

Ballot

'Bid to dilute voting strength'

Black lawmakers sue to block redistricting maps

LANSING, Jan 4, (AP): Current and former Black state lawmakers in Detroit announced a pending lawsuit to block Michigan's newly drawn congressional and legislative districts, contending they illegally dilute the voting strength of African Americans.

The step Monday came days after the new Independent Citizens Redistricting Commission finalized U.S. House and legislative maps to take effect in 2022 and last 10 years.



Dagnogo

The plans are fairer politically to Democrats but have drawn criticism from Black legislators and the state's civil rights department because they slash the number of seats where African Americans account for a majority of the voting-age population.

The old maps had 15 such seats by the end of the decade: two in the U.S. House, two in the state Senate and 11 in the state House.

Commissioners have said Black voters can still elect their candidates of choice without comprising at least half of a district's electorate.

Criteria

The suit, though, will allege violations of the U.S. Voting Rights Act and the Michigan Constitution. The No. 1 map-drawing criteria for the panel was to comply with the 1965 law, which bans discriminatory voting practices and procedures.

Nabih Ayad, a lawyer planning to file the complaint in the Michigan Supreme Court, said the new maps - regardless of whether they are good for Democrats or Republicans - disenfranchise African Americans who are left with the "short end of the stick."

The 13-member commission and its lawyers have said federal law does not require majority-minority districts. Bruce Adelson,

who advised the panel on Voting Rights Act compliance, told commissioners there was a lot of "misinformation" or "a lack of information" being circulated by critics of its approach.

"As shared previously, we believe in the advice of our Voting Rights Act legal counsel that we comply with the Voting Rights Act," commission spokesperson Edwards Woods III said.

Panel

The voter-created panel took over the once-a-decade process that had been handled by the Republican-controlled Legislature and resulted in partisan gerrymandering. Commissioners undid "packing" of African American, heavily Democratic voters in Detroit, which has one of the highest percentages of Black residents in the country.

The city had five state Senate districts. It will have eight under the new map, for instance, after new seats were combined with suburban areas in Oakland and Macomb counties.

Many of the minority-opportunity districts drawn in 2011 had far more African American voting-age residents than were needed to elect candidates of choice, according to Lisa Handley, one of the commission's experts. She submitted a report to the panel saying candidates preferred by Black voters can win general elections if the seats are not 50% African American. But she also noted a lack of data to discern how Black candidates may be affected by white voters in primaries, which decide many races.

"Detroit deserves to have Black leaders," said ex-state Rep. Sherry Gay-Dagnogo, now a school board member. "We want to make sure that our children have an opportunity to see themselves in the Legislature and for people that will fight for them in our classrooms, in our schools to advocate for policies."

She urged the Michigan Democratic Party "to stand with us" even if the maps are fairer to the party as a whole.

"This is unacceptable. We can do better than this," Gay-Dagnogo said.

Insurrection prompts year of change for cops

Jan. 6 attack posed loyalty test for Indiana Rep. Pence

WASHINGTON, Jan 4, (AP): Greg Pence watched the Jan. 6 insurrection unfold from an extraordinary perch.

As chants of "Hang Mike Pence" echoed in the Capitol, the Republican congressman from Indiana and his better-known brother were whisked away from the Senate by the Secret Service shortly before a mob of Donald Trump supporters burst in, intent on stopping the vice president from certifying Democrat Joe Biden's win.

Their dramatic escape, caught on security cameras, came minutes after Trump excoriated Mike Pence on Twitter for lacking the "courage" to use his ceremonial post presiding over the certification of the 2020 election to overturn its outcome.

Asked

"My brother was being asked to do what we don't do in this country," Greg Pence recounted at a Republican fundraising dinner in his district last July, one of the rare instances he has spoken publicly about the attack. He later added, "I couldn't be prouder."

At the beating heart of the insurrection lies Trump's attempt to pressure his vice president to take the unprecedented step of overturning the election. And few had a better vantage point on the day of the attack than Greg Pence, who watched the certification proceedings from the Senate gallery, then joined his younger brother in a private office off the Senate chamber when chaos broke out. They were evacuated, along with other members of the Pence family, to a secure area, where the vice president worked the phone, pleading for help to clear rioters from the building.

That makes Greg Pence a tantalizing prospective witness for the House Jan. 6 committee, which is investigating the origins of the insurrection that Trump fomented when he urged his support-

WASHINGTON, Jan 4, (AP): A year after thousands of violent pro-Trump rioters overwhelmed police officers at the U.S. Capitol - severely injuring dozens in the process - the force dedicated to protecting the premier symbol of American democracy has transformed.

The leaders who were in charge of the U.S. Capitol Police on Jan. 6 were ousted following criticism for intelligence and other failures that left the legislative branch vulnerable to the stunning attack. And more broadly, the agency that was once little-known outside of Washington now has an elevated profile, leading to a roughly 15% increase in funding and a greater awareness of its role in the patchwork of groups that protect the region.

With the nation's political divide running deep and an unprecedented number of threats against lawmakers, there is still concern about the readiness of the Capitol Police to thwart another attack. But experts say the shock of the insurrection has prompted needed changes, including better communication among the Capitol Police, other law enforcement agencies and the public.

"It's a sea change between this year and last year in terms of how the Capitol Police are thinking, and operating," said Chuck Wexler, the head of the Police Executive Research Forum, an organization that focuses on professionalism in policing. "They're going to be over-prepared, and willing to be criticized for being over-prepared."

