

# You can have your voice heard in Florida's redistricting process

12:00 AM, Jun. 19, 2011|

This month, lawmakers from across the state will begin the critical process of redrawing Florida's boundary lines for equal representation. This historic event happens just once every 10 years, as directed by the United States Constitution.

As a part of the Sunshine State's commitment to transparency in government, the Florida Legislature has been working hard to ensure that you will have unprecedented access to all of the information, tools and resources that you need to participate in and impact the redistricting process.

Senate President Mike Haridopolos and House Speaker Dean Cannon have charged us with the responsibility of engaging every Floridian in this fundamental exercise of your political rights. With that duty in mind, we are proud to announce Florida's legislators will host a series of 26 community meetings throughout the state.

The first round of public meetings will take place in the Panhandle, starting in Tallahassee on Monday, from 1 p.m. until

4 p.m. and from 6 p.m. until 8 p.m. in the Knott Building next to the Capitol. On Tuesday, meetings will be at the WSRE-TV studios in Pensacola from 10 a.m. until 1 p.m. and at Fort Walton Beach High School from 6 p.m. until 9 p.m. On Wednesday, we'll travel to Panama City to Gulf Coast Community College for a meeting from 10 a.m. until 1 p.m.

The purpose of these public hearings is to listen to you. Legislators will not be offering comments or making speeches because we want to dedicate the time we spend in your community to hearing from you. We want to know what you believe are the important facts and unique characteristics of your community. We want to draw districts that truly represent you and your community.

Those who cannot attend but would like to listen to the meeting can access a live web stream via the Florida Channel at: [www.thefloridachannel.org](http://www.thefloridachannel.org). If you cannot attend or tune-in to the web stream, there are still many ways to actively participate in the redistricting process.

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We invite you to visit the web pages launched by both the Florida House of Representatives ([www.floridaredistrioting.org](http://www.floridaredistrioting.org)) and the Florida Senate ([www.flsenate.gov/Redistricting](http://www.flsenate.gov/Redistricting)) which are filled with information. Both sites include options to create and submit your own redistricting maps using the same data and tools that legislators will use.

We created online computer programs that we will use to build districts with you in mind. There are training resources that can help you get started drawing your own plan, and we will have demonstrations of the web applications at each meeting. Everyone who attends will have the chance to ask House and Senate staff about using the applications to build districts and how the redistricting process works.

In addition, Floridians can go online now to submit comments, access committee and public hearing schedules, or simply keep up to date with the latest information. Legislators will use your feedback, comments and submitted plans to help inform their redistricting proposals.

Redistricting happens only once a decade. It is your opportunity to help shape the districts that are the basis of your representation in Tallahassee and Washington, D.C.

Stay informed about the process through the tools and information online, and join us at one or more redistricting hearings so that your voice can be heard.

Sen. Don Gaetz, R-Niceville is chairman of

the Senate Redistricting Committee.

Rep. Will Weatherford, R-Wesley Chapel, is chairman of the House Redistricting Committee.

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# Listen, comment and even draw your own maps

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With that duty in mind, we are proud to announce that Florida's legislators will host a series of 26 community meetings throughout the state.

The first round of public meetings will take place in Florida's Panhandle and Big Bend, starting in Tal-

lahassee on Monday from 1 until 4 p.m., and from 6 until 8 p.m. in the Knott Building next to the Capitol. Tuesday, the meetings will move to Pensacola and then around the state, ending in Clewiston on Sept. 1.

The purpose of these public hearings is to listen to the public. Legislators will not be offering comments or giving their options at these meetings, because we want to dedicate the time spent in these communities to gathering thoughts about what Floridians believe are the important facts and the unique characteristics of their communities.

Those who cannot attend but would like to listen to the meetings can access a live web stream via the Florida Channel at [www.thefloridachannel.org](http://www.thefloridachannel.org). And there are still many ways to actively participate in the redistricting process.

Web pages launched by both the Florida House of Representatives ([www.floridaredistricting.org](http://www.floridaredistricting.org)) and the Florida Senate ([www.flsenate.gov/Redistricting](http://www.flsenate.gov/Redistricting)) are filled with information about redistricting.

Both sites even include options for people to create and submit their own redistricting maps, using the same data and tools that legislators will use to draw legislative and congressional boundaries.

