

Challenge of partisan gerrymandering may have impact

RALEIGH — Another month, another legal challenge related to voting and election fairness in North Carolina.

And this one — which challenges partisan gerrymandering of congressional districts by the Republican-led General Assembly — could have far greater impacts on voters and the future of this state than perhaps any other elections-related court case, including the challenges to the voter ID requirement.

Common Cause, a Washington, D.C.-based good government group with a chapter in North Carolina, filed the suit in U.S. District Court in Greensboro. The group said the case could be a “watershed moment in the fight against gerrymandering.”

The courts have largely avoided determining whether partisan gerrymandering — drawing election districts to benefit one political party over another — is legal.

The lawsuit alleges it is unconstitutional.

Republican lawmakers boldly admitted when they redrew the state's 13 congressional districts earlier this year that they were drawing the maps to keep the state's 10-3 GOP advantage in the U.S. House.

“Perhaps for the first time ever in North Carolina, state legislators have freely and publicly admitted that they gerrymandered for rank partisan advantage,” said Bob Phillips, executive director of Common Cause NC. “We believe our case can finally make clear that gerrymandering of any kind violates the constitutional rights of North Carolina voters.”

All voters who believe they should choose their political representatives — instead of their political representative choosing them — should hope the plaintiffs are success-

COLUMNIST



PATRICK GANNON

ful in this case and that the map-drawing process in North Carolina changes as a result. There is plenty of debate about whether an independent commission could draw maps fairly, but no one in their right mind could suggest with a straight face that the political parties could — or ever would — draw them more fairly.

Historically and currently, maps are drawn for North Carolina's congressional districts, as well as state House and Senate districts, by the political party in control in Raleigh. That, of course, is the Republican Party, but had been the Democratic Party through much of the state's history. Both parties, as they have in other states, have used their political power to draw maps aimed at preserving that power, both in Congress and

the General Assembly.

At least in part because of politically lopsided districts, since 1992, nearly half of all state legislative races have had just one candidate on the ballot, leaving millions of voters with no choice at the ballot box.

Liberal and conservative advocacy groups in North Carolina have long banged the drum for redistricting reform and many legislators publicly support it as well, but the General Assembly as a whole has resisted many opportunities to create a nonpartisan commission to draw districts.

Common Cause pointed out that both Republican Gov. Pat McCrory and his 2016 gubernatorial opponent, Democratic Attorney General Roy Cooper, are on record opposing gerrymandering.

If those two can agree, there must be a good reason.

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Bennett Chattanooga Times Free Press



Letters to the Editor

Hillary Clinton should have been indicted on charges

Dear Editor,

Much of what's been occupying the news lately could have possibly been avoided if Hillary Clinton had been rightly indicted and prosecuted by an honest investigation. Anyone who's watched Trey Gowdy's questioning of FBI director James Comey regarding the Hillary emails would quickly realize that Comey should have immediately ordered an indictment and prosecution of Clinton on multiple felony charges.

I say that because you need to go back to the days when U.S. prosecutor James Comey prosecuted Martha Stewart on offenses she had not even been officially charged with! It appears that Comey rushed to judgement to stave off looming investigations of several very big fish in the world banking community. She apparently took the fall to save others but it paid off in some ways because Martha came out of prison and immediately returned to a multi Billion dollar

company. So, you can readily see that what Martha was accused of was in no way on the level of what Hillary Clinton lies about with every breath.

As for Comey you can easily see how a little selective morality can go along way in keeping one's job and gain statue in the political world. Comey has come a long way since those days and he'll probably never fully come clean in this world but there's another who'll judge his character in this life and I would

not want to be in his shoes.

Honesty and morally deficient Democrats prefer the foreign-born Khizr Khan family to that of American born Mrs. Pat Smith who also lost a son to terrorism in Benghazi but she is practically ignored by the media while the Khans are celebrated for their lose which occurred back in 2004 in Iraq. Yet, the Khans saw no need to go public until the Democrats offered fame and celebrity to bash American born Donald Trump, who in the estima-

tion of millions, has the answer to America's 21st century needs.

