

GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF NORTH CAROLINA

2021 LEGISLATIVE SESSION, HOUSE FLOOR

VOTE ON HOUSE BILL 976

NOVEMBER 2, 2021

Transcribed by:

Denise Myers Byrd, CSR 8340, RPR

Discovery Court Reporters and

Legal Videographers, LLC

4208 Six Forks Road

Suite 1000

Raleigh, North Carolina 27609

(919) 424-8242

denise@discoverydepo.com

1 (Transcription from audio recording
2 started at 37:33.)

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

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

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

14 REPRESENTATIVE HALL: Thank you,
15 Mr. Speaker.

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

22 Not only was it the most transparent
23 process in the history of this state, but for
24 the first time in North Carolina history, the
25 legislature adopted a process on our own

1 volition that did not include the use of
2 political data, the first time that has ever
3 happened on our own volition.

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

8 The committee has been open since
9 October 6th, Monday through Friday, from
10 9:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m. Despite that, I was
11 disappointed to see very few of my Democratic
12 colleagues participate the way that they did in
13 2019. For those of you who were here, you'll
14 remember that in many of the groupings that we
15 drew, you had Democrats and Republicans standing
16 there at the computer screen drawing. The room
17 remained open for weeks this time around.

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

24 Upon further reflection of the entire
25 redistricting process, the rural areas in

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

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

21 The first criteria was keeping counties
22 whole. Within this map, where counties could be
23 kept whole, they are. We kept every county
24 whole that we could, for example, Chatham
25 county, Lee county, and Polk county.

1 We tried not to split VTDs. In 2011,
2 when this process was performed by a consultant,
3 and again, not out in the open, you saw hundreds
4 of VTD splits across this map. In my proposal,
5 there are only seven total VTD splits across the
6 entire state of North Carolina. Again, formerly
7 there were hundreds. There are seven total VTD
8 splits in this map.

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

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

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

21 We looked at compactness. Despite not
22 being drawn by a computer algorithm, this map
23 contains the compactness of the current map that
24 we are currently sitting here under today,
25 despite not having that advantage of a computer

1 algorithm and despite essentially drawing the
2 thing by hand, so to speak, in that committee
3 room, live, where everyone could see.

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

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

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

23 And given that I didn't have a
24 computer-based algorithm or consultants using
25 that algorithm, the final product that you see

1 before you today has resulted in what I believe
2 to be an impressive map that splits very few
3 precincts, keeps municipalities whole, and
4 creates compact districts.

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

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

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

18 SPEAKER MOORE: The gentleman has the
19 floor.

20 REPRESENTATIVE REIVES: Thank you. And
21 I appreciate the work that's gone in.
22 Obviously, any time we have to create a bill
23 such as this, I would probably have a little bit
24 of pushback in the sense that one of the things
25 in not a talent I would say that I have, but one

1 of the abilities that I've been able to hold
2 onto since I've gotten here is I've gotten an
3 uncanny ability to count. And because of that
4 ability to count, I know there are certain
5 realities about the drawing of maps and the
6 presenting of maps and things of that sort.

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

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

24 And I will be asking that you consider
25 voting no on this for several reasons. And

1 again, this is not about people, personalities,
2 districts or anything of that sort, but this has
3 been something that I've discussed since we've
4 gotten here when it comes down to redistricting.
5 I do wish we can move closer and closer to an
6 impartial process, closer and closer to a
7 situation where none of us are doing anything
8 that influences these maps or anything of that
9 sort, but that's not where we are right now.

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

19 We definitely had an opportunity to
20 draw more compact districts. For those of you
21 who were on the redistricting committee or kept
22 up with the meeting last night, you saw those
23 opportunities. There were plenty of places
24 where the districts could be even more compact
25 than what is being presented to us today, and if

1 compactness is something that we care about, we
2 have that opportunity to be more compact.

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

14 And really, a lot of these times what
15 we needed to do is to start from scratch, create
16 new districts out of these new groupings. We've
17 grown exponentially since 2010 census and the
18 2011 maps, and this was an opportunity to show
19 that we've had that growth.