Demonstrations of the web applications will be

set up outside each community meeting, and everyone who attends will have the chance to ask House and Senate staff about using the applications to build districts and how the redistricting process works.

In addition to drawing districts, Floridians can go online now to submit comments, access committee and public hearing schedules, or simply keep up with the latest information on the process.

Legislators will use the feedback, comments and submitted plans to help inform their redistricting proposals.

Redistricting is the opportunity for Florida citizens to help shape the districts that are the basis of their representation in Tallahassee and Washington, D.C. We hope that you will join us at one or more redistricting public hearings so that your voice can be heard.

— *State Sen. Don Gaetz, a Republican, represents District 4, which includes parts of Bay, Escambia, Okaloosa, Santa Rosa and Walton counties. He is chair of the Senate Reapportionment Committee. Contact him at [gaetz.don.web@flsenate.gov](mailto:gaetz.don.web@flsenate.gov).*

*State Rep. Will Weatherford, a Republican, represents District 61, which includes parts of Hillsborough and Pasco counties. He is chair of the House Redistricting Committee.*

## Be heard on redistricting process

Everyone lives in a specific electoral district. For instance, constituents who reside within parts of Leon and Gadsden counties are a part of House of Representatives District 8, which I am proud to represent. There are state districts and congressional districts, both of which are drawn by the Florida Legislature.

Districts are redrawn every 10 years, shortly after the U.S. Census data have been compiled and recorded. The Census is very important, as the distribution of federal funds at the local level depends on it. The Census also reveals the areas in states that have increased or decreased in population. Florida gained two additional congressional districts due to its continued growth in population.

The boundary lines are redrawn during redistricting so that each district is equal in population, based on the Census data.

I recently was appointed to the Redistricting Committee, and I look forward to playing a vital role in this process. How can you take part in the redistrict-



**Alan Williams**

My View

### IF YOU GO

#### PUBLIC HEARING ON REDISTRICTING

When: 1-4 p.m. and 6-8 p.m. Monday

Where: 412 Knott Building in the State Capitol Complex

Website: [www.floridaredistricting.org](http://www.floridaredistricting.org)

ing process?

Beginning Monday in Tallahassee, more than two dozen public hearings will be held around the state. Legislators will be seeking public comment and advice on how to establish the boundaries of voting districts and will take recommendations on redrawing district boundaries.

This is an opportunity for every citizen as well as community groups to present their views on how the district lines ought to be drawn.

I encourage you to take advantage of this opportunity to offer an opinion on the district in which you vote.

Redistricting must be guided by a set of criteria. In Florida, those include equal population; compliance with the federal Voting Rights Act; and new standards imposed by Amendments 5 and 6 to the Florida Constitution.

Last November, 63 per-

cent of Florida voters supported the so-called Fair Districts amendments, which require that legislative and congressional districts be contiguous and compact, respect city and county boundaries, and not favor an incumbent or political party. These standards are clear, and they are now required by our state constitution.

Redistricting impacts every Florida citizen and is one of the most important issues we will deal with in 2012, when the legislative session begins Jan. 10.

Legislators will work hard to ensure an appropriate process that creates fair and balanced districts meeting the criteria required by law.

As citizens, being knowledgeable about the redistricting process increases your influence as well as your impact on the political process. I encourage you to stay abreast of and participate in the process to ensure that your voice is heard.

A knowledgeable citizen is an empowered citizen. It's your government; take action!

— *Alan Williams represents District 8, which includes parts of Leon and Gadsden counties, in the Florida House of Representatives. Contact him at [Alan.Williams@myfloridahouse.gov](mailto:Alan.Williams@myfloridahouse.gov).*

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<http://www.news-journalonline.com/opinion/editorials/guest-columns/2011/07/06/hearings-take-redistricting-questions-to-communities.html>

| [Print This Page](#)

Hearings take redistricting questions to communities

By Sen. Don Gaetz and Rep. Will Weatherford, FLORIDA VOICES

This summer, lawmakers from across the state will begin the process of redrawing Florida's boundary lines for equal representation. This historic event happens just once every 10 years, as directed by the United States Constitution. In keeping with our state's strong commitment to transparency, the Florida Legislature has been working hard to ensure that you will have unprecedented access to all of the information, tools, and resources that you need to impact the redistricting process.

