

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Statement from Tennessee House Minority Leader  
State Representative Karen Camper

Today, Speaker Cameron Sexton removed Democratic members from House committee assignments following our opposition to one of the most troubling abuses of power this legislature has seen in recent memory.

I will be honest: at this point, they can do whatever they want. They have proven time and time again that they have little regard for precedent, fairness, or even the spirit of the law itself. They have abused the supermajority over and over again, changing the rules whenever it benefits them and punishing anyone who dares to challenge them.

But even with all that, this still hurt.

It felt like being stabbed in the back, then having the knife pushed in deeper and turned to finish the job because I uncovered what I believe was a deliberate symbolic scheme behind the handling of debate during this extraordinary session.

The numbers mattered.

Forty-seven minutes of debate on the redistricting maps for each side — a clear nod to the 47th President.

Then came the debate structure surrounding changes to election law:

17 minutes for Democrats.

17 minutes for Republicans.

10 minutes for Democrats.

10 minutes for Republicans.

Together, those debate allotments totaled 54 minutes — a nod to 1954, the year of the landmark *Brown v. Board of Education* decision.

And when you add 47, 17, and 10 together, you arrive at 74.

Nineteen seventy-four was the year Harold Ford Sr. became the first Black member of Congress elected from Tennessee in the modern era.

I saw the symbolism. I understood exactly what was happening. And I refused to participate in it.

That is why I intentionally used only 44 minutes during debate on the redistricting legislation — in honor of the 44th President of the United States, Barack Hussein Obama — and refused to use the remainder of the allotted time so the final number would not add up to what they intended.

Apparently, for refusing to play along, Democrats are now being removed from committees.

Let's be clear about what is happening here: this is not about decorum. This is not about rules. This is about power and control.

When Democrats stand up, speak out, and expose what is happening in this chamber, the response from this supermajority is retaliation.

The real disorder is not passionate dissent on behalf of Tennesseans whose voices are being silenced. The real disorder is a legislature that increasingly believes rules only apply when convenient and democracy only works when they get the outcome they want.

As scripture reminds us in 1 Peter 3:17, "For it is better, if it is God's will, to suffer for doing good than for doing evil."

If standing up for democracy, fair representation, and the people of Tennessee comes with punishment from those in power, then we will endure it with our heads held high.

We are hurt. We are disappointed. But we are not intimidated.

And no committee assignment will stop us from fighting for democracy, voting rights, and the people of Tennessee.