

**JOINT COMMITTEE OF THE SENATE COMMITTEE ON SENATE AND
GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS AND THE HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HOUSE AND
GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS**

**Minutes of Redistricting Public Hearing
for the Monroe Region
2010-2011 Interim
March 1, 2011**

I. CALL TO ORDER

Senator Kostelka, Co-chairman of the Joint Committee of the Senate Committee on Senate and Governmental Affairs and the House Committee on House and Governmental Affairs, called the meeting to order at 10:23 a.m. in the Monroe Civic Center, Monroe, Louisiana. The House committee secretary called the roll for the Senate committee, which determined a quorum of the Senate. The House committee secretary also called the roll of the House committee, likewise determining that a quorum of House members was present.

II. COMMITTEE ROLL CALL

SENATE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Senator Robert "Bob" Kostelka, Co-chairman
Senator Dan Claitor
Senator Lydia P. Jackson
Senator Robert "Rob" Marionneaux
Senator Edwin R. Murray
Senator Mike Walsworth

SENATE MEMBERS ABSENT:

Senator David Heitmeier, V-Chairman
Senator Jody Amedee
Senator Jack Donahue
Senator Norby Chabert, Interim Member

HOUSE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Representative Rick Gallot, Co-chairman
Representative Mert Smiley, Vice Chairman
Representative Taylor Barras
Representative Greg Cromer
Representative Mike Danahay
Representative Hebert Dixon
Representative Rosalind Jones
Representative Nancy Landry
Representative Tony Ligi
Representative Erich Ponti
Representative Jerome Richard

HOUSE MEMBERS ABSENT:

Representative Jared Brossett
Representative Patrick Connick
Representative Brett Geymann
Representative Cameron Henry
Representative Girod Jackson
Representative Nick Lorusso
Representative Steve Pugh
Representative Jane Smith

Staff Members Present:

Glenn Koepp, Secretary of the Senate
Yolanda Dixon, First Assistant Secretary of the Senate
Alden A. Clement Jr., Senate Attorney
William Blair, Demographer
Beulah Dwyer, Demography staff
Louis Carral, Senate Sergeant at Arms
John Keller, Senate Sergeant at Arms
A. W. Speer, Clerk of the House of Representatives
M. Patricia Lowrey-Dufour, House Senior Legislative Analyst
Mark Mahaffey, House Attorney
Stephanie Little, House Attorney
Shawn O'Brien, Senior House Secretary
Clarence Russ, Chief House Sergeant at Arms
Darrell Augustine, House Sergeant at Arms
Leroy Cavalier, House Sergeant at Arms

III. DISCUSSION**Opening Remarks**

Senator Kostelka and Representative Gallot welcomed attendees to the eighth of nine public hearings on redistricting to be held throughout the state, explaining the purpose of the hearings is to receive information and ideas from the public on redistricting plans.

Senator Kostelka called upon Representative Rosalind Jones, District 17, for introductory remarks, and for the recognition of local officials which included the following: Mayor James Mayo, City of Monroe; Police Jurors, Charles Jackson, Pat Moore, Ollibeth Reddix; Mayor Steve Hunter, City of Richwood, Mayor Brown, City of St. Joseph - Tensas Parish; Mayor Beckwith, City of Tallulah; Mayor Breland, City of Sterlington; Mayor Harry Lewis, City of Rayville; Mr. Griffin, Madison Parish Police Jury President; Ms. Theresa Wyatt and Ms. Hazel Hunter, Lincoln Parish Police Jurors; Councilman Copeland, Grambling City Council; Mr. Willie Hunter, former state representative.

Senator Kostelka noted the presence of a local senate member, Senator Francis Thompson; and the presence of Mr. Jonathan Johnson, representing Congressman Alexander.

Senator Kostelka noted the presence of area House members, Representatives Downs, Katz, Hoffman, Cheney, Ellington, and Little.

Representative Gallot provided additional opening remarks, noting the committees' goal in using public information and testimony received during the redistricting meetings as legislative plans are drawn. Representative Gallot assured attendees their concerns and recommendations do matter.

Senator Kostelka then called for presentations by staff. Ms. Yolanda Dixon, 1st Assistant Secretary of the Senate provided introductory remarks noting those staff members who will make presentations. Ms. Dixon also provided legislative contact information to the public.

