

# ADC threatens BOE with lawsuit

ADC representative  
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told lawyers  
to pursue the matter

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The Autauga County Board of Education could find itself in court within one month.

That word came Wednesday from Alabama Democratic Conference field representative

Jerome Gray, who said that, although no court date has been set yet, that the board is moving closer and closer to court. He said that the matter could be in court within 30 days, at the least.

Meanwhile, the board held a special meeting Friday at 2 p.m. However, details of the meeting were not available at press time.

Gray said that he has given the green light to ADC lawyers to pursue the matter. He also said he had hoped to settle the matter without having to go to court, and that he could not understand the board's refusal to redistrict.

"It's the most incredible thing I've ever seen," Gray said. "Here we are trying to say, 'Look, we don't want to sue you. Let's work this thing out, go ahead and do it voluntarily,' and they're sitting back and saying, 'Go ahead and sue us.'"

The board has steadfastly refused to reconfigure itself, in spite of the Autauga County Commission's recent redistricting

initiative. Instead, the board has elected to remain under the current five-member district configuration.

The board has told ADC representatives that if they wished the district lines redrawn, the ADC would have to be responsible for petitioning federal court.

Board chairman Pat Barnes has said that the districts under which the board currently operates date back to 1973, when a federal court order reconfigured the lines. While the board has said it is willing to work with the ADC, Barnes said members felt it was the responsibility of the ADC to petition the courts.

However, Gray said Wednesday that the board's position is not solidly based. Gray said the ADC is looking for the same representation as reflected in the county commission's redistricting plan, which

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provided for a black majority district.

At first, he said, meetings with the ADC and the school board appeared to be favorable, but the board decided to let the commission go its way and they would allow the courts to decide what the board should do.

"The County Commission also went to districts by court order, too, at the same time that the school board did. But I told (the board that) it doesn't mean they have no power to redistrict themselves."

Gray said that every 10 years, after a government goes to districts, it is required by law to redistrict voluntarily. Its failure to do so would bring it back before the court again, he said.

Gray said that litigation wouldn't be necessary if the school board did what it was already required to do by law. Meanwhile, a last-minute resolution appears unlikely, Gray said. "I wish I could make one more attempt and hope that it would bear some fruit, but I don't think it would," Gray said. "I would like (to) convey to the community that we have worked with the board from day one, and still, from our vantage point, there is a window of opportunity for them to do it voluntarily, if they would call and say, 'Look, let's get this thing behind us, and we're ready to go,' but we haven't seen any signals like that."