Media Contacts:
press@oag.state.md.us
410-576-7009

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Attorney General Brown Urges US Supreme Court to Protect Minority Voters' Rights

Coalition Argues That States Should Be Given the First Opportunity To Redraw Legislative Districts in Response to Likely Voting Rights Act Violations

BALTIMORE, MD (December 27, 2024) - Attorney General Anthony G. Brown today urged the US Supreme Court to reaffirm that states, in exercising their primary responsibility for legislative redistricting, should be given the first opportunity to redraw legislative maps in response to likely violations of the Voting Rights Act (VRA).

In an amicus brief filed in *Louisiana v. Callais*, a coalition of 20 attorneys general, including Attorney General Brown, is supporting the State of Louisiana and a group of Louisiana voters seeking to uphold a congressional map that includes two majority-Black districts.

In 2022, a federal court in the Middle District of Louisiana found that the state's congressional map likely diluted the votes of Black residents in violation of Section 2 of the VRA. In response, to comply with the VRA, the Louisiana legislature enacted a new map in 2024 that added a second majority-Black district. Later, a group of self-identified "non–African American voters" sued the state in the Western District of Louisiana, arguing that the 2024 map with a second majority-Black district constituted unconstitutional racial gerrymandering, which is defined as drawing districts that favor the voting power of certain racial or ethnic groups, in violation of the Equal Protection Clause.

Supreme Court precedent allows states to redraw voting districts with racial communities in mind when there is a "good reason" to believe they must do so to comply with the voting protections of the VRA. However, a three-judge court in the Western District of Louisiana barred the state from using its 2024 VRA-compliant map to address the 2022 ruling , trapping Louisiana between competing court orders and undermining the state's ability to solve district-based voting inequalities and to comply with federal voting rights law. The Supreme Court agreed to decide whether the Western District of Louisiana's ruling was correct.

"The Voting Rights Act was the product of a struggle endured by those who had been denied the right to vote, so that we could build a better future and form a more perfect union," **said Attorney General Brown**. "Our Office will resist efforts to dismantle the law and weaken any state's ability to address inequality in exercising the right to vote. The right to cast a ballot is the cornerstone of our democracy, and it should be protected."

In its brief, the coalition of attorneys general argue that, in assigning elected state legislatures the primary role in redistricting, the Constitution permits these legislatures the authority to address voting inequalities that violate the VRA by enacting districting plans sensitive to those specific inequalities. The brief explains that, when the federal court ruled in 2022 that Louisiana's existing map likely violated the VRA, the state had a good reason to believe that its addition of a second majority-Black district was required to comply with the federal voting rights statute and was, therefore, not unconstitutional. The brief also urges the Court to reject the arguments in an amicus brief filed by Alabama and 12 other states to toss out years of precedent interpreting Section 2 of the VRA. Accepting those arguments, the coalition argues, would undermine states' decades-long reliance on the Supreme Court's settled interpretation of Section 2.

In filing this brief, Attorney General Brown is joined by the attorneys general of California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, the District of Columbia, Hawai'i, Illinois, Maine, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Nevada, New Jersey, New York, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, Washington, and Wisconsin.

###

https://www.marylandattorneygeneral.gov/press/2024/122724a.pdf