

**IN THE CIRCUIT COURT OF COLE COUNTY  
STATE OF MISSOURI**

JOSEPH PERELES, MATTHEW BAX,  
IKE GRAHAM,  
ROBERT SAUNDERS, and RACHEL  
HOWARD,

Plaintiffs,

v.

JOHN R. ASHCROFT, in his official  
capacity as Missouri Secretary of State,  
Serve: 600 W. Main St.  
Jefferson City, Missouri 65101

Defendant.

Case No.:

Division:

**PETITION FOR DECLARATORY AND INJUNCTIVE RELIEF**

Plaintiffs Joseph Pereles, Matthew Bax, Ike Graham, Robert Saunders, and Rachel Howard bring this Petition for declaratory and injunctive relief against Defendant John (“Jay”) Ashcroft, in his official capacity as the Missouri Secretary of State (“the Secretary”). This Petition is based on the facts and allegations below. Plaintiffs allege as follows:

**INTRODUCTION**

1. Missouri’s current congressional districts were enacted over a decade ago. As revealed by the 2020 Census, the intervening population shifts have rendered those districts unconstitutionally malapportioned. Absent a revised congressional map, Plaintiffs, who live in overpopulated districts, will be forced to cast unequal votes relative to voters in underpopulated districts.

2. The current congressional plan therefore cannot be used in any upcoming elections, including the 2022 elections.

3. Moreover, the General Assembly has failed to enact new districts ahead of the period in which candidates can file written declarations of candidacy, which opened on February 22, 2022 and closes on March 29, 2022. § 115.349(2), RSMo.

4. The Missouri Senate is hopelessly deadlocked on adoption of a congressional plan. And while the House of Representatives has passed a bill (House Bill 2117 (2022)) that would create new congressional districts, it could not become effective before 90 days from enactment without an emergency clause. Mo. Const. art. III, § 29.

5. Because the bill has failed to garner the two-thirds threshold of support it needs to include such an emergency clause, even if it were passed by the Senate and signed by the Governor *today*, it would not become effective before the State's candidate filing deadline of March 29, 2022. § 115.349(1), RSMo.

6. The "General Assembly's failure to provide a means for congressional representation would, if unremedied, result in an unconstitutional deprivation" of Plaintiffs' right to select representatives, as the current congressional districts are "patently and obviously unconstitutional." *Shayer v. Kirkpatrick*, 541 F. Supp. 922, 925 (W.D. Mo. 1982) (quoting Wright, Miller, and Cooper, Fed. Prac. and Procedure, § 4235, at 400).

7. If the General Assembly fails, "the only appropriate remedy is a court-ordered apportionment." *Id.* at 927.

8. Because the General Assembly and Governor have failed to enact a new congressional plan and the filing period is now open, this Court should adopt its own constitutional

redistricting plan sufficiently in advance of the primary election that protects the rights of Missourians.

9. Plaintiffs therefore ask this Court to declare Missouri’s current congressional plan unconstitutional; enjoin Defendant from using the current plan in any future elections; and order Defendant Ashcroft to use a new congressional district plan that adheres to the constitutional requirement of one-person, one-vote.

**PARTIES**

10. Plaintiffs are citizens of the United States and registered voters in Missouri. Plaintiffs reside in the following congressional districts:

| Plaintiff's Name | County of Residence | Congressional District |
|------------------|---------------------|------------------------|
| Joseph Pereles   | St. Louis County    | MO-2                   |
| Matthew Bax      | Johnson County      | MO-4                   |
| Ike Graham       | Jackson County      | MO-5                   |
| Robert Saunders  | Clay County         | MO-6                   |
| Rachel Howard    | Greene County       | MO-7                   |

11. As shown below, Plaintiffs reside in congressional districts that are overpopulated relative to other districts in the State. Thus, they are deprived of the right to cast an equal vote, as guaranteed to them by the Missouri Constitution.

12. Defendant John (“Jay”) Ashcroft is the Missouri Secretary of State and is named as a Defendant in his official capacity.

13. The Secretary of State is the State's chief election official and is responsible for implementing laws related to voting across the State, including the State's current congressional districts and candidate filing for the next election. §§ 115.347, 115.349, RSMo.

### **JURISDICTION & VENUE**

14. This Court maintains original subject-matter jurisdiction over this action. §§ 478.220, 526.030, 527.010; Rule 87.01.

