GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA

2021 LEGISLATIVE SESSION, HOUSE FLOOR

VOTE ON HOUSE BILL 976

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SPEAKER MOORE: Let's move to House Bill 976. The clerk will read.

THE CLERK: Representative Destin Hall, House Bill 976, a bill to be entitled An Act to Realign North Carolina House of Representative Districts Following the Return of the 2020 Federal Decennial Census, General Assembly of North Carolina enacts.

SPEAKER MOORE: The gentleman from Caldwell, Representative Hall, is recognized to debate the bill.

REPRESENTATIVE HALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Members, we've embarked on the most transparent redistricting process in North Carolina history. Every part of this map-making process was done in public and was recorded and archived for anyone who would like to go see how the maps were drawn.

Not only was it the most transparent process in the history of this state, but for the first time in North Carolina history, the legislature adopted a process on our own
volition that did not include the use of political data, the first time that has ever happened on our own volition.

Further, we received a great amount of public input on the maps which has resulted in a North Carolina House map that reflects weeks of public comment, both in person and online.

The committee has been open since October 6th, Monday through Friday, from 9:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. Despite that, I was disappointed to see very few of my Democratic colleagues participate the way that they did in 2019. For those of you who were here, you'll remember that in many of the groupings that we drew, you had Democrats and Republicans standing there at the computer screen drawing. The room remained open for weeks this time around.

I was also disappointed that not a single Democratic member put forth a map to be considered by the public, despite the fact that some of our colleagues in the -- some of the Senate Democrats putting forth several proposals for public comment in their chamber.

Upon further reflection of the entire redistricting process, the rural areas in
North Carolina have lost an immense amount of population in the last decade which has resulted in wholesale change to some districts in some areas, but many of the groupings didn't change or they remain similar to the previous decade. And given that there was so much litigation with respect to those maps, I took advantage of many of the court cases that we had over the course of the decade that had previously dictated to the General Assembly how to draw these maps. That may not be -- it's not applicable in all cases, however, but where applicable, I made every effort to keep current districts intact, and I will, of course, encourage a negative vote on any amendment that doesn't seek to do that.

I am going to begin my presentation of the proposed map by going through the criteria that the House Redistricting Committee adopted and how the proposed map that you see before you complies with that criteria.

The first criteria was keeping counties whole. Within this map, where counties could be kept whole, they are. We kept every county whole that we could, for example, Chatham county, Lee county, and Polk county.
We tried not to split VTDs. In 2011, when this process was performed by a consultant, and again, not out in the open, you saw hundreds of VTD splits across this map. In my proposal, there are only seven total VTD splits across the entire state of North Carolina. Again, formerly there were hundreds. There are seven total VTD splits in this map.

We honored municipal boundaries. I made every effort to keep municipalities whole throughout the draw. The report that you'll see says that there are 82 municipality splits, but the bulk of the splits that you see in the report either have no population or extraordinarily small populations.

Contiguity, every district in this map, of course, is contiguous.

We considered incumbency, and in this map, the bear minimum of members were double-bunked.

We looked at compactness. Despite not being drawn by a computer algorithm, this map contains the compactness of the current map that we are currently sitting here under today, despite not having that advantage of a computer.
algorithm and despite essentially drawing the thing by hand, so to speak, in that committee room, live, where everyone could see.

We did not consider race, and I did not consider race in drawing -- I did not consider racial data in drawing this map.

We did not consider political data, and I did not consider political data in drawing this map.

The other important thing to remember in this map is the way that this thing used to be done is through both parties, some consultant would be hired on the outside and they would draw a map and they'd bring it in and that would be voted on, but this time around, we undertook a different process, a transparent process, and that process included a room being open and any member who wanted to going and drawing districts within that room, and that's what I did. I went in there with -- armed with essentially just the criteria that we had and tried to draw districts as best I could that fit that criteria.

And given that I didn't have a computer-based algorithm or consultants using that algorithm, the final product that you see
before you today has resulted in what I believe to be an impressive map that splits very few precincts, keeps municipalities whole, and creates compact districts.

Members, I hope that you will support this map, and I hope that you will all acknowledge the truly historic nature of the process that we have seen this time around, the unprecedented transparency, and the unprecedented decision to not use political data in drawing these maps, and I hope you will vote yes on this map.

SPEAKER MOORE: For what purpose does the gentleman from Chatham, Representative Reives, rise?

REPRESENTATIVE REIVES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Ask to debate the bill.

SPEAKER MOORE: The gentleman has the floor.

REPRESENTATIVE REIVES: Thank you. And I appreciate the work that's gone in. Obviously, any time we have to create a bill such as this, I would probably have a little bit of pushback in the sense that one of the things in not a talent I would say that I have, but one
of the abilities that I've been able to hold
onto since I've gotten here is I've gotten an
uncanny ability to count. And because of that
ability to count, I know there are certain
realities about the drawing of maps and the
presenting of maps and things of that sort.

I know that a lot of my colleagues
recognize the reality of putting forth 51 maps
and where that might go because, obviously, we
can't pass a set of maps by ourselves. So I
would just say to the chairman's comments, it
was not a lack of interest, at all, that nobody
was drawing maps but trying to be realistic
about the process and trying to be efficient
about a process to what we've done.

Secondly, for those who saw -- I mean,
I know at least I and a couple others did put
maps into certain areas. There are certain
groupings that are going to be what they are
going to be. There are certain groupings that
there are some discussions about and decisions
to be made, and so that would take me to where
we are on this bill.

And I will be asking that you consider
voting no on this for several reasons. And
again, this is not about people, personalities, districts or anything of that sort, but this has been something that I've discussed since we've gotten here when it comes down to redistricting. I do wish we can move closer and closer to an impartial process, closer and closer to a situation where none of us are doing anything that influences these maps or anything of that sort, but that's not where we are right now.

So I would go with the criteria that we have. Even though we've split fewer municipalities than 2011, we still could have split fewer municipalities than we did, and I've drawn some amendments and drawn some maps that show those opportunities. And even though we split fewer VTDs this time than 2011, we could have split even fewer VTDs according to what we wanted to do.

We definitely had an opportunity to draw more compact districts. For those of you who were on the redistricting committee or kept up with the meeting last night, you saw those opportunities. There were plenty of places where the districts could be even more compact than what is being presented to us today, and if
compactness is something that we care about, we have that opportunity to be more compact.

We talked a lot last night about trying to make as few changes as possible, and that really isn't the goal of the criteria we set. The goal of the criteria we set was to try to draw a map that fit the criteria. And because, if you remember from the redraws that we've had to do, those have been court-ordered redraws, but they're still using maps that at some point in time by some court were deemed to be bad maps, and so then we're using the skeletons of those maps to create new.

And really, a lot of these times what we needed to do is to start from scratch, create new districts out of these new groupings. We've grown exponentially since 2010 census and the 2011 maps, and this was an opportunity to show that we've had that growth.

You look at counties like Pitt, Buncombe, Cumberland. Again, if we're saying we're just going to make a few changes, those were areas we made a lot of changes. Buncombe looks nothing like it looked even in the last redraw. Why that is, I can't tell you. I don't
know. But again, we had opportunities not to do it in that way because one of the things we're going to need to do when these maps are done, we can vote on any bill and we can pass any bill, and, frankly, we understand, as the majority caucus, you can pass any bill you want at any point in time, but ultimately, with something this expansive, with this kind of effect, this is the next ten years of this state that we're dealing with. Ultimately, we should want, desire, seek the approval of the people that we serve, not in the sense of making sure that their party gets to stay in any particular area, but in the sense of them feeling like that they had a fair shot, good maps, good representation all around.

