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PRESS STATEMENT

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Chair Coleman on U.S. Supreme Court decision on Texas Redistricting Case

AUSTIN – In a 5-4 decision, the United States Supreme Court today found that the racially gerrymandered Texas redistricting maps were constitutional, but that Texas House District 90 which was redrawn by the Texas Legislature in 2013 was unconstitutional. Chairman of the House Committee on County Affairs Garnet Coleman (D-Houston) released the following statement:

"I am disappointed that the five conservatives on the Supreme Court ignored the strong dissent of Justice Sotomayor, the unanimous finding of the bipartisan three judge panel, and the testimony of Texans of color from across the state. Their ruling is a sad end to a long battle.

[I sent a letter to the U.S. Department of Justice in April of 2011](#) asking them not to preclear the maps drawn during the 2011 legislative session. I also produced maps that appropriately represented and protected communities of color. In 2012, I testified in front of the D.C. District Court as part of the pre-clearance hearing on how the maps drawn by the Texas Legislature intentionally discriminated against communities of color.

*The Supreme Court of the United States remanded a case dealing with the 2011 maps back to a three-judge panel in a Texas District Court in 2012. The three-judge panel in a Texas District Court produced interim maps in 2012 based on the racially gerrymandered maps because the D.C. District Court unanimously ruled—in part because of my testimony—that the 2011 maps did not meet pre-clearance (*Texas v. United States*, 887 F. Supp. 2d 133, 245-46 (2012)).*

Regrettably the interim maps were eventually adopted during the 2013 legislative session largely unchanged. Even worse, in June of 2013 the Supreme

Court gutted the Voting Rights Act (VRA) by removing pre-clearance under Title V of the VRA. Effectively, the maps adopted by the Texas Legislature in 2013 would go into effect immediately instead of having to be pre-cleared by the Justice Department.

I later testified before a different three-judge panel in San Antonio in 2014 about the discriminatory nature of the adopted interim maps, and presented maps that I proposed to the legislature to demonstrate that maps could be drawn to constitutionally represent voters of color. After many years, the three-judge panel in San Antonio finally concluded that the Texas Congressional and House District maps unconstitutionally suppressed the voting rights of people of color.

Sadly, the majority of Justices on the Supreme Court of the United States, in the words of Justice Sotomayor, 'ignor[ed] the clear language and unambiguous factual findings of the order [from the three-judge panel]', and found that the maps for the most part are constitutional.

Regardless of today's disappointing outcome, Texas has consistently acted in violation of the Voting Rights Act and suppressed the rights of Texans of color. Texas deserves to be bailed back into pre-clearance under the Voting Rights Act because of the numerous instances of voting rights violations. It is clear that we cannot rely on the Courts to save us. In the words of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., 'the arc of the moral universe is long, but bends towards justice.' This year's election and every future election is vitally important as we saw today. We need to elect people who will fight for every person's right to vote."

Representative Coleman is available for comment.

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