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New York Advocates Back Redistricting Changes to Prevent Dilution of Black and Brown Voting Strength

Black and Brown Political Power Is Not a Bargaining Chip

(New York, NY) – The Supreme Court’s decision in *Louisiana v. Callais* is a direct and devastating strike against the structural protections that communities of color have relied on in making our democracy a reality. For historically underrepresented communities, who have spent generations fighting for a real say in the decisions that shape their lives, this ruling does not exist in a vacuum. It arrives at a moment of coordinated, well-funded, and relentless effort to reverse the democratic gains BIPOC communities have won after decades of struggle.

Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act (“VRA”) gave communities of color a legal tool to challenge maps and voting practices that denied them fair representation. That protection mattered because political representation determines who gets heard on decisions about education, housing, healthcare, public safety, economic opportunities, and the future of their neighborhoods. In its *Callais* decision, the Supreme Court replaced Section 2 of the VRA’s results-based standard with an intent requirement, making it near impossible to challenge discriminatory maps.

Its impact are detrimental to the health of our democracy. Within days of the decision, Tennessee lawmakers moved to dismantle a majority-Black congressional district and divide Black voters across white-majority districts, diluting their collective power and eliminating the prospect of Black representation in that seat. New York should view that as a preview, not an anomaly.

In response, the New York BIPOC Democracy Table strongly supports the following demands:

1. We strongly support mid-decade redistricting that reflects the urgency of this moment.

2. We strongly support expanding the Independent Redistricting Commission from ten to eleven commissioners. An odd-numbered commission is a structural fix that ensures the body can act and that deadlock cannot be weaponized to deny communities fair representation.

The New York State Legislature has an urgent responsibility to protect their constituents from political disenfranchisement. Black and Brown political power cannot become the cost of fixing New York's redistricting process. Our communities will not accept maps that weaken our ability to elect candidates of our choice. We will not accept proposals that fracture communities of interest or dilute the voting strength of communities of color. And we will not accept efforts to wrap those outcomes in the language of reform.

"What's happening in Tennessee is not a distant warning — it's a roadmap," said **Isaiah Fenichel, Lead Campaign Coordinator, Citizen Action of New York**. Nassau County's Legislature handed communities of color four districts out of nineteen in 2023. They deliberately cracked Elmont, Freeport, and Uniondale to make sure those communities couldn't elect anyone accountable to them. It took a lawsuit and two years to get a fair map. That was with federal protections in place. The Supreme Court just gutted one of them. New York cannot afford to treat redistricting as a procedural question right now. We know exactly what happens when Black and Brown communities lose that fight."

"Black New Yorkers have been fighting for fair representation since before the Voting Rights Act existed," said **Tuulikki Robertson, Executive Director, The Black Institute**. "We know what it costs when our communities are carved up, packed in, or pushed out of the political process. The Callais decision did not create this threat — it accelerated it. The Black Institute will not allow New York's redistricting process to become another instrument for dismantling Black political power. Reform and representation are not in conflict. Anyone who says otherwise is not talking about reform."

The New York BIPOC Democracy Table is a statewide coalition of Black, Indigenous, Latino, and Asian-led organizations working to advance an inclusive, multiracial democracy.

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