Because this isn't just about who stays in power over the next ten years. This is about so many issues that touch so many of us. This is about the segregation of our society at this point. The farther we move districts into these type of hobbles and the more that we set up our walls and the more that we set up in our particular areas, the more we're separating each other out, that doesn't do, really.
What you actually want is to try to figure out ways, which maps give you a unique opportunity to do it, to try to get more people that have local commonalities but maybe don't spend the time together and maybe aren't around each other for different issues.

I don't think we are served better when politics gets infused in every moment of our life. And we don't want people thinking that these maps bake that in, so that's another missed opportunity that we have.

We've already had people -- and even though we didn't use any partisan data looking at this map, obviously, groups have looked at this, they've looked at the map that we're presenting, and we're already getting told from people throughout the country that, again, ranking us compared to other states -- and there are other red states, there are other blue states, there are other purple states. So this isn't about picking on any particular group or anything of that sort, but ranking us even to similarly situated states that we seem to be going back down the path of partisan gerrymandering. So when we see that and we have
that analysis, we've got an opportunity to correct it, so let's correct it.

We have a fundamental difference in our belief in how we're interpreting what the law says we should be doing right now, and there is some up in the air, but one of the things that we feel is clear, for instance, looking at the Stephenson decision, is how we handle race. I do not believe, and I think a lot of people who -- or at least on this side of the aisle don't believe that any of the decisions said that you can't contemplate race. Because the reality is at this point in time and in this stage in our history, race is there. That doesn't mean I'm racist, you're racist, voters are racist, but it means that race is a factor that we've got to consider in order to make more fair districts.

So if we don't look at race at all, then the risk we run is falling afoul of the Stephenson decision where the Stephenson decision says that we've got to make districts that comply with the Voting Rights Act. By not taking race into account at all, then how do we know we've complied? We're only going to know
whether we complied if there's litigation. I'd rather we know without litigation to know that we've had some sort of compliance with the Voting Rights Act because, again, that is a federal mandate.

So again, to me, these can't be about partisanism, I don't think I've ever talked about these being about partisanism, and we can go back through history and who's done what and all that type of thing. Every single day we wake up, we've got a chance to be a new us. Every single day we walk into this chamber, we've got a chance to be something different than what we were before.

I just don't care about the history in that sense because history can be used to excuse any bad act we want to justify, but history can also be used to teach us how to be better, and that is the way to use history just like we're talking about with race.

The courts don't want us using race impermissibly. We don't want to use our history in the wrong way. Don't use our history to figure out ways to get around things. And I'm not saying we have in this case, but what I'm
saying is use this history and use this time to show that the most important aspect of bringing our communities back together, to getting people to have faith in their governments again, are the people in this chamber and that chamber over there. And it's just that simple.

And if we do things that continue to encourage separating into camps, then that's how our communities will go. If we do things like we've done some already this session and like we can still continue to do this session and we can continue to do in the short session, if we do things to show people that none of these letters matter, none of these background issues matter, then we've got an opportunity to help move our communities forward. And if we move our communities forward, we move our state forward. If we move our state forward, then we start moving other states forward.

But a lot of this stuff that a lot of us complain about -- and I'm telling you I hear from my side, your side, everybody. There's parts of this political process we're just sick of, and maps are a way that we encourage a lot of the badness in our political process.
So I'm asking that you vote no just to attempt to be corrective. This is not casting aspersions. I cannot imagine being in Chairman Hall's position where last year he was, like me, getting to kind of sit back and not even have to pay attention to this process and then all of a sudden you're dead in the middle and have to draw it and then he's going to hear somebody like me get up and say that something he spent four weeks on that I'm not happy with. But I'm comfortable, as much as I appreciate chairman Hall, if the roles were reversed, he would feel very comfortable telling me that my four weeks of work he wasn't happy with.

But that's how we get better, and I know that he takes it in that sense. All I'm trying to do is to get us better. And these maps are a big deal to people outside of this chamber, big deal. And when we were listening, when we were going around and we were listening at these tours, this wasn't just Democrats talking, it's Republicans talking too. They're just tired. They don't want us governing from the edges. They want us governing from a different place in a different way, and a way to
do this starts with these maps.

So I ask that you consider voting no on this, let's try to keep tweaking this until we get this in a better place and go forward with that, and thank you.

SPEAKER MOORE: For what purpose does the lady from Buncombe, Representative Fisher, rise?

REPRESENTATIVE FISHER: To debate the bill, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER MOORE: The lady has the floor.

REPRESENTATIVE FISHER: Thank you.

Colleagues, I rise to debate the bill because it appears that the maps specifically for Buncombe are similar to the illegal maps that were from the last decade of our history here. And they differ significantly from the current maps of Buncombe -- the current map of Buncombe, and the numbering of the districts, even, it's down to that where the numbers have changed.

This map has implications not only for the House, but because of Buncombe county's special circumstance of having had districts legislated for them in a past session, it has
the further effect of double-bunking and complicating the county commission districting process.

We had -- at least I attended two public hearings, one before the drawing of the maps and one after, and it was interesting to me to note that at the first public hearing, people asked consistently that there be another hearing once the maps were drawn. And I know that it was made to appear that we had a public hearing after the maps were drawn, but they were commenting on the map that is no longer in front of us.

People are not stupid. They know when they're being included and they know when they're not. So in a sense, we have ignored our constituents again. And the bottom line is I am reminded every single day that our constituents believe that politicians have no business drawing political lines and that they prefer -- our constituents prefer, and this is bipartisan. We proved that by introducing our own bill in the House a few sessions ago where it got bipartisan support. It failed to go further, but we have proof that they prefer a
nonpartisan redistricting commission approach to this process.

So short of that, I will be a no vote on HB 976, and I encourage us to go back to the drawing board, think about what it might look like if our constituents had a real role to play in this instead of being cajoled and coddled into thinking that, yes, they have a big part to play in public hearings and before, during and after drawing. It's not true, and I am looking for a truer process. So I'll be a no vote. Thank you.

SPEAKER MOORE: For what purpose does the lady from Guilford, Representative Harrison, rise?

REPRESENTATIVE HARRISON: To debate the bill.

SPEAKER MOORE: The lady has the floor.

REPRESENTATIVE HARRISON: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Ladies and gentlemen of the House, I'll echo Representative Reives' thanks to Chair Hall and others who have put so much time in this, and especially the staff who put so much time into this because it has been an enormous amount
of time investment.

So early on, we heard a lot of interest in the public -- from the public about how the public process would play out. We heard that on the very first day when we had public comments, and we received a letter -- all the committee members received a letter requesting a fairer and more transparent public process. Several of us on the committee offered that fairer and more transparent process, but that did not go anywhere. And some of the points that were made were making sure -- we were facing a COVID situation, that there was accessibility for those virtually for those who had difficulty traveling; better audio and visual quality, those were not available; they were not livestreamed. There were other points about making sure that any data that was used in drawing the maps was disclosed and a process for that and any third parties involved in the redistricting. We thought we had a good process, and hopefully at some point we'll adopt this for future map drawing, but those were not followed.

