's a constitutional issue, it's a North Carolina issue.

Fair maps are the foundations of fair

elections. Gerrymandering is unfair. I urge you to honor your oath, protect transparency and put the people first with fair and equal representation. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Rebecca Warren, followed by Liz Barber.

PUBLIC SPEAKER: Hi. Thank you. I'm Rebecca Warren, born in Raleigh, voter from eastern North Carolina, from Wilson, North Carolina.

Thank you to everyone and the senators here of sound mind who are asking questions and are speaking up against this crazy, unconstitutional request to redistrict North Carolina.

Senator Hines is racist and his purpose is clear, to silence our voices. Redistricting is taking away our -- the voices of hardworking minorities for the racist Republican agenda. And I'm here asking you to stop giving Republicans seats that mathematically do not represent the people.

Senator Hines -- Hise, you are racist. You are harming the hardworking people of North Carolina. Senator Hines, I dare you to

actually request the public to vote on your ridiculous and stupid attempt to silence our voices. We will not be silenced. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Next is Liz Barber, and then it will be Gay Williams.

PUBLIC SPEAKER: Good morning. Liz Barber, ACLU of North Carolina. I'm going to be very short because I think this is really straightforward.

Voting is the cornerstone of our democracy, and when the party in power tries to take all of the power of the voters, give all of the power to the people who agree with them and take it away from the people who disagree with them, they erode that. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Gay Williams is next, followed by Anne Hemingway Favor.

PUBLIC SPEAKER: Good morning, members of the committee. My name is Gay Williams. I am president of the League of Women Voters of Wake county and redistricting lead for the League of Women Voters of North Carolina.

I am here to express our deep concern for your decision to re-prioritize the work of the General Assembly to focus on achieving

political gains rather than serving the many needs of our state.

I love North Carolina. My family roots run deep here. The people of our state have many challenges, among them nearly a million North Carolinians, about 10 percent of our population, are about to receive notices that their healthcare costs are increasing by staggering amounts in some cases. They will soon have a very short window to make their choices for health insurance or decide to go without.

You could be focused on that, dealing with that reality. Instead, we are here yet again to observe the accumulation of power being prioritized over service to the people.

Please reconsider the needs of the people within our state instead of serving the needs of those outside of it.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Anne Hemingway Favor, followed by Shannon Halbur.

PUBLIC SPEAKER: It's Anne Hemingway Feuer, and I'm with Democracy Out Loud as well as I'm a raging grannie. I'm a grandmother. And I've only lived in North Carolina a short

while, but let me assure you that I really am opposed to people acting like other people don't count. I'm not opposed to Republicans in general. I'm not opposed to Democrats or independents. I am simply opposed to the filthy rich, excuse my French, but those folks stepping on the rest of us, and that happens a lot, I've noticed recently, anyway.

And I feel that North Carolina supporting this felon in the White House in doing that and in sending out ICE troops to pull parents away from their children and zip tie people and the craziness that's going on. I'm opposed to all that. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Shannon Halbur, followed by Cindy Finan.

PUBLIC SPEAKER: Hi. My name is Shannon Halbur. I'm a resident of Clayton, North Carolina, and a United States Air Force veteran. I was born an American citizen, but I'm a North Carolina resident by choice.

Really, 11 Republican seats out of 14, is that what democracy looks like to you? That is not what democracy looks like to me. And I've been trying to understand why this

honorable legislative body wants to take away the voice from North Carolinians. The only reason that I can think of, that makes sense to me, is that you're afraid because make no mistake, this bullying legislation comes from fear.

First, you fear the people of North Carolina. And I don't know why. I love the people of North Carolina. In fact, I just met up with 900 of my besties in Clayton town green on Saturday.

Second, you are afraid of President Trump, afraid of the US president just when we need you to be brave.

I ask you now to please don't do this to our people. You have nothing to fear but fear itself.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Cindy Finan and then Eric Willoughby.

PUBLIC SPEAKER: I'm Cindy Finan, and I'm here to give comment from the North Carolina Red, Wine and Blue. We are a community of nearly 40,000 women in all 100 counties here in North Carolina. We are nonpartisan, grassroots organization with members from both parties and

many unaffiliated voters.

We know that you are redrawing maps to protect President Trump's agenda, and it is an offense to the women in our network. No elected official should be manipulating political maps to draw safe seats for themselves or their party. Voters in North Carolina should choose their representatives in congress. You should not be choosing your voters.

The women in our community are watching, and we will be mobilizing our friends, family, and acquaintances to go to the polls to help vote out any candidate who continues to try to take away our rights and disenfranchise voters. We are in all 100 counties, and we will remember what you do today and the rest of the week. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Eric Willoughby, and then it would be Todd Belcose.

PUBLIC SPEAKER: My name is Eric Willoughby. I'm 19 years old and a sophomore at UNC Charlotte.

Today is a dark day for North Carolina. People who dare to call themselves public servants are showing us who they really serve,

not the people but Donald Trump. Republicans here in Raleigh are preparing to pass a new congressional map that is designed to hand Donald Trump another MAGA congressional district. And they are doing this while North Carolina has not had a state budget for 100 days. Rather than fully funding Medicaid, rather than raising teacher pay or doing their jobs, they're wasting precious time and taxpayer dollars bending the knee to Donald Trump and ripping away the voice of the voters.

It is shameful. It the pathetic. You are shameful. You are pathetic. I call on anyone listening to this right now, please register to vote, get involved and vote these clowns out of office.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Todd Belcose, followed by Alexander Lafond.

PUBLIC SPEAKER: Belcore, R-E, Social Change.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Sorry.

PUBLIC SPEAKER: No worries. No worries. It's my penmanship, not your reading.

It's a privilege to be here, but it's an awful circumstance to be here. Democracy is

to be ruling by the people for the people, and there's nothing based in this closed-door legislation, where no one had a chance to buy in. There's nothing about the process which no matter what people says today that will change anything you do or don't do. There's nothing about the process where the people impacted directly can speak up and you still won't change an aspect of this that gives even a hint towards what democracy is supposed to be like.

Democracy is supposed to be ruled by the people, but if you're ignoring the people at every stage in this process, if you're ignoring the people at every stage even after this process to impact the pain, that is not democracy. That is what authoritarianism looks like. And that is why we are here, not because we want to be here on a Monday, not because we all have other things to do, it's because we are nervous, we are worried, we are concerned about the soul of this country, the soul of this democracy and all the things that are underpinned in this bill.

So please, please take a moment to consider what public comment means. The public

says they don't want this. 84 percent of people vote against this in general say they don't want this, and the people here say they don't want this. And if you want to invite public comment, actually make sure it matters and do something differently based on what that comment represents. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Alexander Lafond and then Kyle Brazil.

PUBLIC SPEAKER: Hello and good morning. My name is Alexander Lafond. I'm a constituent in House District 38 and Senate District 15.

Let me start off by saying I don't mean any disrespect to my fellow Americans. However, I do not care what's happening in Texas, and I do not care what's happening in California. What I care about is what's happening here in North Carolina and how our state legislators and senators are representing the people of North Carolina.

It's been 112 days since North Carolina was supposed to have a budget, and instead of coming here and talking about that, we are here speaking out against redistricting that which

will negatively impact every single voter in North Carolina. It doesn't matter if you're Democrat, it doesn't matter if you're Republican.

The attack by the federal government on the states by cutting funding -- western North Carolina still has funding withheld to rebuild from Hurricane Helene. Where is the representation for western North Carolina?

Instead, we are here talking about redistricting and putting party over country. Instead of coming here and speaking to the General Assembly about how the cost of everyday essentials and the cost of housing continues to rise and asking what your plan is to subsidize this, we're here to decry the attempt by one party to hold control of power rather than governing and representing the voices of its constituents. Shame on Republicans. It's a stain on this establishment.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Kyle Brazil. Is Kyle Brazil here?

All right. That concludes our public speaking segment of the committee hearing.

Are there any other comments from the

members of the committee?

Senator Batch.

SENATOR BATCH: Thank you, Chair.

I just wanted to correct one thing. And I don't believe Senator Hise was quoting it inaccurately because it's what WRAL said. However, the article that he referenced with regard to Democrats in the 1960s redrawing outside of a court order is actually not accurate.

Interestingly enough, the New York Times article that's been archived was on July 4th of 1967, interestingly, about our independence.

And what that article said is that they ordered the General Assembly to rebalance population among districts because districts under that plan had a population variance of 173 percent which the court said was too much. However, the court agreed to let the plan stand for the 1966 elections, that the General Assembly would revamp the lines again by July 1st of 1967.

And they also go on to say that tonight's actions came two days after the

deadline, but legislative leaders said that they believe the court would approve their new districts that only varied 4 percent per population.

And so I just want to make a note that, again, not to Senator Hise but correcting the record, that the WRAL article was incorrect in that it was actually court ordered for those changes in the 1960s.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Thank you.

Senator Robinson.

SENATOR ROBINSON: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Chair, just to make a comment.

You know, it is disingenuous to invite the people of North Carolina to their house in the state and not to consider what they have to say. It is very disingenuous to receive public comment, 200 pages, I believe, and not even consider what the citizens have to say. You know, I am appalled that we who represent the citizens of this state don't represent them. We really don't represent them.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Any other comments from the committee?

Seeing none, is there a motion from the

committee members?

Senator Todd Johnson moves for adoption of the -- the committee will stand at ease for a moment until order is restored.

(At ease.)

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: All right. We have a motion before the committee from Senator Todd Johnson which is favorable report to Senate Bill 249, unfavorable to the original bill. There's no referral to an additional committee.

So all in favor of the motion, please indicate by saying aye.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS: Aye.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: All opposed nay.

COMMITTEE MEMBERS: No.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: The ayes have it and the bill passes out of committee.

And thank you very much today for your work, committee.

(Adjourned.)

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA)
) C E R T I F I C A T E
COUNTY OF WAKE)

I, DENISE MYERS BYRD, Stenographic Court Reporter, CSR 8340, do hereby certify that the transcription of the recorded Senate Elections Committee, held on October 20, 2025, was taken down by me stenographically to the best of my ability and thereafter transcribed under my supervision; and that the foregoing pages, inclusive, constitute a true and accurate transcription of said recording.

Signed this the 31st day of October 2025.

Denise Myers Byrd, CSR 8340

NORTH CAROLINA GENERAL ASSEMBLY

SENATE SESSION

OCTOBER 20, 2025

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PRESIDENT HUNT: The Senate will come to order. The sergeant-at-arms will close the doors. Members will go to their seats. Members and guests of the gallery will please silence all electronic devices.

Leading the Senate in prayer is Senator Eddie Settle of Wilkes county.

All members and guests in the gallery will please stand.

SENATOR SETTLE: Thank you.

Senator Ford, this is coming from the new King James version.

Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you.

If you will pray with me.

Lord, thank you, thank you for this day and the breath of life that we each have, Lord, that you freely give, Lord, and sound mind that we have. We ask you to lead us today in all decisions that are made that will be pleasing to you. And when we leave this place, we will be united. We love you and we praise you. We ask

it all in Jesus name, amen.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Senator Berger is recognized for a motion.

SENATOR BERGER: Thank you, Madam President.

The journal of September 25, 2025, has been examined and is found to be correct. I'll move that we dispense with the reading of the journal and that it stand approved as written.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Without objection, the journal for September 25, 2025, stands approved as written.

Leaves of absence are requested and, without objection, are granted for Senators Britt, Burgin, Lowe, Rabon, and Sawyer.

Courtesies of the gallery. Upon motion of Senator Brent Jackson of Sampson county, the chair is happy to extend courtesies to Ab and Stephanie Johnson of Pender county. They're the parents of Senator Jackson's research assistant Joe Johnson. Please stand and be recognized.

[Applause.]

Senator Alexander, for what purpose do you rise?

SENATOR ALEXANDER: Thank you,

Madam President.

Point of personal privilege to present a senatorial statement out of order.

PRESIDENT HUNT: You have leave to proceed.

SENATOR ALEXANDER: Thank you, Madam President.

It is truly a privilege and an honor today for me to be able to rise and recognize a constituent of mine, a very special constituent, Ms. Sophia Kellstrom who is the reigning Miss North Carolina. And she's with us today. And she is a native, as I mentioned, of Kings Mountain, North Carolina, a graduate of the University of North Carolina Charlotte with a BA in theater and a concentration in performance.

And on June 28th of this year, Ms. Kellstrom was named the 87th Miss North Carolina. And for the talent section of the competition, she performed a vocal of "At Last." And her talent performance also won her the preliminary talent award and the overall vocal talent award.

And she has represented several local

titles of Miss Metrolina's Outstanding Teen, Miss Gastonia, Miss Metrolina, Miss Mecklenburg County, Miss Asheville, and prior to being Miss North Carolina, Miss Davidson County.

She represented us extremely well in the Miss America contest just recently in Orlando, Florida, and our entire community and our state was proud of the way she conducted herself and did such a great job.

She is very active in the community, and one of her causes is fighting childhood hunger. And she promotes her community service initiative Make a Change: Fighting Food Insecurity.

And I will also add that one of her personal goals is to visit every single 100 counties during between now and the end of June of next year, through her reign, and with that she is very open to being requested for coming to your town. So if you have a school or a festival or a church function or some other event, then be sure to get ahold of her. Or if you want to contact me, I'll direct you toward her.

But she has represented us so very

well, and I thought it would be very fitting today to recognize Sophia Kellstrom.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Could Sophia Kellstrom and her mother Malora Kellstrom please stand and be recognized, Miss North Carolina.

[Applause.]

PRESIDENT HUNT: Senator Murdock, for what purpose do you rise?

SENATOR MURDOCK: For a moment of personal privilege.

PRESIDENT HUNT: You have the floor.

SENATOR MURDOCK: On your desk you will see a senatorial statement that is recognizing the life and legacy of Ms. Catherine Spearman Ferrell. Catherine Spearman Ferrell, wait for it, was born October 10, 1912, in Warsaw, North Carolina, where she was raised and rooted in a home based in faith, hard work, and pursuing education. Financial limitations prevented her from attending college to pursue her dream of becoming a teacher, but she fulfilled that calling by teaching and mentoring generations.

After moving to Durham, North Carolina, in 1945 in search of better opportunities, she

and her husband Maynard Ferrell built a home grounded in love, service, devotion. And they have four children that are also here today.

She has deep ties to the east end neighborhood, and she has expressed her decades of service and her church communities which include Orange Grove Baptist Church and Mount Gilead Baptist Church. And Senator Woodard actually just let me know that she started the community garden there at Mount Gilead, and remains active civically and let me know today she has never missed an election. We are honored. And when I say has not missed an election, she does not vote curbside. At 113 years young, she walks in there and votes every election.

Without further ado, she is celebrating 113 years of life and to our knowledge is the oldest living North Carolinian. We have Ms. Ferrell here with us on today.

PRESIDENT HUNT: So could Mrs. Spearman please stand.

[Applause.]

PRESIDENT HUNT: Senator Daniel, for what purpose do you rise?

SENATOR DANIEL: Motions.

PRESIDENT HUNT: You have the floor for motions.

SENATOR DANIEL: I move that all messages from the Senate today be sent to the House by special messenger.

And Senate Bill 249, Realign Congressional Districts 2025 was heard in the elections committee today and is in the rules committee. I move that the bill be recalled from rules and placed on today's floor calendar for immediate consideration.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Without objection, so ordered.

Senate Bill 249. The clerk will read.

THE CLERK: Senate Bill 249, Realign Congressional Districts 2025.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Senator Hise is recognized to explain the bill.

SENATOR HISE: Thank you, Madam President.

Members of the committee, Members, before you is the proposed 2025 congressional maps. We had a robust discussion from our members and heard public comments from everyone

who signed up to speak earlier today in committee. I will not repeat everything I said in committee, but I will say a few things about the proposed redistricting plan.

The motivation behind this draw was to produce a new map that will bring an additional Republican seat to North Carolina's congressional delegation.

Republicans hold a razor-thin majority in the US House of Representatives, and if Democrats flip four seats in the upcoming midterm elections, they will take control of the House and torpedo President Trump's agenda.

President Trump has called on Republican-controlled states across the country to redraw congressional districts, and this map answers that call.

On the issue of race that several members have brought up this morning, to be clear, consistent with practices this decade, in 2023 and 2021, absolutely no racial data was used in the creation of this map. I explained in committee about the dangers of using race in drawing maps. If legislators draw districts predominantly based on race without a compelling

interest, those districts would be declared illegal racial gerrymanders.

As for the Voting Rights Act, in order for a predominant use of race to be justified under Section 2, there must be a strong basis in evidence of three Gingles preconditions. Even assuming the presence of three Gingles conditions, the use of race to draw districts must also be supported by a totality of the evidence. That was true and it's true now.

Past decisions and court records demonstrate there is no evidence of the three Gingles preconditions in North Carolina. In fact, just weeks ago a federal court told us in a case concerning the senate districts in the northeastern part of the state that there was no evidence of legally significant racially polarized voting that would require a majority-minority district.

In the absence of any evidence of the three Gingles preconditions, the chairs elected not to use race in the drawing of these proposed districts strictly to protect the state from lawsuits alleging illegal racial gerrymandering.

To be clear, the chairs do not believe

that the use of racial data would have been helpful in reaching any political or other legislative redistricting goal. Any political considerations in line drawing have been informed by political data and not racial data.

Now, the plan before you. The new congressional districts makes no changes to 12 of the 14 districts. The only districts that are changed in the new map are NC 1 and NC 3.

The changes in new congressional plan consist of the following: Greene, Lenoir, Wayne, and Wilson counties are moved from NC 1 to NC 3.

Beaufort, Carteret, Craven, Dare, Hyde, and Pamlico counties are moved from NC 3 to NC 1.

Following that, to balance the populations of the two districts, 4,853 people, according to the 2020 census, in Onslow county, that's 2.4 percent of the population, are moved from NC 3 to NC 1. That split occurs in the Swansboro precinct, leaving as much of the town in one district NC 1 as possible, minimizing municipal split.

As I stated previously, the motivation

behind this new plan is straightforward: The congressional map improves Republican political strength in eastern North Carolina. It moves NC 1 from a district where President Trump earned 51 percent of the vote in 2024 to one that would have earned 55 percent of the vote, an increase of four points.

To balance Republican strength, NC 3 loses the same amount as NC 1 gains, four points, moving it from 60 percent President Trump performance in the previous map to 56 percent in the new map.

The end result is a congressional map that should elect 11 Republicans. Not only does the new congressional map better improve Republican political strength in eastern North Carolina giving Republican candidates a better opportunity to win NC 1, the new map adheres to all traditional redistricting principles. You all can remove the compactness reports, but the bottom line is the map is more compact than the 2023 map in all recognized manners.

I did also want to state, there may have been some confusion what I said in the

committee this morning, age data was also not available in the data system. Even though there was no prohibition from that, it was not available in the data that was available.

And that being said, Members, I would suggest -- ask for your support for this bill as we continue to move forward. Thank you.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Senator Grafstein, for what purpose do you rise?

SENATOR GRAFSTEIN: To speak to the bill.

PRESIDENT HUNT: You have the floor to speak to the bill.

SENATOR GRAFSTEIN: Thank you, Madam President.

In elections today, the elections committee, the bill sponsor said, and said again today, the motivation behind this redraw is simple and singular, to deliver another seat to Republicans. And I do appreciate that directness. Even as people rub their eyes and check their ears in disbelief, it's good that there's no effort to gaslight anyone on this point. We all understand that this is gerrymandering or as some people are calling it,

DEI for Republicans.

The bill sponsor also said "This is a political arms race" -- this was in elections today. "This is a political arms race that Republicans did not start."

And I need to correct the record here because that's not correct. As Senator Mayfield said in committee, Texas started this dance.

On June 9th of this year, the New York Times reported the following:

President Trump's political team is encouraging Republican leaders in Texas to examine how House district lines in the state could be redrawn ahead of next year's midterm elections to try to save the party's endangered majority according to people in Texas and Washington who are familiar with the effort.

A person close to the president urged a, quote, ruthless approach and said Mr. Trump would welcome any chance to pick up seats in the midterms. The president would pay close attention to those in his party who help or hurt that effort, the person warned.

On June 11th, the Texas Tribune reported the idea, referring to the redraw, is

being driven by President Donald Trump's political advisors who want to draw up new maps that would give Republicans a better chance to flip seats currently held by Democrats. That proposal, which would involve shifting GOP voters from safely red districts into neighboring blue ones, is aimed at safeguarding Republicans thin majority in congress where they control the lower chamber 220 to 212.

Apparently, it took some convincing to get Texas Republicans on board with the plan which I think is saying a lot, but by July 9th of this year, Governor Abbott of Texas called for redistricting in the announcement of his agenda for the Texas legislature.

According again to the Texas Tribune, Abbott's call includes redrawing the state's congressional districts, following through on a demand from President Donald Trump's advisors who want to fortify Republican's slim majority in the US House by carving out more GOP seats in Texas.

In early August, there was an additional push to grab additional seats for the GOP through redistricting in Indiana and

Missouri, all at the behest of DC Republicans. Missouri has followed through and DC Republicans, including the vice president, continue to pressure Indiana to do the same.

On August 14th, more than a month after Governor Abbott called a special session to redistrict there, California announced a plan to counter the open and obvious attack on our democracy by putting new California maps to a vote of the people. Because California has previously changed its system away from partisan redistricting to a citizen redistricting commission, the voters of that state will decide whether to counter the assault from Republicans.

In addition to referring to this as a political arms race, we were also told that this bill is to fight fire with fire. That's what was said in committee. It is beyond dispute that Republicans started the fire. They poured the gasoline. They lit the match. They ignited the fire and are watching it burning. They're bragging about it, openly kowtowing and pleading with the president to notice how obedient they are.

Pitting states against each other,

pitting Americans against each other, pitting North Carolinians against each other, for what, to hold power. It's foolish and pathetic to forfeit your dignity and your morals to cling to power or to forget your dignity and your morals to prove you're a good little boy or girl who will do what they are told even if it violates their oath to serve the people of this state.

It's grasping. It's desperate. If you're not prepared to lose, don't run, whatever party you are. Have some self-respect. Admitting that you can't win without cheating is truly sad and small. It makes you look foolish.

The statement that Republicans did not start this arms race isn't correct. I believe it will be appropriate for the bill sponsor or someone else to retract that statement. Let's be fully honest about what's happening here.

Thank you, Madam President.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Senator Salvador --

Sorry, folks. Sorry. No, we cannot have that. I'm sorry. I know you have strong feelings, but we've got to keep it quiet.

All right. Senator Salvador, for what purpose do you rise?

SENATOR SALVADOR: To speak to the bill.

PRESIDENT HUNT: You have the floor to speak to the bill.

SENATOR SALVADOR: Thank you, Madam President.

I wish I could say that I was standing here to debate the bill, but I think it's time that we be honest, and we're not debating the map today because the Republicans have made their decision far and long ago. And this is the product of a process that was designed to tilt outcomes before a single ballot is cast, to weaken competition, and to isolate opposition, devised to entrench political power at the expense of meaningful representation.

And unfortunately, this bill signals that to them it is not about fair representation, and I genuinely think it's time that we be honest about the damages that this will cause and we've already seen cause to our state.

This costs us trust, the public trust. When lines are drawn behind closed doors, rushed through just days that can impact years, no true

public input, people can lose faith that their voices will be genuinely heard. And witness throughout time when people stop believing, unfortunately, they may stop showing up. And that's not apathy, that is disenfranchisement by design. That is what we're seeing here through these very maps today.

And we have to think about what this will cost all the people that we're elected to serve in our state. Clearer than day, this is a premeditation meant to silence communities. It costs us choice. Because when maps are drawn in a way that predetermine outcomes, they are a theft of the very choice that we should be seeing when we go to the ballot box.

If the outcome is already baked in, then fair representation for impacted communities, especially black and minority communities, is being effectively erased. No genuine need to truly try to earn support, not as much pressure for representatives to step up for the people that they represent. And in the very worst case scenarios that we see, elected officials who are de facto crowned without having to ever really earn the public's support,

and that's just not right. That is just not just, which we see already can lead to real cost and impact for our state.

While communities across North Carolina are asking -- no, they are begging us to do everything we can to have a functioning budget, to have fully funded public schools, to deliver everything we got to see real solutions, we are standing here first and foremost seeing that this Republican leadership body has chosen to instead spend time to rush through maps without public input, without going into the community to hear additional comments, to silence the people that we are meant to serve.

A recent Duke University study confirms it: These maps are not responsive to the public. They are not drawn in a way to reflect shifting opinions or perhaps the changing needs of communities that they may face. They are drawn to lock in power.

North Carolina deserves better. We all deserve better. We deserve representation that is earned, not stolen; leadership that listens, not insulates itself. We have a duty to respond to the people and not form power that will keep

us from that very thing.

This moment calls for good leadership, better leadership, not just what you think you can potentially get away with here, but what's right for North Carolina and the communities that we serve.

And with that, I urge my colleagues to vote no.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Senator Meyer, for what purpose do you rise?

SENATOR MEYER: Thank you, Madam President. I'd like to debate the bill.

PRESIDENT HUNT: You have the floor to debate the bill.

SENATOR MEYER: Thank you, Madam President.

I'd like to begin my debate by asking Senator Berger if he would be willing to answer three questions.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Senator Berger, do you yield?

SENATOR BERGER: As I was not involved in the drawing of the map, I had no involvement at all, and I would suggest that any questions about the map or about the process employed be

directed to Senator Hise. So I do not yield.

PRESIDENT HUNT: He does not yield.

SENATOR MEYER: Thank you, Madam President.

I'd be happy to direct my questions to Senator Hise.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Senator Hise, do you yield?

SENATOR HISE: Absolutely.

PRESIDENT HUNT: He yields.

SENATOR MEYER: Thank you, Senator Hise.

Senator Hise, to the best of your knowledge, did you, your staff here at the General Assembly or your political staff or the General Assembly staff or political staff of any Republican member of the legislature have conversations about this redistricting process with the president of the United States or any of his White House staff or political staff?

SENATOR HISE: I can answer I've had no conversations with the president or his staff members or others regarding these maps or others. I have no awareness of individual conversations.

I am aware of communications over social media and other things in which there were general requests of the president to make draws or his support for this, but I was not involved in any other direct conversations.

SENATOR MEYER: Thank you. I wonder if Senator Hise will yield to a second question.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Do you yield?

SENATOR HISE: I yield.

PRESIDENT HUNT: He yields.

SENATOR MEYER: Thank you, Senator Hise.

During the process of drawing these maps or planning to draw these maps, were you or any of your staff or anyone that you know or any of their staff in communication with Alex Kincaid or anyone else from the National Republican Redistricting Trust?

SENATOR HISE: I'm actually not aware of who those individuals are. I have not had any of those conversations. I'm not aware of those conversations.

SENATOR MEYER: Okay. I wonder if Senator Hise will yield for a third question, Madam President.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Do you yield?

SENATOR HISE: I yield.

PRESIDENT HUNT: He yields.

SENATOR MEYER: Thank you.

Senator Hise, to the best of your knowledge, was Senator Berger or anyone else involved in this process participating in order to receive political support up to and including endorsement from the president of the United States in exchange for this gerrymandering process?

SENATOR HISE: I yielded and I would say up front, I've already stated I had no knowledge of any conversation. That would be a very specific conversation, so the answer remains no.

SENATOR MEYER: Okay. Thank you, Senator Hise.

Thank you, Madam President. May I proceed.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Sure. Speak on the bill.

SENATOR MEYER: Thank you.

Ladies and gentlemen of North Carolina, the questions that I have asked I believe

deserve to be asked of Senator Berger and every other Republican in this room so that you have a full understanding of the way that this public process of redistricting has very important and powerful mechanisms moving behind closed doors, but today, if we take Senator Hise at his word, what we have learned is that Trump's Republicans here in North Carolina will do his bidding even without him bothering to talk to them or beg or ask of them anything. That's how beholden they are.

In America, we do not have kings, and the reason we don't have kings is because kings do not take care of their people. Kings deliver unto themselves rather than delivering unto the people that are below them. And one of the reasons why in America we have legislatures is to ensure that we have no kings, but this legislature is granting power not only to the federal government but to the president of the United States in order to ensure that they advance his agenda, as was said on the floor here today.

Power to an infirm 78-year-old man, a convicted felon, an egomaniac who is so

disrespectful to the people of the United States as to release a video of himself dumping shit on their heads, so cruel as to advance an agenda that drives up your prices for groceries, drives up your housing costs, will double your healthcare premiums.

The level of cruelty coming out of the presidency is a stunning aberration for the history of the United States, and this set of Republicans want to enshrine that through cheating to enact that cruelty on the people of North Carolina.

We deserve better because we are Americans and Americans have no kings.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Senator Chaudhuri, for what purpose do you rise?

SENATOR CHAUDHURI: To debate the bill, Madam President.

PRESIDENT HUNT: You have the floor to debate the bill.

SENATOR CHAUDHURI: Thank you, Madam President.

Madam President, before I speak on the bill, I wanted to see if the bill sponsor, Senator Hise, will be willing to answer a series

of questions.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Will you yield, Senator Hise?

SENATOR HISE: I will yield.

PRESIDENT HUNT: He will yield.

SENATOR CHAUDHURI: Senator Hise, thank you. I know you've answered a number of questions earlier this morning.

To refresh your memory, during the committee meeting this morning, Leader Batch actually corrected the record regarding the statement that Democrats redrew the maps in the mid decade without court order, and I believe as now has been introduced into the record, based on the New York Times article, it's now been shown that the 1960s maps that were redrawn were not -- were actually court ordered.

Do you agree with that?

SENATOR HISE: Senator Chaudhuri, I have looked no further into -- I don't deny what Senator Batch says or accepted. I merely took the article that said Democrats had drawn the districts in the mid '60s at its face value and I think presented it as such, that the article had made that claim.

I have taken no further steps to research that matter or whatever else but do not deny Senator Batch's claim that there was some sort of court proceedings that led to that redraw.

SENATOR CHAUDHURI: Thank you, Senator Hise.

So just assuming that the article introduced in the record is true, could you then tell us when was the last time we did non-court ordered mid decade redistricting in the state?

SENATOR HISE: And I yield. 2024 there was no court order for us to redraw the maps. The maps that the courts had ordered expired after two years in that process, but there was no direct order from the court for us to draw those maps. 2023, I think it was, for 2024.

SENATOR CHAUDHURI: The 2024 maps you're saying were not court ordered?

SENATOR HISE: That's correct. The courts put in their own maps for two years and that injunction ended following that election, and we made the choice to draw districts at that point without being specifically ordered by the courts to do so.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Senator Chaudhuri, do you have another question?

SENATOR CHAUDHURI: Yes.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Do you yield, Senator Hise?

SENATOR HISE: Yes.

PRESIDENT HUNT: He yields.

SENATOR CHAUDHURI: Thank you, Madam President.

I mean, regardless, the 2024 maps were the result of an injunction expiring which were still the result of a court order, I would argue.

But as a follow-up question, Senator Hise, why did you choose to draw this particular map?

SENATOR HISE: I think I've been clear every time I've stated this. We took this map to draw one additional congressional representative that would be a Republican to represent North Carolina in congress.

SENATOR CHAUDHURI: Follow-up, Madam President.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Do you yield?

SENATOR HISE: I yield.

PRESIDENT HUNT: He yields.

SENATOR CHAUDHURI: And so obviously, given the ruling by the United States Supreme Court, I mean, this map was drawn to pick up one additional Republican congressional seat, correct?

SENATOR HISE: The Supreme Court rulings of both the federal and state I think have been clear, that redistricting is a political process done by the state legislatures, and part of that political process we have taken that opportunity.

SENATOR CHAUDHURI: Follow-up, Madam President.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Do you yield?

