T. 11/2/71
DLN:RRR:bnj
DJ 166-012-3

Mr. Francis Waguespack
President, St. James Parish
Police Jury
Vacherie, Louisiana 70390

Dear Mr. Waguespack:

This is in reference to the reapportionment plan
for the St. James Parish Police Jury, which was
submitted pursuant to Section 5 of the Voting Rights
Act of 1965.

We have given careful consideration to the
submitted changes and supporting information. Based
upon our analysis, we are unable to conclude that
the proposed districting will not have a discrimina-
tory effect.

The problem, as we see it, is in the manner by
which the boundary line between proposed Wards 2 and
3 was drawn. It appears to us that the existing
boundary lines throughout the Parish run generally
in straight lines north and south, between the
adjacent parishes and the Mississippi River. The
proposed districting retains the north-south character
of the boundaries nearly everywhere, except a segment
of the boundary between the Wards 2 and 3. The pro-
posed boundary parallels the old boundary line until
it reaches the middle of a large black concentration
in the town of Lutcher. At this point, the line
turns due east and follows a railroad track for
approximately one mile until it reaches Lawrence
Street where it turns back due south and runs to
the river. The result is to divide in half the
black population o. Lutcher which under the old plan
was entirely in Ward 10. It appears that other
alternatives exist which would avoid this racial
effect.

Under these circumstances I must, on behalf of
the Attorney General, interpose an objection. See

Our assessment of the St. James Parish reap-
portionment plan also suggests that the resulting
districts may deviate substantially from the one-
person, one-vote requirements o. Kirkpatrick v.
Presta, 395 U.S. 585 (1969). The following
inconsistency appears in the figures made available
to this Department by Parish officials: Although
the population figures supplied by the Parish for
each ward appear to be in conformity with the require-
ments, the statistics supplied for the number of
persons transferred to proposed Wards 1 and 3 indicate
that Ward 3 would exceed the norm by 7.5% and that
Ward 3 would fall 11.4% below the norm. The Parish
may wish to consider this problem in connection with
any changes which may be made in the submitted reap-
portionment plan.

We would be pleased to work with you in an effort
to resolve these problems. Alternatively, of course,
under the Voting Rights Act, the Parish has the option
of seeking a declaratory judgment in the United States
District Court for the District of Columbia.

Sincerely,

DAVID L. BOYD
Assistant Attorney General
Civil Rights Division