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# Judges OK North Carolina legislative map changes by expert

By Gary D. Robertson

RALEIGH (AP) - Federal judges on Jan. 18 approved changes a court-appointed expert made to two dozen North Carolina legislative districts, agreeing that maps approved by Republican lawmakers last summer didn't fully remove previous illegal racial bias.

The map changes also came as the three-judge panel agreed with voters who sued over General Assembly boundaries that GOP legislators violated the state constitution's provision against mid-decade redistricting by redrawing several House districts they weren't required to adjust. Those districts in and around Raleigh and Charlotte must revert to their shapes as originally drawn in 2011, the

The judges' order approved these alterations by special master Nathaniel Persily of Stanford University and directed Republican lawmakers to incorporate them in the unchallenged parts of Senate and House plans approved last August. The order means the updated maps must be used in this November's election. Candidate filing begins Feb. 12.

The judges "find no deficiencies in - and instead, many marked improvements over - the related districts in the 2017 plan," the judges wrote, adding later: "We direct the defendants to implement the special master's recommended plans."

Republican legislative leaders confirmed later Jan. 18 that they would appeal the order to the U.S. Supreme Court and block Persily's plan. They've argued that the maps approved in August were lawful and criticized the judges for hiring a special master, arguing lawmakers should have had another shot at redrawing.

The judges said the legislature wasn't entitled to another opportunity, since they redrew the boundaries last summer after the same panel - U.S. Circuit Judge Jim Wynn and District Judges Catherine Eagles and Thomas Schroeder - ruled nearly 30 districts initially approved in 2011 were illegal racial gerrymanders.

Democrats and their allies praised the decision, which they said

would result in fairer elections in 2018.

"We hope that legislators respect the reasoned opinion of this court that this kind of race discrimination has no place in our democracy," said Allison Riggs, a lawyer with the Southern Coalition for Social Justice, who represented voters who sued.

GOP redistricting committee leaders Rep. David Lewis and Sen. Ralph Hise said in a news release that the panel "has unleashed another bout of uncertainty that could harm North Carolina voters who are entitled to free and fair elections."

The altered district boundaries under Persily's plan are likely to help Democrats in a couple of additional races in a year when the party hopes to eliminate veto-proof majorities held by Republicans. Those advantages have helped the GOP push a right-leaning agenda.

In four new House and Senate districts, the judges ruled Jan. 18 that the core of the old unconstitutionally race-based boundaries from the 2011 districts were left intact by the General Assembly and had to be eliminated. Two are in Guilford County, a third covered Hoke and Cumberland counties, and a fourth stretched into Wayne and Sampson counties. Adjoining districts also had to be altered.

Republicans disagreed, pointing out that they didn't look at racial data when drawing the districts. But the judges wrote that the use of political data and the priority of helping incumbents "perpetuated the unconstitutional effects" of the districts.

Rejecting Republican arguments that Persily unlawfully used "racial targets" that lowered the black voting-age population in the four districts, the judges wrote that Persily followed their instructions

The accusation "amounts to a baseless attack on the special master's integrity and credibility," the judges wrote. Friday's (Jan. 18) plan would put Democratic Sen. Gladys Robinson and Republican Sen. Trudy Wade in the same Guilford County district, threatening their re-election bids.

Friday's ruling came a day after the U.S. Supreme Court delayed the order by Wynn and two other judges directing the legislature to approve a new congressional map by next week, citing over-thetop partisan bias favoring Republicans in the current plan. Without mentioning Wynn by name, Lewis and Hise accused "one of the judges" of again attempting to create "chaos and confusion" in state

# Women gather in **North Carolina cities** on march anniversary

RALEIGH (AP) - Thousands of women gathered in cities across North Carolina to mark cities on the one-year anniversary of President Donald Trump's inauguration to build support for an agenda on issues like abortion, immigration and civil rights.

The Charlotte Observer reports police said at least 5,000 people attended the march there. The marchers crowded into First Ward Park for two hours of speeches before walking through the streets waving banners and chanting phrases.

Carolyn Logan of the Black Women's Caucus of Charlotte-Mecklenburg called on women to support each other in the workplace and resist harassment of all kinds. Logan told marchers ""Don't let this movement die."

Mayor Vi Lyles, the first female African-American mayor in Charlotte history, also addressed the crowd.

Marches were also held in Raleigh, Winston-Salem Asheville. NoU/



Rita Moreno, left, looks on as Morgan Freeman accepts the Life Achievement Award at the 24th annual Screen Actors Guild Awards at the Shrine Auditorium & Expo Hall on Sunday, Jan. 21, in Los Angeles. (Photo by Vince Bucci/Invision/AP)

### North Carolina college football player shot to death

WINSTON-SALEM (AP) - A North Carolina college football player was shot to death at a party on another campus, police said Jan. 20.

