

THE UNITED STATES COMMISSION ON CIVIL RIGHTS

PRESS RELEASE

January 31, 2012

Contact:

Lenore Ostrowsky
Acting Chief, Public Affairs Unit
202-376-8591

U.S. COMMISSION ON CIVIL RIGHTS ANNOUNCES BRIEFING ON

REDISTRICTING AND THE 2010 CENSUS: ENFORCING SECTION 5 OF THE VOTING RIGHTS ACT

WASHINGTON, DC - The United States Commission on Civil Rights announces that the Commission will hold a briefing on February 3, 2012 at 10:30 am to hear testimony on the enforcement of Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act during the 2011-2012 redistricting cycle. The briefing will support its annual report on federal civil rights enforcement efforts in the United States. The briefing will take place at Commission headquarters, 624 9th St. NW, Washington, DC 20425, 5th floor conference room.

Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act (VRA) requires any jurisdiction identified in the Act as having a history of voting-rights discrimination to submit to the Attorney General or the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia any proposed changes that the jurisdiction intends to make to its voting practices and procedures, including redistricting plans. A covered jurisdiction must demonstrate in the submission that its proposal “neither has the purpose nor will have the effect of denying or abridging the right to vote” on account of race, color, or membership in a language minority group. In reauthorizing the VRA in 2006, Congress amended the statute’s ‘purpose’ and ‘effect’ standards in response to two recent Supreme Court decisions, *Reno v. Bossier Parish Sch. Bd.* and *Georgia v. Ashcroft*. These amendments have been effectuated by new guidance and preclearance procedures issued by the Justice Department.

The briefing will include two panels of experts. Panel I will include voting rights scholars Professor Guy-Uriel Charles of Duke Law School, Professor Keith Gaddie of the University of Oklahoma, Professor Justin Levitt of Loyola Law School, Los Angeles, and Professor Nathaniel Persily of Columbia Law School who will discuss the 2006 VRA amendments and post-census redistricting. Panel II will present redistricting counsel from the States of Georgia and Alabama, and also counsel from the ACLU and the Lawyers’ Committee for Civil Rights Under Law who will give their views on the current redistricting cycle and their interactions with the Justice Department.

In its report, the Commission will analyze the effectiveness of the Justice Department’s implementation of the amendments to the VRA and look at the Department’s Section 5 preclearance record. The Commission will also discuss the recent trend toward states submitting their redistricting maps to federal district court in place of or in addition to the Justice Department.

THE UNITED STATES COMMISSION ON CIVIL RIGHTS

More detailed information regarding the February 3, 2012 briefing can be obtained by email request to publicaffairs@usccr.gov.

#####

The U.S. Commission on Civil Rights is an independent, bipartisan agency charged with monitoring federal civil rights enforcement. Members include Chairman Martin R. Castro and Commissioners Roberta Achtenberg, Todd Gaziano, Gail Heriot, Peter Kirsanow, David Kladney, Abigail Thernstrom, and Michael Yaki. Commission meetings and briefings are open to the general public. The Commission's website is <http://www.usccr.gov>.