Instead, we had, if I recall correctly,
13 public hearings prior to map drawing and then four post map drawing. If y'all remember, those of you who were here in 2011, there were over 60 scattered across the state with significant opportunity for folks to participate virtually and from remote locations which was really important as we faced the COVID.

But the feedback I got -- now, I appreciate that Chair Hall continues to say that this is the most transparent process ever, but the bar is really, really low. And the feedback we kept getting from the public was that it was difficult to find the information they needed on the website, they couldn't navigate it, they felt like we were giving last minute notice, the maps went out on Friday and the public hearing was on Monday and Tuesday and folks hadn't really had a chance to analyze it. And I don't believe the maps were ever interactive on the legislative -- so you couldn't go in and figure out your precinct or your community of interest.

And also, just that it was very difficult to watch the map drawing, that the audio wasn't great, that the video wasn't great either. So I think there's a way -- and I don't
mean this necessarily as a huge criticism. I just think if we can think about this going forward that there could have been a better way to actually -- for the public to understand what was going on because they didn't feel like they did. And I was just -- I didn't read all 4,000 comments that had been filed. I've been trying to get through and get a sense of what the biggest complaints were, but that was probably the biggest complaint was the public participation.

And the second biggest complaint was that they didn't think the maps were fair at all, and I heard that a ton and repeated references to the Princeton Gerrymandering Project giving our map an F and the Senate and the congressional maps, which I guess we'll be voting on tomorrow, Fs.

And I do agree with the points that have been made prior to me, that there's a better way to do this, a fairer way to do this in a way that reflects our values and our priorities. It was never clear to me with the criteria, and we asked about this repeatedly, what is the hierarchy here, what are the
priorities. We got a bunch of criteria that we're considering, but when you have a conflict between compactness and a municipality split or a VTD split, what prevails, and it was never clear to me how we were taking into account communities of interest. And I'm not really sure that the public right now could actually tell from our maps that are on the website how their communities of interest are impacted. We heard a lot of public comments about communities of interest.

And I will just repeat -- I don't want to repeat. I will just echo the comments that there was a better way to do this, and I don't think this is it, and I don't think these maps are fair, and I'm going to be voting no. Thank you.

SPEAKER MOORE: For what purpose does the lady from Wilson, Representative Cooper-Suggs, rise?

REPRESENTATIVE COOPER-SUGGS: To debate the bill, Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER MOORE: The lady has the floor.

REPRESENTATIVE COOPER-SUGGS: My colleagues, I rise today because I think we've
missed an opportunity to make these maps better and more fair for our constituents. When I say more fair, I mean creating districts that are competitive and that reflect their communities. When we split communities in thirds or pack together counties that span half the state, we're not giving the people of North Carolina what they deserve.

If people feel like they have had a fair opportunity to participate in their elections, they have more trust in government and more trust in elected officials. Is that not what our goal should be?

In the last decade, we've seen what happens when redistricting goes wrong: lots of lawsuits, lots of anger, and lots of distrust. We've had electoral maps repeatedly thrown out by the courts for the state house, the state senate, congress, and even local commissions.

All of this conflict has a price: Taxpayers paid millions of dollars last decade to pay for legal fees and court costs during the redistricting cases. Some parts of our state had to hold new elections because candidates no longer lived in the district that they were
elected to.

   In addition to the financial cost, there is a cost as voters lose faith -- yes, I said faith -- in democracy and lose faith in this body, the General Assembly. It is impossible to put a price tag on losing something so inherent to our foundations as a country, but it is a much bigger cost than just dollars and cents.

   The single best way we could afford all of this is to agree on a compromise that gets a majority of votes from both caucuses. With almost all Democratic amendments getting defeated last night in the committee, the bill we have before us is a missed opportunity to instill faith in this body in our democracy.

   I want to thank everyone who worked so hard on those maps, even though I strongly disagree with all of them. If we end up back at the drawing board to draw new districts, I hope that we will seek to reach a consensus that better serves all of the people of North Carolina rather than just a few. I ask each of you, let's go back to the drawing board. I ask you to vote no on this bill. Thank you,
Mr. Speaker.

SPEAKER MOORE: For what purpose does the lady from Mecklenburg, Representative Carney, rise?

REPRESENTATIVE CARNEY: To speak on the bill.

SPEAKER MOORE: The lady has the floor.

REPRESENTATIVE CARNEY: One minute.

Thank you. I had to get fired up here, my batteries.

I rise to speak on this bill, and I might say some things that you might not think that I would be saying, but I have been on this committee, and I'm going to start out saying like everybody else is saying, we do appreciate all the work that has gone into -- from the chairman who has been in that room, that people at home if they knew it was on the audio they could -- they could -- on the livestream in there, they could see it. They could watch people coming in, but people most of the time, as I think the chairman pointed out, the screen was set so that if you looked at that screen you just saw the center of the room, a few screens set up and you'd see one or two people, but you
saw four to six people in there all the time
every day, they were staff.

The process -- I went to a lot -- a lot
of the public hearings, and the comments that I
heard -- and I think that what I kept trying to
remind myself of every one I went to, I read
some of the ones entered on the public input. I
read probably, as Representative Harrison said,
about 4,000, I read through some of those, I
skimmed through them, and they were very well
thought out, a lot of time and thought put into
what their comments were.

I heard from a lot of people that once
in ten years we do this in North Carolina,
right? I heard that, right? Representative
Carney, is that right? Yeah. Well, when do we
get to have our say?

So I said talk to your individual
elected officials in your districts. Call them
up, tell them what you think these maps going
forward should look like.

You can also -- and I directed them to
our website, to go in and make comments.

We had our first initial committee
meetings of the full redistricting committee in
September. We couldn't really do anything, we were told, until the census came out. We could have maybe in the beginning had some teaching to the community, inform the community on how the process would work when we actually got into our work and we could have brought more people on at that point of being a part of the process.

So we had throughout -- you know, the most number, and maybe I'm wrong here so don't quote me. The highest number of attendees was like 110 at a couple of the public hearings. Some had 25 people that spoke. Of the 110 that -- when there was a large number there, maybe 50 spoke. So not a lot of people got to come and put their personal input into their maps. They're not our maps. What we've spent -- and the chairman has spent a ton of time drawing his map that is before us today, they're not our maps. They belong to the people out here. And as someone said earlier, they're smart. They're probably smarter than some of us. When we get up here we think we're smart.

But some of the comments were -- and you've heard it over and over, but it bears repeating so that we're listening, we're
listening. Fortunately, we're livestream now. And I hope that a lot of people put it out there to your constituents to watch today the debate in the House on redistricting. So people wanted the livestreaming for them at the hearings. That was said at every hearing I attended and the notes that I got from others. They called it an autocratic practice. I thought wow. Transparency. So how do you define transparency? I asked a few people how do you define transparency, and they said that so that every segment of the population that votes in the state can have access to what you all are doing. And particularly we heard why don't you have interpreters here for the people of Hispanic communities, Asian communities. We heard at one of the public hearings, why don't you have translators here. And so we have -- we had an opportunity to reach a lot of people in North Carolina. This is a big, big move that we're making. I heard another statement. I just jotted a few down so that I could share with you since we didn't have 120 people attending every public hearing in the state. We had -- from the
committee, we would have four to five. At one I think we had eight. So I'm sharing with you that this should be an informative, not performative experience for us.