With that responsibility in mind, we are making your community aware that Florida's legislators are hosting a series of 26 public input meetings on redistricting throughout the state.

The next set of public redistricting meetings is coming to the Northeast Florida area:

- July 11: At Florida State College in Jacksonville, from 2 p.m.-4 p.m. and 6 p.m.-8 p.m.
- July 12: At Flagler College in St. Augustine from 8 a.m.-1 p.m.
- July 12: At the News-Journal Center in Daytona Beach from 6 p.m.-9 p.m.

The purpose of these public hearings is to listen to you. Legislators will dedicate the time spent in your community to hearing from you. We want to get your thoughts about what you believe are the important facts and unique characteristics of your community. We will provide Floridians with opportunities to ask questions throughout the process; however, this series of meetings will be completely dedicated to hearing from you.

Those who cannot attend but would like to listen to the meeting can access a live web stream via the Florida Channel at: [thefloridachannel.org](http://thefloridachannel.org). If you cannot attend or tune-in to the Web stream there are still many ways to actively participate in the redistricting process.

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The online computer programs that we will use to build districts were created with you in mind. There are training resources that can help you get started drawing your own plan. Demonstrations of the web applications will be set up outside of each community meeting and everyone who attends a community meeting will have the chance to ask House and Senate staff about using the applications to build districts and how the redistricting process works.

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*Gaetz, R-Niceville, is chairman of Senate Reapportionment Committee. Weatherford, R-Wesley Chapel, is chairman of the House Redistricting Committee.*

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## Guest column: Lawmakers: Floridians will make a difference in redistricting

**Posted:** July 6, 2011 - 12:01am

By [Sen. DON GAETZ](#) and [Rep. Will Weatherford](#)

R-Fort Walton Beach and R-Wesley Chapel

This summer, lawmakers from across the state will begin the process of redrawing Florida's boundary lines for equal representation. This historic event happens just once every ten years, as directed by the United States Constitution. In keeping with our state's strong commitment to transparency, the Florida Legislature has been working hard to ensure that you will have unprecedented access to all of the information, tools, and resources that you need to impact the redistricting process.

With that responsibility in mind, Florida's legislators are hosting a series of 26 public input meetings on redistricting throughout the state.

The meetings in Northeast Florida begin Monday in Jacksonville. They are: 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. and 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. at Florida State College at Jacksonville. Tuesday, meetings will be at Flagler College in St. Augustine, 8 a.m. to 11 a.m. and at the News Journal Center at Daytona State College in Daytona Beach, 6 p.m. to 9 p.m.

The purpose of these public hearings is to listen to you. Legislators will dedicate the time spent in your community to hearing from you. We want to get your thoughts about what you believe are the important facts and unique characteristics of your community. We will provide Floridians with opportunities to ask questions throughout the process; however, this series of meetings will be completely dedicated to hearing from you.

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\*

Sen. Don Gaetz is chair of the state Senate Reapportionment Committee; and

Rep. Will Weatherford is chair of the state House Redistricting Committee.

# opinion

Lucy C. Talley, Publisher  
Frank M. Denton, Editor  
Robert E. Martin, General Manager  
Michael P. Clark, Editorial Page Editor

## A VERSE FOR TODAY

For God did not call us to uncleanness, but in holiness.  
**1 Thessalonians 4:7**

## Climate change

# Get practical about issue

Man-made global warming is a reality, and it's a serious problem.

That conclusion has already been made by the nation's premier science group, the National Academies of Science, as well as the nation's premier meteorologists, NOAA.

And it also came from two leaders of the Arlington, Va.-based Pew Center on Global Climate Change, an independent clearinghouse for objective research and analysis on the subject, who were in Jacksonville recently.

## CHECK YOUR USAGE

- Homeowners account for up to 22 percent of the energy consumed in this country. Help them make wiser choices.
- The Pew Center on Global Climate Change offers a "carbon calculator" to show people how much carbon they would avoid and the potential dollar savings of converting to "green" energy.
- The website: [www.pewclimate.org](http://www.pewclimate.org)

nation's energy independence and lowering long-term energy costs.

This newspaper has endorsed proposals that would be revenue neutral — taxing carbon, for instance, but reducing payroll taxes by the same amount. That would provide incentives for what's needed — jobs — and disincentives for what we don't need — carbon.