SENATOR HISE: I yield.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Senator Hise yields.

SENATOR CHAUDHURI: So given -- I mean, given the political gain for an additional congressional Republican seat, I'm curious as to why you didn't draw a map that had 12 Republicans and 2 Democrats.

SENATOR HISE: In we have things that we call traditional redistricting principles which requires districts to be contiguous with

each other, to create districts that are of equal population and those type of things, and I believe that those specific requirements and others has placed this map at the level at which I think we can still maintain those traditional redistricting principles.

SENATOR CHAUDHURI: Follow-up, Madam President.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Do you yield, Senator Hise?

SENATOR HISE: I yield.

PRESIDENT HUNT: He yields.

SENATOR CHAUDHURI: I'm curious why you didn't draw a congressional map with 13 Republicans and 1 Democrat.

SENATOR HISE: Same answer.

SENATOR CHAUDHURI: Same answer.

Follow-up, Madam President.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Do you yield, Senator Hise?

SENATOR HISE: I yield.

PRESIDENT HUNT: He yields.

SENATOR CHAUDHURI: Senator Hise, I believe in 2023 you introduced a map with 11 Democrats and 3 Republicans. I'm kind of

testing your memory, but you're pretty good at redrawing maps here. So why did you not consider that map at this time? That was Senate Bill 756.

SENATOR HISE: The ability to draw this map had a disruption of only two congressional districts which, as I stated earlier, leaves 12 congressional districts unchanged across the state so that we could do it with minimal impact.

SENATOR CHAUDHURI: Thank you.

Follow-up, Madam President.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Senator Hise, do you yield?

SENATOR HISE: I yield.

PRESIDENT HUNT: He yields.

SENATOR CHAUDHURI: Just a couple more questions, Senator Hise. I appreciate it.

Why did the -- why did the committee draw Congressman Davis out of his district?

SENATOR HISE: I believe congressman -- first of all, in North Carolina, we have no requirement that any member of congress live in any particular district within the state.

Clearly, Congressman Davis is still

residing in North Carolina, still resides in a congressional district and is free to run for any of those districts.

SENATOR CHAUDHURI: Thank you.

Two more follow-ups, Madam President.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Do you yield for two more, Senator Hise?

SENATOR HISE: Yes.

PRESIDENT HUNT: He yields.

SENATOR CHAUDHURI: Thank you, Senator Hise.

Senator Hise, these maps, as we know, were posted on the legislative website on Thursday. Did you share this map with anyone in the congressional delegation, in particular Congressman Davis or Congressman Murphy?

SENATOR HISE: To my knowledge, these maps, other than when they were made public, have not been shared with any member of congress or their staff individually.

SENATOR CHAUDHURI: Thank you, Senator Hise.

Madam President, I would speak to the bill.

PRESIDENT HUNT: You have the floor to

speak to the bill.

SENATOR CHAUDHURI: Madam President, I'm looking -- I'm looking at this congressional -- current congressional map, and I'm reminded of what District 1 in northeastern part of our state known as the Black Belt represents. And for more than three decades, District 1 has represented some of the largest majority black counties and rural counties.

For three decades, this district has elected trailblazers like Eva Clayton, the first African American to represent our state in the United States House of Representatives since 1899 and would go on to represent the United Nations in Rome.

It is the district that represented Congressman GK Butterfield, the distinguished civil rights lawyer, a member of the state Supreme Court who would go on to chair the Congressional Black Caucus.

And today, without any transparency to drawing maps, with the stroke of a computer key or two, with this vote today, the Republican majority will carve up northeastern North Carolina into two districts and erase the

common bonds of history and hope.

Today, Republicans will vote to erase Congressman Don Davis's district, a fifth generation North Carolinian, a Presbyterian minister, an Air Force Academy graduate, a former colleague of ours, and a Democrat with the most conservative voting record among his Democrats.

Most of you know, Congressman Davis because you served with him, and you know that he embodies and reflects eastern North Carolina conservatism, and he embodies the history and hope of that congressional district.

But today, you'd rather erase the congressional district of history and hope because your party hasn't beaten Don Davis in two election cycles. And so rather than -- so rather, you draw Republican congressional district. You'd rather steal one more district for Republicans in Washington, DC. You've decided to erase and silence the voices of hundreds of thousands of black voters in northeastern North Carolina to satisfy the request of one Donald Trump.

Redrawing this map is like winning --

it's like the winning football team deciding in the second half of the game that it's going to change the rules again so it can guarantee and do everything it can not just to win the game but to run up the score as high as possible. And for anybody who coaches, we know that's something that we don't teach our children.

This map represents the highest and most egregious form of unadulterated and unfettered partisan power grab that I've witnessed in my nine years serving in the senate. It's the most egregious because we're not here drawing maps because of a court order, we're not here because of the census, we're here because Donald Trump directed our legislative leaders to redraw the map.

Our legislative leaders decided to retaliate against the voters of Congressional District 1 who expressed their political will at the ballot box during the 2024 election to make sure they can't make that same choice again.

And today, I challenge each and every one of us to exercise the oath we took, the oath we took not to Donald Trump but to the constitution.

In 2020, when Donald Trump asked Georgia legislative leaders to go find him 12,000 votes to overturn the election, they refused.

In 2020, when Donald Trump asked Republican Michigan legislative leaders to overturn the elections and name Michigan electors for Trump, they refused.

Will you exercise your oath to Donald Trump or the constitution like these brave and courageous leaders in Georgia and Michigan?

So let me conclude by saying this: Our constitution says We the People. The Gettysburg Address concluded by saying Government of the people, by the people, for the people.

James Madison wrote that the power in the people of the -- James Madison wrote that the power is in the people over the government and not in the government over the people.

Free and fair elections at regular intervals is a key principle to our democracy. Today's redrawing of congressional districts make these congressional elections meaningless because you've rigged the outcome, and in the

process, you haven't given power to the people over the government, you've given Donald Trump power over the people. I urge you to vote against these maps.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Senator Lowe is noted to be in the chamber.

Senator Waddell, for what purpose do you rise?

SENATOR WADDELL: Thank you very much. To debate the bill.

PRESIDENT HUNT: You have the floor to debate the bill.

SENATOR WADDELL: You know, we know a lot about redistricting, and we also know that redistricting can be abused. You know there's a name for that: Gerrymandering. That is why many states use clear criteria, like equal population, compactness, respect for communities of interest, transparency, and a robust public input to keep the process fair, yet here today, the majority leadership is redistricting while failing to pass a state budget. We need to be thinking more about that budget than redistricting.

That choice has real world

consequences, and I'll tell you why. State employees are left without clarity on pay raises. Teachers just don't know what to do. They're waiting for us, and here we are doing something else. And cost-of-living adjustment, agencies cannot fill vacancies or plan training. Schools and universities face hiring and program uncertainty. And health and human services partners are forced to pause urgently needed services, while politics leap to the front of the line. And you know something else, when that happens, the budget is left behind.

Public servants and the communities they serve pay the price. So every ten years we redraw the lines that determine who speaks for us in congress in our state. At its best, redistricting is a civic tune-up, an opportunity to align representation where people actually live, where they work, and, of course, you know, where they raise their families.

But, you know, sometimes we see it at its worst. And at its worst, it becomes an exercise in raw power. That's not what we want. We're in this state, we're better than that. When it becomes raw power, where one party uses

sophisticated software to lock in advantages and lock out voters, we don't want to lock out voters. We need voters, and they expect us to be fair.

That process and that practice, what it does, it flips the promise of democracy on its head in a healthy system. Voters choose their representatives. On the gerrymandering, representatives choose their voters.

And you know something else that gerrymandering does, it dilutes the weight of our votes. It fuels polarization and gridlock. It diminishes the ability of historically underrepresented communities to elect candidates of their choice.

And we say we are country, we're legislating of the people, for the people, and by the people. We must show that in practice.

So if gerrymandering is the misuse of redistricting, how can we use redistricting and make it a good thing? We can. The answer is simple: If we want to make it a good thing, set fair rules, use an open process, and hold ourselves measurable. And some of those standards that can be used to be measurable,

number one, clear, balanced criteria, a transparent process where everybody can participate, everybody, every adult, every voter needs to be able to participate.

Independent checks and expert tools, protection of communities of interest, structures that build stability and accountability.

Now, those are some principles. They're good ones. Why can't we follow them?

Redistricting becomes a tool for representation. It's not to be used any other way. Good maps, think about them. We need good maps.

So when we think about our outcomes, we think about the people and good governance, finishing the people's budget so state employees have the pay. They keep asking us. I get letters every day from state employees, educators, people who work in law enforcement. They want a budget. They want to know what their dollars are going to be, and here we are doing something else.

This is not a fantasy. It's standards we can set. We have the data, the technology,

and the public expects us to do the right thing. And so let's choose a path that invites more people in that reflects our communities of dignity and keeps faith and the simple promise at the heart of self government. And we believe and we know that every person counts and every vote should matter and every state employee deserves a budget that respects their service, their dignity, their worth.

So thank you so much for allowing me to share this with you.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Senator Smith, for what purpose do you rise?

SENATOR SMITH: I would like to debate this bill.

PRESIDENT HUNT: You have the floor to debate the bill.

SENATOR SMITH: Thank you so much, Madam Chair.

I'm speaking today not just as a senator but as a black woman and as someone who represents communities that have far too long been targeted and harmed by those in power who fear the voices at the ballot box.

Everyone in this chamber knows that

this redistricting proposal is not just a map, it's a message, and that the message is loud center clear. It says we will divide your communities, we will dilute your voice, we will move the lines again and again however we see fit until your vote and your voice no longer matters.

This -- this is nothing new and to a degree it's not surprising. It's a continuation of a strategy we all know too well in North Carolina, one where power is preserved not by the will of the people but by the manipulation of our political maps by cynical, scared politicians.

So let's call this exactly what it is: This is an attack on black voters. Again, this is an attack on black voters, and it's one that goes back decades. Let's remember the record in the Gingles case in 1984. A federal court found that North Carolina had officially and effectively discriminated against black citizens in matters touching their exercises of the voting franchise. That was more than 40 years ago, and yet we're doing the same thing today.

In Holmes versus Moore just a few years

ago, our own court of appeals reminded us that state officials continued in their efforts to restrict or dilute African American voting strength well after 1980 and up to the present day.

The McCrory case in 2016 exposed exactly how far this body is willing to go to suppress the black vote by targeting us with what the court called surgical precision.

And now with these new maps in 2025, black voters are being targeted again. Counties in my region, Pitt, Beaufort, Edgecombe, are being sliced, swapped, and shuffled into two districts not because it serves the people but the party in power has decided that it serves them.

The goal here is to undermine the black electorate, silence rural black voices and secure seats not by merit but by manipulation.

This redistricting move is not about fairness, it's about fear, fear over the fact that black voters, working people and eastern North Carolinians had a voice to demand the change that we deserve. It's about stealing elections by design so that the outcomes are

predetermined and accountability becomes optional.

I represent people who work two or three jobs just to make ends meet, folks who are raising their children, caring for aging parents, and they still somehow find the time to vote despite the hurdles that are placed in their way. Nobody is asking for special treatment here. Well, I can't say nobody because we know with these maps who's asking for special treatment.

But what people are asking for is fairness. They want what the constitution guarantees, the right to speak their truth to power. They want what democracy demands, an equal opportunity to choose their leaders. They want what our ancestors bled for, a voice and a vote that counts.

So to those who drew this map, I ask you what are you afraid of? Are you afraid of more black voters at the polls? I'll answer it. Absolutely. Are you afraid of more justice and inclusive North Carolina? I'll answer that for you too. Absolutely. Are you afraid of voters who know and truly represent them and those who

don't? Because I'll tell you what I'm afraid of, I'm afraid of the ignorant complicity that seems to have infected this body and the willingness of my colleagues to give up any sense of a fight for what is good and what is right.

So today I speak not just for myself but for every voter who refuses to be ignored, every child who deserves to grow up in a democracy where their voice matters, and every community that is sick and tired of being used as a pawn in somebody else's power game. We see what you're doing, and we will not be silent.

And listening to my peer, Senator Chaudhuri, asking questions about why are we selecting Congressman Don Davis's seat. He served with many of you right here on this Senate floor, worked across aisles. This is amazing. I just want to know that my dear friend Congressman Don Davis, he is the first African American graduate of the US Air Force Academy in its history that's elected to congress. He is someone who served on this floor and fought with you. He is someone who worked across the aisles. He did not turn his

back, a lot of times frustrated others, but wanted to make sure he was working to serve all North Carolinians, and this is what we do. This is the thanks.

But I guess if I received a call from the people of the president or maybe the president himself, I guess if I wanted to be endorsed in an election, these are the type things that I would do. Sad to say the least, but again, we will not be silent. I urge to vote against this. Thank you.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Senator Mohammed, for what purpose do you rise?

SENATOR MOHAMMED: To speak on the bill, Madam President.

PRESIDENT HUNT: You have the floor to speak on the bill.

SENATOR MOHAMMED: Thank you, Madam President.

Colleagues, I rise today on behalf of the people of Senate District 38, the fourth iteration of such a district since I've been in the North Carolina senate.

From this seat -- and the reason I bring this seat up is because this seat does not

belong to me. Your seat does not belong to you. It belongs to the people, and that's why I rise today. The people. And I rise today in the shadow of a dark, deliberate plot, a plot to strip black communities and working families across North Carolina of their right to choose their own representatives without interference, intimidation, or deceit.

This new congressional map does not protect our voices. It predetermines an election outcome. It rigs the outcomes before the first ballot is even cast and then dares to call that democracy.

For more than a decade, our neighbors in the east have been pushed to the margins, forced to live under maps drawn to dilute their voices and divide their strength.

You dared them to vote against you before when you created a 10/4 map, and now -- and now you've effectively silenced their vote altogether with this new shameful gerrymander. This assembly has become a machine, not of representation but of control, a regime of suppression disguised as governance. And the shameful part is -- the shameful part is

you're not even hiding it any more.

First, you dismantle public financing of judicial elections in our state, then you made judicial races partisan, then you eliminated district court and superior court judges that you didn't like, then you crafted a racist voter ID law so discriminatory that the federal courts stepped in and said again that you targeted African Americans with surgical precision.

You -- you did this. You even tried to stop Souls to the Polls because you couldn't stand that black North Carolinians exercised their faith and their freedom on the same day.

When that wasn't enough, you ban out-of-precinct ballots, you force the state's attorney general to defend your schemes. Now you hand control of the county board of elections and tell them to determine what's going to happen on Sunday voting and pretend that it's local control. Now anyone can challenge a neighbor's ballot pretending it's integrity. Now you've eliminated a once bipartisan grace period for mail-in absentee ballots even though you know nothing is

delivered by mail on time.

You turned a once independently drawn congressional map 7/7 that fairly represented all North Carolinians into the current gerrymandered 10/4 map, silencing and silencing communities across this state, and still -- and still that wasn't enough. That wasn't enough.

Now you schemed an 11th seat out of a 14 congressional seat delegation just to give President Trump an extra -- an extra yes man.

Let's not pretend this is about policy. If it were, you would make your case to the people of North Carolina on the issues that matter to them, on the merits through honest debate, but when you can't win on the issues, when you can't win on the merits, you have to cheat because this isn't about policy, this is about power, pure, unrestrained power.

Who does this rigged map really represent? Not the first year teacher eager to shape young minds in our great state while struggling to pay rent; not the thousands of North Carolinians who are on the verge of losing their access to healthcare because of the reckless decisions made in Washington and this

General Assembly's failure to ensure that access to care should never be a privilege for the few but a promise to every single citizen in our state; not our neighbor driving hours just to get to work or see a doctor; not the working families being priced out of their very own neighborhoods by investors from Texas and California and New York; and certainly -- and certainly not the young people working towards the American dream because this map doesn't build that dream at all, it buries it. It buries it. It keeps home ownership a privilege for the few, another broken promise for the many. Because those are the real life and direct consequences of the map before you, a rigged and gerrymandered map.

You brag about North Carolina winning, but you're deciding who's allowed to win. You're turning elections into coronations. With this map, you've already declared victory, victory for corruption, victory for Donald Trump and for special interest, not your constituents.

But once again, with another rigged map, this is a crushing defeat for North Carolinians, our fellow Americans, and,

most importantly, self determination.

In this moment, in this moment with the disastrous policies coming out of Washington, when our nation cries out for examples of integrity and courage, North Carolina could have led. We could have chosen transparency, public hearings across this great state, fair maps, fair maps drawn in daylight. We could have listened to millions whose voices now will be erased.

Instead, you chose obedience, obedience to the president who withheld flood relief; who stalled funds for education and special needs for our children; who turned his back on small businesses, farmers and families still rebuilding after Hurricane Helene and Tropical Storm Chantal.

And now you reward that neglect with an extra congressional seat for him, for just another politician to join the ranks of spineless politicians in Washington and congress who have made daily life unbearable for American small businesses, for family farms and too many working families and students.

With that said, Madam President, I

would like to send forth an amendment.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Send forth your amendment.

Which amendment, Senator Mohammed?

SENATOR MOHAMMED: Madam President, it would be S 249 ACH 21, Version 5.

PRESIDENT HUNT: The clerk will read.

THE CLERK: Senator Mohammed moves to amend the bill.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Senator Mohammed is recognized to explain the amendment.

SENATOR MOHAMMED: Thank you, Madam President.

Colleagues, if you're rethinking what it means to sit in your seat and you truly want to be a champion of the people and live by the principles and the values that you should and truly represent the people that sent you to sit in this seat -- and you have a real chance before you right now -- you can vote on an independent map that was drawn not by politicians but a special master that truly creates competitive races, creates balance and represents our state fairly by creating, once again, a 7/7 map for the state of

North Carolina. I ask for your support.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Is there discussion or debate on Amendment Number 1?

Senator Hise, for what purpose do you rise?

SENATOR HISE: To move that Amendment 1 do lie upon the table.

SENATOR DANIEL: Second.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Senator Hise moves that Amendment Number 1 do lay upon the table, seconded by Senator Daniel.

This is a non-debatable motion. The question before the body is the motion to lay Amendment Number 1 to Senate Bill 249 on the table. All in favor will vote aye, all opposed will vote no. Five seconds will be allowed for voting, and the clerk will record the vote.

26 having voted in the affirmative, 20 in the negative, Amendment Number 1 will lay upon the table and we're back on the bill.

Senator Mohammed, for what purpose do you rise?

SENATOR MOHAMMED: Madam President, I send forth a second amendment. This is S 249 AST 35, Version 3.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Senator Mohammed -- I'm sorry. The clerk will read.

THE CLERK: Senator Mohammed moves to amend the bill.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Senator Mohammed is recognized to explain the amendment.

SENATOR MOHAMMED: Thank you, Madam President.

With this amendment, maybe we can have nonpartisan judges. Maybe judges that can actually make genuine decisions --

SENATOR HISE: Point of order.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Senator Hise, state your point of order.

SENATOR HISE: Madam Chairman, the adjournment resolution that we passed I believe was Senate Joint Resolution 772 which lays out the matters which can be considered during this session. It only includes matters related to the maps or to redistricting, and this issue would not be allowed, and I would ask therefore that it be ruled out of order.

SENATOR MOHAMMED: Madam President, if I may speak to --

PRESIDENT HUNT: We're going to stand

at ease for one minute.

(At ease.)

PRESIDENT HUNT: Senator Hise, please approach the dais.

(At ease.)

PRESIDENT HUNT: I find the amendment eligible.

Senator Hise, for what purpose do you rise?

SENATOR HISE: Madam chairman, I rise to appeal the decision of the chair.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Senator Daniel, for what purpose do you rise?

SENATOR DANIEL: Madam President, to address the appeal.

My reading of the adjournment resolution is that the items that are eligible would not include this amendment, and therefore I rule it out of order.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Senator Mohammed, for what purpose do you rise?

SENATOR MOHAMMED: Madam President, if you look at our amendment, the statute is -- it's clearly relevant to what the rules are. The statute literally that this amendment

applies to -- again, Senator Hise, if I may explain what the amendment was going to do --

PRESIDENT HUNT: Senator Mohammed, we're past that. So do you want to appeal the rule -- the rules chair's decision?

SENATOR MOHAMMED: Yes, Madam President, but I need to provide an explanation so folks understand why I'm saying -- this is about the three judge panels that are appointed by the General Assembly only who sit on the panels that directly impact redistricting.

The statute is clearly outlined 1-261 -- 267.1, it's literally titled Three-Judge Panel for Action Challenging Plans Apportions or Redistricting State Legislative or Congressional Districts. I don't know how much more relevant it can be to what we're discussing here today.

PRESIDENT HUNT: So we will now have a vote on the -- on Senator Mohammed's appeal of a rules chair decision.

All in favor will vote aye, all opposed will vote no. Five seconds will be allowed for voting.

SENATOR BERGER: Madam President.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Yes.

SENATOR BERGER: Point of inquiry.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Senator Berger.

SENATOR BERGER: Is an aye vote to sustain the rules chair's ruling, or is a no vote to sustain the rules chair's ruling?

PRESIDENT HUNT: The question before the Senate is a motion to sustain the ruling of the rules chair. That's exactly -- so if you're voting aye, you're voting to sustain the motion of the rules chair, the ruling of the rules chair, Senator Daniel.

So all in favor will vote aye, all opposed will vote no. Five seconds will be allowed for voting, and the clerk will record the vote.

26 having voted in the affirmative, 20 in the negative, the ruling by the rules chair stands. We're back on the vote -- on the bill.

Senator Mohammed, for what purpose do you rise?

SENATOR MOHAMMED: Madam President, I send forth an amendment, S 249 AST 34, Version 3.

PRESIDENT HUNT: The clerk will read.

THE CLERK: Senator Mohammed moves to amend the bill.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Senator Mohammed is recognized to explain the amendment.

SENATOR MOHAMMED: Thank you, Madam President.

And for Senator Hise, this is absolutely relevant to the bill. This is simply about giving notice to the congressional voters in these districts that their district representation lines are about to change, or the district numbers. I would think at bare minimum this body would want to provide notice from the state board of elections to people who are going to be directly impacted by these new maps. I'd appreciate your support.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Senator Hise, for what purpose do you rise?

SENATOR HISE: Move that Amendment 3 do lie upon the table.

SENATOR DANIEL: Second.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Senator Hise moves that Amendment Number 3 do lay upon the table, seconded by Senator Daniel. This is a

non-debatable motion.

The question before the body is the motion to lay Amendment Number 3 to Senate Bill 249 on the table.

All in favor will vote aye, all opposed will vote no. Five seconds will be allowed for voting, and the clerk will record the vote.

26 having voted in the affirmative, 20 in the negative, Amendment Number 3 will lay upon the table and we are back on the bill.

Senator Blue, for what purpose do you rise?

SENATOR MOHAMMED: Madam President.

Thank you, Senator Blue.

Madam President, I'd like to speak on the bill.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Senator Mohammed, you have the floor to speak on the bill.

SENATOR MOHAMMED: Thank you, Madam President.

Well, here we are. We had an opportunity to make some changes and provide fair representation to the people of North Carolina, and this body chose not to do that.

So I want to make it clear, you can gerrymander a map, but you cannot gerrymander morality. You cannot draw crooked lines but cannot -- but you cannot draw straight with a crooked heart. You will ram through this illegitimate map today and feel like you've won with your vote today, but don't make that mistake for righteousness. Because one day, long after the votes are counted and the press releases are written, we will all have to answer for what we did with the power that the people gave us. And when that day comes, when each of us has to stand before our creator and explain what did we do with that power, how will you explain this? How will you explain that when you had the chance to strengthen democracy, you chose to weaken it, that when you could have drawn fair lines, you drew walls, that when you could have been a voice for the people, you betrayed their trust.

Because leadership is not about victory, it's about being a good steward. It's about protecting what is sacred, the people's trust, the people's voice, and the people's faith in government.

And today you are breaking that trust. You are betraying that voice. You can pass this rigged map, but you cannot escape accountability. You can ignore the cries of your constituents, but you cannot escape your conscience. And you can silence the people for a time, for a time, but you cannot silence the truth. The truth will find its way to the ballot box, to our courthouses, to our classrooms, to the pulpitis and to the streets in North Carolina because the people of North Carolina will not forget who stood up for them today and who stood in their way.

That's because people like me and many of us still believe in this state. I still believe that good people, even though sitting here today, can choose a better path. I still believe that in the face of impossible odds, people who love this country like I do can change it for the better. And I know this much, that the truth will outlast your maps. The truth always does.

So to the people -- so to the people of North Carolina and Americans across this country, to the people that are in this gallery

today, to the people that are watching on your television or listening in, to the people shaking their heads and wondering does anybody still fight for us, hear me now: Do not lose heart. Do not lose faith. The power is still yours even when the corrupt try to take it away. They can gerrymander representation, but they cannot gerrymander the truth. They can bend the lines, but they cannot bend the will of you the people.

Together -- together we will right this wrong, and when we do, the people will say loud and clearly not in our state, not in our name, and together we will rise for the people, for truth, and for the future we promised our children. I urge you to vote against this map.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Senator Blue, for what purpose do you rise?

SENATOR BLUE: To debate the bill.

PRESIDENT HUNT: You have the floor to debate the bill.

SENATOR BLUE: Thank you very much, Madam President.

I just want to make a couple of quick observations. I'm not going to delay a long

time, but as I hear the debate and also as I consider what we're doing, I'll share two quick things with you.

Number one, I've been studying redistricting since my first year in law school half a century ago, and I've never seen -- and studied it consistently, participated in it, in the cases as well as drawing maps for that for 40 years, and I've never seen anything like -- not necessarily like this particular thing in our legislature today, but what's happening around the country with redistricting.

I think all of us will admit that it's something that has a deleterious effect on this thing we call democracy. And I mention that because next year we celebrate 250 years of the idea that brought this country into existence. 250 years of honoring a constitution. 250 years of being wedded to concepts of fairness and trying to live out what the Declaration of Independence but more importantly the United States Constitution laid forth in a way that no nation had ever laid it forth before.

Now, in the 1990s, I took a strange position. I embraced the concept of states'

rights. Emerging from the civil rights era, it was strange for a black person to take that position because states' rights was the motto that was used in so much of the negative stuff in the '40s, '50s, and '60s, but I embraced that along with legislators from across the United States, Democrat and Republican, because we saw an infringement coming from Washington on what states could do and what they should do.

And as a result of us embracing that, we changed the laws of this country in the supreme court and in the congress so that they stopped overreaching, stopped -- that is, the national government -- stop trying to preempt what states could do. We changed the taxes so that states could collect their fair share of what was beginning to be a great source of revenue as people were beginning to do digital trade.

So we made a difference. So that experience made me even more convinced that this rare little thing as a last amendment in the Bill of Rights, the Tenth Amendment to the United States Constitution which was enacted as a condition to have this government created in

the 1780s.

Now, fast forward a little bit, and I had the privilege of representing all 99 legislative bodies in the United States as well as those from the territories around this world as we visited countries, democracies, some not democracies, trying to point out what the value of the Tenth Amendment is and why America is so different than other democracies.

You know, we met with people in Italy. They wanted to know how we could have the independence that we have, the Tenth Amendment because we're not just an offshoot of the federal government. We don't do what congress tells us to do in 90 percent of the cases because the Tenth Amendment reserves the right to do things regarding those to the states.

And so it's in that context that I think we ought to look at what we're doing now. Because after traveling well over 30 countries, talking about the rarity and the magic of this thing called states' rights, giving states the ability to tell the national government to go pound sand in so many instances, I then look up and see exactly what we're doing here, and I'm

just trying to figure out why.

Because if we look at our -- at our journey through the last 250 years, so many of the major battles have been fought in state legislatures, like the outcome or not, but what we have here and the reason that we are debating this bill is because now we're basically giving all of our power not just -- not just to the national congress, they have basically decided that they aren't going to exercise their power. It's all about checks and balances and us thinking about what best benefits the people that we represent as a state. How do we determine that what we're doing here today benefits North Carolinians?

What surprises me is that so many really want to take on what all the consequences are for what these characters are doing in Washington, whether we really want to take full credit, as apparently some people in here do, of the big whatever kind of bill it is that's going to take insurance coverage away from over a million North Carolinians, a bill that is going to help drive up the cost of things to North Carolinians.

Why do you want to accept full credit for that which is going to be in full bloom next election? Right now you can stand on the sideline and say we didn't do it, those guys in Washington did it. Tell me why you want to take ownership of what everybody sees coming down the road, when people understand why their grocery prices are going up, why all of these other things -- why their hospitals, many of them are going to be closing, why they're going to be losing medical assistance.

Heretofore, you could argue that was those people who just didn't have foresight to know what's going to happen. All we got to do is watch the markets, watch what's happening with the economy.

And as we spring the celebration in July at the 250th anniversary and you look at your constituents, they're going to give you some of the credit for what they're experiencing rather than just blaming the folk in Washington. And that's why I'm so confused as to why you would embrace this for an additional congressperson that's probably going to be all set.

You know, I look at the districts and the makeup of the districts. A 55 percent, 56 percent district in a tough election and one that is a change election is not safe whether it's a 50 percent, 55 percent district in North Carolina for the legislature or whether it's a 55 percent for the congressperson that you are trying to create through this.

So maybe I'm just stupid or ignorant or something like that, but I'm just trying to figure out why you're doing this in light of the kind of analysis that we have the power to do under the Tenth Amendment.

We don't bow to kings or wannabe kings. We don't bow to presidents or wannabe presidents just because they say do something. And I'm not saying that's what happened. I just read the press, but if that's the case, we still owe our citizens a duty to weigh what this benefits them.

And that's the beauty of the ten amendments that gave us this country, and I want you to think about it in that broader context. All of these other issues that are raised, nothing you can do about it because the courts

have totally moved away from precedent and everything else. If they really were originalists, they would understand the environment in which these amendments were passed, they would understand the reason these amendments were passed because they were trying to get as far away from King George III as they possibly could.

They wanted states and localities to have the independent ability to make these decisions. That's why I like celebrating the Tenth Amendment, that's why I believe in states' rights, and that's why I traveled around the world convincing other democracies how we were different. We don't have to rely on the federal government to tell us all of the revenue we get. We're not just their substations.

And if you look at it closely and put it in context, that is what the real debate is, whether we believe in the Tenth Amendment. As citizens and representatives in this legislative body, do we believe that we owe an obligation and a duty to our people to be independent of the federal government when we need to be in their behalf. Thank you.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Senator Bradley, for what purpose do you rise?

SENATOR BRADLEY: To speak to the bill.

PRESIDENT HUNT: You have the floor to speak to the bill.

SENATOR BRADLEY: Today we're faced with a decision, and that decision is not which party we're going to side with. It's whether or not we're going to side with democracy. We can either stand up for the people of North Carolina and their right to have representation that actually represents them or we can strip them of that representation to cater to the whims of one man.

Now, that decision should be an obvious one, but the fact that we're here today with a rigged map proves otherwise.

In a true democracy, good ideas should be able to stand on their own. And if someone's ideas are supposedly so great, so wonderful and so popular, there shouldn't be any need to cheat, nor steal in order for that person and those ideas to come out on top. Confident leaders who are truly working to address the needs of their communities would not be scared

to lose in a fair competition.

And above all of that, attempting to pass this rigged map is profoundly un-American. This isn't about Republican versus Democrat. This is about whether we still respect the principles that our nation was built upon: Democracy, representation, justice, the power of the people, We the People.

I for one love this country. I love this state, and that is exactly why I will be voting against this rigged map. I strongly urge you to do the same. Thank you.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Senator Murdock, for what purpose do you rise?

SENATOR MURDOCK: To speak on the bill.

PRESIDENT HUNT: You have the floor to speak on the bill.

SENATOR MURDOCK: One of the perpetual black eyes of North Carolina is our history of racial gerrymandering and targeting black voters with surgical precision. Our state constitution unfortunately still references a literacy test to vote.