And this other person said Don't let your fear stop your support of democracy," where he had expounded upon the fear of legislators losing their seats. So "Don't let your fear stop your support of democracy."

Another one I heard was "Maps should promote democracy." I heard that numerous times. And then it should -- it violates -- they said, you know, gerrymandering, I heard from a lot of people, has been going on for a long, long time historically. True, I think a lot of us would say that, both sides of the aisle. So this person said it violates equal protection in the constitution, gerrymandering does.

So I thought about all of that through this whole process. And again, we need to -- some people pat yourselves on the back, and those that have been involved, both sides of the aisle closely to the process, yeah, but you got elected, and if you got in the majority, that's
your job, that's what you're supposed to do, so
you should be doing it -- should be doing it
well. And if you got elected and you're in the
minority, that's your job, that's our job, and
that's why I took this redistricting seriously,
to listen. It was about -- it's about all
that -- when you're in the minority that you can
do is listen and be the voice of those people
that came out.

And the times of the day for some of
these public hearings, 3:00 on a Wednesday, and
I thank the speaker for changing the session
that day. Because it was in Mecklenburg, and we
had a voting session that day, and I couldn't
even go to my public hearing in my county unless
I missed a voting session. So the speaker
worked with us, so I thanked him for that, and I
thank him again, but there are a lot of people
that could not get there. They work in the
middle of the day. And we all -- and a lot of
us here work, a lot of us involved in this work
and couldn't be there on Saturdays or Sundays.
So there was opportunity missed, but there were
opportunities, I will say, for the public input.
Did we have enough? Nobody's ever going to have
enough of anything.

But through all of that, I go back
to -- and I'll say it again, somebody has
already mentioned it, but I think it needs --
worth saying again, and that is an independent
redistricting commission. I did my homework. I
said yesterday in the committee, just an FYI to
committee members, that there were, since I came
here in 2003, sworn in, 39 in the Senate and the
House between the two, 39 independent
redistricting commission bills. None went
anywhere. Notice 2003 to 2021, Democrats in
charge and Republicans in charge through my term
here. No -- no bills got heard and went
anywhere.

So I even broke it down a little
further than that. So starting in -- well, from
2003 to 2009, there were -- during the Democrat
time in office, majority, there was one
bipartisan independent redistricting commission
bill filed and there were four Republican during
the Democratic leadership. And then from
2009 -- well, 2010 to today, or 2021, there have
been numerous bipartisan bills, but there have
been seven Democratic bills filed and eight
Republicans, five during the time that the Republicans, here in this chamber, have been in the majority, and they've gone nowhere.

So I'm saying to you -- and some of the members that sponsored the bills and cosponsored them are still serving on both sides of the aisle. Why can't we do that? Why can't we let go of it and bring in -- that's been studied and looked at and recommended for several years in the state. What are we -- as that one person that came to the public hearing, what are we afraid of. We cannot fear it. If we do, we're going to lose democracy. You don't want that in the majority. We don't want that in the minority.

So I'm asking you today to think about what we're about to do, and this is to the citizens of this state, for the next ten years. Demographics are going to change, but these maps are going to be with us, so what you're getting today, they may not be the same by the end of this ten-year term of new redistricting.

I'm grateful to have had the opportunity -- I'm not believing I'm saying this on the floor -- that I served on this committee.
I've learned a lot. I came to this not knowing that much of all the acronyms, digging deep down, but I learned a lot from it. I still have a lot to learn. I'm sorry that the entire body has not had the opportunity to have a deep dive into redistricting and understanding it. Maybe you have on your own, and if you have I applaud you. So I'm thankful for serving on this committee. I'm grateful for the chairman and the work that he's done, and I will say that two weeks of -- and I think it was ten days in 643, there was a live camera and the public could see live people in there, not sure what they were doing, but some drawing maps, but that's the public's perception.

I've never talked this long on the floor, but it's really a passion with me, and I do want everybody to realize how important this vote is today and can you go back home and say to everyone in your district, not just the ones of your party persuasion, but everyone in your district, this is a very fair map for our district. It gives everybody equal representation. It gives everybody a voice at the table.
And one final quote from someone at one of the hearings said that the problem with these maps going forward are that most -- most of the elections from this map, as in the past, are going to be won in primaries. Think about it. I ask you to vote no.

SPEAKER MOORE: For what purpose does the gentleman from Durham, Representative Hawkins, rise?

REPRESENTATIVE HAWKINS: To debate the bill.

SPEAKER MOORE: The gentleman has the floor.

REPRESENTATIVE HAWKINS: I want to thank the chairman for the time and effort and for the amazing words of my colleagues, and so I'll try not to repeat too much, but I fear that you're picking up on the themes that all of us are really concerned about. And I think we're all, you know, familiar with these words: To be rather than to seem. And so what defines North Carolina as a state, its people, and the culture that we try to promote here, and nothing -- nothing more exemplifies that than what we do here in Raleigh, specifically on the
issue of redistricting.

And so as I get started, one of the things that I want to make sure that people understand and what they have to realize, especially because we have cameras here, is that people are watching what we do. It's the people who go to work every single day who work for wages that are not a living wage, who try to put food on their family's table, and who trust us to make the decisions that will impact their lives.

We have young people who have seen the world change in front of their eyes because of a pandemic, social unrest, and all sorts of political changes and want to know that they have 120 people, at least in this house, that have their best interest at heart. And so we want them to have faith -- as one of my colleagues said, we want them to have faith in this process. We want them to know that we're the people that they should look up to and that we are going to do what we say we're going to do, that we have to make sure that we're educating and we're informing so they see us as people that they can trust, and so that's why
I'll focus on just a few of the criteria.

And so based on the criteria that we adopted, one of those is that we were going to try and split the fewest VTDs. And the chairman is absolutely correct, that we -- compared to previous maps, we absolutely did that. Out of the six or seven that we had that were proposed in these maps, I guess I don't know whether I should be proud to say or reluctant to say that half of those are in Durham county. Three of those are in Durham county. And I know we have other options to choose in ways that we could ensure that we don't split VTDs.

And let me give you sort of a zoom out on what that sort of leads to next. When you start to split VTDs, you start to split into communities. And one of the things that we sort of held dear in this process is compactness and the fact that we wanted to ensure that communities of interest remained whole.

I'll use my county as an example, and I'll go on to others, but in Durham county, for example, if you're in northern Durham, you do things in northern Durham, on that side of town. On the east side of town, that borders RTP. You
have eastern -- you have east Durham, all the shops that are connected to the downtown area, you have Brier Creek, which is just across the boarder, and people do things on those sides of town.

When they start to think about who they're going to vote for, they assume that they will be voting for the same person that their neighbor is voting for. That's only logical sense. And the reason that's important is because they'll talk about the schools that their kids go to, they'll talk about the way that those schools are zoned, the school funding that those areas receive, the bus rides, the roads that may be damaged, right, the things that they want to see improved in their community. They want to have commonality in the boundaries that they have so that they then can go to one person and get those problems solved.

And as we see sort of across this map and the way that we have drawn some of our districts that have violated the community of interest criteria, it really does go to everything that you heard from my colleagues. They wonder why -- why is this that way? Are
they being drawn for interests that are not my own? Are they being drawn to favor one party over the other?