## PRACTICAL SOLUTIONS

**Better gas mileage:** Better fuel-efficiency standards for cars. In recent years, automakers often have used efficiency improvements to make cars heavier rather than more fuel-efficient.

**Better design:** As a result of continued global warming, sea levels inevitably will rise. This is a huge issue in Florida.

Allow for that when designing and deciding where to put things — airport runways, streets and port infrastructure, for example.

**Energy-efficient buildings:** This is one of the most cost-efficient improvements that could be made since it would last as long as the life of the building. To finance this, some sort of conservation bank could be used for low-interest loans. Payments could be offset by savings in electricity bills.

**Embrace clean energy standards.** For example, require utilities to make a certain percentage of their electricity from clean energy sources — wind, solar, nuclear or maybe natural gas. This should be phased in carefully so that consumers aren't socked overnight with higher energy costs.

**Use education:** Conservation can save money as well as energy. Show people how to save energy.

It's unfortunate that global warming deniers can exert enough political pressure to block badly needed reforms.

But there are steps we can take today that don't require immersion in the controversy to make practical sense.

Until the day when that finally changes, everybody — government, businesses and individuals alike — need to do their part to at least slow the warming process.

If the globe is warming, for whatever reason, then we need to make adjustments for our children and grandchildren.

To do otherwise would be irresponsible.

## Angry cities

# Jacksonville needs to cool down a bit

Do you want to relax, chill out or calm down?

David Fitzsimmons The Arizona Star



## Redistricting

# A once-in-a-decade chance to speak out

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In keeping with our state's strong commitment to transparency, the Florida Legislature has been working hard to ensure that citizens will have unprecedented access to all of the information, tools and resources to impact the redistricting process.

Florida's legislators are hosting a series of 26 public input meetings on redistricting.

We want to get your thoughts about what you believe are the important facts and unique characteristics of your community.

Those who cannot attend but would like to listen to the meeting can access a live webstream via the Florida Channel at this site: [www.thefloridachannel.org](http://www.thefloridachannel.org).

## MEETINGS

- Monday, 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. and 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. at Florida State College at Jacksonville, downtown.
- Tuesday, 8 a.m. to 11 a.m. at Flagler College in St. Augustine.

If you cannot attend or tune-in to the web stream, there are still many ways to actively participate in the redistricting process.

We invite citizens to visit the web pages launched by the Florida House of Representatives ([www.floridaredistricting.org](http://www.floridaredistricting.org)) and the Florida Senate ([www.flsenate.gov/Redistricting](http://www.flsenate.gov/Redistricting)).

Both sites even include options to create and submit your own redistricting maps using the same data and tools that legislators will use to draw legislative and con-

gressional boundaries.

Demonstrations of the web applications will be set up outside of each community meeting. Everyone who attends a community meeting will have the chance to ask House and Senate staff how the redistricting process works.

In addition to drawing districts, Floridians can go online to submit comments, access committee and public hearing schedules or simply keep up with the latest information on the process.

Legislators will use feedback, comments and submitted plans to help inform their redistricting proposals.

This is your opportunity to help shape the districts that are the basis of your representation in Tallahassee and Washington.

The authors: Sen. Don Gaetz is chairman of the Senate Reapportionment Committee and Rep. Will Weatherford is chairman of the House Redistricting Committee.

## Letters from Readers

### REPLY: RICK SCOTT

#### In praise of governor

A letter writer claims Gov. Rick Scott is selling out our state to the highest bidder, and we can like it or lump it.

Well, I like it.

The Wall Street Journal reported that it's no coincidence that Florida's unemployment rate has dropped every month since he's been in office.

According to the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Florida added 28,000 jobs from April to May. It was the largest increase of any state.

He privatized Medicaid. That's an improvement. Maybe now our taxes will be better spent on U.S. citizens rather than illegal immigrants.

The governor turned down high-speed rail. Well, boo hoo. It is a luxury we cannot afford.

California agreed to it but accepted only \$16 million of stimulus money for high speed rail, the rest is private funds and voter-approved bonds. They have the population density that might support it. I wish them luck on that.

We are fortunate to have Scott as our governor.

Marje Evers, Ponte Vedra Beach

### CASEY ANTHONY TRIAL

#### Truth will come out

I always believe that someday the truth always will prevail.

It may not be for a while, but eventually someone talks.

