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Subject: L. de Quay Testimony for February 2, 2022 Redistricting Hearings
Attachments: L de Quay Testimony for Redistricting Hearings on 2 February 2022.docx

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Please find the subject testimony, attached and submitted for the record.

Thank you.

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Hello, my name is Larry de Quay and I'm a resident of Slidell. I gave an oral testimony in Covington, LA on November 30th last year as a representative of the Saint Tammany Parish Democratic Party Executive Committee. I also submitted a supplemental written testimony earlier this year. In my prior testimonies I neglected to state that I served in the U.S. Navy, seven years full time active duty and four years in the reserves. I would have stayed in longer if the time needed for my family and regular job at that time allowed it.

I also attended a past roadshow that was held in New Orleans; not giving my own testimony, but only listening to the oral testimonies of others and taking notes. Three themes from many of these testimonies that kept drawing my attention and causing me anxiety were:

1. How it's really the local issues that we really care about, much more than those at the national level,
2. How there's not really much difference between political parties (at least at the local level) in how well elected leaders represent their constituents and advance their interests, e.g. are they able to 'get things done' or 'keep the promises they made,'
3. How all people, no matter what race or gender, all really want the same things for their lives and the lives of their loved ones.

In addition to the above testimony themes causing me anxiety was the recent decision today, February 1, 2022, where the Louisiana State Legislative Committee tasked with producing new district maps suddenly decided to change the focus exclusively to 'ethics' for the hearings to be held on February 2, 2022. It was not clear to me whether or not the subject of 'ethics,' as prescribed by this committee today, includes the fair representation of black and brown people living in our state. After recalling the words of the U.S. Constitution, "We the People," "to form a more perfect union," and "Promote the general welfare and Secure the blessings of liberty to ourselves and our posterity," it is abundantly clear to me that "ethics" does include the fair representation of all Americans, including African Americans, Hispanic Americans, Asian Americans, and other non-white Americans!

This leads me back to the various testimony themes that I heard in New Orleans at the Redistricting Roadshow earlier this year and that caused me great concern.

While I do agree that the local issues are often the primary concern of people; often across races, cultural and ethnic identities, and lifestyles and when it comes to the more immediate problems that we see each day and how well they're addressed or solved; the issues faced at the state and national levels cannot be ignored. These latter issues often have effects that are more gradual, long-term, and often unnoticed where a lot more time usually passes before we feel their effects directly; so it's easy to say these are not important or are much less important. For example, the Voting Rights Act (VRA) of 1965 seems to be from a long-ago past that doesn't really affect our state very much. However, I submit that without the VRA, we'd now have zero representation for black and brown

Americans, instead of one district where they are represented in accordance with their collective interests. As another example, our state now has a system where any citizen is able to acquire decent-quality health care at prices they can afford; e.g. financial costs to stay healthy or survive don't send them into permanent debt, bankruptcy, or destitute living. This came about because of federal government actions, after steady unrelenting opposition from one major political party.

While I do agree that all of us, no matter our race, cultural identity, or ethnicity, really want the same basic things in life; such as decent health, prosperity, good quality of life, and quality education for ourselves and our children; there's a huge difference in the level of access to these things across different races and ethnic groups. The data from thousands of highly credible studies show much higher incarceration rates, mortality rates, and levels of chronic illnesses among black and brown people as compared to white people. The data also shows huge disparities in personal income, types of jobs, personal wealth, levels of resources for schools, education levels, and access to healthcare services across communities of different races. Redlining that keeps African Americans out of selected neighborhoods still exists, even in the northern states, such as New York where I grew up. These disparities exist even when accounting for education levels; and even among the highly educated. I am an engineer by trade and this has taught me to follow the data wherever it leads, keeping emotion and personal feelings out of data analysis as much as possible. I also believe that most of these data are valid in the same way I believe the Earth is a sphere (with a slight bulge at the equator), the Earth revolves around the Sun, and global warming caused by human activities is a real phenomenon; even though I never traveled into space and never traveled the world sufficiently to observe these things with my own eyes.

While all of us really want the same basic things in our lives, there are huge differences between how we believe these things are attained for every American. Progressives, like me, believe that equality, equity, and justice for all in America requires federal government intervention in the form of strong and effective laws and regulations as well as active enforcement of the same. We believe that the existing inequalities and inequities are not the fault of those suffering from them; at least for the most part; we believe that they are the result of entrenched institutions, cultures, and belief systems (both formal and informal) of those who hold power and wealth. The nearly 100 years it took from the time African Americans had the right to vote on paper in our Constitution to the time they really acquired true voting rights in the late 1960s is more than sufficient evidence to support this belief. Today, we know how the 2020 election went down. We know which elected officials in the U.S. Congress voted to nullify votes cast in key swing states. We know which groups of people had their votes challenged. We are smart enough to know where state legislatures have enacted new laws designed to make it harder to virtually impossible for selected people to cast their votes. We know who these selected people are.

On a personal level, I share a common core value with most progressives and most people in minority groups. That is the absolute need for all Americans to be taught the complete and unvarnished truth about our nation's history; the good, the bad, and the ugly. When I see Article I, Section 2, of our Constitution state "three fifths of all other persons" in language for apportioning representation and taxation of states, we need to know the full reasons behind it; not some glossed-over explanation, such as this was just a needed compromise with legislators of the southern states. When I see Article I, Section 9 talk about migration or importation of human beings prior to 1808 and tax or duty limitations for the same, we need to know how and why this provision is there. The 'Fugitive Slave Law' codified in

Article IV, Section 2 and how it affected African American slaves, basically terrorizing them and causing mass migrations to Canada, needs to be taught. [The parallels and similarities between the treatment of fugitive slaves under this law and that of European Jews seeking asylum to escape Nazi Germany and that of Central Americans legally seeking asylum today in America are striking!] When I attended high school in the 1970s, in Teddy Roosevelt's hometown of Oyster Bay, Long Island; we were taught that the Civil War was mainly a war to settle disagreements about states' rights and self-determination. We were taught that slavery only became a major issue after Abraham Lincoln gave his Emancipation Proclamation, later reinforced by the Gettysburg Address. We were never taught about how the unpaid labor and exploitation of millions sustained the highly profitable economic systems of the southern states since well before our nation was founded. I was also taught that Reconstruction was a horrible time when 'Carpetbaggers' from the northern states cheated and took advantage of white southerners; no mention of the rein of terror against African American communities and Ulysses S. Grant sending federal troops into the southern states to protect these people and enforce the newly ratified Constitutional amendments in state elections and legislative processes. [I was also taught the oversimplified and misleading narrative that Reconstruction was a classic case lesson in federal government overreach that failed.] About six years ago, I was talking with a group of Republican friends when one of them complained about how high the costs were for the in-progress renovation of the U.S. Capitol as compared to the costs to build the Capitol from the ground up, even after accounting for inflation. When I mentioned that slave labor was used to build this building, it was amazing how fast our conversation pivoted to another totally unrelated subject.

Thank you for reading and considering my testimony.