

tests, interpretation clauses, and residency requirements cloaked in race-neutral language, Mississippi's political architects built a structure of exclusion that endured for three-quarters of a century. By 1964, only 6.7% of eligible Black Mississippians were registered to vote. That is the legacy we carry. That is the standard by which we now judge the actions of this administration.

The Voting Rights Act of 1965 was not a gift from the government — it was a hard-won victory extracted from the blood, sacrifice, and organizing genius of Mississippi's own people. Its preclearance requirement, gutted by the Supreme Court's 2013 decision in *Shelby County v. Holder*, once required this state to justify its election law changes before they could cause harm. That protection is gone. The burden now falls on voters and civil rights organizations to challenge discriminatory maps after the damage is already done. We will not be silent while that burden is imposed.

A special session called outside the normal legislative calendar, without adequate public notice, transparent process, or community input, raises immediate and serious concerns. We are deeply troubled by the following:

- **Speed as a weapon:** A rushed redistricting process is a deliberate process. Compressing public deliberation prevents meaningful participation from the Black communities most likely to be harmed by diluted maps.
- **Racial impact is not incidental — it is the design:** Any redrawing of congressional, legislative, and judicial maps in Mississippi cannot be separated from its racial impact. Black Mississippians constitute approximately 38% of the state's population. Diluting that representation across multiple branches of government compounds harm generationally.
- **Judicial maps are not immune:** Despite Mississippi's own Supreme Court ruling, access to impartial courts and a representative judiciary is a cornerstone of equal justice.

We call upon both you and Lieutenant Governor Hosemann to take the following actions:

- **Abandon the special session for redistricting.** There is no urgent, legitimate, or legally compelling basis to circumvent the normal legislative and redistricting process and compress public deliberation on maps.
- **If redistricting proceeds, which it should not, commit to a fully transparent and community-centered process.** This must include: no fewer than thirty days of public notice before any vote; public hearings in each congressional district, with evening and weekend options to ensure working-class participation; access to all draft maps at least fourteen days before final consideration; independent demographic and racial impact

analysis made publicly available; and meaningful participation from communities of color, not performative consultation.

- **Commit publicly that no redistricting plan will be adopted that dilutes the voting power of Black Mississippians or any other minority community** in violation of the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment, the remaining protections of the Voting Rights Act, the Mississippi Constitution, or any other protection.

We write to you not only as advocates but also as people who have watched this state previously use the machinery of government to silence its most vulnerable citizens. We are not without recourse. The undersigned organizations reserve all rights to pursue legal action, federal and state administrative complaints, legislative accountability measures, and public mobilization in response to any redistricting plan that diminishes the voting power of Black Mississippians or any other protected community.

Mississippi's future is not served by maps drawn to silence its people. We urge you, in the strongest possible terms, to choose transparency, fairness, and the full enfranchisement of every Mississippian over political expediency.

History is watching. So are we.

Respectfully and resolutely submitted,

Members of the MS Voting Rights Act Rapid Response Coalition

cc:

The Honorable Delbert Hosemann

Lieutenant Governor, State of Mississippi