

New York Court of Appeals Delivers Victory to Clients Supporting Independent Redistricting Effort

News

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The New York Court of Appeals sided with three clients who belong to the state's Independent Redistricting Commission (IRC) and ruled that the IRC should fulfil its constitutionally mandated duty. In its opinion, the four-judge majority held that the IRC should submit to the legislature a new congressional redistricting plan by February 28, 2024.

Partner Jessie Amunson argued the case on behalf of IRC Chairperson Ken Jenkins and Commissioners Frazier and Cuevas-Molina. In a statement, she said: "Today's decision aligns with the wishes of New Yorkers who voted almost 10 years ago for the specific mechanism to provide fair maps: the Independent Redistricting Commission. We are delighted the IRC can now fulfill their constitutionally mandated role of presenting the legislature with proposed congressional districts before the next election cycle."

Chief Judge Wilson, writing for the majority, described the "tortured history" of voting in New York. The 10-member IRC was created in 2014 by voters' amendment to the state's Constitution. Its mission is to usher in "a new era of bipartisanship and transparency" in New York elections.

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The IRC's first opportunity to carry out its duties came after the 2020 census. But in January 2022, the state legislature rejected the IRC's submitted maps. The IRC was then obligated to submit a second set. Deadlocked, the IRC never did. The legislature composed its own congressional and senate maps. Litigation immediately followed, with proponents of the legislative maps arguing that those maps trumped the IRC because the commission failed to deliver its maps on time.

In June 2023, the Third Department of the New York Supreme Court's Appellate Division held that the IRC should reconvene to fulfill its duty. IRC member Ross Brady and others appealed to the state's high court.

In affirming the Third Department’s decision, Judge Wilson wrote that the state’s Constitution explicitly places a limitation on court-created maps. “The Constitution clearly establishes the IRC process as predominant over court-drawn districts,” he explained.

In addition to Jessie, the team included Partners Sam Hirsch and Jake Alderdice, Associate Allison Douglis, Manager of Docketing Services **Na'eem Conway**, Senior Paralegal **Cheryl Olson**, and Legal Assistant **Sheree Anyiam**.

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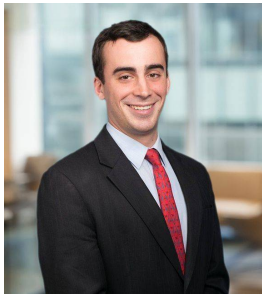


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