

### State of Florida Leverages Microsoft Cloud Solution for Census

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PR Newswire

TALLAHASSEE, Fla., June 11

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Contact: Jared Adams of Merritt Group, +1-703-390-1530, adams@merrittgrp.com, for Microsoft

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## MyFloridaCensus leverages Microsoft Windows Azure cloud platform, Silverlight, and Bing Maps for Florida 2010 Census count

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speak for the betterment of their communities," explains Microsoft.

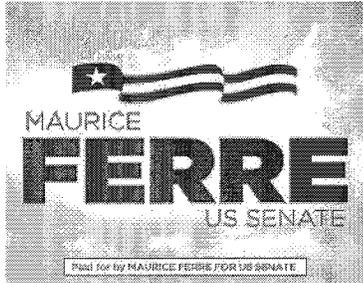
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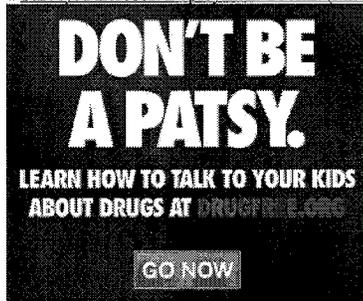
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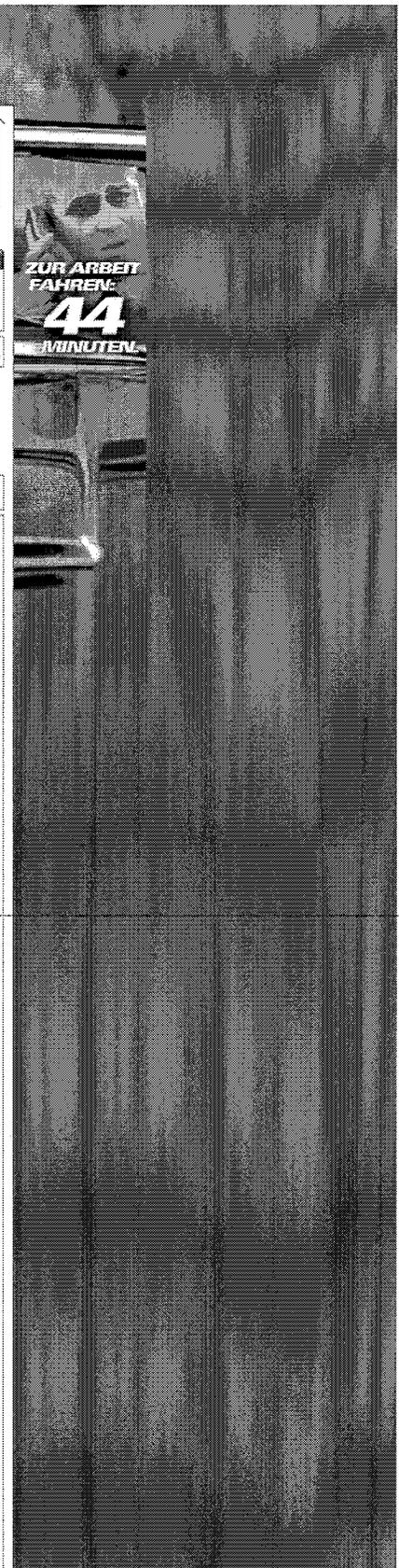
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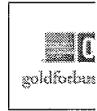
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## Florida's growth rate tapers off further in 2009

The Associated Press

Updated: 2:56 p.m. Friday, June 11, 2010  
Posted: 11:59 a.m. Thursday, June 10, 2010

U.S. Census estimates say Florida's population growth rate is continuing to decline.

Among the nation's leaders in unemployment and home foreclosure rates, Florida gained just 114,091 residents from July 1, 2008, to July 1, 2009. After averaging around 2.0 percent growth for much of the decade, the rate dropped last year to 0.6 percent — the lowest of the decade.

Census estimates released Thursday put Florida's population at 18,537,969.

Florida's growth leader was Wakulla County near Tallahassee, and the biggest loser was Union County in north central Florida.

The largest of Florida's 67 counties — Miami-Dade — crested the 2.5 million mark in population in 2009. North Florida's Lafayette County was the smallest, with 7,949 residents.

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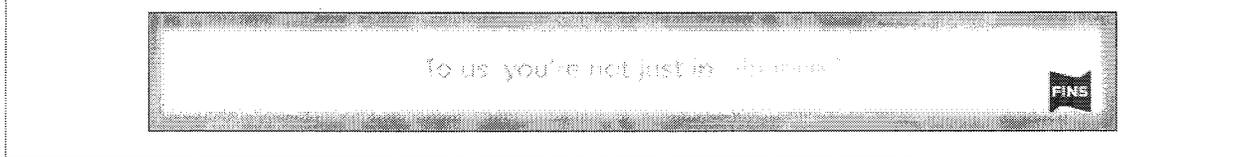
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JUNE 11, 2010 10:49 AM ET

# State of Florida Leverages Microsoft Cloud Solution for Census Count

Article

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Built on Windows Azure, MyFloridaCensus.gov helps Floridians identify homes, neighborhoods and communities for 2010 census. TALLAHASSEE, Fla., June 11 /PRNewswire-FirstCall/ -- The Florida House of Representatives is making one final push over the next month for its state residents to be counted in the 2010 Census, through its MyFloridaCensus (<http://www.myfloridacensus.gov>) website and Web-based application. MyFloridaCensus is an innovative component in Florida's overall effort to ensure a complete count of residents during the ongoing 2010 Census, supplementing door-to-door canvassing, which ends nationwide July 10.

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MyFloridaCensus is hosted in the Windows Azure cloud platform and runs using Microsoft Silverlight for cross-browser compatibility. With the support of a Bing Maps interface, the collective technology allows visitors to share their experiences with the 2010 Census and build a social user-generated experience around the once-per-decade count. In turn, the Florida House provides the U.S. Census Bureau, state and local governments, and citizens with dynamic feedback and visual representations of that feedback. Unlike most traditional government websites, MyFloridaCensus offers Floridians the opportunity to take part in the gathering of information, and thus affords individual citizens the opportunity to speak for the betterment of their communities.

"Once Florida residents share the census impact in their communities, we use MyFloridaCensus.gov to work with the U.S. Census Bureau to account for streets, neighborhoods and communities that may otherwise be missed in the 2010 Census," said Florida state Rep. Dean Cannon.

## Basic Needs, New Tools

Government agencies are more frequently being asked to communicate with their constituencies with the vigor and versatility of the private sector. The combination of Azure, Silverlight and Bing Maps gives the Florida House the ability to build a dynamic front-end user experience supported by a back-end system that optimizes for flexibility and can satisfy heavy peak demand usage. Equally important, MyFloridaCensus provides a successful proof of concept for future cloud-based public service endeavors. In 2011, the Florida House will transition MyFloridaCensus into an online tool for the public to participate in the process of redrawing political boundary lines (redistricting).

"Florida is not only on the leading edge of engaging its citizens on Census participation, but the Windows Azure solution they've chosen to build has broader applicability for future resident engagement," said Gail Thomas-Flynn, vice president of State and Local Government at Microsoft. "More of our state customers are following this approach and moving unique and ongoing citizen services to the cloud platforms that can scale up and down according to need."

The Florida House chose to host the application in a cloud environment because application use is expected to be high for only a few critical weeks and then gradually fall off over time, until the launch of a new application in 2011. Windows Azure hosting provides the ability to expand and contract the use of server space, helping reduce the cost to taxpayers when the site is not in peak use.

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## State of Florida Leverages Microsoft Cloud Solution for Census Count

Built on Windows Azure, MyFloridaCensus.gov helps Floridians identify homes, neighborhoods and communities for 2010 census.



PR Newswire

**Companies:** Microsoft Corporation

**Press Release Source:** Microsoft Corp. On Friday June 11, 2010, 10:49 am EDT

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## State of Florida Leverages Microsoft Cloud Solution for Census Count

Date : 2010-06-13 09:55:21

Source:TAG-IT News Agency

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PUBLIC SECTOR

## State of Florida runs on Microsoft cloud

14 June 2010

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*Gail Thomas-Flynn, Microsoft*

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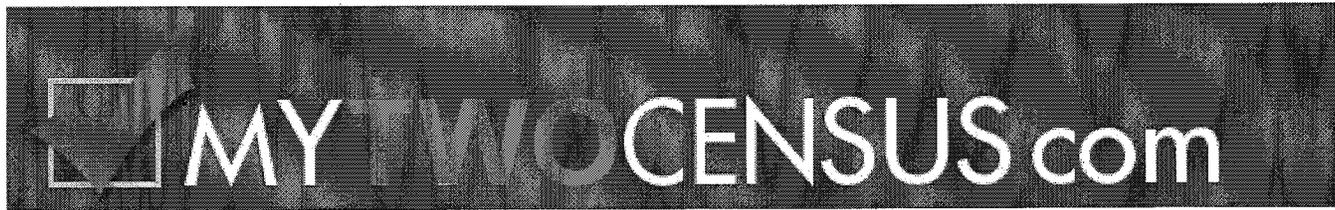
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### [MyTwoCensus Investigation: Is Florida already gearing up for a challenge to its 2010 Census figures?](#)

Monday, June 14th, 2010

First, here's some background: States and municipalities have the power to challenge census results. For instance, just this year the Census Bureau admitted that its numbers were faulty for a number of locales around the country and eventually adjusted the totals, immediately effecting how federal funds were/are distributed. A few days ago, Microsoft released a press release stating that it is now operating a software system for the state of Florida that will help the state identify areas where the Census Bureau may have screwed up and failed to count people.

(Check out the site here at [myfloridacensus.com](http://myfloridacensus.com))

*site note: maybe I should sue Microsoft/the state of Florida for infringing on the mytwocensus name with myfloridacensus? any lawyers out there want to advise me on this one?*

The press release states the following:

“The Florida House of Representatives is making one final push over the next month for its state residents to be counted in the 2010 Census, through its MyFloridaCensus (<http://www.myfloridacensus.gov>) website and Web-based application. MyFloridaCensus is an innovative component in Florida's overall effort to ensure a complete count of residents during the ongoing 2010 Census, supplementing door-to-door canvassing, which ends nationwide July 10.”

Ostensibly, if Florida doesn't like its total population count as identified by the Census Bureau, it will happily use data collected through [myfloridacensus.com](http://myfloridacensus.com) to fight the Census Bureau in its challenge. Does this mean that the stage is already being set for yet another bloody recount in Florida, this one to take place in 2011, ten years after the last one rocked the nation and changed the course of history?

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State of Florida Leverages Microsoft Cloud Solution for Census Count

PR Newswire 2010-06-15

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## Florida site catches what the Census missed

Online tool for correcting omissions will be used for redistricting next year

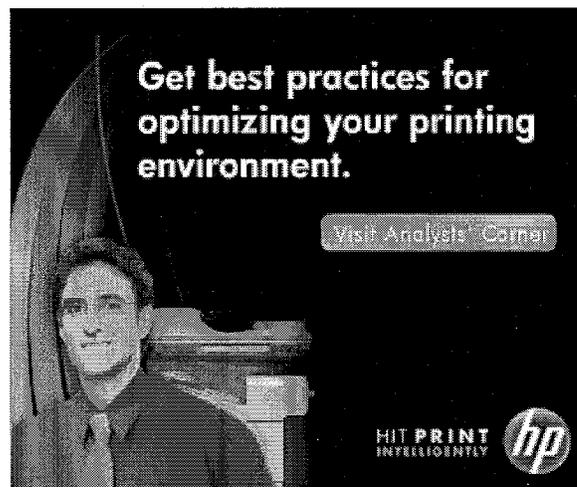
- By [Rutrell Yasin](#)
- Jun 17, 2010

The Florida House of Representatives is making a month-long push to ensure that state residents are counted in the 2010 Census through its [MyFloridaCensus](#) Web site, which gives residents the opportunity to contribute information, such as whether they've been included in the Census.

The House plans to turn MyFloridaCensus into an online tool for the public to participate in the process of redistricting, the redrawing of political boundary lines, Florida officials said. That will happen next year.

MyFloridaCensus is hosted in the Microsoft Windows Azure cloud platform and runs using Microsoft Silverlight, a development platform for creating rich media applications and business applications for the Web, desktop and mobile devices.

With the support of a Bing Maps interface, the collective technology lets visitors to the site share their experiences with the 2010 Census. In turn, the Florida House provides the U.S. Census Bureau, state and local governments, and citizens with dynamic feedback and visual representations of that feedback.



### Related coverage:

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[Microsoft puts its focus on the cloud](#)

Rep. Dean Cannon (R-Winter Park) spearheaded MyFloridaCensus because he wanted to have Floridians involved in the redistricting and Census processes, said Bob West, director of the Florida House of Representatives' Office of Reapportionment.

The Florida House is using the site to help identify people the Census might have missed, supplementing the door-to-door canvassing of residents, scheduled to end nationwide on July 10. Depending on whose estimates are used, each missed person could cost the state \$900 to \$3,000 in lost federal funds, West said.

The Florida House initially sent out e-mails, primarily to state employees, asking them to go to the site to let state officials know if they were reached or missed by the Census. Through the process, the state identified 3,000 people who were missed, West said. About 19,000 employees went to the site to give information.

State officials often find that when a person has not been counted, their entire street or neighborhood has been missed, said Alex Kelly, a Florida legislative analyst. So it opened the door to actually finding a number of communities, at least at the time, that were going uncounted, Kelly said.

The combination of Azure, Silverlight and Bing Maps gives the Florida House the flexibility to move complicated layers of information, West said.

For instance, as the information technology team worked on the redistricting component, they discovered that, if they used other technologies, they would have to essentially build a duplicate version of an application for each Web browser they wanted to support, at least three or four times. Using Silverlight, they built an application once that was compatible across various browsers, West said.

Bing Maps allowed the House to avoid having to develop its own road maps, water layers and aerial images, West said. "Using Bing Maps and the Silverlight plug-in gave us a lot of tools we needed to build the application," he said.

After building the Web site, the Florida House needed a place to host it. They thought about doing it in-house but estimated that it would cost the state \$300,000 over four years, including licensing and servers.

The Florida House built MyFloridaCensus expecting there to be short periods of high demand interspersed with longer stretches of relatively low usage. On the Azure cloud platform, state officials can pay only for the resources they use.

During peak times, the state has two copies of the Web site to handle the load. After peak times, they go back to one. The same server platform in-house would have cost \$15,000 over the four years, so going to the cloud offers infrastructure and maintenance savings.

By the middle of next year, The Florida House will flip the switch and turn the site into a redistricting application, Kelly said.

"When we get the results of the Census – by April 1, 2011 – we will put those up over-layed with Bing Maps," Kelly said. Local government officials will be able to go online and see the results and challenge any discrepancies. For instance, a town or county may have grown to 10,000 people from 4,000 but a couple of thousand are missing. That means a major difference in federal and state money allotted to that municipality, Kelly noted.

The Web site, though, will also allow the public to submit their suggestions about the redrawing of congressional districts. The state attempted this a few years ago, but the desktop software used at the time was not an interactive, dynamic tool, West said.

"We're getting into the realm where we are not just offering up information for constituents, but we are asking them for the information and to participate," Kelly said.

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# B-DISTRICTING

THE STORY OF WRITING REDISTRICTING SOFTWARE AND OTHER THOUGHTS ON REDISTRICTING.

2010-06-20

## News Recap 05-19 to 06-18

**FL**

2010-05-19 FL Legislature competes with redistricting initiatives.

