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Sent: Saturday, January 1, 2022 3:02 PM
To: House & Governmental Affairs
Cc: Peggy Abadie
Subject: Redistricting in Louisiana - 2020 Census

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Dear Sirs and Madams,

I again find myself writing a note to those who are well educated and fully experienced in matters of public policy and their impacts on the daily lives of the citizenry of this state. The point of today's note is not to share information with you that you do not already know. Rather it is to share with you that many are well aware of what you already know and are hopeful that your knowledge and experience will lead to wise and righteous action on your part.

The very fact that we are looking at the recent census data and discussing making changes to our Congressional Districts based on the numbers is cause for concern. It is not hard to see that no change is truly warranted. It seems to me that although the population of Louisiana has, according to 2020 Census data, increased only 2.74%, that we could all come together in a conversation among reasonable people and say that 2.74% is below what warrants reapportionment.

Even if we look at the data district by district, it is not likely that reasonable people would say a major reapportionment should be considered. Following previous Census Data, Louisiana's six Congressional Districts were redrawn to adjust for Louisiana's decreased population growth in relation to the United States as a whole, and to comply with the Justice Department's requirement for minority representation in Congress. The current boundaries were approved by the U.S. Justice Department as complying with voter representation guidelines. Since the 2020 Census data reveals Louisiana's population increased only 2.74% in the past 10 years, only minimal changes are even worth discussing.

The rules recommend the boundaries be redrawn **only when the Census reveals a particular District experienced a significant increase or decrease in population.** The rules define "significant" as a change of greater than 5%. The 2020 Census data reveals the change in population of Louisiana's Congressional Districts as follows:

1st District population increased by 7.6% (Currently Within Ideal Range)

2nd District population increased by 2.6% (Currently Within Ideal Range)

3rd District population increased by 4.0% (Currently Within Ideal Range)

4th District population decreased by 3.6% (-6.2% Smaller than Ideal)

5th District population decreased by 2.2% (Currently Within Ideal Range)

6th District population increased by 8.1% (+5.2% Larger than Ideal)

As you can see, the majority of Louisiana's Congressional Districts are well within the range where no change in boundaries is warranted. While the 1st District experienced more than a 5% change in population, (largely from residents of St. Bernard Parish moving back after Hurricane Katrina) it is currently within the ideal population range of a Louisiana Congressional District. There are only two Districts which are slightly outside of the ideal population range of a Louisiana Congressional District; District 4 and District 6. Even there, the percentage outside range is so slight that very small adjustments are at risk of moving in the wrong direction.

It is even more important to remind ourselves that the current Congressional District boundaries are based on a commonality of interests in economy and needs of the respective districts. The northern part of Louisiana is largely rural, agricultural and focused on Christian values. The coastal area of the state is concerned about coastal restoration and largely employed in the oil and seafood industries. The urban districts are distinctly different in needs and goals from adjacent districts. In short, each district has unique needs, and deserves representation in Congress that makes their unique needs a priority.

In both an Associated Press (AP) Poll and a poll conducted by RepresentUS gerrymandering is alarming to the citizens of the state. 67% and 89% respectively affirmed that using reapportionment efforts to benefit one group over another is a "major problem."

Despite the obvious will of the people, a coalition of groups has partnered together in an attempt to force widespread racial gerrymandering. We as reasonable people cannot allow ourselves to look past the truth represented in the numbers and make unwise decisions based on the special interest of a few loud voices. We need to be found strong and courageous to choose what is right even if it is not beneficial to us. I urge all of you to take the time to look at all of the information for yourselves and not be swayed by less than truth and reason.

A main argument of this coalition is that black voting strength has been diluted. This argument is not valid when you consider the data from the Cook Partisan Voting Index (CPVI) which shows the current Congressional Districts are extremely balanced:

1st District (+22 Rep)

2nd District (+25 Dem)

3rd District (+21 Rep)

4th District (+14 Rep)

5th District (+17 Rep)

6th District (+18 Rep)

As you can see, in addition to being largely equal in population, all of the current districts are also fairly politically balanced as the percentage of voters in the majority party in the 2nd District is within 4 percentage points of both the 1st and 3rd Districts and well above that of the remaining districts.

In short, **I recommend the Louisiana Congressional Districts remain largely intact.** It is most representative of the people's needs, it is fair to all voting groups, it is the will of the people, and it follows the law.

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