15. Venue is proper because Defendant maintains an office here and because Cole County holds the seat of Missouri State Government. *See* § 508.010, RSMo.

### **GENERAL ALLEGATIONS**

#### **I. Missouri's current congressional districts were drawn using 2010 Census data.**

16. On April 27, 2011, over a decade ago, the Republican-controlled General Assembly sent legislation creating new congressional districts to Governor Jay Nixon, a Democrat. Governor Nixon vetoed the map on May 2, 2011.

17. Following the veto, both houses of the General Assembly voted to override the Governor's veto and adopted the map on May 4, 2011.

18. Using the 2010 Census, Missouri had a resident population of 5,988,927. Accordingly, a decade ago, the ideal population for each of Missouri's eight congressional districts (i.e., the State's total population divided by the number of districts) was 748,616 persons.

19. According to 2010 Census data, the 2011 congressional plan had a maximum deviation (i.e., the difference between the most populated district and least populated district) of exactly one person: seven districts had a population of 748,616, and one district had a population of 748,615.

20. Since the 2011 congressional district plan went into effect, Missouri has not redrawn its congressional districts, meaning that Missouri's current congressional districts were drawn using data from the 2010 Census.

**II. Population numbers from the 2020 Census reveal that Missouri's population has grown over the last decade.**

21. In 2020, the U.S. Census Bureau conducted the decennial census required by Article I, Section 2 of the U.S. Constitution.

22. On April 26, 2021, the U.S. Secretary of Commerce delivered the apportionment results of the 2020 Census to the President. The results of the 2020 Census report that Missouri's resident population is 6,154,913.

23. Accordingly, the ideal population for each of Missouri's congressional districts is now 769,364.

**III. As a result of significant population shifts, Missouri's congressional districts are unconstitutionally malapportioned.**

24. In the past decade, Missouri's population has shifted significantly.

25. Because the 2020 Census has now been completed, the 2010 population data used to draw Missouri's current congressional districts are obsolete, and any prior justifications for the existing map's deviations from population equality are inapplicable.

26. On August 12, 2021, the U.S. Census Bureau delivered to Missouri its redistricting data file in legacy format, allowing the State to tabulate the new population of each political subdivision. These data are commonly referred to as "P.L. 94-171 data," a reference to the legislation enacting this process. *See* Pub. L. No. 94-171, 89 Stat. 1023 (1975).

27. These data make clear that significant population shifts have occurred in Missouri since 2010, skewing the current congressional districts far from population equality.

28. The table below, generated from the P.L. 94-171 data file provided by the Census Bureau on August 12, 2021, shows how the populations of each of Missouri’s congressional districts have shifted between 2010 and 2020. For each district, the “2010 Population” column represents the district’s 2010 resident population according to the 2010 Census, and the “2020 Population” column indicates the district’s 2020 population according to the P.L. 94-171 data. The “Shift” column represents the shift in population between 2010 and 2020. The “Deviation from Ideal 2020 Population” column shows how far the 2020 resident population of each district strays from the ideal 2020 congressional district population. And the “Percent Deviation” column shows that deviation as a percentage of the ideal 2020 district population.

| District | 2010 Population | 2020 Population | Shift   | Deviation from Ideal 2020 Population | Percent Deviation |
|----------|-----------------|-----------------|---------|--------------------------------------|-------------------|
| 1        | 748,616         | 714,731         | -33,885 | -54,633                              | -7.64%            |
| 2        | 748,616         | 777,688         | +29,072 | 8,324                                | 1.07%             |
| 3        | 748,615         | 804,505         | +55,890 | 35,141                               | 4.37%             |
| 4        | 748,616         | 777,217         | +28,601 | 7,853                                | 1.01%             |
| 5        | 748,616         | 788,310         | +39,694 | 18,946                               | 2.40%             |
| 6        | 748,616         | 781,000         | +32,384 | 11,636                               | 1.49%             |
| 7        | 748,616         | 792,419         | +43,803 | 23,055                               | 2.91%             |
| 8        | 748,616         | 719,043         | -29,573 | -50,321                              | -7.00%            |

29. The table above indicates that population shifts since 2010 have rendered Missouri’s Second, Third, Fourth, Fifth, Sixth, and Seventh Congressional Districts overpopulated, and its First and Eighth Congressional Districts significantly underpopulated.

