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Commissioner Simmons' Statement on County Judge Tim O'Hare's First Act of Racial Gerrymandering

On Wednesday, April 2, the Tarrant County Commissioners Court will consider a dangerous, destructive, and illegal power grab by County Judge Tim O'Hare and other extremist county leaders designed to intentionally undermine and destroy minority voting strength in Tarrant County. The effort is disguised as a routine legal services agreement with the Public Interest Legal Foundation, but this agenda item is the first step in an extremist effort to redraw Commissioner precinct boundaries mid-decade—without justification and with the clear intent to discriminate against Black, Hispanic, and other minority voters in Tarrant County.

This blatant attempt at racial gerrymandering would dilute the voting power of people of color in Precincts 1 and 2, threatening to eliminate one—if not two—districts where minority voters have consistently elected candidates of their choice. Intentionally destroying the voting strength of minority voters violates the Voting Rights Act and the U.S. Constitution. O'Hare and other county leaders allied with him have consistently failed to win majority support in Precincts 1 and 2. Rather than do the hard and responsible work needed to win the votes of minority citizens in these precincts, they are opting to target and destroy their ability to elect their candidates of choice.

Every Tarrant County voter and taxpayer is being abused by this effort. O'Hare and his allies want to use taxpayer dollars to fund a legal group with a history of racial discrimination and voter suppression. This is nothing more than an attempt by extremist leaders to handpick their voters rather than respect the electorate as it stands. These illegal, intentionally discriminatory actions will result in extensive and expensive litigation, unnecessarily putting Tarrant County in the outrageous position of defending blatant racial discrimination.

Tim O'Hare has made his intentions clear. He telegraphed them just before his election when he publicly stated, "The reality is, if you are a Republican and you haven't been called a racist, you probably haven't done a thing." The question now is whether his two colleagues, Matt Krause and Manny Ramirez, will stand with him or with the voters of Tarrant County. Will they defend fair elections, or will they join O'Hare in a blatant act of intentional racial discrimination?

On Wednesday, we'll get our answer. The people of Tarrant County are watching, and the federal courts will be waiting.

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