Both sides say remap favored incumbents

By JOHN LaPLANTE
-Capitol news bureau

NEW ORLEANS - Incumbent congressmen played a major role in shaping a black-controlled congressional district in Louisiana, witnesses on both sides of a historic redistricting battle agreed Tuesday.

Attorneys trying to prove the state's congressional maps are unfair to blacks rested their case in federal court after testimony that white incumbents gained the most from a plan that divides black population - and black voting power - between two districts.

State attorneys defending the plan began building their case with testimony that congressmen were trying to preserve their political base - not discriminate against blacks - when they succeeded in killing plans for a majority-black district in New Orleans.

A lawsuit filed in the name of the state's half-million black voters claims the district lines are illegal because they dilute black voting strength.

At the center of the case is the boundary line between the 2nd District represented by liberal Rep. Lindy Boggs and the 1st District represented by conservative Republican Rep. Bob Livingston. The line meanders through inner-city New Orleans, splitting heavily black neighborhoods between the two districts.

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