We are here today because voter suppression is not as flagrant as it was in the

times of Jim Crow, as it was when my ancestors and many of you fought. The firehoses and attack dogs have been replaced with complex and oppressive laws making it harder to vote and harder for those votes to count even after they are cast. We now have to fight for those votes to count.

Election conspiracists and those supporting Donald Trump want a world where I don't belong. They push outrage culture to justify legal barriers to voting and actively eliminate access to economic opportunities to black and brown people. They are fighting to erase the stories of my ancestors, your ancestors and the blood they spilled from our freedom, from our classroom to legislative bodies.

We are the defenders of our democracy each and everyday. We will see the dreams and aspirations of the civil rights movement through. We will deliver a country better than the one we inherited because our ancestors all sacrificed. We have made a covenant with God to serve and be just and kind.

Civil rights is more than a series of

laws. It's a quality of life we deliver as leaders, neighbors and people of god.

The federal Voting Rights Act is barely hanging on by a thread. Gone are the days where our state cared about having representatives that look like them. That makes our democracy better.

My aunts and uncles who marched alongside the A&T Four and led the 1960 Greensboro sit-ins are still marching to this day for our voting rights. It has been over 60 years, and they are tired. I want to give them the ability to rest, to bask in knowing votes will count of their children and their grandchildren. They have passed the torch on to all of us.

For the past three years, I have traveled to Selma, Montgomery to honor the life and legacy of those freedom fighters that almost died on Bloody Sunday in 1965 for voting rights. We march arm in arm as we walk across the Edmund Pettus Bridge. John Lewis and others never would have imagined that we would still be fighting for the right for black votes to actually count.

John Lewis once said the vote is precious. It is the most powerful non-violent tool we have in a democratic society, and we must use it. Shame on us.

Congresswoman Eva Clayton was the first black woman elected to congress here in North Carolina. I can only begin to imagine the joy and pride she felt that the South, the home place of Jim Crow, was getting it right, finally getting it right when we made history by electing her in 1992.

And now in 2025, we are on the verge of subjecting the people of the first congressional district to having worse representation than they did in 1992. I am really sad that in her 91 years she will see us roll backwards, going, yet again, in the wrong direction.

The truth is our democracy is fragile. It is founded and reestablished daily. We have to fight for it, and we will on today. That is why we are speaking out and will continue to do so. We know we won't win today's battle, but we're not going down without a fight. History will be kind to us, showing that the hundreds of people comments mattered, the hundreds of people

that showed up this morning, that dropped their lives to drive to Raleigh at the ninth hour. They fought for democracy today, and it matters.

We must speak out today. The people of North Carolina's first district deserve that. Just as those who marched in Selma dreamed of a better democracy as they were bleeding and running for their lives, being chased by dogs. We will continue to dream for a better tomorrow.

People often forget Selma did not send with that Bloody Sunday when John Lewis almost died and went unconscious. On March 25, 1965, they were joined with 25,000 people and then marched all of them to Montgomery, to the capital, to continue to fight for voting rights.

So today is not the end, it is just the beginning. And we don't just have 25,000 people, we have millions of voters that will keep fighting, keep pushing. Some of them are joining us here today.

So again, this is just the beginning. We will continue to stand up and fight because, as John Lewis said, the most valuable tool of our democracy is voting, and we will continue to fight, even putting our bodies on the line to

protect that sacred right. I urge you to vote against this bill.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Senator Chitlik, for what purpose do you rise?

SENATOR CHITLIK: To speak to the bill.

PRESIDENT HUNT: You have the floor to speak to the bill.

SENATOR CHITLIK: Thank you.

Today when I was coming to work, I was saying goodbye to my son, who asked, why are you so fancy? I said, you know, I'm going to work. And he said why? You know, like just stay home with me. And I said, I'm sorry, I can't do that, but you know when we play Candy Land -- he's four so he's like super excited to know how to play this game now -- you know there's a set of rules that we actually don't get to change. Yes, he said. And I'm going to work to remind some people about that because I'm afraid that they've forgotten.

Look, we're not playing Candy Land here. We're not even playing government. I don't really know what game we're playing, but I know our country has rules. It has rules because our founders suffered under a vicious

monarchy where one person and one person alone imposed his decisions on the masses.

Almost 250 years ago, we decided that that was not a good way to run a vibrant nation, that democracy was the way to have the most powerful and vibrant nation in the entire world. An elected despotism was not the government we fought for but one which should not only be founded on free principles but in which the powers of government should be so divided and balanced among several bodies.

That's not just my advice, it's Thomas Jefferson's. The president is asking state legislators to give him more seats in congress because he is scared that voters won't vote for his wildly unpopular agenda of low taxes for the rich and high prices and true sacrifice for literally everyone else, an agenda that disproportionately harms black people whose power that this map takes away.

By saying, okay, great, sure, actually, yes, volunteer us, please to that request, this body would be directly challenging the sacred American Creeds of separation of powers, of states' rights just like Senator Blue

brilliantly talked about, and of representative democracy.

So I'm genuinely asking today, does creating our fifth congressional map in six years at the request of a sitting president strengthen the principles that we were founded on or does it degrade them, does it degrade this very body? Is this aligned with our constitution and with our founding spirit or is it an affront to those things?

I wasn't in committee today, but I really wanted to ask what other parts of the North Carolina law and our American constitution are you willing to throw out when Donald Trump asks you to?

If he doesn't like the 2026 election results and he calls you to ask you to overturn them, just like he did in 2020 in Georgia -- so it's not that far-fetched, okay -- will you help him? If President Trump wants to change the constitution that we all have on our desk that's really sacred to us, that's gotten us here for 250 years so that he can get a third term or a fourth term, are you going to ratify that? Is that okay, too? Is that on the table? What if

he agrees to, I don't know, endorse you in exchange for your help, or is this just the normal democratic process now?

Look, the GOP might be governed like a monarchy, but North Carolina is still a democracy, at least for now. Our founders believed in separation of powers. They believed in divided government. They believed in constitutional democracy, and they also believed in deliberation. That process got us here -- the process that got us here isn't just bad by 2025 standards, it's bad by 1775 standards. That's really embarrassing. A bad process will get you a bad product every time.

Look, you and I both know that I -- that we as Democrats don't have a lot of power to stop these maps. That's actually why you put them in front of us, but what we do have and what I have is a deep and fundamental belief in our constitution and in the people of this state. I also believe in the rules. I don't let my four-year-old cheat at Candy Land, and I wish with all of my power that I could stop you from cheating by changing these maps in the middle of the game.

History will not judge favorably those who defy our founding principles by voting for these maps. You are bringing great shame to our republic and, frankly, to your children and grandchildren to whom you owe a more noble legacy than the desecration of our democracy and the idea that cheating is just fine.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Senator Everitt, for what purpose do you rise?

SENATOR EVERITT: To speak on the bill.

PRESIDENT HUNT: You have the floor to speak on the bill.

SENATOR EVERITT: Thank you.

It is surreal to me that we are here having this debate about whether we want the republic to continue. And if you don't think that that is what this is about, you don't fully understand what you're about to vote on.

This map isn't about representation, it is about predetermination, drawing districts to guarantee outcomes and insulate those in power from accountability. We have redistricted before, but today we're told we must redistrict North Carolina to help Republicans secure congress and move President Trump's agenda

forward.

We are using state power to fix the result to protect the president. I still can't get my head around that. We do not for work Donald Trump. This is not his field office. This is the North Carolina Senate. We work for the people of North Carolina. Was that not clear in the job description?

When a party uses state power to predetermine elections in an effort to make opposition meaningless, that's no longer self-governance. Checks and balances only function if each branch insists on doing its job. When a legislature engineers a congressional delegation to protect the ambitions of one man, it is not governing any more. It is surrendering the people's voice for its own self-interest.

This is a betrayal of our office. It is a betrayal of our country.

That being said, I expect every member of the majority in the Senate and in the House to vote for this bill anyway, but I know what history does with moments like this, it will ask one simple question: When it was your turn, did

you defend the republic?

History will remember the day fascism came to North Carolina, and y'all couldn't wait to get on your knees.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Senator Applewhite, for what purpose do you rise?

SENATOR APPLEWHITE: To speak to the bill.

PRESIDENT HUNT: You have the floor to speak to the bill.

SENATOR APPLEWHITE: Thank you, Madam President. And thank you to my colleagues for your words, and a special thanks to everyone that came out to the committee this morning and spoke.

And I was struck by one of the speakers who told a story of her son that served in the Air Force and he got out of the Air Force and he was going to run for public office, but he passed away, and she was there speaking about democracy in his honor and on his behalf.

That resonated with me because many of you know that I have also served in the Air Force. I represent a district, Fort Bragg, that serves many active duty members, and we've

all, many times, raised our right hand and swore to protect and defend the constitution of the United States against all enemies, foreign and domestic.

And by the way, many of the active duty members who are defending democracy because of President Trump and what's happening in Washington may not get a paycheck the first of November, so process that.

So I thought I would talk to you about democracy. Not only have I served, but my graduate work is in political science, and I'm kind of poli-sci wonk. Before there was the United States Constitution, before there was even a United States as we know it, there was an idea, an idea that ordinary people could govern themselves, but that was a fragile idea.

In 1787, as the newly- formed states debated whether to ratify the constitution, three men -- and I know you all seen Hamilton -- Alexander Hamilton, John Jay, and James Madison wrote a series of essays called The Federalist Papers. These papers were written to persuade a skeptical public that this new form of government, a representative democracy, could

actually work. They explored every danger that could threaten it and every safeguard needed to preserve it.

Of those essays, Federalist Paper Number 10, written by James Madison, stands as one of the most prophetic. Madison warned that the greatest threat to this bold experiment in democracy would not come from foreign countries but from factions, groups of citizens bound together by a common interest who would pursue power at the expense of justice, fairness, and the rights of others. He cautioned that these factions, what we now call political parties, could one day grow so powerful and so self-interested that they would put their own survival above the survival of democracy itself.

280 -- 238 years later, Madison's warning echos through this chamber. What he feared has come to pass. The two-party system, once meant to balance ideas, has hardened into a battlefield where victory itself has become more important than virtue. And today as we prepare to vote on these new congressional lines for political advantage, not for fairness, not for representation but for partisan power, we stand

as living proof that Madison's fears were justified.

Let us not pretend this is new. North Carolina has been ground zero for voter suppression for over a decade. We've watched this state become a testing ground, a testing lab for every modern tactic designed to make voting harder: Strict voter ID laws, signature verification, hurdles, purging voter roles, and racially gerrymandered maps that courts have repeatedly struck down as unconstitutional.

Yet here we are again using the same playbook, the same cynical manipulation of democracy, different decades but same disrespect. And this morning, during the elections committee, we saw the playbook on full display when Senator Hise was asked who drew the maps, he proudly said I did it. When asked if other members of the caucus were, you know, involved in drawing the maps, he said no, a couple staff members and, you know, him and the caucus legal team. He even claimed that, quote, that at no point ever did anyone look at race. He said it with a straight face. I looked around the room and not one person believed him,

but that didn't stop him. He just kept saying it like as if he said it enough times it would somehow become true.

Well, Senator, if you didn't look at race, you sure did manage to find every black community between here and the coast when it came to slice up the map.

It's hard to be a black voter in North Carolina. Republicans can't find black communities for broadband access, for economic investment, or for healthcare, but when it comes to redistricting, suddenly they've got the best GPS in the country and, boy, they are good at finding us.

Let's not kid ourselves, the so-called Black Belt of North Carolina has long been a cornerstone of black political power and rural representation. By dismantling this district, Republicans aren't just redrawing lines, they are erasing history, silencing voices, and turning their backs on decades of progress.

But we've seen these fights before, but back then we could rely on the courts to deliberate freely and deliver justice. We believed that when politicians went too far,

there were guardrails, a judiciary that would protect the people when politicians would not.

Those times are gone. Our North Carolina courts have been compromised. The highest court in our state, once a shield for fairness and justice, has been overtaken by partisanship. Even the United States Supreme Court, once revered as the final defender of constitutional rights, has become entangled in ideology and influence and politics.

So what do we do now? What do we do as a state, as a nation when every institution designed to protect democracy begins to crumble under political pressure?

I'll tell you what we'll do. We will turn to the only authority left: The people. The people of North Carolina must now become the last line of defense because clearly this legislature will not defend democracy. Clearly, too many in congress are standing by watching what has taken 250 years to build begin to crumble before our very eyes.

We are just one year away from this nation's 250th birthday, a milestone that should be a celebration of freedom, progress, and

justice, but instead we will find ourselves asking what exactly will we be celebrating? Are we celebrating democracy or its dismantling? Are we celebrating liberty or loyalty to one man?

Because let's be clear, this latest push to redraw congressional maps is not about North Carolina, it is about Donald Trump. It's being done at his direction just as we saw in Texas and Florida and other Republican-controlled states. It is part of a coordinated national effort to reshape this country's political map in his image to guarantee one thing, that Donald Trump and only Donald Trump remains in power.

Once again, our statements from many of you point fingers at Democrats as though we are the problem, but let's tell the truth, the real danger sits in the White House. This is the man who refused to accept the results of a free and fair election, who pressured state officials to find votes that didn't exist, the same man who sends federal troops into American cities to silence protestors, who threaten governors who refuse to use the national guard against their

own citizens. The same man who encouraged armed extremists to stand back and standby. The same man who inspired an insurrection against the very government he swore to protect.

And now North Carolina's Republican majority has decided to follow his lead, to take direction not from the constitution, not from the people of the state but from Donald Trump.

You can change the lines all you want, but you cannot change the truth. This legislature is now carrying out the political will of a man who has made himself the single -- single greatest threat to American democracy in modern history. And when the history of this moment is written, it will show that Donald Trump didn't need to destroy democracy alone. He had willing partners right here in the North Carolina General Assembly, partners who followed his orders, who traded the people's trust for political favor, who forgot that their loyalty should be their constituents, not a man. We are witnessing a hostile takeover of our democracy led not by foreign powers but by those entrusted to keep it and to protect it.

And I say this directly to the people

of North Carolina: It is up to you now. The courts will not save us. The congress will not save us. Only you, the voters, the citizens, the communities who still believe in justice, fairness, and truth can save this democracy. Your vote, your voice, your vigilance, that is the last barrier standing between freedom and the fall of this republic.

Almost done. Nothing I say here today will change the outcome of this vote. I am under no illusion. The majority will move forward with this plan not because it is right but because they can, but history will remember this moment. It will remember who stood up, who stayed silent. It will remember who protected democracy and who traded it away for power.

And to my Republican colleagues, I need to ask -- I mean, he's a nice guy, but do you trust Senator Hise that much? He told you he drew the maps. He told you that -- he said you had no input, no role, no knowledge, and yet you will still vote for them on something this critical not just for the future of our state but for the very survival of our democracy. Are you willing to risk it all on a map that he

wrote behind closed doors and you didn't even see it, a map drawn at the direction of a man in the White House traded for political favor. Are you really going to do that? Your names will go down in history with this one, not as -- not as bystanders but as participants, and I can promise you this history is not going to be kind.

I ask you, is there any line you won't cross for power? Is there any point where you stop and say this is too much? I cannot believe every single one of you sitting here believes today that this is the right thing to do. Will there ever come a moment, even once, when your conscience outweighs your caucus, when your core values, your sense of morality, your belief in true democracy outweighs party loyalty? Because make no mistake, history will remember not just what you did but why you did it.

And there was a time when I envied the Republican colleagues. I envy how you all stood together, 30/20, 30/20. You guys would stick together like glue. No matter how harmful the policy, you never broke ranks. But I don't admire that any more, I don't. Because what I

once saw as unity, I now see as silence, silence borne of fear and ambition.

At the end of the day when the cameras are gone and the headlines fade, you live with yourself. You will live with the choices you made and the integrity you surrendered. I would walk away from this seat tomorrow before I would ever compromise who I am and who I believe in. The English historian Lord Acton once said power tends to corrupt and absolute power corrupts absolutely.

Thank you.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Let me remind the Senate of Rule 17B, no derogatory remarks reflecting personally upon any senator shall be allowed on the floor.

Senator Robinson, for what purpose do you rise?

SENATOR ROBINSON: To comment on the bill.

PRESIDENT HUNT: You may speak on the bill.

SENATOR ROBINSON: Thank you. I know you all are tired of the comments. I hear ya, but we're tired of the foolishness.

Senator Hise reminded us several times this morning that this map was strictly about partisan politics, strictly about partisan politics, but we know that the map is about race. The map is about race.

Never has a president of the United States of America requested that a legislature do such. Barack Obama didn't do that. What he did not say, though, is that this map would disenfranchise black Americans.

This state is 50/50, just about 50/50, plus or minus a few, but it does not only take the rights, Senator Hise, from Democrats, it takes the rights from black voters.

You know, I was a part of the 1965 -- well, no, I'm not 65, but I was there in '67 electing people to vote. I helped elect Henry Frye, the first African American to this General Assembly.

I never thought that we would get to a day that you would try to take back the rights of black people. I'm disappointed. I don't think all of you are hateful, but out of three black representatives, you want to pull one away which takes away the opportunity for black

people to elect somebody that represents them, that understands their needs in congress.

We thought that Jim Crow went out with the Voting Rights Act, but you assured us that Jim Crow -- the new Jim Crow is back.

I also thought that we had made some progress in North Carolina. You fooled me, but I can be easily fooled because this map represents a taking back not only of the rights but the trust, the trust that we had built in this General Assembly or in North Carolina, and the people will not have such a trust.

Republicans are rigging elections for a power grab, and we know that's your angle. You do that all the time. But instead of that, you have allowed a convicted felon in the White House to convince you to make North Carolina a part of his assault not for votes but out of an act of allegiance.

I'm disappointed. I'm disappointed where this General Assembly has gone. You don't represent even your constituents because people this morning said they've talked to Republicans as well as Democrats, and the majority of them don't want this. So who do you represent? I

don't know. I ask you to vote no on this map.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Senator Lowe, for what purpose do you rise?

SENATOR LOWE: To speak on the --

PRESIDENT HUNT: You have the floor to speak on the bill.

SENATOR LOWE: -- speak on the bill. Thank you. I'm not going to speak very long. I had dental surgery this morning, and the Novocain is wearing off so I'm capable of saying a whole lot of things that you wouldn't want to hear me say.

I rise today as -- not just as a legislator but as someone that has spent their whole life fighting injustice. I'm a child of the civil rights movement. My parents fought in the civil rights movement. My grandparents fought in the civil rights movement. And so many things that we thought we had moved past we are now seeing all over again. I didn't think I would see what I'm seeing now and what we're experiencing now, and I think it's wrong.

This is a choice that was calculated to weaken the African American vote, rural voters, everyday working families across eastern

North Carolina. When you slice through Greenville, when you unravel Kinston, when you split Wilson, when you carve up Greene county, Bertie, and Washington, you are not just redrawing lines on a map. You are redrawing the story of our people. You are breaking apart communities bound by faith, by history, and by shared struggle. And I tell you it is wrong. Because I'm a black Baptist preacher, I got to put scripture somewhere.

Isaiah said, woe unto them that decree unrighteousness and unrighteous decrees.

Well, this is unrighteous policy. This is punishment. This punishes communities who dare to vote their conscious. It punishes the citizens who still believes that democracy means one person, one vote, not one party all the power.

Many of you, I have spent time with and I would consider friends and would invite you to my home, and I've been to some of your homes, but this is wrong, and that's all I can really say. These maps silence black voices in places where the church still stands tall and where families still gather on porches and where folks

still believe that their vote ought to count just as much as anyone else's.

So I stand here today to say not this time, not again. North Carolina, we can do better. We are called to serve the people, all the people, not to manipulate them for temporary gain. And history will remember whether we stood for what was right or stood by while others erase the progress that we have made.

So for this reason I cannot support this bill, but I would like to offer an amendment -- two amendments at this time.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Which amendment is first?

SENATOR LOWE: S 249. Do you have -- do I need to read the rest of these numbers that you got?

PRESIDENT HUNT: Yes, please.

SENATOR LOWE: S 249-ACHE-119.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Thank you. The clerk will read.

THE CLERK: Senator Lowe moves to amend the bill.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Senator Lowe is recognized to explain the amendment.

SENATOR LOWE: Okay. This amendment makes a slight change here. It moves to amend the bill on page 1, line 2 by deleting districts and submitting districts and to require four hours of early voting on at least one Sunday during the early voting period.

This has been a -- I can't say a long-standing tradition, but it certainly has been a tradition in the African American community and has been a tradition that African American churches have carried out to many people vote at different times and for some Sunday is the only time they have to go to the polls. So it is my hope that you will consider this amendment that I submit to you.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Senator Hise, for what purpose do you rise?

SENATOR HISE: To move that Amendment 4 do lie upon the table.

SENATOR DANIEL: Second.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Senator Hise moves that Amendment Number 4 do lay upon the table, seconded by Senator Daniel.

This is a non-debatable motion. The question before the body is the motion to lay

Amendment Number 4 to Senate Bill 249 on the table.

All in favor will vote aye, all opposed will vote no. Five seconds will be allowed for voting, and the clerk will record the vote.

Senator Blue, no.

Senator Lowe.

SENATOR LOWE: No.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Senator Lee. Senator Lee. Senator Lee.

Senator Lazzara. Senator Lazzara. Senator Lazzara.

24 having voted in the affirmative, 20 in the negative, Amendment Number 4 will lay upon the table.

Senator Lowe, for what purpose do you rise?

SENATOR LOWE: To submit an amendment.

PRESIDENT HUNT: The clerk will read.

THE CLERK: Senator Lowe moves to amend the bill.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Senator Lowe is recognized to explain the amendment.

SENATOR LOWE: This amendment moves to amend the bill on page 1, line 2 by deleting

districts and -- substituting districts and to allow for a ten-day grace period for the return of absentee ballots if postmarked on election day. I submit to you.

PRESIDENT HUNT: A leave of absence is requested and without objection is granted for Senator Lee.

Senator Hise, for purpose do you rise?

SENATOR HISE: Move that Amendment 5 do lie upon the table.

SENATOR DANIEL: Second.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Senator Hise moves that Amendment Number 5 do lay upon the table, seconded by Senator Daniel.

This is a non-debatable motion. The question before the body is the motion to lay Amendment Number 5 to Senate Bill 249 on the table.

All in favor will vote aye, all opposed will vote no. Five seconds will be allowed for voting, and the clerk will record the vote.

Senator Sawrey, aye.

Senator Chaudhuri, no.

25 having voted in the affirmative, 20 in the negative, Amendment Number 4 -- Number 5

will lay upon the table. We're back on the bill.

Senator Lazzara, for what purpose do you rise?

SENATOR LAZZARA: Thank you, Madam President. Can I be an aye on Amendment 4, please.

PRESIDENT HUNT: So the final count on Amendment 4 was 25 aye, 20 no.

Senator Garrett, for what purpose do you rise?

SENATOR GARRETT: Thank you, Madam President. I move that Senate Bill 249 do lie upon the table.

SENATOR BATCH: Second.

PRESIDENT HUNT: All right. Senator Garrett moves that Senate Bill 249 do lay upon the table, seconded by Senator Batch.

This is a non-debatable motion. The question before the body is the motion to lay Senate Bill 249 on the table.

All in favor will vote aye, all opposed will vote no. Five seconds will be allowed for voting, and the clerk will record the vote.

19 having voted in the affirmative, 26

in the negative, Senate Bill 249 will not lay upon the table. We're back on the bill.

Senator Garrett, for what purpose do you rise?

SENATOR GARRETT: I move that the Senate do now adjourn.

SENATOR BATCH: Second.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Senator Berger, for what purpose do you rise?

SENATOR BERGER: Call for the ayes and nos.

PRESIDENT HUNT: All right. Let's call for the ayes and nos on this. All in favor will vote aye, all opposed will vote no to adjourn.

All right. This is how we're going to do this. The question before the body is yes or no on the motion to adjourn.

All in favor will vote aye, all opposed will vote no. Five seconds will be allowed for voting, and the clerk will record the vote.

20 having voted in the affirmative, 25 in the negative, the motion to adjourn does not pass. We are back on the bill.

Senator Garrett, for what purpose do you rise?

SENATOR GARRETT: I would like to move that the Senate do now adjourn until March 4th.

SENATOR BATCH: Second.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Once again, we're going to take a vote on this. All in favor of adjourning until March 4th will vote aye, all against adjourning until March 4th will vote no. Five seconds will be allowed for voting, and the clerk will record the vote.

Hold on. The question before the body is the motion to adjourn until March 4th.

All in favor will vote aye, all opposed will vote no. Five seconds will be allowed for voting, and the clerk will record the vote.

18 in the positive -- I'm sorry.

SENATOR JACKSON: Madam President.

PRESIDENT HUNT: I'm sorry. Yes. Senator Jackson, you're a no. All right.

18 having voted in the affirmative, 27 in the negative, the motion to adjourn to March 4th does not pass.

SENATOR BERGER: Madam President.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Yes, Senator Berger, for what purpose do you rise?

SENATOR BERGER: Under Rule 19, I move

that we call the question.

SENATOR BATCH: Objection.

PRESIDENT HUNT: We're at ease for a minute.

(At ease.)

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Madam President.

(At ease.)

PRESIDENT HUNT: The Senate will come back to order.

Senator Batch, your objection is noted. There was, however, no second to the motion so it's not up for --

SENATOR BERGER: Madam President.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Senator Berger, for what purpose do you rise?

SENATOR BERGER: I move the previous question.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Second.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Shall the main question be put now. All in favor will vote aye, all opposed will vote no. Five seconds will be allowed for voting, and the clerk will record the vote.

25 having voted in the affirmative, 8 in the negative, we have moved to the previous

question, and we are back on the bill.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Objection to third reading, Madam President.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Is there further discussion or debate?

Senator Grafstein.

SENATOR GRAFSTEIN: Madam President, if you would record me as a no on the previous vote, please. I think there was some uncounted votes.

PRESIDENT HUNT: You'll be a no.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Madam President, record me as a no.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Hold on one second. All right. Hold on.

I've got a list of people who have their buttons pushed. Did you all wish to vote no on the previous question?

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yes.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Yes.

PRESIDENT HUNT: I'm going to read the names. Smith.

SENATOR SMITH: Yes.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Mayfield, Waddell, Theodros, Garrett, Salvador.

Also, Senator Chaudhuri and Senator Murdock and Senator Everitt.

Just a second.

So the final count for the motion for the previous question was 25 in the positive and 18 negative, so we will still have moved and there is no debate on that, so we will go straight to the vote.

The question before -- all right. We're going to have to clear the gallery.

SENATOR DANIEL: Madam President.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Yes, Senator Daniel.

SENATOR DANIEL: Can we stand at ease for five minutes until the gallery is cleared.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Yes.

(At ease.)

PRESIDENT HUNT: All right. The question before the Senate is the passage of Senate Bill 249 on its second reading.

All in favor will vote aye, all opposed will vote no. Five seconds will be allowed for voting, and the clerk will record the vote.

25 having voted in the affirmative, 20 in the negative, Senate Bill 249 passes its second reading and will be calendared for

tomorrow.

All right. Are there any notices or announcements?

SENATOR BATCH: Madam President.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Yes. Senator Batch, for what purpose do you rise?

SENATOR BATCH: I'd like to be recognized for a point of order.

PRESIDENT HUNT: You are recognized for a point of order.

SENATOR BATCH: I find it extremely frustrating and disappointing that my members were silenced and not everyone had the opportunity to speak, especially given what is happening today and especially being the first black woman to lead a caucus in this state that my voice was silenced when Senator Berger called the question.

And so at this time, pursuant to Article 2, Section 18, I would like to send forth my constitutional protest because I find this legislation and the actions of the members in this chamber to be injurious to the public.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Bring forward your protest.

Senator Grafstein, for what purpose do you rise?

SENATOR GRAFSTEIN: Madam President, for the same reasons as Senator Batch, pursuant to Article 2, Section 18 of North Carolina Constitution, point of order, I would like to send forth my constitutional protest because I want my dissent entered on the journal because there's no legal justification for this action, for the silencing of Senator Batch, and the process that led to this bill which undermines the very foundations of representative government.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Bring forth your protest.

Senator Applewhite, for what purpose do you rise?

SENATOR APPLEWHITE: To be recognized for a point of order.

PRESIDENT HUNT: You're recognized for a point of order.

SENATOR APPLEWHITE: Pursuant to Article 2, Section 18 of the North Carolina Constitution, I would like to send forth my constitutional protest because I find this

legislation is passed in this chamber to be injurious to the public.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Send forth your protest.

Senator Garrett, for what purpose do you rise?

SENATOR GARRETT: For a point of order.

PRESIDENT HUNT: You're recognized for a point of order.

SENATOR GARRETT: Pursuant to Article 2, Section 18 of the North Carolina Constitution, any member of either house may dissent from and protest against any act or resolve which he may think injurious to the public or to any individual and have the reasons of his dissent entered upon the journal. I'd like to send forth my constitutional protest.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Send forth your protest.

Senator Salvador, for what purpose do you rise?

SENATOR SALVADOR: Point of order.

PRESIDENT HUNT: You have the floor for a point of order.

SENATOR SALVADOR: Pursuant to

Article 2, Section 18 of the North Carolina Constitution, I would like to send forth my constitutional protest because I find this legislation to be injurious to the public.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Send forth your protest.

Senator Mayfield, for what purpose do you rise?

SENATOR MAYFIELD: To be recognized for a point of order.

PRESIDENT HUNT: You're recognized for a point of order.

SENATOR MAYFIELD: Thank you.

Pursuant to Article 2, Section 18 of the North Carolina Constitution, I would like to send forth my constitutional protest because I find this legislation to be injurious to the public.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Send forth your protest.

Senator Bradley, for what purpose do you rise?

SENATOR BRADLEY: A point of order.

PRESIDENT HUNT: You have the floor for a point of order.

SENATOR BRADLEY: Thank you, Madam President.

Pursuant to Article 2, Section 18 of the North Carolina Constitution, I would like to send forth my constitutional protest because I find this legislation to be injurious to the public.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Send forth your protest.

Senator Chitlik, for what purpose do you rise?

SENATOR CHITLIK: For a point of order.

PRESIDENT HUNT: You have the floor for a point of order.

SENATOR CHITLIK: Pursuant to Article 2, Section 18 of the North Carolina Constitution, which I still believe in, I would like to send forth my constitutional protest because I find this legislation to be deeply injurious to the public.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Send forth your protest.

Senator Adcock, for what purpose do you rise?

SENATOR ADCOCK: To be recognized for a

point of order.

PRESIDENT HUNT: You're recognized for a point of order.

SENATOR ADCOCK: Thank you.

Pursuant to Article 2, Section 18 of the North Carolina Constitution, I would like to send forth my constitutional protest because I find this legislation to be injurious to the public.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Send forth your protest.

Senator Murdock, for what purpose do you rise?

SENATOR MURDOCK: To be recognized for a point of order.

PRESIDENT HUNT: You're recognized for a point of order.

SENATOR MURDOCK: Pursuant to Article 2, Section 18 of the North Carolina Constitution, I would like to send forth my constitutional protest because I find this legislation to be injurious to the public.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Send forth your protest.

Senator Everitt, for what purpose do

you rise?

SENATOR EVERITT: To be recognized for a point of order.

PRESIDENT HUNT: You're recognized for a point of order.

SENATOR EVERITT: Pursuant to Article 2, Section 18 of the North Carolina Constitution, I would like to send forth my constitutional protest because I find this legislation to be injurious to the public.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Send forth your protest.

Senator Waddell, for what purpose do you rise?

SENATOR WADDELL: Point of order.

PRESIDENT HUNT: You're recognized for a point of order.