20 You look at counties like Pitt,
21 Buncombe, Cumberland. Again, if we're saying
22 we're just going to make a few changes, those
23 were areas we made a lot of changes. Buncombe
24 looks nothing like it looked even in the last
25 redraw. Why that is, I can't tell you. I don't

1 know. But again, we had opportunities not to do
2 it in that way because one of the things we're
3 going to need to do when these maps are done, we
4 can vote on any bill and we can pass any bill,
5 and, frankly, we understand, as the majority
6 caucus, you can pass any bill you want at any
7 point in time, but ultimately, with something
8 this expansive, with this kind of effect, this
9 is the next ten years of this state that we're
10 dealing with. Ultimately, we should want,
11 desire, seek the approval of the people that we
12 serve, not in the sense of making sure that
13 their party gets to stay in any particular area,
14 but in the sense of them feeling like that they
15 had a fair shot, good maps, good representation
16 all around.

17 Because this isn't just about who stays
18 in power over the next ten years. This is about
19 so many issues that touch so many of us. This
20 is about the segregation of our society at this
21 point. The farther we move districts into these
22 type of hobbles and the more that we set up our
23 walls and the more that we set up in our
24 particular areas, the more we're separating each
25 other out, that doesn't do, really.

1 What you actually want is to try to
2 figure out ways, which maps give you a unique
3 opportunity to do it, to try to get more people
4 that have local commonalties but maybe don't
5 spend the time together and maybe aren't around
6 each other for different issues.

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

12 We've already had people -- and even
13 though we didn't use any partisan data looking
14 at this map, obviously, groups have looked at
15 this, they've looked at the map that we're
16 presenting, and we're already getting told from
17 people throughout the country that, again,
18 ranking us compared to other states -- and there
19 are other red states, there are other blue
20 states, there are other purple states. So this
21 isn't about picking on any particular group or
22 anything of that sort, but ranking us even to
23 similarly situated states that we seem to be
24 going back down the path of partisan
25 gerrymandering. So when we see that and we have

1 that analysis, we've got an opportunity to
2 correct it, so let's correct it.

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

19 So if we don't look at race at all,
20 then the risk we run is falling afoul of the
21 Stephenson decision where the Stephenson
22 decision says that we've got to make districts
23 that comply with the Voting Rights Act. By not
24 taking race into account at all, then how do we
25 know we've complied? We're only going to know

1 whether we complied if there's litigation. I'd
2 rather we know without litigation to know that
3 we've had some sort of compliance with the
4 Voting Rights Act because, again, that is a
5 federal mandate.

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

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

21 The courts don't want us using race
22 impermissibly. We don't want to use our history
23 in the wrong way. Don't use our history to
24 figure out ways to get around things. And I'm
25 not saying we have in this case, but what I'm

1 saying is use this history and use this time to
2 show that the most important aspect of bringing
3 our communities back together, to getting people
4 to have faith in their governments again, are
5 the people in this chamber and that chamber over
6 there. And it's just that simple.

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

20 But a lot of this stuff that a lot of
21 us complain about -- and I'm telling you I hear
22 from my side, your side, everybody. There's
23 parts of this political process we're just sick
24 of, and maps are a way that we encourage a lot
25 of the badness in our political process.

1 So I'm asking that you vote no just to
2 attempt to be corrective. This is not casting
3 aspersions. I cannot imagine being in
4 Chairman Hall's position where last year he was,
5 like me, getting to kind of sit back and not
6 even have to pay attention to this process and
7 then all of a sudden you're dead in the middle
8 and have to draw it and then he's going to hear
9 somebody like me get up and say that something
10 he spent four weeks on that I'm not happy with.
11 But I'm comfortable, as much as I appreciate
12 chairman Hall, if the roles were reversed, he
13 would feel very comfortable telling me that my
14 four weeks of work he wasn't happy with.

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

1 do this starts with these maps.

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

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

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

11 SPEAKER MOORE: The lady has the floor.

12 REPRESENTATIVE FISHER: Thank you.

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

22 This map has implications not only for
23 the House, but because of Buncombe county's
24 special circumstance of having had districts
25 legislated for them in a past session, it has

1 the further effect of double-bunking and
2 complicating the county commission districting
3 process.

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

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

1 nonpartisan redistricting commission approach to
2 this process.

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

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

16 REPRESENTATIVE HARRISON: To debate the
17 bill.

18 SPEAKER MOORE: The lady has the floor.

19 REPRESENTATIVE HARRISON: Thank you,
20 Mr. Speaker.

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

1 of time investment.