And we also saw this play out -- and one of the rules that we were trying to adhere to was the fewest changes, but in many ways we found that in the example of Pitt county, in a district that should have been rarely changed, with small changes, that we had many changes that resulted in a much, much different district.

One of the practices that results -- that results in all of these things is that people believe that gerrymandering is a hateful practice, is a bad practice that only benefits one group over the other, and what it does, and they are tired of it, is that it promotes extremes.

Durham, no doubt, everyone knows this, is a pretty Democratic town, but let me tell you, when I get in front of those people and I talk about the fact that I have conversations across the aisle on common things with my colleagues, they clap every single time. It doesn't matter what sort of bill I'm working on
individually. It doesn't matter what type of thing I think is important, but when I tell them that we're putting the people of North Carolina ahead of our own political interest and we're working together, applause rings out. And if we don't get a chance to follow this criteria in the way that we said we were, right, being rather than to seem, it hurts their ability to trust what we're doing here and it makes them tune out to the process.

Now, the one thing I know about all of you is that because you serve, you care about your communities. You want more people to participate in democracy. And so if that's the case, I'm going to kindly sort of have to ask you to vote no on this because one thing that I know for sure is that North Carolina has had a history lately of not just doing this once a decade. Now, I know that the chairman wants to do this once this decade, I'm pretty sure of that, and I want to join him in that effort, but it does seem like we're going down the road of seeing each other again on the redistricting committee, and I don't want that to happen. I don't want that to happen at all.
And so one of the things that I have proposed, and I said it quite a few times in our committee, is that there's nothing wrong with slowing this process down, pushing our primary back, and making sure that we get this done right the first time, get this done right the first time. I'm a child that has a May birthday. I grew up in North Carolina having May primaries. I could always look forward to that, and this move to March doesn't benefit us in any way outside of the presidential years. And so us moving our primary back, taking our time, ensuring that we have all the interest and the input from the people of North Carolina is not a bad thing. I think each of your constituents would really appreciate that.

And so that's what I'm asking and proposing as I vote no and for you to consider joining me in voting no. Because to me, nothing is more important than good government. Nothing is more important than good government, and that's what people want. They want to make sure that they understand that we're working together, that we're building together, and that there are things that they can look at down the
road and say we did this as North Carolinians. And so if you believe that, if you believe in a better North Carolina, if you believe in making sure that we uphold democracy and that we adhere to democracy, that you'll vote no for this bill and join us in helping to make this a better process.

So I want to thank, again, the chairman and all of the staff, all of my colleagues who spent time drawing these maps, and I know this process is far from over, but I want to thank everyone for all of their hard work and hopefully we can build this together later. Thank you.

SPEAKER MOORE: For what purpose does the lady from Durham, Representative Morey, rise?

REPRESENTATIVE MOREY: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. To ask the bill sponsor a question.

SPEAKER MOORE: Representative Hall, does the gentleman yield?

REPRESENTATIVE HALL: I yield.

SPEAKER MOORE: He yields.

REPRESENTATIVE MOREY: Thank you,
Representative Hall. You've done an amazing amount of work, it's taken a long time. I was not on redistricting but watched with great interest many times when it was being livestreamed, and I have two very respectful and pretty simple questions.

And so watching the livestream and seeing you drawing the maps and getting up from the drawing and going with maps and coming out -- going out of the room, coming back into the room with a map, setting down, redrawing or continuing drawing -- two questions:

When you left the rooms, was there any materials that you referred to or consulted with to make changes when you came back into the room to keep drawing the maps? Was there any demographic material, other materials you would use to make changes?

REPRESENTATIVE HALL: No.
REPRESENTATIVE MOREY: Thank you.
One follow-up.

SPEAKER MOORE: Does the gentleman yield?

REPRESENTATIVE HALL: I yield.
SPEAKER MOORE: He yields.
REPRESENTATIVE MOREY: And similarly, were there any consultants, experts, individuals you would consult with when you would be drawing the map, leaving the room, coming back and sitting down to continue your work?

REPRESENTATIVE HALL: There were no outside consultants that I used at all in any way in the drawing of this map.

REPRESENTATIVE MOREY: Thank you. I appreciate it.

May I speak on the bill.

SPEAKER MOORE: The lady has the floor to debate the bill.

REPRESENTATIVE MOREY: And my questions to the chairman were not meant to be critical at all. I think it just reflects our human nature.

We're sitting here as a body basically on two teams: 69 on that side, 51 on this side. We're getting ready to go decide how we're going to play the new sport, who's going to play what positions, who's going to draw the lines on the field or what kind of field it's going to be. You got 69; we got 51. Why do we even go out on the court?

But we are very interested, but I think
that goes also to the rhetorical question I think the chairman said why didn't we come out and draw the maps. We know the outcome. It's 69 to 51 most likely. And if it were the opposite, and we're 69 on this side and 51, it's the same deal, but I think it goes exactly to what Representative Carney said. I couldn't go in and offer a map because, fundamentally, I represent people who have told me and I have told them it's an independent redistricting commission that should take charge. And so I can't in good faith in good conscience be a politician and go in and sit at a terminal and draw a map that I want that will reflect my political belief and my political philosophies. You can't do that. It's hypocritical. It won't happen. It's not human nature.

And so I think that's why you're hearing from our side of the aisle. Yes, we're in the minority, yes, these maps will be passed, but there's a better way to do it. It is totally a political process. Even though we say we're not using political data, it's all about politics, but it shouldn't be. It should be about the representation of the people of this
state, at least one third who aren't even a member of either political party and where are they.

So I hope we do introduce good legislation and it takes us out of the politics and the drawings and gives an even playing field not to us but to the people we represent. Thank you.

SPEAKER MOORE: For what purpose does the gentleman from Robeson, Representative Graham, rise?

REPRESENTATIVE GRAHAM: Inquiry, Mr. Chair.

SPEAKER MOORE: For me or the bill sponsor? The gentleman is recognized.

REPRESENTATIVE GRAHAM: Will we be taking in any amendments this afternoon?

SPEAKER MOORE: We are. I think the amendments are still -- I understand that maybe you had an amendment or someone else. The chair's not in possession of any amendments at this time. There's also an amendment that will simply try to do -- that will renumber the matters, and we haven't received those.

So what I talked to the minority leader
and the majority leader about was we could do the second reading and then we can take the amendments on third, that way we can go into a recess until we get those amendments.

REPRESENTATIVE GRAHAM: Thanks, Mr. Speaker. I would like to debate the bill.

SPEAKER MOORE: The gentleman has the floor.

REPRESENTATIVE GRAHAM: Thank you, Members. I'll be brief.

I've had the opportunity to serve in this body for -- this is my sixth term, going through redistricting, obviously, for the second time, and I'm really concerned about what I've seen as it relates to my district.

I am the only one of me in this body. I represent approximately 50 plus thousand Lumbees in Robeson county, of course, some in Scotland county and some over in Hoke county. Since the '70s, we've had a Lumbee serving in this body. And Representative Morey just mentioned representation. That's very important, and it's very important to my people, the Lumbee people in Robeson county and the other citizens in that county. But my district
has always been primarily and without question a
majority American Indian district, and I'm
really concerned about what I'm seeing on the
map that I've been presented today.