There is a person in the Anthony family who must know how Caylee died.

What parent does not report that their child is missing for a whole month?

I know that mothers and fathers can relate to that feeling of anguish when a child is missing for one minute, never mind a whole month.

Too many blatant lies have been told to make this verdict make sense.

Justice for Caylee will eventually come.

Casey might have gotten away with murder, but it's just a matter of time. The truth will prevail.

Marjie Rogozinski, Jacksonville

### CASEY ANTHONY TRIAL

#### Defense dream team

The verdict of a jury that went through a very long trial was very impressive.

Casey Anthony was found not

### CASEY ANTHONY TRIAL

#### Like the O.J. verdict

Once again, as in the O. J. Simpson trial, our judicial system has failed us.

Not only are our own personal values as a society going downhill, our country as a whole is in a downward spiral.

As a U.S. Army veteran, it shames me to know that I wasted three years of my life serving a country that is not worthy of the efforts of our military troops that guard us from harm.

In our case, harm will undoubtedly come from within!

Danny W. Suber, Jacksonville

### GLOBAL WARMING

#### Skeptics and deniers

Man-made global warming is real and it's inconvenient, just as Al Gore labeled it, especially now when our economy is in the tank.

If you don't believe it's real, you're either a skeptic or a denier.

The skeptics refuse to consider the peer-reviewed results reported by over 98 percent of our climate scientists proving man-made global warming is real and if continued is likely to nose very

## Don Gaetz and Will Weatherford: Your opportunity to help guide the state's reapportionment

By Don Gaetz and Will Weatherford

Special to The Sun

Published: Monday, July 11, 2011 at 6:01 a.m.

This summer, lawmakers from across the state will begin the process of redrawing Florida's legislative and congressional district boundaries.

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The Associated Press

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With that responsibility in mind, we are making your community aware that Florida's legislators are hosting a series of 26 public input meetings on redistricting throughout the state.

The pair of public redistricting meetings in North Central Florida will be held Wednesday from 8 a.m. until noon in The Villages in Marion County; and from 6 p.m. until 9 p.m. at Santa Fe College.

The purpose of these public hearings is to listen to you, not for politicians to stand on their soapboxes.

We want to get your thoughts about what you believe are the important facts and unique characteristics of your community.

We will provide Floridians with opportunities to ask questions throughout the process; however, legislators will dedicate the time spent in your community to hearing from you.

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The online district building applications were created with you in mind, and include training resources that can help you get started drawing your own plan. Demonstrations of the web applications will be set up outside of each community meeting and everyone will have the chance to ask House and Senate staff about the applications and the redistricting process in general.

Floridians also can go online to submit comments, to access committee and public

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hearing schedules or to keep up with the latest information on the process.

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*State Sen. Don Gaetz is chair of the Senate Reapportionment Committee. Rep. Will Weatherford chairs the House Redistricting Committee.*



## **Drawing the lines**

Florida Today  
July 22, 2011

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With that responsibility in mind, Florida's legislators are hosting a series of 26 public input meetings on redistricting throughout the state. We travel next to an area of particular importance to this process — Central Florida. This leg of our tour takes us along the I-4 corridor, an area that saw significant population growth over the last decade, and to the Space Coast.

We will host a meeting from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Thursday at the Brevard County Government Center in Viera. We invite you to join us.

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## [ OP-ED COLUMN ]

### Redistricting Meetings Next Week

**The meetings begin Monday in Lakeland from 2 to 5 p.m. at Polk State College. On Tuesday, it is at the Hardee County Civic Center in Wauchula, from 8 to 11 a.m.**

*By WILL WEATHERFORD & DON GAETZ*

*Published: Friday, July 22, 2011 at 12:01 a.m.*

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We travel next to an area of particular importance to this process — Central Florida. This leg of our tour takes us along the Interstate 4 corridor, an area that saw significant population growth over the last decade, and to the Space Coast. Along the way we will visit one of Florida's Section 5 jurisdictions, Hardee County.

The meetings in your area begin Monday in Lakeland from 2 to 5 p.m. at Polk State College. On Tuesday, meetings will be at the Hardee County Civic Center in Wauchula, from 8 to 11 a.m., and at the gym at Wiregrass Ranch High School in Wesley Chapel from 6 to 9 p.m.

