

# Supreme Court rejects LA voting map

## Ruling gives states more control in redistricting

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USA TODAY

WASHINGTON – After the Supreme Court on April 29 threw out a congressional map in Louisiana that had been drawn to protect the voting power of Black residents, the decision was criticized for undercutting the 1965 Voting Rights Act, though legal and political experts say it's unlikely to play much role in the 2026 midterm elections.

An ideologically divided court sided 6-3 with the Trump administration and with the non-Black voters who challenged the map as relying too heavily on race to sort voters – and it did so just three years after upholding the 1965 Voting Rights Act's vote dilution protections for racial minorities.

Writing for the conservative majority, Justice Samuel Alito called the map an "unconstitutional gerrymander" that violates the constitutional rights of the non-Black voters who challenged it.

The decision had been hotly anticipated because it comes amid the biggest flurry of redistricting since the 1880s, between the customary 10-year Census population counts. Most states have already held primaries for 2026 so the high court's decision is likely to be felt more in the 2028 presidential contest or in 2031, after the next Census.

The decision could ultimately reduce the number of Black and Hispanic members of Congress and boost Republicans' chances of winning more seats in the U.S. House, where they have a thin majority.

States now have a freer hand to change boundaries of voting districts at all levels of government.

Derrick Johnson, president of the NAACP, called the decision "a devastating blow" and "a license for corrupt politicians who want to rig the entire system."

Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act tries to prevent legislative map drawers from diminishing the voting power of racial minorities by either packing them into one district or spreading them out



The decision by the Supreme Court to throw out a congressional map in Louisiana, which had been drawn to protect the voting power of Black residents, could ultimately reduce the number of Black and Hispanic members of Congress and boost Republicans' chances of winning more seats in the U.S. House, where they have a thin majority. ALEX WONG/GETTY IMAGES FILE

across too many districts to have an impact.

Rick Hasen, a law professor at University of California Los Angeles, said lawmakers understood in crafting the voting law that discrimination was rarely done in the open but was hidden "in technical rules, fine print, and lines quietly drawn on a map." He said the ruling could accelerate "an already relentless arms race" in redrawing districts where "politicians choose their voters instead of the other way around."

"The stakes go beyond a single map or a single election cycle," Hasen said in his blog Feb. 18. "Minority representation in Congress hangs in the balance, as does the basic premise that voters should be able to hold their representatives accountable."

Michael Dorf, a constitutional law professor at Cornell University, said the case revived a debate raging for decades about how to avoid discriminating against voters.

"What Alito and the rest of the conservatives would say is we allow politics but we specifically aren't allowing

racial gerrymandering because what you're claiming is a remedy for racial gerrymandering is itself racial gerrymandering," Dorf told USA TODAY. "This is just a recapitulation of the debate we've been having about affirmative action for the last 50 years."

Dorf said he wasn't aware of other pending legal challenges to congressional maps based on race.

It will now be easier for Republicans to draw maps that favor their party, particularly in the South where a voter's race closely aligns with party preference.

Alito wrote that the voting rights law "requires evidence giving rise to a strong inference of intentional discrimination."

In her dissent, Kagan wrote that intentional discrimination is very difficult to prove.

That means, she said, that under the majority's "new view" of the law, a state can systematically dilute minority citizens' voting power "without legal consequences."

In Louisiana, the racially and politi-

cally charged case grew out of a year-long battle over the state's congressional map.

After the 2020 census, the state legislature created a map that had only one majority-Black district out of six, even though Black people make up about one-third of the state's population.

When a group of Black voters sued, lower courts said the map likely violated the Voting Rights Act, the centerpiece legislation of the civil rights movement passed after peaceful marchers were attacked by Alabama state troopers on what became known as "Bloody Sunday."

But in 2024, when the GOP-controlled legislature created a second majority-Black district, a group of self-described non-Black voters went to court in a separate action, arguing a "racial quota" cost the state a Republican seat in a narrowly divided Congress.

The Supreme Court debated the issue in early 2025.

Rather than issuing a decision, however, the justices took the rare step of calling for a second round of oral arguments that more squarely put the future of the redistricting protections in jeopardy. They asked whether states may create legislative districts that comply with the Voting Rights Act without violating the bans on racial discrimination in the 14th and 15th Amendments – changes to the Constitution passed after the Civil War to protect the rights of formerly enslaved people.

Louisiana, which initially defended the map, argued instead in October that the Voting Rights Act's redistricting protections are both "unworkable and unconstitutional."

The Justice Department under President Donald Trump likewise argued that it's become too easy for courts to invalidate maps as discriminating against Blacks without sufficiently considering whether race-neutral factors – such as incumbency protection and partisan advantage – played a role.

The attorney representing Black voters in Louisiana countered, arguing the civil rights law has played a crucial role in diversifying leadership in the state and giving minority voters an equal opportunity to participate in the process.

## U.S. companies reassure investors despite Iran war

Arpan Varghese  
REUTERS

Top American companies from General Motors to Coca-Cola are trying to reassure investors they can weather the financial fallout from the Iran war, even as surging fuel and packaging costs threaten margins.

Oil prices have jumped since the start of the conflict, driving up input costs across industries already pressured by U.S. tariffs. The increase is forcing companies to weigh price increases at a time when consumers are showing signs of strain.

