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**Senate Redistricting Public Hearing  
Summary of Testimony  
Sumter**

Central Carolina Technical College, Iris Rose, Health Sciences Center  
March 24, 2011 6:30-8:30 p.m. scheduled

The public hearing began at 6:32 pm. The Redistricting Subcommittee members present were: Senator McConnell, Senator Ford, Senator Malloy, Senator Cleary, and Senator Shoopman. Senators L. Martin and Hutto were absent. The Senate Redistricting staff persons present were: Charlie Terreni, Debbie Hammond, Bonnie Anzelmo, Dwight Jones, and Laurie Traywick.

Senator McConnell introduced members of the subcommittee and explained the redistricting process. He also explained that the ground rules for all of the 10 public hearings would be to ask each speaker to be clear, brief, and civil, so all persons would have the time to present their ideas and concerns clearly and concisely and that all positions would be given respect.

1. Ms. Sherry Smith, the Chairwoman of the Sumter Tea Party, spoke about both Senate and Congressional redistricting. She stated that the Tea Party's main concern is that the redistricting process is fair and balanced, and she stated that the Tea Party believes that no Senate or Congressional seat should be pre-determined simply based upon where the lines are currently drawn or have been historically drawn. Ms. Smith further testified that the Tea Party worked very hard in Sumter County and throughout the 5<sup>th</sup> Congressional District in the recent 5<sup>th</sup> Congressional District election to get Congressman Mick Mulvaney elected to that seat. She also testified that the Tea Party worked to get Representative Murrell Smith elected to his State House seat. Ms. Smith stated that the Tea Party does not have any specific recommendations for how the Senate or Congressional Districts should be drawn; however, she reiterated that the Tea Party will be watching the redistricting process and wants the process and the final plan to be fair and balanced.

2. Mr. Calvin Bennett spoke on the redistricting process in general. He asked that, in the decision-making process that the senators make the districts mirror the population of South Carolina and the diversity of South Carolina. Mr. Bennett testified that South Carolina needs another majority African-American district. He further stated that if the Senate follows the census data, then the process will be fair. However, he cautioned the senators that if process does not follow the data, there will be problems.

3. Mr. Ferdinand Burns with the NAACP spoke next. He spoke about redistricting the lines of Sumter County and the State of South Carolina. He stated that South Carolina has had problems in the past with redistricting. Mr. Burns testified that he simply wants the districts to be drawn fairly so that South Carolina no longer will have to be ruled by Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act. He further testified that he wants the districts to be truly representative of the people. He stated that the Hispanic population in Sumter County has increased 147% in the last 10 years, and he stated that the African-American population has increased as well. Mr. Burns further testified that South Carolina needs to get its priorities straight. Mr. Burns is concerned about the amount of money South Carolina spends on the penal system and specifically mentioned that it costs \$40,000 per year to house a juvenile. Mr. Burns thinks South Carolina should be able to do something better with that kind of money. His main concern is that the redistricting process be fair and balanced for all parties. He stated that, if the process is not fair, the NAACP will take action.

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4. Mr. James Felder, who represents the SC Voter Education Project, spoke about the redistricting process in general. The SC Voter Education Project, in existence since 1965, aids and assists minorities in securing the ballot and offering for office. He noted that since 1965, South Carolina has gone from eight black elected officials to 928 elected officials. However, the Voter Education Project is still finding problems in South Carolina. Mr. Felder testified that he was a legislator in 1972 and served on the redistricting committee when the legislature first apportioned South Carolina in House and Senate races. He stated that the redistricting committee at that time was chaired by Senator Marion Gressette. Mr. Felder noted that South Carolina has had previous problems with redistricting. He is pleased that the senators are holding public hearings and allowing the community to have the opportunity to have input in the redistricting process. He emphasized that the senators should focus on the African-American and Hispanic diversity of South Carolina. Finally, he wants the process to be fair and balanced, and he thinks that, if the Senate abides by that, then this process should go smoothly.

5. Mr. Jonathan Bryan, a Sumter County attorney, spoke next. Mr. Bryan would like for the subcommittee to avoid splitting precincts as much as possible. He stated that Patricia Jackson, the Director of the Sumter County Election Commission, would also like to avoid splitting precincts, because, when precincts are split, the elections are harder to administer. Mr. Bryan stated that he understands, as does Ms. Jackson, that well-administered elections need to be run to instill confidence in government by the people. As such, Mr. Bryan asked that the subcommittee avoid splits if possible. He also testified that with the numbers that the census has shown, which will have about 100,000 people in each Senate district and about 600,000 people in each Congressional Districts, he believes that the subcommittee can avoid splitting precincts and maintain communities of interest and other policies the subcommittee is trying to protect.