"That means the measure – HJR 7231 – will appear on the ballot as Amendment 7. The redistricting amendments pushed by FairDistrictsFlorida.org are Amendment 5 and Amendment 6."

2010-05-20 TampaBay.com

"Unfettered by party, independent Crist backs constitutional ban on gerrymandering" That would be formerly Republican Governor, Charlie Crist.

2010-05-20 Orlando Sentinel Proponents of 5 and 6 complain about placement of 7 that could cause confusion

2010-05-21 Orlando Sentinel NAACP, LWV, and others cry foul over 7.

2010-05-22 and then they file suit:

"They filed a lawsuit in Tallahassee on Friday that asks a circuit court judge to knock off the ballot a proposed constitutional amendment that the GOP-controlled Legislature approved the last day of the session."

2010-05-25 Orlando Sentinel

In what looks like a tit-for-tat move, U.S. Reps. Corrine Brown, D-Jacksonville, and Mario Diaz-Balart, R-Miami "have filed a lawsuit challenging the Fair Districts constitutional amendments headed to voters this fall, claiming the congressional redistricting proposal would not afford enough protection to minorities."

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I think that'd be covered by the old Voting Rights Act, as usual.

2010-05-26 Diaz-Balart criticizes FL citizen initiative 6

"Amendment 6 is riddled with inconsistencies and, if passed, would set unworkable standards in drawing districts," said Diaz-Balart, a four-term congressman who served 14 years in the Legislature.

- ▶ May (2)
- ▶ April (2)
- ▶ March (8)

I kinda agree.

2010-05-31 Longish article about arguments on both sides, 5,6 vs 7.

**OH**

2010-05-25 OH HJR 15

"House Joint Resolution 15, a plan to revamp how state legislative districts are drawn, was approved on a 7-6 party-line vote by the House Elections and Ethics Committee."

2010-05-29 Examiner.com

"The measure in question, HJR 15, sponsored by Democrats Tom Letson of Warren and Jennifer Garrison of Marietta, passed 69-28 with the help of 17 Republicans, some of whom expressed their strong concerns in comments made from the floor."

"Senate Joint Resolution 5, a similarly focused measure sponsored by State Sen. Jon Husted (R-Kettering) that was passed by the Senate in September of last year,"

2010-06-02 Marietta Times

"The House version is a version that is a mathematical formula and considers representational fairness and political competitiveness, keeping municipalities and counties together,"

2010-06-04 ohio.com and Columbus Dispatch note apparent failure in current political process.

Current negotiations failed, but "GOP State Sen. Jon Husted (HYOO'-sted), the top proponent of redistricting, pledges to keep working on an

---

ABOUT ME

BOLSON  
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS, UNITED STATES

Programmer and Citizen. I work for a major internet software company, and then go home and do some more to try to make the world a better place through software.

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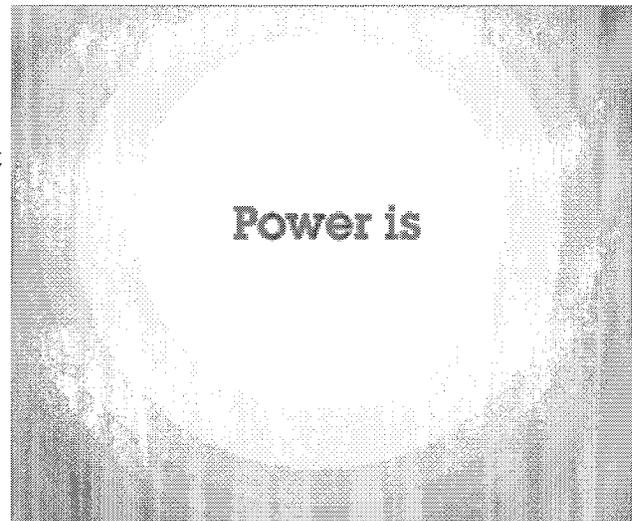
## Florida's cloud-based Census app aims to find "missed" Floridians

By Scott McPherson

Created Jun 22 2010 - 4:37pm

Of all the uses of clouds, both public and private, perhaps the most technologically sophisticated and potentially revolutionary cloud is the one being developed by the Florida House of Representatives. It is a Web-based, Microsoft-cloud-driven, Silverlight-Bing-enabled app called [www.myfloridacensus.gov](http://www.myfloridacensus.gov) [1]. And it works quite well, thank you.

First, the problem behind the solution. Just because the Census happens every ten years does not mean there is nothing going on in the intervening years. Far from it: Cities, counties, states and the Census Bureau itself are constantly upgrading their residential address databases and maps. This is because entire communities can (and in Florida and elsewhere, do) spring up in the years between the Censuses. Or is that Censi? Whatever.



These neighborhoods need to be tallied and their streets added to the Bureau's geospatial files. This process is called Local Update of Census Addresses, or LUCA. And LUCA is an essential part of the run-up to the Census. For without it, entire subdivisions would be undercounted, or possibly not counted at all.

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This problem is most acute in fast-growing areas of the nation, especially Florida. Florida is historically "undercounted" in the Census. Though the undercount was halved in Florida in 2000, it still represents tens -- perhaps hundreds -- of thousands of Floridians who are "missed" by the Census.

There are numerous ways to verify and cross-check to see if a community was "missed" by the Bureau. One such way is what Florida did in 2000; namely, engaged a direct mail firm and mailed letters to underperforming Census tracts and asked people to call a toll-free number if they were "missed."

This was excellent, but it was reactionary and was slow by today's standards. So the Florida House of Representatives this year moved forward with an interactive Website which actually displays blocks, neighborhoods, even entire subdivisions in red, where the Bureau has no record of residences (but the overhead photography of the bikes in the yards and the barbecue grills would seem to confirm the presence of life there).

Bob West, the House's reapportionment guru, spends a considerable amount of his time analyzing data from divergent sources such as driver license files, property appraiser files, and voting records. He creates a gignunda database of residential addresses and matches that verified file against the Census Bureau's final LUCA file that is published to states immediately prior to the start of the Census.

The simple rule of thumb: Any address in the House's database that is not in the Bureau's database is a potential missed count. So that information goes to the Bureau, along with entreaties that the Bureau recheck its data and get out there and enumerate those "missing" homes.

But it certainly would be helpful if actual residents of those homes also listed their status as either counted

or missed, which creates yet another mode of verification. Hence the Florida House's Website.

Now as many of you know, I am the CIO of the Florida House. That is in my bio here at Computerworld and I formally disclose that fact here. But the truth is, outside of mentioning the possibility of placing this solution in the cloud, I have had little to do with the nuts-and-bolts of placing this solution within Microsoft's Azure cloud. That has come from some very talented developers who work elsewhere within the House. Come to think of it, my principal Webslinger did design the site's look and feel, we did convey project management skills, and my information architect checks in as needed on the project, so I guess we did do more than just cheerlead.

And that is part of the lesson here. CIOs need to be heavily invested (and ultimately, supportive) of the uses of such clouds. In the case of my shop, placing this Census solution "in the cloud" meant I did not have to buy a bunch of new servers, even though we are heavily virtualized already. Microsoft's cloud licensing and Bing licensing models are much more reasonable than buying MS Server and SQL Server licenses. I do not have to worry about DR, outside of backing up our data that we post to the cloud. Since we pay "by the drink," we do not have to overbuy capacity within our existing data center. Indeed, we have great elasticity that we would not have had otherwise, virtualized or not.

All told, we have saved many tens of thousands of dollars with this solution. And every minute we spend on this solution gets us smarter for the future. "The future" for us might mean placing our bread-and-butter .NET apps in the cloud. And it certainly means we are closer to offering such things as "Online DIY Redistricting" for greater transparency, when reapportionment occurs in 2012. That is a goal of incoming Speaker Dean Cannon of the Orlando area.

Back to the reason for the app. Floridians who feel that they were "missed" by the Census can access the Florida House's cloud app at [www.myfloridacensus.gov](http://www.myfloridacensus.gov) [2]. They can see if their community is recognized by the Census, or was "missed." And counted or no, they can officially certify their status by filking in their information within a form, which is routinely forwarded to the Census Bureau. But time is rapidly running out, and the Bureau will stop enumerating door-to-door very soon.

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**Links:**

[1] <http://www.myfloridacensus.gov/>

[2] <http://www.myfloridacensus.gov/>

6/25/10



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Printed on page B4

## 2 Redistricting Amendments Spark Legal Battle

By *BILL KACZOR*  
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Published: Friday, June 25, 2010 at 12:01 a.m.

TALLAHASSEE | A pair of lawsuits seeking to knock three redistricting proposals off Florida's Nov. 2 ballot have touched off a legal and political free-for-all.

It includes now-independent Gov. Charlie Crist, Democratic former Gov. and ex-U.S. Sen. Bob Graham, both houses of the Republican-controlled Legislature and two members of Congress.

A judge allowed Graham to intervene Thursday in one of the lawsuits.

Crist filed written arguments as a "friend of the court" opposing stances taken by the Legislature in both cases earlier this week.

One case focuses on a pair of citizen initiatives placed on the ballot by petition. Each is designed to curtail the traditional practice of gerrymandering to help incumbents win re-election and the political party in power to stay that way. Amendment 5 covers legislative redistricting and Amendment 6 congressional.

The other lawsuit challenges Amendment 7, which the Legislature put on the ballot in reaction to the initiatives. Sponsors say it's needed to "clarify" the initiatives if they should pass. Opponents, though, argue it would nullify the anti-gerrymandering measures and give the legislative majority free rein to do as it pleases.

Crist has joined Graham and other initiative supporters in defending those measures. He also has sided with initiative backers who are challenging Amendment 7.

"The governor of the state ought to have an interest in the fair election process," said Ron Meyer, a lawyer for Graham.

Meyer, though, acknowledged it would have been hard to imagine Crist opposing the Legislature before he quit the Republican Party in his run for the U.S. Senate.

U.S. Reps. Corrine Brown, D-Jacksonville, and Mario Diaz-Balart, R-Miami, are challenging Amendment 6, which affects only Congress. Both house of the Legislature joined their lawsuit and expanded it to include Amendment 5.

Brown, who is black, and Diaz-Balart, a Cuban-American, and the Legislature argue the initiatives would hurt gains made in minority representation.

The initiatives' defenders say just the opposite - that they will protect those gains.

Crist has allied himself with Florida's chapter of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the Florida League of Women Voters and the Hispanic advocacy group Democracia Ahora and their leaders, who are challenging Amendment 7.

Other plaintiffs are a couple moderate Republicans, former state Comptroller Bob Milligan and Nathaniel Reed, an environmentalist who served as an assistant interior



secretary under GOP Presidents Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford.

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Graham, Milligan and Reed are honorary co-chairmen of Fair Districts Florida, which obtained more than 600,000 signatures needed to put each of the anti-gerrymandering initiatives on the ballot.

Both cases were filed in Tallahassee. A final hearing is set July 8 for the Amendment 7 case. A non-jury trial is scheduled for July 26 in the initiatives case.

Meyer said both cases likely will wind up in the Florida Supreme Court.

This story appeared in print on page B4

orlandosentinel.com/news/opinion/os-ed-quickhits-062610-20100625,0,4311393.story

## OrlandoSentinel.com

### Our take on: Fair districts & A tennis match for the ages

June 26, 2010

#### Fair districts

Gov. Charlie Crist won the enmity of Republican legislative leaders when he vetoed their bill tying teachers' pay to students' achievement, their bill banning funding for human embryonic stem-cell research, their bill letting legislative leaders control slush funds and their bill compromising women's constitutional right to an abortion.

They're going to really hate him now for hitting them where they breathe: The governor asked the courts this week to kill the legislators' lawsuit challenging proposed constitutional amendments that would end gerrymandering.

Legislators love the perverse practice, which allows them to draw legislative and congressional

districts in ways that make it virtually impossible for challengers to unseat them. They'll despise Mr. Crist for trying to get in their way.

Floridians who value democracy should cheer him for it.

#### For the ages

On the day defending champion Serena Williams whined about playing her Wimbledon match on Court 2 instead of the All England Club's fabled Centre Court, John Isner and Nicolas Mahut served and volleyed their way through their first-round match on obscure Court 18.

Again. And again. And again. And, for their efforts, will forever define this year's tournament.

6-4, 3-6, 6-7 (7), 7-6 (3), 70-68. One-hundred eighty-two games, lasting 11 hours 5 minutes, played out over three days. The longest professional match, ever.

To those who watched or read the accounts, it doesn't really matter who won. What matters is that a couple of sportsmen, given no real chance of winning the tournament, showed fans that competitiveness — out-of-this-world competitiveness; not money or fame — still drives some athletes.

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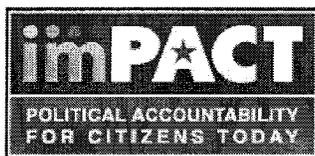
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## Political Gerrymandering: (Part 5) The Ohio Redistricting Competition

Monday, June 28th, 2010

*Professor Will Huhn, AKRON LAW CAFE – AKRON BEACON JOURNAL, 6/26/10.* In 2009 the Ohio Secretary of State's office under Jennifer Brunner helped to host a public competition to draw fair, nonpartisan congressional legislative districts for the State of Ohio. The results were remarkable.

There was no cost to entering the competition, and competitors were offered free training and software. To qualify, plans had to have roughly equal population in each district, all election districts had to be contiguous (single units), and there had to be one district where African-Americans constitute a majority of the voters in accordance with the Voting Rights Act. Plans that qualified were evaluated on the basis the four following criteria:

**Compactness.** Sometimes referred to as the "look" of a district, compactness assures that bizarrely-shaped legislative districts are minimized. This measure helps promote fair representation within a district.

**Communities of Interest.** Counties, municipalities, and other government boundaries give Ohioans a sense of place and shared interests. This measure seeks to minimize counties divided between districts, while opening a dialogue about the role of municipal, township and other community divisions given the rapid growth of suburban and exurban communities in Ohio.

**Competitiveness.** Our democracy thrives when the marketplace of ideas is truly competitive, especially on Election Day. This measure seeks to maximize the number of legislative districts that could be won by either party, providing Ohioans with a stronger voice in choosing their representatives.

**Representational Fairness.** The counterbalance for competitiveness is assuring that a final redistricting plan does not unfairly bias one party over another. This measure seeks to minimize this outcome by comparing the partisan bias of legislative districts to the real world voting history of Ohioans.

Eleven plans were submitted that met the required criteria, and three of those eleven were selected as winners. Each of these plans is fair and nonpartisan and is vastly superior to the current plan. In comparison to the current plan, the winning plans are more evenly divided between Republican-leaning and Democratic-leaning districts, have more districts that are competitive, are far less likely to divide counties, and simply look more logical; the shapes of the districts are much more compact than under the current plan. Here are the details about the winning plans and the current plan, with links to the map for each plan:

**Plan 1 (USER PLAN 32)** Tim Clarke, Avon, Ohio.

- An even split of likely district representation with 9 leaning Republican and 9 leaning Democratic.

- 10 of 18 Congressional Districts rated as competitive for either political

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party.

- 7 county fragments, providing a high level of community preservation.
- Appropriately compact districts, providing districts that "look" fair.

**Plan 2** (USER PLAN 5B) Stuart Wright, Columbus, Ohio.

- An even split of likely district representation with 9 leaning Republican and 9 leaning Democratic.
- 11 of 18 Congressional Districts rated as competitive for either political party.
- 20 county fragments, providing a moderate level of community preservation.
- Appropriately compact districts, providing districts that "look" fair.