Temporary

As the temporary public face of the department, then-acting Police Chief Yogananda Pittman conceded to Congress in February that multiple levels of failures allowed rioters to storm the building. But she disputed the notion that law enforcement had failed to take the threat seriously, noting how Capitol Police several days before the riot had distributed an internal document warning that extremists were poised for violence.

The police department had compiled numerous intelligence documents suggesting the crowd could turn violent and even target Congress. The intelligence documents, obtained by The Associated Press, warned that crowds could number in the tens of thousands and include members of extremist groups like the Proud Boys.

The Capitol Police Board has oversight of the force and is comprised of the House and Senate sergeants-at-arms and the architect of the Capitol, who oversees the building. It passed over Pittman in its search for a permanent chief and, in July, selected J. Thomas Manger, the former chief of the police departments in Fairfax

County, Virginia, and Montgomery County, Maryland.

Manger has focused on making major changes to the agency, which includes 1,800 sworn police officers and nearly 400 civilian employees. He's ordered new equipment for front-line officers and officers assigned to the civil disturbance unit while expanding training sessions with the National Guard and other agencies. He's also pushed for stronger peer support and mental health services for officers.

"I think that the damage that was done on Jan. 6 was not just the physical damage to the Capitol itself. It was not just the harm, the injuries, the deaths that occurred to the men and women of the Capitol Police Department, to



Rioters loyal to President Donald Trump rally at the U.S. Capitol in Washington on Jan. 6, 2021. A new poll shows that a year after the deadly Jan. 6 insurrection at the U.S. Capitol, only about 4 in 10 Republicans recall the attack by supporters of former President Donald Trump as very violent or extremely violent. (AP)

ers to march on the Capitol and "fight like hell."

Pence has largely declined to discuss what transpired while he was with his brother that day, other than praising his brother as a hero for standing up to Trump.

His silence serves as powerful evidence of the grip that Trump still holds on his party, which has led many Republicans to dispute the seriousness of the attack and instead perpetuate the lie that Trump was wrongly denied a second term.

Pence declined last month to speak with The Associated Press at the Capitol. A spokesperson did not respond to multiple inquiries seeking comment.

First elected to Congress in 2018, 65-year-old Greg Pence represents a deeply Republican and largely rural district that his brother held for 12 years before he was elected Indiana governor and eventually selected by

the demonstrators, to the folks that were on the Capitol grounds that day," Manger said in an interview with the AP in September. "The damage went beyond that. It went to where it damaged, I think, the confidence of the American public that the Capitol could be adequately protected."

Improved

In the last year, Capitol Police say they have also improved the way that investigators gather, analyze and disseminate intelligence and have brought on someone dedicated to planning major events to focus on intelligence and coordination. The agency has also started conducting planning sessions and exercises

Trump to become vice president. Unlike his brother, who from a young age was fixated on a career in politics, Greg Pence was always an unlikely congressman.

After graduating from Loyola University in Chicago, he joined the Marines and later fell into a series of petroleum industry jobs. He eventually served as president of Kiel Bros., a Midwest gas station empire his father helped build, a post he resigned from in 2004 after the company filed for bankruptcy and saddled the state of Indiana with more than \$21 million in unpaid environmental cleanup costs, a 2018 Associated Press investigation found.

Pence turned his focus in 2006 to operating antique malls he purchased with his wife, Denise, a business now worth between \$5 million and \$25 million, according to his congressional financial disclosure.

ahead of major events and is briefing officers in person.

Many officers within the department had criticized their own leaders, saying they had failed to recognize the threat ahead of the insurrection and didn't do enough to bolster staffing. Some officers were outfitted with equipment for a protest, rather than a riot.

But even with a new chief and major changes to operations, questions still remain about whether the Capitol is adequately protected. While many, both inside and outside the Capitol, were surprised by the attack that took place last January, some were cautioning the intelligence community to take the planned rallies by pro-Trump entities seriously.

'2022 New Year Ceremony for Peace and Reunification on the Korean Peninsula' and 'Junior/Local Honorary PUAC Member Appointment' held by Peaceful Unification Advisory Council (PUAC) Kuwait



On Saturday morning, 1 January 2022, 'New Year Ceremony for Peace and Reunification on the Korean Peninsula' and 'Junior/Local Honorary PUAC Member Appointment Ceremony' were held at the Radisson Blu Hotel in Kuwait, hosted by Peaceful Unification Advisory Council (PUAC) Kuwait (Chair Hyun-sik Chung, Secretary Kyu-young Lee) and PUAC the Middle East (Chair Bong-cheol Hyun).

About 60 people including Byung-ha Chung, Korean Ambassador to Kuwait, Bong-cheol Hyun, chair of PUAC the Middle East, Seong-hee Jeong, chair of Korean Association in Kuwait, Sook-ja Kim, principal of Korean language school, former and incumbent PUAC members and the representatives of various Korean organizations gathered in this event.

They exchanged New Year's greetings and words of encouragement to build friendships and promote peace and prosperity between Korea and Kuwait. They also had time to pray for peaceful reunification on the Korean Peninsula. In particular, this year, in order to revitalize the Korean community in Kuwait that has been shrunk due to the corona pandemic, and to vigorously promote various community services and peace projects, Junior/Local Honorary PUAC members were appointed with the wishes of PUAC Kuwait's council members. Chung, the chair of PUAC Kuwait, declared that he would carry out various peace projects together with the local community in Kuwait.