According to these figures, the maximum deviation among Missouri’s congressional districts increased from 0 percent to more than 12 percent between 2010 and 2020.

30. In light of these population shifts, Missouri’s existing congressional district configurations are unconstitutionally malapportioned.

31. If used in any future election, these district configurations would unconstitutionally dilute the strength of Plaintiffs’ votes in congressional elections because Plaintiffs live in districts with populations that are significantly larger than those in which other voters live.

#### **IV. Missouri’s political branches are deadlocked and will fail to enact a lawful congressional district map in time for the next election.**

32. New congressional districts in Missouri must be passed by both houses of the General Assembly and signed by the Governor, Mo. Const. art. III, §§ 45, 31, or passed by a two-thirds majority of both houses following the Governor’s veto, Mo. Const. art. § 32.

33. In the Senate, “[d]eep fissures between the Republican majority and the Conservative Caucus” over competing visions for a congressional map “have repeatedly stalled legislative work.”<sup>1</sup>

34. Senators from the Conservative Caucus have “held the floor hostage for hours on routine motions” and filibustered a proposed congressional redistricting bill for 31 hours on the Senate floor.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Tessa Weinberg, *Filibuster continues after Missouri Senate rejects ‘7-1’ redistricting plan*, MISSOURI INDEPENDENT (Feb. 8, 2022, 8:03 AM), available at: <https://missouriindependent.com/2022/02/08/filibuster-continues-after-missouri-senate-rejects-7-1-redistricting-plan/>.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.*; see also Tessa Weinberg, *Missouri’s redrawn congressional map remains in limbo after 31-hour Senate filibuster*, MISSOURI INDEPENDENT (Feb. 8, 2022 7:28 PM), available at: <https://missouriindependent.com/2022/02/08/filibuster-of-missouri-congressional-redistricting-plan-passes-26-hour-mark/>.

35. The Kansas City star reported that “no compromise was in sight” despite convening for sessions during weekends – a rare move – as a group of unwavering conservatives engaged in what their colleagues called “hardball tactics.”<sup>3</sup>

36. Talks broke down as conservative and moderate Republican senators traded “scathing” accusations, resulting in a “near-physical” altercation. *Id.* President Pro Tem Dave Schatz admitted that any compromise would be a “magic path.” *Id.*

37. On February 12, after nearly a week of the entire Senate debating congressional redistricting, Senate leadership abandoned their effort to pass a congressional redistricting bill for the time being.

38. Senate Majority Leader Caleb Rowden announced in a statement that day that the Senate would “step away from this debate on the senate floor.” Lamenting that “business critical to [Missouri] citizens has been delayed,” Senator Rowden acknowledged that a court may be forced to draw the map.<sup>4</sup>

39. After the official debate on the floor paused on February 12, progress remained stalled behind closed doors as well. While conservative senators anticipated a last-ditch effort to pass a bill on March 2, the Senate failed to take up redistricting whatsoever.<sup>5</sup> Senate leadership acknowledged on March 5 that it considered the conservative senators’ demands to be a “fallacy”

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<sup>3</sup> Jeanne Kuang, ‘*Definition of insanity: MO Senate ends week of filibuster with no redistricting deal*’, KANSAS CITY STAR (Feb. 13, 2022, 11:15 AM), available at: <https://www.kansascity.com/news/politics-government/article258331253.html>.

<sup>4</sup> Emily Manley, *Missourians have right to be disappointed about redistricting, Senate GOP leaders say*, FOX 4 (Feb. 14, 2022, 7:49 PM), available at: <https://fox4kc.com/news/senate-majority-leadership-missourians-have-every-right-to-be-disappointed/>.

