

Louisiana v. Callais

Decision update and implications for voting rights

April 30, 2026

Update

On April 29, 2026, the U.S. Supreme Court released a deeply consequential [6-3 decision](#) in *Louisiana v. Callais et al.*

The Supreme Court held that: (1) because the Voting Rights Act did not require Louisiana to create an additional majority-minority district, no compelling interest justified the state's use of race in creating the district at issue (referred to as SB8), and (2) the SB8 map is an unconstitutional racial gerrymander.

Case background

In 2022, after the decennial census, the Louisiana legislature drew a new congressional map with only one minority opportunity district — even though Black voters make up about 30% of the state's population. There are six congressional districts in the state. In response, a group of plaintiffs sued the state of Louisiana. The district court preliminarily blocked the map. The Fifth Circuit upheld the district court's decision, but it gave the legislature an opportunity to draw a new map (SB8).

The new map was effectively upheld by the Supreme Court in 2023, when it decided *Allen v. Milligan*, a similar case about redistricting in Alabama. In that decision, the Supreme Court affirmed the use of Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act to create a second opportunity district in that state based on racialized voting patterns, communities of interest, and a history of discrimination.

Subsequently, a group of white voters sued Louisiana arguing that the remedial map was unconstitutional because it discriminated against white voters in the political process.

The case was originally argued in March 2025, but the Supreme Court set the case for re-argument in October 2025, directing the parties to file supplemental briefing “addressing . . . whether the State’s intentional creation of a second majority-minority congressional district violates the Fourteenth or Fifteenth Amendments to the U.S. Constitution.”

Prior to each of the Supreme Court oral arguments, Public Rights Project filed an amicus brief on behalf of the Louisiana Legislative Black Caucus (LLBC).

- In the December 2024 [brief](#), the LLBC amplified calls from Louisiana voters for more fair maps, argued that the drawing of district lines in the SB8 map were driven by politics rather than race, and established why SB8 should survive a strict scrutiny analysis.
- In the September 2025 [brief](#), the LLBC urged the court to reject the argument that Section 2 no longer needs to be enforced and explained why Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act must remain in place. Caucus members shared first-hand experiences about the barriers that Black legislators and voters face in Louisiana. For example, several districts in Louisiana with significant Black populations are represented only by white elected officials who fail to respond to their communities’ needs.

The decision

Key highlights

The Supreme Court’s reinterpretation of Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act renders it nearly impossible to enforce. The court does not strike down Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act as unconstitutional, but it substantially reinterprets Section 2(b).

- Section 2(b) states that a violation occurs when political processes are “not equally open to participation by” members of a racial group “in that [they] have less opportunity than other members of the electorate to . . . elect representatives of their choice.”
- Under the court's new interpretation of Section 2(b), **a historically marginalized voter is not entitled to cast a ballot in a district created to allow them the best opportunity to select representation reflective of their communities and interests.**

- The court explains that Congress’s authority is limited to enforcing the Fifteenth Amendment’s prohibition on ***intentional racial discrimination***, and that this prohibition imposes liability **only when the state intentionally drew its districts to afford minority voters less opportunity because of their race.**

What it means for 2026 and beyond

- **Section 2’s protections for historically marginalized voters are severely narrowed.** The bar is as high as it has ever been for challenging racially discriminatory redistricting plans and maps. While the Supreme Court did not expressly rule Section 2 to be unconstitutional, it effectively eliminated the VRA as a meaningful tool for civil rights protections.
- **This decision will impact every level of the electoral system.** Challenges to congressional redistricting, state legislative districts, and local electoral districts will all be subject to a new analytical framework in light of the *Callais* decision. And hundreds of districts that were drawn or re-drawn to comply with Section 2 of the VRA will now be subject to revision or litigation.
- **Partisan justifications will likely be given the most weight in reviewing gerrymandered maps, regardless of racial impact.** The new framework created by the *Callais* decision gives extreme deference to a state’s partisan justifications and goals in defending its redistricting plans, appearing to weigh those considerations over the effects of present-day or historical racial discrimination — the original animating force of the Voting Rights Act.
- **Because many primary elections are already meaningfully in progress, the effect on the 2026 midterm elections may be fairly limited.** However, states with later primaries or active redistricting fights may still take on efforts to alter their maps for immediate impact in the 2026 election cycle. The Louisiana governor has already signaled an effort to pause primaries in that state.

Get support

Public Rights Project will continue to monitor the wide-reaching effects of this decision on upcoming elections and redistricting efforts.

Our **Election Protection Hub** offers direct legal support, training, and technical assistance to local elections officials across the country. Please reach out to us: elections@publicrightsproject.org.