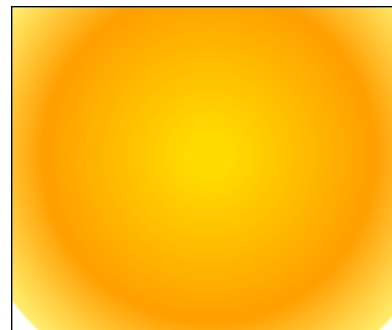
The purpose of these public hearings is to listen to you. Legislators will dedicate the time spent in your community to hearing from you. We want to get your thoughts about what you believe are the important facts and unique characteristics of your community. While legislators will dedicate the time spent in your community to hearing from you, Floridians will have numerous opportunities to ask questions throughout the process.

Those who cannot attend but would like to listen to the meeting can access a live Web stream via the Florida Channel at [www.thefloridachannel.org](http://www.thefloridachannel.org). If you cannot attend or tune-in to the web stream there are still many ways to actively participate in the redistricting process.

We invite you to visit the webpages launched by both the Florida House of Representatives at [www.floridaredistricting.org](http://www.floridaredistricting.org) and the Florida Senate at [www.flsenate.gov/redistricting](http://www.flsenate.gov/redistricting). They are filled with information about redistricting. Both sites even include options to create and submit your own redistricting maps using the same data and tools that legislators will use to draw legislative and congressional boundaries.

The online computer programs that we will use to build districts were created with you in mind. There are training resources that will help you get started drawing your own plan. Demonstrations of the web applications will be set up outside of each community meeting. House and Senate staff will be available to talk to those in attendance about using the applications to build districts and how the redistricting process works.

In addition to drawing districts, you may go online now to submit comments, access committee and public hearing schedules, or simply keep up with the latest information on the process. Legislators will use your feedback, comments and submitted plans to help inform their redistricting proposals.



Redistricting happens only once a decade. It is your opportunity to help shape the districts that are the basis of your representation in Tallahassee and Washington. We invite you to stay informed about the process through the tools and information online, and we hope that you will join us at one or more redistricting public hearings so that your voice can be heard.

[ State Rep. Will Weatherford, R-Wesley Chapel, is chair of the House Redistricting Committee. State Sen. Don Gaetz, R-Niceville, is chair of the Senate Committee on Reapportionment. ]

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Posted on Wed, Aug. 10, 2011

## Your chance to be heard on redistricting

BY REP. WILL WEATHERFORD AND SEN. DON GAETZ

[gaetz.don.web@flsenate.gov](mailto:gaetz.don.web@flsenate.gov)

During the regular session that starts Jan. 10, the State Legislature must redraw Florida's legislative and congressional district boundaries based on the 2010 Census. This historic event happens just once every 10 years, as directed by the U.S. and Florida constitutions.

In keeping with the Sunshine State's strong commitment to transparency in government, the Florida Legislature has been working hard to ensure that you will have unprecedented access to all of the information, tools and resources that you need to participate in the redistricting process.

With that responsibility in mind, this summer we are hosting a series of 26 public meetings on redistricting throughout the state.

We head to Miami Dade College's Wolfson Campus in downtown Miami from 10 a.m. until 2 p.m. on Wednesday, August 17. Later that day, we will go to Florida International University's Law School Auditorium on the Modesto A. Maidique Campus in western Miami-Dade County from 6-9 p.m. The week of public hearings concludes with a stop in Key West on Thursday, Aug. 18, at Florida Keys Community College from 4-7 p.m.

The meeting in Key West will also give residents of Monroe County, a jurisdiction covered under Section 5 of the federal Voting Rights Act, the opportunity to comment on how redistricting uniquely affects their communities.

The purpose of these public hearings is to listen to constituents. Miami-Dade County has changed dramatically in the last 10 years. We want to get your thoughts about what you believe are the important facts and unique characteristics of your community. We will provide opportunities for an open dialogue between legislators and the public throughout the process; however, legislators will dedicate the time spent in your community to hearing from you.

Those who cannot attend but who would like to listen to the meeting can access a live web stream provided by the Florida Channel at [www.thefloridachannel.org](http://www.thefloridachannel.org). If you cannot attend or tune-in to the web stream there are still many ways to actively participate in the redistricting process.