Staff Presentations on Current District Maps with 2010 Census Population Figures for Congress, Louisiana House and Senate, Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, Public Service Commission, Supreme Court, and Courts of Appeal Districts

Staff members used PowerPoint slides to illustrate their presentations, beginning with a general explanation of the redistricting process for all the affected election bodies by Ms. Dixon.

Mr. Glenn Koepp, Secretary of the Senate, gave a presentation on the history and use of the term "gerrymandering," noting that racial gerrymandering is the deliberate and arbitrary distortion of district boundaries for the purpose which has been held to be unconstitutional. He opined that gerrymandering must be balanced against other constitutional issues involved in the redistricting process, e.g., race, economic status, political persuasion, and the recognition of communities of interest; that gerrymandering generally has been found acceptable if used with race-neutral districting principles such as compactness, contiguity, respect for political boundaries, and the protection of core districts, and that if a plan appears to be driven by the factor of race, the courts will review whether other overriding issues are controlling compliance with the Voting Rights Act, e.g., a district should contain a percentage of population that provides minority population an opportunity to elect a candidate of its choosing, but that percentage should not be so excessive to create a district "packed."

Mr. Mark Mahaffey, House staff attorney, discussed the process of U.S. Department of Justice preclearance of plans for compliance with the Voting Rights Act of 1965 stating the purpose of pre-clearance is to determine whether there is an effect of denying or abridging the right to vote based on racial or ethnic factors comparing previous plans to proposed plans.

Ms. Stephanie Little, House staff attorney, discussed the Board of Elementary and Secondary Education (BESE) redistricting needs, noting the extent to which the Monroe districts were within or outside of the acceptable plus or minus 5% population range according to the 2010 census. She reported that District No. 5 is 1.9 % under the new ideal baseline, noting the "overall" population deviation for the state's BESE districts is 55%.

Ms. Little discussed the redistricting needs of the Public Service Commission, noting that District No. 5 is 3.7% above the new baseline.

Mr. Mahaffey then addressed Supreme Court and Courts of Appeal districts noting, notwithstanding that the "one man - one vote" principle of voter representation does not apply to judicial districts, the Committee on House and Governmental Affairs has adopted a rule requiring Supreme Court districts, which have not been redrawn since 1997, to be within a plus or minus 5% deviation of the new baseline. The current baseline population for each of the seven Supreme Court districts is 647,624, and at present the districts range from 22.18% above to 32.34% below with five of the seven districts outside the acceptable range of deviation from the new baseline.

Mr. Mahaffey also noted that as to the five circuit courts of appeal, they are further divided into three districts within the circuit, noting that Monroe is in the Second Circuit.

Mr. Koepp then presented information relative to Louisiana Senate districts, explaining various population shifts and why populations are moved from districts that are over the population baseline to districts that are now under the new baseline.

Ms. Lowrey-Dufour, senior legislative analyst, Committee on House and Governmental Affairs, presented an overview of House of Representatives districts, reporting the new ideal House of Representatives district population is 43,174, noting an increase from the previous total of 42,561, further noting some of the districts in the Baton Rouge region are considered as some of the fastest growing and most heavily populated districts in the state with nine being considered within the plus or minus 5% range and several far exceeding the high-end range, the highest being 51.81% above the baseline. She also reported that the most population losses are in the Parishes of Jefferson, Orleans, Plaquemines, and St. Bernard Parishes following Hurricane Katrina.

Ms. Lowrey-Dufour explained that as to congressional districts, although the state population did increase slightly, the increase failed to keep up with population growth elsewhere in the South, with Louisiana dropping from the rank of 19th largest state in 1980 to 25th in 2010, noting that Louisiana is the only southern state losing a congressman in the current cycle. She further reported the population is 755,562 with the loss from seven to six congressional districts.

Public Comment

Senator Kostelka directed those in the audience wishing to speak must fill out a witness card and keep their remarks to three minutes as required by committee rules. Senator Kostelka also noted that any resolutions, letters of support, etc., presented to the committee would be made a part of the record of the hearing today.

Rick Saulsberry, Minority Business Council, 3908 Grammont St., Monroe, LA, requested members consider keeping the I-20 Corridor within one district.

Ora Evans, representing Morehouse Parish, 430 Kammel St., Bastrop, LA, testified, requesting members consider moving the minority district seat to Bastrop, Morehouse Parish.

