



The Columbus Branch NAACP
P.O. Box 6006
Columbus, GA 31907

Wednesday October 5, 2022

Honorable Ed Harbison
Georgia State Senator

Senator Harbison:

In the absence of Calvin Smyre, as the current leader of the local elected delegation, on behalf of the Columbus Branch of the NAACP, I am writing to share our concerns and inform you of our serious intent to seek the designation of Muscogee County as a single County judicial circuit.

The provisions of O.C.G.A. 15-6-1, et seq., set forth the legislature's intent as to the creation of judicial circuits. The statute sets forth no standards, guidelines, or any criteria as to the composition of a single member circuit. With that being the case, this Branch looked for the "common-good" thread in the current designated single county circuits. The only common thread we "discerned" was that they all met a citizenry population of eighty-thousand or greater.

As Georgia's 10th largest populated county (206,922), we question why there are seven counties; Paulding, Houston, Columbia, Douglas, Floyd, Rockdale, and Dougherty with populations far below ours that serve as single judicial circuits.

The growing population of color has been the case since 2009. According to the latest census the demographic makeup of Muscogee County is 49% Black, 37% White and 8% Hispanic, however, in the past forty-two years there have only been three people of color to serve as Superior Court Judges: The Honorable Albert Thompson, John D. Allen and recently appointed Ben Richardson. In addition, there are currently no individuals of color who serve as Juvenile Court Judges. It is our contention that the current six county Chattahoochee Judicial Circuit, intentional or not, is designed to dilute the Black voting strength.

In our struggle for racial parity of our judicial system I would like to open a dialogue with members of our local elected delegation, and the Judges of the Chattahoochee Judicial Circuit to share our concerns and seek assistance in this matter prior to the next legislative session.

Ed, I would like to set up a meeting with our local elected delegation, the Judges of the Chattahoochee Judicial Circuit and the NAACP prior to the holidays, preferably the last week in October or the first week in November. The members of the NAACP will include myself, our political Action Chairman Rev. Marcus Gibson, and the NAACP National Board member Elder Ed Dubose.

Please review your schedule and let me know what day and time would be convenient for you and I will coordinate with the other entities. I can be reached by phone if needed at 706.358.9202.

Sincerely submitted
Wane A. Hailes
NAACP President