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CONTACT: Dan Morenoff, (214) 504-1835, danmorenoff@equalvotingrights.org;

www.equalvotingrights.org

Voters Challenge Districts that Illegally Target Local Minority

DALLAS— Today, the Equal Voting Rights Institute and a group of Dallas voters sued the County, asking a Federal court to declare that the existing Commissioners Court districts deny a local racial minority its rights under the Voting Rights Act and the Constitution. The suit argues that the current map denies a local racial minority (Anglos) the chance to fairly participate in the electoral process. They have challenged exactly the same treatment that voting rights activists have complained for years that statewide minorities receive from Texas.

Courts across America apply the Voting Rights Act to bar governments from punishing racial groups out-of-favor with those in power. Originally understood to prevent the rigging of elections so that only one race could win, modern cases forbid the “dilution” of out-of-power races’ voting strength through maps that “crack” them between many districts or “pack” them unnecessarily into a single one. Courts require the drawing of districts that allow racial minorities the chance to elect their preferred candidates.

These principles are well established, but EVRI’s Dallas suit is the first in the nation to seek these same protections for an Anglo minority sliced and diced between districts. Explained Dan Morenoff, EVRI’s Executive Director, “Dallas carved up a local minority’s vote with a map allowing almost half the population the chance to compete for no more than a fifth of the seats. That’s just wrong. The Voting Rights Act prevents that kind of disenfranchisement of an out-of-favor race, regardless of what race it is. When Congress took the historic step in 1965 to equally protect *all* Americans from racial discrimination, they meant *every* American and I look forward to seeing the Courts enforce that original understanding.”

If EVRI’s suit prevails, Dallas’s commissioners court map would be replaced with one respecting the local minority’s rights and including a second minority opportunity district.

The Equal Voting Rights Institute fights for EVRI American’s voting rights. To learn more about EVRI, its goal of restoring the original understanding of the VRA, and its lawsuit in Dallas, please visit www.equalvotingrights.org.

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Related Quotes from Drafters:

- **Martin Luther King, Jr., in the Letter from Birmingham Jail** (<http://tinyurl.com/nesmqot>):
 - “An unjust law is a code inflicted upon a minority which that minority had no part in enacting or creating because they did not have the unhampered right to vote.”

- **President Lyndon Johnson, in the “We Shall Overcome” Speech** (<http://tinyurl.com/ld8hno>):
 - “There is no [black] problem. There is no Southern problem. There is only an American problem” to which “the answer is simple. Open your polling places to all your people. Allow men and women to register and vote whatever the color of their skin.”

- **Chief Justice Earl Warren, in the *Katzenbach v. South Carolina* Supreme Court case** (<http://tinyurl.com/phczd5c>): (the very first decided under the VRA):
 - **The VRA “...broadly prohibits the use of voting rules to abridge exercise of the franchise on racial grounds.”**

- **Congressman John Lewis, in Politico** (<http://tinyurl.com/m925h78>):
 - “It is an affront to all of what the civil rights movement stood for, what people died for, what people bled for.... [T]hose of us who marched across that bridge [50] years ago, we didn’t march for some racial entitlement.... [W]e wanted to open up the political process, and let all of the people come in, and it didn’t matter whether they were black or white, Latino, Asian-American or Native American.”