SENATOR WADDELL: Pursuant to Article 2, Section 18 of the North Carolina Constitution, I would like to send forth a protest because I think this is injurious to the public.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Send forth your protest.

Senator Theodros, for what purpose do

you rise?

SENATOR THEODROS: Point of order.

PRESIDENT HUNT: You're recognized for a point of order.

SENATOR THEODROS: Pursuant to Article 2, Section 18 of the North Carolina Constitution, I would like to send forth my constitutional protest because I find this legislation to be injurious to the public.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Send forth your protest.

Senator Meyer, for what purpose do you rise?

SENATOR MEYER: Thank you, Madam President. I would like to be recognized for a point of order.

PRESIDENT HUNT: You're recognized for a point of order.

SENATOR MEYER: Thank you Madam President.

Pursuant to Article 2, Section 18 of the North Carolina Constitution, I would like to send forth my constitutional protest because I find this legislation to be injurious to the public.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Send forth your protest.

Senator Lowe, for what purpose do you rise?

SENATOR LOWE: Point of order.

PRESIDENT HUNT: You're recognized for a point of order.

SENATOR LOWE: Pursuant to Article 2, Section 18 of the North Carolina Constitution, any member of either house may dissent from protests against any act or resolve which he thinks is injurious to the public or individuals, so I would like to send forth my --

PRESIDENT HUNT: Send forth your protest.

Senator Mohammed, for what purpose do you rise?

SENATOR MOHAMMED: Point of order, Madam President.

PRESIDENT HUNT: You're recognized for a point of order.

SENATOR MOHAMMED: Pursuant to Article 2, Section 18 of the North Carolina Constitution, I would like to send forth my

constitutional protest because I find this legislation to be injurious to the public.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Send forth your protest.

Senator Robinson, for what purpose do you rise?

SENATOR ROBINSON: Point of order.

PRESIDENT HUNT: You're recognized for a point of order.

SENATOR ROBINSON: Pursuant to Article 2, Section 18 of the North Carolina Constitution, any member of either house may dissent from and protest against any act or resolve which he may think injurious to the public or to individuals and have reasons of his dissent entered on the journal.

I ask that this dissent be entered on the journal because this is a calculated move to weaken black political representation by splitting and diluting black communities. I would like to send forth this.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Send forth your protest.

Senator Chaudhuri, for what purpose do you rise?

SENATOR CHAUDHURI: To be recognized for a point of order.

PRESIDENT HUNT: You're recognized for a point of order.

SENATOR CHAUDHURI: Madam President, pursuant to Article 2, Section 18 of the North Carolina Constitution, I would like to send forth my constitutional protest because I find this legislation to be injurious to the public.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Send forth your protest.

Senator Blue, for what purpose do you rise?

SENATOR BLUE: Point of order.

PRESIDENT HUNT: You're recognized for a point of order.

SENATOR BLUE: Thank you, Madam President.

Pursuant to Article 2, Section 18 of the North Carolina Constitution, as a member of this chamber, I'm dissenting from and a protest against the specific act, and I would ask that my dissent be entered on the journal because there is no legal justification for this action,

meaning legislation, and the process that led to this bill undermines the very foundation of representative government.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Send forth your protest.

Senator Waddell, for what purpose do you rise?

Senator Garrett, for what purpose do you rise?

SENATOR GARRETT: Motion, Madam President.

PRESIDENT HUNT: You have the floor.

SENATOR GARRETT: I move that the words spoken by my colleagues, my Democratic colleagues and Senator Hise today on the floor be spread upon the journal.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Senator Smith, for what purpose do you rise?

REPRESENTATIVE SMITH: To be recognized for a point of order.

PRESIDENT HUNT: You're recognized.

REPRESENTATIVE SMITH: Pursuant to Article 2, Section 18 of the North Carolina Constitution, I would like to send forth my constitutional protest because I find this

legislation to be injurious to the public because these maps are political weapon and black voters are the target. This bill and these maps are designed to fracture historic coalitions, diminish voter turnout, and protect incumbents at the expense of the will of the people. And I would like for this to make sure that we are spreading this across the journal as well. Thank you.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Send forth your protest.

Is there further business to come before the Senate?

If not, Senator Berger is recognized for a motion.

SENATOR BERGER: Thank you, Madam President.

I move that Senate do now adjourn to reconvene tomorrow October 21, 2025, at 9:00 a.m. This will be a voting session.

PRESIDENT HUNT: The motion is that the Senate do now adjourn to reconvene Tuesday, October 21, 2025, at 9:00 a.m., seconded by Senator Daniel.

All in favor say aye.

SENATE MEMBERS: Aye.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Opposed no.

The ayes have it and the Senate stands adjourned.

(Adjourned.)

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA)

) C E R T I F I C A T E

COUNTY OF WAKE)

I, DENISE MYERS BYRD, Stenographic Court Reporter, CSR 8340, do hereby certify that the transcription of the recorded Senate session, held on October 20, 2025, was taken down by me stenographically to the best of my ability and thereafter transcribed under my supervision; and that the foregoing pages, inclusive, constitute a true and accurate transcription of said recording.

Signed this the 1st day of November 2025.

Denise Myers Byrd, CSR 8340

NORTH CAROLINA GENERAL ASSEMBLY

SENATE SESSION

OCTOBER 21, 2025

Transcribed by:

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PRESIDENT HUNT: The Senate will come to order. The sergeant-at-arms will close the doors, members will go to their seats, members and guests of the gallery will please silence all electronic devices.

Leading the Senate in prayer is Senator Julie Mayfield of Buncombe county. All members and guests in the gallery will please stand.

SENATOR MAYFIELD: Good morning. For those of you who were here five years ago, you don't need to worry that I'm going to read something similar to what I did then.

You all probably all know that a couple of weekends ago was the first anniversary of Helene. This is a poem written by a resident of Swannanoa, and I wanted to share it with you. It's about coming together just not after the storm but in a larger sense as well.

One year later, our scarred earth is blooming green. What if humanity did the same, rewilding the love that flooded our broken landscape after the hurricane.

What if it sprawled unruly across the whole aching world. God love poured tender from laboring hands.

What if the incentive was not to keep but to share what we have, to nourish one another and live inside that well spring of care.

What if people bound together like they did after the storm, with shovels and muscle and problem-solving and purposeful hearts, where heroes wore muck boots and went searching for need and gave freely to fill it no matter who or what it was. And after the many hard hours of work well spent, all of us sharing, cooking, serving and together breaking bread.

What if the tendrils of care, roots that we planted in her wake with our tears and our loved ones and our hopes that the storm stole away grew into the earth and knit together to mend this place into a world where we say neighbor's names like a prayer, where we outstretch our arms and welcome who isn't yet there, where no wind or water or rain could break what was born here, when we pulled our neighbors to safety and tended our collective grief.

Helene, who and what you took will never be forgot. We move through our days with

loss etched in our palms and a longing and a will for a world where it doesn't take disaster for love to bloom wild and overcome what it is that divides us. A love louder than thunder, a love that transcends our dollars and our politics and our headlines, love more powerful than a river, love more powerful than a hurricane, stronger than the biggest storm, love that honors who has gone and prepares us for what is to come.

May love carry our community as we forge ahead, and may it serve the people and the places that still most ache with need, and may we never forget what we learned from the storm. What we have is each other here in this wild world.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Senator Berger is recognized for a motion.

SENATOR BERGER: Thank you, Madam President.

The journal of October 20, 2025, has been examined and is found to be correct. I move that we dispense with the reading of the journal and that it stand approved as written.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Without objection, the

journal for October 20, 2025, stands approved as written.

Leaves of absence are requested and, without objection, are granted for Senators Burgin, Britt, Rabon, and Sawyer.

Introduction of bills, the clerk will read.

THE CLERK: Senate Bill 777 by Senator Daniel, a bill to be entitled An Act to Appoint Persons to Various Public Offices by the General Assembly upon the Recommendations of the President Pro Tempore of the Senate and the Speaker of the House of Representatives and To Make Corrections to Previous Appointments.

Senate Joint Resolution 778 by Senator Daniel, a Joint Resolution Further Amending Resolution 2025-8 as amended by Resolution 2025-11.

PRESIDENT HUNT: We'll now go to the calendar. Third reading roll call, Senate Bill 249.

SENATOR DANIEL: Madam President.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Excuse me.

Senator Daniel, for what purpose do you rise?

SENATOR DANIEL: Motions.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Proceed with your motions.

SENATOR DANIEL: Move that all messages from the Senate today be sent to the House by special message and that Senate Joint Resolution 777, General Assembly appointments that was filed yesterday and read in, move that it be referred to today's floor calendar.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Without objection, so ordered.

Senator Grafstein, for what purpose do you rise?

SENATOR GRAFSTEIN: Thank you, Madam President.

I ask to be recognized for an announcement out of order.

PRESIDENT HUNT: You are recognized for an announcement.

SENATOR GRAFSTEIN: Thank you, Madam President.

Members, as we've all heard from many of our constituents across the state, folks who are providers and beneficiaries of Medicaid are really suffering and concerned about the issues

around the lack of approval of additional funding for the rebase.

Senate Bill 403, which was sent back to us in September by the House, has Medicaid rebase in an amount that we've already agreed on and approved in this body. It has some other provisions that we would want to address, but what we are going to do or what I'm going to be doing under Rule 47 is circulating a discharge petition so that we can bring that bill to the floor and we can get some action on Medicaid rebase for people who need that.

And so, Madam President, as you know under Rule 47 after ten days sitting in committee, a discharge petition can be filed to bring a bill to the floor. We're going to ask members to support that so that we can address the needs of our constituents and get that Medicaid rebase back before us. So I would ask that the clerk prepare the petition for circulation.

PRESIDENT HUNT: The clerk has the form for you to circulate.

All right. Senate Bill 249, the clerk will read.

THE CLERK: Senate Bill 249, Realign Congressional Districts 2025.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Senator Hise is recognized to explain the bill.

SENATOR HISE: Thank you, Madam President.

A few other things I want to mention following yesterday's spirited discussion of this bill.

We heard a lot of revisionist history yesterday about how, quote, unquote, Texas started this, and I just wanted to point that nothing could be further from the truth.

The history of these so-called gerrymander wars goes back way before Texas in the preceding decennial census cycle. States such as Illinois, California, Massachusetts, and New York employed partisan gerrymander to systematically deny Republican seats in the US Congress, despite each state having statistically significant proportion of Republican votes.

Illinois has only three of 17 congressman seats held by Republican even though 43.5 percent of the state vote went to

President Trump. And New York where more than 40 percent of the electorate backed Trump and Democrat members hold 19 of the 26 congressional seats. New Mexico, Connecticut, and Massachusetts send only Democrats to congress, notwithstanding that Republican candidates received a considerable percentage of the vote in each state in both 2020 and 2024. In 2024, 46 percent, 42 percent, 36 percent, notwithstanding the fact that one third of the overall population votes Republican in the last seven presidential elections.

Massachusetts has not sent a Republican to congress in 30 years. Even though roughly one third of California's voters supported Donald Trump in the two presidential, Republicans hold only 9 of the state's 52 congressional votes.

Members, it is incumbent upon us to react to this environment, to respond to this environment and not let these tactics that have happened in blue states dominate the control of congress.

One other thing I wanted to address is there were comments on the floor yesterday

claiming specifically that I and we had lied about the use of racial data in the creation of the maps. I will again completely state that there was no racial data used in these maps and in fact that is a verifiable fact. The computer can produce what the dataset included, what it included since it's been uploaded as well as what was accessed and reported for those maps. And so that is all produced as part of the packet that we generally have to produce for court after this and will do so as soon as are at that point.

There's even been claims that I or others were offered some sort of endorsement or those type of things, a claim that is made completely without fact and made completely out of whole cloth. There is no one that has any evidence whatsoever that that occurred, and I will equivocally say I have been offered nothing for the purpose of doing this map or for drawing this map.

Members, we saw a lot come through yesterday, a few amendments and others that really emphasized what this entire conversation is about. It is about the balance of power.

There was an amendment offered yesterday to change the maps, to draw the maps to an outcome that was more favorable for the Democrats.

The proposal for the map for this committee to -- amendment for this body to consider wasn't to not draw or to others. It was simply to draw in a favorable more conditional to the Democrat outcome. And so this is where we're at this day.

The purpose of this map was to pick up a Republican seat. We've stated that over and over again. I think there's been a real attempt to try to say because that's the only legal strategy left to say that it was done for other reasons, it was done for racial or done for others, and that simply doesn't hold any water.

We designed these maps, we came up with these maps for the purpose of rebalancing this nation, rebalancing congress and making sure that North Carolina is as optimized as the other blue states were when they created their districts.

Thank you, Madam President. I'd be happy to answer any question.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Senator Mayfield, for

what purpose do you rise?

SENATOR MAYFIELD: To speak on the bill.

PRESIDENT HUNT: You have the floor to speak on the bill.

SENATOR MAYFIELD: Thank you.

Senator Hise, I appreciate that recitation of statistics about the Democratic representation from other states. Here's what I would say about that: That's just regular old gerrymandering. That's just regular old gerrymandering that is constitutional in our country because of a Republican-led US Supreme Court.

We do it. We are -- North Carolina. I don't have to tell you all of this. Your names have been on the lawsuits that have gone to the US Supreme Court. We are ground zero for political gerrymandering in this country.

So it's legal here. It's legal around the country. So people are going to do it, right. We do it. Red states do it. Blue states do it. I think it's terrible. I think it should all be banned. I think it should be -- political gerrymandering should be

unconstitutional everywhere under the US Constitution, under every state constitution, but that is not where we are, and that's not where we are because of Republicans, not because of Democrats.

So this that we are doing today is fundamentally different than just regular old political gerrymandering. That is the order of the day, regular old political gerrymandering.

What is happening today is, as I said yesterday morning, a response to a call from a president who has demanded fealty from members of his party who control legislatures across this country. That is where this began. Nowhere else. Nowhere else. It began with our president who -- and I get that you don't -- that he doesn't want to lose the ability to advance his agenda. That's totally politics.

What is different here is mid-decade redistricting at the request of an authoritarian president. And what is different here is that state legislatures run by Republicans across the country are bowing to that request. It is wrong, and you know it. You all know it.

So, again, I say to blame this on

California or Massachusetts or Illinois or anything else is a fiction, and everybody in here in this room knows it, and anybody who continues to say that it's the blue states that are responsible for what is happening here simply looks foolish. You know it's not true.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Senator Everitt, for what purpose do you rise?

SENATOR EVERITT: Speak on the bill.

PRESIDENT HUNT: You have the floor to speak on the bill.

SENATOR EVERITT: Thank you, Madam President.

Two quick things. The amendment yesterday to draw a different map was not more fair to the Democrats. It was more fair to the people of North Carolina. It was more representative of the people of North Carolina. That is who it was more fair to.

And the second issue is no one suggested yesterday that Senator Hise was being offered anything for these maps. No one made that suggestion. We know where the offer was made.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Senator Chaudhuri, for

what purpose do you rise?

SENATOR CHAUDHURI: Speak on the bill.

PRESIDENT HUNT: You have the floor to speak on the bill.

SENATOR CHAUDHURI: I'll be very brief, Madam President.

I just want to use Massachusetts as an example that was cited by Senator Hise. A couple of differences to point out in the process. Number one is, yes, Senator Hise is correct that Democrats did approve the bill, but number one, the maps that were drawn in Massachusetts were not deemed partisan.

Number two, a majority of Republicans voted for that map.

And lastly, Madam President, it was a Republican governor that signed that congressional redistricting map into law.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Senator Smith, for what purpose do you rise?

REPRESENTATIVE SMITH: I would like to speak to the bill.

PRESIDENT HUNT: You have the floor to speak to the bill.

REPRESENTATIVE SMITH: Thank you so

much.

I first want to go back and repeat some things that I remember my peer Senator Applewhite saying because when we were in the elections committee, all we continued to hear was I drew the map, I drew the map, I drew the map. Now I'm hearing we drew the map, and I don't know who the we is because the Democrats were not included.

I'm looking at what we're talking about now and going off what other states are doing, and they set a precedent. Well, they also set a precedent to pass a budget that it doesn't look like we're willing to do.

We're spending so much time now wanting to follow our peers. Let's pass a budget. We have people who are hurting, and these people are people that you represent, unless you don't care.

When we go back to talking about we're not using anything racial, we're just going to move black people, but it's not racial. We're going to go to the Black Belt and make all of these suggestions to get a map. We could have made moves any other place, but we specifically

chose that section in eastern North Carolina. Oh, it just so happened to be that it was the Black Belt, but it's nothing racial.

So we can change words, we can talk around words, we can move them around and say all those things. People know the truth. They know what's happening right here. It is their job to elect us and not our job to feel like who we want to represent.

So I encourage all of us to make sure that we continue to vote no on this. I know some of you are feeling pressure because you're often put on the line about how you can vote. I'm glad I don't have anybody who has to tell me what I have to do. Thank you.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Is there further discussion or debate?

Senator Garrett, for what purpose do you rise?

SENATOR GARRETT: To send forward an amendment.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Send forth your amendment. The clerk will read.

THE CLERK: Senator Garrett moves to amend the bill.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Senator Garrett is recognized to explain the amendment.

SENATOR GARRETT: Thank you, Madam President.

Colleagues, this is a pretty straightforward and simple amendment that would put before the voters a constitutional amendment to establish a nonpartisan redistricting commission, giving the people the voice and the ability to choose their elected representatives, not the other way around. I encourage your support.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Senator Hise, for what purpose do you rise?

SENATOR HISE: To move that Amendment 6 do lie upon the table.

SENATOR DANIEL: Second.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Senator Hise moves that Amendment 6 do lay upon the table, seconded by Senator Daniel.

This is a non-debatable motion. The question before the body is the motion to lay Amendment Number 6 to Senate Bill 249 on the table.

All in favor will vote aye, all opposed

will vote no. Five seconds will be allowed for voting, and the clerk will record the vote.

Senator Chaudhuri, no.

26 having voted in the affirmative, 20 in the negative, Amendment Number 6 will lay upon the table, and we are back on the bill.

Senator Garrett, for what purpose do you rise?

SENATOR GARRETT: To speak to the bill, Madam President.

PRESIDENT HUNT: You have the floor to speak to the bill.

SENATOR GARRETT: Thank you.

Madam President, members of this body, to the people of North Carolina, I stand before you today at a crossroads in American history, not the kind you read about later, sanitized in textbooks with neat conclusions, but the raw, uncertain kind, the kind where the choices we make in this chamber, on this day, will echo through generations yet unborn.

This past weekend something extraordinary happened across our country. While we prepare to debate redistricting behind these walls, millions of Americans, from

New York City to Bryson city right here in North Carolina, from major capitals to small towns with populations in the hundreds, took to the streets, more than 2,500 communities, possibly the largest single day protest in American history, millions of voices but one message that has thundered through American history since 1776: America has no kings.

They marched peacefully, grandmothers and college students, veterans and teachers, people who had never protested before standing shoulder to shoulder with those who have marched decades. They weren't there because they hate America. They were there because they love her.

Today, in this chamber and with this vote, we are being asked to betray them. Let me tell you where we stand in the eyes of history.

There are moments that define nations, moments when the soul of a country is tested, when everything that came before, every sacrifice, every principle, every promise hangs in the balance. This is one of those moments. Future historians will look back at 2025 and ask when democracy was openly under assault, when a president demanded states rig their elections,

when millions took to the streets begging their leaders to protect their rights, what did those in power do? Did they stand with the people, or did they stand with the powerful? Do they honor the sacrifices of those who came before, or did they auction off democracy to the highest bidder? Did they keep the promise, or did they break the faith with every generation that bled for this republic? We are living through a stress test of American democracy.

Madam President, I fear that we are failing it.

Let's go back to Philadelphia 1787. Our founders, imperfect men, yet visionaries, didn't write We the People, in order to form a perfect union. They couldn't. They knew they hadn't created perfection. They had just fought a war to escape a king, and here they were, some of them still holding human beings in bondage. They knew the contradiction, and they felt its weight, so they made a promise, not a guarantee, not a completed work, a promise to form a more perfect union, more perfect than yesterday, more perfect than the generation before, more democratic than the one we inherited.

That promise, that sacred covenant, is the thread that binds every generation of Americans to the next. That generational promise is what makes America America. It's not our geography. It's not our wealth. It's the solemn vow that each generation makes to the next. We will leave you an America closer to its ideals than the one we inherited.

My parents made that promise to me, their parents made it to them, and I made that promise to my children, that I would fight to give them a country where their voices matter, where their votes count, where democracy isn't just a word we teach in civics class but a living, breathing reality they experience every day, and that promise has been paid for in blood.

Think about Nathan Hale, just 21 years old, standing on the gallows with a noose around his neck. His last words echoing across history, and I quote, I only regret that I have one life to lose for my country. He died so that America could be born without a king.

Think about the thousands who froze and starved at Valley Forge, men who wrapped their

bleeding feet in rags, who ate bark from trees, who watched their friends die of disease and exposure. They could have gone home, they could have surrendered, but they stayed and they suffered. Many of them died because they believed in the promise.

Think about Susan B. Anthony, arrested and fined for daring to vote. Think about the suffragists who died before seeing the 19th Amendment passed, who kept fighting for a victory they would never see. The promise wasn't about them, it was about the next generation.

Think about Congressman John Lewis, good trouble John Lewis, beaten nearly to death on the Edmund Pettus Bridge. His skull fractured, blood pouring down his face, and still he got up, still he marched, still he fought for decades, until the very end because he understood something profound: Democracy is not a spectator sport. It requires sacrifice, it demands courage, and it never ever comes free.

Every single one of them kept that promise, even when it might have or did cost

them everything. And now we stand here in our comfortable suits, in our air conditioned chamber, and we're being asked will you honor that promise or will you spit on their graves? Because make no mistake, that is what today is about. This is about whether we believe in the principle that those millions of Americans stood for this past weekend, that in America the people choose their leaders, not the other way around.

Democracy isn't a gift that arrived complete and perfect in 1776. It's not a participation trophy we get for just being American. It's not a static thing frozen in time requiring only our passive acceptance.

Democracy is alive. It breathes. It bleeds. It can be wounded. It can be killed. And right now it is gasping for air.

Democracy only lives when duly elected representatives stand for the people, present their visions, make their arguments, and trust the voters to decide. It thrives when we compete for the privilege to serve, when we earn the people's trust through the quality of our ideas and the strength of our character, when we

fight in the arena of public opinion, not in the back rooms where maps get carved up.

Democracy dies when we politicians rig the game, when we draw lines to choose our voters instead of letting our voters choose us, when we admit -- and let's be honest, that's exactly what's happening here today -- when we admit that we can't win in fair competition so we'll just change the rules, when we're so afraid of the people's judgment, we rig the system to avoid it.

That's not democracy, folks. That's tyranny with a prettier name. That's authoritarianism in a suit and tie. And that's everything these soldiers, marchers, and freedom fighters died to prevent.

My colleagues on the other side of the aisle talk about protecting the president's agenda. Let me ask you something: Since when did America exist to support the president's agenda? I thought government was supposed to serve the people. I thought elected officials were supposed to represent their constituents, not take orders from Washington on how to rig maps. I thought we fought a revolution

specifically to establish that no one, not a king, not a president, not anyone is above the will of the people.

The president said he's entitled to more seats. Entitled? That word should chill every American to the bone. No elected official is entitled to anything, anything except the privilege of earning the people's trust. And if you can't earn it fairly, you don't deserve it at all.

We teach our children to compete fairly, to do their homework, to practice harder, to win or lose on merit, to shake hands after the game, win or lose, to respect their opponents and to honor the rules.

So what are we teaching them today? If the game isn't going your way, you just change the rules. Integrity is optional when power is on the line.

What do we say to the kids that marched with their parents this last weekend, the ones holding signs saying we bow to no king, the ones who believe -- and God bless them, they still believe -- that their voices matter, that democracy works, that America keeps its

promises.

Do we look them in the eye and say, sorry, kid, your vote doesn't matter as much as our political power.

This past weekend, millions of Americans in the streets were screaming to be heard. They were saying we see what you're doing. We understand that democracy is under attack. We know the difference between legitimate governance and authoritarian power grab. We remember what happened to countries that chose strong men over self-governance. We know how this story ends if we don't stop it, and we refuse -- we refuse to be silent while you steal the people's voice.

This body needs to listen. America is standing up not just members of one party but Americans from every walk of life, from every corner of this nation who understand that once you allow election rigging to become normalized, once you accept that might makes right and power justifies betrayal, you have crossed a line you can never uncross. You are breaking something that cannot easily be repaired.

Those marchers this past weekend,

they're the spiritual descendants of every American whoever refused to bow. They are keeping the promise, but will we? Will we honor the sacrifice of every American whoever fought for democracy, or will we slap them in the face by trading away the very thing they died to protect? When our grandchildren ask us what did you do when democracy was dying, will we have an answer that let's us sleep at night?

This is the moment, this chamber, this day. History doesn't send an engraved invitation letting you know when something important is happening. You don't get a warning label that says democracy's fate hangs in the balance today. You don't get a second chance to make the right choice. You just get moments like this where regular people in regular places make choices that ripple through time.

We are living in one of those moments right now. Historians will write about this vote. Future students will wonder how could they not see what they were doing? How could they not understand what they were throwing away?

I'm here to tell you what we're doing

is wrong. It's a desecration on every grave at Arlington, every memorial at Gettysburg, every name on the Vietnam wall, every star in the Gold Star mother's window, but we can still stop. And let me tell you what gives me hope because I'm going to end on hope. Getting close to the end. You're welcome.

Even now, even today, I'm hopeful. And I'm not naive about today's vote. I know how this will end. I know democracy is going to take another bullet in this chamber this morning. The voice of the people will be silenced once again by a pen stroke of politicians who fear them.

But here's what keeps me going, what lets me sleep at night, what gets me out of bed in the morning to come back into this chamber and fight again because the promise is bigger than any one vote. The covenant is stronger than any one betrayal. The American spirit cannot be killed by a gerrymandered map.

Those revolutionaries at Valley Forge lost battles. They froze, they starved, they buried their friends in shallow graves in the snow, but they won the war.

John Lewis had his skull fractured on that bridge, but he got up, he marched again. He ran for congress. He served for 33 years. He fought until his last breath, and he won the war.

But here's what authoritarians and would-be kings never understand. You cannot kill an idea whose time has come. Yes, democracy may bleed today. Yes, this body may succeed in rigging these maps. Yes, the party in control might steal a few more seats, and they might hold on to power for a few more years.

You can rig the map, but you can't rig the people's determination. You cannot silence our votes, but -- you can silence our votes, but you cannot silence our voices. You can try to break our democracy, but it will not break our will to restore it. The fight doesn't end today. It doesn't end with this vote. It doesn't end until we restore the promise, until we repair what's been broken, until we leave our children an America worthy of the sacrifices that built it.

So I will keep fighting because the

promise is worth keeping. The covenant is worth honoring. Democracy is worth defending. And America, this magnificent, flawed, frustrating, beautiful experiment in self-governance, America is worth fighting for. Even today, especially today as democracy takes another bullet, I will keep that promise.

Thank you, Madam President. Thank you to the people of North Carolina, and may God give us the strength to be worthy of our time and the promise that we're entrusted to keep.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Senator Chitlik, for what purpose do you rise?

SENATOR CHITLIK: I would like to ask Senator Hise a question, please.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Senator Hise, do you yield?

SENATOR HISE: I yield.

PRESIDENT HUNT: He yields.

SENATOR CHITLIK: Thank you, Senator Hise. Thank you, Madam President.

So one of the public reasons that you've given about why this bill is so important is saying that North Carolina voted for Donald Trump and this is what the people want, they

want to implement President Trump's agenda. And I agree with you, the people voted for Donald Trump. I'm not here to dispute elections.

But if that is in fact true, why -- can you help me understand why is this not an independent redistricting bill if this is the will of the people?

SENATOR HISE: Thank you, Madam Chairman -- Madam President, and for the question.

Independent districting has never been part of the history of the state of North Carolina. The power given to the state legislature to draw districts and, conversely, congress as well is given by the US Constitution. I believe it is the requirement of the state legislature to do so. And we have never abdicated that power to any type of independent commission which is, as I've said before many times, I think is a fairly tale anyway. And California probably proves that. They create one until they want to do something else and then they go back to their legislature. So we don't have it and never have.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Senator Chitlik, for

what purpose do you rise?

SENATOR CHITLIK: I have a follow-up question for Senator Hise, please.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Do you yield, Senator Hise?

SENATOR HISE: I yield.

PRESIDENT HUNT: He yields.

SENATOR CHITLIK: Thank you, Senator Hise.

I understand that that might be without historical precedent. So let's -- I have a follow-up question to this.

Help me understand, if North Carolina voted for, say -- about 53 percent for President Trump, maybe -- we can be generous, maybe it was 54 on a really good day. So help me understand why if 54 percent of North Carolinians voted for President Trump why this body believes -- or excuse me -- why you because I know you are the person who drew the map, so why you think that that is a mandate that 79 percent of our seats should go to Republicans? Help me understand that part.

SENATOR HISE: As I have said on multiple occasions and again earlier today, when

other states across the country are maximizing and increasing their map proportions for Democrats, it is incumbent upon us not to stand still and allow them to be successful, but we must also maximize our maps in the state of North Carolina to make sure we preserve the balance of power for congress.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Senator Chitlik, for what purpose do you rise?

SENATOR CHITLIK: I would like a moment of personal privilege to speak to the bill for the young people in the audience.

PRESIDENT HUNT: All right. You may speak to the bill.

SENATOR CHITLIK: Thank you.

I've noticed that while we were debating this bill we have this wonderful group of it looks like high school students come in, and so welcome. Thank you. You've chosen -- middle school. Wow. Okay. Y'all look fabulous.

So I just want to -- you know, I just want to contextualize for you what is happening. I'm sure your incredible teachers have had an opportunity to brief you on the redistricting

that's happening today.

What you're seeing is not democracy, it's a fallacy of democracy. We're all actors, right, in this game around being able to talk about the power that's happening.

SENATOR BERGER: Madam President.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Senator Berger, for what purpose do you rise?

SENATOR BERGER: I believe Senator Chitlik under our rules has the floor to debate the bill, not to speak to an audience.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Yes. That's correct.

Senator Chitlik, please --

SENATOR CHITLIK: Sure. I'll debate the merits of the bill. I just want to do a quick summary of where we are.

So we had debate yesterday. We had debate today.

SENATOR BERGER: Madam President.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Yes, Senator Berger.

SENATOR BERGER: Again, it is pursuant to the rules appropriate to debate the bill. It is not appropriate to speak to an audience.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Yes.

Senator Chitlik, please only debate the

bill. Don't speak to the audience.

SENATOR CHITLIK: Okay. I don't think I need to debate the bill. I think that was all they needed to learn. Thank you.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Thank you.

Senator Grafstein, for what purpose do you rise?

SENATOR GRAFSTEIN: Madam President, just to ask that the words of senator Garrett that were --

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Objection.

SENATOR GRAFSTEIN: Sorry. I don't know who said that.

I'm just asking that the words of Senator Garrett be spread upon the journal.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Senator Newton, for what purpose do you rise?

SENATOR NEWTON: I object to the senator's request.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Point of order, Madam President. That's amazing. That's amazing.

PRESIDENT HUNT: All right. At this time we're going to vote on the motion to spread the words upon the journal of Senator Garrett.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Madam President, is that a debatable motion?

PRESIDENT HUNT: Yes.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Thank you. Just briefly, then, Madam President.

What an outrage. You know, they say that the truth only hurts if it should. Senator Garrett spoke the truth. Those true words should be spread upon the journal. I urge you all, regardless of party, to show some respect for your colleagues, to show some respect for our state, for our country, for the freedom of speech. Show some respect. Let's spread these words on the journal.

