

OFFICE OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

SUFFOLK COUNTY LEGISLATURE

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PRESS RELEASE

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Judicial Redistricting to Marginalize Minority Communities

Gregory Warns Magistrate's Plan Violates the Spirit of the Voting Rights Act

AMITYVILLE, NY— After examining the congressional redistricting map alternatives drafted by U.S. Magistrate Roanne Mann, today Suffolk County Legislative Majority Leader DuWayne Gregory (*D—Amityville*) expressed great dismay to see that his own community, and most of the communities that he represents as one of only three African-American's ever elected in the entire history of the Legislature, have been thrown into Congressman Peter King's district.

Unlike the current lines, where King represents an overwhelmingly Caucasian population on Suffolk County's south shore (very similar to the demographics of the Nassau County portion of his current district), Mann's map redraws Congressman King's district into areas like North Amityville and Wyandanch. These communities have very different needs than the rest of his district. Of the minority communities in western Suffolk, only Huntington Station (which also has a large African American population), remains in Congressman Steve Israel's district.

Newsday's asserts that Mann's maps keep most districts "geographically compact". But Gregory asserts that Mann's plan for New York's 2nd Congressional District is also a lasting manifestation of the watering down of the 1965 landmark Voting Rights Act. The VRA prohibits drawing district lines that discriminate on the basis of "race, color, or membership in a protected language minority group."

Since its inception, the law has endured several disturbing judicial dilutions.

— MORE, MORE, MORE —

In 1980, the Supreme Court ruled (*Mobile v. Bolden*) that any constitutional claim of minority voter weakening must also include definitive proof of a racially discriminatory purpose or intent. These requirements have been widely viewed as inherently making such claims much more difficult to prove.

A 2009 split decision by the Supreme Court weakened the VRA even further by ruling that a minority group must constitute more than 50% of its citizens voting age population for a district (or potential district) to even be protected by the VRA.

“When our communities are further divided our interests are further marginalized,” says Gregory. “By splitting the African American population between these two districts, Islanders of color will only lose more influence on national issues that have a tremendous local impact.”

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