6. Representative Grady Brown spoke next. Representative Brown represents House District 50 in the SC House of Representatives, which contains a portion of Sumter County, and has represented that area for over 26 years. Representative Brown is looking forward to the redistricting process in the House. Representative Brown pointed out that there are differences in the House and Senate rules and specifically mentioned that the House only allows filibustering on the issue of redistricting. He believes filibustering will be used when the House takes up redistricting in August. He has heard news about the extinction of the "white Democrat," but he asked the Senators not to protect anyone. He stated that he only wants the redistricting process to be conducted in a fair manner in the Senate and House. He told the subcommittee that he went through the redistricting process after the last census. He is looking forward to working with the Senate in this process.

7. Mr. Braden Bunch, Chairman of the Sumter County Republican Party, testified next. Mr. Bunch would like for the subcommittee to consider communities of interest when drawing district lines. He further stated, though, that with the growth and expansion of the Internet throughout the state, the communities of interest have grown and expanded. Additionally, Mr. Bunch would like for the subcommittee to avoid splitting Senate districts between Congressional districts. He stated that the 6<sup>th</sup> Congressional District contains the areas of 14 State senators, and, in the Congressional seat in the Upstate, nine State Senators make up that area. Mr. Bunch opined that the fewer breaks that the subcommittee makes in those areas, the better the plan will be. He also stated that doing so would reduce the explanations that must be given to people concerning why they have the same State Senator as their neighbors but not the same Congressman.

8. Mr. Kevin Johnson, with the Wateree Task Force, testified next. One of his organization's main concerns is how the shift in population will affect the funding in South Carolina. Senator McConnell told Mr. Johnson that he could speak with the subcommittee attorney about that issue. Mr. Johnson believes that a good bit of the funding South Carolina receives is from the federal budget, and he hopes the shift in

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population in South Carolina and the growth in population will allow South Carolina to be allocated more money.

9. Senator Phil Leventis, who represents Senate District 35, spoke next. Senator Leventis wanted to speak about the communities of interest in Sumter. He testified that Sumter, Clarendon, and Lee counties have always had a very close community of interest. He indicated that Sumter and Clarendon formed a multi-member district in the past. He stated that Central Carolina Technical College has outlets in Sumter, Clarendon, and Lee counties, and USC-Sumter serves Sumter, Lee, Clarendon, and Williamsburg counties. Senator Leventis testified that Sumter and Lee share a detention center for purposes of economy, effectiveness, and efficiency. He testified that Sumter had much in common with Richland County, as well, but that it is 16 to 17 miles from the last stop light in Sumter County to the first stop light in Richland County and that it is over 20 miles between the first major commercial areas in Sumter and Richland counties. He stated that the same is true with Kershaw County. Senator Leventis stated that Sumter is a military and industrial community, and he stated that although Sumter is not a large area, it does have 107,000 people, which is enough by itself for a Senate district and should have a strong influence in a Congressional district. Sumter County has Shaw Air Force Base, which will soon represent 7,000 employees once the Army joins with the Ninth Air Force and the 20<sup>th</sup> fighter wing. Senator Leventis stated that, when that union happens, Shaw will be one of the largest employers in South Carolina, exceeding BMW's and Boeing's current employment numbers. He stated that having the Army and Air Force together will give the area more of an opportunity to withstand efficiency efforts by the federal government in terms of military operations. He also testified about Sumter's industrial strength. He stated that, in the 1990s, there were more new industrial jobs in Sumter County than in any other county, and there was greater growth in Sumter County than in any other county. He stated that Sumter was affected by the early 2000s and the recent poor economic times, but he stated that there are numerous industries in Sumter County that draw employees mainly from Sumter, Lee, and Clarendon counties, while drawing some employees from Williamsburg and Richland counties. He testified that *The Item* newspaper is distributed in Sumter, Lee, and Clarendon counties, and he stated that the judicial circuit contains Sumter, Lee, Clarendon, and Williamsburg counties. The area is bordered with the substantial borders of Lake Marion to the south and the Wateree swamp to the west, and there are two main roads that go through those areas. They are the road that goes to Columbia (HWY. 378) and I-95, which goes to Orangeburg and Calhoun counties. Senator Leventis stated that Sumter has links with Richland and Kershaw counties, but Sumter's main links are with Lee and Clarendon. Those areas even have banks in common. He mentioned that Sumter has close interaction with Darlington County, and that the Sumter Chamber of Commerce recently joined the Midlands area Chambers of Commerce. Finally, Senator Leventis stated that his district is lacking over 30,000 people, and he recognized that drawing the districts is going to be a difficult task. He asked that the subcommittee consider the communities of interest he mentioned and to try to keep those areas together.

Senator McConnell asked if there were any other people in the audience who wished to speak. No one responded. Senator McConnell also announced the upcoming agenda of the subcommittee for those in the audience who were interested in attending other meetings.

The hearing was adjourned at approximately 7:06 p.m.