

Political Grab Bag

By Steve Bagby, Sr., Political Action Committee Chair

In this month of April we celebrate Easter. This is a very special, spiritual and significant time in the lives of Christians. We focus on the life of Jesus Christ and his sacrifice for our sins. We are grateful for his life and the Resurrection!" Glorious is His Name!" I extend my well wishes to each of you during this sacred season. Happy Spring to all of you as well!

U.S. SUPREME COURT NOMINEE—KETANJI BROWN JACKSON –

After a contentious confirmation hearing at times, Senate Democrats are trying to **confirm Supreme Court nominee Ketanji Brown Jackson** as quickly as they can now that the nomination hearings, which ended on March 24th, are over. Democrats want to close the deal swiftly, with a Senate vote to confirm Judge Jackson's nomination by April 8. Because they are in the majority, Democrats have a pretty clear path to get this done, though there's likely to be some "drama," putting it mildly, from Republicans.

Per an online article from *Vox (Vox Media)* dated March 24, 2022, entitled "***Ketanji Brown Jackson Is On Track For A Pretty Quick Confirmation***," Judge Jackson's nomination heads next to a vote in the Senate Judiciary Committee that is slated to take place on Monday, April 4. Per the article, "[t]he Committee vote is widely expected to end in a tie, since the 11 Democrats in the Committee are set to support Judge Jackson, while none of the 11 Republicans are expected to. Although a tie would cause a slight delay, it won't deter her nomination from advancing." "A tie vote doesn't stop us," Sen. Dick Durbin (D-IL) said Wednesday. "It slows us down on the floor for a few hours, but it doesn't stop us."

Per the article, the Committee's response to a potential tie could also indicate how much lawmakers want to preserve Senate norms. Historically, the Judiciary Committee has allowed Supreme Court nominees, including Robert Bork and Clarence Thomas, to go to the floor even if they don't get the backing of the majority of the Committee. If Republicans refuse to do the same with Judge Jackson, Democrats have the ability to vote to release her nomination. Going that

route, though, would indicate that the days of honoring this past practice are likely over.

Democrats hope to hold a floor vote on Judge Jackson shortly after the Committee meeting, with the goal of getting her confirmed before the Senate leaves for its Easter recess, which members could depart for beginning Thursday, April 7th.

Because Supreme Court nominees only need a simple majority (51 votes) to get confirmed, the Democrats' 50-member caucus will be able to advance Judge Jackson on their own, with a tiebreaking vote from Vice President Kamala Harris.

Between now and then, however, Democrats are courting Republican Senators in an attempt to make the vote on Judge Jackson's nomination a bipartisan one in the full Senate. Some have said that given the limited Republican support Judge Jackson received last year, it is unlikely that she will get more than a handful of GOP votes this time around. Sen. Susan Collins (R-ME), who voted to support Judge Jackson's nomination to the DC Circuit Court, recently indicated that she would support her nomination to the Supreme Court. That is good news, indeed!

Republicans Have Limited Ways To Stop The Nomination -

Per the article, there are limited tools Republicans have in order to block the nomination from moving forward. One way is a boycott of the Judiciary Committee vote. Per Committee rules, two members of the minority party need to be present to establish the quorum needed for a vote to take place. If no minority members are present, the vote theoretically cannot move forward. Additionally, a majority of the Committee needs to be present to report a nomination to the Senate floor.

Were Republicans to boycott, the Committee would not have the majority it needs to send the nomination to the floor. In the end, however, Democrats have a way to overcome such maneuvers. In the case of a boycott, Democrats could still advance Judge Jackson's nomination, though it would likely be contested on the Senate floor as a rules violation. At that point, the Senate could hold a majority vote effectively overriding these rules.

There is also precedent to ignore the quorum rule. In 2020, then-Senate Judiciary Chair, Lindsey Graham, advanced Supreme Court Justice Amy Coney Barrett's

nomination even though Democrats boycotted the Committee vote. At the time, however, Republicans had the necessary majority in the Committee to get the nomination to the floor.

Thus far, multiple Republicans have indicated they're unlikely to pursue a boycott. "I haven't had any conversation [on a boycott] with any Republican," Senate Judiciary ranking member Chuck Grassley (R-IA) recently stated. "If there's any thought of that, people would be talking to me. So there's no thought of that."

