

TEXAS REDISTRICTING LAWSUIT UPDATE

As 2017 begins, Texans are still awaiting action on lawsuits filed six years ago challenging the Texas congressional and State House district boundaries. Attorneys involved in the case had expected the three-judge San Antonio federal district court to issue a decision soon after the November election.

It has been two years since the trial on the merits of the case concluded. [For details on the actions to date, see the earlier blog [“The Long and Winding Road of Court Challenges to Texas Voting Rights 02/25/2016 \(updated 05/13/2016\).”](#)]

On December 30, 2016, the major plaintiffs in the case, filed a [joint motion](#) to compel the San Antonio court to issue a decision on the claims that the 2011 Texas maps adopted are discriminatory and in violation of the Voting Rights Act and the U.S. Constitution. The motion indicates plaintiffs will seek relief in appellate court if no ruling in the case is received by January 17, 2017. The motion is pursued now because of the fear the case won't move forward to be able to address boundaries before the 2018 state election and the subsequent redrawing of the next Census-driven boundaries in 2021.

Absent a ruling, Texas has been voting for Congressional members and State Representatives based on the interim plans ordered by the Court in 2012, which plaintiffs argue retain many of the discriminatory features against Hispanic and African American voters – specifically in Corpus Christi, San Antonio, the border region, Travis County and Dallas/Fort Worth areas.

Meantime, in preparation for the 85th Session of the Texas Legislature, three redistricting bills are prefiled on the subject. State Rep. Donna Howard filed HB 369 and HJR 32 calling for a Texas Redistricting Commission to create boundaries for the Legislature and Congressional districts. State Senator Royce West filed SB 209 to establish a Texas Congressional Redistricting Commission.