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

25 Instead, we had, if I recall correctly,

1 13 public hearings prior to map drawing and then
2 four post map drawing. If y'all remember, those
3 of you who were here in 2011, there were over 60
4 scattered across the state with significant
5 opportunity for folks to participate virtually
6 and from remote locations which was really
7 important as we faced the COVID.

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

22 And also, just that it was very
23 difficult to watch the map drawing, that the
24 audio wasn't great, that the video wasn't great
25 either. So I think there's a way -- and I don't

1 mean this necessarily as a huge criticism. I
2 just think if we can think about this going
3 forward that there could have been a better way
4 to actually -- for the public to understand what
5 was going on because they didn't feel like they
6 did. And I was just -- I didn't read all 4,000
7 comments that had been filed. I've been trying
8 to get through and get a sense of what the
9 biggest complaints were, but that was probably
10 the biggest complaint was the public
11 participation.

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

19 And I do agree with the points that
20 have been made prior to me, that there's a
21 better way to do this, a fairer way to do this
22 in a way that reflects our values and our
23 priorities. It was never clear to me with the
24 criteria, and we asked about this repeatedly,
25 what is the hierarchy here, what are the

1 priorities. We got a bunch of criteria that
2 we're considering, but when you have a conflict
3 between compactness and a municipality split or
4 a VTD split, what prevails, and it was never
5 clear to me how we were taking into account
6 communities of interest. And I'm not really
7 sure that the public right now could actually
8 tell from our maps that are on the website how
9 their communities of interest are impacted. We
10 heard a lot of public comments about communities
11 of interest.

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

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

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

23 SPEAKER MOORE: The lady has the floor.

24 REPRESENTATIVE COOPER-SUGGS: My
25 colleagues, I rise today because I think we've

1 missed an opportunity to make these maps better
2 and more fair for our constituents. When I say
3 more fair, I mean creating districts that are
4 competitive and that reflect their communities.
5 When we split communities in thirds or pack
6 together counties that span half the state,
7 we're not giving the people of North Carolina
8 what they deserve.

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

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

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

1 elected to.

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

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

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

1 Mr. Speaker.

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

5 REPRESENTATIVE CARNEY: To speak on the
6 bill.

7 SPEAKER MOORE: The lady has the floor.

8 REPRESENTATIVE CARNEY: One minute.

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

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

1 saw four to six people in there all the time
2 every day, they were staff.

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

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

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

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

24 We had our first initial committee
25 meetings of the full redistricting committee in

1 September. We couldn't really do anything, we
2 were told, until the census came out. We could
3 have maybe in the beginning had some teaching to
4 the community, inform the community on how the
5 process would work when we actually got into our
6 work and we could have brought more people on at
7 that point of being a part of the process.

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

23 But some of the comments were -- and
24 you've heard it over and over, but it bears
25 repeating so that we're listening, we're

1 listening. Fortunately, we're livestream now.
2 And I hope that a lot of people put it out there
3 to your constituents to watch today the debate
4 in the House on redistricting. So people wanted
5 the livestreaming for them at the hearings.
6 That was said at every hearing I attended and
7 the notes that I got from others. They called
8 it an autocratic practice. I thought wow.
9 Transparency. So how do you define
10 transparency? I asked a few people how do you
11 define transparency, and they said that so that
12 every segment of the population that votes in
13 the state can have access to what you all are
14 doing. And particularly we heard why don't you
15 have interpreters here for the people of
16 Hispanic communities, Asian communities. We
17 heard at one of the public hearings, why don't
18 you have translators here.

19 And so we have -- we had an opportunity
20 to reach a lot of people in North Carolina.
21 This is a big, big move that we're making.

22 I heard another statement. I just
23 jotted a few down so that I could share with you
24 since we didn't have 120 people attending every
25 public hearing in the state. We had -- from the

1 committee, we would have four to five. At one I
2 think we had eight. So I'm sharing with you
3 that this should be an informative, not
4 performative experience for us.

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

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

20 So I thought about all of that through
21 this whole process. And again, we need to --
22 some people pat yourselves on the back, and
23 those that have been involved, both sides of the
24 aisle closely to the process, yeah, but you got
25 elected, and if you got in the majority, that's

1 your job, that's what you're supposed to do, so
2 you should be doing it -- should be doing it
3 well. And if you got elected and you're in the
4 minority, that's your job, that's our job, and
5 that's why I took this redistricting seriously,
6 to listen. It was about -- it's about all
7 that -- when you're in the minority that you can
8 do is listen and be the voice of those people
9 that came out.