According statement from Winston-Salem police, its officers responded to a call from Wake Forest University for assistance after a report of a gunshot on campus.

Responding found 21-year-old Najee Ali Baker, a walk-on at Winston-Salem University. Baker was taken to a local hospital, where he died from a gunshot wound.

Wake Forest Winston-Salem State are 9 miles apart.

Winston-Salem Journal reports an email from Wake Forest President Nathan Hatch said Baker was shot during a fight at a party in The Barn, which Forest officials describe as a studentcentered social space that hosts concerts, speakers and various celebrations.

Baker sat out the 2017 season after transferring from Dean College in Franklin, Massachusetts. school's website said Baker was a 6-foot, 1-inch 240-pound linebacker from Brooklyn, New York.

Winston-Salem State Coach Kienus Boulware told the newspaper he was

shocked at the phone call he received early Jan. 20. "I was shocked when I got the call and as a coach you never want to get this

kind of call," Boulware

said, adding that he had to notify Baker's father.

"I spoke with Najee's father and it's a tough call to make to let him know that his son won't be coming home," Boulware said. "We are all really shocked by this because he was a quiet guy and a great teammate."

The coach said Baker would have been a contributor on the defensive line in the 2018 season, which would have been the first of his three years of eligibility at Winston-Salem State, a historically black university in the central part of the state.

Police say the shooting appears to be an isolated incident. No arrests have been made so far. Winston-Salem police and officers from the two schools are investigating the

#### A look at the veracity of claims by political figures

WASHINGTON (AP) - Donald Trump, the presidential candidate, would not like the way Trump, the officers president, is crowing about today's unemployment rate. He'd be calling the whole thing a "hoax."

Trump raised a red flag about declining jobless numbers during his campaign, so as to deny President Barack Obama any credit. Trump noted that the jobless rate masks the true employment picture by leaving out the millions who have given up looking for work.

But Trump is seeing red no more. The same stats he assailed in 2015 and 2016 now are his proof of "fantastic," 'terrific" economic progress, for which he wants the credit.

That disconnect is part of why Trump's statements about the economy this past week, some accurate on their face, fall short of the whole truth.

On top of that, Trump made the far-fetched claim that the economy is better than it has ever been. And in a week consumed with the dustup over the government shutdown, Trump's doctor stepped forward with a testament to the president's health that other physicians found to be too rosy.

A look at some recent remarks away from the din of the budget battle:

TRUMP: "Black unemployment is the best it's ever been in recorded history. It's been fantastic. And it's the best number we've had with respect to black unemployment. We've never seen anything even close." - remarks from Oval Office. THE FACTS: Yes, the black unemployment rate of 6.8 percent is the lowest on record. No, it's not

far and away superior to any time in the past. In 2000, it was within one point of today's record for six months, and as low 7 percent. As Trump was quick to note as a candidate, the unemployment rate only measures people without jobs

who are searching for work. Like other demographic groups, fewer African-Americans are working or looking for work than in the past. Just 62.1 percent of blacks are employed or seeking a job, down from a peak of 66.4 percent in 1999.

The black unemployment rate would be much higher if the rate of black labor force participation was near its levels before the Great Recession.

During the campaign, Trump claimed that real unemployment then was a soaring 42 percent. It's not quite clear, but he could have been referring to the percentage of the U.S. population without jobs - a figure that includes retirees, stay-at-home parents and students. At the time, he considered the official jobless rate a "phony set of numbers ... one of the biggest hoaxes in modern politics."

TRUMP: "We're making incredible progress. The women's unemployment rate hit the lowest level that it's been in 17 years. Well, that's something. And women in the workforce reached a record high. ... That's really terrific, and especially since it's on my watch." - at women's event Jan. 15.

THE FACTS: Again - yes, but. The 4 percent jobless rate for women is at a 17-year low, just as it is for the overall population. But the labor force participation rate by women is lower today than in 2000. The proportion of women in the workforce is not at a record high.

TRUMP: "Our country is doing very well. Economically, we've never had anything like it." - from

THE FACTS: Never say never. The U.S. economy had better employment stats during the 2000 tech boom, just for one example. It's enjoyed stock market surges before. It's had blazing, double-digit annual growth, a far cry from the 3.2 percent achieved during the second and third quarters of 2017. That was the best six-month pace since 2014 - hardly the best ever.

The economy added about 170,000 new jobs a month during Trump's first year. That was slightly

below the average of 185,000 in Obama's last year.

DR. RONNY JACKSON, White House physician, on his examination of Trump: "I think he'll remain fit for duty for the remainder of this term and even for the remainder of another term if he's elected. ... His cardiac health is excellent." - White House briefing Jan. 15.