



CONGRESSMAN
SILVESTRE REYES

Proudly Representing the People of the 16th District of Texas

Press Release

December 14, 2011

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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REYES STATEMENT ON UNITED STATES SUPREME COURT ONGOING DEVELOPMENTS REGARDING TEXAS CONGRESSIONAL MAPS

Washington, D.C. – Congressman Silvestre Reyes (D-Texas) released the following statement regarding the Texas Congressional redistricting maps and the ongoing developments with the United States Supreme Court:

“Redistricting is a complex matter that I have been focused on for over a year. The 2010 census determined that the population in Texas grew substantially, providing four new congressional seats. The number of residents in Texas divided by 36 seats determined that the 16th District of Texas would lose 59,000 individuals who will now be represented by the neighboring district, the 23rd District of Texas.

“In my 15 years in office, the 16th District of Texas has never included the entire county of El Paso, however my office has worked to ensure we help surrounding communities. For example, I worked for over a decade to help ensure the Tornillo-Guadalupe International Bridge & Port of Entry is built.

“El Paso County Commissioner's Court is raising concerns that under the map drawn by the San Antonio federal court, Fort Bliss is no longer in the 16th District of Texas. In fact, under the new map, the main cantonment area for Fort Bliss remains in the 16th District of Texas. The majority of the population of Fort Bliss is mostly inside Loop 375 and is included in the 16th District of Texas, and much of Fort Bliss is in New Mexico. Until 2002, a large part of the Fort Bliss land in Texas was in the 23rd District of Texas, but I have always worked to support the entire base, whether in Texas or New Mexico.

“When the Texas Legislature approved their partisan map, my Texas Democratic colleagues at the federal level and I worked with other advocacy groups to ensure that the Voting Rights Act was upheld.

“Despite the fact that Texas' minority population has grown substantially over the past decade, becoming the state's majority population, the Republican endorsed map violates the Voting Rights Act and suppresses the impact of the growth of minority populations in Texas.

“As I have mentioned in the past, the Congressional redistricting map passed by Republicans in the state legislature earlier this year is a clear example of their deliberate attempt to dilute minority representation in Texas. Mainly due to the increase in the minority population, Texas will have four additional members of Congress. Minorities account for almost 90 percent of the state's growth in the past decade. Nearly 70 percent of that growth is Hispanic population. However, the Republican Texas legislature drew a map with no new minority opportunity districts. As the first Hispanic elected to represent El Pasoans in the United States Congress, this issue is of immense importance to me. These efforts by Republicans are nothing more than a concerted attempt to deny every Texan the power of one person one vote over the next decade. This is

retrogression, plain and simple. This deliberate attempt to silence the voices of such a large segment of our population is contrary to our American ideals, and should be resoundingly rejected by all Texans.

"Texas is a richly diverse state, and the new congressional map should reflect the large influence of Texans of Hispanic, African-American, and Asian descent, not weaken their voices. Our state's gains in congressional seats are the direct result of minority growth, and any congressional map - whether drafted by a three judge panel in San Antonio or the United States Supreme Court - should reflect this reality.

"The Department of Justice has already indicated its concern that at least two of the districts violate Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act, including our neighboring district -- 23rd District of Texas. Since the deadlines for filing were fast approaching, the federal court in San Antonio drew a new map to address the Voting Rights Act concerns as well as the increase in the minority population.

"I appreciate the concern by the El Paso County Commissioner's Court after Monday's decision of joining their voices with mine in this year-long battle to defeat the political maneuvering of the Republican Super-Majority in Texas that aims to dilute the growth of the Hispanic population. However, their tardiness to this case could potentially hurt all Democrats in Texas.

"As this case now heads to the United States Supreme Court, the highest court in the land, I look forward to its immediate resolution so we can move forward with state elections now scheduled for March 6. I am hopeful that the United States Supreme Court will uphold the latest map drawn by the three judge panel in the San Antonio. The map drawn by the three judge panel in San Antonio, I believe, most accurately reflects the diversity of our state. Regardless of the outcome of the map, I will continue to represent and work hard for all local universities, local school districts, the County of El Paso, the City of El Paso, its surrounding communities, Fort Bliss and all El Pasoans living in or outside the 16th District of Texas as I have done for the past 15 years.

"I encourage any who wish to learn about the process or would like to help to contact my El Paso office at (915) 534-4400 or my Washington, D.C. office at (202) 225-4831."

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SILVESTRE REYES
16TH DISTRICT, TEXAS

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Congress of the United States
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Washington, DC 20515

December 15, 2011

The Honorable Veronica Escobar
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The Honorable Joe Pickett
State Representative, District 79
1790 Lee Trevino #307
El Paso, Texas 79936

Dear Colleagues:

As we recently learned, the El Paso County Commissioners Court on Monday voted to instruct the county attorney to move forward with finding possible legal options to weigh in on the redistricting process taking place in two separate federal courts as well as the United States Supreme Court.

You will recall that in 2006 the United States Supreme Court determined that the Republican State Legislature approved a redistricting map that violated the Voting Rights Act. In 2011, the United States Department of Justice maintains that the map drawn this year by the Republican State Legislature again violates the Voting Rights Act.

Over the past decade, the population of Texas grew so much that our state gained four new seats in the U.S. House of Representatives. Almost 90 percent of this growth came from minorities - nearly 70 percent from Hispanics.