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

1 enough of anything.

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

16 So I even broke it down a little
17 further than that. So starting in -- well, from
18 2003 to 2009, there were -- during the Democrat
19 time in office, majority, there was one
20 bipartisan independent redistricting commission
21 bill filed and there were four Republican during
22 the Democratic leadership. And then from
23 2009 -- well, 2010 to today, or 2021, there have
24 been numerous bipartisan bills, but there have
25 been seven Democratic bills filed and eight

1 Republicans, five during the time that the
2 Republicans, here in this chamber, have been in
3 the majority, and they've gone nowhere.

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

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

23 I'm grateful to have had the
24 opportunity -- I'm not believing I'm saying this
25 on the floor -- that I served on this committee.

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

16 I've never talked this long on the
17 floor, but it's really a passion with me, and I
18 do want everybody to realize how important this
19 vote is today and can you go back home and say
20 to everyone in your district, not just the ones
21 of your party persuasion, but everyone in your
22 district, this is a very fair map for our
23 district. It gives everybody equal
24 representation. It gives everybody a voice at
25 the table.

1 And one final quote from someone at one
2 of the hearings said that the problem with these
3 maps going forward are that most -- most of the
4 elections from this map, as in the past, are
5 going to be won in primaries. Think about it.
6 I ask you to vote no.

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

10 REPRESENTATIVE HAWKINS: To debate the
11 bill.

12 SPEAKER MOORE: The gentleman has the
13 floor.

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

1 issue of redistricting.

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

12 We have young people who have seen the
13 world change in front of their eyes because of a
14 pandemic, social unrest, and all sorts of
15 political changes and want to know that they
16 have 120 people, at least in this house, that
17 have their best interest at heart. And so we
18 want them to have faith -- as one of my
19 colleagues said, we want them to have faith in
20 this process. We want them to know that we're
21 the people that they should look up to and that
22 we are going to do what we say we're going to
23 do, that we have to make sure that we're
24 educating and we're informing so they see us as
25 people that they can trust, and so that's why

1 I'll focus on just a few of the criteria.

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

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

21 I'll use my county as an example, and
22 I'll go on to others, but in Durham county, for
23 example, if you're in northern Durham, you do
24 things in northern Durham, on that side of town.
25 On the east side of town, that borders RTP. You

1 have eastern -- you have east Durham, all the
2 shops that are connected to the downtown area,
3 you have Brier Creek, which is just across the
4 boarder, and people do things on those sides of
5 town.

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

20 And as we see sort of across this map
21 and the way that we have drawn some of our
22 districts that have violated the community of
23 interest criteria, it really does go to
24 everything that you heard from my colleagues.
25 They wonder why -- why is this that way? Are

1 they being drawn for interests that are not my
2 own? Are they being drawn to favor one party
3 over the other?

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

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

19 Durham, no doubt, everyone knows this,
20 is a pretty Democratic town, but let me tell
21 you, when I get in front of those people and I
22 talk about the fact that I have conversations
23 across the aisle on common things with my
24 colleagues, they clap every single time. It
25 doesn't matter what sort of bill I'm working on

1 individually. It doesn't matter what type of
2 thing I think is important, but when I tell them
3 that we're putting the people of North Carolina
4 ahead of our own political interest and we're
5 working together, applause rings out. And if we
6 don't get a chance to follow this criteria in
7 the way that we said we were, right, being
8 rather than to seem, it hurts their ability to
9 trust what we're doing here and it makes them
10 tune out to the process.

11 Now, the one thing I know about all of
12 you is that because you serve, you care about
13 your communities. You want more people to
14 participate in democracy. And so if that's the
15 case, I'm going to kindly sort of have to ask
16 you to vote no on this because one thing that I
17 know for sure is that North Carolina has had a
18 history lately of not just doing this once a
19 decade. Now, I know that the chairman wants to
20 do this once this decade, I'm pretty sure of
21 that, and I want to join him in that effort, but
22 it does seem like we're going down the road of
23 seeing each other again on the redistricting
24 committee, and I don't want that to happen. I
25 don't want that to happen at all.

