



THE LAW OFFICES OF NICKOLAS A.
SPENCER & ASSOCIATES, PLLC.
9100 SOUTHWEST FREEWAY, SUITE 122
HOUSTON, TX 77074
(713) 863-1409
NAS@NASLEGAL.COM



NICKOLAS A. SPENCER, J.D., MA
MANAGING ATTORNEY
NAS@NASLEGAL.COM

STEPHANIE J. WELLNER, J.D.
OF COUNSEL

BRE'ONA PACE, J.D.
ATTORNEY
BPACE@NASLEGAL.COM

CASANDRA JOHNSON, J.D.
ATTORNEY
CJOHNSON@NASLEGAL.COM

October 15, 2024

By Electronic Filing

The Honorable Jerry E. Smith
The Honorable David C. Guaderrama
The Honorable Jeffrey V. Brown
United States District Court for the
Western District of Texas
262 West Nueva Street
San Antonio, Texas 78207

cc: Counsel of Record via ECF.

Re. *League of United Latin America Citizens et al., v. Abbott et al.*, No. EP-21-CV-00259-DCG-JES-JVB
(W.D. Texas)

Dear Judge Smith, Judge Guaderrama, and Judge Brown:

We write on behalf of Plaintiff-Intervenors Eddie Bernice Johnson, Sheila Jackson-Lee, Alexander Green, and Jasmine Crockett in response to the Court's order requesting briefing on the impact of the recent Fifth Circuit decision in *Petteway v. Galveston County* on our case. While *Petteway* significantly impacts coalition claims under Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act, we respectfully submit that our case remains viable and unaffected by this decision.

I. Impact on Section 2 Claims

Petteway overturns Fifth Circuit precedent allowing minority coalition claims under Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act. This may affect some Section 2 claims in related cases. However, we emphasize that our clients, as individual voters and incumbent legislators or candidates, do not bring coalition-based Section 2 claims. Their claims focus on intentional discrimination and racial gerrymandering affecting specific districts (CDs 9, 18, and 30).

II. Viability of Constitutional Claims

Our constitutional claims of intentional discrimination and racial gerrymandering under the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments remain fully viable. Intentional harm to districts with significant minority populations still violates the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments, even if not cognizable under Section 2 through coalition claims. We draw an analogy to the Supreme Court's decision in *Bartlett v. Strickland*, where the Court stated:

"[I]f there were a showing that a State intentionally drew district lines in order to destroy otherwise effective crossover districts, that would raise serious questions under both the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments. " *Bartlett v. Strickland*, 556 U.S. 1, 24 (2009)(quoting *Reno v. Bossier Parish School Bd.*, 520 U.S. 471, 481–482, 117 S.Ct. 1491, 137 L.Ed.2d 730 (1997)).

Similarly, we contend that the intentional destruction or manipulation of coalition districts for predominantly racial reasons still violates the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Amendments, regardless of Section 2's applicability.

It's important to note that in *Texas v. United States*, the court recognized that "CDs 9, 18, and 30 are the only Black ability districts in" in Texas. 887 F. Supp. 2d 133, 159 (D.D.C. 2012). This underscores the significance of these districts, which are the focus of our clients' claims, and the potential constitutional implications of their manipulation.

III. Plaintiff-Intervenors' Claims Unaffected

We emphasize that the claims brought by our clients do not rely on coalition-based Section 2 arguments. Their claims are grounded in intentional discrimination and racial gerrymandering affecting specific districts. Therefore, these claims are entirely unaffected by the *Petteway* decision and should proceed without impediment.

IV. Request to Amend

Should the Court disagree about the applicability of *Petteway* to the Intervenor's suit, and in light of the sea change *Petteway* wrought on Fifth Circuit jurisprudence, we respectfully request leave to amend our complaint and Expert reports to comport with the Courts understanding.

V. Conclusion

While *Petteway* impacts coalition-based Section 2 claims, the core of our case—focused on intentional discrimination and racial gerrymandering in specific districts—remains viable. We are prepared to proceed with these claims and respectfully request the Court's guidance on amending our complaint to address the changed legal landscape.

We appreciate the Court's consideration of these issues and are available to provide any additional information or briefing the Court may require.

Very truly yours,
/s/ Nickolas A. Spencer
 Gary L. Bledsoe
 Nickolas A. Spencer, Attorney



Attorney for Plaintiff-Intervenors Eddie
Bernice Johnson, Sheila Jackson-Lee, Alexander
Green, and Jasmine Crockett

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