

1 Written Testimony of Lawrence Hill
2 On Behalf of African Americans for Legislative Redistricting
3 Senate Redistricting Committee
4 May 27, 2011
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6 My name is Lawrence Hill. I am President of the Cook County Bar Association.

7 I offer this testimony today in my capacity as co-chairperson of the African
8 Americans for Legislative Redistricting ("AALR"), a coalition of civic organizations
9 that includes the Chicago Urban League, The Woodlawn Community Development
10 Corporation, Harriet's Daughters, Cook County Bar Association, Rainbow/PUSH and
11 United Neighbors for Economic Change. The coalition was formed to ensure the fair
12 representation of African American voters in the 2011 remapping. AALR strongly
13 endorses the map contained in Amendment # 2 to Senate Bill 1177.

14 In general, we believe the proposed map is fair to the interests of African-
15 American voters while also recognizing and accommodating the interests and
16 ambitions of other communities of color with whom AALR has cooperated during the
17 remap process. In regard to the African-American community, the Amendment
18 improves upon the AALR's proposed maps by creating a total of 18 African-
19 American effective opportunity House districts (5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 10, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29,
20 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 38, 114) and 8 African-American effective opportunity Senate
21 districts (3, 4, 5, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17), in which African Americans have the potential to
22 elect the candidate of their choice; 2 other effective opportunity House districts (78,
23 80) in which Blacks and Latinos in combination make up more than 40% of the
24 voting age population and could elect the candidate of their choice; 3 influence House
25 districts (67, 92, 96), in which Blacks will play a substantial role in the outcome of
26 elections; and 2 influence Senate districts (40, 57).

27 The proposed plan achieves its effective African-American opportunity
28 districts and influence districts in part by reducing AALR’s proposed Black voting-
29 age percentages in some African-American opportunity districts, in two instances to
30 below 50% (House Districts 7 and 114). AALR has never been wedded to a set
31 percentage as the ideal benchmark for an African-American opportunity district.
32 Instead, as I testified to this Committee on March 28 of this year, “[O]ur second
33 minimum prerequisite for fair redistricting is that the legislature be guided by the best
34 available political data in determining . . . *what percentage of minority populations*
35 *will create effective majority-minority and minority-opportunity districts.*”

36 Having read the May 24, 2011 committee testimony of Professor Allan
37 Lichtman of American University, we are persuaded by, among other things, the
38 historical and political data which supports the anticipation of African Americans in
39 Illinois retaining the ability to elect the representative of their choice in the African-
40 American opportunity districts proposed in Amendment # 2, including in House
41 Districts 7, 78, 80 and 114. For instance, Professor Lichtman testified that House
42 District 78 has performed as an African-American opportunity district over the past
43 decade despite its lack of a Black voting-age majority, and that the newly proposed
44 District 78 with less than a Black voting age majority should do the same in the
45 future. Given this reality, AALR agrees with the decision of the amendment’s
46 authors to retain House District 78 as an African-American opportunity district.
47 Moreover, in Professor Lichtman’s expert view, House District 7, a district that is
48 adjacent to House District 78, does not require a majority of voting-age Blacks to
49 elect the Black-preferred candidate either; thus, it is feasible to retain House Districts

50 7 and 78 as Black-opportunity districts. Any other reconfiguration in this area would
51 dilute Black voting strength.

52 Before I conclude, I would like to say a word about the extent to which AALR
53 has worked with other groups in order to respect their rights in the remap process.
54 The specific example that I would like to cite is our deference to the Asian-American
55 and Latino communities regarding the formation of a Latino opportunity district that
56 included the vast majority of Chinatown (House District 2). Moreover, at no point
57 during the mapping process did AALR presume to draw districts for these
58 communities; we instead sought only to protect the interests of African-American
59 voters for which we believe the law commands protection. In the process, we
60 respected and worked around districts that were proposed by the Asian-American and
61 Latino communities. We would hope that the Asian-American and Latino
62 communities will show reciprocal respect for the interests of African-American voters
63 going forward. Moreover, we hope to continue to forge a strong bond with these
64 communities as attempts are made to pit communities of color against each other
65 while ultimately seeking to diminish the political power of all voters of color.

66 In sum, AALR is pleased to formally endorse Amendment # 2 to Senate Bill 1177
67 and urge its passage. We appeal especially to Gov. Pat Quinn on behalf of African
68 Americans in Illinois, a constituency that was formidable in his recent election, to
69 heed the broad and representative swath of African-American voices that are part of
70 AALR and to sign SB 1177 into law in a timely fashion.

71 Thank you for the opportunity to submit my testimony.

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