

Maps

from page A1

Associate Justice Antonin Scalia last weekend right after the High Court had been petitioned by state lawmakers to stay the lower court order, and very little is clear until Friday.

"There is no indication that Scalia's vote would make a difference in the decision regarding a stay," says Irving Joyner, law professor at North Carolina Central University's School of Law in Durham. "Chief Justice [John] Roberts [who hears emergency requests from the U.S. Fourth Circuit] can make this decision without consulting with other mem-

bers of the court, although his practice has been to consult the full court when stays have been requested in other voting rights cases."

Lawyers for the plaintiffs filed their arguments Tuesday with the U.S. Supreme Court as to why the appellate court order should not be stayed. "Simply put, a choice between forcing millions of North Carolinians to vote in yet another election under the unconstitutional enacted plan, and taking the administrative steps necessary to hold a constitutional election in 2016 — including delaying the congressional primary election as necessary — is no choice at all," wrote Marc

Elias, plaintiffs' attorney.

If Roberts doesn't issue a stay before Friday, then the appellate court order stands, and the state is compelled to submit newly-drawn maps by Friday. If the chief justice does consult the full court, and it comes back 4-4 with Justice Scalia gone, then the same result applies.

However, if Roberts were to answer state lawmakers' prayers and stay the lower court order on his own, that means the March 15 primaries would proceed under the current maps.

That would not please the N.C. NAACP, which hasn't gotten very far with its own state court challenges to the 2011 redistricting lines. The civil rights organization has applauded the appellate court order stemming from a federal lawsuit filed by three independent plaintiffs in the First and Third Districts, and this week, blasted "extremist" Republican legislative leaders for wasting literally half of the two-week deadline period they were given to redraw the two unconstitutional districts doing nothing, only to follow-up in the final week with hearings, and a two-day joint session today and Friday.

"These hearings are cynical attempts to create the impression that the redrawn maps had no significant public opposition," charged Rev. William Barber, president of the N.C. NAACP. "In short, the extremists are producing a farce, now that their maps have been called absurd."

Barber wants the March 15 primaries pushed back to May, where they originally were before this year. He added that waiting until the week of to first hold statewide hearings, and then meet Thursday and Friday without getting public input on the newly configured maps, was "evidence that our extremist leaders continue to act in bad faith."

If Republican leaders were hoping to use statewide hearings Monday that were abruptly called for last Friday afternoon

after 5 p.m. with little public notice as a cover, it may have backfired. According to published reports, those who agreed with the appellate court's decision to strike down the First and Twelfth districts outnumbered the opposition 2-1, with many blaming lawmakers not only for the maps, but the confusion caused by moving up the primaries by two months.

State lawmakers reported began redrawing the maps Tuesday considering the testimony drawn from Monday's hearings. Unless the U.S. Supreme Court says otherwise, the N.C. General Assembly is scheduled to convene today and Friday for votes on the new maps.



Photo by Tevin Stinson

Local NAACP chapter President Isaac Howard greets people as they board the bus headed to Raleigh for the Moral March on Saturday, Feb. 13

March

from page A1

requirement that those without one must fill out a "reasonable impediment" excuse in order to cast a provisional ballot, which could still be challenged and thrown out.

In his remarks before the Moral Marchers, Rev. Barber reiterated that the N.C. NAACP will continue voter restriction laws in the courts, and in the streets.

"The fight for voting rights is personal for me," Rev. Barber said, recounting how his family has had to fight for them all of his life. "And it is a battle that we will not turn back from now."

The vote is at the "heart of our democracy," Barber said. "This is why we're so concerned, when politics is more a struggle over money and manipulation, than a struggle over of ideas."

Rev. Barber said when politicians suppress the vote, they want the people to become "slaves to their decisions without citizens having the ability to register their discontent at the ballot box."

"Any politicians who try to suppress the vote are committing a crime against democracy," Barber charged, who then blasted the Republican-led state Legislature for "stacking and packing" black voters into the First and Twelfth Congressional Districts, a move the U.S. Fourth Circuit Court of Appeals has now ruled to be unconstitutional, and lawmakers are scrambling to fix by Feb. 19 for the March 15 primaries.

"When you want to decrease and suppress voter participation so you can rule by default; when you draw racially motivated redistricting political maps that segregate black voters and disallow black and white people and Latino voters from coming together to elect candidates of their choice. That's a crime against democracy! And we must fight back!" declared Rev. Barber.

"We suggest [lawmakers] repent now and begin keeping their promise to protect and defend the Constitution," Barber continued. He rattled off a laundry list of what he called repressive laws that have made it easier to purchase a gun than to vote; hurt the state's environment; and made it harder for the unemployed to find work.

"We have come to serve notice, that we will unleash every political, legal, and moral strategy that we can to create the New South. We will not go back," Rev. Barber said.

"The more you try to suppress the right to vote, the more we will register and vote," he continued. "You can't stop the people. We will win. You can't stop the flow of democracy. You can't take government of the people, by the people, from the people. You can't stop truth. You can't stop justice. You can't stop right. We will rise up. It's on now."

People from Winston-Salem travel to Raleigh for march

BY TEVIN STINSON THE CHRONICLE

Below freezing temperatures and a forecast threatening to dump snow on the entire state did not stop more than a dozen people from Winston-Salem from taking the two-hour bus ride to Raleigh to participate in the Moral March on Saturday, Feb. 13

During the march, which was organized by the N.C. NAACP and the Move Forward Together Movement, thousands of people took to the streets to voice their opinions on a number of issues, including economic justice, educational equity, health care expansion and the protection of voting rights.

Many of those who rode the bus are members of the Winston-Salem Branch of the NAACP and Democracy North Carolina (DNC), a non-partisan organization that uses research, organizing and

advocacy to increase voter participation, reduce the influence of big money in politics and achieve a government that is truly of the people.

DNC field organizer Linda Sutton said voting is very important to her because so many people have made sacrifices over the years to assure that everyone has the opportunity to cast a ballot during elections.

Sutton, who is also a member of the Community Mobilization Committee, recently held a meeting at Emmanuel Baptist Church to discuss the importance of the upcoming elections and encourage citizens to get involved.

"Voting has always been an important topic for me," said Sutton. "Not too long ago, people of color were not even allowed to vote. We have to make sure we preserve that right for younger generations."

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