**Plan 3** (USER PLAN 80) Mike Fortner, Current State Representative (Dist. 95 – R), former mayor of West Chicago, also an Associate Professor of Physics at Northern Illinois University, West Chicago, Illinois.

- A moderate split of likely district representation with 10 leaning Republican and 8 leaning Democratic.
- 12 of 18 Congressional Districts rated as competitive for either political party.
- 8 county fragments, providing a high level of community preservation.
- Appropriately compact districts, providing districts that "look" fair.

**Current Plan**

- A partisan split of likely district representation with 13 leaning Republican and 5 leaning Democratic.
- 7 of 18 Congressional Districts rated as competitive for either political party.
- 44 county fragments, providing a low level of community preservation.
- Highly uncompact districts, creating districts that do not "look" fair.

Here are links to:

1. The statement from the Secretary of State's office "[Ohio Redistricting Competition Partners Announce Competition Winners](#)"
2. A pdf file containing [images of the three winning plans and the current plan](#);
3. A pdf file containing information about [other plans](#) that were submitted in the competition.

It is entirely possible to draw legislative districts that are fair, nonpartisan, competitive, and compact. This is critical to protect our democracy. Neither Republicans nor Democrats should be able to create redistricting maps that favor their political party or

that protect incumbency. The voters should choose their representatives; the representatives should not choose their voters.

*Wilson Huhn teaches Constitutional Law at The University of Akron School of Law. Previous posts on this subject have described what political gerrymandering is; summarized the decisions of the United States Supreme Court on the subject; described the Iowa plan; and described the Ohio House and Senate proposals to end political gerrymandering.*

You might be interested in:

- [Political Gerrymandering: \(Part 4\) The Competing Ohio Proposals \(Akron Law Café\)](#)
- [Political Gerrymandering: \(Part 3\) The Iowa Plan \(Akron Law Café\)](#)
- [Delays threaten redistricting deal \(News – Ohio.com\)](#)
- [Ohio lawmakers fail to pass redistricting bill \(News – Ohio.com\)](#)

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6/29/10



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## Editorial: Florida officials incorrectly taking steps to preserve power, maintain status quo

Editorial board

Tuesday, June 29, 2010

Those wily Florida lawmakers will do almost anything to retain political power.

Witness their latest ploy: to quash Fair Districts amendments 5 and 6.

These two citizen-sponsored proposals would bring greater fairness and equity to the geographical boundaries of Florida's legislative and congressional districts — boundaries that typically are redrawn to favor the incumbent or party in power.

Consider, for example, the ballot summary of Amendment 6, which states, in part: "Congressional districts or districting plans may not be drawn to favor or disfavor an incumbent or political party. ... Districts must be contiguous. Unless otherwise required, districts must be compact, as equal in population as feasible, and where feasible must make use of existing city, county and geographical boundaries."

Who could argue with this commonsense approach to redistricting?

Nobody but a public official seeking re-election.

The bipartisan group Fair Districts Florida conducted a petition drive to put Amendments 5 and 6 on the November ballot. The 2010 Legislature countered with a redistricting amendment of its own: Amendment 7. On its face, the proposal would appear to promote more equitable district boundaries by asserting "the state shall take into consideration the ability of racial and language minorities to participate in the political process and elect candidates of their choice, and communities of common interest other than political parties may be respected and promoted."

Here's the rub, though, with Amendment 7: "Consideration" of these issues falls far short of the more specific guidelines enumerated in Amendments 5 and 6.

If Amendment 7 is approved by voters, it essentially would maintain the status quo and invalidate Amendments 5 and 6 if one or both is approved.

Florida's elected officials didn't stop with an amendment of their own. Two of them — U.S. Reps. Corrine Brown, D-Jacksonville, and Mario Diaz-Balart, R-Miami — filed a

lawsuit to remove Amendment 6 from the ballot. Brown is in her ninth term in Congress, Diaz-Balart in his fourth. The Legislature subsequently joined the suit.

Anything, it seems, to preserve one's chances to win re-election.

Florida needs to adopt constitutional Amendments 5 and 6, which would reduce the egregious, self-preserving practices of GOP and Democratic legislatures to gerrymander districts and keep themselves in power. Getting to this point, however, won't be easy.

To be clear: If you support fair, equitable voting districts, vote "yes" on Amendments 5 and 6, and "no" on what has been dubbed the "poison pill" — Amendment 7.



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Article published Jul 1, 2010

Bill Cotterell: 'Tea Party' or 'tea party,' it matters to the GOP

Bill Cotterell

Capital Curmudgeon

There's a running gag in "Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid," when the train robbers are chased by a specially recruited posse that can't be bluffed, evaded or scared off.

"Who *are* those guys?" the outlaws repeatedly ask, with a mix of fear and grudging respect.

The Republican Party of Florida knows the feeling. Just when things are going their way — when big majorities believe the country is going the wrong way and folks are fed up with taxes — GOP leaders have a small, determined band of zealots nipping at their heels.

The swag, in this chase, is the support of disgruntled voters. Re-gruntling them, the Republicans believe, is *their* franchise and they don't appreciate Tea Party competition.

State Rep. Will Weatherford of Wesley Chapel, presenting the House report at last month's state GOP meeting in Tampa, illustrated how the party has to show due respect for the people attending Tea Party rallies. But the GOP suspects some or all of the Tea Party candidates are stand-ins, planted to split the conservative vote and let Democrats slip into office with less than 50 percent of the vote.

---

"It started 18 months ago to fight against a socialist health care system that our Congress was trying to pass," Weatherford said of the movement. "It's a very healthy and helpful movement for the Republican Party. What's happened, though ... is that there are Democrats who are trying to hijack the Tea Party. They have strategically placed, in specific races that are battleground seats, the Tea Party candidates."

We need to distinguish between the Tea Party and the tea parties occurring all over the country. There is some legal and political strife over the label, within the Florida movement, but that's not what this is about.

The tea party (small letters) is the latest manifestation of people who worry about what's going on and don't trust either major party to fix it. As a proper noun, the Tea Party is a newly formed political party that has 18 people on the ballot next fall — 14 for the Florida House, one for the state Senate, one for agriculture commissioner and two trying for Congress.

There is reason for the GOP's suspicion. All but one of the Tea Party candidates registered on the last, or next-to-last, day of the qualifying period. None is well known, some used to be Democrats, and some live far from the districts they supposedly seek to represent.

There's a man from Orlando, for instance, running for the Senate in the far Panhandle. There's Tea Party candidate for a House seat in Fort Myers who lives in Orlando. Another has a street address in Tallahassee and a campaign phone number with a Brevard County area code, and he's running for a House seat in Tampa.

Well, candidates don't have to live in their districts until they win. There are some Tea Party contenders challenging Democrats, too. And for Republicans to accuse Democrats of ballot chicanery is like the Democrats complaining somebody played the race card or frightened elderly voters.

It was the GOP leadership that put a constitutional amendment on the November ballot, intended to override the "Fair Districts Florida" initiatives. And there was some disagreement about Florida's electoral vote in 2000.

The Democrats didn't just deny forging a covert covenant with the Tea Party at the close of qualifying last month, they ridiculed the conspiracy theory. They even copied the RPOF letterhead and put out a bogus press release, claiming that Florida GOP Chairman John Thrasher was about to announce that the Apollo moon landings were a big hoax. For the humor-impaired, Florida Democratic Party flak Eric Jotkoff put a note at the bottom of that press release, saying it was a forgery. The party doesn't really know 18 conservatives.

Still, rounding up a posse of tea partiers would be a pretty neat dirty trick. Voters who aren't political junkies — that is, most normal people — might see "Tea Party" and think those candidates must be the nonpoliticians.

But there is also a slew of independent candidates (besides Charlie Crist) who will be all over the ballot in November. There will be ample opportunity to cast a "pox on both your parties" ballot.

The backlash won't be enough to pry a well-financed incumbent out of the House. Nor will it prevent the Tea Party from taking its place with the Reform Party, Green Party and 30 others you probably forgot are on the registration rolls.

---

But there's a constituency of riled-up voters — not angry, just concerned — that Republicans will have to compete for next November.

- Contact Senior Political Writer Bill Cotterell at (850) 671-6545 or at [bcotterell@tallahassee.com](mailto:bcotterell@tallahassee.com).
-



Beach, three hours to drive from his home in Indian River County to Mims.

District boundaries are redrawn every 10 years following the US Census. Fair Districts Florida wants to require redrawn districts to be compact and community based.

But several state lawmakers, Democrat and Republican, say the Fair Districts Florida Amendment would rob people of their voting rights. They came up with Amendment 7, whose primary mover was incoming Senate President Mike Haridopolos, a Merritt Island Republican who also won re-election without opposition this year. He'll be overseeing redistricting in the 2011 Legislature.

The amendment Haridopolos and others, including several longtime Democratic lawmakers, are pushing would neutralize the other amendments, ensuring that the Florida Legislature continues to redraw district lines the way it always has. Haridopolos has been marketing the new ballot proposal deceptively as needed to protect racial and language minorities at the polls.

Labels: [Brevard watchdog blog](#), [census](#), [Florida politics](#), [redistricting](#)

POSTED BY JEFF SCHWEERS AT 3:58 AM

2 COMMENTS:

 Anonymous said...

One prime example is District 29, which runs 185 miles from Mims in northern Brevard County all the way into Indian River County. It takes State Rep. Ralph Poppell, R-Vero Beach, three hours to drive from his home in Indian River County to Mims.

Driving directions to Mims, FL  
86.0 mi – about 1 hour 27 mins  
from Vero Beach, FL

where is he going that take him so long?

FRIDAY, JULY 02, 2010 11:51:00 AM

 Mark Hollis said...

To help clarify the final paragraph in the posting above...During the 2010 legislative session, most (but not all) Florida House Democratic Caucus members opposed the Republican-backed Amendment 7 proposal and expressed support for Amendments 5 & 6.

Mark Hollis  
Communications Director  
Florida House Democratic Caucus

WEDNESDAY, JULY 07, 2010 3:22:00 PM

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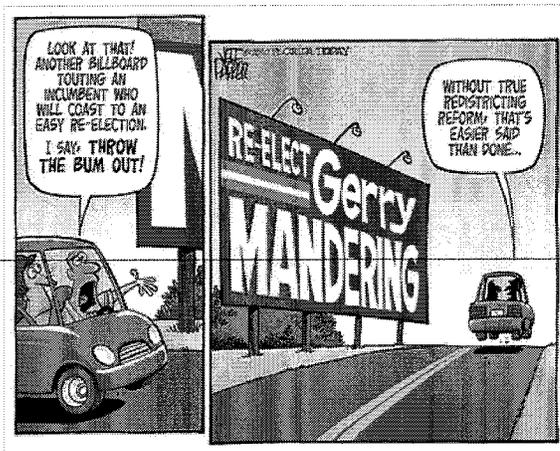
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FRIDAY, JULY 2, 2010

07/02 Cartoon- Incumbent Upon Redistricting



A couple of local pols won their races this last election because they had no one running against them. Is this any way to run a democracy? Problem is, congressional and legislative districts are drawn by the politicians themselves and the redistricting process is more about cherry-picking voters and retaining power for you and your party than fair representation for the community.

Fair Districts Florida, the group pushing for redistricting reform through two amendments on the ballot this year, reported some stunning stats recently. The group's study shows that out of 420 races in the last six years, only *three incumbents* lost their re-election bid.

Now a new anti-incumbent fever is sweeping the land, but no amount of wailing and gnashing is going to do very much good if incumbents are allowed to draw the maps.

A slight behind-the-scenes note regarding this cartoon: Our editorial board had a quick debate yesterday about the spelling on the billboard. I originally had the phony name as, "Jerry Mandering." We kicked around which notion was more confusing -- spelling gerrymandering incorrectly with a J so it sounds more like a pun name, or readers reading a hard G sound if we spell it correctly. Obviously, the G won out as Gerry is a variant, albeit rare, of Jerry -- and as always -- spelling counts...



Purchase Jeff Parker's cartoons as reprints or on mugs, t-shirts, etc. **Order your 'toon now!**

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Meet Jeff Parker



Jeff Parker grew up in Satellite Beach, and has been FLORIDA TODAY's editorial cartoonist since 1992. Along with cartoonist Steve Kelley, Jeff is co-creator of the comic strip, "Dustin." He also assists Mike Peters with his strip, "Mother Goose & Grimm." Jeff has won awards from Gannett, the National Cartoonists Society and Florida Society of

Newspaper Editors. His cartoons are distributed by Cagle Cartoons syndicate to hundreds of news outlets.

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Send your questions, comments, ideas to Jeff by [e-mail](#) or talk with him and fellow readers by commenting here in the blog.

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- Community debates fate of old Gibsonton school
- Local girl wins a spot for her and her dad in Brandon parade
- South Shore residents lack local representation
- World War I vet's headstone ends up in east Hillsborough woman's yard

### South Shore residents lack local representation

By Ernest Hooper, Metro Columnist

In Print: Friday, July 2, 2010

If the residents of South Shore wanted to convene a meeting of its elected officials at the South Shore Library, one congressional member (Kathy Castor) would come in from Tampa and the other (Adam Putnam) would arrive from Polk County.

Its state senators (Ronda Storms and Arthenia Joyner) would have to drive from Valrico and Tampa respectively. And two of its three state representatives would have to trek from Lakeland (Seth McKeel) and Bradenton (Ron Reagan), respectively.

South Shore's County Commission representation is divided between a Tampa resident (Rose Ferlita) and a Plant City resident (Al Higginbotham). Its School Board representation is much the same, split between South Tampa (Candy Olson) and Valrico (Jennifer Faliero).

The officials who hold county-wide spots on the County Commission and the School Board also live in other parts of the county.

Not one of the 17 elected officials — excluding the governor, U.S. senators and state Cabinet officers — charged with representing South Shore could walk or bike to the meeting. Not one lives south of the Alafia River and north of the Hillsborough/Manatee county line between U.S. 41 and U.S. 301.

Of the 17, only state Rep. Rachel Burgin has what can be classified as a South Shore address. But her home in Riverview's Winthrop community is closer to Brandon, which comprises the bulk of her district.

As *the Times* prepared for a month of stories leading up to the Aug. 24 primary, I was struck by how the districts have South Shore residents pulling representatives from all over west-central Florida.

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Consider Sun City Center. If you live north of State Road 674 between Interstate 75 and U.S. 301, Reagan currently serves as the state representative.

However, if you live south of State Road 674 between 36th Street SE and U.S. 301, McKeel serves as your representative.

The jigsaw cutting of South Shore hasn't gone unnoticed by the folks at Fair Districts Florida. The organization wants to change the process for creating districts and on its website, it uses Castor's congressional district, which includes Ruskin and Apollo Beach, as an example of why we need new laws.

Fair Districts Florida has placed Amendments 5 and 6 on the November ballot which, if approved, would prohibit gerrymandering. Districts drawn in 2012 after the U.S. Census results come in will be compact and utilize existing political and geographical boundaries.

The Legislature placed Amendment 7 on the ballot, which would negate most of the requirements instituted by Amendments 5 and 6.

The current lines raise the question: Has a lack of neighborly representation translated to poor representation?

On the county level, Ruskin's Fred Jacobsen, founder of the South Shore Economic Development Council, said Ferlita and Higginbotham are "nice people who listen," but credits citizens rather than elected officials for improvements.

"The area relies on grass roots movements of people to come together on their own dime and own time to say, 'What about us?'" said Jacobsen, who credits such groups for the library in Ruskin. "I think it's been, from my observation, an ongoing issue of representation."

On the other hand, Melanie Morrison, executive director of the Ruskin Chamber of Commerce, said her organization intensified its efforts to connect with county commissioners and has been pleased with the response.