PRESIDENT HUNT: All right. So the motion is to spread the words of senator Garrett on the journal.

All in favor of that vote yes, all against it vote no. You have five seconds. The clerk will record the vote.

20 having voted in the affirmative, 26 in the negative, the motion does not pass.

Is there further discussion or debate?

Hearing none, the question before the Senate is the passage of Senate Bill 249 on its

third reading.

All in favor will vote aye, all opposed will vote no. Five seconds will be allowed for voting, and the clerk will record the vote.

Senator Meyer. Senator Meyer. Senator Meyer.

25 having voted in the affirmative -- Senator Lee, for what purpose do you rise?

SENATOR LEE: Thank you, Madam President. I was thinking about the previous motion and not this bill. I change my vote no to aye, please.

PRESIDENT HUNT: To an aye to the previous motion or of this bill?

SENATOR LEE: Aye on this bill.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Aye on this bill. Okay.

SENATOR MEYER: Madam President --

PRESIDENT HUNT: Senator Meyer.

SENATOR MEYER: -- may I be recorded as voting no.

PRESIDENT HUNT: You're a no.

SENATOR MEYER: Thank you.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Okay. 26 having voted in the affirmative, 20 in the negative,

Senate Bill 249 passes its third reading and will be sent to the House.

Senate Bill 777, the clerk will read.

THE CLERK: Senate Bill 777, General Assembly Appointments.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Senator Daniel is recognized to explain the bill.

SENATOR DANIEL: Thank you, Madam President.

Senate Bill 777 contains appointments for the president pro tem and the speaker of the house. Specifically, it fills two vacancies on the college of the Albemarle Board of Trustees and one on the North Carolina Acupuncture Licensing Board. It makes an appointment to the eastern North Carolina School for the Deaf Board of Trustees, and there was one technical correction regarding the prior appointments bill. I ask for your support.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Is there further discussion or debate?

Senator Batch, for what purpose do you rise?

SENATOR BATCH: To ask Senator Daniel a question.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Senator Daniel, do you yield?

SENATOR DANIEL: Yes.

PRESIDENT HUNT: He yields.

SENATOR BATCH: It appears that there are three appointments that are previously made that are now being removed. Can you tell us why three individuals that we've already appointed are being removed from those boards.

SENATOR DANIEL: No, not without doing further research.

SENATOR BATCH: If we could take a moment, Madam President.

PRESIDENT HUNT: I'm sorry. What was your question?

SENATOR BATCH: If we could take a recess so that Senator Daniel can research my question.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Senator Daniel, can you do that in a matter of few minutes or --

SENATOR DANIEL: Probably five minutes.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Five minutes. We'll take five minutes.

(At ease.)

PRESIDENT HUNT: The senate will come

back to order.

Senator Daniel, for what purpose do you rise?

SENATOR DANIEL: To answer Senator Batch's question.

So the section that Senator Batch was asking about are three House appointees. My understanding is -- after discussion with staff and talking to Senator Batch is that those appointees don't need to be appointed by statute, just by letter of the speaker, and the House requested this be removed from our prior appointments bill.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Is there further discussion or debate?

Hearing none, the question before the Senate is the passage of Senate Bill 777 on its second reading.

All in favor will vote aye, all opposed will vote no. Five seconds will be allowed for voting, and the clerk will record the vote.

Senator Jones, aye.

Senator Lowe. Senator Lowe. Aye.

Senator Newton, aye.

45 having voted in the affirmative, one

in the negative, Senate Bill 777 passes its second reading and, without objection, will be read a third time.

THE CLERK: The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Is there further discussion or debate?

Hearing none, all in favor of the passage of Senate Bill 777 on its third reading will say aye.

SENATE MEMBERS: Aye.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Opposed no.

The ayes have it. Senate Bill 777 passes its third reading and will be sent to the House.

Are there any notices and announcements?

Senator Galey, for what purpose do you rise?

SENATOR GALEY: A moment of personal privilege.

PRESIDENT HUNT: You have the floor for a moment of personal privilege.

SENATOR GALEY: Thank you, Madam President.

I just -- I received on my desk a firearm lock, lock it up, keep it safe. It doesn't have the name of anybody on it. Rule 17J says that if a senator puts an item on another senator's desk, then they should display the name of the senator placing the item. Because I don't know who to thank for this and --

PRESIDENT HUNT: Senator Lowe, are you trying to answer Senator Galey?

SENATOR LOWE: I am trying to answer you. I was coming back around there, and I was accosted by someone and didn't get around there fast enough to talk to you personally.

SENATOR GALEY: Well, thank you, Senator Lowe, for the gift. I appreciate that, and I will -- I will route it to the person in my family who will be most interested in it. Thank you.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Senator Berger, for what purpose do you rise?

SENATOR BERGER: Thank you, Madam President.

We have a conference report that's being worked on that is not prepared as of yet.

I would ask that the Senate stand in recess until 12:00 noon.

PRESIDENT HUNT: The senate will stand at recess until 12:00 noon.

(Recess.)

PRESIDENT HUNT: Senator Berger, for what purpose do you rise?

SENATOR BERGER: A motion and an announcement.

PRESIDENT HUNT: You have the floor.

SENATOR BERGER: Thank you, Madam President.

Members, we need to stand in recess until 1:00 p.m. We are awaiting the final draft of a conference report. So I would move that we stand in recess until 1:00 p.m.

And during the recess, an announcement, Republicans will caucus.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Without objection, so ordered. Recess until 1:00.

(Recess.)

PRESIDENT HUNT: Senate will come back to order.

Senator Daniel, for what purpose do you rise?

SENATOR DANIEL: Point of order.

PRESIDENT HUNT: State your point of order.

SENATOR DANIEL: Thank you, Madam President.

Prior to recessing earlier today, Senator Grafstein announced her intention to circulate a discharge petition for Senate Bill 403 under Rule 47B. That announcement and circulation of the petition is premature because it had not been ten legislative days since the bill was referred to the rules committee. This bill was referred to the committee on the hundredth legislative day, and only two legislative days have passed since then. We're now on Day 102.

So any announcement of circulation of discharge petition would be in order following the tenth legislative day and would need to be raised again at that time.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Senator Grafstein, for what purpose do you rise?

SENATOR GRAFSTEIN: To speak to the point of order.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Yes. You have the

floor.

SENATOR GRAFSTEIN: Thank you, Madam President, and thank you, Senator Daniel.

You're correct in the -- on the rule. I'm not going to dispute you on the rule. We have -- I was actually at something earlier today of folks who are here to ask us to fund Medicaid. Hundreds of people were there, providers all over the state.

So the discharge petition really is an effort for us to address the call from these folks. I appreciate that it's out of order. We will be bringing it back. My hope is that we don't have to bring it back after ten legislative days. Ten legislative days will be beyond the November 1 timeframe when people are going to start losing benefits, when people are going to start losing providers.

So I would ask Senator Daniel as acting rules chair if -- in lieu of the petition, if you would bring Senate Bill 403 to the floor tomorrow so that -- or today so that we can vote on it and make sure that people get the benefits that they are entitled to, so providers don't go out of business or don't have to lay people off.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Senator Grafstein.

SENATOR GRAFSTEIN: I would ask if Senator Daniel would yield for a question.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Senator Daniel, will you yield?

SENATOR DANIEL: I yield.

SENATOR GRAFSTEIN: Senator Daniel, will you bring Senate Bill 403 to the floor as acting rules chair so that we can give relief to people and so that we can fund Medicaid at a level the House and Senate agree on, put aside differences for today, get people what they need in case we don't come back before November which it sounds like we're not?

SENATOR DANIEL: So I think, Senator Grafstein, if you refer to the adjournment resolution, that is not in accordance with the adjournment resolution. It wouldn't be eligible for this session.

SENATOR GRAFSTEIN: I wonder if Senator Daniel will yield for one more question.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Senator Daniel, will you yield?

SENATOR DANIEL: I'll yield.

PRESIDENT HUNT: He yields.

SENATOR GRAFSTEIN: Senator Daniel, would you be willing to waive the rules so that we can bring that bill back to the floor for consideration?

SENATOR DANIEL: No.

SENATOR GRAFSTEIN: Madam President, may I speak one more time on the --

SENATOR DANIEL: And it would have to be -- it couldn't just be the Senate. It would have to be -- like to change the adjournment resolution, we would have to have the House agree with us.

PRESIDENT HUNT: All right. So the ruling is that it is only the second legislative day, so that is put to bed right now on the point of order.

SENATOR GRAFSTEIN: Thank you, Madam President.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Senator Daniel, for what purpose do you rise?

SENATOR DANIEL: Motion.

PRESIDENT HUNT: You have the floor for a motion.

SENATOR DANIEL: If I can find it.

Conference report for Senate Bill 449,

Continuing Budget Operations Part 4 has been handed in to the principal clerk. I move that it be placed on today's calendar for immediate consideration.

PRESIDENT HUNT: So ordered.

Senate Bill 449, the clerk will read.

THE CLERK: Senate Bill 449, Conference Committee Substitute Continuing Budget Operations Part 4.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Senator Jackson is recognized to explain the conference report.

SENATOR JACKSON: Thank you, Madam President.

Before I get in to explaining the highlights of this bill, I want to take just a few moments and thank our central staff as well as pro tem staff and all those that have worked on this bill. There's been a lot of time spent on it behind the scenes, making sure it's together and making sure the I's are dotted and the T's are crossed. And we as members don't always see that, and the public certainly doesn't, of the time it takes to put something like this together, but I would like to thank all of them. And the majority of them are

sitting here behind me.

And I also -- I want to say goodbye. Deborah stand up, please. Deborah Landreth, this will probably be -- and she's probably happy about it, y'all -- will be her last budget cycle with us. She is retiring, and as after a well-earned retirement coming. And I just want to say thank you to you and Jennifer and all those that have worked on this, but thank you, Deborah, and we wish you the very best in your retirement, and thank you for giving us the time you've begin us. And don't be a stranger. Thank you.

Let's give Deborah a hand, y'all.

[Applause.]

And, Deborah, just so you know, I'll miss you, and we all will. And I had to go ahead and say that because y'all know how absent-brained I can be part of the time and I got on the end of all this explaining and I forgot it, so I didn't want to forget it. Try to do the important things first.

So, Madam President, with that, I'd like to explain the bill.

PRESIDENT HUNT: You have the floor.

SENATOR JACKSON: Members, this is a technical fix. These are time-sensitive issues, or so we have been told and we believe them to be. It is pre-negotiated between the House and the Senate, and I'll just highlight briefly some of the changes.

We have made several adjustments to various Hurricane Helene programs and provisions including extending the restriction on local tree ordinances as well as valid development approvals by one year for Helene-impacted counties. We've increased the Golden LEAF loan program for small businesses. Hopefully they will be able to get more money out to more businesses.

We have modified the Helene local government cash flow loan programs that are administered by the treasurer and modifications to the Local Government Capital Grant Program project set to be denied by FEMA can receive grant funding prior to that without delay.

We are allowing the Board of Governors to raise out-of-state tuition at NC Promise institutions by $1,000 a semester, and this was a request by the UNC system. This balances the

need to keep costs down for in-state students while also addressing budget concerns at the North Carolina Promise campuses.

There is 2.1 million recurring for VIPER operations of maintenance, 7.2 million nonrecurring for Administrative Office of Courts to implement IT improvements. It allows the SBI to contract with a third party to process fingerprints and criminal background checks. It appropriates nearly 22 million of the biennium from the IT reserve for the state budget system stabilization and replacement program, and this was a request from OSBM.

It also waives the local state plan, the 2.4 percent increase for the state health plan. It's going to waive that to the local governments. And we are applying 25 million recurring for the pay plan reserves which we put in place last spring to implement staff increases for the General Assembly authorized, like I said earlier this year, which was last spring, across various agencies, including teachers, through DPI, SBI, State Highway Patrol, and DPS.

It appropriates 7 million to the

Department of Transportation for ferry maintenance, operations, and dry docking. And it does various other things, but these are the highlights.

And, Members, I would ask for your support, and I'll be happy to entertain any questions. Thank you.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Is there further discussion or debate?

Hearing none -- Senator Mayfield, for what purpose do you rise?

SENATOR MAYFIELD: To ask the bill sponsor a question or the conference report -- to ask Senator Jackson a question.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Senator Jackson, do you yield?

SENATOR JACKSON: Yes, ma'am.

PRESIDENT HUNT: He yields.

SENATOR MAYFIELD: Thank you.

And you may or may not be able to answer this, but there's a provision in the conference report related to the local government loan program, cash flow loan program, and there's no redlining in that section so it's -- I can't tell what has changed. I'm not

suspicious. I don't know -- but my question are what are those changes there?

SENATOR JACKSON: Madam President, to respond.

Senator Mayfield, I can't tell you the changes. We did tweak that program some to do what the county commissioner association had asked us to do, so we did do that.

SENATOR MAYFIELD: So it was in response to a request from the county commissioners.

SENATOR JACKSON: Yes, ma'am.

SENATOR MAYFIELD: Great. All right. Thank you so much.

SENATOR JACKSON: You're welcome.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Is there further discussion or debate?

Hearing none, the question before the body is the adoption of the conference report for Senate Bill 449.

All in favor will vote aye, all opposed will vote no. Five seconds will be allowed for voting, and the clerk will report the vote.

46 having voted in the affirmative, 0 in the negative, the conference report for

Senate Bill 449 is adopted and the House will be so notified.

Is there further business to come before the Senate?

If not, Senator Berger -- Senator Hise, for what purpose do you rise?

SENATOR HISE: A moment of personal privilege.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Yes, you have the floor.

SENATOR HISE: Thank you, Madam President.

Members of the Senate, I just wanted to take a moment -- hopefully this is the last day in a while that we're going to be meeting -- to recognize my research assistant, Leah Byers, who is leaving us here in the General Assembly to go be a liaison, so you'll still get to see her regularly in the building and others. I'll let her do the announcements where and when that is, but I wanted to take the opportunity to thank her for the years of work that she's given to my office, put together with making sure the budget -- both passed and unpassed budgets that we've done have been put together and

appropriate and make sure were represented.

She's done an incredible job, and I couldn't be more excited to see her moving up and on. There's great things ahead for you and hopefully in state government, but in any direction you seem to go. And thank you for the opportunity for us to work with you.

[Applause.]

PRESIDENT HUNT: Senator Settle, for what purpose do you rise?

SENATOR SETTLE: A moment of personal privilege, please.

PRESIDENT HUNT: You have the floor.

SENATOR SETTLE: Thank you, Madam President.

With all the fun we've been having in here the last couple of days, I haven't had a chance. I wanted to bring this up and just congratulate -- in my office, my intern Liva Lathem back here will be graduating from North Carolina State this fall. And we found out today that she has -- yesterday she has been accepted and a full scholarship to Elon Law School, so we're really happy about that and wanted to congratulate her. Thank you.

[Applause.]

PRESIDENT HUNT: Senator Adcock, for what purpose do you rise?

SENATOR ADCOCK: A moment of personal privilege.

PRESIDENT HUNT: You have the floor.

SENATOR ADCOCK: Please join me in recognizing and honoring the senator to my left, Senator Kandie Smith on her birthday yesterday.

[Applause.]

PRESIDENT HUNT: Senator Applewhite, for what purpose do you rise?

SENATOR APPLEWHITE: A moment of personal privilege.

PRESIDENT HUNT: You have the floor.

SENATOR APPLEWHITE: Thank you -- oh, I turned my own mic off.

Thank you, Madam President.

I think we all can agree that this is really tough work, what we do here in the Senate, many hours that we spend not in this chamber preparing for to do the people's work. And I just wanted to take a moment to say to my Democratic colleagues how much I appreciate you all. And although it's hard for all of us, it's

hard for us to be in the minority knowing that every day we come on the floor, we're going to lose. We are going to lose the battle. We are going to lose the vote. But we still show up every day, and we do this work. And I just wanted to say thank you for that. And we still laugh, and we still enjoy each other.

And this last two days has really been a challenge for us with the redistricting bill, and I just wanted to acknowledge all of the floor speeches that we gave and spoke about democracy. That was really important.

And many of you know, I love political science, that's my graduate degree, and I just eat this stuff up all day, but I did want to really recognize Senator Garrett's comments this morning, his floor speech. I enjoyed it. I think that you painted an accurate historical narrative. I listened to your words. I was somehow at the no king marches. I was somehow crossing the Edmund Pettus Bridge. I somehow saw the feet being wrapped at Valley Forge of frozen feet, right. So thank you for your words.

And as you were speaking, there was a

group of middle schoolers that came in, and I watched how they were watching you. And although your words were not sprinkled across the journal, they were sprinkled across the hearts and minds of our young people.

Thank you, Madam President.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Upon motion of Senator Jarvis of Davidson and Davie county, the chair is happy to extend courtesies to Lexington city councilman Joe Watkins who is in the gallery. Please stand and be recognized.

[Applause.]

PRESIDENT HUNT: Senator Murdock, for what purpose does rise?

SENATOR MURDOCK: Point of personal privilege.

PRESIDENT HUNT: You have the floor for a point of personal privilege.

SENATOR MURDOCK: A notice was sent out by the clerk, but still just wanted to take the time since we'll be adjourning for -- or adjourning now for a few days.

We did unfortunately lose a former colleague that was a part of my freshman class, Senator Ernestine Bazemore. So she was elected

in 2020, joined -- or elected in 2020, joined in 2020, and was only with us for a short period, but had to lift her up as a lot of you know that are still serving had so many health challenges while she was serving but would still muster up a smile, ask us how we were doing, did her best to represent her district. Before that, was an educator, was even vice chair of the Bertie county commission, was really a legend in her district, had a passion and a heart for rural communities, particularly healthcare access and broadband.

So just on the Senate floor wanted to acknowledge the life, legacy, and memory of the late, great state Senator Ernestine Bazemore.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Is there further business to come before the Senate?

Senator Garrett, for what purpose do you rise?

SENATOR GARRETT: For a moment of personal privilege.

PRESIDENT HUNT: You have the floor.

SENATOR GARRETT: Colleagues, Guilford county lost a true public servant on Monday. Dot Kendall Kearns was the first woman to serve

on the Guilford County Board of Commissioners. She was a member of the High Point City Council and then went on to become a member of the Unified Guilford County Board of Education. And so I would just ask -- also a personal friend of mine and served with my mother on the Board of Education for 20 years -- that we adjourn in her honor today.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Without objection, so ordered.

Is there further business to come before the Senate?

If not, Senator Berger is recognized for a motion.

Senator Garrett, could you please repeat the name that we are adjourning in honor in memory of.

SENATOR GARRETT: Yes. Sorry. Dot Kendall.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Dot Kendall.

SENATOR GARRETT: Kearns.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Hurns?

SENATOR GARRETT: Kearns, K-E-A-R-N-S.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Thank you.

SENATOR GARRETT: Thank you.

SENATOR BERGER: Thank you, Madam President.

I move that Senate do now adjourn in memory of Dot Kendall Kearns, to reconvene on October 22nd -- that's tomorrow -- 2025, at 10:00 a.m. Members, this will be a nonvoting session. There will be no further voting sessions this week.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Objection, Madam President, to adjourning.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Okay. We will have a vote on whether or not to adjourn.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: May I speak to the --

PRESIDENT HUNT: Yes.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Thank you, Madam President.

I appreciate the person whose honor we're -- the motion is to adjourn. I'm not objecting to that.

My objection is we have business to do. I've raised several times today this issue around Medicaid. I feel like I have to raise it one more time. There are hundreds of people in this building right now, there are thousands of

people across this state who are going to lose access to services. There are small providers across this state who are going to lose their businesses if we don't do something by November 1st.

I am objecting that we're adjourning today without taking care of that very important piece of business. And for that reason, Madam President, I hope that we can all vote not to adjourn at this time.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Give me a second on the adjournment motion.

SENATOR BERGER: Madam President, I'll restate the motion and see if there's a second out there.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Senator Berger.

SENATOR BERGER: Members, I'll move that Senate do now adjourn in memory of Dot Kendall Kearns, to reconvene on October 22nd, that's tomorrow, at 10:00 a.m. Members, this would be a nonvoting session. No further voting sessions this week.

SENATOR DANIEL: Second.

PRESIDENT HUNT: We will now have a vote on the adjournment motion.

All in favor of adjourning will vote aye, all opposed will vote no. Five seconds will be allowed for voting, and the clerk will record the vote.

Senator Everitt. Senator Everitt. Senator Everitt.

Senator Newton. Senator Newton. Senator Newton.

28 having voted aye, 16 having voted no, the motion to adjourn passes.

The motion is that the Senate do now adjourn to reconvene Wednesday, October 22, 2025, at 10:00 a.m., seconded by Senator Daniel.

All in favor will say aye.

SENATE MEMBERS: Aye.

PRESIDENT HUNT: Opposed no.

The ayes have it and the Senate stands adjourned in memory and honor of Dot Kendall Kearns.

(Adjourned.)

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA)

) C E R T I F I C A T E

COUNTY OF WAKE)

I, DENISE MYERS BYRD, Stenographic Court Reporter, CSR 8340, do hereby certify that the transcription of the recorded Senate session, held on October 21, 2025, was taken down by me stenographically to the best of my ability and thereafter transcribed under my supervision; and that the foregoing pages, inclusive, constitute a true and accurate transcription of said recording.

Signed this the 2nd day of November 2025.

Denise Myers Byrd, CSR 8340

NORTH CAROLINA GENERAL ASSEMBLY

HOUSE SELECT COMMITTEE ON REDISTRICTING

OCTOBER 21, 2025

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CHAIRMAN BLACKWELL: ...order. Welcome to this House Select Committee on Redistricting. I want to begin by introducing the sergeants-at-arms who are here today to help us.

Marvin Lee. Marvin, if you'll raise your hand. Marvin is over here. Terry McCraw over here. Reggie, Reginald Seals is -- he walked outside. Thomas Terry back at the back door. John Gilbert over here. And Stafford Young is back at the back door. Thank you, gentlemen.

Let me also say to members of the committee, if there is a member of the committee who has an amendment that they propose to offer in this committee, that I need you to turn that in to the clerk for Chair Jones and I to take a look at while we are otherwise proceeding.

Let me also at this point take just a moment to outline the procedure. I'm going to recognize Representative Jones to begin with some remarks. Following that, Senator Hise will present the bill as it comes over from the Senate. We'll have questions and comments for them from members of the committee.

At that point, we will take public

comments. It's my intention to take those public comments for up to an hour, assuming we have sufficient time, which I think we will, but we're asking that members commenting -- members of the public who are commenting limit their remarks to a minute so we can get through them all.

The sergeant-at-arms, one of them will be back there, and they'll have a little placard or sign that says 30 seconds to let you know you're halfway through and then a sign when your minute is up.

Beyond that, when we complete the public comments, we'll come back and we will take a motion on the bill and have committee debate. If there are amendments, we would take those up during that period of time, but we will be taking a vote on the final bill no later than ten minutes to 4:00, or 3:50, unless we get through earlier.

So any questions from members of the committee?

Great. So that being said, the Chair recognizes Chair Jones for his remarks on this bill.

CHAIRMAN JONES: Thank you, Chairman.

It is a pleasure to be with you here today. I'm going to paint a roadmap and walk each of you through the House's process regarding redistricting.

On Friday, October 10th, I alone with Co-Chair Blackwell emailed our consultant asking him to begin work on Monday, October 13th, here in Raleigh. The House consultant is Mr. Blake Springhetti who is based in Columbus, Ohio. He previously worked for the Ohio legislature and has prior experience redistricting Ohio and also as a consultant for North Carolina House during the 2023 redistricting process.

In that email to our consultant, we provided instructions for Mr. Springhetti to adhere to in constructing the map. Those instructions are as follows:

Number 1. Data identifying the race of individuals of voters shall not be used in the construction or consideration of districts in the 2025 congressional plan.

Number 2. Draw Congressional District 1, known as CD 1, to increase the Republican vote share of CD 1 in the 2023

congressional plan codified in Senate Bill 757 on October 25, 2023. Unless otherwise directed, you may consider any of the election results referenced in Number 8 below, but you may only adjust the boundaries of CD 1 and Congressional District 3 known as CD 3.

Number 3. Draw congressional districts to comply with federal standards for equal population.

Number 4. Draw congressional districts that are contiguous. Contiguity by a point is not permitted, but contiguity by water is permissible.

Number 5. To extent feasible, draw districts that are visually reasonably compact. No mathematical test are required.

Number 6. Take reasonable measures to draw districts that respect and follow contiguous municipal boundaries.

Number 7. Take reasonable measures to draw districts that do not split VTDs.

Number 8. Political data should be considered. You may use any election or political data that is loaded onto the computer provided to you by the North Carolina General

Assembly.

Number 9. An incumbent state House's member's local knowledge of communities of interest may be considered.

Number 10. All work is to be completed at the legislative complex here in Raleigh on equipment provided by the North Carolina General Assembly.

The election contest data in the stat pack before you and that is also available on the committee website was considered in the creation of the plan, but the primary focus was on the election contest data from the 2024 presidential race.

So as stated, in the drawing process that began here at the General Assembly on Monday, October 13th, let me be clear and let me emphasize, racial data was not used. Ultimately, we decided to proceed with a map put forward by Senator Hise who you're going to hear from regarding the details of this map. The map was then publicly released last Thursday, October 16th, and the public comment portal was open giving the general public time to submit public comments for our review.

We will vote this bill out of committee today, and it will be on the House floor for a final vote tomorrow.

To everyone listening, the House is here today because California and the radical left launched a full-fledged coordinated attack -- Mr. Chair.

CHAIRMAN BLACKWELL: Up until now we've been doing pretty well. I don't want to have to ask the sergeants-at-arms to remove people, but we will have to contain those outbursts, please.

So let's go back to being under control so we can get through this meeting and everybody can get their say. We don't need your reactions to what others are saying.

Chair Jones, would you continue.

CHAIRMAN JONES: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And again, we'll try it one more time.

To everyone listening, the House is here today because of California and the radical left launched a full-fledged coordinated attack not only on North Carolina but on the integrity of democracy itself.

I've got bad news for Gavin Newsom and the radical left: North Carolina will not stand

by while tried to be undermine the will of the voters and stack the deck in DC.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

CHAIRMAN BLACKWELL: The Chair recognizes Senator Hise to come forward.

Welcome, Senator Hise. We love having you over here, especially when you're agreeable.

SENATOR HISE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Thank you members of the committee. Members, before you is the proposed 2025 congressional map. We had a robust discussion in the Senate committee, heard public comment from everyone who signed up to speak yesterday, had hours of debate on the Senate floor yesterday and earlier today.

I will not repeat everything I said, but I will say a few things about this redistricting plan.

The motivation behind this draw was to produce a new map that will bring an additional Republican seat to North Carolina's congressional delegation.

Republicans hold a razor-thin margin in the United States House of Representatives. If Democrats flip four seats in the upcoming

midterm elections, they will take control of the House and torpedo President Trump's agenda.

President Trump has called on Republican-controlled states across the country to redraw congressional maps, and this map answers that call.

On the issue of race, to be clear, consistent with our practices this decade, in 2023 and in 2021, absolutely no racial data was used in the creation of this map.

Past decisions and court records demonstrate there is no evidence of the three Gingles preconditions in North Carolina. In fact, just weeks ago, a federal court told us in a case concerning Senate districts in the northeastern part of the state there was no evidence of legally significant racially polarized voting that would require a majority-minority district.

In the absence of any evidence of the three Gingles preconditions, the chairs, myself and the Senate elected not to use race in drawing these proposed districts strictly to predict -- protect the state from lawsuits alleging illegal racial gerrymandering.

The chairs do not believe the use of racial data would have been helpful in reaching any political or other legislative redistricting goal. Any political consideration in line drawings have been influenced by political data, not racial data.

Now, to the plan before you. The new congressional plan makes no changes to 12 of the 14 districts. The only districts that were changed in the new map are NC 1 and NC 3. These changes in the new congressional plan consist of the following: Greene, Lenoir, Wayne, and Wilson counties are moved from NC 1 to NC 3.

Beaufort, Carteret, Craven, Dare, Hyde, and Pamlico counties are moved from NC 3 to NC 1.

To balance the population of the two districts, 4,853 people, by the 2020 census numbers, out of 204,576 in Onslow county, 2.4 percent of the population, are moved from NC 3 to NC 1.

This split occurs in Swansboro precinct, leaving as much of the town in one district, NC 1, as possible, minimizing the municipal split.

As I stated previously, the motivation behind this new plan is straightforward: The new congressional map improves Republican political strength in eastern North Carolina. It moves NC 1 from a district where President Trump earned 51 percent of the vote in 2024 to a district that would have produced 55 percent of the vote, an increase of 4 points.

To balance the strength, NC 3 would lose the same amount that NC 1 gains, 4 points, moving it from a district which Trump performed at 60 percent of the vote in the previous map to 56 percent in the new map.

The end result is a congressional plan that should perform to elect 11 Republicans.

Not only does the new congressional map better improve Republican political strength in eastern North Carolina, giving Republican candidates a better opportunity to win NC 1, the new map adheres to traditional redistricting principles.

Y'all can review the compactness reports, but the bottom line is that this map is more compact than the '23 map in all recognized measures.

I would urge your support.

CHAIRMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you, Senator Hise.

Are there questions or comments at this point from members of the committee?

Representative Harrison is ready to go.

REPRESENTATIVE HARRISON: Yes, Mr. Chair. Thank you.

And I have a question for Chair Jones and a question for Chair Hise, and then I'm going to make my comments, if I may. Is that okay?

CHAIRMAN BLACKWELL: I think that sounds reasonable.

REPRESENTATIVE HARRISON: Great. Thank you.

Chair Jones, you -- I was surprised to hear you describe y'all's -- y'all's efforts at drawing your own map. I just had heard Senator Hise talk about the process in the Senate, and I just assumed that y'all weren't working together on that.

So you all, the House, worked separately to develop your own map with the criteria that you gave to Mr. Springhetti and

then you decided that you preferred the map? Were they similar? I'm just trying to figure out how you reached the conclusion to go with the --

CHAIRMAN BLACKWELL: Chair Jones is recognized to respond.

CHAIRMAN JONES: Thank you, Chairman. Thank you, Representative.

Yes, we chose Senator Hise's map over -- yes.

REPRESENTATIVE HARRISON: Thank you.

And, Senator Hise, I listened to the Senate committee, and I listened to the floor debate, and I don't want to waste the chamber's time readjudicating all the questions, but I did have one that I did not hear asked, and I'm wondering because I didn't hear Chair Jones mention it either.

Were communities of interest taken into account for the drawing of this map?

CHAIRMAN BLACKWELL: Senator Hise, you're recognized.

SENATOR HISE: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Communities of interest are always considered in maps. We have predominantly

divided those by what are voter tabulation districts or often referred to as precincts. We continued to keep counties as whole as possible. As I mentioned with Swansboro, we kept it as whole as possible. In making that division, we divided one additional county in this map, and those are things we could always consider as communities of interest. There was no formal definition establishing a new community of interest that had not been part of our redistricting up to this point.

REPRESENTATIVE HARRISON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I might dispute that communities of interest sometimes exceed the boundaries of VTDs. But thank you for that.

So I just want to respond to some of the points that --

CHAIRMAN BLACKWELL: You're recognized for your comments.

REPRESENTATIVE HARRISON: Thank you, and I will try and be as brief as possible, but there's a lot to say.

So I have to dispute the claim that California started this. Texas started it at the behest of President Trump who saw his

potential for losing control of the House in 2026 elections as slipping away and is asking states. And it's not just Texas. It's also Missouri, Indiana, other starts are looking at redistricting to provide more Republican-drawn districts.