1 And so one of the things that I have
2 proposed, and I said it quite a few times in our
3 committee, is that there's nothing wrong with
4 slowing this process down, pushing our primary
5 back, and making sure that we get this done
6 right the first time, get this done right the
7 first time. I'm a child that has a May
8 birthday. I grew up in North Carolina having
9 May primaries. I could always look forward to
10 that, and this move to March doesn't benefit us
11 in any way outside of the presidential years.
12 And so us moving our primary back, taking our
13 time, ensuring that we have all the interest and
14 the input from the people of North Carolina is
15 not a bad thing. I think each of your
16 constituents would really appreciate that.

17 And so that's what I'm asking and
18 proposing as I vote no and for you to consider
19 joining me in voting no. Because to me, nothing
20 is more important than good government. Nothing
21 is more important than good government, and
22 that's what people want. They want to make sure
23 that they understand that we're working
24 together, that we're building together, and that
25 there are things that they can look at down the

1 road and say we did this as North Carolinians.

2 And so if you believe that, if you
3 believe in a better North Carolina, if you
4 believe in making sure that we uphold democracy
5 and that we adhere to democracy, that you'll
6 vote no for this bill and join us in helping to
7 make this a better process.

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

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

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

21 SPEAKER MOORE: Representative Hall,
22 does the gentleman yield?

23 REPRESENTATIVE HALL: I yield.

24 SPEAKER MOORE: He yields.

25 REPRESENTATIVE MOREY: Thank you,

1 Representative Hall. You've done an amazing
2 amount of work, it's taken a long time. I was
3 not on redistricting but watched with great
4 interest many times when it was being
5 livestreamed, and I have two very respectful and
6 pretty simple questions.

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

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

19 REPRESENTATIVE HALL: No.

20 REPRESENTATIVE MOREY: Thank you.

21 One follow-up.

22 SPEAKER MOORE: Does the gentleman
23 yield?

24 REPRESENTATIVE HALL: I yield.

25 SPEAKER MOORE: He yields.

1 REPRESENTATIVE MOREY: And similarly,
2 were there any consultants, experts, individuals
3 you would consult with when you would be drawing
4 the map, leaving the room, coming back and
5 sitting down to continue your work?

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

9 REPRESENTATIVE MOREY: Thank you. I
10 appreciate it.

11 May I speak on the bill.

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

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

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

25 But we are very interested, but I think

1 that goes also to the rhetorical question I
2 think the chairman said why didn't we come out
3 and draw the maps. We know the outcome. It's
4 69 to 51 most likely. And if it were the
5 opposite, and we're 69 on this side and 51, it's
6 the same deal, but I think it goes exactly to
7 what Representative Carney said. I couldn't go
8 in and offer a map because, fundamentally, I
9 represent people who have told me and I have
10 told them it's an independent redistricting
11 commission that should take charge. And so I
12 can't in good faith in good conscience be a
13 politician and go in and sit at a terminal and
14 draw a map that I want that will reflect my
15 political belief and my political philosophies.
16 You can't do that. It's hypocritical. It won't
17 happen. It's not human nature.

18 And so I think that's why you're
19 hearing from our side of the aisle. Yes, we're
20 in the minority, yes, these maps will be passed,
21 but there's a better way to do it. It is
22 totally a political process. Even though we say
23 we're not using political data, it's all about
24 politics, but it shouldn't be. It should be
25 about the representation of the people of this

1 state, at least one third who aren't even a
2 member of either political party and where are
3 they.

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

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

12 REPRESENTATIVE GRAHAM: Inquiry,
13 Mr. Chair.

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

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

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

25 So what I talked to the minority leader

1 and the majority leader about was we could do
2 the second reading and then we can take the
3 amendments on third, that way we can go into a
4 recess until we get those amendments.

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

7 SPEAKER MOORE: The gentleman has the
8 floor.

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

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

16 I am the only one of me in this body.
17 I represent approximately 50 plus thousand
18 Lumbees in Robeson county, of course, some in
19 Scotland county and some over in Hoke county.
20 Since the '70s, we've had a Lumbee serving in
21 this body. And Representative Morey just
22 mentioned representation. That's very
23 important, and it's very important to my people,
24 the Lumbee people in Robeson county and the
25 other citizens in that county. But my district

1 has always been primarily and without question a
2 majority American Indian district, and I'm
3 really concerned about what I'm seeing on the
4 map that I've been presented today.

