

July 14, 2008

Honorable Glenn Koepp  
Secretary of the Senate  
State Capitol  
Baton Rouge, LA 70802

Re: Senate Bill No. 429 by Senator Shepherd  
Veto Message

Dear Mr. Koepp:

Senate Bill No. 429 would statutorily restructure the 24<sup>th</sup> Judicial District Court for the parish of Jefferson in accordance with consent decrees issued in the case *Clark v. Roemer*, No. 86-435-A, U.S. District Court, Middle District of Louisiana. As a result of *Clark*, the 24<sup>th</sup> JDC's sixteen judges (Divisions A-P) were divided among seven "election sections," with the ratio of population to judges proportional among all sections. Six sections elect two judges and one section elects four judges. One of the two-judge sections is dedicated as a minority section, referred to in SB 429 as "election section five" ("Election section five shall be a minority section and shall consist of Divisions C and P). I fully support SB 429 to the extent that it seeks to codify this structure.

Senate Bill No. 429 further provides that "[t]he next vacancy in a judgeship that occurs after January 1, 2009, other than a vacancy in either Division C or Division P, shall be filled by election from election section five." This means that the next vacancy in an open section will be filled by voters from the minority election section. I have received several veto requests from officials representing voters within the impacted area. For instance, in a joint request, Speaker Tucker, Representative Templet and Representative Wooton describe the bill as "patently unfair" and urge delay of the decision on whether an additional minority judgeship is added until after the next decennial census in 2010.

I agree with taking a cautious approach to a bill that parcels authority among voters. The 2010 census will provide objective data to drive the ultimate outcome of this issue.

For these reasons, I have vetoed Senate Bill 429 and hereby return it to the Senate.

Very truly yours,

Bobby Jindal  
Governor

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