

# Court made correct decision on districts

Monday's U.S. Supreme Court decision striking down racial gerrymandering will have far-reaching effects on the American political front.

In a 5-4 vote on the last day of the session, the court said districts in which electoral boundaries were drawn for ethnic reasons violated equal treatment statutes for voters. But the decision has created more problems than it has solved.

First off, does the decision sound a death knell for all "majority-minority" districts, or just the ones that blatantly disregard any semblance of geographical order?

Monday's case centered on two congressional districts in North Carolina, created at the urging of the Justice Department after the 1990 census. Though 22 percent of the state's residents are black, the entire delegation was white. In order to equalize the delegation on ethnic lines, the North Carolina legislature hewed out two new districts, and blacks were elected in both of them.

**The court did not deny the right for ethnic districts to exist; it merely affirmed that such districts must fall between logical boundaries.**

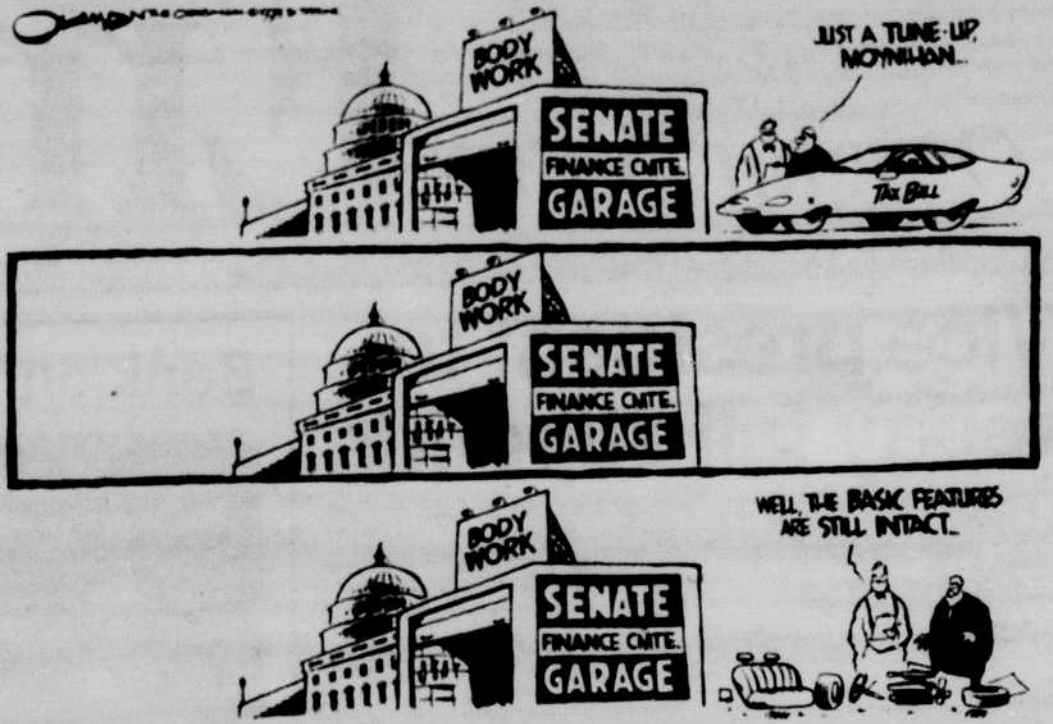
The problem: The districts were not like traditional "majority-minority" ones in which zigzagging boundaries enclosed large black or Hispanic communities. Instead, for example, North Carolina's new 12th District snaked along the Interstate 85 for 160 miles, linking one small black community to another.

While opponents of Monday's decision will scream that the Supreme Court just took a giant step backward on equal rights, such is not the case. The court did not deny the right for ethnic districts to exist; it merely affirmed that such districts must fall between logical boundaries.

Congressional districts should have something in common other than race. The residents of North Carolina's 12th District did not have the same regional goals or ideals — they just had the same color of skin. Such acts do not increase minority empowerment; they foster resentment, stereotypes and racism.

Yes, whether it be traditional or reverse, racism is still the denial of a group's civil liberties by another.

Districts should reflect area demographics as much as possible. Obviously, the two districts struck down by the Supreme Court did not do that. They were merely politically expedient measures done to fulfill a Justice Department requirement while not upsetting the other district boundaries.



## LETTERS

### Brave new world

Oregonians watched the promised 60-day deadline for a solution to the timber gridlock pass. Now we must wait indefinitely for President Clinton's new administration and army of scientists to answer to those whose jobs and communities are threatened.

Science has apparently become a religion of the new guard. Humanity has not been a priority of the 60-day decision-making process that is expected to result in tremendous job losses.

We are entering a "brave new world" where scientists have free rein to decide how and where we will live, work and play. Human needs take last place to the need to study indefinitely where people can no longer work and live. It is a frightening concept. And our politicians seem afraid to challenge the new untested science, even though scientific theories are, by definition, just educated guesses.

Whatever happened to common sense? We are throwing away family-wage jobs in the name of science, as if it is a new religion that we must embrace if we are to be politically correct. We now face a school budget crisis, and it is no coincidence that we are having a timber crisis at the same time. Schools receive millions of dollars every year in timber receipts, which have also been cut dramatically as a result of timber gridlock in the courts.

Jean Sjogren  
Roseburg

### Stay public

I am a student at the University, and I am writing you this letter in hope that you will consider my opinion in making a decision about the future of our

school.

I believe that our school should absolutely not be converted into a private school. For one thing, the price would go up even further, and the majority of students are already on financial aid.

The community of Eugene would crumble due to the status of people attending the University. The school itself is very important to me as well as all the other students. Nobody wants to see it changed.

Thank you for your time. Please take this matter into account.

Stephanie Reisberg  
English

### Memorial fund

June 22, 1992, my son John Alfred Schwab, a former class of '93 junior, died in a tragic accident. In his honor, the family has established a memorial fund via the University Foundation and the history department in his memory.

Each year, a deserving student in the history department will be awarded a scholarship to further his or her education.

I would like you to please publish an article that announces the one year anniversary of his death and invites all and any interested friends, students and colleagues to contribute donations to John's fund in his memory.

Approximately \$700 is still needed before the funds can be awarded. The family would very much like to see the scholarship begun and keep John's memory preserved on the University campus.

Please help us raise the remaining money so some deserving student can be rewarded. All contributions can be made to:

University of Oregon Foundation, John A. Schwab Memorial Scholarship Fund, P.O. Box 3346, Eugene, OR, 97403, Attn: C. Cole.

Thank you for your help.

Linda Schwab  
Delray Beach, Florida

### Close Up

Oregon has much to be proud of... especially its young people.

As the coordinator for the Close Up Foundation's program in Oregon, I have recently had the opportunity to work with 460 high school students and teachers representing 50 Oregon schools who traveled to Washington, D.C., to investigate the Working of the federal government.

While here, the groups had the opportunity to see that Washington is more than a city of marble facades and distant bureaucrats. The students shared their views with many of these people and with students from other areas of the country.

The 23-year-old Close Up Foundation is the nation's largest civic education organization. With educational programs serving thousands of middle and high school students and teachers, the Foundation teaches the participants how democracy works — and how to make it work for them.

Also, the local congressional delegation has been equally supportive in helping to show all of the students that democracy is not a spectator sport and for it to survive, all of us must become active participants.

To all who helped make this experience possible, I say thanks.

Chrissy Brunner  
Oregon Outreach Coordinator,  
Alexandria, Virginia

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