And I've been watching over the last
few days. I will be submitting an amendment,
but I want to appeal to this committee and to
the chair, let's not undermine the opportunity
to have American Indians in this body. And I
think if we proceed down the path that I'm
looking at, that could potentially happen, and
I'm really concerned about that, and I hope
you're concerned about that.

And I appreciate the speaker allowing
me an opportunity this session to represent the
tribes of North Carolina as a committee chair.
To me, that's very important. It gives our
citizens a voice. It gives the tribes a voice
here in this body. And from time to time I've
had many of you over the course of the past
12 years come to me and ask for advice on
particular items as it related to American
Indians in this state. I can't imagine that you
would support -- or not support having an
American Indian in this body, and I hope you
will really take this to heart. Our people need representation here too. I have communities of interest.

I hate to bring up the race card, but I'm going to talk about culture. And I will just pick out Chairman Hall. I mean, he's the chairman, he drew these maps, and I can say that I bet you that his district looks like him, no doubt in my mind it looks like him. I want a district that looks like me in this House, in this body, whether I'm standing here or not. Our people deserve it, and I expect that I'll be sending an amendment that will support that at some point.

And I just want to make you aware that I'm really concerned about potential that we're getting to -- getting to obviously see happen is for the first time in over 50 years may not have an American Indian standing on this floor. That's a possibility, and I just want to emphasize that.

And, Mr. Speaker, thank you for the opportunity and thank you for listening.

SPEAKER MOORE: And actually, Representative Graham, I want to let you know,
the amendments we are actually going to run on
the second reading so they don't have to redraft
them for third, so I think the amendments are on
the way over. So if we get to a point where the
debate has ended and where the amendments have
not -- we have not yet received the amendments,
what I will probably do is put everything at
ease until we get those amendments in. So we're
going to try to take care of those on second.

For what purpose does the gentleman
from Cumberland, Representative Richardson,
rise?

REPRESENTATIVE RICHARDSON: To debate
the --

SPEAKER MOORE: The gentleman has the
floor.

REPRESENTATIVE RICHARDSON: Thank you,
Mr. Speaker.

Members, this is where the rubber meets
the road. Two people far smarter than I have
said it this way:

"The right of voting for representation
is a primary right by which other rights are
protected." Thomas Paine.

John Adams. "The principal difficulty
lies, and the greatest care -- the greatest care should be employed in constituting the representative assembly. It should be a miniature, an exact portrait of the people at large. It should think, feel, reason, and act like them. That it may be the interest of the assembly to do strict justice at all times, it should be an equal representation, or, in other words, equal interests among the people should have equal interests in it. Great care -- great care should be taken to effect this and to prevent unfair, partial, and corrupt elections."

John Adams.

The one thing that I've always respected about a conservative is that they, probably more than any other group, profess that they stand on principles of the constitution and principles of their core beliefs, and I've seen many times the other side of the aisle has done this.

Years ago, you were the leaders -- you were the leaders of impartial redistricting. What has happened? Why have you backed off that belief?

Caucus politics is hard, but standing
on your merit and standing on your beliefs is harder. Today is a day that each of you should not listen to your caucus or what your caucus is saying to the extent it overrides your basic core beliefs.

And one of the hardest things we all do in here, one of the most difficult things we do in here, and I do it time and again, is I often will go against my basic core beliefs to back and strengthen my caucus, but not at this expense, not at this expense.

John Adams was right when he said what he said here. We all know it. We just don't have the courage to do it. We need to go to some form of impartial redistricting. It's the only answer.

I watched an extraordinarily good man that I have immense respect for, our rules chairman, struggle with this for two weeks and struggle with the debate on the floor last night. And it was hard -- it was a hard debate for all of us. The reason is we're trying to fit a square peg in a round hole. We're drawing the very districts and the very lines in which the people are going to elect us.
Are we following John Adams' admonition? No, we're not.

Let's take this bill back, put in a -- and it will work this way if we would put an impartial redistricting in it, let those folks draw the lines, and then we have control over the ultimate outcome of it by voting to make sure they honor the principles that John Adams says.

This assembly is at its best -- I believe this to my core, because I've run in a number of districts that are about 50/50 districts. It makes you a better candidate. It makes you a better person. It makes you work harder. And it makes you listen to different beliefs when you're in a 50/50 district. Trust me; I know.

Y'all, this is just too important. We have a chance to do something extraordinarily special, extraordinarily right as a group. I sense it in everybody in this room that this is a chance to get it right. Reconsider this, please reconsider it. Thank you.

SPEAKER MOORE: For what purpose does the gentleman from Wake, Representative Jones,
rise?

REPRESENTATIVE JONES: I rise to speak to the bill.

SPEAKER MOORE: The gentleman has the floor.

REPRESENTATIVE JONES: I didn't plan to say anything about the bill when you had said that two others planned to speak. And I'm not going to speak on the lines and all that so I'm going to sort of keep that promise, but I want to speak more globally about this process.

Every ten years, I understand the legislature does this, and it's very, very important to the people of North Carolina. It reminds me of democracy, the election process and the vote is like in the subway system, they have two rails that run the train, but then over on the side they have another rail. That's a third rail, and that's where the power comes from. And if you touch the third rail, it electrocutes you as a human being, that's how powerful it is.

This process here that we're about to engage in is the third rail of democracy. And I had a friend in this body, he's no longer here,
he's still living, good man, a lot of you may have known him. Skip Stam from Apex. Good, solid, conservative Republican. And Skip -- I knew Skip from law practice, and I knew Carl Holleman who knew Skip. And Skip's a very smart guy. Skip, I think -- I don't think I'm misinterpreting this, now supports commission to do this work. I don't know what he did when he was in the body, but this is what he now supports. And I believe the reason for that is because it would lift us, we members, whether you're on the minority side or majority side, out of the process and put it in the hands of men and women and experts who are Democrat, Republican, black, white, Native American, whatever, would be on a commission and try to do the best they can with the process that deals with the third rail of our democracy which is voting.

And it's important, whether you win or lose an election, that you feel that process was fair. You may get the most votes and win, you may get fewer votes and lose, but at least you feel in your gut I got heard and my vote didn't count any more than another person's or any
less. That's democracy.

So I hope -- I'm going to say some things towards the future, and I'm going to make a couple of promises here. I don't know how long I'm going to be in this House, but if I ever am in the House and I'm in the majority, I'm going to say the same thing I'm saying now in the minority. I'm going to support a commission. I'm going to support a process that lifts it out of us and gives it to a commission so that we can change the perception that when the D's are in charge, they control it and they manipulate it, and when the R's in charge, they manipulate it, and the people can say we now believe that they will be fair. That's what I want to support in the future.

And I have a suggestion. You may not follow this, but that's okay. Regardless of what happens today, we kind of know what the deal is going to be in the lines and all that, but I'm not getting into the lines. But I hope that even when it's not the odd year after the even year, 2021, 3031 after 30, why can't we in the future work on this together in future sessions between now and the next one and change
this process that obviously is flawed. It's flawed. And I don't care how long they've been doing it, but the great thing about a democracy, we can change it and make it even better.

So I implore you down the road -- I know today is sort of done, but down the road, why don't we look at this together in the nonelection years, in the non year after the ten and say let's make it better. Let's put something together that's different for the future. Thank you.

SPEAKER MOORE: Thank you, Representative Jones.