"We've let them know we have a large business voice and a large community," Morrison said. "They've acknowledged that, and the message we've gotten back is that they are concerned."

Ferlita, who also represents parts of West Tampa, South Tampa and Town 'N Country, said residents' perception remains a challenge.

"They feel like they're the stepchild of District 1, and I knew I was inheriting that going in," Ferlita said. "But I've made as many trips there and to Town 'N Country as I have anywhere else. If you're doing what you're supposed to do, it's not a problem."

Former county commissioner and current Clerk of the Circuit Court Pat Frank crafted the current County Commission lines in 2002. She argues that nothing is prohibiting a South Shore resident from running for office and winning over residents who live outside of the immediate area.

Apollo Beach native and resident Z.J. Hafeez accepts the task and is running for state House District 67. To have any chance, he'll have to win over a lot of residents not in South Shore, but in Manatee County.

That's all I'm saying.

[Last modified: Jun 30, 2010 02:21 PM]

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FL Cracker wrote:

Bottom line -- VOTE YES on Amendments 5 and 6 and NO on Amendment 7.

And don't you just love Pat Frank's let 'em eat cake attitude? She would never admit that HER districting lines are faulty. She does so well...

Jul 2, 2010 9:57 AM

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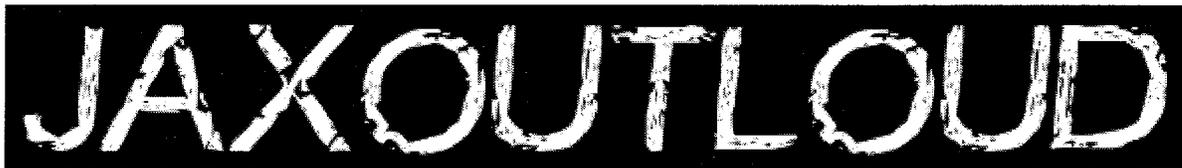
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 Businessman To Challenge Corrine Brown

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#### North Florida Political Arena

Discussions that are specific to political parties in North Florida



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07-06-2010, 03:43 PM

#131



**Uh Duh**  
 Marauding Moderator

Join Date: Jul 2008  
 Location: The Best Side The Westside  
 Posts: 2,391  
 Rep Power: 15

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Ross Hancock**  
 Mr. Duh,

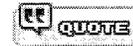
*What you are missing is that if Fortune is elected, the VERY RATIONALE for racial districting will be destroyed, and we will have proved, as a people, that we do not need the districts drawn for us by racial makeup to determine an outcome.*

*And that is something even federal judges are powerless to thwart.*

*I don't think ANY rant against grave injustice is meaningless.*

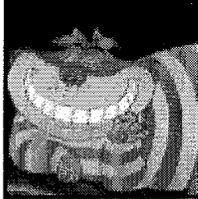
That "if" is huge. The current system of districting is not an injustice, it is in place to right the injustices of the past. That was the rationale behind the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and subsequent SCOTUS rulings, which have evolved and changed the process and the way the Law is interpreted. Ultimately the Courts will decide the issue one way or the other.

He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you?  
To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.



07-06-2010, 03:47 PM

#132



**Diane Melendez**   
Admin

Join Date: Jun 2007  
Location: Avondale  
Posts: 13,105  
Rep Power: 10



Not personal shame, shame. LOL Just acknowledging the likely reason for the forceful defense of a woman who is clearly intent upon thwarting the will of the citizens and voters. I have a problem with that. In anycase, everyone is welcome to their perspective as you well know and mine is that Corrine is looking out for her own political life and not the good of the citizens. Those in the GOB structure who have spent substantial amounts of money keeping her where she is have a vested interest in defending her as she does their bidding, follows their rules and delivers what is expected of her. Unfortunately, her presence has not improved the lives of the racial minority she is supposedly elected to represent. Anyone who doubts that only need take a ride through our urban core communities and take a look. Most have declined in recent years and Corrine has done little except use the race card given her via this gerrymandered district to an unhealthy advantage. IMO

Looks like I hit a nerve UhDuh. No need to be defensive. It's not about you, it's about Corrine and those who want to keep her type of contol intact.

Cheshire Cat: Well, some go this way, some go that way. But as for me, myself, personally, I prefer the shortcut.

Cheshire Cat: You know? We could make her \*really\* angry! Shall we try?



07-06-2010, 04:01 PM

#133



**Uh Duh**   
Marauding Moderator

Join Date: Jul 2008  
Location: The Best Side The Westside  
Posts: 2,391  
Rep Power: 15



Your "likely reason" is utterly false. The truth is she hates me. I am in no way a supporter of hers or of the ridiculously shaped Florida 3rd Congressional District. I am simply explaining where the Federal Law governing redistricting or districting currently stands. Is the current system "fair?" That is for the Courts to determine. What is absolutely true is the current Congressional Districts were deemed to be Constitutional by the Justice Department. Next year the lines will once again be drawn, but that is off topic.

It seems foolish to me for candidates for this seat to complain about how the current lines are drawn. The Congresswoman did not draw them. Nor will any of her opponents if they happen to win. As a voter in District 3, I am not happy with the Congresswoman and will vote against her in November. Whoever the Republican nominee is will lose despite my opposition and vote.

He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God.



07-06-2010, 04:21 PM

#134



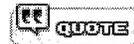
**Diane Melendez** ●  
Admin

Join Date: Jun 2007  
Location: Avondale  
Posts: 13,105  
Rep Power: 10



Well then you have put that notion to rest Uh Duh. Consider yourself in good company. LOL I guess we are looking at the situation from two very different perspectives and that's fine. When it comes to politics and associated doings there certainly is a broad range of feelings, interpretations and reactions. In anycase, we will all see what happens with the lawsuit and how the voters respond or don't respond to her this election cycle. I personally feel that the districting issue is not going to go away, even if nothing is resolved before this election. The reason the district was drawn the way it was way back when and it's effectiveness now is something certainly needed to be addressed.

Cheshire Cat: Well, some go this way, some go that way. But as for me, myself, personally, I prefer the shortcut.  
Cheshire Cat: You know? We could make her \*really\* angry! Shall we try?



07-06-2010, 06:53 PM

#135



**Ross Hancock** ●  
Junior Member

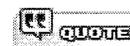
Join Date: Jun 2010  
Posts: 29  
Rep Power: 0



Quote:

Originally Posted by **Uh Duh** ●  
*The current system of districting is not an injustice, it is in place to right the injustices of the past.*

Are you one of those Republicans that is so devoted to righting the injustices of the past?



07-06-2010, 11:55 PM

#136



**MarriedBro**  
Grand Poobah Poster

Join Date: May 2008  
Posts: 776  
Rep Power: 6

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Uh Duh**

*This thread is full of errors concerning redistricting. First, the lawsuit filed by Congresswoman Brown and others is not intended to stop redistricting. It is an attempt to remove the "Fair Districts" amendments from the ballot. If the amendments pass, then Florida's redistricting will be ultimately done by the Justice Department or the Federal Courts. While the intent of the "Fair Districts" amendments are reasonable and sound "fair", they are contrary to Federal Law and the way the Courts have interpreted the 1965 Voting Rights Act and other legislation. As for the Congresswoman hanging up on Melissa Ross, Ms. Ross was pursuing a line of questioning which had no basis in fact. The Congresswoman is correct, a Judge will decide the issue.*

*There will be no unified Duval County Congressional District. First, the county has more population than that required to make a single Congressional District. So Duval County will be part of at least two districts. Second, IMHO, the Courts may allow the amendments to continue to the ballot, where they might get 60% and pass. The Constitution mandates the lines be drawn by the State Legislature, so even with passage the Legislature can do what it will. The plans will be reviewed by the Justice Department and if they say that minority access is afforded then the plans will become law. If not then the plans will be drawn again. If the Legislature cannot come up with an acceptable plan, then it will most likely be drawn by a panel of Federal Judges.*

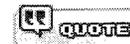
*The 3RD will continue to look somewhat like it does today with multiple counties included and it meanders about to pickup pockets of minority population. Now you can say this is wrong. Race or political party registration should not be the basis by which districts are drawn, but the Federal Courts in the past have disagreed. As Congresswoman Brown told Ms. Ross, a Judge will decide the issue.*

.....

Uh Duh, you continue to impress me with your insight. What bothers me though is what is wrong with the district being drawn based on race? Not meaning to sound racist, but how else will this group of underserved be represented? Giving them a republican representative won't help. They have had that in a governor all along. The problem with the 3rd district is not that it is gerrymandered, but that it has the

wrong representative. I have done my part in voting the other way each time, but the stupid people keep winning.

What is needed are stronger candidates. Scott could ease and improve his lot by simply moving into the district.



Yesterday, 06:23 AM

#137



**MarriedBro**  
Grand Poobah Poster

Join Date: May 2008  
Posts: 776  
Rep Power: 6

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Ross Hancock**  
*Mr. Duh,*

*What you are missing is that if Fortune is elected, the VERY RATIONALE for racial districting will be destroyed, .....*

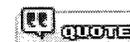
See here's the thing. Voting is a pretty powerful tool that should not be taken for granted. Representing the underserved is too. Scott has apparently made redistricting the centerpiece of his campaign with the people of the district a distant 2nd. I have asked why he does not run and beat Ander Crenshaw, that way he could work with Corrine (who he will not beat) to improve the very district he seeks to redraw. He's an attorney, I am sure he has considered that.

The thing that confuses me about this election though, is that Scott Fortune's name will not be on Scott Fortune's voting ballot. **He cannot even vote for himself since he does not live in the district.** I again ask, what is his real purpose in running?

Diane, I need your insight on this.

Ross, who is Scott voting for for Congress?

*Last edited by MarriedBro; Yesterday at 06:24 AM. Reason: Added a line.*



Yesterday, 07:09 AM

#138



**Ross Hancock**  
Junior Member

Join Date: Jun 2010  
Posts: 29  
Rep Power: 0



Quote:

Originally Posted by **MarriedBro** 

*The thing that confuses me about this election though, is that Scott Fortune's name will not be on Scott Fortune's voting ballot. **He cannot even vote for himself since he does not live in the district.** I again ask, what is his real purpose in running?*

*Diane, I need your insight on this.*

*Ross, who is Scott voting for for Congress?*

MarriedBro, I love this discussion with you.

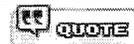
You question why Fortune thinks gerrymandering is so important, then you provide the answer.

**His name won't be on his own ballot.**

*And Crenshaw's name won't be on yours.*

Two men, in the same community. But one sign says, "Coloreds Vote Here" and another sign says "Whites Vote Here."

And Crenshaw and Brown (and Mica and Stearns) get their seats forever because you and Fortune (and the people of FL-3) have been robbed of your right to vote them out.



 Yesterday, 07:15 AM

#139



**Ross Hancock**   
Junior Member

Join Date: Jun 2010  
Posts: 29  
Rep Power: 0



Quote:

Originally Posted by **MarriedBro** 

*Ross, who is Scott voting for for Congress?*

He has no meaningful vote available to him. The Republican Florida Legislature has picked Crenshaw for him, and Brown for you.

Like voting in Russia.



Yesterday, 07:46 AM

#140



**MarriedBro**  
Grand Poobah Poster

Join Date: May 2008  
Posts: 776  
Rep Power: 6

Quote:

Originally Posted by **Ross Hancock**  
*He has no meaningful vote available to him. The Republican Florida Legislature has picked Crenshaw for him, and Brown for you.  
  
Like voting in Russia.*

With all due respect Ross, Scott being involved in Congressional District 3 and your rationalization is crazy talk. He cannot even vote for himself. That should tell everyone everything they need to know about his run against Corrine.

*Last edited by MarriedBro; Yesterday at 07:48 AM. Reason: corrected grammer*



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## OrlandoSentinel.com

### Will new rules shape Florida lawmakers' districts?

#### Shifting population spurs a redistricting battle in Florida

By Aaron Deslatte, Orlando Sentinel Tallahassee Bureau

7:35 AM EDT, July 6, 2010

TALLAHASSEE -- It's a fight over party control of the levers of government that's as old as American democracy.

This summer, an army of lawyers is battling over whether voters will get to rewrite the rules for reapportionment, the once-a-decade process when politicians redraw their own district maps. It's a process that has put Republicans in firm control of the state's legislative and congressional delegations for more than a decade.

And the battle comes as Republicans are seeing their voter-registration stall, or diminish. Traditional bastions of GOP power – including Central Florida -- are lagging at a time when partisan anger at the Obama administration is growing and conventional wisdom suggests their numbers should be surging.

Republican state legislators, joined by U.S. Reps. Corrine Brown, D- Jacksonville, and Mario Diaz-Balart, R- Miami, and others, are asking a judge to strike down two constitutional amendments pushed by a lawyer- and union-financed group called Fair Districts Florida. Designated Amendments 5 and 6, they are designed to make it harder for Republicans in the state Capitol to gerrymander congressional and legislative boundaries to keep themselves in power when they adopt new maps in 2012.

The amendments would require lawmakers to draw the maps more compactly, following existing city and county boundaries where feasible, and without intent to help incumbents or political parties.

Supporters – ranging from the NAACP to newly independent Gov. Charlie Crist -- argue the existing standards have shoe-horned minorities and minority-party voters into districts to benefit Republicans.

The district maps resemble jigsaw-puzzle pieces. Brown's "minority access" district winds through nine counties, from Jacksonville to Orlando. Although Democrats have a 42 percent to 36 percent advantage among Florida's 11 million voters, Republicans have nearly 2-to-1 majorities in the Legislature and the state's 25-member congressional delegation.

Incumbents are rarely defeated, and critics say lawmakers are less motivated to seek compromises because they rarely worry about retribution from voters.

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"The system we have now has many forces making it more and more partisan," said Bob Graham, the former Democratic U.S. senator and governor who is co-chairman of Fair Districts. "But no force is greater than the way districts are currently drawn to make safe homes for incumbents."

But House Speaker-designate Dean Cannon, R- Winter Park, Senate President-designate Mike Haridopolos, R-Merritt Island, and a handful of black and Hispanic lawmakers are making the case that minority representation will be the loser if the amendments pass.

They cite a 2009 U.S. Supreme Court ruling that said states are not required to carve out "minority access" districts in order to comply with the federal Voting Rights Act, as legislators did in 1992 and 2002. They warn that blacks and Hispanics could see their numbers reduced in the 160-member state Legislature and the congressional delegation.

Their remedy: Amendment 7, which lawmakers rushed onto the Nov. 2 ballot in the last week of the spring lawmaking session and effectively would nullify the new requirements of Amendments 5 and 6 and give legislators broad authority to draw districts as they see fit.

"If you then must draw them compactly, you may reduce the minority population to a level where they couldn't elect a racial or language minority of their choice," Cannon said.

"That would probably matter to the people who vote."

It's an argument reminiscent of 1992, when then-majority Democrats saw a surging Republican Party peel away black Democrats by proposing maps that packed districts with larger numbers of Hispanics and blacks, ensuring more minorities would be elected. But the new maps also made neighboring districts more white – and more Republican.

---

The fight raged for years, and Republicans eventually took control of the Legislature in 1996.

As in 1992, Cannon and Haridopolos are attracting a growing list of minority backers, many of them Democrats. "I have a minority access seat. That's why I'm here today," said state Sen. Gary Siplin, an Orlando Democrat who co-sponsored Amendment 7.

The Fair Districts amendments "wouldn't guarantee minority access seats such as mine," he said.