Republicans have also made demands for more documents to vet Judge Jackson's nomination, including the pre-sentencing reports in child porn cases that Judge Jackson oversaw. Throughout the hearings, Republicans have argued that Judge Jackson was too lenient in child porn cases, an argument that's been widely debunked as it was determined that her sentencing practices were in line with those of other judges. Democrats have already rejected this request and said that they have provided Republicans with sufficient information about these cases. "The notion of making those pre-sentencing reports available for this political environment, and potentially available for public consumption, would be reprehensible and dangerous," said Senator Dick Durbin, Chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee.

Per the article, George Washington University professor Sarah Binder, an expert on congressional procedure, notes that there are few avenues for Republicans to actually slow or block the nomination, including the push for documents. "In a 50-50 senate, the majority can stick together and manage the process to the majority's interests," she told Vox.

We all look forward to April 4th and the dates thereafter as the process moves forward until we can celebrate the confirmation of the first African American United States Supreme Court Justice. What an exciting and historic day that will be. Truly!!

STACEY ABRAMS FOR GOVERNOR OF GEORGIA –

We have another opportunity to celebrate an historic achievement of an African American woman if **Stacey Abrams** is elected Governor of the State of Georgia.

Having previously run for Governor in 2018 and only losing to Brian Kemp by just 1.4 points, Ms. Abrams, the voting rights advocate and former top Democrat in the Georgia House of Representatives, is buoyed by the prospect of defeating Kemp this time around, saying she is running "because opportunity in our state shouldn't be determined by zip code, background or access to power."

Just months after Georgia voters delivered both the White House and the Senate for Democrats, Kemp struck back. One year ago on March 25, 2021, Kemp signed Georgia's notorious anti-voter law — suppressing voters, making it harder to vote by mail and even making it a crime for volunteers to give out food and water to voters in line at the polls. In campaign literature, Ms. Abrams said that "Kemp and his allies in the legislature know they cannot win a fair fight and they rushed through a brazen and horrific bill that makes it harder for Georgians, especially voters of color, to make their voices heard." However, while Kemp's "shameful attack on voting rights will make our work harder . . . it will not stop us." "My parents raised me to believe the right to vote is sacred and that you work for it — and you work to ensure everyone else can too. Our opponents would rather make it harder for Georgians to participate in our democratic process than to lose control." "[We must] fight back and elect new leadership for Georgia. No matter how hard Kemp tries to restrict voting rights, we cannot back down. [Let us] defeat Kemp and his assault on democracy." "My mission is to protect our right to vote so that our democracy reflects the needs and ambitions of those it governs."

There is a lot at stake in Georgia. Between defending the Senate seat of **Ralph Warnock** so as to retain the Democratic majority in the Senate and the race for Governor of Georgia, we must do our part to contribute to their respective campaigns and encourage our brethren there to get out and vote regardless of the draconian effort to stifle their/our voices!!

UPCOMING ELECTIONS –

On Tuesday, **April 5, 2022**, there will be a **Special Primary Election** for **Assembly District 62**, which was called by California Governor Gavin Newsom to fill the vacancy created in the District when **Autumn Burke** resigned. The 62nd Assembly District includes Hawthorne, Lennox, Inglewood, El Segundo, LAX, Westchester, Marina Del Rey and Venice. There are four Democrats running to fill the vacancy:

Angie Reyes English - Councilwoman/Councilmember's Deputy; **Robert Pullen-Miles** - Mayor, City of Lawndale; **Tina Simone Mckinnor** - Non-Profit Director/Businesswoman and **Nico Ruderman** - Neighborhood Councilmember. Vote by mail ballots were mailed out in early March which must be returned or postmarked by Election Day and in-person voting began at Vote Centers on March 26th. After the **Primary**, the **Special General Election** for this District will take place on **June 7, 2022**.

There are also **Elections** taking place on Tuesday, **April 12, 2022**, in other areas in Los Angeles County:

A **General Municipal Election** will be held in the **City of Vernon** on April 12th to elect one member of the City Council.

A **General Municipal Election** will be held in the **City of Cerritos** on April 12th for two City Council seats.

A **General Municipal Election** will be held in the **City of Lancaster** on April 12th for two City Council seats.

In addition, a **General Municipal Election** will be held in the **City of Whittier** on April 12th for Mayor and two City Council seats.

For those of you who live in one of the areas referenced above, make sure you vote so that your voices will be heard!!!

UPDATE ON REDISTRICTING --

Valerie McDonald provided me with updated information on Redistricting in several states for the Grab Bag. Her information prompted me to look into the status of Redistricting in California . . . so before I include the information provided by Valerie, I am providing an update on Redistricting in California.

