

# Fellowship Southwest leaders oppose redistricting effort

August 1, 2025

Leaders of Fellowship Southwest voiced opposition to the congressional redistricting effort in the special session of the Texas Legislature, calling it a “partisan power grab.”

Gov. Greg Abbott included redistricting in his July 9 [call for a special session](#), citing “constitutional concerns raised by the U.S. Department of Justice.”

In a July 7 letter to Abbott and Texas Attorney General Ken Paxton, Harmeet K. Dhillon and Michael E. Gates from the Civil Rights Division of the Justice Department stated their office’s position that several Texas congressional districts “constitute unconstitutional gerrymanders.” They insisted Texas needed to rectify “race-based considerations” in Districts 9, 18, 29 and 33.

President Donald [Trump told reporters a “simple redrawing”](#) of the congressional map in Texas would allow Republicans to gain five seats in the U.S. House of Representatives.

Rep. Todd Hunter, R-Corpus Christi, filed HB 4 and its associated [map of proposed new congressional districts](#).

## ‘Waste of time, taxpayer dollars and political will’

Critics of the plan—including officials with Fellowship Southwest—assert it essentially will deny representation to some predominantly non-Anglo areas

of the state.

The proposed redistricting plan “does nothing for the people of Texas,” said Stephen Reeves, executive director of Fellowship Southwest. “It is merely a thinly disguised partisan power grab.

“In service to the powerful in Washington, further gerrymandering our state only compounds the marginalization and weakens the votes of millions of minority Texans.”

In the Fellowship Southwest Aug. 2 email newsletter, Reeves called redistricting at this point “a waste of time, taxpayer dollars, and political will.”

## **‘Repudiation of ... righteousness and justice’**

He insisted “faithful people of goodwill” should “forcefully oppose this effort and fight for a democracy where every vote is equally respected, and each community has a fair shot at electing a representative of their choice.”

John Ogletree, a Houston pastor and chair of the Fellowship Southwest board, stated, “The effort to redraw congressional lines targeting Black and Hispanic districts is a repudiation of the founding principles of this country, as well as a repudiation of the standard of righteousness and justice found throughout the word of God.”

Ogletree, founding pastor of First Metropolitan Church in Houston, asserted “the governor and state legislature will face divine retribution” for their actions.

He quoted Isaiah 10:1-2, which pronounces judgment on “those who make unjust laws, to deprive the poor of their rights and withhold justice from

the oppressed of my people.”

## **‘Silencing the voices of people’**

Prior to an Aug. 1 public hearing on the redistricting plan, Fellowship Southwest released testimony Anyra Cano, the organization’s director of programs and outreach, planned to present.

“These changes are not about justice or fair representation,” Cano stated in her prepared testimony.

“They are about imposing power and control, at the cost of silencing the voices of people who have already been pushed to the margins for far too long—the voices of Texans who work tirelessly every day, pay taxes, contribute to their communities, and trust you to represent them in decisions that affect their lives.”

Cano, an equipping pastor at Iglesia Bautista Victoria en Cristo in Fort Worth, insisted the proposed changes would “disenfranchise our community by replacing their chosen representative with one they did not elect.”

## **‘Steal their voice, their vote and their dignity’**

In her prepared remarks, Cano noted the Texas Legislature in its regular session approved legislation mandating the display of the Ten Commandments in every public school classroom.

“If we are going to display that message, we should take note that those very same commandments tell not to make or worship idols, this includes the idols of politics and power,” she stated.

Cano also pointed to the commandment against stealing, saying, “Redistricting lines that silence communities would steal their voice, their vote and their dignity.”

Congressional district maps should “reflect the people of Texas, not just those in power,” she asserted.

“God calls us to love our neighbors, to speak for those who cannot speak for themselves, and to care for the marginalized, not to silence those with whom we disagree,” she stated.

Fellowship Southwest describes itself as “a faith-based organization that catalyzes and amplifies the work of Christians as they practice compassion and pursue justice.” Several Baptist churches in Texas, Oklahoma, and Arizona are listed on its website as supporting churches.