<sup>5</sup> Jack Suntrup, *GOP leader unloads on Missouri Senate colleagues who’ve delayed redistricting*, ST. LOUIS POST-DISPATCH (Mar. 5, 2022), available at: [https://www.stltoday.com/news/local/govt-and-politics/gop-leader-unloads-on-missouri-senate-colleagues-who-ve-delayed-redistricting/article\\_7cf29847-d1b9-5ab3-bd7a-0c2ab78f4b31.html](https://www.stltoday.com/news/local/govt-and-politics/gop-leader-unloads-on-missouri-senate-colleagues-who-ve-delayed-redistricting/article_7cf29847-d1b9-5ab3-bd7a-0c2ab78f4b31.html).



and that no private discussion of their requests was occurring. *Id.* The Senate is now scheduled to be in a spring recess until March 21, making speedy progress even more unlikely.<sup>6</sup>

40. Even if the General Assembly changed course and mustered simple majorities behind a redistricting bill, that option is already too late: without an emergency clause, any redistricting bill could not take effect for 90 days—blowing past the March 29, 2022 filing deadline. § 115.349(1), RSMo.

41. For the General Assembly to include an emergency clause, both chambers would need to approve the emergency clause by a two-thirds majority. Mo. Const. art. III, § 29.

42. Candidate filing has already opened in Missouri, § 115.349(2), RSMo, but candidates—and voters—do not even know in which districts they reside or will be eligible to vote. It is in the interests of voters, candidates, and Missouri’s entire electoral apparatus that new congressional districts be established as soon as possible, in advance of candidates’ deadline to file.

43. The judicial redistricting process in several other states where the political branches have been unable to pass congressional maps is well underway. In Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Pennsylvania, for instance, courts have already adopted new congressional maps following political impasse. *See Wattson v. Simon*, Nos. A21-0243, A21-0546 (Minn. Feb. 15, 2022) (Order Adopting a Cong. Redistricting Plan); *see also Johnson v. Wis. Elec. Comm’n*, 2022 WL 621082 (Wis. Mar. 1, 2022) (Order); *Carter v. Chapman*, 7 MM 2022 (Pa. Feb. 23, 2022) (Order).

44. The General Assembly and Governor have failed to enact a new congressional plan. If this Court does not act, the 2022 election will be held using illegal district maps, depriving Plaintiffs of their constitutional rights.

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<sup>6</sup> *Id.*; *see also* Mo. Senate, 2022 Session Schedule (Feb. 24, 2022), available at: <https://www.senate.mo.gov/22info/2022SessionSchedule.pdf>

**CAUSE OF ACTION**

**COUNT I**

**Congressional Malapportionment in Violation of Article III, Section 45, of the Missouri Constitution**

45. Plaintiffs reallege and incorporate by reference all prior paragraphs of this Petition and the paragraphs in the count below as though fully set forth herein.

46. Article III, Section 45 of the Missouri Constitution requires that after each decennial census, “the general assembly shall by law divide the state into districts corresponding with the number of representatives to which it is entitled, which districts *shall* be composed of contiguous territory as compact and as *nearly equal in population as may be*” (emphasis added). The Missouri Supreme Court has affirmed that “numerical equality [is] mandatory.” *Pearson v. Koster*, 359 S.W.3d 35, 39 (Mo. Banc 2012). Section 45 is “triggered when the results of the . . . United States Census [are] revealed.” *Id.* at 37.

47. In order to comply with this requirement, the deviation in population among Missouri’s congressional districts should be no more than one person. The Missouri General Assembly achieved that goal following the 2010 Census. Now, as indicated in the table above, the population deviation among the current congressional districts is as high as nearly 90,000 persons.

48. Given the significant population shifts that have occurred since the 2010 Census, and the publication of the results of the 2020 Census, Missouri’s congressional districts—which were drawn based on 2010 Census data—are now unconstitutionally malapportioned.

49. Any future use of Missouri’s current congressional district plan would violate Plaintiffs’ constitutional right to cast an equal, undiluted vote.

**PRAYER FOR RELIEF**

**WHEREFORE**, Plaintiffs respectfully request that this Court enter judgment:

- a) Declaring that the current configuration of Missouri's congressional districts violates Article III, Section 45 of the Missouri Constitution;
- b) Enjoining Defendant, his respective agents, officers, employees, and successors, and all persons acting in concert with him, from implementing, enforcing, or giving any effect to Missouri's current congressional district plan;
- c) Establishing a schedule that will enable the Court to adopt and implement a lawful congressional district plan in time for the 2022 elections;
- d) Adopting a new congressional district plan that complies with Article III, Section 45 of the Missouri Constitution;
- e) Awarding Plaintiffs their costs, disbursements, and reasonable attorneys' fees; and
- f) Granting such other and further relief as the Court deems just and proper.

Respectfully Submitted,

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