Siplin's district is 29 percent black and 29 percent Hispanic, giving the two groups enough votes to generally elect a minority candidate but not enough for either voting bloc to dominate.

But Fair Districts backers argue Amendment 7 would leave voters with less protection from gerrymandering. It would trump a requirement that districts be "contiguous," lower the standard of legal review when maps are challenged in court – and allow lawmakers to avoid other rules and create districts that include undefined "communities of common interest."

"They can determine a community of interest is having all the gated communities in an area," said Ron Meyer, a Tallahassee lawyer for the groups challenging Amendment 7.

This week, a Leon County Circuit Court judge will hear final arguments in a challenge to the Legislature's amendment by the Florida League of Women Voters and the NAACP. Meanwhile, Brown, Diaz-Balart and the Legislature are suing to invalidate Amendments 5 and 6. Both court fights could go to the Florida Supreme Court in August, although they might not be resolved before election ballots get

printed.

There's also a significant difference between now and 1992: An *Orlando Sentinel* analysis of voter-registration data shows the percentage of new voters registering with the GOP is shrinking, compared to those choosing to be Democrats, independents or a growing number of third-party alternatives.

Central Florida, for example, no longer can be banked on as a rock-ribbed Republican bastion.

Of the 17 Republican-held state House districts located primarily in Lake, Volusia, Seminole, Orange, Brevard and Osceola counties, the percentage of registered GOP voters fell an average of 4.8 percentage points – declining from 43.5 percent to 38.7 percent -- since 2002, the analysis found.

Meanwhile, Democratic numbers inched up, from 36.4 percent to 37.2 percent. And no-party-affiliation voters grew from 15.4 percent to 18.2 percent.

The six GOP-held state Senate seats in the same area have seen Republican registration fall from an average of 44.6 percent to 40.2 percent, while the Democratic percentage has held flat at nearly 37 percent and NPAs have grown on average from 15.2 percent to 17.7 percent.

No district captures the shift – and the threat to GOP power -- better than House District 35, Cannon's seat. Trendy shopping and million-dollar mansions in Winter Park and Baldwin Park quickly give way to well-worn – and increasingly Hispanic -- neighborhoods to the south and the University of Central Florida campus to the east.

When its boundaries were drawn in 2002, House District 35 was secure Republican turf – 73 percent white, with a 44 percent to 34 percent GOP edge. Since then, Hispanic voters have grown from 15 percent to 20 percent, whites have fallen to 63 percent, and Democratic voters have a 38 percent to 35 percent advantage.

---

"When these lines were drawn, I don't think the Hispanics were taken into consideration," said Amy Mercado, a Democratic activist who is running against Cannon. "For the early part of the decade, it was a safe seat. It's not anymore."

Nobody knows what the future holds, though, for the burgeoning Hispanic population.

Only one Hispanic – Rep. Darren Soto, D-Orlando – represents the region now. And Fair Districts critics say the amendments would make it harder to elect more Hispanics to Tallahassee or Washington.

University of South Florida political scientist Susan MacManus, an expert on Florida's 1992 redistricting fight, expects the GOP-minority coalition will be a major force, if not a decisive one.

"They each feel they could lose representation under the new system," she said. "Whether it's reality or not, that's the fear."

Aaron Deslatte can be reached at [adeslatte@orlandosentinel.com](mailto:adeslatte@orlandosentinel.com) or 850-222-5564.

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7/6/10

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Today, 07:26 AM

#1

swampcabbage Heisman Candidate

Fair Districts Florida

Join Date: Jun 2009 Posts: 3,426

I haven't seen any discussion on the proposed amendments to the State Constitution to take the Gerrymandering out of establishing the districts for state and federal candidates for US Representatives, and state Representatives and Senatorial candidates.

http://www.fairdistrictsflorida.org/home.php

If this passes, it has the potential to effect a seismic shift in Florida politics. One of the problems with the present system is that the majority party can tailor districts that go a long way toward ensuring the election of Republican candidates. Under fair districting as I understand it, the the decision has to be made on rational geographic grounds, rather than doing every thing you can to make sure your party has the best chance of winning a majority of the seats.

As I say, I have not seen any discussion of this on this board, but I would expect that most Republicans would oppose it, because it takes away their ability to craft districts that are safe for them. Since there are more pubs than dems registered in Florida, it might not make a huge difference; but it could.

On the positive side for the Republicans, it would probably almost guarantee that Corrine Brown would be on the "hot seat," rather than the "safe seat." For some of the pubs on this board, I would imagine that by itself could induce them to vote for it.

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Today, 07:28 AM

#2

TJtheGator VIP Member

Salamandering will continue. It's the only way people like Corrine Brown get elected. No way they stop this practice.

Join Date: Apr 2007 Location: Winter Springs, FL Posts: 3,904

Today, 07:41 AM

#3

Zeus Heisman Winner

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7/7: Letters to the Editor



July 7, 2010 E-mail Print Share Text Size

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Redrawing districts will solve problems

When I looked at U.S. Rep. Corrine Brown's legislative district and read the comments by Republican state legislative leaders Dean Cannon and Mike Haridopoulos, and Democrat state Sen. Gary Siplin, it was clear they want business as usual ("Will new rules shape districts?" Orlando Sentinel, Tuesday).

The comments in opposition to amendments 5 and 6 are geared to justifying a bad system and keeping the status quo. Siplin's comment was the worst. He is not only buying into the scare tactic of less minority representation; he is also using it to keep his state Senate district intact. The election of our first African-American president shows more Americans are looking past race, gender and religion to find acceptable leadership.

Term limits of legislative leaders much like the executive branch of government, combined with the drawing of fair, competitive legislative districts, will not only give the average citizen better representation; it will force the executive and legislative branches to find practical ideas to solve our problems.

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Stuart Peisner Longwood

Health-insurance peace of mind

This Independence Day, those of us who must purchase individual health-insurance policies celebrated an end to the health-insurer practice of rescission.

In September, insurance companies will no longer be able to search for a technical mistake in our applications in order to deny coverage if we get sick. My individual pursuit of happiness will be more complete once I know that my monthly insurance payment will result in coverage if I get sick. This is a great improvement for millions of Americans.

That's why it was so disheartening to read David Moreland's shallow repetition of tired party lines in Saturday's Sentinel (New Voices: "Obamacare: Reality versus the rhetoric"). If Moreland had any personal experience with insurance-company practices of denying claims while increasing premiums, then maybe he would have written more thoughtfully about the cracks in our current system.

Kathy Williamson Leesburg

Sacrifice greed for financial reform

As a gesture of full disclosure, I have not read the more than 2,000-page financial-reform bill that appears headed to the president's desk for his signature.

However, I have studied it enough to conclude that this seems to be just another warm-and-fuzzy action by Congress, establishing even more layers of regulation and red tape that will allow our elected officials to trumpet their tireless efforts to protect their clueless constituents who don't have the will to protect themselves.

As long as an alarming number of people remain uneducated and uninformed in regard to even the most basic of financial fundamentals, and as long as greed lives in the hearts of so many, I see this piece of legislation doing

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# Cloud Hosting Lends a Hand in Florida Census

July 07, 2010  
By David Sims, TMCnet Contributing Editor



The Florida House of Representatives, recognizing the dangers of undercounting votes, is making one final push over the next month for its state residents to be counted in the 2010 Census, according to officials of Microsoft (News - Alert).

You might be wondering: *Microsoft? What do they have to do with this? I thought Google ran the world now?*

Perhaps not the entire world – thanks to cloud hosting. Florida's running its appeal through its Microsoft Azure-hosted MyFloridaCensus site and Web-based application.

MyFloridaCensus is a major Florida's overall effort to ensure a complete count of residents during the ongoing 2010 Census. Oh they're going door-to-door too, doing the canvassing thing as well, but that ends nationwide July 10. An online presence is quite necessary.

As an aside, when this reporter lived in Istanbul, he saw a quite effective method of census-taking: The Turkish government simply banned people from leaving their homes for one day. The census workers came by and counted you and that was it. A delightfully barbaric (yet efficient) method.

MyFloridaCensus, hosted in the Windows Azure cloud platform, uses Microsoft Silverlight for cross-browser compatibility. With the support of a Bing Maps interface, Microsoft officials explain, the collective technology "allows visitors to share their experiences with the 2010 Census and build a social user-generated experience around the once-per-decade count."

And the Florida House gets to provide the U.S. Census Bureau, state and local governments, and citizens with dynamic feedback and visual representations of that feedback.

MyFloridaCensus is being seen as kind of a test run for future cloud-based public service endeavors. In 2011, the Florida House will transition MyFloridaCensus into an online tool for the public to participate in the process of redrawing political boundary lines – redistricting, a.k.a gerrymandering. The fireworks should be visible from where you live.

Gail Thomas-Flynn, vice president of state and local government at Microsoft (yes – it's

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a big enough market share to warrant its own department) said that "more of our state customers are following this approach and moving unique and ongoing citizen services to the cloud platforms that can scale up and down according to need."

Well, that's got to be reassuring news for company's specializing in cloud hosting...

*David Sims is a contributing editor for TMCnet. To read more of David's articles, please visit his columnist page. He also blogs for TMCnet here.*

Edited by Erin Monda

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Fair Districts chair applauds Amend. 7 ruling

Ellen Freidin, chairwoman of the two citizen Fair Districts amendments, was predictably giddy at Judge Jim Shelfer's decision to throw the Legislature's Amendment 7 off the ballot.

"We have always been confident that any court would look at this and see it for exactly what it is," she said. "It's an attempt to fool the voters, and as the judge said, to hide the ball."

Freidin criticized the Legislature's proposed standards as "non requirements" that would be given equal or a higher priority than those spelled out in the Fair Districts amendments. She said the proposed standards would allow wide discretion in crafting districts.

"It gives the Legislature free reign to continue drawing districts for their own political purposes," she said.



PolitiFact Florida is a partnership of the St. Petersburg Times and the Miami Herald to help you find the truth in politics.

Posted by Lee Logan on July 8, 2010 in Florida Legislature , Mike Haridopolos , Redistricting | Permalink

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July 2010

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## Democrats Praise Amendment 7 Ruling

By *Kevin Derby*  
Created 07/08/2010 - 1:02pm

With a Leon County Circuit Court judge in Tallahassee knocking Amendment 7 -- a redistricting measure backed by both houses of the Legislature -- off the ballot, Democratic leaders are praising the ruling. While there have been some prominent exceptions, such as U.S. Rep. Corrine Brown and Senate Minority Leader Al Lawson, D-Tallahassee, most Florida Democrats opposed Amendment 7, backing Amendments 5 and 6 which are being supported by FairDistricts Florida.

"Today, a Florida court has properly recognized the failings and deceit of a Republican-led legislative attempt to undermine the citizen-backed FairDistricts reapportionment ballot measures," said House Minority Leader Franklin Sands, D-Weston. "The Leon County Circuit Court ruling is a victory for all Floridians who believe that political districts should not be drawn with the intent of helping incumbents and political parties retain their power."

---

"From its genesis, the Amendment 7 proposal has been a deceptive and despicable display of partisan power-grabbing by Republican legislative leaders," added Sands. "I am pleased that the court has recognized that the proposal is seriously flawed and doesn't deserve further consideration."

Sen. Dan Gelber, D-Miami Beach, who is currently locked in a tight battle with Sen. Dave Aronberg, D-Greenacres, for the Democratic attorney general nomination, has been a vocal opponent of Amendment 7 and praised Thursday's ruling.

"Today's ruling by the Leon County Circuit Court is a victory for Floridians who are tired of the special interests' control of the Legislature," said Gelber. "I fought aggressively this legislative session against efforts by the Republican majority to place Amendment 7 on the ballot. Unfortunately, they prevailed because of the gerrymandered control they have in the House and Senate. The court's ruling vindicates the efforts of so many right-thinking Floridians who want to be able to pick their elected officials, rather than vice-versa."

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7/8/10

# The Miami Herald

Posted on Thu, Jul. 08, 2010

## Judge strikes proposed political districting amendment

BY MARC CAPUTO AND LEE LOGAN  
Times/Herald Tallahassee Bureau

A judge on Thursday struck down the Legislature's proposed constitutional amendment concerning political districts because, he said, it is too confusing for voters to understand.

Amendment 7 was drafted by the Republican-led Legislature in response to two other proposed amendments that a liberal-leaning citizens group placed on the ballot to make it tougher for lawmakers to draw political districts that favor a political party or an incumbent.

But the Legislature's proposal -- which lawmakers said would "clarify" the amendments of the Fair Districts Florida group -- created far more confusion, Tallahassee Circuit Judge James Shelfer said in a ruling from the bench.

"I can hardly think that the average voter going in the voting booth would be able to make an informed decision," Shelfer said. "It took me three days -- in reading all of these cases, reading all of these briefings, hearing all of your arguments -- to get a handle on what this amendment did and its effect on the existing laws and the Constitution."

---

A written ruling by Shelfer is expected in the next few days. The case will likely be appealed to the state Supreme Court.

One paragraph from Amendment 7 stood out as being particularly complicated. It says "the state shall take into consideration the ability of racial and language minorities to participate in the political process and elect candidates of their choice, and communities of common interest other than political parties may be respected and promoted, both without subordination to any other provision of this article."

In a word, Amendment 7 was "gobbledygook," said Ron Meyer, an attorney who argued against the Legislature's plan on behalf of the NAACP, which supported the Fair Districts proposals.

The Fair Districts amendments, 5 and 6, survived court challenges from the Legislature, in part because another court had ruled that their language was more straightforward. It says lawmakers cannot intend to favor a political party or incumbent when drawing districts. It also says that minority voting rights shall be protected.

But despite those minority provisions -- and the backing of the NAACP -- legislators said Fair Districts would hurt minority voting rights, in large part due to a Supreme Court ruling that made certain minority voting districts harder to draw.

Two members of Florida's congressional delegation, Democrat Corrine Brown of Jacksonville

and Republican Mario Diaz-Balart of Miami, have filed their own suits against the Fair Districts amendments to knock them off the ballot.

Future Senate President Mike Haridopolos held months of hearings to poke holes in the Fair Districts proposals and pushed his rival amendment in the waning days of the spring lawmaking session. He persuaded state Sen. Gary Siplin, an Orlando Democrat and leader of the black caucus, to sponsor the amendment.

Both Haridopolos and Siplin repeatedly said Amendment 7 just "clarifies" amendments 5 and 6.

Haridopolos could not immediately be reached for comment.

Ellen Freidin, the Fair Districts chairwoman, applauded the ruling and said she is confident her side will prevail.

"We have always been confident that any court would look at this and see it for exactly what it is," she said. "It's an attempt to fool the voters, and as the judge said, to hide the ball."

Sen. John Thrasher, R-St. Augustine, said he had not yet ruling, but that the case is likely headed to the Supreme Court.

"I don't think anybody should take any great joy or sorrow from what they've just done," he said. "These kinds of decisions are made all the time."

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# Breaking News: Tallahassee Judge Says Redistricting Amendment 7 is a No-Go in November

LANE WRIGHT'S BLOG | POSTED: JULY 8, 2010 11:37 AM

Amendment 7, pushed to the November ballot by Sen. Mike Haridopolos and others among the state Republican leadership, will no longer be up for a vote in November, a Tallahassee judge has ruled. The amendment had been crafted to balance out -- or oppose -- Amendments 5 and 6, which dealt with gerrymandering districts. Haridopolos says it was important to make sure minority rights were protected in the redistricting process.

Haridopolos, incoming senate president of the Florida Senate, was attending the Clean Energy Summit in Orlando Thursday morning when he got the news. He admitted he was shocked and surprised and said he plans to take the issue to the Supreme Court.

