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## **OFFICIAL PRESS STATEMENT**

By Rev. Dr. Wendell Anthony

### **DON'T CHOKE - VOTE!**

**DETROIT** – The U.S. Supreme Court in a six to three ruling put another chokehold on the neck of the right to vote. The majority decided in *Louisiana vs. Callais* the state's current map, which has two majority Black districts, is unconstitutional gerrymandering. Its use would violate the plaintiff's constitutional rights. Justice Samuel Alito, writing the courts majority opinion, cited that "*Section two of the Voting Rights Act could not justify the state's use of race-based redistricting because the Voting Rights Act did not require Louisiana to create an additional majority/minority district. No compelling interests justified the state's use of race.*" This same Supreme Court in *Noem vs. Vasquez Perdomo* last September, by the same six three margin, ruled that race, ethnicity, and language can be used to stop and detain individuals throughout the country. What hypocrisy! Prior to the state approving a second Black district, Louisiana had four Republican districts out of six, one Black majority district, and one swing Democratic leaning district. After the ruling, the state is expected to create five to six Republican districts and one Black majority district. Many fear that this reversal from the prior protection guaranteed by the Voting Rights Act of 1965, rooted in the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> Amendments which 1) Granted citizenship to all born and naturalized in the United States, including former slaves, are guaranteed due process and equal protection under law; and 2) Prohibition denying a citizen the right to vote based on race, color, or previous condition of servitude, additionally extended voting rights to Black men. However, it would take another 50 years, the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment, to provide the same right to women in 1920.

Tied to the 2013 ruling in *Shelby County vs. Holder*, Section 4B of the 1965 Voting Rights Act invalidated state and local jurisdictional requirements to obtain pre-clearance to change voting laws. It opened the flood gates for states like Texas, Mississippi, Georgia, Florida, North Carolina, Louisiana, Alabama, and Arizona to strangle the right to vote with voter ID laws, reduced early voting, changes to same day registration, while placing limits on ballot access. The political noose seems to be tightening around the very neck of the right to vote. Justice Elena Kagan writes in her dissent that the changes made, "*eviscerate the law.*" She further states, "*The Voting Rights Act is or now more accurately was one of the most consequential efficacious and amply justified exercises of federal legislative power in our nations history. It was born of the literal blood of union soldiers and civil rights marchers. It ushered in awe-inspiring change, bringing this nation closer to fulfilling the ideals of democracy and racial equity. It has been repeatedly and overwhelmingly reauthorized by the peoples representatives in Congress. Only they have a right to say it is no longer needed, not the members of this court.*" The noose may be tight around the neck of the voting process. Yet, there is still the breadth of life in the movement for social progress.

This setback should cause everyone to step forward. Now is not the time to sit down. Now is the time to stand up. Now is not the time to stop the vote. Now is the time to vote like never before. Don't just get mad. Let's get even. The Supreme Court Justices were nominated by the President and confirmed by the Senate. Both entities were elected by the people. The same people can both un-elect a President that nominated them and a Senate that confirmed them. All it takes is to exercise the voting privilege and responsibility won by the sacrifices of those who came before us. We can stop this stringing up to the political tree of voting rights before it chokes the very life out of the political body. The midterms make it our turn to take the noose from around the neck of the right to vote. The general election in November should cause us to remember the charge that we have to continue the fight for our freedom. Frederick Douglass still speaks loudly and clearly, "*Power concedes nothing without a demand. It never did and it never will.*" Douglass understood then what we must understand now.

**Liberty Or Oppression – The Choice Is Ours!**

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