And why is this wrong? President Trump is not very popular in North Carolina right now, as I think his approval rating is below 40 percent. Many of his actions are meeting with great disapproval and also blocked by the courts because they're illegal or unconstitutional. So I'm not sure that we should be drawing maps at the behest of President Trump that are in clear conflict with what the citizens of North Carolina want. So there's that.

The Duke study found that this map is the most gerrymandered and least responsive in North Carolina history. That's really saying something because we've had some bad maps before, and this is really -- this is bad.

The process others are going to speak to, but the fact that we crunched this down into, what, it's been a week, but the public's

only known about it since Thursday afternoon, and we've had -- unlike 2011 when we had 65 public hearings around the state, 14 in 2021, and several in the 2023 redraw, this is it for public participation and in the Senate committee.

But we do have over 11,000 comments in the public portal, which I just found out only us on the committee are receiving those. Our colleagues don't have them if you're not on the committee, but that's -- that's really something.

And the themes have been pretty consistent: Unhappy with President Trump, really unhappy with gerrymandering, very much want fair maps and independent redistricting. And this is -- you know, I don't know that that's what this -- I don't know that that's what this map reflects. In fact, I'm pretty sure, because I listened to the Senate debate, that the Senate didn't take into account any public input when they were drawing the map. I hope this committee will, but I don't know how that is going to happen.

So we've got the first redrawn

congressional district mid decadal in North Carolina history that wasn't at the request of the courts. So there's another -- there's another record for us.

There is no competitiveness. We no longer have a district that is competitive. It's a 12/2 map in a 50/50 state. We've got a 12/2 map without one competitive congressional district.

We've got a president, as I said, he's got a very unpopular agenda, historically low approval ratings, yet we are drawing a map for him to maintain control of a congress when we have severe cuts in Medicaid coming to our districts. We have SNAP benefits cut. We have environmental justice programs ended. We have environmental protections removed. We have the entire clean energy investments withdrawn. The list is really long, and it's all very unpopular.

I will say that y'all are sick of hearing me talk about it, but while we still have a Voting Rights Act Section 2, this map clearly violates that section. There is a -- and I disagree respectfully with

Senator Hise that -- about that court ruling on the Senate districts because I think maybe the plaintiffs didn't make their case, but it's pretty clear that there is evidence that majority black populations can choose a candidate of their choice given the opportunity, but this is not giving them the opportunity because they're shifting the districts between Representative Murphy and Representative Davis in a way that we will not have a black Democrat representing that section of the state.

And I'm really excited that Eva Clayton is here who was the first black woman elected to the House since 1901, elected to the US House for North Carolina since 1901.

CHAIRMAN BLACKWELL: Representative Harrison, excuse me for interrupting you, and I don't mean to be unreasonable. We've got other members of the committee, and my biggest concern is that we've sort of intended to give an hour for public comment. And if we -- there will be an opportunity for debate on the motion itself. If you might finish up.

REPRESENTATIVE HARRISON: I'm wrapping up. I'm almost done. I don't think I'll speak

again, so thank you Chair Blackwell.

I just want to comment that everything about this process is wrong, and I know we're going to hear that from the public who has come to speak. Out of the 11,000 plus comments, my wonderful legislative assistant found three who favored the maps.

So anyway, I appreciate your indulgence. I'm just so angry about what we're doing to our democracy today that I'm having a hard time containing myself. And thank you all for coming to speak.

CHAIRMAN BLACKWELL: Do other members of the committee have questions or comments at this point?

Again, as I just said, we are going to have debate available, but, Representative Ball, you're recognized.

REPRESENTATIVE BALL: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Question for Senator Hise.

CHAIRMAN BLACKWELL: Senator Hise, you're recognized for an answer.

REPRESENTATIVE BALL: Senator Hise, I listened to the Senate presentation yesterday

and the questions that you were asked and recall that you were asked if anyone else had anything to do with drawing this map, and you indicated that they did not, that no one else was involved, it was just you.

Can you explain the difference between what you said yesterday and what Chair Jones told us just a bit ago.

SENATOR HISE: So first, let me clear up the inaccuracies on that. I did indicate that I was accompanied by legal staff and others as well as central staff and pro tem staff that were involved in that, in both the mechanics and the others of drawing the map.

There were no other members present when I drew these maps. I think Representative Jones can say what he was saying, something else was going on somewhere else in the House, but we completed the map, we sent the map out, decisions were made. No input was given back to us on changes to the map after it was -- after I had completed the drawing. And so the development and drawing of the map was completely done by me as the only member that was available there.

I don't know how -- what else you're looking for, but it was the sole decision. The House made the decision to proceed with that map. And as Representative Jones has said, they were looking at other things as well.

REPRESENTATIVE BALL: Just a quick follow-up.

CHAIRMAN BLACKWELL: You're recognized for a follow-up.

REPRESENTATIVE BALL: Thank you, Senator Hise. That clarifies it a bit for me.

But I'm also wondering and actually want to express my concern, which I'll debate a little bit later, that you indicated that the map was sent out. It was not sent out to the members of the House of Representatives who are Democrats, at least -- and on this committee. At least I did not receive it, and I don't think any of my colleagues did.

So what you mean is that you sent it out to the Republicans in the House and there was no change to yours; is that right?

CHAIRMAN BLACKWELL: Senator Hise.

SENATOR HISE: It depends on your timeline for that. On Thursday, the map was

released publicly to everyone without any changes from where it was going. In that interim time, it went to both legal counsel and other people who were making those decisions, that's correct.

REPRESENTATIVE BALL: That's it. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN BLACKWELL: Other questions or comments at this time from members of the committee?

Representative Carney.

REPRESENTATIVE CARNEY: I guess you saw the hesitation in my hand.

CHAIRMAN BLACKWELL: Well, you can take it back if you'd like.

REPRESENTATIVE CARNEY: No. No. I would like a question of the chair.

CHAIRMAN BLACKWELL: Yes.

REPRESENTATIVE CARNEY: So when we come back for discussion from the committee, we can ask questions then? I would rather hear from the public so we can move forward after that, whatever your schedule is, if you'll clarify.

CHAIRMAN BLACKWELL: Here's my thought. I'm not sure if Senator Hise is going to hang

around for the next hour and a half, so if you have questions for him, I would encourage you to go ahead and ask those now. Otherwise, we can deal with things during the debate after -- and the motion after the public comments.

REPRESENTATIVE CARNEY: So then I do have a question for Senator Hise.

CHAIRMAN BLACKWELL: Yes. Please proceed.

REPRESENTATIVE CARNEY: So, Senator Hise, we've both been here for a long time. I know I've been here for -- I'm in my 12th term. And I have a question. And by public admission from our leadership that this map was drawn at the request of the president, that's a quote from leadership, and it's been all over the news.

My question to you is have we ever drawn a map in North Carolina that was requested by the president of the United States?

CHAIRMAN BLACKWELL: Senator Hise, you're recognized for a response.

SENATOR HISE: I am -- I have received -- I will say this first. I'm not aware of any map which the president has made

comments on before. That does not mean I'm aware of all 50 states and how many times the president has historically involved themselves in the drawing of maps. I couldn't comment on that.

I will say that I received no direct communication from the president, from the White House staff or directives to draw a map.

This is something I very much support doing individually and improving the direction of this map.

What I have seen is there are social media posts and other things out there that are publicly available of the president calling on all states, Republican-controlled states across the nation to undo the challenges we've seen from so many other states, California being the most recent, but New York, New Mexico, Connecticut, Massachusetts who maximize their maps in order to put Democrats into congress, and it's necessary for the State of North Carolina to respond.

REPRESENTATIVE CARNEY: Thank you. So I take that in my opinion that has not happened in North Carolina I'm questioning about, that a

president has never -- a seated president has never requested a map to be drawn specifically for them in North Carolina.

I would just --

CHAIRMAN BLACKWELL: Do you have a further question or comment?

REPRESENTATIVE CARNEY: Thank you. Further question.

CHAIRMAN BLACKWELL: Okay.

REPRESENTATIVE CARNEY: How much money has the state of North Carolina spent to -- if you know the answer or staff -- to defend the current congressional map that's in court now? And that's a question coming from the public too. How much money --

CHAIRMAN BLACKWELL: Senator Hise, do you --

SENATOR HISE: The specific current congressional map we've only been on for two years. I'm aware of two cases that may involve -- one was a Senate case so maybe it's just one case on the congressional map.

What our legal fees are to date, I'm sure somebody can get them an answer, but I don't know anybody that keeps that on the cuff.

CHAIRMAN BLACKWELL: We can probably get staff to get you an answer on that. I'm not sure how quickly --

REPRESENTATIVE CARNEY: That's fine.

REPRESENTATIVE HARRISON: Mr. Chair, I have that number right here. I promise I will just --

CHAIRMAN BLACKWELL: I will let you send it out to the members of the committee or you can tell us in debate. How about that.

Other questions or comments from the members of the committee at this point?

Representative Jackson, you're recognized.

REPRESENTATIVE JACKSON: Yes, sir. Thank you.

My question to Senator Hise is just a question. You just said that the president wasn't the reason the lines were drawn.

What happened in 2024 in the population or in the changes in the community that would prompt us to have the maps changed before the census is -- before the next census?

CHAIRMAN BLACKWELL: Senator Hise, you're recognized.

SENATOR HISE: The most recent incident is that California redrew its maps to add four Democrats to congress, and we do not intend to let that go unanswered.

CHAIRMAN BLACKWELL: Further questions or comments at this point from members of the committee?

Representative Reives is recognized.

REPRESENTATIVE REIVES: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I know we've talked about California a lot, but I'm trying to look at what has happened. And the way I'm seeing it is Texas draws their map. Texas nets, it looks like, five seats. California has drawn a map that's going to the voters which may or may not pass which gets five seats. Missouri then redrew at the request of the administration their maps that netted one seat.

So right now, if everybody stopped today, then you're at a one seat gain as a total.

So I don't know if you were or were not aware of that, but since Republicans have already gotten one more seat in the House and

you were doing this I guess thinking that California had somehow changed the balance, is it something that we can just withdraw until we see some other blue state do it?

CHAIRMAN BLACKWELL: Senator Hise, you're recognized to answer.

SENATOR HISE: Thank you.

I think that's a really convenient place to kind of put your line and where you want to draw and not look at the results of what was drawn for the '22 congressional maps where states like New Mexico, Connecticut, Massachusetts drew their maps to not elect any Republicans within their state and have done so.

Illinois, only 3 of 17 Republicans in their state even though Trump carried 43.5 percent of the vote. New York which was part of the lawsuits that was there as well where more than 40 percent of the vote for Trump, only 19 out of the 26 congressional seats are -- 19 of the 26 congressional seats are held by Democrats.

It is obvious this began with the 2022 redistricting with the Democrat optimization while when the laws changed and Texas was under

new standards for drawing their districts to rebalance this, I felt like that was a movement that came more towards a balance and then California is the latest to throw their chips in the hat and try to add for Democrats. We can adjust one of those seats by moving in North Carolina.

CHAIRMAN BLACKWELL: Further comments or questions from members?

Representatives Reives.

REPRESENTATIVE REIVES: Yes. And I apologize for seeming like I was trying to draw a convenient line, and I may have misunderstood what both folks have said as to why we were doing this.

What I heard when you initially talked and when Chair Jones talked was that you were doing this in response to California, not into something that happened in '22. So if I misheard that, I apologize.

So if this is a response then to what happened in 2022, why didn't you draw this map in 2024 when you had the chance to draw a map?

CHAIRMAN BLACKWELL: Senator Hise.

SENATOR HISE: As you're aware, in

2022, we did not draw the congressional maps that's with coming out, so the results of how the maps would perform, we didn't have 2024 election data either in that process, but it was California adding the five congressional seats to the Senate which made us optimize our maps.

We actually did put out a proposal for a 12/2 map in the previous draw of 2024 that's coming out, that was not adopted, but when the environment changes, the opportunity to make changes come to light.

CHAIRMAN BLACKWELL: Further comments or questions from members of the committee at this point?

Representative Reives.

REPRESENTATIVE REIVES: Yes. Thank you.

So the House drew a congressional map and the Senate drew a congressional map, and if I'm hearing you correctly, what's been adopted is the Senate congressional map. So there were no compromises made for the House map.

So for instance, the House didn't have parts in it that you said, hey, I will change my map for, or is this the original Senate map that

the House was asked to look at?

CHAIRMAN BLACKWELL: Senator Hise.

SENATOR HISE: I have never seen the map drawn by the House or produced by the House. I don't even know that a full map was produced. I was just informed that the House was willing to accept the map that I drew.

REPRESENTATIVE REIVES: All right. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN BLACKWELL: Further questions, comments, members of the committee.

Representative Carney, our recognized.

REPRESENTATIVE CARNEY: Thank you. I wasn't quite through before, but I was okay with that.

CHAIRMAN BLACKWELL: Okay.

REPRESENTATIVE CARNEY: So, Senator Hise -- and I'm going to read from this. The Tenth Amendment simply means that any powers not specifically given to the federal government by the constitution are automatically reserved to the states or the people.

From the question earlier, it appears that -- and that the president we know has asked for this request of North Carolina.

So can you -- if the following instructions that I read, aren't we violating the Tenth Amendment by moving forward as a state on a federal government, the president's request?

CHAIRMAN BLACKWELL: Senator Hise.

SENATOR HISE: Multiple challenges to that. First of all, the right to draw congressional districts is given to the federal government. If you read the US Constitution, it also authorizes congress to make changes to the districts as well as the state legislature.

This is a decision -- there is no requirement or others that the state do it. This is a choice we are making that the president approves in that process, and this is a decision of the state legislature to redraw its districts at this time.

REPRESENTATIVE CARNEY: So one follow-up --

SENATOR HISE: As evidenced by the fact that you're getting ready to vote on this process.

REPRESENTATIVE CARNEY: Mr. Chair, a follow-up.

CHAIRMAN BLACKWELL: Yes.

REPRESENTATIVE CARNEY: Okay. So my question would be, after your statement, then, would we have -- would you have moved forward or we been requested to move forward -- had this request not come from the president, would we be here today moving forward with this as a General Assembly?

CHAIRMAN BLACKWELL: Senator Hise.

SENATOR HISE: Given the opportunity to move forward and rebalance after California, I would have taken any opportunity available to bring this body here to maximize our congressional representation.

REPRESENTATIVE CARNEY: Thank you. I just want to be on the record as saying I disagree that this started in California. It really originated back in Texas.

CHAIRMAN BLACKWELL: Further questions or comments from members of the committee before we go to public comments?

Representative Ball.

REPRESENTATIVE BALL: Just a question for the Chair, please. I want clarification.

CHAIRMAN BLACKWELL: Yes.

REPRESENTATIVE BALL: So we will have an opportunity to debate after the public has comment; in other words, we are not -- you do not want us to debate now, you want us to wait until the public has completed, and we will extend as long as we need to because we are not going into session, I understand, at 4:00, so our calendar can be moved to allow the public to have as much opportunity to speak and the members of this committee as much opportunity to voice their thoughts as well. So if you would clarify that for me.

CHAIRMAN BLACKWELL: It's the intention of the Chair that we would take a vote at 3:50. If we get some revised indication that they are going give us more time or want us to take more time, that could change, but as of now, the expectation is we will go into public comments, and after the public comments, we will come back, have a motion and a debate on the bill itself. How much time we will have may depend on how much time we end up with on public comment. The idea originally was to have an hour for public comment. We are now at 2:42, so we may -- I think -- unless -- I don't know how

many additional sign-ups we've got at the back, but we may have fewer public comments than we need for a full hour.

So we're going to have to play it a little bit by ear, Representative Ball. I can't promise exactly how much time is, but we will have debate.

REPRESENTATIVE BALL: Thank you, Mr. Chair. I was just -- I offered a solution that will make sure we have plenty time to debate, members of this committee, and that the public has plenty of time to offer their comments because we have been told that the Republicans will caucus at 4:00, therefore we are caucusing at 4:00. So we don't have to take -- we don't have to go into session which was the original plan to have session at 4:00. So anything can be moved a bit to accommodate the necessary debate on this bill.

CHAIRMAN BLACKWELL: Well, as I said, we'll have to see how that develops.

Presently, my instructions, if you will, for the committee are for us to finish at ten of 4:00. If that changes, then I certainly am willing to stay here personally, but we'll

see how that goes.

At this point, we're going to go to public comment. I'll remind you of the rules, if you will, that one minute. The sergeant-at-arm has a card that he'll hold up after 30 seconds to let you know you've used half of your time, and then he's got a separate one to hold up when you have reached the one-minute time limit. I know that's not a lot of time, but we've got a lot of folks that we are going to try to hear from.

I'm going to call these in the name -- the names in the order that they've been given to me, and I'm going to call several to start with, and I'll call them in order. If the person second and third and fourth in line would go ahead and come up to the mic and stand at the back or to the side and wait for your turn, that might help us move through this promptly.

The first -- and when you're speaking to us, if you'll identify clearly your name, if you are with an organization or representing a group, if you'll let us know that.

The first four speakers that have signed up: Vicki Boyer, then former

Congresswoman Eva Clayton, Clinton Wright. I think this is Khalil D. Thomas. Apologize if I didn't get that correctly. Tameka Walter Kelly -- Walker Kelly. That's five.

But we'll start with Ms. Boyer, if she's here. And if you'll come up to the mic. And, Ms. Clayton, if you can get in position.

Yes, Ms. Boyer.

PUBLIC SPEAKER: Thank you. Thank you very much. I'm Vicki Boyer. I am from Orange county representing myself. I want you to know I'm a North Carolina native, and I can trace my ancestors here back to the 1730s.

I'm going to tell you that this is one of those days that will live in infamy in North Carolina history. Today, North Carolina Republicans show their true face. They have lost all sense of honor. They have lost their Christian values. They've become completely absorbed into the American fascist party. Their oath of office, sworn to with their hand on a bible means nothing to them. It was only a means to an end.

Their actions today prove that their plans for North Carolina are so unpopular that

they have to cheat to win. They don't want to govern, they want to rule. I hope they will remember that old adage that cheaters never prosper.

The best sign I saw Saturday at a No Kings rally was this: Yo papa didn't run moonshine through North Carolina hollers just so you could be a boot licker.

CHAIRMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you, Ms. Boyer.

Representative Eva Clayton. Ms. Clayton, welcome to the House.

PUBLIC SPEAKER: Thank you. I wish to speak on the House bill regarding North Carolina congressional district. I rise to speak against the House bill that redraws North Carolina first congressional district.

Shame on this General Assembly. Shame on North Carolina for silencing the will of the people in northeastern North Carolina, a true swing district that reflects the diversity value of the state.

For 91 years, after 1901, no black citizens represented North Carolina. I broke that banner. I was that person who was elected

in 1992. I represented teachers. I represented farmers. In 2024, voters in this district chose a Republican president and a Democrat black representative. Although I did not vote for that president, that is democracy.

What you're doing today means that you are against democracy, but this redistricting strips indeed the majority black counties from the first congressional district and bury them in a heavily Republican area. That is an act of gerrymandering.

You also -- you also remove one of the three black representatives. Shame on you for saying you didn't consider that.

CHAIRMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you.

PUBLIC SPEAKER: Did you not know that Donald Davis was black? Well, I'm here to inform you. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you, Representative Clayton.

Our next speaker is Clinton Wright.

PUBLIC SPEAKER: Good afternoon. I'm Clinton Wright, and I've come here today to talk about Senate Bill 249 as a recovering Republican turned registered independent.

Like many of you, I'm from a rural country town where most people vote Republican because that's how my father, my papa, and my granddaddy and generations of my family voted.

The GOP is a party of people who allow the social movements of their day to push them to do great things. I know what you're feeling in these confusing times. I know you're a Republican politician because you too want to do great things, and you're confused by the men and women around you who aren't living up to the principles of the party that you were raised in.

So I've come here today to say leave your church and your lying abusive pastor, burn your hoods instead of your crosses, open your closet doors instead of hiding your truth, and I promise you that when you do, what you'll find is a huge, gigantic family that loves you just the way you are. And you don't need to stay on your knees worshiping the men who bully, belittle, harass, and rape you with their golden phalluses of lies and hatred.

I know that deep down inside of you, you know that these maps are racist, immoral, and wrong. Vote no -- state budget. In doing

so, you will do something great --

CHAIRMAN BLACKWELL: Mr. Wright, your time has expired.

PUBLIC SPEAKER: Your freedom and your truth.

CHAIRMAN BLACKWELL: The next speaker, if I'm reading this truth is Khalil D. Thomas. I apologize if that's not correctly pronounced.

PUBLIC SPEAKER: Thank you. My name is difficult. It is Khalil D. Thomas. I am with Democracy Out Loud.

I asked Representative Pricey for the amount of taxpayer money spent on redistricting litigation. 22,512,000 redistricting litigation since GOP took over in 2011.

It's ironic to me that the party for states' rights is abdicating their own power to Trump, to give a convicted felon with an incredibly dangerous and unpopular agenda your power. And you Republicans are willing to kneel to fascism for Berger's desperation not to be primaried.

It's a misdirected claim that this is not race targeted when you're targeting the district that's known as the Black Belt. This

is the southern agenda. You will be on the wrong side of history.

Today is an amazing opportunity for a Republican who has the nerve to be a hero by standing up for equal representation and the rights of black voters.

I demand Medicaid funding and a moral budget, not racist maps.

CHAIRMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you Ms. D. Thomas.

Let me read out some names. I think Ms. Kelly is probably at the podium, but the next speakers after her, if you would come up, would be Greg Flynn, Deb O'Raunsio, Pat Butler, and Catherine O'Malley.

Ms. Kelly, you're recognized.

PUBLIC SPEAKER: I am Tameka Walker Kelly, an elementary music teacher from Cumberland county and president of NCAE.

It has been 113 days since the General Assembly has missed its deadline to pass a state budget, 100 days of missed opportunities for students across the state, 100 days of educators trying to function without the raises that they deserve, and 100 days of uncertainty for schools

trying to plan.

But instead, you are busy drawing congressional maps once again. And so while teachers are wondering if they can stay in the classroom, you are rigging the system. And instead of students who are thinking of them who are sitting in overcrowded classrooms, you are breaking the rule of law to benefit the powerful few.

Education -- public education is the foundation of our democracy and this economy, and yet it is playing second fiddle to people's political ambition and that should not be so. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you.

The next speaker is Greg Flynn.

PUBLIC SPEAKER: Greg Flynn, citizen, voter. The map hasn't changed yesterday so my comments will be equally familiar.

This president has circulated a video of himself dropping excrement on American people. This is the God you worship, the dictator you appeal to, you appease, the king you pander to, why thousands of North Carolina citizens are on track to lose health insurance,

while civil rights guaranteed by the constitution are now daily trampled on. No one is safe from his retribution, not even you.

I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America and to the Republic for which it stands, a Republic if you can keep it, not to a felonious monarch in a gilded house on Pennsylvania Avenue.

Are you monarchists? Are you not Republicans? Absolute power is corroding the republic. Just because you can legally eat everything at a buffet doesn't mean it's a good idea.

CHAIRMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you, Mr. Flynn.

The next speaker is Deb O'Raunsio.

PUBLIC SPEAKER: Yes. Good afternoon. Thank you.

This action by the legislature is a shameless and deliberate attack on democracy. First, let's be crystal clear about the racist nature of this redraw. You're not just shuffling lines, you're dismantling a historically black opportunity district. The claim of no racial data used is a legal shield

to mask a real world tragedy you are effectively silencing the voices of black North Carolinians and erasing their history of representation.

This isn't just partisan, this is a moral regression. The sheer arrogance move is just as appalling when we all know that between 84 and 87 percent of all North Carolinians believe partisan gerrymandering is wrong.

In a moment when our families are struggling with real issues, you are wasting taxpayer time to pick your own voters. This map is a stain on our state. You do not have the right to ignore the voices of your constituents. Shame --

CHAIRMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you, Ms. O'Raunsio.

The next speaker is Pat Butler.

PUBLIC SPEAKER: Pat Butler. As a mother and grandmother --

CHAIRMAN BLACKWELL: Could you just for the record state your name and whether you are with anybody.

PUBLIC SPEAKER: Pat Butler. I'm here for myself.

And as a mother and grandmother, I

taught my children not to be a bully, but if they encountered one, to not bow down but to stand up for what they knew was morally and ethically right. And I imagine that many of you did the same thing with your children.

So I'm asking you now, how do you explain to your children and rationalize that you're bending the knee to the dictator? How do you do that?

CHAIRMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you, Ms. Butler.

The next speaker is Catherine O'Malley.

PUBLIC SPEAKER: Hi. My name is Catherine O'Malley. I'm here representing myself. I am, however, a proud member of Red Wine & Blue, League of Women Voters and Indivisible.

And apparently you all do not realize you work for us. You do not work for yourselves. You do not work for Trump. You work for We the People.

I'm also a proud participant in the No Kings day where we stood 7 million proud to say you represent us. These maps do not represent the state of North Carolina. These maps do not

represent your constituents.

We've heard you're wasting taxpayer money. We've heard there's 10,997 public comments and us saying we want fair maps. These are not fair maps.

CHAIRMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you, Ms. O'Malley.

I think I failed to get some other folks up there on time, so let's get them -- four or five more.

Gerald Givens Junior, Kathy Martin, Mark Swallow, Anna Ruderman.

PUBLIC SPEAKER: My name is Gerald Givens Junior. I proudly served this nation for two decades in the United States Air Force. I defended freedom not for a party but for the principle that every American should have their voice equally counted.

I've heard it said that race wasn't used in drawing this map, but I've seen the effect of long-standing black communities in places like northeastern North Carolina, Greensboro and Charlotte have been split apart or packed so tightly together that their voices can't shape outcomes beyond their own district.

You don't need to use racial data to see racial impact. When a district that has elected a black representative for decades is redrawn so those voters can no longer elect their candidate of choice, that's not balance, that's silence.

I didn't fight for selective freedom. I fought for every North Carolinian to have their voice heard.

Do what's right. Defend the people's voice like I defended yours.

CHAIRMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you, Mr. Givens.

The next speaker is Kathy Martin.

PUBLIC SPEAKER: My name is Kathy Martin. I am a member of Democracy Out Loud.

And I spoke also yesterday, so I know you're probably all aware that this is pretty much what happened yesterday and you know what the arguments are.

And I am totally -- it's incredulous that that man wants to lie and say we're doing this because what California is doing. California is asking their voters what they want. These folks are not doing that. Shame on

you if you don't understand that this is a democracy and that you work for us.

CHAIRMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you, Ms. Martin.

The next speaker is Mark Swallow.

PUBLIC SPEAKER: My name is Mark Swallow with Democracy Out Loud.

So these maps are racist, right. When you take a predominantly black and brown district, you don't need to add race. It's there already. And then you add predominantly white counties to dilute the black and brown votes, you're disenfranchising those votes, right. That's racism.

This bill is about Berger, and it's about helping Berger win his primary in March by gaining the support of President Trump. He is giving up a seat in North Carolina for a favor from the president. That's corrupt and it smacks of racketeering.

And telling the lies over and over again about California doesn't make it true. It just makes you a liar.

Add a referendum on the ballot in North Carolina and see what the people of

North Carolina want. That is what you should be doing, not this.

CHAIRMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you, Mr. Swallow.

I think Anna Ruderman is next, but before she speaks, if Frank Atkinson can come up next, Daniel Ayers, Eric Willoughby, and Mark McClure.

Ms. Ruderman, you have the floor.

PUBLIC SPEAKER: Dr. Ruderman. Thank you.

Article 1, Section 10 of the North Carolina Constitution known simply as the free elections clause states that all elections shall be free. Merriam-Webster defined free as not determined by anything beyond its nature or being, choosing or capable of choosing for itself.

In violation of the concept of free elections, partisan gerrymandering is the form of vote dilution, the devaluing of one citizen's vote as compared to others. That imposes a constraint on a voter's will.

A rigged election is not a free election, nor is an election with a voter's

voice is worthless because the election results have been preordained by whoever yields political power. The rights that prohibit partisan gerrymandering are the bedrock of our sacred system of democratic government, and this is a shameful manipulation of our principles of democracy and the rule of law.

And, Mr. Blackwell, you were 20 years old, just four years younger than the late, great John Lewis when he had his head bashed in to protect voting rights. I know on which side of history I would like to stand.

CHAIRMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you, Ms. Ruderman.

Frank Atkinson or is it Ackerson. No.

How about Daniel Ayers.

PUBLIC SPEAKER: Daniel Ayers, Hometown Holler, North Carolina's number one state politics podcast. Go check us out.

Got my bible here today. Don't be nervous. Do unto others as you would have them do unto you. It's that simple. It's that simple.

I've heard a lot of excuses for these maps. Gavin Newsom, California. When we get

down to it, folks, is this what you would have your neighbor do unto you? Is this what biblical leadership looks like?

These maps -- these maps are the wet dream of soft men who won't even look up from their phones to face their voters. These are men who lust for a world where the powerful do what they can and the rest of us suffer what we must. Jesus wept.

CHAIRMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you, Mr. Ayers.

Eric Willoughby.

PUBLIC SPEAKER: My name is Eric Willoughby. I'm a sophomore at UNC Charlotte, and I just want to highlight what this kangaroo court actually is.

This is a sham. This is a blatant, racist attempt to limit the power of minority voters. This is pathetic, it is pitiful, and it is shameful. That is what this is.

And you Republicans, you want us to be afraid because voters who are fearful do not show up, they do not come and fight you on everything, but let me tell you, hear us, see us, we are not afraid of you. The arc of the

moral universe is long, but it bends towards justice, as Dr. King said, and we will win in the end. Shame on you. Shame.

CHAIRMAN BLACKWELL: Thanks.

Mark McClure is next, but Mr. McClure, before you start, let me call out the next group.

Congresswoman Alma Adams, Jennifer Burkins, Kristin -- I think it's Creeson or Grossman. I'm sorry. I can't quite read it. And Elena Ceberio.

Mr. McClure.

PUBLIC SPEAKER: My name is Mark McClure. I'm a member -- a proud member of Democracy Out Loud.

And according to the North Carolina Constitution, all political power originates from the people is founded upon their will only and is instituted solely for the good of the whole.

This surgical targeting of the black and brown community in northeast North Carolina is not for the good of the whole.

I'm a physician. There's a cancer in Washington, DC, and it has metastasized

throughout the Republican Party, and it will kill this party. It will kill the Republican Party, and it will hurt millions of people. Vote against this.

CHAIRMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you, Mr. McClure.

Congresswoman Adams. Welcome back, it's good to see your hat.

PUBLIC SPEAKER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I'm Congresswoman Alma Adams. I'm a former member of this body, and I'm deeply ashamed of this body for putting the people of North Carolina last. Speaker Hall made it very clear that this attempt to further gerrymander our state has been done at the request of President Trump, not because it's in the best interest of North Carolina citizens.

You focus on stealing another congressional seat after you've already stolen three, and in ridding our democracy, then addressing our state's -- not addressing our state's pressing issues.

And we're tired of congressional districts being shuffled every election because

you'd rather pick your voters than have them pick you. We're tired of being disenfranchised, of being embarrassed because gerrymandering is more important to you.

So you're not just targeting a Democrat member, that's obvious, and he is black, you must know that. You're trying to dismantle the district with the largest record of black congressional leadership in North Carolina history, and that's just not right.

Your constituents are speaking to you today. I certainly hope you listen. I spent 20 years here. I know you. You should know your citizens, and you need to respect our wishes.

CHAIRMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you, Congresswoman Adams.

The next speaker is Jennifer Burkins.

PUBLIC SPEAKER: Hello. No organization, just a very concerned American citizen.

What's happening here right now because PINO, president in name only, asked you, his radical right minions, to steal more seats is an abomination.