More to come later in Sunshine State News.

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A waste of \$50,000 to \$60,000 a day of taxpayer money, considering offshore drilling is already prohibited.

A necessary use of funds to possibly allow voters to amend the Florida Constitution.

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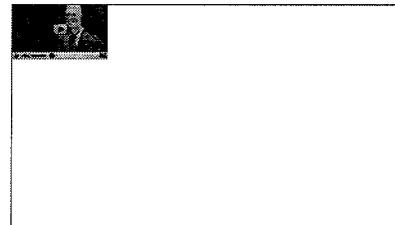
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Judge removes redistricting amendment from Florida ballot

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The Associated Press

Published: July 8, 2010

Updated: 07/08/2010 04:03 pm

TALLAHASSEE - A proposed constitutional amendment was struck from the ballot today by a Leon County circuit judge who called it misleading and confusing.

Circuit Judge James Shelfer said it took him three days to grasp the purported meaning of Amendment 7 that would give the Legislature greater influence in creating new political boundaries.

Shelfer said he didn't believe the average voter would be able to understand it in just the few minutes they might spend in a voting booth.

"This amendment is nothing if not deceptive," said Ron Meyer, attorney for the plaintiffs. "The court was saying, here he is a lawyer and judge who had difficulty parsing through it."

Attorneys for the Secretary of State's office and Legislature will appeal Shelfer's decision, which will eventually be decided by the Florida Supreme Court.

Shelfer, who ruled from the bench to expedite the issue through the state's court system, said he viewed the amendment's summary language as a clear attempt to conceal its true impact.

George Meros, a lawyer for the Florida House, argued that Amendment 7 provided additional standards, to those that districts be connected by land or be contiguous.

Gov. Charlie Crist, who is running for the U.S. Senate as an independent, joined in the suit brought by the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the Florida League of Women Voters and a Hispanic advocacy group.

"The judge got it right," said Crist. "Now fair districts will have an opportunity to be on the ballot straight up, if you will, and give the people, again, the opportunity to make important decisions about their constitution, about their democracy, about how they're represented."

The plaintiffs argued Amendment 7 would nullify anti-gerrymandering measures and give the legislative majority free rein to do as it pleases when redrawing districts designed to help incumbents retain their seats and one party retain its power. Republicans now hold a clear majority in the Florida Senate and House.

But opposition to Amendment 7 was somewhat bipartisan.

Other plaintiffs included former state Comptroller Bob Milligan and Nathaniel Reed, an environmentalist who served as an assistant interior secretary in the administrations of GOP Presidents Richard Nixon and Gerald Ford. Both are Republicans.

Former Democratic governor and U.S. Sen. Bob Graham, Milligan and Reed serve as honorary co-chairmen of Fair Districts Florida, which obtained more than 600,000 signatures required to put each of the anti-gerrymandering initiatives on the ballot.

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## FL GOP's Misleading Redistricting Amendment 7 Thrown Off Ballot

July 8, 2010 by [inkberries](#)

The GOP controlled Florida legislature's latest attempt to thwart the will of voters in the state, Amendment 7, has been thrown off the ballot:

The Legislature's decision to counter the Fair Districts Florida redistricting amendments with its own was declared misleading by Judge James Shelfer, who tossed it off the ballot.

The key part of the ruling being [this](#):

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**Shelfer said it took him three days to understand the meaning of Amendment 7 and that he couldn't foresee how an average voter would grasp its description during a few minutes in the voting booth.**

Since it seems to have been designed to mislead and confuse, I suppose you could say it worked like a charm, *in voters favor*. Who's "confused" now GOP?

Oh, well besides the future Senate President [Mike Haridopolos](#) that is, who released a statement saying basically.....**that the judge was merely confused**. Seriously.

And if that's not enough irony for you, there's [this](#):

Ellen Freidin, chairwoman of the two citizen Fair Districts amendments, was predictably giddy at Judge Jim Shelfer's decision to throw the Legislature's Amendment 7 off the ballot.

"We have always been confident that any court would look at this and see it for exactly what it is," she said. **"It's an attempt to fool the voters, and as the judge said, to hide the ball."**

Well put, considering Haridopolos could hide that ball in one hand, while **throwing tar balls at the voter** with the other.

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Posted on 8th July 2010 by [cloudhostingguy](#) in [Cloud Hosting](#)

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Florida's running its appeal through its Microsoft Azure-hosted [MyFloridaCensus](#) site and Web-based application according to [TMCNet](#). MyFloridaCensus, hosted in the [Windows Azure](#) cloud platform, uses Microsoft Silverlight for cross-browser compatibility.

Microsoft officials explain, the collective technology "allows visitors to share their experiences with the 2010 Census and build a social user-generated experience around the once-per-decade count." This is all made possible with the help of a [Bing Maps](#) interface that allows them to interact with each other over the cloud servers.

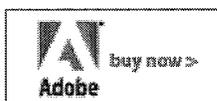
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MyFloridaCensus is a major Florida's overall effort to ensure a complete count of residents during the ongoing 2010 Census. An online presence is quite necessary considering that door-to-door is becoming obsolete and is being done away with nationwide July 10th.

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Friday, July 9, 2010 — Last update: 1:29 a.m. MDT

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## Fair Boundaries coalition seeking commitment from Gov. Gary Herbert

By Joseph M. Dougherty  
Deseret News

Published: Thursday, July 8, 2010 10:02 p.m. MDT

6 comments

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SALT LAKE CITY — Fair Boundaries has a commitment from Democratic gubernatorial candidate and Salt Lake County Mayor Peter Corroon to veto a politically gerrymandered map of legislative districts.

The group wants the same commitment from Utah Gov. Gary Herbert.

"The governor that we elect this fall is in the most important position next year to approve or disapprove of a legislative redistricting plan," said Merrill Nelson, who sits on the coalition's board of directors.

Fair Boundaries sought to create an independent redistricting commission once population numbers from this year's Census are available. The coalition failed to get 95,000 signatures by the May deadline to place its measure on the November ballot.

In a news release Thursday, Fair Boundaries said it had sent a letter requesting Herbert's opinion on using objective standards rather than those based on parties and legislators. The group never heard back, but Thursday, Herbert's spokeswoman said he plans to respond. "Governor Herbert's interest, like that of all Utahns, is that any future redistricting efforts are conducted in an open, transparent process that achieves fair results," Angie Welling said.

Nelson said he was pleased the governor will respond to the group's request.

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"We've got some breathing room here," Nelson said, adding that the election isn't until November. "We are not advocating for any particular party or candidate."

The next governor represents the only protection between concerned voters and a gerrymandered political map for the next decade, so it is important to know where the candidates stand on the issue, the Fair Boundaries release states.



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Nelson said legislators have made it clear to him that they will not use the objective standards Fair Boundaries was advocating. That leaves Fair Boundaries in an advocacy role, with a plan to monitor legislation during 2011. The group also plans to use Census data and contract with a private entity to apply its neutral redistricting plan and then compare that with the plan legislators develop.

That could give the public something tangible to put pressure on the Legislature, Nelson said.

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# Judge strikes redistricting 'poison pill' from Florida ballots

By [Cooper Levey-Baker](#) 7/8/10 2:03 PM

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A Leon County judge struck Amendment 7 from Florida's November ballot today. Via [the Associated Press](#):

A proposed constitutional amendment was struck from the ballot Thursday by a Leon County circuit judge who called it misleading and confusing.

Circuit Judge James Shelfer said it took him three days to grasp the purported meaning of Amendment 7 and that he didn't believe the average voter would be able to understand it during a few minutes in the voting booth.

The suit had been filed by the NAACP, the League of Women Voters and others, who called the amendment "a brazen attempt by those in power to continue their absolute control of the redistricting process" and an "incumbent protection plan." They charged those who drafted the amendment with purposely seeking to undermine Amendments 5 and 6, which would create rules for how the Florida legislature can draw districts. Fair Districts Florida, the organization that has pushed for Amendment 5 and 6, called Amendment 7 a "poison pill."

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## 1 bill removed from ballot in redistricting debate

Source URL: <http://jacksonville.com/news/metro/2010-07-08/story/1-bill-removed-ballot-redistricting-debate>

By Brandon Larrabee

TALLAHASSEE - The legal war over redrawing the state's political boundaries heated up Thursday, with a Leon County judge striking down one constitutional vote on redistricting while another court weighed whether two others should remain on the ballot.

The court battles marked the latest in the tussle over what guidelines, if any, should control legislative efforts - generally after the once-a-decade census - to craft new districts for themselves and for the state's seats in Congress.

In the only decision to come out of the day's legal battles, backers of a pair of constitutional amendments aimed at ending political gerrymandering won a victory when a judge removed from the ballot a proposal by the Legislature that would have watered down the other two amendments.

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The legislative initiative, Amendment 7, would have allowed lawmakers to ignore the other two amendments even if they were to pass in November. Amendments 5 and 6 propose new rules to safeguard some minority districts and lines drawn to keep "communities of interest" together. Supporters of those amendments said their proposals already protected minority rights and that Amendment 7 was trying to confuse voters. The court agreed.

Circuit Judge James Shelfer called it misleading and confusing, saying it took him three days to grasp the purported meaning of Amendment 7 and that he didn't believe the average voter would be able to understand it during a few minutes in the voting booth.

Shelfer also said he viewed the amendment's summary language as a clear attempt to conceal its true impact.

"There's no question that the Legislature drafted and passed that amendment with the intent of fooling the voters," said Ellen Frieden, campaign manager for Fair Districts Florida, a grass-roots group that supports amendments 5 and 6.

But incoming Senate President Mike Haridopolos, who pushed for Amendment 7 and will oversee the next redistricting session, said the criticisms launched at his amendment could also apply to the Fair Districts proposals.

"If [the judge] found our amendment confusing, I can't wait until he takes a look at 5 and 6," said Haridopolos, R-Merritt Island.

That task actually fell to another judge, who did not immediately rule on arguments Thursday about whether the Fair Districts amendments should be thrown off the ballot.

Frieden said an earlier Supreme Court ruling allowing the initiative to go forward should stand, and pointed to the more than 1.6 million voters who signed petitions to get the measures on the November ballot.

"The Legislature's basically saying to the people, 'We don't care what you want, we want those off,' " she said.

No matter the decisions, the rulings on all three amendments will likely be appealed to the Florida Supreme Court.

*The Associated Press contributed to this report.*

*brandon.larrabee@jacksonville.com, (678) 977-3709*

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## Redistricting amendment tossed from ballot

> Posted by Josh Hafenbrack on July 8, 2010 11:46 AM

A Leon County circuit judge today struck from the ballot Amendment 7, the Legislature's redistricting amendment aimed at undermining the Fair Districts proposals to create standards in drawing legislative and congressional lines.

Judge James Sheffer read his decision from the bench after oral arguments. The case hinged on whether the ballot summary fairly informed voters about Amendment 7's impacts on the redistricting process.

"I'm not the brightest light on the Christmas tree, but it took me three days... to get a handle on what this amendment does," Sheffer said. The amendment summary's "failure to inform the public is clearly and convincingly an attempt to hide the ball" on its true impacts.

Sheffer's ruling will be appealed to the state Supreme Court, which will have the final say.

Amendment 7 says:

In establishing congressional and legislative district boundaries or plans, the state shall apply federal requirements and balance and implement the standards in the State Constitution. The state shall take into consideration the ability of racial and language minorities to participate in the political process and elect candidates of their choice, and communities of common interest other than political parties may be respected and promoted, both without subordination to any other provision of Article III of the State Constitution. Districts and plans are valid if the balancing and implementation of standards is rationally related to the standards contained in the State Constitution and is consistent with federal law.

The key: the new, proposed standards for minorities and communities of common interest would be applied "without subordination" to any other provision of the constitution, namely that districts be connected or "contiguous." The amendment effectively allows the Legislature to ignore or deemphasize the contiguous rule — in favor of the new standards — without informing voters about that change, Sheffer ruled.

George Meros, the lawyer for the Florida House who defended Amendment 7 in court today, had argued that reading is "the greatest stretch." He said the proposal simply provides more standards, on top of the requirement that districts be connected by land — "creating additional standards that go with the standards that presently exist."

The case was brought by the state NAACP and argued by attorney Ron Meyer. "This amendment is nothing if not deceptive, if not unintelligible," he said. "They could have, if they wanted to, made this a very simple, straightforward amendment. But the Legislature chose not to do that, and they chose not to do that for the very purpose of being able to hide the impacts."

Amendment 7 was the Legislature's response to Fair Districts Florida, which has two ballot items — Amendments 5 and 6 — going before voters in November. The Fair Districts amendments say legislative and congressional districts can't be drawn to benefit an incumbent or political party or to deny access to minorities, and that districts must be contiguous and, where possible, compact and drawn along existing municipal or geographic boundaries.

A separate court hearing is scheduled this afternoon in Tallahassee on Amendments 5 and 6 — more legal wrangling to get those thrown off the ballot.

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**Court declares Legislature's redistricting amendment misleading**

The Legislature's decision to counter the Fair Districts Florida redistricting amendment with its own was declared misleading by Judge James Sheffer, who tossed it off the ballot. His ruling is sure to be appealed.

Sheffer said it took him three days to understand the meaning of Amendment 7 and that he couldn't foresee how an average voter would grasp its description during a few minutes in the voting booth.

That's quite a blow to future Senate President Mike Haridopolos and the Republicans in the Legislature who portrayed Amendment 7 as a model of clarity. They said it was needed to "clarify" two other amendments, 5 and 6, placed on the ballot by a group called Fair Districts. Haridopolos, who co-sponsored Amendment 7 with Democrat Gary Siplin, said the Fair Districts amendments could harm minority voting rights. Florida Congressional leaders, Republican Mario Diaz Balart and Democrat Corrine Brown agree and are challenging Fair Districts.

But Fair Districts backers say Amendments 5 and 6 are simply intended to make it tougher for lawmakers to favor incumbents and political parties when they draw congressional and legislative districts.

The Legislature's proposal was drafted in the waning days of session and changed at least once. It wasn't the clearest of amendments, giving the NAACP and other backers of Fair Districts fertile ground to argue it was misleading.

"The Legislature's amendment was gobbledygook," said Ron Meyer, one of the NAACP lawyers.

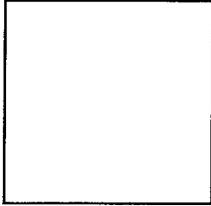
Sheffer essentially agreed, saying the way Amendment 7 was written could undo the Fair Districts Amendments and could make it easier for legislative and congressional districts to be drawn without being contiguous. So one politician could represent two different areas of the state, say Jacksonville and Okaloosa County.

Posted by Marc Caputo on July 8, 2010 in 2010 amendments , Redistricting | Permalink

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## LEGISLATIVE REDISTRICTING AMENDMENT AXED FROM BALLOT

By DAVID ROYSE  
THE NEWS SERVICE OF FLORIDA

THE CAPITAL, TALLAHASSEE, July 8, 2010... A Tallahassee judge on Thursday knocked the Legislature's proposed constitutional amendment dealing with redistricting standards off the ballot, saying he couldn't easily understand what it would do so it was unreasonable to expect voters could.

Amendment 7 was put on the November ballot by lawmakers earlier this year after two other amendments dealing with redistricting were cleared to go before voters. Those two amendments – 5 and 6 – angered lawmakers who said the effort by a citizens group called FairDistricts.org to “remove politics” from redistricting could have illegal unintended consequences.