Ms. Churchill, are any of those amendments -- actually, Ms. Churchill, could the lady approach the dais, please.

(Brief interruption.)

SPEAKER MOORE: The House will come back to order.

Members, before we get underway, we do want to welcome a special guest on motion of Representative Belk who actually herself is in the gallery right now. We're pleased to extend the courtesy of the gallery to the mayor pro tem of Charlotte, Julie Eiselt who is with us.
Ms. Eiselt, if you would stand, please. We want to thank you for being here with us today.

Members, we are ready to proceed with the amendments. We're going to take up Amendment ABW-23 V2.

Representative Graham is recognized to send forth the amendment, and the clerk will read.

THE CLERK: Representative Graham moves to amend the bill on page 5, lines 42 through 48, by rewriting those lines to read.

SPEAKER MOORE: The gentleman from Robeson has the floor to debate the amendment.

REPRESENTATIVE GRAHAM: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and I'll be brief.

I think I stated earlier my concern, and with this amendment, the amendment really does give I guess it's House District 24 an opportunity to have someone of the American Indian community here in the legislature. As I said earlier, we can go back to the '70s and we've had a member of the tribe standing on this floor, and my amendment will -- nothing's guaranteed, but it will give the citizens of Robeson county and the folks of the Lumbee Tribe
a majority decision as they go to the polls and make a choice. The numbers work out very well. Of course, it gives the municipalities of Rowland back to the district, which I served two terms two years ago, and right now I'm serving the area of Fairmont. And this amendment gives those districts back to this -- for this particular amendment.

As I said earlier, this is an opportunity to ensure -- I think a good opportunity to ensure that a member of the tribe would be -- or the Lumbee Tribe would be represented in this body, and I think that's what I hope you would want to give us good representation across the state. And I know some of you represent tribes, but those tribes are not in the majority in your districts, but this happens to be -- Robeson county happens to be the most diverse -- culturally diverse county in this country, and this amendment will give the citizens of that county representation and a very good chance to have a member of the Lumbee Tribe serving in this body, and I would ask you to support this amendment. Thank you.

SPEAKER MOORE: For what purpose does
the gentleman from Caldwell, Representative Hall, rise?

REPRESENTATIVE HALL: To debate the amendment.

SPEAKER MOORE: The gentleman has the floor to debate the amendment.

REPRESENTATIVE HALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Members, I am going to respectfully ask you to vote no on the amendment. For those of you who were here in 2017, you may remember that we had some litigation on our maps at that time and we had to come in and redraw, and the amendment that's before you in large part replicates the district that was struck down by the court. And of course, we want to avoid any such strike down this time around. So again, I respectfully ask you to vote no on the amendment.

SPEAKER MOORE: For what purpose does the gentleman from Chatham, Representative Reives, rise?

REPRESENTATIVE REIVES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Just ask for a recorded vote on both amendments.
SPEAKER MOORE: The chair will be taking recorded votes on the amendments.

For what purpose does the gentleman from Robeson county, Representative Graham, rise?

REPRESENTATIVE GRAHAM: To speak a second time.

SPEAKER MOORE: The gentleman has the floor.

REPRESENTATIVE GRAHAM: Well, I do remember that, Representative Hall, and I don't think that was the factor that -- I don't think that's -- I don't think that's a correct statement you made, and I disagree with you 100 percent.

My county got caught up into that and that was the fix. It was another district that was in question. And my county, my district got caught up in that. And of course, it was changed considerably, and I disagree with that.

So, Members, don't buy that, don't buy that. It's not true. And I will tell you my basis for my amendment is to give the Lumbee people in Robeson county representation in this body, and I would ask you don't accept that. Of
course my district was changed, but it was not -- it was not because my district was not a part of the litigation. So I'm asking you do not accept that.

I'm asking you give this amendment an opportunity, which if you do vote for this amendment, it will give an opportunity for someone who looks like me, and who looks like many of your districts, an opportunity to be served and have representation in this body. So I would ask you to support this amendment. Thank you.

SPEAKER MOORE: For what purpose does the lady from Mecklenburg, Representative Cunningham, rise?

REPRESENTATIVE CUNNINGHAM: To ask my colleague, Representative Graham, a question.

SPEAKER MOORE: Representative Graham, does the gentleman yield?

REPRESENTATIVE GRAHAM: I yield.

SPEAKER MOORE: He yields.

REPRESENTATIVE CUNNINGHAM: Thank you, Representative Graham.

In District 23 and District 24, do we know how much is comprised of Lumbee Indians in
that area?

REPRESENTATIVE GRAHAM: Well, there are Lumbees in both districts, 23 and 24, but if we accept this amendment, the majority in district -- the District 24 would be a majority Lumbee.

REPRESENTATIVE CUNNINGHAM: Thank you, sir.

SPEAKER MOORE: Further discussion, further debate.

If not, the question before the House is the adoption of Amendment A1 sent forward by Representative Graham. Those in favor will vote aye. Those opposed will vote no. The clerk will open the vote.

The clerk will lock the machine and record the vote.

49 having voted in the affirmative and 66 in the negative, the amendment is not adopted.

Representative Reives is recognized to send forward Amendment ABW-24. The clerk will read.

REPRESENTATIVE REIVES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker. Oh, I'm sorry. Go ahead.
THE CLERK: Representative Reives moves to amend the bill on page 4, lines 43 through 49, by rewriting the lines to read.

SPEAKER MOORE: Now the gentleman from Chatham has the floor to debate the amendment.

REPRESENTATIVE REIVES: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

In this particular amendment, as you see, takes two of the Stephenson groupings and puts them together, so this is completely different than any of the amendments I've offered on any prior occasions last night or any other time or even in the map that I drew.

The map that I drew before during this last two weeks and also the amendments I have offered have gone by the rules that I feel that the committee has set forth.

There's one area that I fundamentally disagreed with our approach on and just in the interpretation of the legal situation that we're in, and I alluded to this in my earlier argument. That's what this amendment addresses.

As a lot of you know, last night's PCS was the first time that we saw a new grouping and a new change in the districts that cover
Wayne, Sampson, Bladen and those areas, and so we couldn't do anything about having an amendment ready for that because last night was the first time we saw it and obviously didn't want everybody to stay here late at night for that.

This morning, did not get to Raleigh in time. My comrade, Representative Terry Brown, was able to help out and I was able to communicate to him what it is I was trying to draw, and that's what we got, and I really appreciate staff getting this together as quickly as they did.

So as I stated, from the beginning of this process, our discussion has been that we've got to address the Voting Rights Act. There's no way around that. Stephenson, to me, makes it very clear that we have to address the Voting Rights Act.

The fundamental difference in our approaches, in our two different interpretations that I and the chairman have about this particular part, is that we feel that in order to comply with Stephenson that you actually have to draw your Voting Rights Act districts first.
Once you draw those districts, then you commence to drawing the rest of the map by the rules and the points that we brought up as far as the criteria that we've used.

And so what I'm offering today is that approach, whereas we've put two Stephenson groupings together to draw a Voting Rights Act qualified district. And if you look at the area -- and for those of you especially that serve that area and remember that area, it was just four years ago that African Americans were able to elect the candidate of their choice in those counties, in Wayne and Lenoir counties.

Well, now, with the new configuration, there's an argument to be made that African Americans can elect one person of their choice with the configuration that we have in place. We believe that is what the Voting Rights Act was meant to address.