Chair Jones, your rhetoric and propaganda is astonishing. This started in Texas with Abbott, and California responded using your racist and right-wing tactics, and you don't like it. It's an abomination of our constitution and what we the people want.

Tell yourselves there's no racial component to this redistricting or, sorry, gerrymandering, if it helps you sleep at night. This shouldn't even be happening at all, and this legislature isn't even doing its job. Where is our budget, guys? Y'all have your priorities mixed up, and your hunger for maintaining power and control is sickening.

It doesn't end here. We the people will continue to fight for justice, diversity, equity, and inclusion and fair maps. We the people's voice will not be stifled and we will persist. The world is watching, and your place in history will not be favorable.

CHAIRMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you, Ms. Burkins.

The next speaker is Kristen. And I apologize, I can't read your last name. You may --

PUBLIC SPEAKER: Sorry. My name is Kristen Greeson. I'm from Liberty, North Carolina, and I'm here on behalf of myself.

I'm here because I'm tired. I'm tired because I'm feeling like my elected officials no longer serve their constituents as they are sworn to do. If you truly care about your constituents, you would be working to pass a budget. You would be working to fully fund Medicaid in the state of North Carolina. Instead, you are redistricting the state again to finagle more power and more money for yourselves.

If you truly cared about what your constituents think, then put a referendum on the ballot and ask them across the state. Let them tell you what they want redistricting to look like in the state of North Carolina.

Everyone in this room, Democrat or Republican, should be in favor of free and fair elections. You are not doing that right now.

CHAIRMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you, Ms. Greeson.

Before we go to Elena Ceberio, next in

line would be Landon Anderson, Lisa Mitchell, Ron Osborn, and Larissa Arichkovich.

And so Elena Ceberio, if you're here.

PUBLIC SPEAKER: I am. My name Elena Ceberio, and I am with Democracy Out Loud.

This is a people's proclamation.

Whereas, on November 20, 2025, 25 members of the North Carolina Senate voted to openly disenfranchise black voters of District 1. We the people call shame.

Whereas, Senator Ralph Hise of District 47 was divinely inspired to take it upon himself to violently remove justice from the voting rights of black voters in District 1. The people call shame.

Whereas, the Republican Party of this state was -- has decided to get on their knees awaiting their reward from an authoritarian thug, a convicted felon who sees himself as king while defecating on the citizens of this republic. The people call shame.

Whereas, the House of Representatives of the state of North Carolina has the opportunity on this date to break the cycle of partisan gerrymandering. The people say do the

right thing. Stop hurting black voters as has been the result of every gerrymander in this state's history. Vote no.

CHAIRMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you, Ms. Ceberio. Your time has expired.

Landon Anderson. Mr. Anderson, are you in the room?

If not, Lisa Mitchell.

PUBLIC SPEAKER: Hello and thank you. I appreciate this opportunity to talk.

Rather than repeat points that other people have made, I would just like to remind this esteemed committee that 84 percent of voters, including 87 percent of Democrats, 78 percent of Republicans, have said they oppose partisan voting maps, and this is September survey.

Each of you on this committee and in the House took an oath to defend the state constitution and serve all of the people of North Carolina. If this gerrymander is implemented, at least 6 million people will have lost trust in this House.

CHAIRMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you, ma'am.

Ron Osborn.

PUBLIC SPEAKER: I'm Ron Osborn. I'm from Alamance county, and I want to say that I applaud Representative Jones and Senator Hise for their frankness. It is not easy to represent up front the Republican Party as they did. They did a good job of that. They put their bigotry and their greed front and center, and I appreciate that forthrightness in doing that.

I only wish that your honesty, truthfulness would extend to talking about the motives behind these things. And it reminds me of the story about the old quaker farmer who caught a chicken thief. He caught the chicken thief in his barn and he said, friend, I would not shoot thee, but -- I would not harm thee, but I'm about to shoot where you're standing. And that's kind of the way you're looking at saying this is not about racial issues. You can call it what it is, but we know what's going on.

CHAIRMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you, Mr. Osborn.

The next speaker is going to be Larissa Arichkovich, but let me say if you could get in line as the following speakers: Hanna Gibbs,

Jennifer Speal, and Jazmyne Abney and Carless Stacey or Stacey Carless.

But first Larissa Arichkovich.

PUBLIC SPEAKER: First of all, I thank you for attempting to pronounce my last name. It's very courageous of you.

My parents were from Ukraine. They came here after World War II, so I was born and raised here, and I know why they came, just as many others come for the better life.

I am not here to shame anybody, to talk ill about anybody. All that has been said before me, but I am looking for courage. I am looking for somebody who aspires to be somebody like Abraham Lincoln.

The Republican Party has had great figures in its history, so why are we simply rubber-stamping our commander-in-chief and not exerting our rights as free-thinking people to stand up for the people of North Carolina.

To redistrict this in a manner just to gain a vote is dishonest, lacks integrity, and will not serve you well in the future. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you, ma'am.

I won't try it again.

Hanna Gibbs is next. Ms. Gibbs are you in the room still? Apparently not.

How about Jennifer Speal. Help me with your last name.

PUBLIC SPEAKER: It's Speal, S-P-E-A-L.

CHAIRMAN BLACKWELL: I'm sorry.

PUBLIC SPEAKER: My handwriting was not all that great. My name is Jennifer Speal. I am a citizen of this great state and this country.

First, I want to say I reiterate uplift and personally agree with every word Representative Harrison spoke earlier. I think she hit all the nails on the head.

I'm here to communicate my extreme disappointment in the continual redistricting of our voting districts. I mean, how many times do we have to do this? Really.

Gerrymandering is cheating, plain and simple. And I have said for a long time that the Republicans don't have game. They haven't had game in a long time. And when you don't have game, you have to rely upon cheating to get votes.

And one last thing I want to say is we the people of North Carolina means fairly and justly representing the people of North Carolina, and that's what you should be doing.

And, Representative Jones, I've watched you, and you haven't looked up from your phone the entire time we've been speaking. How disrespectful.

CHAIRMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you, Ms. Spell.

Our next speaker is Jazmyne Abney. And she'll be followed by Stacey Carless.

PUBLIC SPEAKER: Hi, y'all. I am Jazmyne Abney. I am here with Common Cause North Carolina, but first and foremost, I'm a North Carolina native and a generational North Carolinian.

And if you're wondering, no, we should not be redistricting. You should not be gerrymandering an already gerrymandered map.

You should be letting your constituents focus on their municipal elections and the early voting plans that their county boards of elections are taking up, but instead they are

here.

And Senator Hise let us know that he didn't want to read any of those 11,000 comments. He said that was partisan mess, but I'm here in front of you because this is not right. Read the comments, listen to your constituents, and act accordingly. Do not vote for these maps.

CHAIRMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you, Ms. Abney.

Stacey Carless, and then our final speaker after Ms. Carless is Queen Alyssia Hammond.

PUBLIC SPEAKER: Good afternoon. My name is Stacey Carless, also a North Carolina native, but speaking today on behalf of NC Counts Coalition, a nonpartisan organization that led statewide efforts for complete and accurate 2020 census count.

Redistricting like the census should occur once every ten years to ensure fair representation, never to serve partisan interests, yet for the fourth time since 2020 and not due to court order, we are here again because North Carolina's redistricting process

and the mess before us continue to dilute the political power of black voters while impairing limited -- while limiting meaningful public participation.

These maps protect partisan political power, not democracy. Voters should choose their leaders, not the other way around. North Carolinians deserve transparency, inclusion, and fairness in every step of the redistricting process.

Elected officials are supposed to serve the people, not partisan power. We will not stand for politics that silence black voters and other voters of color, weaken democracy, or keep control in the hands of a few. North Carolinians deserve better. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN BLACKWELL: Thank you, Ms. Carless.

And then our final speaker, Queen Alyssia Hammond. Ms. Hammond. Not seeing her.

The Chair thanks you members of the public for your comments and especially for your decorum and trying to help us keep on schedule.

The Chair recognizes Chair Jones for a motion.

CHAIRMAN JONES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I move for a favorable report of Senate Bill 249 with a referral to Rules.

CHAIRMAN BLACKWELL: The committee will stand at ease.

(At ease.)

CHAIRMAN BLACKWELL: ...you're recognized for a motion.

CHAIR JONES: Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

I move for a favorable report to Senate Bill 249 with a referral to Rules.

CHAIRMAN BLACKWELL: Representative Jones, would you like to speak on your motion or go to other members for debate?

CHAIRMAN JONES: We can go to other members for debate.

CHAIRMAN BLACKWELL: Okay. Are there members of the committee who want to be heard?

Representative Ball, you're recognized.

REPRESENTATIVE BALL: I would like to call for a roll call vote.

CHAIRMAN BLACKWELL: Glad to do it.

Other comments or questions from members of the committee.

Representative Harrison, you're

recognized.

REPRESENTATIVE HARRISON: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I know I promised I wasn't going to speak again, but there were a couple of things that I missed, including that financial figure.

So Mrs. Thomas said it, but we got the information as the committee was starting up.

So I've been checking every time we go through these redistricting litigation processes, and the total now is -- since the 2011 redraw, it's been 22,512,000. So that's a lot of money, and I guess I raise it in the context of the fact that this very district that's getting redrawn, 1 and 3, is subject to litigation right now in the federal court. And the trial took place in June, and it looks like we might get a decision imminently. And this seems premature to be drawing this map when it's going to be the same issue.

So I wanted to also sort of remind folks what Mr. McClure -- Dr. McClure said. It's Article 1, Section 2, sovereignty of the people, the clause about all the power vesting with the people. This -- so the point is is

that what we're supposed to do as an institution is solely for the good of the whole. And I would argue that there is no way that this redraw of this map mid decadal is for -- possibly likely in violation of the Voting Rights Act, all kinds of problems, it is for the good of the whole.

And I just remind us of our constitutional oath that we all took, and this seems to -- a vote for this map seems to be in direct violation of that oath.

And I guess I have a quick question for the Chair. Given that we just heard a bunch of public comment, we had all the online portal comments, are we going to factor any of that into the proposed map, or are we just voting on this map? Thank you.

CHAIRMAN BLACKWELL: We're voting on the motion before the committee by 3:50.

Are there other questions, comments from members of the committee?

Representative Reives.

REPRESENTATIVE REIVES: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And I recognize that I'll probably comment a couple other times and so I'll try to

not be as lengthy as I sometimes am.

What I'm hoping would happen in this committee, same thing that I hope that happens, if it passes, this committee and goes to rules, same thing I hope to happen on the floor.

And I guess what is important to me right now, sometimes all of us do things and disappointingly for me the country has become completely polarized about party. Everything is what party are you in, and if the party does something, then, you know, a lot of us feel compelled to support it.

I have been very clear in my time up here, and I don't think there's a time that somebody can tell me I've done differently, I am in a political party because that is the system that we're in. I vote for myself, my constituents, my God, my faith, and I do what I feel is the right thing to do even if that puts me in disagreement with folks in my party, your party or whoever it is.

I bring these things up because one of the things that happens and why it gets so dangerous in this country and really anywhere, it's throughout history, when you start really

kind of trying to fit yourself into two boxes is I don't care if you got a population of ten, at some point that five that's in that box, they're going to start disagree about something. And so while we've been concentrating on these maps and things of that sort, I'm looking at other things.

And two of the things that have really stayed deeply in my mind are Tom Tillis and John Bolton. When I got here, Tom Tillis was speaker. There were a lot of people here that are in the majority right now that I think if we say it in an honest moment, you're here because of Tom Tillis. Tom Tillis had a vision. He saw an opportunity to take a majority, and I don't think there are many people, when it comes down to the state legislature, that could have done more for Republicans and put Republicans in majority than Tom Tillis, and I really don't. And I know that the president pro tem was also involved, but I remember Tillis's popularity and leadership coming out of Mecklenburg.

So why has he been on my mind? He's going home, and he hadn't really done anything wrong. There's not really something you can

point to where he's been out of line with the party or he's been some rogue agent. I don't think anybody would ever describe him as a rogue agent, but he fell out of favor with the present leadership of the party.

I look at John Bolton. There was not a closer advisor to the present administration than John Bolton. He's under indictment. And why that's concerning is because for those of you who have never been in the federal system, feds don't bring an indictment if they don't think they're getting ready to get a conviction. That guy is going to prison. And again, off the little bit of information I know, I'm not sure why except I know that he has been identified as an enemy of the administration.

So why do I bring these things up? With these maps, the maps that were drawn in '24 were allowed to be drawn for partisan advantage. That ship sailed. That's it. So I think those maps were the maps that folks in this chamber that voted on it believed were the best Republican maps you could get, and now we're back again. And we're doing it again to curry favor with the administration, but what we're

really doing is consolidating power.

So the warning I would give the folks is this: It's all well and good as long as you stay in favor, but one day you're John Bolton, one day you're Tom Tillis, one day you're like -- but the most important thing for my constituents, which is what I believe all 120 of us are here for. The most important thing with my constituents is actually out of line with what this particular administration wants, not the party but what this administration wants.

And when we start doing things to make a person happy -- this is something I feel strongly about, and I don't mind bringing up in church. You don't follow a pastor, you support your church. And I bring that up because I think all great organizations, that's what you do. It's not about the person who's at top. It's about what ultimately helps all of the people we're supposed to be serving.

I will give it to you, there's been no pretense that this is doing something to make things better for North Carolinians. This is something to gain power and to hold power. I would just warn all of us that when we do things

for that reason, it's going to come back to bite. I know how many people I've watched get walked out of here not physically but figuratively when they fall out of line with something that leadership wants which again is nothing that is violative of the party.

I would hope we'd vote these maps down simply for this reason: One, I will never believe in so and so did something so I'm going to do something back. Somebody hits you, you got to hit them back. Somebody attacks you, you got to attack them back, but bad behavior politically, whoever started it, does not ever merit bad behavior politically here. Because you know what's going to happen with North Carolina -- it doesn't matter how this congressional stuff goes. Ultimately, North Carolina is going to be all right because we are here as North Carolina's leadership.

So I ask you to vote no on this not to be insulting, not to talk about anybody, not to say one idea is better than the idea, not to say one party or one leadership is better than another. I'm not even saying if this was the greatest president we had ever had in our lives,

I would say the same thing. It's not about who's in leadership now, it's about starting the habit of doing things for a person and not for the folks that we serve and not for the folks that you serve with. And I don't want to see us become that, so I ask that you vote no.

CHAIRMAN BLACKWELL: Further comments or questions from members of the committee.

Seeing none, the question -- I'm sorry.

Representative Dew.

REPRESENTATIVE DEW: Sorry. I will say I actually served as the redistricting chair for the county commission or for the county which was appointed by the county commission in 2011.

And so at that point our maps were actually pulled back here during the middle of the process which circumvented the opportunity for the community to actually comment on the maps.

And I think that it's really unfortunate that in this situation, for those who are being affected who may not be able to make it here from my folks in Mecklenburg, of course there are a lot of people who could make it here today, but there was not an opportunity

for the folks affected to be able to speak to these maps in a public forum that wasn't here.

And also, I don't think an hour and 40 minutes is adequate. And also, with the way this process was set up, there's no real opportunity to change. And so that's unfortunate. I expected more of us.

CHAIRMAN BLACKWELL: Representative Ball.

REPRESENTATIVE BALL: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Just a few thoughts.

The old map is bad and is a gerrymander. The new map is really, really bad. I don't want us to forget that. The current map and the new map are illegal partisan gerrymanders. Even if the US Supreme Court and the North Carolina Supreme Court do not agree, I will not shy away from calling it that. Sorry. Excuse me.

The current map and the new map are illegal racial gerrymanders that violate the Voting Rights Act reauthorized by congress and signed by President Bush in 2006. This is true even if the US Supreme Court does not agree.

In the long, sorted history of

North Carolina gerrymandering, we are breaking new ground, and I am outraged about that as I know many people who have reached out to me from my district and all over this state. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN BLACKWELL: Further comments or questions from members of the committee.

Representative Carney.

REPRESENTATIVE CARNEY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

I'm trying to gather my thoughts. I have been a North Carolinian, born and bread here. My children have been raised here. My grandchildren, some of them have been raised here. I've had the distinct honor and privilege to serve Mecklenburg county, my district, in Raleigh for the last 23 years. I've been in the majority, I've been in the minority.

I can't believe that I'm sitting here today that we are now moving forward because someone, one man in Washington, the president -- and you heard my questioning earlier. This has never been done in North Carolina. That we have taken from the president of the country and saying I need for you to redistrict and give me one more congressional seat. That is just so

out of the realm of the democracy that I have been raised in.

My father was a World War II veteran, and if he were alive today, he would be 105. I cannot believe that he is sitting where he is in heaven, proud of what his daughter has been asked to do today, and that is to not stand up for the constitution in this bill, in this redistricting, not because the constitution requires it, not because the people have demanded it, but because one man in Washington asked us to do it.

I just can't believe that I'm sitting here -- it's surreal to me. We just went through this three years ago, and now we're doing it again to the people for what reason? It makes no sense to me except it's just -- I hate clichÃ©s. I don't like them. I've worked with you all on both sides of the road, and I hope I can continue to do that and have your respect, but I can't keep quiet at this moment because I hear from the people you've heard from here today and online, and I do encourage you to read them. I think some of you may have read them or read some of them or someone's told you

what's in there.

I get it that power comes with the party in power. It comes from your leadership. I get it. I've been there. I just ask us all to pause, think why we're doing it because it truly is, as the speaker said -- and my children, my adult children, my in-laws, they've been calling me, texting me, you can't be quiet, mom. They know I don't speak a lot, but when I do, it's from my heart and my disappointment.

My state is better than that, than this. Our state is better than this. And I know you don't want to hear half of what people are saying, but I hope at some point that when you put your head down on the pillow, as my daddy told me at night, and you can fall asleep, you know you're in a good position. I hope you all sleep well. Thank you.

CHAIRMAN BLACKWELL: Further comments or questions from members of the committee.

Seeing none, the motion before the committee is that we give Senate Bill 249 a favorable report with a referral to rules.

If you are in favor of the motion, vote aye or yes, and if you're opposed vote no. And

the clerk will call the roll.

THE CLERK: Representative Ball.

REPRESENTATIVE BALL: No.

THE CLERK: Ball, no.

Representative Carney.

REPRESENTATIVE CARNEY: No.

THE CLERK: Representative Carney, no.

Representative Dew.

REPRESENTATIVE DEW: No.

THE CLERK: Representative Dew, no.

Dixon.

REPRESENTATIVE DIXON: Yes.

THE CLERK: Dixon, yes.

Echevarria.

REPRESENTATIVE ECHEVARRIA: Yes.

THE CLERK: Echevarria, yes.

Gillespie.

REPRESENTATIVE GILLESPIE: Yes.

THE CLERK: Gillespie, yes.

Harrison.

REPRESENTATIVE HARRISON: No.

THE CLERK: Harrison, no.

Humphrey.

REPRESENTATIVE HUMPHREY: Yes.

THE CLERK: Humphrey, yes.

Frances Jackson.

REPRESENTATIVE JACKSON: No.

THE CLERK: Frances Jackson, no.

Neal Jackson.

REPRESENTATIVE N. JACKSON: Yes.

THE CLERK: Neal Jackson, yes.

Miller.

REPRESENTATIVE MILLER: Yes.

THE CLERK: Miller, yes.

Reives.

REPRESENTATIVE REIVES: No.

THE CLERK: Reives, no.

Rhyne.

REPRESENTATIVE RHYNE: Yes.

THE CLERK: Rhyne, yes.

Carson Smith.

REPRESENTATIVE SMITH: Aye.

THE CLERK: Carson Smith yes, aye.

Willingham.

REPRESENTATIVE WILLINGHAM: No.

THE CLERK: Willingham, no.

Bell.

Setzer.

Tyson.

Chairman Jones.

CHAIRMAN JONES: Yes.

THE CLERK: Chairman Jones, yes.

Do you wish to vote Blackwell?

CHAIRMAN BLACKWELL: Chair votes yes.

What is the count, madam chair -- Madam Clerk?

The votes on the motion are 10 in favor, 7 against. That completes the work of this committee, and the committee is adjourned.

(Adjourned.)

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA)
) C E R T I F I C A T E
COUNTY OF WAKE)

I, DENISE MYERS BYRD, Stenographic Court Reporter, CSR 8340, do hereby certify that the transcription of the recorded House Select Committee on Redistricting, held on October 21, 2025, was taken down by me stenographically to the best of my ability and thereafter transcribed under my supervision; and that the foregoing pages, inclusive, constitute a true and accurate transcription of said recording.

Signed this the 3rd day of November 2025.

Denise Myers Byrd, CSR 8340

NORTH CAROLINA GENERAL ASSEMBLY

HOUSE CHAMBER

SENATE BILL 249

OCTOBER 22, 2025

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SPEAKER HALL: Members, we're going to go into our calendar momentarily. I believe the rules chairman majority leader's consulted with the minority leader, and after we take up the realignment of congressional districts 2025, Senate Bill 249, we will adjourn for no more than an hour for the rules committee to meet to take up two or three other bills that the chairs talked to the minority leader about, and I think the rules chair is doing that as well, to give everyone a heads up on those. And then we'll come back in for what should be a very quick session after the rules committee meets, and we will have session quickly as possible after that, but part of the delay is it just takes some time for staff to be able to read a bill in that comes from rules.

So again, we'll do Senate Bill 249 now. When we're done with that, we will then go into recess for probably an hour to have rules and get those bills that are coming from rules read in and then we'll come back into session and have again what the chair expects to be a very quick session.

With that said, Mr. Clerk,

Senate Bill 249. The clerk will read.

THE CLERK: Senators Alexander, Daniel, and Galey, Senate Bill 249, a bill to be entitled Realign Congressional Districts 2025, the General Assembly of North Carolina enacts.

SPEAKER HALL: The gentleman from Columbus, Representative Jones, is recognized to debate the bill.

REPRESENTATIVE JONES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Members, today you will see a transparent and accountable process, one that is both constitutional and fundamental to representative government, congressional redistricting.

We're here today because California and the radical left launched a full-fledged, coordinated attack not only --

SPEAKER HALL: One second, Representative Jones.

All right. The chair should have addressed this before. The chair understands that folks are here in the gallery today and they got an opinion on certain bills that are being heard, but if you're in the gallery, you

can't make noise, you can't clap, you can't celebrate.

There 120 members of this body elected. They each represent 90,000 people. As I often say, when you try to shout over them or make noise, you're not muffling them out, you're muffling out the 90,000 people who they represent.

So with that said, if you can stay in here and be -- and stay silent and listen to the debate, people on both sides are going to debate it, then you can stay in here. If not, the chair will just simply clear the gallery. The chair doesn't want to do that. I don't think I've had to do that all session long, but again, it's up to you. So please remain silent during the debate.

Representative Jones, the gentleman has the floor.

REPRESENTATIVE JONES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Once again, we're here today because California and the radical left launched a full-fledged, coordinated attack not only on North Carolina but the integrity of democracy

itself. And I've got bad news for Gavin Newsom and the radical left: North Carolina will not stand by while they try to undermine the will of our voters and stack the decks in Washington.

Sadly, this isn't new. Just look around the country. In Massachusetts, New Mexico, and Connecticut, Republicans hold zero congressional seats due to Democrat congressional map gerrymanders. It's the same playbook over and over.

Well, enough is enough. We have been called to fight back, and that's exactly what this body intends to do. The motivation behind this new redistricting plan is straightforward: The new congressional map improves Republican political strength in eastern North Carolina and will bring an additional Republican seat to North Carolina's congressional delegation.

Let's talk about the process by which we did this.

As I mentioned in committee yesterday, the House worked with consultant Blake Springhetti. He's from Ohio. From Day one, we established clear, written standards for how this map would be drawn. We instructed our

consultant to follow these guidelines exactly. I'm going to share those with you for those who were not in committee.

Number 1. Data identifying the race of individuals or voters shall not be used in the construction or consideration of districts in the 2025 congressional plan.

Draw Congressional District 1, known as CD 1, to increase the Republican vote share of CD 1 in the 2023 congressional plan codified by Senate Bill 757 on October 25, 2023. Unless otherwise directed, you may consider any of the election results referenced in Number 8 below, but you may only adjust the boundaries of CD 1 and Congressional District 3 known as CD 3.

Number 3. Draw congressional districts to comply with federal standards for equal population.

Number 4. Draw congressional districts that are contiguous. Contiguity by point is not permitted but by water is permissible.

Number 5. To the extent feasible, draw districts that are visually reasonably compact. No mathematical tests are required.

Number 6. Take reasonable measures to

draw districts that represent and follow contiguous municipal boundaries.

Number 7. Take reasonable measures to draw districts that do not split VTDs.

Number 8. Political data should be considered. You may use any election or political data that is loaded onto a computer provided by the North Carolina General Assembly.

Number 9. An incumbent state member's knowledge of communities of interest may be considered.

Number 10. All work to be completed -- is to be completed at the legislative complex here in Raleigh on equipment provided by the General Assembly.

The election contest data in the stat pack for Senate Bill 249 -- and that data will also be available in the House Select Committee of Redistricting's website -- was considered in the creation of the plan, but the primary focus on this election contest data from 2024 presidential race.

Our consultant followed our instructions, and the result is a process that has been transparent, has been lawful, and

accountable to the people of this state.

Again, let me emphasize, racial data was not used in the creation of this map.

While we considered several variations of the congressional plan with our consultant, ultimately, we decided to proceed with the map put forward by Senator Ralph Hise whose members of this General Assembly have heard speak multiple times regarding the details of that map.

While our consultant offered input to members regarding the plan, the map before you is the map that was drawn by Senator Hise.

To briefly summarize the plan before you, the new map makes no changes to 12 of the 14 districts. Only the districts that are changed in the new map are NC 1 and NC 3.

As I stated previously, the motivation behind this plan is straightforward. It moves NC 1 from a district where President Trump earned 51 percent of the vote in 2024 to 55 percent of the vote, an increase of 4 points. The end result is a congressional map that should perform to elect 11 Republicans.

Not only does the new congressional map

better improve Republican political strength in eastern North Carolina, the new map adheres to traditional redistricting principles and is more compact than the current math by Reock and Polsby-Popper measures of compactness.

Now, I know what's coming next. The same national organizations that are talking heads who praise the blue state maps will continue attacking ours not because of the process but because of the outcome. But the people of North Carolina didn't elect us to surrender our responsibilities. They elected us to lead.

So to the national left, I'm sorry, your favorite governor in Sacramento miscalculated. Proposition 50 has backfired. Republican-led states are here to make sure that one man does not predetermine the controls of congress. North Carolina will not be lectured, will not be bullied, and will not be sued into submission. We will not let outsiders tell us how to govern, and we will never apologize for doing exactly what the people of this state has elected us to do.

We did our job transparently, lawfully,

and unapologetically. And if that offends the left, so be it because what we're defending here today is not just a map, it's the principle that stops the deck from being stacked against us. It's the principle that our delegation in congress will advocate for the true beliefs of North Carolinians, and it is a fact that we will send one more Republican from congress from this great state.

You can be mad about redistricting all you want to, but you need to look in the mirror and ask yourself what got us here, and I think then you will begin to realize just how bad the left messed up. So thanks for poking that bear, giving us the playbook, and for that we will be sending another strong conservative to Washington to represent this great state.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER HALL: For what purpose does the gentleman from Wilson, Representative Pittman, rise?

REPRESENTATIVE PITTMAN: Mr. Speaker, to speak to the bill.

SPEAKER HALL: The gentleman is recognized to debate the bill.

REPRESENTATIVE PITTMAN: Mr. Speaker, in my region of eastern North Carolina, we know how to work together. We work together to bring economic development and good jobs, to support our community schools, and to step in to help our neighbors. What helps us to do that is by focusing on our community and its people, not being thrust in the middle of a national partisan power grab.

Wilson county is a competitive county, and the first congressional district is a competitive district. I know this because Congressman Davis won the first congressional district, and President Trump won the first congressional district. I won North Carolina House District 24, and President Trump won North Carolina House District 24.

What I can tell you is when you are in a 50/50 district, you don't waste your time figuring out who is in what political party. You work together to move your community forward, and we need more of that in politics.

But here we are, what started as a political power play in Texas has turned into a national redistricting war, and my home and my

people have been drug into the middle of it. This action is further dividing a deeply divided nation, but more acutely, it unnecessarily divides communities when we should be focusing on lowering costs and expanding economic opportunities in North Carolina.

My hometown is not just a place on a map to be conquered. It is a community that is home to good people that must deal with the divisions drawn by power hungry politicians who attempt to tell us who our voice in Washington is going to be.

This map weaponizes my community. I oppose it, and I resent it.

SPEAKER HALL: For what purpose does the gentleman from Halifax, Representative Pierce, rise?

REPRESENTATIVE PIERCE: To speak to the bill.

SPEAKER HALL: The gentleman is recognized to debate the bill.

REPRESENTATIVE PIERCE: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Now, I understand that this debate will be framed in a lot of different ways about maps,

numbers, and lines on a page, but to me and to the people of House District 27, this is about something much deeper, about the soul and the shared destiny of eastern North Carolina.

This bill redraws Congressional District 1 in a way that doesn't just shift boundaries, it fractures communities. It pulls together counties that have little in common in geography, economy, and daily life. It ties our inland agricultural communities where families are working generations deep in the soil, to coastal areas driven by tourism, property, and development. These are different economies, different priorities, different needs.

When you do that, you dilute the voice of people who have long toiled together toward a common good, working people, small farmers, and those in rural communities who have already been struggling to be heard.

As we approach America's 250th anniversary, our semiquincentennial, and District 27 is home to the Halifax Resolves, I can't help but think about the people who contributed to the revolutionary cause, men and women, white, black, indigenous, Asian, and

Hispanic. They fought for a shared cause, liberty and justice, a vision of one nation united for the common good.

Yet today, instead of working together on that shared purpose, instead of passing a budget to fund our public schools, strengthen public health, and keep our communities safe, we are fighting over maps that divide us even more.

While families are struggling, we are playing politics with people's lives. Folks don't know what's coming next. Federal workers don't know if they'll get paid. Teachers and state employees don't know if a raise will even matter once their insurance premiums go up. County commissioners don't know if the federal government is going to come through, and all the while we're told that certain programs are being targeted as if they only help certain people.

So I ask who are you serving? The people back home who sent you here or someone else's agenda because it seems to me that while you refuse to compromise on a budget, on a fair budget, you have no problem rushing to grab power. We don't have to say it because people already see it. They know what's happening.

Our duty as members of this General Assembly is to the people of North Carolina, all of them. Let's stop dividing them, and let's start delivering for them.

SPEAKER HALL: For what purpose does the gentleman from Duplin, Representative Dixon, rise?

REPRESENTATIVE DIXON: To speak to the bill, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER HALL: The gentleman is recognized to debate the bill.

REPRESENTATIVE DIXON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Early this morning, Members, I awakened thinking about the public comments yesterday, so I turn today my source of solace and read, but the tongue can no man tame; out of the same mouth proceeded blessings and cursings.

Yesterday, I was told what I should not do. I was told what my motives are. None of those who called my cellphone and left hateful and vulgar messages asked me what my motives were. They just told me over and over again how right they were and how much they hated Donald Trump.

I respect and sustain their right to say that, but I'm left to observe how some folks who demand tolerance do it so intolerantly.

I will now exercise my elected responsibility to speak for myself.

I love President Trump, and I sustain him as the leader of our nation. I support and sustain him as the current leader of the Republican Party. In my opinion, he's the greatest president of my lifetime.

He's not my king, and I don't think he wants to be your king. I've witnessed divine intervention in preserving his life. He is divinely changed man who loves this nation.

I support the constitutional authority of this legislature to legally redraw our congressional districts.

I would implore us to remember this sage advice: Anger never persuades. Hostility never heals. Contention never leads to lasting solutions.

