



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
October 12, 2021

**CONTACT: LaToya Henry**  
(313) 447-6404

## **OFFICIAL PRESS STATEMENT**

### **REDISTRICTING OR A 3<sup>rd</sup> RECONSTRUCTION?**

**DETROIT** – *“We are now faced with the fact that tomorrow is today. We are confronted with the fierce urgency of now. In this unfolding conundrum of life and history, there is such a thing as being too late. This is no time for apathy or complacency. This is a time for vigorous and positive action,”* Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. There is a continuous protracted assault on African American political empowerment. In the attempt to re-draw congressional boundaries, will the result be a third reconstruction? The first was right after the Civil War. Blacks gained seats in Congress and State Legislatures throughout the south. The infamous Black Codes were passed by southerners to keep freed men from exercising their right to vote. The 13<sup>th</sup> Amendment, 1865, 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment, 1868, and 15<sup>th</sup> Amendment, 1870, were known collectively as the “Civil War Amendments.” Following enslavement, they were crafted to make certain that African Americans would have rights just like every other U.S. citizen. These amendments abolished slavery, provided equal protection under law, protected the right to vote of all citizens regardless of race or skin color, and provided for apportionment among states according to the numbers of their population. They further sought to eliminate the discriminatory practice of using poll taxes and literacy tests to keep African Americans from voting. From ending enslavement to protecting our liberty, it has been a constant struggle.

The second reconstruction occurred between 1945 and 1968. Presidents from Harry S. Truman to Lyndon B. Johnson used executive orders to desegregate the military, establish civil rights commissions, and enforce equal opportunity. *Brown vs. Board of Education* was decided in 1954. We witnessed the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965. This period required the full engagement of the civil rights movement from both faith-based community, labor, and political leadership, along with Americans from all walks of life.

Today we are facing a third reconstruction. It is rooted in a roll back of our voting rights. African Americans and others are taking their *Soles To The Polls To Vote*. The gutting of Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act in 2013, required certain states and local governments with history of racial discrimination to obtain federal pre-clearance before implementing changes to their voting laws. It has had a lethal effect on the voting process. Gerrymandering of certain districts to crack (fragment minority communities into several districts), stack (concentrate in a small number of districts so that their votes are wasted), and pack (forcing communities to fit into nice squares or design ugly ducklings to jam them together thus limiting the opportunity to expand representation). It can be seen in the recent gutting of Section 2 of the U.S. Constitution by the Supreme Court in July of this year. The court upheld the racist Arizona Voting Laws limiting the number of polling places and the times voters can exercise their franchise. 404 voter suppression bills have been introduced in 48 states with at least 18 states having passed laws making it harder to vote. This is a political virus which has infected our democracy. In the state of Michigan there are the *Blind 39* bills introduced to suppress the right to vote. They particularly target the urban communities with the greatest number of African American voters. These bills are based on the big lie of voter fraud.

**-more-**

Now we face the trauma of having our district boundaries redrawn by using maps that will dilute black political power in congressional and legislative seats. These maps do not expand or create greater opportunity. They restrict the right to participate in our democracy. They violate the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> Amendments. In addition, it violates Section 2 of the Constitution requiring that *"if there is racially polarized voting and if a minority opportunity district can be drawn, then it must be drawn."* There are only three Black people in the state that have been elected in non-majority minority districts. Sarah Anthony, a Representative from Lansing, Erica Geiss, a Senator from the city of Taylor, and Felicia Brabec, a Senator from Washtenaw County. We do not want our votes split up forcing us to give up seats earned by the blood, sweat, and tears of voters down through the years. These measures were designed historically to facilitate greater representation by people of color. They attempted to expand the right to vote not to take away the gains that we have made. We call upon the Michigan Citizens Redistricting Commission to bring forward maps that include us, not dilute us. Maps should be drawn to provide a real opportunity to preserve our democracy. This is why we are standing directly in front of the Spirit of Detroit. It reminds us that, *"now the Lord is that spirit and where the spirit of the Lord is there is liberty,"* 2 Corinthians 3:17. *"This is no time for apathy or complacency. This is a time for vigorous and positive action."* We who believe in liberty and justice for all... *Must Fight Until We Win.*

###