



**Stop crying. Start organizing. The courts won't save us.**

*By: Johnnie R.S. Mcknight*

This week, the U.S. Supreme Court quietly delivered another blow that will shape the future of American democracy.

In *Louisiana v. Callais*, the Court allowed a lower court ruling to stand, blocking Louisiana from using a newly drawn congressional map that would have created a second majority-Black district. The case centered on whether race was used improperly in drawing district lines. By a 6–3 vote, the justices let the challenge succeed, without fully revisiting the broader framework of the Voting Rights Act.

Legal analysts will debate the nuance. Politicians will spin the outcome. But for Democrats, activists, and anyone concerned about representation, the takeaway should be far more uncomfortable:

This didn't happen overnight. And it didn't happen in a vacuum. It happened while we weren't paying attention.

For years, Democrats have poured energy into national headlines, health care battles, impeachment fights, presidential elections, while something quieter, more permanent, and more consequential was unfolding: the reshaping of the courts. While we argued, Republicans organized.

They filled judicial vacancies. They built a legal pipeline. They treated the courts not as an afterthought, but as a central battleground for power. And now, decision after decision, we're seeing the results.

Yet the response from many in the Democratic Party has been predictable: outrage, press releases, and frustration. What's been missing is urgency. What's been missing is organization.

Crying about the outcome won't change it. Winning power will.

That starts with an honest conversation about responsibility. We cannot keep blaming institutions we ignored. We cannot keep acting surprised by outcomes that were years in the making.

Power in this country doesn't just flow through Congress or the White House. It runs through statehouses, local elections, and yes, the courts. Right now, we are losing ground in all three.

If Democrats want to protect voting rights, it won't happen through statements. It will happen through strategy.

That means organizing at the local level, where turnout is lowest and impact is often greatest. It means investing in state legislative races, where redistricting maps are drawn. It means building a bench of candidates who aren't waiting their turn, but ready to lead now.

Because here's the part we don't say enough:

Redistricting is not some abstract legal debate. It is a direct threat to the life we live.

We see the headlines about Trump-era policies and unchecked executive power. That concerns people, and it should. But the deeper danger is structural. Imagine those same policies backed by a Congress that doesn't just enable, but accelerates them. A Congress that grants sweeping authority for war. A Congress that refuses to check power at all.

That's how systems break.

I'm not saying this to scare people. I'm saying it to be honest.

This moment is serious, but seriousness requires strategy, not just emotion. Stop crying. Start fighting smarter, with urgency.

Because here's another truth we avoid: energy, and leadership matter.

History makes that clear.

The Eisenhower era did not end because the moment demanded caution. It ended because a new generation stepped forward with urgency. When John F. Kennedy took office, he didn't just inherit a country, he faced a moral crisis. In 1963, his administration advanced civil rights legislation aimed at protecting the right to vote, addressing segregation, and prohibiting discrimination in public accommodations. While his early approach leaned on litigation, Kennedy ultimately put forward a comprehensive bill that laid the groundwork for the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the voting rights protections that followed.

That didn't happen by accident. It took fearless leadership. It took urgency.

And it took a willingness to act before it was politically comfortable.

When you think about that era, you also think of leaders like Martin Luther King Jr., organizing in his 30s, and John Lewis, risking his life in his 20s. They didn't wait. They didn't operate at half-speed. They moved with purpose, and they brought people with them.

Today, too much of the Democratic Party feels stuck. Not because of age, but because of mindset. Leadership has, in many places, become about maintaining position rather than building power. About managing decline instead of driving change. Voters feel it!

They see a party warning about threats to democracy while failing to match that warning with action. They hear urgency in speeches but don't see it in strategy.

That disconnect is costing us, not just elections, but influence.

If we're serious about protecting democracy, then we need to act like it.

That means organizing every neighborhood, not just during presidential cycles. It means turning out voters in municipal elections, not just midterms. It means challenging the idea that the same leadership, using the same approach, will somehow produce different results.

Because it won't.

The courts are not going to save us. The system is not going to correct itself. And no single election is going to fix what years of neglect have created.

But organized people, focused, energized, and strategic, can. The question is whether we're ready to do the work. No more waiting. No more excuses.

If we want power back, we have to organize like we mean it.