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

14 And I appreciate the speaker allowing
15 me an opportunity this session to represent the
16 tribes of North Carolina as a committee chair.
17 To me, that's very important. It gives our
18 citizens a voice. It gives the tribes a voice
19 here in this body. And from time to time I've
20 had many of you over the course of the past
21 12 years come to me and ask for advice on
22 particular items as it related to American
23 Indians in this state. I can't imagine that you
24 would support -- or not support having an
25 American Indian in this body, and I hope you

1 will really take this to heart. Our people need
2 representation here too. I have communities of
3 interest.

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

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

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

24 SPEAKER MOORE: And actually,
25 Representative Graham, I want to let you know,

1 the amendments we are actually going to run on
2 the second reading so they don't have to redraft
3 them for third, so I think the amendments are on
4 the way over. So if we get to a point where the
5 debate has ended and where the amendments have
6 not -- we have not yet received the amendments,
7 what I will probably do is put everything at
8 ease until we get those amendments in. So we're
9 going to try to take care of those on second.

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

13 REPRESENTATIVE RICHARDSON: To debate
14 the --

15 SPEAKER MOORE: The gentleman has the
16 floor.

17 REPRESENTATIVE RICHARDSON: Thank you,
18 Mr. Speaker.

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

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

25 John Adams. "The principal difficulty

1 lies, and the greatest care -- the greatest care
2 should be employed in constituting the
3 representative assembly. It should be a
4 miniature, an exact portrait of the people at
5 large. It should think, feel, reason, and act
6 like them. That it may be the interest of the
7 assembly to do strict justice at all times, it
8 should be an equal representation, or, in other
9 words, equal interests among the people should
10 have equal interests in it. Great care -- great
11 care should be taken to effect this and to
12 prevent unfair, partial, and corrupt elections."
13 John Adams.

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

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

25 Caucus politics is hard, but standing

1 on your merit and standing on your beliefs is
2 harder. Today is a day that each of you should
3 not listen to your caucus or what your caucus is
4 saying to the extent it overrides your basic
5 core beliefs.

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

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

17 I watched an extraordinarily good man
18 that I have immense respect for, our rules
19 chairman, struggle with this for two weeks and
20 struggle with the debate on the floor last
21 night. And it was hard -- it was a hard debate
22 for all of us. The reason is we're trying to
23 fit a square peg in a round hole. We're drawing
24 the very districts and the very lines in which
25 the people are going to elect us.

1 Are we following John Adams'
2 admonition? No, we're not.

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

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

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

24 SPEAKER MOORE: For what purpose does
25 the gentleman from Wake, Representative Jones,

1 rise?

2 REPRESENTATIVE JONES: I rise to speak
3 to the bill.

4 SPEAKER MOORE: The gentleman has the
5 floor.

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

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

23 This process here that we're about to
24 engage in is the third rail of democracy. And I
25 had a friend in this body, he's no longer here,

1 he's still living, good man, a lot of you may
2 have known him. Skip Stam from Apex. Good,
3 solid, conservative Republican. And Skip -- I
4 knew Skip from law practice, and I knew Carl
5 Holleman who knew Skip. And Skip's a very smart
6 guy. Skip, I think -- I don't think I'm
7 misinterpreting this, now supports commission to
8 do this work. I don't know what he did when he
9 was in the body, but this is what he now
10 supports. And I believe the reason for that is
11 because it would lift us, we members, whether
12 you're on the minority side or majority side,
13 out of the process and put it in the hands of
14 men and women and experts who are Democrat,
15 Republican, black, white, Native American,
16 whatever, would be on a commission and try to do
17 the best they can with the process that deals
18 with the third rail of our democracy which is
19 voting.

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

1 less. That's democracy.

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

17 And I have a suggestion. You may not
18 follow this, but that's okay. Regardless of
19 what happens today, we kind of know what the
20 deal is going to be in the lines and all that,
21 but I'm not getting into the lines. But I hope
22 that even when it's not the odd year after the
23 even year, 2021, 3031 after 30, why can't we in
24 the future work on this together in future
25 sessions between now and the next one and change

1 this process that obviously is flawed. It's
2 flawed. And I don't care how long they've been
3 doing it, but the great thing about a democracy,
4 we can change it and make it even better.