Please support this legal proposal to help North Carolina help President Donald Trump make America great again.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER HALL: For what purpose does the lady from Pitt, Representative Brown, rise?

REPRESENTATIVE BROWN: To debate the bill.

SPEAKER HALL: The lady is recognized to debate the bill.

REPRESENTATIVE BROWN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I rise today to speak to you on behalf of my community. Although I represent the northern half of Pitt county, my community extends beyond the line of my district, and I too know the feeling of being pulled from one district to another because I was in District 1, Pitt county was, and then we got pulled into District 3, not having any input, not knowing what was going on, and we still have citizens still not realizing what district they're in.

I was born and raised in Martin county, started my family in Bethel, and my grand babies live in Lenoir. Eastern North Carolina is my home, but I did not have a seat at the table. Myself and my Democratic colleagues have been left out of the discussion and the drawing of these maps. Our constituents and our

communities did not have a say in the process.

In the past six days, my office has fielded many emails and phone calls from not just my constituents but people all over the state extremely frustrated with the legislature.

I will be remiss if I did not relay their concerns which are: Why are we redrawing these maps again? How far are you willing to go to bend the knee to this administration? Are you listening to the concerns of your constituents? Why are we focused on unnecessarily redrawing congressional maps mid decade instead of passing a budget for our state? Why are we not having public hearings in the community that will be impacted by this legislation?

These are the questions that we may never get answers for. It often feels like we are yelling into the abyss while this body continues to pass harmful, unpopular, and dangerous legislation like this despite the overwhelming evidence that this is not what our constituents want.

You claimed that racial data was not used. You didn't need to use racial data

because every single member of this body knows about the black population in the northeastern part of this state.

Yesterday in the redistricting committee, an Air Force veteran said you don't need to use racial data to see racial impact.

Redrawing Districts 1 and 3 is purposefully dilutions of black votes.

North Carolina is the testing ground for the new era of Jim Crow laws, going after Souls to the Polls, restricting early voting dates, hours, and locations, and now breaking up the Black Belt that has been electing black Democrats for the -- for three decades now.

You are silencing black voices and are going against the will of your constituents. We will remember.

And in closing, I like to leave this with you Proverbs 11:21. Though hand join in hand, the wicked shall not be unpunished, but the seed of the righteous shall be delivered.

Thank you.

SPEAKER HALL: For what purpose -- the sergeant-at-arms will clear the gallery of the folks who have self selected for themselves to

be removed, who believe their voices are more important than everyone else's.

We'll put you down as a maybe.

For what purpose does the gentleman from Granville, Representative Cohn, rise?

REPRESENTATIVE COHN: To debate the bill, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER HALL: The gentleman is recognized to debate the bill.

REPRESENTATIVE COHN: Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong opposition of Senate Bill 249 on behalf of the voters of Vance and Granville county who deserve fair maps and representation, not political manipulation.

This bill is a partisan weapon designed to silence voices and protect power, not people.

This bill is not a reaction to Governor Gavin Newsom and what they intend on doing in the state of California. This is a reaction at the behest of the president of the United States and Governor Greg Abbott of Texas, make no mistake about that.

The leadership in the General Assembly has saw fit to basically follow their lead and do as they're told.

Our democracy deserves better. The people of North Carolina deserve better. The folks of our district of eastern North Carolina deserve better.

I urge my colleagues today to reject this disgraceful bill and vote no.

Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER HALL: For what purpose does the lady from Mecklenburg, Representative Helfrich, rise?

REPRESENTATIVE HELFRICH: To speak to the bill.

SPEAKER HALL: The lady is recognized to debate the bill.

REPRESENTATIVE HELFRICH: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

As a former English teacher, I pay close attention to words and to phrases, and one phrase I've heard a lot over the past several days is answering the call.

A sitting president has asked states to rig their voting districts in order to avoid accountability in the midterms, and here we are answering the call.

But in forcing this bill through today,

you know whose calls we are refusing to answer? Yours. Yours. Yours. And the tens of thousands of other people across this state from each of our districts who have been calling us, emailing us, writing us, submitting public comments, traveling here by bus and by carpool asking us to simply say no. No, we will not further rig our voting districts at the request of one person.

But answering the call, of course, is not just about picking up the phone. It's about responding to challenge out of a sense of duty. I thought our duty was to the constitution and to the people of North Carolina. And they are overwhelmingly opposed to this bill.

And to that end, Mr. Speaker, I have concluded my remarks on the bill and would like to be recognized for a question of privilege under Rule 8.

SPEAKER HALL: The lady may state her question of privilege.

REPRESENTATIVE HELFRICH: I understand that Rule 8 concerns the rights of the House collectively, its safety and dignity and the integrity of its proceedings.

Members of the House, we asked the public to submit comment on this proposed map. They answered the call. As of 10:30 this morning, we had received 12,280 comments. I have them printed right here.

At no point in these proceedings have their input -- has their input been meaningfully considered, and I believe this calls into question the integrity of the House and these proceedings.

SPEAKER HALL: For what purpose does the lady from Durham, Representative Morey, rise?

REPRESENTATIVE MOREY: To speak to the bill.

SPEAKER HALL: The lady is recognized to debate the bill.

REPRESENTATIVE MOREY: We are here today because simply it's map warfare that was started unquestionably on the record by the president of the United States when he demanded the governor of Texas, Greg Abbott, to redraw the Texas congressional maps so there would be at least five more Republicans representing the MAGA agenda in congress and the nation. This is

on record. It is in writing.

In response, California has a referendum to their voters to counteract Texas redistricting, and now here we are in North Carolina doing a fifth redistricting in five years. And it's not because of the census, it's not because of a court order, it's because of a command from a president, unprecedented in American history.

Let's look at what the Tenth Amendment of our US Constitution says. All powers not given to the federal government are reserved to the states.

Election laws are reserved to the states, not the federal government. What we are doing here upon the direction of the president is allowing the federal government to overstep its authority.

Even worse, as my colleague said, we are targeting Congressional District 1 known as the eastern Black Belt of North Carolina. We are dividing and diluting historically black and Latino voters, exactly what they did in Texas. The lawsuit has been filed. They diluted and they divided black, Hispanic voters in Dallas,

in Houston, drew two incumbent congressional Democrats in one district. It's the same playbook. All of this while the president's polling is at historical low and people are rejecting the cruelty of the MAGA agenda.

And I thought, foolishly, Republicans stood for less government and states' rights. Could have fooled us, but you have not fooled the voters. And rather than have robust public hearings, we had two committee hearings where people from all over the state came to Raleigh to have one minute to speak, and their voices need to be amplified.

One of them, I proudly served for two decades in the United States Air Force. I defended freedom, and you don't need to use racial data to see racial impact. That's not balance, that's silence. And I did not fight for my country for selective freedom.

Another, you are redistricting the state to finagle more power and money for yourselves. And if you truly cared about what your constituents think, then put a referendum on the ballot and ask them across the state, let them decide.

Another who teaches civics in District 3, my seniors can tell you why gerrymandering, while legal, is unethical and wrong. We will be District 1 not because of a census redistricting but because of fear from Republican leadership over potentially losing a seat in the midterm.

The thousands of students I have taught in my 28-year career is far more fair-minded and constitutionally aligned than our current General Assembly. And, yes, I taught gerrymandering was wrong when the Democrats did it. Shame on every member who allows their party to take dominance over what's right. Feel free, come to my civics class, you may learn something.

And finally, a former Republican who says, I am a former Republican. I say former because I can no longer believe in, trust or endorse the Republican Party. They only care about one thing, accumulating power and profits at the expense of everyone and everything. If this redistricting passes, it's a violation of American decency and a blatant power grab. It sends a signal that the Republican Party no

longer cares about free and fair election. This is how democracy dies.

Those are just four of the public comments senators and representatives heard this week when they had one minute to speak.

So this body has outlawed in a bill that's up for a veto, DEI, diversity, equity, and inclusion, in state government, in our universities, and now we're doing it with voting. It's shameful.

SPEAKER HALL: Members, just what -- administration rules chair I think respecting the minority leader, we will vote on this bill by 12:30. The chair will continue with those folks who have their lights on until that time.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker, excuse me, I'd like to send forth an amendment.

SPEAKER HALL: So I think the amendments have been put forth but not into the dashboard yet. So we'll deal with your amendments before 12:30.

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Thank you.

SPEAKER HALL: For what purpose does the gentleman from Guilford, Representative Quick, rise?

REPRESENTATIVE QUICK: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To debate the bill.

SPEAKER HALL: The gentleman is recognized to debate the bill.

REPRESENTATIVE QUICK: Thank you, sir.

Having been given complete control of the federal government, Republicans have managed to shut down the government during the present Trump administration after seeing the previous Trump administration shut down the government for a record 35 days, and now North Carolina Republicans have the illogical nerve to ask for more Republicans through a rigged system.

Speaking of illogical, it's also been said that this is being done because President Trump has a mandate from voters, but not North Carolina voters because if voters were set to give a mandate, that would mean Governor Josh Stein has a mandate for he won more votes than President Trump did by about 172,000.

So instead of pressing President Trump's agenda in North Carolina, we ought to be voting for Governor Stein's budget if we're using votes as indication of a mandate.

It was also alluded to about

California's redistricting efforts, but there's a very clear and distinct difference between what we're doing in North Carolina and what's happening in California. Because in California, the referendum goes to the voters. In North Carolina, a few people get behind a closed door and decide that we need a new map.

Finally, it's very ironic in this body that we've done two things which seem to be opposed to each other. First, we have funded the Cheatham-White Scholarship which is a great scholarship program that helps deserving students at North Carolina A&T and North Carolina Central University.

The irony of the Cheatham-White scholarship is that the White part of it comes from a gentleman by the name of George Henry White who was pushed out of congress in 1901 by a very similar system as what we're using right now. But I want to quote George Henry white as I conclude my remarks.

He said, you may push the African American out of congress by these ill-gotten means, but some day the African American congressional representative will rise up some

day and come again.

So you may push the African American voters out of District 1, the representation of African American voters out of District 1, but this is wrong, and wrong never stands. Wrong never stands. And some day, when Democrats are back in control and when by your help doing things like this, it will be sooner rather than later that Democrats will be back in control. We will recognize the power of the African American voter in what's previously known as the Black Belt.

I ask that you would vote no. Thank you.

SPEAKER HALL: For what purpose does the lady from Guilford, Representative Harrison, rise?

REPRESENTATIVE HARRISON: To debate the bill.

SPEAKER HALL: The lady is recognized to debate the bill.

REPRESENTATIVE HARRISON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

So much to say, ladies and gentlemen of the House, about all of this, but I'm going to

start with the process because I don't think that's seen a lot of attention yet.

This is highly irregular. We have had a very truncated schedule, with less than 24 hours between publication of the map and the beginning of the discussion and debate in the Senate. The public has had very little time to process and understand what we are doing here today. And we could have done it earlier because, as Representative Morey pointed out, this was started by the president, a directive to Texas. Texas started in June or July, and so we've had plenty of time to get an earlier start on this, but I'm not going to go deep into that.

But I do want to point out -- so thank you, Representative Helfrich, for pointing out that since yesterday and today we had another thousand comments totaling 12,215. I want to compare that to 2021 and -- where we had 10,000 -- I'm sorry -- 1,000 in 2021 and 600 in 2023. And out of those 12,215 -- and deep gratitude to my legislative assistant for going through most of them -- she's found three in favor of these maps. Three.

I want to talk about the public

hearings. As was mentioned, there was just two here, both in Raleigh. And back in 2011, we had 65. In 2021, we had 14 in each congressional district. And then when we redrew in 2023, we did have three geographically spread out in the state. So folks have not had an opportunity to present in person, and you know how much of a difference that makes if you attend these. I'll just say there's been inadequate time for the legislators and the public to review.

In those comments, I'll just highlight the most common mentioned teams. Process, request for a nonpartisan independent redistricting process.

No to gerrymandering. That's the high point.

Lots of comments about race and the racist nature of the maps.

The fact that we should be working on a budget and other state high priorities.

And a big chunk of folks who talk about the current president.

I want to remind you that this map we are considering today in a state with a history of the most gerrymandered maps in the country,

we now have the most gerrymandered and least responsive map in the state's history before you. 84 percent of the public has expressed objections to the partisan nature of our redistricting process.

I also want to talk on the substance or talk to you about the fact that we still have a Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act. We don't know for how long, but it was recently reaffirmed in the Allen v Milligan case that took place in Alabama two years ago.

This requires an opportunity to draw districts for black voters to elect a candidate of their choice. As has been mentioned, this map clearly carves out the Black Belt and whether -- and has been mentioned whether the sponsor used racial data or not, he knows the districts well enough to know that he was splitting up the Black Belt.

And I'm saying he, I mean Senator Hise because he's the one that drew the map. No personal attack, just observing the process.

He continued to claim throughout the process in the Senate and in yesterday's committee that we have no evidence of racially

polarized voting in our state, but it's been some time since the last racially polarized voting analysis has been performed. And it was repeated in the Allen v Milligan case that that needs to be performed to understand localized racially polarized voting.

So y'all remember, those of you who were here back in 2023 redraw, we did have one racially polarized voting analysis performed by the Southern Coalition for Social Justice, and they only had a week to do it so it was very truncated, but that was in response to the fact that the lack of our performing our own. That found significant racially polarized voting in this very area where we are getting ready to carve up the black voters into two different districts.

They also -- Senator Hise also stated that there was no need to prove the Gingles criteria because those weren't present either, but I want to repeat to you all what the Gingles criteria are because the Southern Coalition for Social Justice says that that area of the state actually meets the Gingles criteria.

And I'm sorry, I'm not going to take up

much of your time. I just think these are important points to make and to be considered as we get ready to approve this map.

So the first is a minority group must be able to demonstrate that it's sufficiently large and compact to constitute a majority of a single-member district.

Second, it must be able to show that it's politically cohesive.

Third, it must be able to demonstrate that the white majority votes significantly as a bloc to enable it to defeat the minority's preferred candidate.

And that -- those criteria have been met, and we probably could have proved it ourselves if we had taken the time to go through the racially polarized analysis that was needed.

So I will just, sorry, move along here to the next point and has been stated this particular district that's being -- these two congressional districts that are being -- that are being redrawn have the longest legacy of black leadership in the state's history and the highest concentration of black voters.

Representative Alma Adams said that

yesterday in committee, and the former Representative Eva Clayton who spoke at the committee also pointed this out. This is really important to take into consideration.

Representative Clayton, former Representative Clayton was the first black woman to represent North Carolina in our history in congress, and she was the first black elected to congress from North Carolina since 1901.

So as has been pointed out by Representative Pierce and others, we have strong black leadership fighting for the causes and the values that that area of the state cares about the most and are going to be most affected by the current leadership.

So I just want to say that we are in clear violation of the Voting Rights Act and likely are going to engage in litigation.

So why is that important? Because this state -- when the majority party, again, with all due respect, started drawing maps in 2011, we've spent $22,512,000 on redistricting litigation, and probably more, but that's related to outside counsel.

Article 1, Section 2, Sovereignty of

the people. All political power is vested in and derived from the people. All government of right originates from the people, is founded upon their will only, and is instituted solely for the good of the whole.

Is this map for the good of the whole? I contend that it is not. We're clearly carving up an area that is going to lose a long legacy of terrific leadership.

We have a 12/2 map with zero competitive districts in a 50/50 state. Nope, it's not for the good of the whole. I encourage my colleagues to vote no on this map. Thank you.

SPEAKER HALL: For what purpose does the lady from orange, Representative Price, rise?

REPRESENTATIVE PRICE: To debate the bill.

SPEAKER HALL: The lady is recognized to debate the bill.

REPRESENTATIVE PRICE: 250 years ago -- sorry. Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

250 years ago, no taxation without representation was the rallying cry that

prompted the American Revolution and the founding of this country. Colonial Americans refused to be dominated by people who failed to represent them fairly.

Manipulating the boundaries of electoral constituencies in order to favor one party or class or creating legislative districts that minimize the voices of the people that live therein is therefore a direct assault on the very foundation of American democracy.

This bill and this map are the epitome of gerrymandering which are an assault on the spirit of democracy. The map denies people, particularly African Americans and Native Americans, of their right to fair elections. It is a violation of the United States Constitution and therefore an intentional violation against our basic rights as United States citizens and furthermore an egregious assault on the people of North Carolina, our constituents.

This anxiousness to gerrymander a new congressional district appears to arise from a fear of losing elections. One could also surmise that the proponents of this map may be haunted by the fear that historically

marginalized people will take their rightful places of influence and power.

I therefore implore this body to reject this brazen act to redraw a map that intentionally disenfranchises thousands of people and that purposefully denies them the potential to elect leaders that truly represent their interests.

The proposed map is unconstitutional, unjust, and immoral, and I ask you to please vote no on Senate Bill 249.

SPEAKER HALL: Members, we'll go ahead and take up Representative Morey's amendments. The first one on the dashboard. The Amendment S249 ACM 23B3. The clerk will read.

THE CLERK: Representative Morey moves to amend the bill.

SPEAKER HALL: The lady from Durham, Representative Morey, is recognized to debate the amendment.

REPRESENTATIVE MOREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

I'm presenting a map, and this map goes exactly like we had the congressional maps in 2022. It reflects the state of North Carolina,

and it would give probably equal seven Republican, seven Democrat district. I ask you to approve this amendment.

SPEAKER HALL: The gentleman from Columbus, Representative Jones, is recognized to debate the amendment.

REPRESENTATIVE JONES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Representative Morey, thank you for the amendment. We appreciate you putting the input in, but as you said, I guess if we're redistricting your way, it's okay, but if we're doing it to help the Republicans, it's not.

So, Members, I ask that you vote this down, please. Thank you.

SPEAKER HALL: The question before the House is the adoption of the amendment. All those in favor will vote aye, all those opposed will vote no. The clerk will open the vote.

The clerk will lock the machine and record the vote.

46 having voted in the affirmative and 67 in the negative, the amendment fails.

Members, moving to the next amendment, Representative Morey, bill changes the title so

therefore not germane, so the amendment will be returned to the lady.

We're now back on debate on the bill.

For what purpose does the gentleman from Wake, Representative Rubin, rise?

REPRESENTATIVE RUBIN: To debate the bill.

SPEAKER HALL: The gentleman is recognized to debate the bill.

REPRESENTATIVE RUBIN: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Colleagues, at the end of the day and at the end of our lives, each of us should strive to be people who overcome the darkness and never to be the people that create the darkness that the others in our society are forced to overcome.

Today's latest attack by Republicans on self-governance in North Carolina follows the attack on our board of elections, it follows a brazen attempt to steal Supreme Court election, and it all adds up to a sense that there are those in our government that think only the right people may ever hold power and that the rules must be rigged to make sure the people can

never disagree with those choices.

And now we're here today. The Republican Party holding a vote of no confidence on our self-government in North Carolina to make our already rigged maps even worse.

But it's not just the maps themselves. Behold the process that led to today. Secretive, dismissive, six days long from end to end, and frankly, disrespectful of the people of North Carolina, dismissive of the people of North Carolina. You have treated them as obstacles to be managed, even talked down to here in this debate today, not citizens to be heard. And it would be bad enough if they were simply ignored, and they were ignored. No one looked at those comments. We all know that. No one looked at that. No one tried to take their feedback into consideration. And why even have a public comment period if you're going to dismiss all of their comments when they're clearly one direction.

But the fact is that's treating them with contempt. And I would say this, if you're wondering how it could get to that point, I mean, in politics you would think that elected

officials would never want to treat the voters of their state with disrespect. That would lead to them being ousted, but the fact is, we're not just rigging the districts today.

This House is the product of rigged districts, and everything that you see happening is a product of what happens when politicians pick their voters. It is a General Assembly who despite rigging every district to make sure Republicans control their body regardless of what the people think still can't pass a budget.

Ruined healthcare in this state. It is now the worst in the country for healthcare costs. 48th in the country for school funding, and rural schools in particular are being hit by that, the very districts many members of the Republican Party represent.

This is the result of rigging electoral districts to isolate the members of the legislature and now our members of congress even more from ever having to answer to the people. It is the opposite of what democracy is meant to be, and it is the opposite of our founding principles, that we are accountable to the people, and that when they get mad at the way

we're running things, they can remove us and they can pick somebody else who they think will do it better, and we get better and we get better over time.

The people in North Carolina are crying out for something real in their leaders, something selfless, and yet with acts like this, you show them the worst of our politics, the absolute worst of it. Selfish power grabs designed to exclude the public from the process to exalt and protect your own power and real people suffer for the wanting.

My message to the people of North Carolina is simple: It doesn't have to be like this. Your state legislature does not have to be an utter mess. You deserve a legislature that works together on driving down the highest healthcare costs in the country. You deserve one that funds your schools. You deserve a budget that gets passed, roads that get built, and a DMV that functions.

All of that is possible, but these rigged maps, state and federal, are why you can't have it, but in all of this, I have faith in one thing, and it's the people of

North Carolina. They should not have to overcome you. They shouldn't have to overcome maps rigged against them. They shouldn't have to overcome their representatives consistently working to exclude the public from every aspect of participation.

But I have faith that they will overcome it. And when they do, instead of petty revenge and a different set of bad maps that go the other way, we will put forth a constitutional amendment to end this absolute corruption once and for all, to make crystal clear that legislators serve the people. And for all the complaining about Democrats in other far-off states doing what you don't like, let's make it a federal constitutional amendment. I'll sign it. I'll tour the country with you. If you don't like it in Illinois, we can end it there too.

At the end of the day and at the end of our lives, each of us should strive to be people who help others overcome the darkness, and we all have to check ourselves to make sure that we're not becoming it.

SPEAKER HALL: The gentleman from

Wayne, Representative Bell, is recognized for a motion.

REPRESENTATIVE BELL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. I move the previous question.

SPEAKER HALL: Sergeant-at-arms will clear the gallery.

Now, back to the motion.

The gentleman from Wayne, Representative Bell, has moved the previous question. The motion is not debatable.

The question before the House is representative -- the approval of Representative Bell's motion of the previous question.

All those in favor of the motion will vote aye, all those opposed will vote no. The clerk will open the vote.

The clerk will lock the machine and record the vote.

65 having voted in the affirmative and 49 in the negative, the motion carries.

The majority and minority leaders each get three minutes to speak. Majority leader is waiving their three minutes.

Representative Reives, who's the chair,

want to have recognized for the three minutes.

REPRESENTATIVE REIVES: I will do the speaking. Thank you.

SPEAKER HALL: The gentleman from Chatham, Representative Reives, is recognized to debate the bill.

REPRESENTATIVE REIVES: Okay. And what I will say is this so. I know I've got to be quick.

10:30 we were here ready to do business, and we start at 11:30. 11:30 we were thinking we have a little time to debate. We don't. I want to express on behalf of the caucus, that's pretty frustrating. This is serious. So I will try to be as concise as possible.

I will tell you what I told you in committee yesterday. I'm not getting into fairness. I'm not getting into what should or shouldn't happen. I'm not getting into process. We've decided to be who we're going to be.

Here's what I am telling you. One day it's you. I'm scared. I'm not angry. I am frightened.

Indiana Senate Republicans say they do

not have votes to pass midcycle redistricting despite a pressure campaign from the White House, according to a spokesperson for Senate President Pro Tem Rodric Bray. How was he answered? An immediate answer from a campaign manager -- campaign manager, not an elected official, who said, oh, yeah, now the real fun begins.

I don't know any other way to interpret that if I'm the president pro tem of that senate expect I just got threatened.

It feels good when you're doing it for somebody that you like, but everything we do in this building has to be done based on what happens when it's a guy I don't like. And I'm going to tell you guys a secret. I'm lucky enough to be in the Democratic Party so I know full well how much people can dislike you, even in your own party.

Don Davis is getting drawn out for one simple reason. There may be other reasons, and that's for other people to discuss. Do you know why Don Davis is going home? Because he had the nerve to say northeastern North Carolina can't survive with these Medicaid cuts. Northeastern

North Carolina cannot survive with these education cuts. I have got to put my constituents first.

And you know the sad thing, Don Davis was always called one of the good ones by a lot of people in this chamber. He was a good one, and he's going home. Don Davis busted his behind when he was here to work both sides. He busted his behind to compromise, and he's going home.

And I can go ahead and tell you, Rodric Bray can go ahead and count his days. He's getting primaried and he's going home.

I said yesterday John Bolton is under indictment. James Comey is under indictment. And I know that's not a big deal to anybody now because you're like, look, I'm going to stay on the good side, but what happens when it's your district. What happens when the people who put you up here say we can't do what they're asking us to do.

You're right, it's been transparent, but I'm not going to get into why we're doing this because I'm not in the room. I know what the news has reported. I know what the quid pro

quo is supposed to be for this, and what I know is the House didn't draw this map, the House wasn't asked their opinion, and the House is getting nothing out of this except for to be able to say that we are doing what we've been asked to do.

What I can say candidly is this -- and I remember this as clear as day. My eight years out of 11 were spent with Roy Cooper. And I can't tell you how many times I sat there and listened to somebody say don't you just do what Roy Cooper says, he's not your boss, you're in the legislature. I mean, I think I heard that every week.

And I replied, I like Roy Cooper a lot, but he doesn't tell me what to do. I do what I think is best for my folks back home. Because ultimately whatever he feels about me, there's going to be another governor. Whatever he feels about me, there's going to be other people I have to answer to. And whatever he feels about me, the most important people in my life need to be able to look me in the face and then look their friends and family in the face and say whether you agree with them or not, he did what

he thought was going to help you guys out. And that's done. That ends today.

Because you can't tell me that out of 71 members there's not one district that's getting hurt right now by the present agenda. This isn't about how you feel about this person. There's always going to be another person. We've had members serve for 40 years up here. Do you know how many presidents and governors those members go through? But this body stays because we are the last line of defense for this state. We are the last line of defense for the people who got us here.

Do you know how hard -- all of you have been through this that have been in rural counties. Do you know how hard it is to lift yourself up when everything is lined up against you? Do you know how many good benefits, lucky breaks you've got to get to end up -- how you end up here? And do you know how many times one thing going bad, one bit of government money not showing up, one program, one service not being there and you're back home and you're working somewhere, you're making $7.40 an hour because you didn't know the right people at the right

time.

And that's not what this country was built on, and it is shocking to me, it is shocking to me where we are right now.

This is easy. If you are Republican in this state and in this country, you can run anything. Every last one of you can stand up and say, nah, I'm not doing this. And you know what can happen to you? Nothing. You've got a working supermajority according to the newspapers. You can pass any bill at any time, do anything you want. And we're passing a bill right now for somebody that won't even sit in the room and talk to you about the budget which is the only job we've got.

And I don't know why and I don't care why and it's not my business, but at some point in time, I'm not telling anybody they're going to lose office. I'm not telling you that the voters are going to make you pay. I don't know what the voters are going to do. I never know.

What I do know is this: There is somebody you care about back home who is going to suffer with these cuts. There's somebody who is going to die because of these cuts. There is

some brilliant child at home whose chances are now cut off because they're just not going to have the money for a school, they're just not going to have the ability to go to a university, they're just not going to have the ability because their ability is in science and there's no science jobs at home and they can't leave. And I can't feel good about that.

So I appreciate Don Davis. I appreciate Tom Tillis who is being sent home who used to be right up there. Tom Tillis is the reason half of the Republican caucus is here right now. Tom Tillis is one of five people who created the supermajority, and he's having to go home because he's like my people can't take this.

So this isn't about how you feel about this president. I'm not getting into that. The last president everybody felt like was a great president was George Washington, and even George Washington said, I could stay in this office for the rest of my life, but I'm not because that's not what's good for this country. We have won the war for independence, and we're going to be better than England.

Think about that. We talk about blood, sweat, and tears. He actually bled. He actually sweated. He actually risked execution. And then he had an entire country in his hands, and he said, I am stepping away because it's the right thing to do because just because I have the power to do something doesn't mean that I should do that.

And we're completely the opposite now. We have taken the position that we got the power to do, we can do whatever the hell we want now.

And Representative Quick made a great point that, you know, this switches and stuff. I don't even care about that any more. I don't know if this ever switches. I don't know if this ever changes. I don't even know if we're going to have elections in four years. But what I know is as long as I'm allowed to serve the people of my district --

SPEAKER HALL: Representative Reives, the gentleman is beyond eight minutes. I don't think I've ever cut you off, but I would ask you to wrap up your comments.

REPRESENTATIVE REIVES: And I understand, and I am expressing a lot of points

that would have been made by a lot of people on this side because they're angry and upset. The Senate debated for hours. And I appreciate where you're coming from, Mr. Speaker. It is just -- I can't watch it die like this, but it seems like I'm going to have to.

But what I would ask -- what I would ask is you mark this day, mark this day because one day they're coming to you and they're going to ask you to do something that you just can't do, and because we have set the precedent that only one person in the party matters, you're going home.

You've got a chance to vote no. Be like Indiana. Be like all these other states that just say, nah, we're just not doing this or we've got a chance to do what we're told and then one day look up and say, God, I wish that hadn't have happened. I wish I had taken that moment. Thank you.

SPEAKER HALL: The question before the House is the passage of Senate Bill Substitute Senate Bill 249 on second reading.

All those in favor will vote aye, all those opposed will vote no. The clerk will open

the vote.

The clerk will lock the machine and record the vote.

66 having voted in the affirmative and 48 in the negative, the Senate Committee Substitute Senate Bill 249 having passed its second reading. It will be read a third time.

THE CLERK: The General Assembly of North Carolina enacts.

SPEAKER HALL: The question before the House is the passage of Senate Committee Substitute Senate Bill 249 on its third reading.

All those in favor will say aye.

All those opposed no.

The ayes have it. The Senate Committee Substitute Senate Bill 249 having passed its third reading will be ordered enrolled.

Members, the rules committee is going to meet immediately upon us going into recess, which we are about to do. It's 12:41, so chair intends to begin session at 1:40 --

UNIDENTIFIED SPEAKER: Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER HALL: Just one second. I may answer your question. Give me one second.

So we will back in at 1:40. And the

chair will just ask staff as quickly as you can to get those bills back up here, but I don't anticipate that 1:40 session lasting more than 20 minutes or so.

And, of course, Representative Reives will have all those bills ahead of time to the extent he doesn't have them now.

For what purpose does the gentleman from Halifax, Representative Pierce, rise?

REPRESENTATIVE PIERCE: Mr. Speaker, I rise to state a protest on Article 2, Section 18 of the North Carolina Constitution.

SPEAKER HALL: So noted.

For what purpose does the gentleman from Durham, Representative Hawkins, rise?

For what purpose does the lady from New Hanover, Representative Butler, rise?

REPRESENTATIVE BUTLER: I likewise rise to raise a constitutional challenge, sir, under Article 2, Section 18.

SPEAKER HALL: Noted.

For what purpose does the lady from Mecklenburg, Representative Bell, rise?

REPRESENTATIVE BELL: Mr. Speaker, I do too rise to make a protest under the -- pursuant

to Article 2, Section 18, of the North Carolina Constitution.

SPEAKER HALL: The chair presumes all the lights on right now have constitutional arguments they wish to make, and those will be so noted.

Does anybody have any concerns that are not constitutional in nature?

Seeing none, the House will now be in recess until 1:40 p.m.

(Recess.)

STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA)
) C E R T I F I C A T E
COUNTY OF WAKE)

I, DENISE MYERS BYRD, Stenographic Court Reporter, CSR 8340, do hereby certify that the transcription of the recorded House Chamber related to Senate Bill 249, held on October 22, 2025, was taken down by me stenographically to the best of my ability and thereafter transcribed under my supervision; and that the foregoing pages, inclusive, constitute a true and accurate transcription of said recording.

Signed this the 4th day of November 2025.

Denise Myers Byrd, CSR 8340