

Congressman Watt's Statement on the Recently Released Congressional Redistricting Map Proposed by the State House and Senate Republicans

WASHINGTON, DC— Congressman Mel Watt (12th District of North Carolina) made the following statement regarding the recently released congressional redistricting map proposed by the state House and Senate Republicans:

“I have reviewed the congressional redistricting map proposed by the state House and Senate Republicans. My assessment is that the desire of the Republicans to gain partisan advantage has led them to violate both the letter and spirit of the Voting Rights Act (VRA) and court cases interpreting the VRA. The Republicans have gone out of their way to pack African-American voters into the 12th District and, in the process, have made race the compelling rationale for the proposed district. This is neither justified nor sanctioned by the VRA. It represents a disappointing effort by the Republicans to dilute and minimize the political influence of African-American voters in the Piedmont by packing all of them into the 12th district so none of them have influence in adjoining districts. It also represents a sinister Republican effort to use African Americans as pawns in their effort to gain partisan, political gains in Congress.

“The VRA was passed to level the political playing field for African Americans by neutralizing the impact of historic racial voting patterns that continue today. Overcompensating for racially polarized voting by packing more African-American voters into a district than reasonably necessary to offset racial voting patterns is just as violative of the VRA as not placing enough African-American voters with common interests in a district to offset racial voting patterns. Republicans placing too much emphasis on race, which seems apparent in the drawing of the 12th district as well as some other districts in their plan, will almost certainly result in protracted and costly litigation, uncertainty and cynicism. I regret that the Republicans have chosen a course of action that will have this result in an effort to gain partisan political advantage.”

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