May the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob repay these traitors to their country for their sins and those who agree with them as well! Please don't be like James Comey, Hillary Clinton and the Democrats who have no god but their own selfish goals. Remember Romans 10:13

Calvin Lacy
Hertford

Americans are all fools for believing President Obama

Dear Editor,

I can't recall feeling as much disgust at our politicians as I have these past few weeks, and I'm not even talking about the circuses in Cleveland and Philadelphia. It began with the Sunday shows: Hillary lying through her teeth about Benghazi and the FBI investigation, and Donald Trump putting both feet in his mouth while counterpunching the Khans. Then President Obama took over.

First, our anointed leader gave a campaign speech praising Hillary as the most qualified

candidate ever to run for the presidency. Yes, that same Hillary whose 30-year public career has featured an unending string of scandals and lies, not to mention incompetence at every level.

But Obama didn't dwell on Hillary: he used most of his speech to boast about his presidency. Somehow, he failed to mention our \$20 trillion debt, the lowest job participation in decades, a GDP below two percent, and attacks on our soil by terrorists he refuses to name.

Confirming his belief that the

incarceration rate for blacks is disproportionately high, he next commuted the sentences of 208 federal prisoners, bringing the total commutations during his presidency to 562. He justified his action by saying these prisoners had not committed violent offenses, including many who had been convicted of drug dealing, as if providing deadly poisons is not a violent act. Tell that to the mother of a child found dead with a needle sticking out of his arm.

Then, mirroring the President's views on LGBT issues, Secre-

tary of the Navy Ray Mabus announced plans to name a Navy ship for homosexual predator Harvey Milk. In describing Milk, Tony Perkins of the Family Research Council said: "The Navy seems intent on following in the administration's ridiculous footsteps and bestowing a great honor on someone primarily on the basis of his sex life." A life marred by promotion of illegal drug use, sexual exploits, and lies doesn't deserve one of the greatest military distinctions.

Finally, it was revealed that the

President had sent \$400 million to Iran in laundered money delivered in the dead of night on an unmarked cargo plane, the same day that four American prisoners were released by Iran. An Iranian Revolutionary Guard commander boasted it was ransom money, but the Administration denied it. It was just a coincidence. Right.

Obama knows the fools will believe it all. They voted for him, didn't they?

Claude Milot
Hertford

Perquimans, Chowan failing to follow rules on wind farms

Dear Editor,

I have reviewed the Perquimans and Chowan county Large Scale Wind Energy CUP application submitted by APEX clean energy and found that it is missing a major requirement.

I have shared this concern and obvious failure to follow the letter of the law with Perquimans county management and Chowan county legal counsel and received no valid explanation.

The area of concern is found under letter (f) of both counties' Wind Energy application requirements.

The preamble states: "the application shall contain the following". It does not state the verbiage: "should, it would be nice if., or at the counties discretion." Section (f) requirement states: "Any Environmental Assessment required by state or Federal law;" North Carolina Wind Energy permitting legislation, (Chapter 143-21C) requires: "A study of the impact of the proposed wind energy facility or proposed wind energy facility expansion on natural resources and uses, including avian, bat, and endangered and threatened species."

So the big unanswered question is why would our counties spend the time to barely "strengthen" our ordinance if they don't even plan on adhering to its requirements? Failure requires repair or replacement.

Alan Lennon
Hertford

**Support the party of love,
mercy and justice**

Dear Editor,

A man of God was asked to speak at the Republican National Convention. The Pastor said "our enemy" is the Democratic Party and the the Republican Party was "the conservative party under God". Most in the audience appeared to share his sentiments.

Another man of God was asked to speak at the Democratic National Convention. The Reverend said "We must shock this nation with the power of love. We must shock this nation with the power of mercy. We must shock this nation and fight for justice for all."

Most in the audience seemed to share his sentiments.

So, we have one political party that supports divisiveness and hate, and refers to their fellow Americans as the "enemy". And we have another political party that supports love, mercy, and justice for all.

I don't know about anyone else, but I'm going with the Party that supports, love, mercy, and justice for all.

Nancy Theodore
Hertford

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