VIEWPOINT
Parish Remap
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IT APPEARS that the Lafayette Parish Police Jury will finally reapportion itself, after dragging the issue for almost a decade. The jury this week directed District Attorney Bertrand DeBlanc to prepare an ordinance that will redivide the parish and eliminate rural wards that still exist.

The action comes after the federal courts approved a contested remap plan that was drawn up by the City of Lafayette based on voter registration figures, as opposed to the population counts usually relied on for such determinations. The federal court upheld the one and two man, one vote theory of voter registration figures.

IT ALL STARTED back in 1962, when local attorney J. Minos Simon filed suit demanding that the jury and parish school board reapportion because of unequal urban-rural representation.

The federal court upheld Simon's contention that present division gives the rural wards far greater strength than the more populated Third Ward, which includes the City of Lafayette.

But there were more court fights, appeals, and decisions to be made on the merits of the plan finally proposed by the jury and accepted by the courts.

UNDER THE NEW division, the jury would retain 15 jurors, but would be divided with three members from each of five wards. (At present there are 10 wards, with six jurors representing Ward Three and one juror for each of the remaining nine wards.)

The five wards would look like this:

- The new Ward One will contain the present four precincts in the present Ward One, precincts 8, 9, 10, 22 and 23 of the present Ward Three, and precincts one and two of Ward Nine.

- The proposed Ward Two would be comprised of precincts 12, 14, 18, 19, 20, 21, 24, 25 and 26 of the present Ward Ten.

- The new Ward Three would contain precincts 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 11, 15, and 17 of the present Ward Three andprecincts 3 of Ward Ten.

- Ward Four, under the new plan, will contain precincts 3, 13 and 16 of the present Ward Three, precinct 1 of Ward Four, and precincts one and two of Wards Seven and Nine.

And the new Ward Five would include precincts 1, 2, and 3 of the present Ward Two, and precincts five through eight of the present Ward Eight and precincts 1, 2, 4 and 5 of Ward Ten.

ALL OF THE new districts under the figures submitted in 1968, when the plan was drawn up by the police jury, would contain approximately the same number of voters. If the jury does finally adopt the ordinance in the near future, it will be in effect for the coming jury election, and could decide the political fortunes of some of the incumbent jury members.

And it's also likely to require the use of a scorecard by the voters to tell who's running from where and where they used to be running from.

INDIRECTLY AFFECTED, as well, will be the parish board of education if desegregation and financial woes weren't headache enough, since members of that body now run from the same wards as the police jury.

That board was once bound by law to conform to the political districts as the police jury, but the legislature has since undone that requirement. Board president George Dupuis has indicated in the past that the board would reapportion when the jury does.

But there could be a situation in which we have police jurors running from five wards and school board members running from 10 wards and representative members in a different senatorial district altogether.

WE THINK, however, that the reapportionment will serve to upgrade the jury, make it more responsive to the needs of a parish which is increasingly urban, and eliminate urban-rural splits that still exist on the jury.

Government in Lafayette must be upgraded at all levels as we grow into our metropolitan status. And the reapportionment is a long overdue step in that direction.