

Democracy & Voting Rights

- ⚠️ Trump judges have weakened our democracy by siding with those who seek to undermine democratic representation and limit voting rights.
- ⚠️ These judges have allowed Republican-led states to further disenfranchise minority voters, eroding their right to have a government that truly represents or serves them.
- ⚠️ They have also made it increasingly difficult for minority voters to challenge voting restrictions, racial gerrymandering, and the dilution of their votes.

The Cases

1 *Rucho v. Common Cause*

In 2019, the Supreme Court issued one of its most detrimental decisions for representative democracy in several decades. The Court ruled that partisan gerrymandering, the act of political parties manipulating voting district boundaries for their own advantage, is not an issue the federal courts can resolve — essentially green-lighting partisan gerrymandering in many states.

What Happened? After a lower court struck down North Carolina's 2016 congressional map for excessive partisan gerrymandering, state Republicans appealed to the Supreme Court. Legislators openly admitted they drew the map to secure a 10-3 Republican advantage in House seats, even though statewide votes were nearly evenly divided between the parties. In a [5-4 decision](#), the Court declined to intervene, ruling that claims of partisan gerrymandering involve a "political question" outside the jurisdiction of federal courts.

Impact: The Supreme Court's decision to remove federal oversight of partisan gerrymandering has weakened protections for fair representation. By refusing to address a fundamental threat to democracy, the Court opened the door for unchecked political manipulation of district maps. This ruling not only entrenches partisan power but also fuels greater polarization and shields politicians from accountability by limiting competitive elections.

2 *Alexander v. South Carolina State Conference of the NAACP*

The Supreme Court's conservative majority has repeatedly sided [against expansive voting rights](#), and this case was no exception. By accepting lawmakers' flawed arguments, the Court upheld racist gerrymandering and disenfranchised voters of color, disproportionately benefiting Republican politicians.

What Happened? In 2022, a federal court in South Carolina found that Republican lawmakers engaged in racial gerrymandering when creating new electoral maps, severely limiting the voting power of Black communities in the state. On appeal, lawmakers argued their actions were merely partisan gerrymandering, not racial. Despite the clear overlap between race and partisanship — as [90% of Black voters](#) in South Carolina support Democrats — the conservative majority on the Court accepted this flawed reasoning, disenfranchising voters of color.

Impact: Racial gerrymandering has long been used to dilute the voting power of minority groups. As Justice Kagan's dissent points out, this decision unfairly "stacks the deck against challenges." The ruling allows lawmakers to disguise weakening minority voting power as "partisanship," and makes it even harder for challengers (including voters) to prove its unconstitutionality.

3 **Petteway v. Galveston County**

The Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals ruled that Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act (VRA), which bans racial discrimination in voting, **does not permit multiracial coalitions** of voters to challenge racially discriminatory redistricting plans. This ruling impacts three southern states — Texas, Mississippi, and Louisiana — that have a history of discrimination against minority voters.

What Happened? After the 2020 Census, the Galveston County Commissioners Court adopted a redistricting map eliminating the only precinct where Black and Hispanic voters made up the majority, diluting their voting power. Voters challenged the plan, arguing it was unconstitutional and violated Section 2 of the VRA. A district court agreed, finding that the new map unlawfully weakened the political influence of the Black and Hispanic coalition. The Fifth Circuit, with **six Trump-appointed judges**, overturned that decision and ruled against the multiracial coalition.

Impact: The Fifth Circuit's decision to deny multiracial coalitions the ability to jointly challenge discriminatory maps weakens the VRA, fractures solidarity among communities of color, and sets a dangerous precedent that undermines democracy and collective legal action. The ruling makes it easier for lawmakers to weaken minority voting power without accountability, limits access to fair representation, and further erodes voter protections in an increasingly diverse electorate.

The Bigger Picture

The Courts Are Rigged Against Us

Trump-appointed judges and the conservative supermajority they helped form — are systematically undermining American democracy in ways that consolidate power, insulate authoritarian behavior, and erode protections for marginalized communities. Across the board, these rulings weaken the foundational principles of democratic accountability, equal representation, and the rule of law. These decisions are strategic, structural attacks on the institutions and rights that support a multiracial democracy. They centralize power in the hands of a few, disempower voters of color, and remove legal pathways to challenge that disempowerment.

Why This Matters to You

- These decisions aren't just isolated legal setbacks — they reflect a broader, coordinated effort to dismantle democratic safeguards and civil rights protections. Trump-appointed judges have already shaped who holds power in America and who is systematically excluded from it. The long-term damage is clear: our democracy is weaker, more fragile, and under relentless attack.
- Silencing minority voters doesn't just harm those communities — it distorts and erodes our entire democracy. It shifts congressional representation, skews presidential elections, and produces a government that no longer reflects the people it serves.
- By making it harder for minority voters and multiracial coalitions to challenge discriminatory laws, the courts are directly enabling disenfranchisement and gutting vital constitutional protections.
- And this isn't just about theoretical rights. When elected leaders are accountable to the wealthy and powerful few instead of the full electorate, they fail to deliver policies that truly serve the people.

What You Can Do



- Spread the word: Share this fact sheet to educate your communities.
- Hold lawmakers accountable: Demand senators reject any nominees who will protect the wealthy and powerful over the rights of all of us.
- Support organizations like AFJ that are fighting back.