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## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **"CASTEEN ADDRESSES UNCONSTITUTIONAL CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICTS"**

Recently, a panel of three federal judges struck down the maps of North Carolina's First (1st) and Twelfth (12th) Congressional Districts as being illegally drawn. It is the responsibility of the North Carolina legislature to establish districts, which afford voters the opportunity to select representatives of their choice.

In a "toss up" state, like North Carolina, legislative districts should be contested and competitive more often than not. North Carolina has a large and varied population, and each person has something to contribute toward improving our home state. Structuring districts with the goal of limiting debate silences those important voices.

In many districts, the officeholder is determined not in the general election but during the earlier party primary. In situations where the preferred party candidate is either unopposed in the general election or his seat is statistically "safe," citizens are left without a meaningful choice or effective vote.

The favored explanations of Republican legislative leaders are in essence: "This is how the game is played;" and "We didn't intend to disenfranchise voters based on race but to do so based upon political affiliation and ideology."

Regarding reconstruction of the local Seventh Congressional District, the Democratic candidate, Wesley Casteen said, "In retaliation for being out of power for more than a century

and after being repeatedly denied at the voting booth, the new legislative majorities put pen to paper and made the road to Congress easier for a favored son. The legislature redrew the maps to exclude the hometown of the popular nine-term incumbent Congressman, Mike McIntyre. They surgically removed downtown Wilmington from the district, and they extended the traditional boundaries northward toward Raleigh."

Casteen continued, "David Rouzer was the intended beneficiary of this legislative gift. Mr. Rouzer voted to redraw the 7th District, and as a state senator, he also voted to approve the boundaries of the two racially motivated districts, which have now been declared unconstitutional by a federal court."

Regardless of whether the class or group being discriminated against is defined by race or political affiliation, the power and benefit of their votes are materially diminished. Intentionally disenfranchising thousands of voters and discounting their votes is improper, even if it is arguably legal.

Casteen said, "I am running for Congress to represent the Seventh District. I am running to represent all of district's citizens: Democrat, Republican, and Independent; White, Black, and Brown; Christian, Jew, and Gentile."

The fact that retaliatory redistricting has been a fixture in American politics for more than two hundred (200) years does not mean that disenfranchising voters should be an objective of the political system. Casteen closed by saying, "Winning over the hearts and minds of voters is a difficult proposition, but our country and its people deserve our best efforts. Overtly manipulating the process not only cheats voters, but it also cheats America."

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