A Reuters review of company statements since the start of the war showed that 24 companies have withdrawn or cut their forecasts, 35 have signaled price hikes and another 35 have warned of a financial hit.

Yet, several executives struck a confident tone on April 28, banking on hedging, prior purchasing contracts, resilient demand or the ability to offset costs elsewhere.

Coca-Cola was among the major firms to strike an optimistic note, betting on resilient demand for its sodas, with CFO John Murphy stating that the company, like PepsiCo, had locked in some lower prices before the start of the current disruption.

The beverage giant is still exposed to higher packaging costs of plastic and aluminum for some finished products. Murphy said the company is "working hard with our bottling partners to deal with the implications of the situation ... in the Middle East."

Some of the optimism has rubbed off on Wall Street. Analysts raised expectations for first-quarter S&P 500 earnings growth to 16.1% as of April 24 from 14.3% on Feb. 27, before the war began, albeit driven mostly by strong forecasts from technology and energy companies, according to LSEG data.

"It's been an extraordinarily strong earnings season," said David Morrison, senior market analyst, Trade Nation, noting that the bullish signaling from CFOs and CEOs was necessary.

"If they don't sound as bullish and



Coca-Cola reassured investors that the company had locked in some lower prices before the start of the current disruption fueled by the war with Iran. LUCY NICHOLSON/REUTERS FILE

start citing higher energy costs or, the war with Iran or anything, the market is in a mood and it's at a level where, these stocks could get punished quite badly."

Some like United Parcel Service stuck to a more cautious note, reiterating its full-year revenue target, but also warning that soaring fuel prices could eventually crimp demand.

"It is early in the year and there is a war in the Middle East. High gasoline prices could potentially impact demand towards the end of the year," UPS CEO Carol Tome said.

Others like Detroit carmaker GM signaled that they have been here before, and are well placed to navigate the storm.

GM said it expects inflation in raw materials, chips and logistics to cut annual earnings by \$1.5 billion to \$2 billion, about \$500 million more than it estimated late last year, but still lifted its full-year earnings forecast, citing a resilient U.S. market and an expected tariff refund.

Procter & Gamble was an outlier, at least outside of the airlines, as the global consumer goods bellwether last week warned of a roughly \$1 billion hit to its fiscal 2027 profit from surging oil.

Airlines remain the most exposed, with jet fuel prices having nearly doubled since end-February, wedging carriers between spiraling costs and pre-sold tickets.

## DOJ cites suspect's photo in detention bid

Aysha Bagchi  
USA TODAY

Actions that were "premeditated, violent, and calculated to cause death." The "most serious" crimes in U.S. law. A "possible sentence of life in prison."

The Justice Department isn't holding back in its bid to keep the man accused of attempting to assassinate President Donald Trump locked up.

In an April 29 court filing asking a federal judge in Washington, DC, to keep suspect Cole Tomas Allen in custody in the lead-up to his trial, government lawyers essentially said there are no bail conditions that would keep others safe if Allen were to go free.

"So long as the President and members of his Cabinet continue to appear publicly, which they undoubtedly will, the defendant's motivation for violence remains," they said.

The DOJ also revealed a new photo of Allen, allegedly taken by him shortly before the attack. An enhanced version of the image shows him wearing a sheathed knife, pliers, and wire cutters – consistent with items later recovered when law enforcement arrested him, according to the DOJ.

Allen has been charged not only with attempting to assassinate a president, but also with transporting a gun and ammunition to commit a felony, and firing a gun during a violent crime. U.S. Attorney Jeanine Pirro, whose staff is prosecuting the case, has vowed to bring additional charges as the investigation unfolds.

If Allen is convicted, he could spend the rest of his life in prison.

The case arose after Allen was arrested during an incident at the White House Correspondents' Association Dinner at a Washington, DC, Hilton hotel on April 25. Several top officials were present at the dinner, including Trump, Vice President JD Vance and House Speaker Mike Johnson, R-Louisiana.

Allen attempted to storm the dinner on foot, carrying multiple guns and knives, and planned to kill top officials, starting with the highest-ranking, according to the charges. Prosecutors



The Department of Justice revealed a new photo of suspect Cole Tomas Allen, allegedly taken by him shortly before the attack. PROVIDED BY COLE TOMAS ALLEN VIA UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT FOR THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA

said he emailed family, friends, and a former employer about his plans minutes before the attack.

Tezira Abe, one of two lawyers appointed to represent Allen, previewed what the defense may argue as it seeks conditions that will free Allen from jail at an April 27 proceeding in the case. Abe told a judge that Allen has no prior arrests or convictions and is presumed innocent under the law.

Government lawyers agreed in their new filing that Allen has a clean criminal record, but still said he's a danger to the public.

"Although the defendant apparently has not had prior contact with the criminal justice system, his personal history and circumstances demonstrate that conditions less restrictive than detention will not reasonably assure the community's safety while this case proceeds," the lawyers said.

Recent investigations appear to undercut speculation by online observers who have pored over videos of the shootout that a Secret Service agent shot in the attack may have been injured by friendly fire. The agent, who has not been identified, was protected from serious harm by a bullet proof vest.

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