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DLN:RRR:bmj  
DJ 166-012-3

NOV 2 1971

Mr. Francis Waguespack  
President, St. James Parish  
Police Jury  
Vacherie, Louisiana 70070

Dear Mr. Waguespack:

This is in reference to the reapportionment plan for the St. James Parish Police Jury, which was submitted pursuant to Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

We have given careful consideration to the submitted changes and supporting information. Based upon our analysis, we are unable to conclude that the proposed districting will not have a discriminatory effect.

The problem, as we see it, is in the manner by which the boundary line between proposed Wards 2 and 3 was drawn. It appears to us that the existing boundary lines throughout the Parish run generally in straight lines north and south, between the adjoining parishes and the Mississippi River. The proposed districting retains the north-south character of the boundaries nearly everywhere, except a segment of the boundary between new Wards 2 and 3. The proposed boundary parallels the old boundary line until it reaches the middle of a large black concentration in the town of Lusher. At this point, the line turns due east and follows a railroad track for approximately one mile until it reaches Lawrence Street where it turns back due south and runs to the river. The result is to divide in half the

black population of Latcher which under the old plan was entirely in Ward 10. It appears that other alternatives exist which would avoid this racial effect.

Under these circumstances I must, on behalf of the Attorney General, interpose an objection. See Coalition v. Lightfoot, 364 U.S. 339.

Our assessment of the St. James Parish reapportionment plan also suggests that the resulting districts may deviate substantially from the one-person, one-vote requirements of Kirkpatrick v. Preisler, 394 U.S. 526 (1970). The following inconsistency appears in the figures made available to this Department by Parish officials: Although the population figures supplied by the Parish for each ward appear to be in conformity with the requirements, the statistics supplied for the number of persons transferred to proposed wards 2 and 3 indicate that ward 2 would exceed the norm by 8.6% and that ward 3 would fall 11.4% below the norm. The Parish may wish to consider this problem in connection with any changes which may be made in the submitted reapportionment plan.

We would be pleased to work with you in an effort to resolve these problems. Alternatively, of course, under the Voting Rights Act, the Parish has the option of seeking a declaratory judgment in the United States District Court for the District of Columbia.

Sincerely,

DAVID L. NORMAN  
Assistant Attorney General  
Civil Rights Division