Dr. Reddix, Ouachita Parish Police Juror, 1201 Powell Ave., Monroe, LA, testified that according to the 2010 census, the African American population remains at 1/3 of the state's population and that members consider the Voting Rights Act when redistricting the senatorial districts.

Sarah W. Allen, 702 S. 15th Street, Monroe, LA, agreed with Dr. Reddix's testimony, and requested the territory of District 34 be maintained within one senatorial district.

Richard Shaw, representing Tiny Mart, 1313 Walton Lane, Monore, LA, testified he believes

a congressional district drawn east to west offers the best opportunity for the representation of those citizens sharing commonalities along the I-20 corridor.

Pastor James B. Johnson, representing New Light Baptist Church, P.O. Box, 28, Monroe, LA, testified relative to the redistricting meeting schedule, opining it is being held at the wrong time for those who are working and unable to attend. He suggested, and requested the Committee consider meeting during the evenings rather than during the morning hours.

Senator Kostelka explained the difficulties in arranging, traveling and scheduling all meeting times during evening hours.

Willie Hunter, former state representative, self-representation, Monroe, LA, testified "retrogression" is not acceptable and requested the territory of Senate District 34 be maintained within one senatorial district.

Leonal Hardman, AFSCME, Richland Parish, Many, LA, requested members consider encompassing the entirety of Richland Parish within Senate District 34.

Lena Allen, representing the "South side", 913 S. 15th St., Monroe, LA, requested members give special attention to the southern portion of District 34, noting the citizens are in great need of assistance.

Caphilia Potter, representing the South Core Outreach, Inc., 5121 Brown, Rd., Monroe, LA, requested Representative Jones to look into the needs of senior citizens, noting problems with the prescription program.

Ms. Holmes, 141 DeSiard St., Ste. 315, Monroe, LA, expressed written concerns, denying the opportunity to speak, about whether redistricting would affect Monroe school districts.

Ellen Gardner, representing SCORE, Inc., 6509 Mosswood Dr. Monroe, LA, testified relative to senior citizen benefits, requesting assistance and representation.

Reverend Duane E. Smith, self-representation, Rayville, LA, testified, requested members consider maintaining the Mississippi Delta area in District 34 within one senatorial district based on their commonalities and economic growth.

Carolyn Hunt, representing the Delta Area, 116 Sparrow Street, Monroe, LA, requested the committees keep District 34 in tact, and increased to include more Mississippi River Delta Parishes, i.e., adding all of Richland Parish, Morehouse Parish, and part of West Carroll Parish, based on their cultural and economic commonalities.

Robert Noel, self-representation, Monroe, LA, testified his current congressional district runs from the Arkansas border down to West Carroll Parish and the district lacks compactness, does not represent "like" cultures, and that none of the current districts fall within the baseline guidelines of congressional redistricting. He requested members consider maintaining the I-20 corridor parishes within the same congressional district.

Maynard Bilton, self-representation, 805 S. 28th St., Monroe, LA, testified in support of maintaining District 34 within the same congressional district.

Dr. Billye Burns, representing DSCC/DPEC Exec. Commission, West Monroe, LA, testified the poor education system of Louisiana requires more representation for the West Monroe area.

James Goods, Jr., representing SCORE, (Senior Citizens Organization) INC., 311 Atkinson Street, Richwood - Monroe, LA, requested legislators consider senior citizens best interests relative to senior citizen programs, i.e., healthcare, medicare, social security, etc.

Annie Martins, self-representation, 3113 Dick Taylor St., Monroe, LA, testified the district is lacking in representation especially as to retirement issues.

Greta Jones, self-representation, 2306 Hawthorne, St., Monroe, LA, testified she has been a citizen of District 16 for forty-eight years and requested members support an increase in the number of river crossings to the area in order to bring citizens together in Northeast Louisiana.

Paul Hurd, Northeast Louisiana Tea Party, Monroe, LA, requested members focus on the Constitution and redistricting principles, i.e., compactness, community-based commonalities, providing regional districts that empower all voters, etc., in considering congressional districts.

Leslie Dandridge, self-representation, 103 Washington St., St. Joseph, LA, testified in support of the "Delta Area," and expressed concerns about the representation of Morehouse, Union, and Tensas Parishes, opining there are too many elected officials representing the area, impeding progress and successful representation. Ms. Dandridge requested members consider expanding District 34 to include the entirety of Richland, Morehouse and Union Parishes.