In December 2021, **California Secretary of State Shirley Weber** signed off on new congressional and state legislative maps unanimously approved by an independent Redistricting Commission based on an updated population count from the 2020 census. Maps were re-drawn by the 14-member independent Commission comprised of a diverse group of Republican, Democrat and Independent community leaders throughout the State who had to apply for the position. The Commission included two African Americans - - **Trena Turner**, a

registered Democrat from the San Joaquin Central Valley and **Derric Taylor**, a registered Republican from Los Angeles.

An article written in January 2022 by the law firm of *Foley and Lardner, LLP*, entitled, “***Congressional Map Redistricted in California: What to Know***,” gives an update on the impact of the new maps. The information below is from that article.

Key Updates on Congressional Districts –

- California will lose one congressional House seat in southern Los Angeles County due to a relative decline in population. Under this new map, congressional districts 40 and 47 will combine. The members that currently represent both of these districts, longtime-serving **Reps. Lucille Roybal-Allard (D-40)** and **Alan Lowenthal (D-47)**, have both recently announced that they will not seek re-election.
- Six Republican seats will shift more Democratic . . . those of **Reps. Tom McClintock (R-04)** in the Sacramento area, **David Valadao (R-21)** in the Central Valley, **Mike Garcia (R-25)** in northern Los Angeles County, **Ken Calvert (R-42)** in Riverside, **Young Kim (R-45)** in San Bernadino and **Michelle Steel (R-48)** in Orange County.
- **Rep. Jackie Speier (D-14)** has announced that she will retire at the end of the 117th Congress.
- **Rep. Josh Harder (D-05)** has been redrawn into a strong Republican area, moving from +1 to +17 Republican.
- **Rep. Devin Nunes (R-22)** announced retirement from his seat in late 2021 after the new 21st congressional district became significantly more Democratic. Under the new map, his seat moves from a +11 Republican lean to a +16 Democratic lean.
- **Incumbent Rep. Darrell Issa (R-48)** received a boost in Republican representation that will bolster his chances of reelection in 2022.
- **Incumbent Democratic Rep. Katie Porter** announced she will run in the stronger Democratic 47th district.
- **Incumbent Democratic Rep. Mike Levin** will run in the 49th congressional district against Republican Orange County Supervisor Lisa Barlett.
- **Incumbents Doris Matsui** and **Ami Bera** (nephew of the late Gertrude Dewey) have announced that they will run in each other's respective districts, with Matsui running in the newly redrawn 7th district and Bera

running in the 6th district. Many of Bera's current constituents have been redrawn into the 6th district.

With Republicans slated to win back the House of Representatives, the new California map represents a chance for Democrats to potentially minimize losses and pick up seats held by Republican incumbents. As a state that has been key in changing majorities in the House, Southern California and the Central Valley represent competitive areas that will be of focus for both parties in 2022. **The new map will take effect with the 2022 Primary Elections, which will be held on June 7th.**

Key Legislature Updates: State Assembly and Senate --

Not only are congressional districts impacted by the Redistricting process in California, lines for the State Assembly and State Senate are also redrawn for 2022. Thus far, 16 incumbents across both the state Assembly and Senate have announced that they are retiring. In 2022, all 80 seats in the Assembly and 20 seats in the Senate will be up for election, providing the potential for a large freshman class. The key caveat for Assembly members is that they must live in the district that they represent, therefore with the redrawing process members often change districts.

Democrats control of the Assembly could increase under the new maps, while their majority in the state Senate could shrink in 2022. In the Assembly, pundits have projected that 63 of the 80 seats are solid Democratic. In the Senate, three districts are flipping from Democratic to a Republican-lean, while only one district has been flipped to favor Democrats.

Retiring Assembly Members include: Democrat Marc Levine, who represents the 10th district in San Rafael; **Democrat Jim Frazier**, who represents the 11th district in Solano; **Democrat David Chiu**, who represents the 17th district in San Francisco; **Democrat Bill Quirk**, who represents the 20th district in Hayward; **Democrat Kevin Mullin**, who represents the 22nd district in South San Francisco; **Democrat Rudy Salas**, who represents the 32nd district in Bakersfield; **Democrat Richard Bloom**, who represents the 50th district in Santa Monica; **Democrat Jose Medina**, who represents the 61st district in Riverside; **Democrat Cristina Garcia**, who represents the 64th district in Bell Gardens; **Democrat Patrick**

O'Donnell, who represents the 70th district in Long Beach; and **Democrat Lorena Gonzalez**, who represents the 80th district in San Diego.