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

12 SPEAKER MOORE: Thank you,
13 Representative Jones.

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

17 (Brief interruption.)

18 SPEAKER MOORE: The House will come
19 back to order.

20 Members, before we get underway, we do
21 want to welcome a special guest on motion of
22 Representative Belk who actually herself is in
23 the gallery right now. We're pleased to extend
24 the courtesy of the gallery to the mayor pro tem
25 of Charlotte, Julie Eiselt who is with us.

1 Ms. Eiselt, if you would stand, please. We want
2 to thank you for being here with us today.

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

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

9 THE CLERK: Representative Graham moves
10 to amend the bill on page 5, lines 42 through
11 48, by rewriting those lines to read.

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

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

16 I think I stated earlier my concern,
17 and with this amendment, the amendment really
18 does give I guess it's House District 24 an
19 opportunity to have someone of the American
20 Indian community here in the legislature. As I
21 said earlier, we can go back to the '70s and
22 we've had a member of the tribe standing on this
23 floor, and my amendment will -- nothing's
24 guaranteed, but it will give the citizens of
25 Robeson county and the folks of the Lumbee Tribe

1 a majority decision as they go to the polls and
2 make a choice. The numbers work out very well.
3 Of course, it gives the municipalities of
4 Rowland back to the district, which I served two
5 terms two years ago, and right now I'm serving
6 the area of Fairmont. And this amendment gives
7 those districts back to this -- for this
8 particular amendment.

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

25 SPEAKER MOORE: For what purpose does

1 the gentleman from Caldwell,
2 Representative Hall, rise?

3 REPRESENTATIVE HALL: To debate the
4 amendment.

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

7 REPRESENTATIVE HALL: Thank you,
8 Mr. Speaker.

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

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

23 REPRESENTATIVE REIVES: Thank you,
24 Mr. Speaker. Just ask for a recorded vote on
25 both amendments.

1 SPEAKER MOORE: The chair will be
2 taking recorded votes on the amendments.

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

6 REPRESENTATIVE GRAHAM: To speak a
7 second time.

8 SPEAKER MOORE: The gentleman has the
9 floor.

10 REPRESENTATIVE GRAHAM: Well, I do
11 remember that, Representative Hall, and I don't
12 think that was the factor that -- I don't think
13 that's -- I don't think that's a correct
14 statement you made, and I disagree with you
15 100 percent.

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

21 So, Members, don't buy that, don't buy
22 that. It's not true. And I will tell you my
23 basis for my amendment is to give the Lumbee
24 people in Robeson county representation in this
25 body, and I would ask you don't accept that. Of

1 course my district was changed, but it was
2 not -- it was not because my district was not a
3 part of the litigation. So I'm asking you do
4 not accept that.

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

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

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

18 SPEAKER MOORE: Representative Graham,
19 does the gentleman yield?

20 REPRESENTATIVE GRAHAM: I yield.

21 SPEAKER MOORE: He yields.

22 REPRESENTATIVE CUNNINGHAM: Thank you,
23 Representative Graham.

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

1 that area?

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

7 REPRESENTATIVE CUNNINGHAM: Thank you,
8 sir.

9 SPEAKER MOORE: Further discussion,
10 further debate.

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

16 The clerk will lock the machine and
17 record the vote.

18 49 having voted in the affirmative and
19 66 in the negative, the amendment is not
20 adopted.

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

24 REPRESENTATIVE REIVES: Thank you,
25 Mr. Speaker. Oh, I'm sorry. Go ahead.

1 THE CLERK: Representative Reives moves
2 to amend the bill on page 4, lines 43 through
3 49, by rewriting the lines to read.

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

6 REPRESENTATIVE REIVES: Thank you,
7 Mr. Speaker.

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

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

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

23 As a lot of you know, last night's PCS
24 was the first time that we saw a new grouping
25 and a new change in the districts that cover

1 Wayne, Sampson, Bladen and those areas, and so
2 we couldn't do anything about having an
3 amendment ready for that because last night was
4 the first time we saw it and obviously didn't
5 want everybody to stay here late at night for
6 that.

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

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

20 The fundamental difference in our
21 approaches, in our two different interpretations
22 that I and the chairman have about this
23 particular part, is that we feel that in order
24 to comply with Stephenson that you actually have
25 to draw your Voting Rights Act districts first.