The parties to the litigation are unanimous against the State of Texas map that was approved by the Republican State Legislature because of concerns with the Voting Rights Act. It is important to note that

when the Republican Texas Legislature drew the new map, no additional minority opportunity districts were included. The United States Department of Justice has indicated that there are Voting Rights Act violations in the state drawn map and the state of Texas' unwillingness to follow the law led the federal court in Washington, D.C. to conclude it would take too long to fully litigate that issue in time for the 2012 election. Because of the deadline for candidate filing and the State of Texas' early primary election, the federal court in Washington, D.C. requested the federal court in San Antonio to draw a new map for the 2012 election.

The federal court in San Antonio drew the map based on extensive input received from different groups and individuals at during a two-week trial this past fall. The Republican drawn map would be unfair to minorities living in Texas. In addition, delaying the election would also hurt the minority population as it might affect voter turnout. As such, both Texas Republicans and Democrats support maintaining a unified primary.

For over a year, I along with many other people have been focused on redistricting in the State of Texas. There have been many opportunities to weigh in, but now we are at the 11th hour on the interim map and doing so could be problematic for minorities throughout the State of Texas.

I have received the concerns raised by the El Paso County Commissioners Court. More specifically, I am aware of County Judge Escobar's assertion as reported by the media that the interim map had cut Ft. Bliss completely out of the 16th District of Texas. While I understand the concerns this would raise, this latter point is incorrect. In fact my office contacted Judge Escobar's office immediately upon receipt of her letter outlying her plan of action regarding redistricting.

I would also like to shed some light on issues regarding Ft. Bliss that have been raise by Judge Escobar.

First, the main areas of Ft. Bliss are within Loop 375 and these areas remain in the 16th District of Texas under the map drawn by the federal court in San Antonio. Second, 89 percent of Fort Bliss is in New Mexico. In fact, up until 2002 I shared the 11 percent of the Texas side of Ft. Bliss with the 23rd District of Texas and worked closely with then Congressman Henry Bonilla, who represented a great portion of west Texas for 14 years, to support the base. Furthermore, larger cities in the State of Texas and throughout the United States enjoy significant influence in part because they have a number of Members of Congress representing, advocating and pushing for their interests and needs.

That aside however, during my 15 years in office, I have supported all parts of Fort Bliss – whether in the 16th District of Texas or the 23rd District of Texas or in New Mexico.

Redistricting is a complex matter, so there also seems to be some confusion about why the 16th District of Texas must be balanced out with the population of all other Congressional districts and 59,000 of its constituents must be allocated to the neighboring Congressional district. In 2012, there will be 36 members elected from the State of Texas to the U.S. House of Representatives, rather than its current 32, so taking the population of the State of Texas and dividing it by 36 rather than 32 results in the need for some Congressional districts to gain constituents, while others have too many constituents. Thus, the one person, one vote requirement of the U.S. Constitution requires that the 16th District of Texas must decrease by 59,000 people.

As you see, the issue at hand is not the representation of Ft. Bliss. The real issue is what will happen to the representation of the countless Hispanic, African-American, and other minorities who fueled the growth of the State of Texas and helped increase its federal share of representation in Washington, D.C.

should the Republican map not be rejected by the Supreme Court. On this point, I have worked with other colleagues at the Congressional level to ensure that not just El Paso, but that Texas is fairly represented and I am encouraged that Judge Escobar has reconsidered advancing any litigation before having the facts, as doing so would have cost taxpayer money and could have potentially damaged the best interests not just of El Paso, but of minority representation in the State of Texas.

Regardless of the outcome, I will always help, support and work for anyone in the region who reaches out to our office whether in the 16th District of Texas, the 23rd District of Texas or the State of New Mexico. I will focus on the issues of importance to our community like protecting Social Security, Medicare, Medicaid and continue being a strong advocate for our seniors, soldiers, students, veterans, and all of El Paso, regardless of Congressional district.

Please feel free to contact me should you need more information on the redistricting process or should you wish to help in this ongoing fight to ensure that Texas' federal representation accurately portrays the diversity of voices in our state.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Silvestre Reyes", with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Silvestre Reyes
Member of Congress



VERONICA ESCOBAR

El Paso County Judge

December 19, 2011

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City of El Paso
Honorable Mayor and Council
Two Civic Center Plaza, 10th Floor
El Paso, Texas 79901

Esteemed Colleagues:

In an effort to keep you informed of our ongoing discussions regarding redistricting, the Commissioners Court wishes to share with you the action we took at today's meeting.

We are not intervening in any of the ongoing cases but have been informed by the various legal experts we've consulted with that there will probably be a third map. It is that map we are most interested in, and we asked the County Attorney's office to (1) monitor the ongoing court cases, (2) continue conversations with outside counsel in case there is a need to retain a firm when the Supreme Court decision is made, and (3) stay in communication with the City of El Paso.

Furthermore, we ratified a position we took in June, which was to maintain Fort Bliss, Texas in the 16th Congressional District should we have the opportunity via a third map. We believe it is possible to maintain minority voting rights in the rest of Texas and keep Fort Bliss, Texas in the 16th Congressional District at the same time.

We will have an item on our agenda on January 9 and 16, 2012 to discuss our options as they develop.

Should you have any concerns or comments, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Veronica Escobar
El Paso County Judge