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Alabama Republicans caught two lucky breaks this redistricting cycle. The first: Despite widespread expectation that it might drop another seat in 2022, the Census data showed that its seventh seat was not in serious jeopardy. In contrast to most of the South, Alabama has been losing House seats. As recently as 1960, it had nine. Since 1972, it has held steady at seven. But that left another issue for Alabama.  
  
With the history of the Voting Rights Act—and the mathematics of a state with 27 percent black population—Democrats advocated for the creation of a second African-American majority, in addition to the 7th District, which extends from the outskirts of Mobile to the western side of Montgomery and significant parts of Birmingham and Tuscaloosa. As David Wasserman wrote in the Cook Political Report with Amy Walter, the 7th could be split into two districts: one “covering inner Birmingham and rural Black Belt counties,” plus Tuscaloosa, and the other “stretching from Mobile to Montgomery to the Georgia border.” The lone Democratic member of the delegation, Terri Sewell, has been willing to spread her voters across two districts. To succeed in this redistricting strategy, with little influence in state government, Democrats likely would need friendly federal judges in the Deep South and, eventually, at the Supreme Court. So far, Republicans’ second lucky break came with the Court.  
  
During the 2021 redistricting, a Democratic state senator proposed a map that would lower the Black voting age population in Sewell’s district to just below 50 percent while transforming GOP Rep. Gary Palmer’s 6th District into a competitive seat with a Black voting age population of over 40 percent. The Republican majority rejected this proposal, instead passing a status quo map that maintained the GOP’s 6-1 lock on the delegation. In January 2022 a three-judge panel threw out the new map, ruling that legislators must draw two districts that are likely to elect a Black representative. The Supreme Court blocked that ruling only a couple weeks later, with some justices signaling that they thought redoing the map this close to the state’s primary elections would be too chaotic. That left Alabama’s fate to rest on whether the Supreme Court decided the map violates the Voting Rights Act by diluting Black voting power. Voting rights advocates feared an adverse ruling could have a ripple effect across the country.