FairDistricts said it intended 5 and 6 to bar lawmakers from redrawing political boundaries that favor themselves. The two FairDistricts amendments – put on the ballot after a signature gathering effort – spell out certain boundary drawing rules, including prohibitions against favoring incumbents or political parties when drawing the districts, which lawmakers do every 10 years to account for demographic changes.

~~But legislators said the FairDistricts amendments likely couldn't actually work – that there was no way districts could be drawn that could be defended as having met the required standards – and that they might run afoul of federal requirements that minority interests be protected when drawing lines.~~

So the Legislature wrote its own amendment to also put before voters – one that lawmakers argued would clarify that even if Amendment 5 and 6 passed, there were certain requirements for how to draw the lines that should be adhered to – that had to be adhered to – even if it seemed they might conflict with the FairDistricts amendments.

The League of Women Voters and the NAACP sued over the legislative amendment, Amendment 7, saying that the ballot language was misleading.

Ron Meyer, the lawyer who argued for the groups challenging the amendment, said that what the legislative amendment appeared to call for was goals for what lawmakers should try to do when drawing districts – not actual requirements – and that the language would make those goals paramount to other standards already in the constitution.

Moreover, the amendment was misleading, Meyer argued.

Circuit Judge James O. Shelfer agreed, issuing a verbal order to strike the amendment, saying voters couldn't be expected to know what it would do.

“The court concluded that the amendment flies under false colors and hides the ball,” Meyer said. “It does things that are not apparent to the voter.”

League of Women Voters President Deirdre Macnabb said the legislative amendment wasn't just

coincidentally confusing. She argued it was meant to blunt the two FairDistricts proposals, calling it a "deceptive ruse by Florida legislators to trick voters."

Incoming House Speaker Dean Cannon noted that Shelfer appeared to suggest that Amendment 7 could interfere with a current constitutional requirement that districts be contiguous – that is, not be composed of areas that don't touch each other such as a district that includes part of one county and part of another one three counties away. Cannon said the legislatively drawn amendment wouldn't affect that requirement at all.

"There is absolutely no basis for this ruling in the amendment's legislative history or record," Cannon said in a statement. "However, Amendments 5 and 6 on redistricting will be subject to judicial review later this month. It will be interesting to see how this ruling impacts the judicial review of Amendments 5 and 6. If the judge here found Amendment 7 confusing, Amendments 5 and 6 probably are as well since they are far more complicated and have far greater impacts on present constitutional powers and rights."

A spokeswoman for incoming Senate President Mike Haridopolos – the most vocal critic of Amendments 5 and 6 – said he'd have a statement later on Thursday.

Legislative Democrats, most of whom were opposed to Amendment 7, agreed with the plaintiffs that the Legislature's proposal was intentionally disingenuous and applauded the ruling.

"Today, a Florida court has properly recognized the failings and deceit of a Republican-led legislative attempt to undermine the citizen-backed FairDistricts reapportionment ballot measures," said House Minority Leader Franklin Sands, D-Weston.

Amendments 5 and 6 are being challenged in a lawsuit filed by two members of Congress, Democratic Rep. Corrine Brown and Republican Rep. Mario Diaz-Balart, arguing that those amendments could reverse gains made in guaranteeing minority voting rights that are protected by federal law. A hearing on that case, in which the state is the defendant, is scheduled for later Thursday.

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Both sides expect that Shelfer's Amendment 7 ruling will be appealed, and likely eventually decided by the Supreme Court.

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Judge throws out Legislature's redistricting amendment

Uncategorized — posted by jhafenbrack on July, 8 2010 11:21 AM

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A Leon County circuit judge today struck from the ballot Amendment 7, the Legislature's redistricting amendment aimed at undermining the Fair Districts proposals to create standards in drawing legislative and congressional lines.

Judge James Shelfer read his decision from the bench after oral arguments. The case hinged on whether the ballot summary fairly informed voters about Amendment 7's impacts on the redistricting process.

"I'm not the brightest light on the Christmas tree, but it took me three days...to get a handle on what this amendment does," Shelfer said. The amendment summary's "failure to inform the public is clearly and convincingly an attempt to hide the ball" on its true impacts.

Shelfer's ruling will be appealed to the state Supreme Court, which will have the final say.

Amendment 7 says:

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The key: the new, proposed standards for minorities and communities of common interest would be applied "without subordination" to any other provision of the constitution, namely that districts be connected or "contiguous." The amendment effectively allows the Legislature to ignore or deemphasize the contiguous rule — in favor of the new standards — without informing voters about that change, Shelfer ruled.

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Amendment 7 was the Legislature's response to Fair Districts Florida, which has two ballot items — Amendments 5 and 6 — going before voters in November. The Fair Districts amendments say legislative and congressional districts can't be drawn to benefit an incumbent or political party or to deny access to minorities, and that districts must be contiguous and, where possible, compact and drawn along existing municipal or geographic boundaries.

A separate court hearing is scheduled this afternoon in Tallahassee on Amendments 5 and 6 — more legal wrangling to get those thrown off the ballot.

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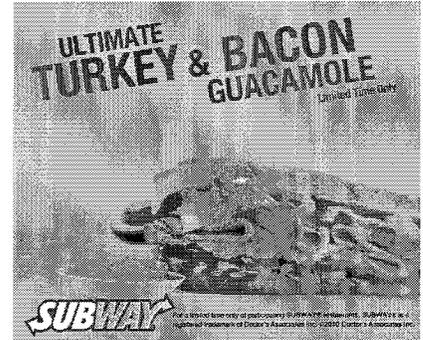
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« Meek adds \$1M to campaign coffers

# Court knocks redistricting initiative from ballot

by Michael C. Bender | July 8th, 2010

From [Gary Fineout](#):

Judge Shelfer says amendment 7 could have wiped out other standards inc one that requires connected districts

Judge Shelfer says it took him 3 days and loads of case law to understand Amend 7. Doubts voter could figure it out.

State lawmakers — Republicans and some black Democrats — added Amendment 7 to the ballot to let lawmakers to maintain “communities of interest” when they draw new political boundaries. The NAACP and Women’s League of Voters sued to block it.

The amendment was in response to a pair of citizen initiatives (Amendments 5 and 6) that would aimed at overhauling how legislative boundaries are drawn. U.S. Reps. Corrine Brown, D-Jacksonville, and Mario Diaz-Balart, R-Miami, have sued to block Amendment 6.

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This entry was posted on Thursday, July 8th, 2010 at 11:21 am and is filed under [Uncategorized](#). You can follow any responses to this entry through the [RSS 2.0](#) feed. You can skip to the end and leave a response. Pinging is currently not allowed.

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## Dean Cannon Questions Judicial Logic on Amendment 7 and Its Effect on FairDistrict Amendments

By *Kevin Derby*  
Created 07/08/2010 - 1:11pm

Incoming House Speaker Dean Cannon, R-Winter Park, commented on a Leon County Circuit Court judge knocking Amendment 7 -- a redistricting measure backed by the Legislature -- off the November ballot.

"Although there was no written ruling, apparently the court found that the purpose or effect of the amendment was to change the contiguity requirement," said Cannon. "I respectfully disagree with the court's decision. There is absolutely no basis for this ruling in the amendment's legislative history or record."

---

Cannon used the opportunity to take shots at the proposed redistricting amendments to the Florida Constitution being backed by most Democrats as well as the FairDistricts Florida organization. "However, Amendments 5 and 6 on redistricting will be subject to judicial review later this month," noted Cannon. "It will be interesting to see how this ruling impacts the judicial review of Amendments 5 and 6. If the judge here found Amendment 7 confusing, Amendments 5 and 6 probably are as well, since they are far more complicated and have far greater impacts on present constitutional powers and rights."

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Court declares Legislature's redistricting amendment misleading | Main

July 08, 2010

### Fair Districts chair applauds Amend. 7 ruling

Ellen Freidin, chairwoman of the two citizen Fair Districts amendments, was predictably giddy at Judge Jim Shelfer's decision to throw the Legislature's Amendment 7 off the ballot.

"We have always been confident that any court would look at this and see it for exactly what it is," she said. "It's an attempt to fool the voters, and as the judge said, to hide the ball."

Freidin criticized the Legislature's proposed standards as "non requirements" that would be given equal or a higher priority than those spelled out in the Fair Districts amendments. She said the proposed standards would allow wide discretion in crafting districts.

"It gives the Legislature free reign to continue drawing districts for their own political purposes," she said.

Posted by Lee Logan at 12:10:53 PM on July 8, 2010 in Florida Legislature , Mike Haridopoulos , Redistricting | Permalink

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### Judge Strikes Down Redistricting Amendment

Thursday, July 8, 2010  
By: Tom Parkinson

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**July 8, 2010 - A judge in Tallahassee has thrown out a proposed state constitutional amendment that would have given state lawmakers more say over how to draw legislative districts. The judge says the wording of the amendment is confusing and misleading.**

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Leon County Circuit Judge James Shelfer says it took him three days to make sense of Amendment 7 and he says the average voter would not understand it either. The amendment is one of 3 proposed redistricting measures. It was put on the ballot by a legislative committee -- supporters of the other two amendments said it would negate efforts in their proposals to combat gerrymandering. State Senator Mike Haridopolos sponsored Amendment 7. He says if the same standards are applied to the two competing amendments, they would also be struck down because of confusing language. A lawsuit challenging those 2 proposals is still pending. To learn more about the all three redistricting amendments, click here. <http://www.wmfe.org/site/News2?page=NewsArticle&id=10691>

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**Judge Throws Out Amendment 7: Says It Confuses Voters**

Posted Thu, Jul 08, 2010 at 03:07 pm

By Joshua Stewart (Send E-Mail)

TAMPA (2010-07-08) - A circuit court judge has thrown out a proposed constitutional amendment that would have given state lawmakers more say over drawing legislative districts.

Circuit Judge James Shelfer says it took him three days to understand the purported meaning of Amendment 7 and he didn't think an average voter would grasp its description during a few minutes in the voting booth.

The proposal is one of three redistricting measures on the November ballot. It was placed there by the state Legislature in response to the other two amendments, which supporters say will combat gerrymandering.

State Senator Mike Haridopolous sponsored Amendment 7. He says if the same standards are applied to the other two amendments, they would also be struck down because of confusing

language.

Gov. Charlie Crist, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People, the Florida League of Women Voters and a Hispanic advocacy group were among those challenging Amendment 7.

They argued it would nullify anti-gerrymandering measures and give the legislative majority free rein to do as it pleases when redrawing districts

A lawsuit challenging those two proposals is pending.

Ellen Freidin, chairwoman of Fair Districts Florida, said, "We are so pleased that after careful review, Judge Shelfer recognized that the Legislature's amendment was meant to trick voters so politicians could continue to use redistricting to favor themselves and their political allies."

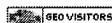
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News Politics

## Republicans to appeal Tallahassee judge throwing out Amendment 7

July 9, 2010 at 8:42 am by Mitch Perry



A Tallahassee judge yesterday rejected the Florida Legislature's proposed constitutional amendment aimed at countering the "Fair Districts" amendments on this November's ballot that would reform how legislators draw up legislative and congressional districts.

Leon County Circuit Judge James Shelfer put it succinctly, saying:

"I'm not the brightest light on the Christmas tree, but it took me three days...to get a handle on what this amendment does," Shelfer said. The amendment summary's "failure to inform the public is clearly and convincingly an attempt to hide the ball" on its true impacts, he added.

The ruling will be appealed to the state Supreme Court, but must come down soon: the deadline for constitutional amendments to get on the November ballot is September 2.

Amendments 5 and 6, which are already on the ballot (though there is a separate legal challenge by opponents trying to force them off the ballot) would theoretically make it harder for state lawmakers to draw up legislative and congressional districts to favor one party, which is the case now (in favor of Republicans).

Naturally, supporters of the amendments 5 and 6, like Ellen Freidin, the chair of FairDistrictFlorida.Org, cheered the ruling:

"We are so pleased that after careful review, Judge Shelfer recognized that the Legislature's amendment was meant to trick voters so politicians could continue to use redistricting to favor themselves and their political allies/ We are grateful that our coalition partners NAACP, League of Women Voters of Florida, and Democracia Ahora took on this fight against the politicians and for the people of Florida. Now the voters - by voting YES on FairDistricts Amendments 5 and 6 - will have a real shot on November 2 at changing the system that has allowed politicians to draw districts to ensure their own re-elections."

The motley crew opposed to those amendments are part of the current political status quo - namely, most of the Republicans in the Legislature, and even Congressional Democrats who have seats drawn up that are favorable to them, such as Corrine Brown, whose long and winding district encompasses parts of both Orange and Volusia (Jacksonville) counties - Alachua (Gainesville) and Seminole as well.

Brown has been one of the public faces - along with Mike Haridopolos - opposed to the amendments. However, she may not be the best spokesperson for that cause. Last month on a public radio program in Jacksonville, Brown bailed out after only a few minutes in defending her position:

On Thursday's "First Coast Connect," a Jacksonville public radio program, Rep. Brown was set to be interviewed about a recent lawsuit she filed requesting the redistricting amendments be stricken from the forthcoming ballot. Unfortunately for host Melissa Ross, along with many listeners hoping to hear the congresswoman's defense, Brown hung up within the first five minutes of the interview. Before the argument came to a head, Brown said this of her recently filed claim: "As far as I'm concerned, this is a legal issue that should be handled in the courts."

Several callers to the show disagreed, saying that her argument "wasn't very poignant" and that her only desire was to "protect her own district and ensure her election." While Brown has said in previous interviews that the 1965 Voting Rights Act was enacted in order to draw together communities of interest, many argue that not changing the district's lines only perpetuates institutional racism, diluting the amount of minorities in neighboring districts - and at the same time guaranteeing Brown's reelection.

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# Death, Taxes & Politics

A look at power and the people behind the scenes

## Fortune: Striking Amendment 7 was a 'victory for the people of Florida'



Submitted by David Hunt on July 9, 2010 - 9:19am

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Death, Taxes & Politics

Congressional candidate Scott Fortune, a Beaches lawyer running against U.S. Rep. Corrine Brown in the Aug. 24 Democratic primary, said the court ruling taking Amendment 7 off the ballot was "a victory for the people of Florida."

*More than 1 million registered voters throughout Florida signed petitions to get Amendments 5 and 6 on the ballot this November. They did this because they are tired of the politicians in Tallahassee abusing the electoral process by drawing districts designed solely to keep themselves in office, without regard to the will of the people of Florida. They did it because the legislators have not shown the courage to draw voting districts fairly.*

*Many of the lawmakers in Tallahassee became scared and got angry about Amendments 5 and 6 being on the ballot. They are the same lawmakers who will be drawing the new voting districts in 2011, and they happen to be mostly Republicans. These folks have benefitted for years, and even decades, by specially drawn voting districts that intentionally group their supporters altogether in one oddly shaped district that usually stretches across towns, cities and even counties. As a result of these "gerrymandered" districts, the voters in a single district are often scattered more than 100 miles from each other. This prevents the elected representative of such a bizarrely shaped district from being genuinely useful to most of the people who voted for him or her. This is because each city and county has its own unique needs and therefore requires its own elected Representative to address those needs. This is true for the Representatives whether they are in Tallahassee or in Washington, in Congress.*

Fortune, who has made an issue of gerrymandering in his campaign, was reacting to Thursday's court decision on Amendment 7. [Click here for the full story.](#)

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Was a Tallahassee judge right to strike down Amendment 7, the so-called 'poison-pill' from the Legislature that would nullify redistricting reform?