Key updates on State Assembly Seats -

- **Republican Phillip Chen**, who currently represents the 55th district in Brea, has had his district shift towards a Republican majority.
- **Democrat Cottie Petrie-Norris**, who currently represents the 74th district in Orange County, has had her district shift towards a Republican majority.
- **Republican Janet Nguyen**, who currently represents the 72nd district in Huntington Beach, has had her district shift towards a Democratic majority.
- **Republican Marie Waldron**, who currently represents the 75th district in Escondido, has had her district shift towards a Democratic majority.

Key Updates on State Senate Seats -

Retiring Senate Members, most of whom have termed out, include: **Republican Jim Nielsen**, who currently represents the 4th district in Red Bluff; **Democrat Richard Pan**, who currently represents the 6th district in Sacramento; **Democrat Bob Wieckowski**, who currently represents the 10th district in Fremont; **Democrat Robert Hertzberg**, who currently represents the 18th district in Van Nuys; **Democrat Connie Leyva**, who represents the 20th district in Fontana; **Republican Melissa Melendez**, who currently represents the 28th district in Lake Elsinore; **Republican Patricia Bates**, who currently represents the 36th district in Laguna Niguel; and **Democrat Ben Hueso**, who currently represents the 40th district in San Diego.

As is clear from the information set forth above, the new Redistricting Maps have significant consequences on current elected officials, as well as us, the constituents who are served by the officials. Thus, we must stay abreast of the impact of the Redistricting maps in both Congress and the California Assembly and Senate, and be prepared to vote in the June 7, 2022 Primary and beyond, so we can elect officials who are sensitive to the issues that impact us directly.

Note: The article referenced above contains more detailed information than shared in this Grab Bag. For those interested, further information on this topic may be obtained by “googling” the name of the article . . . ***“Congressional Map Redistricted in California: What to Know.”***

Redistricting Information For Other States-

Valerie McDonald provided the following information written on March 24, 2022, by ***“ALL ON THE LINE,”*** a grassroots advocacy campaign supported by the National Redistricting Action Fund.

Notwithstanding the U.S. Supreme Court’s unsigned opinion on March 23rd, reversing a Wisconsin Supreme Court ruling that increased majority-Black districts in the state legislature, the *ALL ON THE LINE* article indicates that there have been some major wins for fair maps recently—like the Supreme Court denying Republicans’ last-ditch attempts to install gerrymandered maps in North Carolina and Pennsylvania. Per the article, there are four states left to pass congressional maps and many more in the midst of redrawing maps that were deemed gerrymandered, thus, their advocacy work must continue. The states they are tracking and the comments related thereto are as follows:

- **Florida** --The GOP-controlled state legislature passed a gerrymandered congressional map that completely fails to accurately reflect today’s Florida, yet Governor DeSantis has threatened to veto this gerrymandered map because - -- *he wants to gerrymander it even more by eliminating a minority voting district.*
- **New Hampshire** - -We are anticipating the state Senate to vote on the proposed congressional map by the end of March. We are also hoping that Governor Sununu will veto the gerrymandered map as promised -- but right now, this Republican governor is holding his cards close.
- **Louisiana** -- Governor Edwards vetoed a gerrymandered congressional map that would have diluted the voting power of black Louisianans -- a big win! But now we are asking the state court to step in to ensure fair maps are adopted in time for the 2022 midterm elections.
- **Missouri** -- This is the last of the four states that have not finalized maps yet. We supported voters filing an impasse lawsuit (like we did in Louisiana) to ask the state court to intervene.

- **Ohio** -- Republicans in Ohio have secured quite the reputation – for running out the clock, gerrymandering the maps and repeating the scenario. . . . so it should come as no surprise that the congressional map they submitted in the latest redraw is gerrymandered and we’re helping voters challenge it in court!
- The redistricting landscape is changing every day. As the midterm elections get closer, our actions right now could be the difference between voters being able to fairly elect leaders who represent their interests -- or another decade of obstruction.

Thank you, Valerie, for sharing this information. It is good to know that there are advocacy groups who are closely following Redistricting issues in various states and helping to challenge problematic maps when the need arises. *ALL ON THE LINE*, as well as other advocacy groups addressing these issues, are following/applying the words of the late, great civil rights leader, **Congressman John R. Lewis**: “. . . **Never, ever be afraid to make some noise and get in *good trouble, necessary trouble.***” (Emphasis added.)

Thank you for reading!

(April 2022)