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Koreatown to File Redistricting Lawsuit Against L.A. City Council; 2 Pro-Bono Firms on Board

By Simone Wilson

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[They threatened](#), and they meant it: Koreatown is taking the L.A. City Council to court over the gerrymandered land grab that was redistricting 2011-12.

City Hall politicians get loads of legal threats thrown their way, on the daily. But Koreatown activists' growing rage was given a lot more weight last night at a town-hall meeting, where L.A. law firms Akin Gump and Bird Marella agreed to take on their case pro-bono.

"Over the next couple of months, as City Council wraps up their process..."

"... we will be completing our investigation and preparing our lawsuit," announced Hyongsoon Kim, attorney at Akin Gump. (Reporting courtesy of *LA Weekly* superstar Hillel Aron, who attended the town hall.)

Kim said the legal claims will fall into "two buckets."

The first is the final map itself, which splits Koreatown in half. In particular, the attorney cited complaints that City Council President Herb Wesson's self-appointed redistricting commissioner might have been unfairly focusing on making Wesson's district as black as possible (and therefore a shoo-in for a black candidate).

Then there was the process of drawing up the maps.

"The map was drawn behind closed doors, ignoring both comments of the public and the [efforts](#) of Commissioners [Helen] Kim and [Robert] Ahn," said the Akin Gump attorney.

That's something we can all agree on -- including Councilmembers Bernard Parks and Jan Perry, who didn't even try to contain their fury over the Wesson-centric gerrymanderfest that has been plaguing City Hall for the past few months. If Parks and Perry don't file their *own* lawsuits, they'll be ideal witnesses for the Koreatown plaintiffs.

Jimmy Chai, a 35-year-old resident, said at one heated redistricting hearing: "Koreatown needs cleaner streets, more parks ... but [Wesson] uses this as leverage for his personal agenda!"

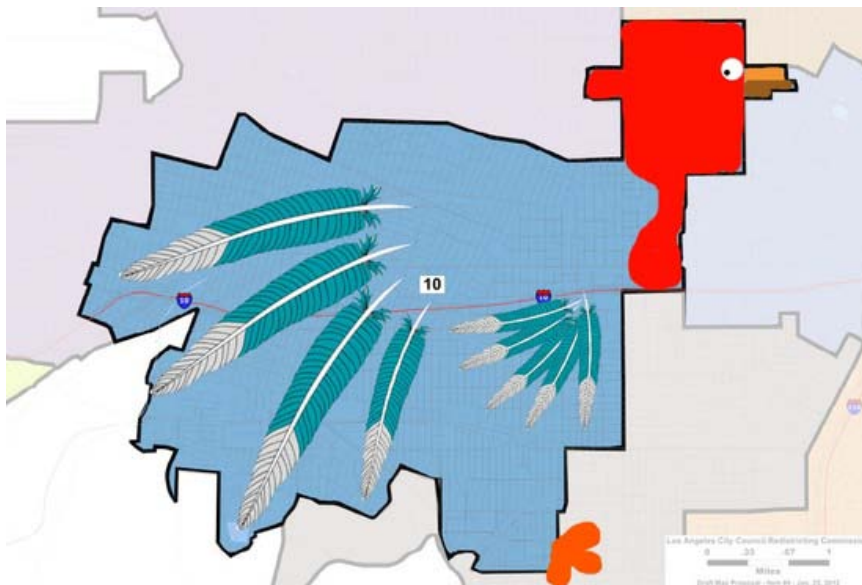
Councilwoman Perry's comments at the final City Council map approval two weeks ago were even more menacing. Her final words to Council President Wesson, via [City Maven](#):

"I'm the only woman on the city council now. I'm one woman out of 14 men. This is a lesson in the wise use of power, to respect the process, to respect the people, and to do their business in the light of day. I want to tell you publicly, Mr. President, I regret not voting for you and I am sorry. As a woman, I'm completely comfortable saying that because I'm fighting for something bigger than the both of us. For those of you who have commented they don't like to see three African-Americans fighting amongst each other, don't marginalize the issue. It's bigger than that. We are fighting for the futures of our communities."

At that same meeting, the fearless Grace Yoo, executive director of the Korean American Coalition, hinted at the inevitable: "Creating a map is not pretty, but a lawsuit will be far worse and that's the only place you're leaving us. You think our grounds are weak? Talk to your attorneys. Consider it because we are strong."

Now, Akin Gump and Bird Marella will help them make good on that promise. And Koreatown won't be paying a dime -- unlike the taxpayers of Los Angeles, who can look forward to contributing outrageous sums toward Wesson's political interests.

After the first round of drafting, the council king's District 10 looked like a [fat turkey](#):



And it hasn't changed much since then. To which Koreatown -- and its lawyers -- say: You'll regret the day you cleaved us in half and gobbled our economic core. See you in court, Wesson.

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