Edward Beckwith, Jr., representing City of Tallulah, 204 North Cedar Street, Tallulah, LA, testified Senate District 21 is too "wide-spread," suggesting a more compact district is desirable. He further opined there is a need for increasing representation in the Delta Region for reasons of fairness, equal protection, and in order to comply with the Voting Rights Act.

Raymond Lee Cannon, Self-representation, P.O. Box 1108, Tallulah, LA, testified in support of the Delta Region, expressing concern over the scheduling times for these meetings which he opined prevented many citizens from being able to attend and voice their opinions.

Edward Brown, Mayor of the Town of St. Joseph, 125 Plank Road, St. Joseph, LA, testified in support of maintaining District 34's Delta region within one senate district.

Pat Moore, representing Ouachita Parish Police Jury, testified she supports a congressional district that includes the parishes along the I-20 Corridor based on economic and cultural commonalities.

Otis Chisley, representing NAACP, 1615 Jackson St., Monroe, LA, requested members consider fairer representation of the state's African American population when drafting redistricting plans.

Nora G. Brown, self-representation, 2114 Weaver Circle, Monroe, LA, recommended the Committee consider an east - west congressional district that includes parishes located along the I-20 Corridor.

Steve Hunter, Mayor, Town of Richwood, 5130 Brown Rd., Richwood, LA, inquired whether more meetings would be held concerning redistricting prior to taking action. Representative Gallot responded, noting the joint meeting to be held later in Alexandria. Representative Gallot further responded the committees would meet during the special session allowing additional opportunity for public input.

James Griffin, Jr., representing Madison Parish Police Jury, testified in support of a newly created district representing the Bastrop-Monroe area with strong minority representation. Mr. Griffin expressed concerns over the difficulty in attaining proper and fair representation for the smaller, poorer parishes of that area.

Emma F. Brandon, Morehouse District Association, 22 Eden Ave., Bastrop, LA, testified in support of a district comprised of the Bastrop and Monroe area.

Gloria Walker, self-representation/Ouachita Parish, Monroe, LA, testified in opposition to expanding District 34.

Representative Kay Katz, District 16, Monroe, LA, requested members consider maintaining the two congressional districts located in North Louisiana as currently drawn, noting in her opinion, the need for maintaining the current level of congressional representation enjoyed by Louisiana's northern region.

Antoinette Brooks, self-representation, P.O. Box 7591, Monroe, LA, submitted a written comment, requesting the Committees consider the number of minorities in the state and that Louisiana provide a proportionate number of Congressmen in Washington, D.C.

James Bradford, self-representation, 709 Leon Drive, Jonesboro, LA, testified in support of 33% of the state's minority population achieving proportionate representation, requesting more minority districts drawn depicting Louisiana's diversity.

James "Jamie" Mayo, Mayor, City of Monroe, Monroe, welcomed and thanked members of the committees and testified in support of maintaining District 34 in the same congressional district to ensure the continued economic success of the area, requesting members consider proper and fair representation for all citizens.

Mary Ann Moon, President of the West Monroe-Ouachita Chamber of Commerce, testified in support of the Louisiana Delta region and maintaining two congressional districts located in North Louisiana as currently drawn to continue the congressional representation currently enjoyed by both areas. Ms. Moon further opined Louisiana's Delta Region is completely different from any other region of the entire United States, deserving the help and support of the legislative Committees when redistricting.

Antoinette Brooks, self-representation, P.O. Box 7591, Monroe, LA, testified as to disappointment with committee members and their "texting" during the meeting.

Senator Kostelka read written comments submitted by Earnestine Marshall, Dwayne Gibson, Eva Wilson, O.C. Sanders, and Dorothy Ann Scott-Martin, declining the opportunity to testify, expressing their written opinions regarding redistricting.

Having called upon all witnesses wishing to testify, Senator Kostelka and Representative Gallot thanked everyone for attending the eighth of the nine scheduled meetings.

IV. OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business to come before the joint committee.

V. ANNOUNCEMENTS

There were no announcements.

VI. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 12:12 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Robert W. Kostelka, Chairman
Committee on Senate and Governmental Affairs

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Adopted: _____