And one point I want to clarify is there's a huge difference between making a majority-minority district and making a district where African Americans have the opportunity to elect a candidate of their choice. It can be a much smaller percentage but still allow for that
opportunity. This amendment would allow for that opportunity, and therefore I would ask you to support this amendment.

SPEAKER MOORE: For what purpose does the gentleman from Caldwell, Representative Hall, rise?

REPRESENTATIVE HALL: To debate the amendment.

SPEAKER MOORE: The gentleman has the floor.

REPRESENTATIVE HALL: Thank you, Mr. Speaker.

Colleagues, again respectfully, I'm going to ask you to vote against the amendment. I'll say that, you know, as to some of the amendments last night and, of course, as to the amendment today, I've had very little time to look at them, to digest them, to think through them, and that's despite the fact that the committee room has been open for about three weeks, and for much of that time I've been right over there where anybody could come in and speak to me any time they wanted to.

Members, if you look at this grouping, this -- the proposed amendment that's before
you, you don't have to really be an expert to look at that and think that's gerrymandering. This is the exact kind of thing that folks across the state in public comment told us they wanted to avoid. They wanted to avoid districts that look like monsters or some sort of creature. And if you look at this district, it's not compact at all. In fact, the seventh district on this actually has the worst compactness score under what's called the Polsby-Popper score of any district in the entire map at .09.

Additionally, Members, in this amendment, it would violate the state's constitution. And I understand Representative Reives and I have a different viewpoint on that, but in my opinion this would violate the state's constitution because it traverses counties too many times. The purple sixth district runs from Wayne, Greene, down into Lenoir, again, in violation of the Stephenson decision.

Members, the grouping that was chosen ultimately -- and I went back and forth on this one as I worked in the committee room, and ultimately -- well, when I discovered that every
member -- determined finally that every member in this grouping would be coming back and plan to run again, I looked at that again, that's one of our criteria is doing our best not to double-bunk, and so at that point I knew somebody had to be double-bunked. And so I said, okay, well, let's go look at the other criteria.

And if you look at the counties that are in the grouping that are in the map, Bladen and Sampson have better community connections than Bladen and Pender. Bladen is more of an agricultural rural county; Pender more of a beach suburban county. And really, it makes more sense for Bladen and Sampson to be together than it does Bladen and Pender.

In the map drawn on the base map, Goldsboro is kept whole. And in fact, the districts in that grouping are more compact than any other that I've seen drawn in this particular grouping. It also keeps Onslow mostly the same as it was except for swapping Duplin for what is Pender on our current map.

So, Members, for those reasons -- and again, just by -- if you just look at it and
tell this doesn't pass the eye test. I would ask you to vote no on the amendment.

SPEAKER MOORE: For what purpose does the gentleman from Chatham, Representative Reives, rise?

REPRESENTATIVE REIVES: To speak to the amendment a second time.

SPEAKER MOORE: The gentleman has the floor.

REPRESENTATIVE REIVES: And I would just say as a friendly reminder, on this particular grouping, the chairman and I actually drew basically the same groupings. The first time we saw a change in this grouping was last night, and so I don't know we disagree until we disagree.

So again, this wasn't a trial by, you know, laying in wait. This was a we saw a map last night that differed from the map that's been out for the last week or two, we have now given you something in response to that.

Secondly, I will remind you, this is not an argument about compactness. The question simply is does Stephenson require that we draw Voting Rights Act districts first. If you draw
those, by definition, those are going to be ugly districts, so that's not what this is about. That's the plain question: Do we draw those Voting Rights Act districts first? According to what we've done so far, we have not addressed the Voting Rights Act at all in this map. This would address that. I would ask you to support the amendment.

SPEAKER MOORE: Further discussion, further debate.

If not, the question before the House is the adoption of Amendment A2 sent forward by Representative Reives. Those in favor of the amendment will vote aye. Those opposed will vote no. The clerk will open the vote.

The clerk will lock the machine and record the vote.

49 having voted in the affirmative and 67 in the negative, the amendment is not adopted.

Representative Hall is recognized to send forth Amendment AST-72. The clerk will read.

THE CLERK: Representative Hall moves to amend the bill on page 1, line 9, through
page 13, line 19, by rewriting those lines to read.

SPEAKER MOORE: Representative Hall is recognized to explain the amendment.

REPRESENTATIVE HALL: Members, as many of you mentioned -- many of the members in my caucus and some of the folks in the other caucus mentioned to Representative Reives, the districts on what I call the base map that's before you today, the numbers were a bit off from what we're used to seeing, and so I went ahead and did my best today to try to get an amendment to fix those numbers within this map.

And so that's all this does. It doesn't change the map at all. It tries to make these district numbers a little bit closer to what they currently have. Did not realize how important that might be to some folks, but it is. And I'll offer a piece of free political advice: Probably shouldn't be running on your district number anyway, but that's okay. We're going to change these and try to get them as close as we can.

I don't believe this is a controversial amendment. I actually asked Representative
Reives if he would send me what the requests from the Democrats, and I knew on our said, you know, who really, really cared about it and we tried to get it as close as we could, so please support the amendment.

SPEAKER MOORE: Further discussion, further debate. If not, the question before the House is the adoption of Amendment A3 sent forward by Representative Hall. Those in favor will vote aye. Those opposed will vote no. The clerk will open the vote.

Representative Hawkins. Representative Hawkins wish to vote?

The clerk will lock the machine and record the vote.

116 having voted in the affirmative and none in the negative, Amendment A3 is adopted. That was a close one.

All right. All the amendments have been taken at this point.

Further discussion further debate on the bill.

If not, the question before the House is the passage of House Bill 976 on its second reading. Those in favor will vote aye. Those
opposed will vote no. The clerk will open the vote.

Representative Richardson wish to vote.
The clerk will lock the machine and record the vote.

68 having voted in the affirmative, 48 in the negative, House Bill 976 passed the second reading and will be read a third time.

THE CLERK: General Assembly of North Carolina exacts.

SPEAKER MOORE: Further discussion further debate.

Representative Morey, does the lady wish to be recorded as a "no" on that first vote?

REPRESENTATIVE MOREY: Yes, sir.

SPEAKER MOORE: I was holding out hope there. You dashed my hopes up here, Representative Morey. I was like -- Further discussion, further debate. If not, the question before the House is the passage of House Bill 976 on its third reading. Those in favor will vote aye. Those opposed will vote no. The clerk will open the vote.

The clerk will lock the machine and
record the vote.

67 having voted in the affirmative and 49 in the negative, House Bill 976 passes its third reading. The bill is ordered engrossed and sent to the Senate by special messenger.

(Transcription from audio recording stopped at 2:29:21.)
STATE OF NORTH CAROLINA  )
   ) CERTIFICATE
COUNTY OF WAKE  )

I, DENISE MYERS BYRD, Stenographic Court Reporter, CSR 8340, do hereby certify that the transcription of the audio recorded General Assembly of North Carolina House Floor Vote on HB 976, held on November 2, 2021, was taken down by me stenographically to the best of my ability and thereafter transcribed under my supervision; and that the foregoing pages, inclusive, constitute a true and accurate transcription of said recording.

Signed this the 20th day of December 2021.

Denise Myers Byrd
CSR 8240, RPR, CLR 102409-2
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