

When we shut out the interests of the people because of partisan politics, the people are the ultimate losers

This is the people of Texas versus one man. Lest someone think that all is well in the U.S. House of Representatives, please consider that the level of frustration has hit a new low. Long-serving members tell us story after story of their being shut out of the legislative process which in turn causes the loss of voices of millions of American citizens. We need real leadership here. People who will reach out and heal the divisiveness, people who are willing to change the direction that our legislative bodies are going.

I repeat: When we shut out the interests of the people because of partisan politics, the people are ultimate losers.

This is the people of Texas versus one man. TOM DELAY's interests cannot and will not be allowed to win out over the interests of the good people of the great State of Texas.

THE 53 TEXAS DEMOCRATS COURAGEOUS PROTEST

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. JACKSON-LEE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, on May 12, 2003, 53 courageous and selfless Democratic members of the Texas legislature departed en masse from the Texas Capitol in a display of protest, solidarity, and community pride. Included in these 53 courageous souls are Harold Dutton, Al Edwards, Senfronia Thompson, Garnett Coleman, and Jessica Farrar from my district. Also, Joe Moreno, Kevin Baily, Scott Hochberg, and Rick Noriega from the Houston area.

The Texas Democrats are protesting the new Texas Redistricting plan proposed by the Republican members of the Texas Legislature. This plan is a sham, an outrage, and an insult.

The Republican redistricting plan is an unnecessary, partisan initiative. Redistricting maps are drawn the year following a state census. Accordingly, in 2001, the Texas district lines were drawn and certified by a unanimous federal district court. By law, the present district lines are fair to the public and both political parties. It is an unprecedented and possibly illegal action to redraw the lines so soon after a census.

For example, the Republican goal of increasing the minority percentages in the 30th district could lead to that district being declared illegal under either the Voting Rights Act for "packing the minority community" or illegal in a racial gerrymandering challenge because the district as proposed under Representative KING's plan is not narrowly tailored.

Also, the Republican's elimination of the 24th District as a minority opportunity district would retrogress black voters in Texas in clear violation of the Voting Rights Act.

The only possible justification for redrawing the district lines is so that the Republicans can advance their malicious, mean-spirited goals of party dominance. In advancing their partisan goals the historic 5th Ward will simply be destroyed.

The Republicans have violated over 120 years of congeniality and compromise. During the Democrats' time as the majority party in the Texas legislature, bi-partisan compromise,

party parity, and harmony was the rule of the day. The power hungry Republicans have insulted all Democrats by shattering this longstanding policy of working together.

The Republican insults have stretched all the way to Washington, DC. The Majority Leader of the U.S. House of Representatives TOM DELAY made the bizarre request to have federal authorities like the U.S. Marshals or the FBI pursue the Democratic members of the Texas Legislature.

The 53 Democratic members of the Texas Legislature are not criminals, they are champions of justice.

There are some Republican supporters out there who have begun a mail campaign against the Democratic members of the Texas legislature. They have encouraged people to mail letters calling the Texas Democrats villains and scoundrels.

The vast majority of the public, however, has spoken out in full support of the 53 Texas Democrats. Stanley Tolliver of Cleveland, Ohio, the President of the Norman S. Minor Bar Association, called in with a better idea. Mr. Tolliver encourages us to begin our own mail campaign calling the Texas Democrats what they really are—heroes and sheroes, patriots, the patriotic 53.

These brave individuals are standing up for democracy. They are doing the work of the people of Texas, not the dirty work of TOM DELAY.

I stand today to applaud my colleagues and friends in the Texas Democratic coalition. I salute you and I support you. All of us who believe in justice, fairness, and equality are with you in mind and in spirit. You are our heroes.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. HINOJOSA) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. HINOJOSA addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extension of Remarks.)

TEXAS REDISTRICTING

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. BELL) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. BELL. Mr. Speaker, this gives us a great opportunity to talk about what has transpired in Austin, Texas, and Ardmore, Oklahoma, over the course of this week and what really has transpired throughout the Nation and to set the record straight. I appreciate having this opportunity. During the course of the debate which has taken place this week, there have been some very large misstatements of fact. This gives us a chance to correct the record on some of those issues.

There has been a lot of finger-wagging by the majority leader, Mr. DELAY, along with the Speaker of the Texas House, Mr. Craddick, acting as if they were terribly surprised by the Democrats' reaction to this redistricting bill that was going to be jammed down their throats.

Mr. Speaker, we can look back to editorials in almost every major Texas newspaper dating back to January of

this year where almost every major newspaper took an editorial position that because of the problems facing the State of Texas, because of the challenges that the Texas legislature would be facing because they only meet every 2 years and they have a very limited amount of time to address those challenges, every major newspaper editorialized that redistricting should be stayed away from. Redistricting had already been accomplished by the courts just 2 years ago. There was absolutely no reason to take an absolutely unprecedented course of action and take up redistricting in what was obviously nonsense this year.

But despite those warnings and the warnings set forth very clearly that redistricting would be an incredibly partisan issue, an incredibly divisive issue and would distract from everything that the legislature needed to accomplish, despite those warnings, the majority leader of this body decided to march forward with this very partisan power grab. And so what we saw happen this week with 53 very courageous Democrats from the State House of Representatives going to Ardmore, Oklahoma, had to be expected. There was no surprise. Everybody knew that they would take a stand, that they would fight back. For them to now act as if they were completely shocked is absolutely absurd and absolutely ridiculous.

Another question that has been raised during the course of this debate is that is this not politics as usual and now that the Republicans have a majority in the State House, should this not be expected; should they not try to change the majority of congressional districts in the State of Texas since Texas is a majority Republican State. Again, that is a little bit misleading. Because Texas already has a majority of Republican congressional districts. In fact, if one looks at the voter percentages and the voter history in each of the congressional districts in the State of Texas, there are 20 Republican districts and there are only 12 Democratic districts.