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## South Florida Sun-Sentinel.com

### Lawmakers seek to draw voters into Florida redistricting process

By Will Weatherford and Don Gaetz

August 10, 2011

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The next leg of our trip goes from the Treasure Coast through Palm Beach and Broward counties. Stops include Florida Atlantic University's campus in [Boca Raton](#) from 10 a.m. until 1 p.m. Aug. 16, and from 6 p.m. until 9 p.m. at the Davie campus of Broward College.

The purpose of these public hearings is to listen to you. We want to get your thoughts about what you believe are the important facts and unique characteristics of your community. We have heard some incredibly helpful testimony from residents from the Panhandle, Northeast and Central Florida. We hope that you will share your thoughts on how your communities have changed in the last 10 years.

Those who cannot attend but would like to listen to the meeting can access a live web stream provided by the Florida Channel at <http://www.thefloridachannel.org>. If you cannot attend or tune in to the web stream, there are still many ways to actively participate in the redistricting process.

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*Rep. Will Weatherford is chairman of the House Redistricting Committee. Sen. Don Gaetz is chairman of the Senate Reapportionment Committee.*

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## **Will Weatherford & Don Gaetz: Legislators looking forward to Florida residents' ideas on redistricting**

**Legislators seeking Floridians' ideas on legislative redistricting Upcoming meetings in Stuart, south, your opportunity to impact process**

Will Weatherford, R-Wesley Chapel, is chairman of the House Redistricting Committee. Don Gaetz, R-Fort Walton Beach, is chairman of the Senate Reapportionment Committee.

Friday, August 12, 2011

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The next leg of our trip goes from the Treasure Coast through the Palm Beaches, Broward, and Miami-Dade down to the Keys.

Stops include the Blake Library in Stuart (6-9 p.m. Aug. 15); Florida Atlantic University's campus in Boca Raton (10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Aug. 16), and the Davie campus of Broward College (6-9 p.m. Aug. 16). We head south after that through Aug. 18, when we will meet in Key West.

The purpose of these public hearings is to listen to you, not for politicians to stand on their soapboxes. We want to get your thoughts about what you believe are the important facts and unique characteristics of your community. We have heard some incredibly helpful testimony from residents from the Panhandle, Northeast and Central Florida. We hope that you will share your thoughts on how your communities have changed in the last 10 years.

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## My Word: Districts don't have to be compact

August 17, 2011 | By State Sen. David Simmons

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In November, voters changed the rules and set new standards for legislative and congressional redistricting by adding amendments 5 and 6 to Florida's Constitution. While one amendment sets standards for legislative districts and the other sets standards for congressional districts, the amendments are substantively identical.

The amendments' new standards for redistricting fall into two tiers. Tier 1 prohibits the Legislature from drawing districts with the intent of favoring or disfavoring a political party or incumbent. Tier 1 also prohibits "abridging the equal opportunity of racial or language minorities to participate in the political process" or diminishing "their ability to elect representatives of their choice."

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The amendments also have a second-tier analysis that is subordinate to the requirements of Tier 1. Tier 2 requires the Legislature to draw districts that are compact and, where feasible, to use existing political and geographical boundaries in doing so.

As such, the amendments require, and their proponents have admitted, that preserving and creating minority-opportunity districts is a first priority of the Legislature, and must be done at the expense of compactness. In this regard, it is apparent that compactness simply cannot be achieved in many areas of Florida where the Legislature must preserve or create opportunities for racial or language minorities.

Take, for example, Congressional District 3, which has been represented by Congresswoman Corrine Brown since 1993. Congressional District 3, a minority-access district, includes parts of Jacksonville down to Orlando. It has been targeted as an example of the evils of gerrymandering. But Amendment 6 prohibits the Legislature from diminishing the ability of minority voters in this district to choose their own representative, and it seems to require preservation of such a district in northeast Florida.

Thus, amendments 5 and 6, contrary to requiring compact districts, now have enshrined many odd-shaped minority districts into Florida's Constitution.

Many voters will be surprised to find that Florida's Constitution now requires the Legislature, as its overarching priority, to create minority districts that are not compact and do not follow political and geographical boundaries. After such minority districts are in place, the Tier 2 standards will more significantly impact how the Legislature draws the remaining House, Senate and congressional districts.

