

Supreme Court reviewing Pa. redistricting case

WASHINGTON (AP) - The Supreme Court used Pennsylvania's congressional map to consider whether the redrawing of election districts has become too political - a case that could affect voters nationwide.

At issue is a 19-district map that was drawn last year by the Republican-controlled state Legislature and forced three Democratic lawmakers out of office. The high court debated whether drawing districts to favor one party over another can be constitutional or a political matter best left for states.

A handful of other states, including Texas and Florida, also are grappling with the fairness of such a congressional gerrymandering system.

"How unfair is unfair?" asked Justice Antonin Scalia.

"If a party is getting two-thirds of the seats with less than half of the vote, I submit that's unfair," answered Paul M. Smith, who argued the case on behalf of a group of Democrats.

Republicans hold 12 of Pennsylvania's 19 congressional seats, but Democrats have a 445,000 statewide

voter edge over the GOP. Previously, the Republicans had 11 seats to the Democrats' 10. Because of the state's slower-than-average population growth, Pennsylvania lost two of its 21 seats in Congress after the 2000 census.

The Supreme Court has made it almost impossible to win a claim that partisan gerrymandering is unconstitutional, although justices left the door open to such claims in a splintered 1986 ruling.

The case is important because of the high stakes involved in boundary-drawing

for political parties. States must redraw boundaries after every census to reflect population shifts, and legislatures and political parties have begun using sophisticated computer analysis to ferret out the best places to pick up more seats.

If the court makes it easier to challenge maps, some states could be forced to redraw their districts, which could threaten Republican control of Congress.

The case "puts the Supreme Court in a terrible bind," said Jonathan Turley, a constitution law professor

at George Washington University. "The court has historically avoided political questions, and respected the public to render its own judgment on the propriety of political maneuvers or tactics."

Pennsylvania Deputy Attorney General J. Bart DeLone, defending the Republican map, shrugged off whether politics played a part in drawing the lines.

"There's nothing wrong with it," DeLone told the court. "I think you can assume there was a political motivation. And frankly, we don't have a problem with

that. The question is whether or not (Democrats) have been shut out of the process."

Justice John Paul Stevens criticized Republicans for failing to justify the political gerrymandering which the Democrats charge violates the "one-person, one-vote" requirement protected in the Constitution.

"When you have a very strangely shaped district, the burden is on you to point out one neutral justification for it," Steven said. "But you can't point to anything."

The case is *Vieth v. Jubelirer*, 02-1580.

Expert: Plan harms political power of Texas minorities

AUSTIN, Texas (AP) - The state's GOP-proposed Congressional redistricting map would divide a Black community in the Dallas-Fort Worth area to such an extent those voters could not elect their candidate of choice, a history professor testified in

federal court. Democratic U.S. Reps. Chet Edwards of Waco and Max Sandlin of Marshall also testified Friday that minority communities in their districts also would be split up under the plan approved by the Republican-dominated Legisla-

ture in October. In the Dallas-Fort Worth area, about 148,000 Blacks now represented by Democratic U.S. Rep. Martin Frost would be put in five separate districts under the plan, said Allan Lichtman, an American University history pro-

posed map. The Black population in that district is the state's third largest.

"They have been put in a district where they have no realistic prospects of electing the candidate of their choice," Lichtman testified Thursday before a federal three-judge panel hearing lawsuits that challenge the redistricting map.

Plaintiffs in the case argue that the map's dilution of minority voting power vio-

lates the federal Voting Rights Act, rendering the GOP plan to put more Republicans in Congress illegally.

Andy Taylor, an attorney for the state, contended that a new district in South Texas would replace Frost's district as a majority minority district in which the minority population could elect a candidate of choice.

Lichtman said that district, which stretches from the Mexico border north to Aus-

tin, could be tough for a Hispanic to win.

Legislators approved the redistricting map during a special session after partisan fighting all year and two boycotts in which Democrats fled the state.

In addition to the federal court hearing the lawsuits, the U.S. Justice Department is reviewing whether the map violates the Voting Rights Act. If the map stands, it would be used in the state primary March 9.

Thurmond

(Continued from Page 1) to me. I would not have done anything to hurt him," she said.

Williams, a 78-year-old retiree living in Los Angeles, has said Thurmond fathered her when he was 22 and living in his parents' home. Her mother, Carrie Butler, 16 at the time, worked as a maid in the Thurmond home.

If Williams had come forward earlier, she believes it could have destroyed Thurmond's career. In seven decades of politics, the former senator gained fame and infamy as an arch-segregationist but later came to support a holiday for slain civil rights leader Martin Luther King.

"I think it might have hurt him and I think that would totally have changed the history," she said.

Williams said she didn't talk politics much with her father, but when she was in college she did ask him why he was a segregationist.

"Well, that's the way things always have been," Williams recalled Thurmond as saying.

"And I said, 'But you know, you're in a position maybe you could do something,'" Williams said. "And he said he was doing as much as he could at that time."

Williams rejected criticism that if she had spoken out sooner, it might have helped hasten civil rights legislation. "I wanted to do what I wanted to do when I was ready," she said.

Thurmond's family on

Monday acknowledged Williams' claim, and the former senator's oldest son, U.S. Attorney Strom Thurmond Jr., said he would like to meet his half-sister and get to know her.

Williams said she appreciated the family's kindness and that no one ever demanded she stay silent.

"It wasn't to my advantage to talk about anything that he had done. We didn't have any agreement about not talking about it, we just didn't talk about it — either one of us," she said.

The former senator apparently never disputed Williams was his daughter, first meeting her in his Edgefield office when she was 16.

"Well, you look like one of my sisters," Williams recalled Thurmond saying. "You've got those cheekbones like our family."

"So that was like almost an admission," Williams said.

After Thurmond died in June at 100, Williams said she began to think about ending "all the speculation and questions" about the long-rumored relationship.

Harlem

(Continued from Page 4)

a good look at the robber, who she said was about 6 feet tall, 165 pounds to 175 pounds, with a caramel-colored complexion. According to Higdon, there have been two shoplifting incidents at Duane Reade, at 279 West 125th Street. One occurred in late November and early December. In the November incident, four men entered the pharmacy and began placing merchandise in their clothing. When a security guard intervened, a fight broke out. In both incidents, the perpetrators were able to get away.

Mamadou Chinyelu writes for the Amsterdam News.



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