

FILED

STATE OF MINNESOTA
SPECIAL REDISTRICTING PANEL
A21-0243
A21-0546

December 8, 2021

OFFICE OF
APPELLATE COURTS

Peter S. Wattson, Joseph Mansky, Nancy B. Greenwood, Mary E. Kupper, Douglas W. Backstrom and James E. Hougas III, individually and on behalf of all citizens and voting residents of Minnesota similarly situated, and League of Women Voters Minnesota,

Plaintiffs,

and

Paul Anderson, Ida Lano, Chuck Brusven, Karen Lane, Joel Hineman, Carol Wegner, and Daniel Schonhardt,

Plaintiff-Intervenors

**Declaration of Wali Dirie
in Support of the Corrie Plaintiffs'
Proposed Redistricting Plan**

vs.

Steve Simon, Secretary of State of Minnesota; and Kendra Olson, Carver County Elections and Licensing Manager, individually and on behalf of all Minnesota county chief election officers,

Defendants,

and

Frank Sachs, Dagny Heimisdottir, Michael Arulfo, Tanwi Prigge, Jennifer Guertin, Garrison O'Keith McMurtrey, Mara Lee Glubka, Jeffrey Strand, Danielle Main, and Wayne Grimmer,

Plaintiffs,

and

Dr. Bruce Corrie, Shelly Diaz, Alberder
Gillespie, Xiongpaoo Lee, Abdirazak
Mahboub, Aida Simon, Beatriz Winters,
Common Cause, OneMinnesota.org, and
Voices for Racial Justice,

Plaintiff-Intervenors,

vs.

Steve Simon, Secretary of State of Minnesota,

Defendant.

I, Wali Dirie, declare as follows:

1. I am a member of the Somali community of Minneapolis. I am the Executive Director of the Islamic Society of America – Dar Al-Hijrah Mosque, and I reside in House District 60B, in the Cedar-Riverside Area of Minneapolis.

We support the proposed boundaries for House District 60A keeping together the predominantly East African communities that have been living, working, and flourishing in the Cedar-Riverside area for the past few decades. Our communities want to be kept together and have unified representation along with other African communities because we constitute a distinct community in Minnesota with specific cultural ties and common issues.

2. Minnesota is home to more than 85,000 Somali, Ethiopian, and other East Africans, many of whom live in the Twin Cities. The Somali, Ethiopian and other East African communities face challenges that are unimaginable to our native-born neighbors: many of us came to Minnesota to escape civil war, political repression, and severe poverty. We came to Minnesota because of this state's history of generosity toward new immigrants. While being welcomed here, members of our community still have had to deal with learning a new language and culture while healing the psychic wounds of war and displacement.
3. These challenges bear themselves out in statistics: for example, according to StatisHealth, "34 percent of Somalis in Minnesota ages 25-64 do not have a high school diploma or GED, compared to 6 percent of all Minnesotans; Somali adults have roughly 2–3 times higher rates of unemployment than the state overall [and] 83 percent lives in or near the federal poverty threshold." Similarly, the median income for Ethiopian Americans is only 72 percent of the median income for the overall U.S. population.

4. Despite these challenges, many East Africans have thrived, building small businesses along Minneapolis' Lake Street Corridor, but even here we faced distinct hardships after the civil unrest of 2020 and the COVID pandemic. Many East African business owners lacked insurance or the wherewithal to navigate the application system for government assistance.
5. Our community has formed a network of social service, health, and economic development organizations to help new arrivals and assist with economic development. Our networks build upon our strengths—systems that involve elders, faith leaders, men and women who are trusted and chosen by our community.
6. For Somalis and Oromo (East African) to make effective, community-oriented decisions, we need to engage those voices, we need to know that our community structures can work with mainstream systems (healthcare, schools, public safety). Breaking up our community structure does deep harm to how we effectively participate in our democracy. It is crucial to keep our community intact, to protect our ability to effectively participate in Minnesota's civic life by allowing us the opportunity to elect representatives who understand our community's unique culture.
7. The Corrie plaintiffs' map House District 60A succeeds in keeping together East African communities in the Ceder-Riverside communities of Minneapolis, Minnesota in a way that provides us with effective representation in the U.S. House of Representatives and the Minnesota State Legislature. I urge the court to adopt these maps.

I declare under penalty of perjury of the laws of the United States and the state of Minnesota that the foregoing is true and correct to the best of my knowledge.

Dated: December 6, 2021


Wali Dirie (Dec 6, 2021 19:25 CST)
Wali Dirie

DRAFT East African COI narrative

Final Audit Report

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