**State Sen. David Simmons is a Republican from Maitland.**

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**Orlando Sentinel**

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Published: August 26, 2011

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## Let's talk redistricting

**By WILL WEATHERFORD, DON GAETZ**

This summer, lawmakers from across the state will begin the process of redrawing Florida's legislative and congressional district boundaries. This historic event happens just once every 10 years, as directed by the U.S. Constitution. In keeping with the Sunshine State's strong commitment to transparency, the Florida Legislature has been working hard to ensure that you will have unprecedented access to all of the information, tools and resources that you need to impact the redistricting process.

With that responsibility in mind, we are making your community aware that Florida's legislators are hosting a series of 26 public input meetings on redistricting throughout the state.

We travel next to Southwest Florida for public redistricting meetings. On the final leg of our tour we will stop in Tampa at the Jefferson High School Auditorium on Monday from 4 p.m. until 8 p.m. We head to Largo on Tuesday for hearings at the EpiCenter at St. Pete College from 8 a.m. until 11 a.m., and then to Sarasota to New College of Florida from 6 p.m. until 9.

We will host a meeting in Naples on Wednesday from 8 a.m. until 11 a.m. at the Naples Daily News community room before heading to Lehigh Acres at the Veterans' Park Gymnasium from 6 p.m. until 9 p.m. Our travels end in Clewiston on Sept. 1 from 8 a.m. until 11 a.m. at the Hendry County Health Department.

The purpose of these public hearings is to listen to you, not for politicians to stand on their soapboxes. We want to get your thoughts about what you believe are the important facts and unique characteristics of your community.

We will provide Floridians with opportunities to ask questions throughout the process; however, legislators will dedicate the time spent in your community to hearing from you. The meetings will also give residents of Collier, Hendry and Hillsborough counties, all of which are jurisdictions covered by Section 5 of the federal Voting Rights Act, the opportunity to comment on the impact of redistricting to their unique communities.

Those who cannot attend but would like to listen to the meeting can access a live Web stream provided by the Florida Channel at [www.thefloridachannel.org](http://www.thefloridachannel.org). If you cannot attend or tune in to the stream there are still many



ways to actively participate in the redistricting process.

We invite you to visit the Web pages launched by both the House of Representatives ([www.floridaredistricting.org](http://www.floridaredistricting.org) ) and the Senate ([www.flsenate.gov/Redistricting](http://www.flsenate.gov/Redistricting)). Both sites are filled with information about redistricting and allow users to create and submit your own redistricting maps using the same data and tools that legislators will use to draw legislative and congressional boundaries.

The online district-building applications were created with you in mind and include training resources that can help you get started drawing your own plan. Demonstrations of the web applications will be set up outside of each community meeting, and everyone who will have the chance to ask House and Senate staffs about the applications and the redistricting process in general.

Floridians can also go online to submit comments, to access committee and public hearing schedules, or simply to keep up with the latest information on the process.

Legislators will use your feedback, comments and submitted plans to help construct their redistricting proposals.

This is your opportunity to help shape the districts that form the basis of your representation in Tallahassee and Washington, D.C.

We invite you to stay informed about the process through the tools and information online, and we hope that you will join us at one or more redistricting public hearings to make your voice heard.



## Guest opinion: We request your help, comments on redistricting

10:10 PM, Aug. 29, 2011|

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With that responsibility in mind, we invite you to the Florida Legislature's public input meetings on redistricting throughout the state.

On this final leg of our tour, we will stop in Largo today for a hearing at the EpiCenter at St. Pete College from 8 a.m. until 11 a.m., and then to Sarasota to New College from 6 p.m. until 9 p.m.

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The purpose of these public hearings is to listen to you.

We want to get your thoughts about what you believe are the important facts and unique characteristics of your community.

Southwest Florida has changed dramatically in the last 10 years, and residents are facing new, unique challenges.

We will provide Floridians with opportunities to ask questions throughout the process; however, legislators will dedicate the time spent in your community to hearing from you.

The meetings will also give residents of

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### If you go

Redistricting meetings in Lee, Collier and Hendry counties.

They are open to the public.

Wednesday, Aug. 31

- 8 a.m. — Naples, Naples Daily News community room
- 6 p.m. — Lehigh Acres, Veterans Park gymnasium, 55 Homestead Road.

Thursday, Sept. 1

- 8 a.m. — Clewiston, Hendry County Health Department, 100 South Olympia Ave.

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