1 Once you draw those districts, then you commence
2 to drawing the rest of the map by the rules and
3 the points that we brought up as far as the
4 criteria that we've used.

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

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

20 And one point I want to clarify is
21 there's a huge difference between making a
22 majority-minority district and making a district
23 where African Americans have the opportunity to
24 elect a candidate of their choice. It can be a
25 much smaller percentage but still allow for that

1 opportunity. This amendment would allow for
2 that opportunity, and therefore I would ask you
3 to support this amendment.

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

7 REPRESENTATIVE HALL: To debate the
8 amendment.

9 SPEAKER MOORE: The gentleman has the
10 floor.

11 REPRESENTATIVE HALL: Thank you,
12 Mr. Speaker.

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

24 Members, if you look at this grouping,
25 this -- the proposed amendment that's before

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

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

22 Members, the grouping that was chosen
23 ultimately -- and I went back and forth on this
24 one as I worked in the committee room, and
25 ultimately -- well, when I discovered that every

1 member -- determined finally that every member
2 in this grouping would be coming back and plan
3 to run again, I looked at that again, that's one
4 of our criteria is doing our best not to
5 double-bunk, and so at that point I knew
6 somebody had to be double-bunked. And so I
7 said, okay, well, let's go look at the other
8 criteria.

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

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

24 So, Members, for those reasons -- and
25 again, just by -- if you just look at it and

1 tell this doesn't pass the eye test. I would
2 ask you to vote no on the amendment.

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

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

8 SPEAKER MOORE: The gentleman has the
9 floor.

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

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

22 Secondly, I will remind you, this is
23 not an argument about compactness. The question
24 simply is does Stephenson require that we draw
25 Voting Rights Act districts first. If you draw

1 those, by definition, those are going to be ugly
2 districts, so that's not what this is about.
3 That's the plain question: Do we draw those
4 Voting Rights Act districts first? According to
5 what we've done so far, we have not addressed
6 the Voting Rights Act at all in this map. This
7 would address that. I would ask you to support
8 the amendment.

9 SPEAKER MOORE: Further discussion,
10 further debate.

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

16 The clerk will lock the machine and
17 record the vote.

18 49 having voted in the affirmative and
19 67 in the negative, the amendment is not
20 adopted.

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

24 THE CLERK: Representative Hall moves
25 to amend the bill on page 1, line 9, through

1 page 13, line 19, by rewriting those lines to
2 read.

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

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

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

24 I don't believe this is a controversial
25 amendment. I actually asked Representative

1 Reives if he would send me what the requests
2 from the Democrats, and I knew on our said, you
3 know, who really, really cared about it and we
4 tried to get it as close as we could, so please
5 support the amendment.

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

12 Representative Hawkins. Representative
13 Hawkins wish to vote?

14 The clerk will lock the machine and
15 record the vote.

16 116 having voted in the affirmative and
17 none in the negative, Amendment A3 is adopted.
18 That was a close one.

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

21 Further discussion further debate on
22 the bill.

23 If not, the question before the House
24 is the passage of House Bill 976 on its second
25 reading. Those in favor will vote aye. Those

1 opposed will vote no. The clerk will open the
2 vote.

3 Representative Richardson wish to vote.

4 The clerk will lock the machine and
5 record the vote.

6 68 having voted in the affirmative, 48
7 in the negative, House Bill 976 passed the
8 second reading and will be read a third time.

9 THE CLERK: General Assembly of
10 North Carolina exacts.

11 SPEAKER MOORE: Further discussion
12 further debate.

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

16 REPRESENTATIVE MOREY: Yes, sir.

17 SPEAKER MOORE: I was holding out hope
18 there. You dashed my hopes up here,
19 Representative Morey. I was like --

20 Further discussion, further debate. If
21 not, the question before the House is the
22 passage of House Bill 976 on its third reading.
23 Those in favor will vote aye. Those opposed
24 will vote no. The clerk will open the vote.

25 The clerk will lock the machine and

1 record the vote.

2 67 having voted in the affirmative and
3 49 in the negative, House Bill 976 passes its
4 third reading. The bill is ordered engrossed
5 and sent to the Senate by special messenger.

6 (Transcription from audio recording
7 stopped at 2:29:21.)

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