Why then is there a Democratic majority? Why are there 17 Democrats and 15 Republicans elected to Congress from the State of Texas? That is rather simple. Because in five of those Republican districts, the voters, Mr. Speaker, have decided that they like their Democratic Representatives and have returned them time and time again to the U.S. House of Representatives. That is what in Texas and I think everywhere else in the United States we call democracy. Under this plan, the secret plan that finally saw the light of day that Mr. DELAY is proposing, Mr. Speaker, it would change all that by going in and tearing apart districts, tearing apart communities that have been together for years and years, destroying those districts as they exist today to make it practically impossible for the Representatives, the

Democratic Representatives who currently serve in those districts, to be rejected. That is not what we call democracy, Mr. Speaker. That is what we call a very partisan power grab.

The heroes from the State House of Representatives in Texas who went to Ardmore, Oklahoma, this week have been criticized by many on the other side of the aisle. They have said that they should be in Austin carrying out the people's business, they should be there to vote on the legislation which is before them. But interestingly, I heard none of those same complaints just last week when the majority leader of this body decided it was more important to be in Austin, Texas, to lobby for his secret redistricting plan instead of being here in Washington, D.C., along with the rest of us voting on the legislation which was before us. I heard nobody from the other side of the aisle rise to the podium and say the majority leader should be here in Washington, D.C., carrying on and representing his district back home.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. RODRIGUEZ) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. RODRIGUEZ addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. GONZALEZ) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. GONZALEZ addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. STENHOLM) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. STENHOLM addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Texas (Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. REYES) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. REYES addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. ORTIZ) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. ORTIZ addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

THE GROWING CONCENTRATION OF MEDIA OWNERSHIP

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under the Speaker's announced policy of January 7, 2003, the gentleman from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS) is recognized for 60 minutes as the designee of the minority leader.

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. Speaker, in my view the issue that I and some of my colleagues are about to discuss, which is concentration of ownership in the media and the implications of more media deregulation as proposed by the Bush administration and FCC Chairman Michael Powell, is one of the very most important issues facing this country. One of the ways that we can know how important this issue is is precisely by how relatively little media attention has been paid to it. The growing concentration of corporate ownership of media in the United States is in fact one of the least discussed major issues in this country because the media itself is in a major conflict of interest and chooses not to discuss it.

As bad as the situation is today, and when we examine this chart we will find out how bad it is, how few major multinational conglomerates like Viacom, AOL Time Warner, Disney, Clear Channel, News Corporation and a few others, to what degree a few major corporations control what we see, hear and read, as bad as it is, it is likely to become much worse, much more dangerous for the future of democracy in this country if, as is proposed on June 2, the FCC votes for further media deregulation, regulations that have been on the books for years to protect localism, to protect diversity of opinion, to protect the clash of ideas.

Needless to say, there are many people and many organizations all across this country regardless of political orientation who are strongly opposed to changing these regulations and who do not want to see more media consolidation in this country. Millions of Americans do not want to see the handful of corporations who determine what we see, hear and read become three, become two, become one perhaps as a result of mergers and takeovers. These groups range across the political spectrum from progressive groups to conservative groups. According to the Associated Press yesterday, and I quote, "The National Rifle Association joined the ranks of consumer groups, musicians, writers and academics who oppose easing the restrictions.

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"The NRA asked its members to write Powell," that is the FCC Chairman, "and lawmakers in support of the existing rules, said Wayne LaPierre, the NRA's executive vice president." Quote from Mr. LaPierre: "These big media conglomerates are already pushing out diversity of political opinion."

Further, we have heard recently from organizations representing black broadcasters and Latino broadcasters.

We have heard from musicians. We have heard from a wide spectrum of people who say what America is about is freedom, and we cannot have freedom if we do not have a clash of ideas. And it will be very dangerous for this country when a tiny number of multimillion-dollar international conglomerates own virtually all of our newspapers, all of our radio stations, all of our television stations, all of our book publishing companies, all of the companies that produce the films that we observe.

At issue now is the FCC's review of rules that seek to protect localism so that back home they will have local news, that there will be a local radio station telling them what is going on in their community, that will preserve competition and diversity. These rules, among other things, currently limit a single corporation from dominating local TV markets. Do people want to live in a community where all of the local television stations are owned by one company? These rules that we have in place right now will prevent the merging of local television stations, radio stations, and a newspaper. Do people want to live in a community where one company owns their local TV station, owns the newspaper and owns radio stations? Do they think they are going to hear different points of view when that happens?

These regulations deal with the merging of two major television networks so that we will have just a few networks controlling all of the TV stations facing our country. Honest people might have differences of opinion on this issue, but one would think that there would be massive amounts of public discussion all over America. I can tell the Members that in my small State, the State of Vermont, which is one of the smallest States in this country, we recently had a town meeting on this issue, and 600 people came out to hear FCC Commissioner Michael Copps talk about that issue. We should be having town meetings like that all over America, and in my view and in the view of many of us in Congress, the FCC should delay making any decisions on June 2 and let the American people get involved in the process.

Mr. Speaker, it is my privilege now to yield to the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY) who has been very active on this issue. I thank the gentlewoman for being with us.

Ms. WOOLSEY. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Mr. Speaker, I am here today to join my colleagues and to thank the gentleman from Vermont (Mr. SANDERS) for pulling this evening together so that we can speak out against a threat to America. It is not a threat to American lives, but a threat to American values. It is a threat to everything that this Nation stands for, every principle that this Nation was founded on, and every memory of every soldier that has fought and died or been harmed for the free exchange of ideas.