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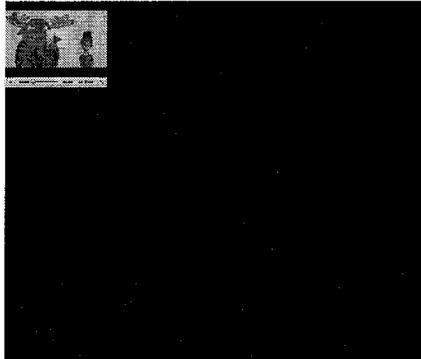
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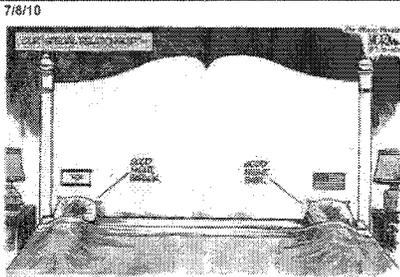
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BY PAT BUCHANAN

"This was a war of Obama's choosing. This is not something the United States has actively prosecuted or wanted to engage in."

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#### Hitting the reset button

BY FRIDA GHITIS

Watching the public love-fest between Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and President Obama, a reporter asked the president if he had decided that his previous policy of distancing himself from Israel and giving Netanyahu "the cold shoulder" had been a mistake. Obama promptly denied the two men and the two countries had ever had anything but close ties and excellent relations. Netanyahu joyfully concurred with the president. Any thought that the two of them did not love one another,

EDITORIALS

GROUP 3

Judge Peter Skolnik has drawn opposition for the first time since he was first elected in 1990. Debra Steinsaltz, 40, an assistant public defender is seeking to unseat him.

GROUP 22

Judge Carlos Rebollo, appointed 2 1/2 years ago, is opposed by Robert "Bob" Nichols. Both are well-qualified former prosecutors.

Group 45

Miami-Dade Circuit Court Judge Peter Adrien was elected in 2004 after an unsuccessful run in 2000. Incumbency sets a high bar for any challenger in a judicial race, but in this one, unfortunately, Judge Adrien, 42, has not shown he is up to the task despite his years on the bench.

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MIAMI-DADE CIRCUIT COURT

GROUP 62

Miami-Dade voters have two strong judicial candidates running for an open seat in Group 62 of the 11th Judicial Circuit.

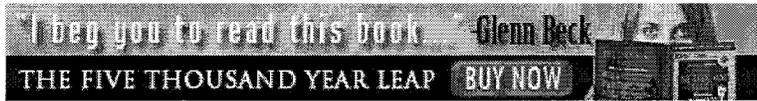
#### Release all political prisoners

Re Cuban Cardinal Jaime Ortega's announcement that five political prisoners were being released by the Cuban regime and 47 others will be released within the next few months:

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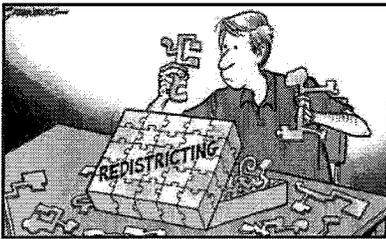
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## **Court Declares Legislature's Redistricting Amendment Misleading**

July 9, 2010 [Political News](#), [State](#) No Comments



Editor's Note – Good luck with this one.

You have Republicans siding with Black Caucus Democrats, who are being opposed by the NAACP? What seems to be reasonable is challenged as being unfair, and what appears to be preferential is being touted as just?

I'm waiting for Rep. Corrine Brown to share with us where she thinks Mr. Gerry Mandering would stand on all this?

As best described by Linda O'Keefe, this makes my head spin!

Although, when you have politicians trying to divy up the pie for themselves, what do you expect? Just file this under the *'I'm from the government, and I'm here to help'* category.

### **Court Declares Legislature's Redistricting Amendment Misleading**

By Marc Caputo  
Miami Herald

The Legislature's decision to counter the Fair Districts Florida redistricting amendments with its own was declared misleading by Judge James Shelfer, who tossed it off the ballot. His ruling is sure to be appealed.

Shelfer said it took him three days to understand the meaning of Amendment 7 and that he couldn't foresee how an average voter would grasp its description during a few minutes in the voting booth.

That's quite a blow to future Senate President Mike Haridopolos and the Republicans in the Legislature who portrayed Amendment 7 as a model of clarity. They said it was needed to "clarify" two other amendments, 5 and 6, placed on the ballot by a group called Fair Districts.

Haridopolos, who co-sponsored Amendment 7 with Democrat Gary Siplin, said the Fair Districts amendments could harm minority voting rights. Florida Congressional leaders, Republican Mario Diaz Balart and Democrat Corrine Brown agree and are challenging Fair Districts.

But Fair Districts backers say Amendments 5 and 6 are simply intended to make it tougher for lawmakers to favor incumbents and political parties when they draw congressional and legislative districts.

Haridopolos released this statement in reaction to a Shelfer's decision to strike Amendment 7 from the ballot:

*Even with seven months of attempts, the sponsors of amendments 5 and 6 failed to explain the workable application of their amendments or how the amendments would protect minority representation. Judge Shelfer's inability to understand the process of redistricting after only looking at it for three days is convincing proof that amendments 5 and 6 are fatally flawed.*

*Amendment 7 was co-authored by Legislative Black Caucus Chairman Gary Siplin and Minority Leader Senator Al Lawson. I personally supported their efforts because I am not willing to stand idly by and allow minority representation to diminish.*

*I fully expect for Judge Shelfer's standards to be applied to Amendment 5 and 6 and am certain that if that is done, Amendments 5 and 6 will be removed from the ballot."*

Read more: <http://miamiherald.typepad.com/nakedpolitics/2010/07/legislatures-redistricting-amendment-tossed.html#ixzz0tBUCTj8p>



**Posted by TomT**

A late comer to the political scene, Tom quickly established himself as a leader of the tea party movement in the Central Florida area. He's an occasional co-host of the Tea Party Patriots LIVE radio show and is a co-founder of Orlando Political Press. He is known for his laid back style, passion for the issues and intensity of opinion, which he prefers sharing in open parking lots with plenty of room to pontificate.

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7/9/10



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# FairDistricts Amendments Now Before Court

BY: BY KATHLEEN HAUGHNEY THE NEWS SERVICE OF FLORIDA | POSTED: JULY 9, 2010 4:05 AM

TAGS: BOB GRAHAM, DEPARTMENT OF STATE, JUDGE JACKIE FULFORD, MICHAEL TANNER, MIKE HARIDOPOLOS, SUPREME COURT, REDISTRICTING, PROPOSED CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT DEALING WITH THE RULES FOR DRAWING POLITICAL BOUNDARIES, BACKERS OF TWO OTHER BALLOT QUESTIONS SEEKING TO CHANGE THE WAY REDISTRICTING IS DONE WERE IN COURT DEFENDING THEIRS.

The two remaining proposals still slated, as of now, to be decided by voters in November, seek to keep lawmakers from trying to protect incumbents or political parties when they take on the once-a-decade task of redrawing Senate, House and congressional boundary lines.

Those two amendments, Amendments 5 and 6, sponsored by a group called FairDistricts.org, are being challenged by two members of Congress and by the Legislature, which says that the proposals are likely to run afoul of federal protections for minority voters, a claim vehemently denied by backers of the two amendments.

Supporters of the 5 and 6, which were put on the ballot through petition, argued they should go before voters just a few hours after a separate judge threw out a competing ballot measure that lawmakers voted to put before voters, though that question will be the subject of an appeal.

Attorneys for the Legislature, losers in their effort to protect their proposed amendment in court earlier in the day, were back later Thursday before a different judge, arguing that the other two amendments also should come off. They argued that the Supreme Court's OK of the amendments for the ballot - which must precede any citizen-backed initiative going to the voters - was merely advisory and didn't take into account any factual arguments over what the amendment might do.

But the Florida Department of State, joined by FairDistricts.org and former U.S. Sen. Bob Graham, who intervened in the case, argued that there has never been a case where a circuit court has overruled the Supreme Court's consent to place a proposed constitutional amendment on the ballot.

Michael Tanner, a lawyer for the Department of State, said that the Supreme Court's advisory opinion process would essentially be rendered meaningless if the case against Amendments 5 and 6 was allowed to continue. The Constitution's writers established a "unique structure" to place citizen initiatives before the voters.

"One cannot achieve this goal and allow a case like this to go forward," he said.

Circuit Court Judge Jackie Fulford, who heard the arguments, said she could issue an opinion on whether to dismiss the case as early as Friday. However, the Supreme Court will likely be the final arbiter in the dispute over both redistricting proposals.

Senate President-designate Mike Haridopolos who spearheaded the legislative efforts to write Amendment 7, counter proposal to Amendments 5 and 6, released a statement urging that 5 and 6 be removed from the November ballot just as Amendment 7 was earlier in the day.

"Even with seven months of attempts, sponsors of Amendments 5 and 6 failed to explain the workable application of their amendments or how (they) would protect minority representation," he said.

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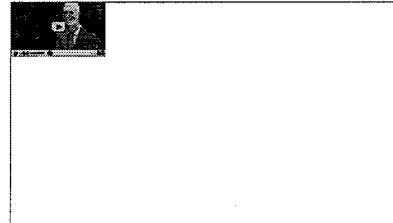
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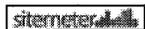
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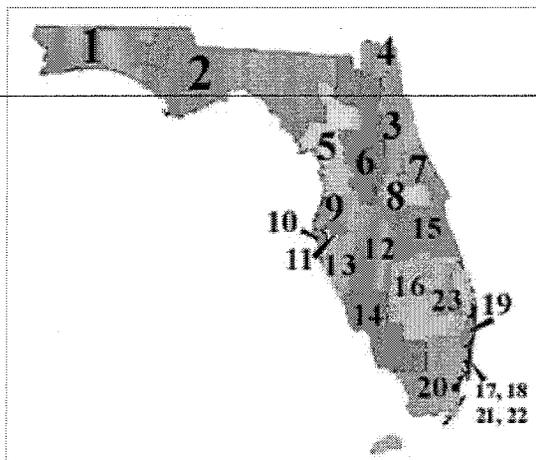
# Talk To Me

Ask anyone who knows me, I'd stop St. Peter's roll call to start a conversation. I'm a longtime Brevard County resident blessed with the gift of gab. Get settled behind your keyboard. Let's talk local...and state...and national.



FRIDAY, JULY 9, 2010

## Happy Friday: Amendment 7 Off the November Ballot



Per Progressive Pensacola, 7/8/2010:

Leon County Judge Jim Shelfer today ruled that this fall's Amendment 7 is misleading and pulled it from the ballot.

Amendment 7 was drafted by state legislators in response to Amendments 5 and 6, called the "Fair Districts" amendments, which would promote a nonpartisan districting process. Legislators argued that their Amendment 7 would "clarify" the process and protect minority representation, while opponents argued Amendment 7 was a last-ditch effort by those in power to protect incumbents and the ability to gerrymander districts.



You've stumbled across my archive blog! Join the Talk to Me conversation in progress over at Florida Today.

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Opposing Amendment 7 was Fair Districts Florida, the Florida NAACP, the League of Women Voters, and others.

Read more over at [FairDistricts.org](http://FairDistricts.org).

End gerrymandered districts in Florida.

Vote YES on Amendment 5 and 6.

**Take Florida back!**

Happy Friday.

Labels: [fair districts](#), [Fair Districts Florida](#)

posted by Sheree @ 2:45 AM

5 comments 

**5 Comments:**

At 7/9/10 9:41 AM,  Anonymous said...

ALFRED-E-NEWMAN wrote:  
OK!

At 7/9/10 9:41 AM,  Sheree said...

Sheree wrote:

From the St. Pete Times:

July 08, 2010

Mike Haridopolos says judge didn't understand redistricting issues

Future Senate President Mike Haridopolos sent out this statement in reaction to a judge's decision to strike Amendment 7 from the ballot (more here):

"Even with seven months of attempts, the sponsors of amendments 5 and 6 failed to explain the workable application of their amendments or how the amendments would protect minority representation. Judge Shelfer's inability to understand the process of redistricting after only looking at it for three days is convincing proof that amendments 5 and 6 are fatally flawed.

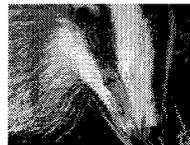
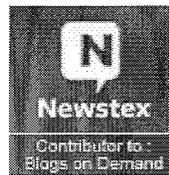
Amendment 7 was co-authored by Legislative Black Caucus Chairman Gary Siplin and Minority Leader Senator Al Lawson. I personally supported their efforts because I am not willing to stand idly by and allow minority representation to diminish.

I fully expect for Judge Shelfer's standards to be applied to Amendment 5 and 6 and am certain that if that is done, Amendments 5 and 6 will be removed from the ballot."

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The judge got it right ... Now fair districts will have an opportunity to be on the ballot straight up, if you will, and give the people, again, the opportunity to make important decisions about their constitution, about their democracy, about how they're represented.

12h 21m ago Tampa Bay Online

### Judge removes redistricting amendment from Florida ballot

12h 21m ago Tampa Bay Online

TALLAHASSEE - A proposed constitutional amendment was struck from the ballot today by a Leon County circuit judge who called it misleading and confusing. Circuit Judge James Shelfer said it took him three days to grasp the purported meaning of

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## **Editorial: Redistricting ... kudos to judge for killing a confusing amendment**

Staff Reports

Sunday, July 11, 2010

Bully for Judge James Shelfer.

The Leon County circuit judge swatted down a proposed constitutional amendment that would dictate how new boundary lines are drawn for congressional and other voting districts in Florida.

Shelfer said Amendment 7 was misleading and confusing, ordering it off the November general election ballot. His decision was quickly appealed by an attorney representing the Florida Legislature.

That means the final decision on whether the amendment makes it on the ballot will likely go to the Florida Supreme Court.

---

Shelfer questioned how voters would understand the amendment language during their brief visit to the polling booth when it took him three days to grasp the purported meaning of Amendment 7.

To put the amendment in simple terms, it would allow for the continued gerrymandering and king-making by the legislative leaders when districts are drawn for U.S. House, state House and state Senate seats.

Redistricting occurs every 10 years following the national census.

The last time Florida districts were redrawn, there were complaints — including editorials in this newspaper — that the process favored powerful incumbents instead of constituencies.

For instance, Collier and Lee counties were diced and sliced, with portions ending up in some districts dominated by East Coast counties, so incumbents could run from “safe” districts.

Those opposed to such gerrymandering drafted two amendments for the November ballot that would put the focus in the future on the voter and make redistricting less partisan.

In response the state Legislature proposed Amendment 7, fearing it would lose the oft-exercised power of drawing voting districts for self-preservation.

Judge Shelfer struck Amendment 7 from the ballot. The high court should concur.



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Kelly, Alex

7/12/10

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**Sent:** Monday, July 12, 2010 2:16 PM  
**To:** Bahl, Mathew; Kelly, Alex  
**Subject:** Fw: REDISTRICTING CHALLENGES MAY BE HEADED TO SUPREME COURT

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Jill Chamberlin  
Speaker's Office  
Florida House of Representatives  
850.921.2002  
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**REDISTRICTING CHALLENGES MAY BE HEADED TO SUPREME COURT**

July 12, 2010

JOHN KENNEDY  
THE NEWS SERVICE OF FLORIDA

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THE CAPITAL, TALLAHASSEE, July 12, 2010... A Leon County judge Monday denied a motion by state officials to dismiss a lawsuit by two Florida members of Congress seeking to throw out a pair of constitutional amendments intended to guide how the state draws new political boundaries in 2012.

Circuit Judge Jackie Fulford denied the motion by Secretary of State Dawn Roberts and FairDistricts Florida, the political committee which gathered enough petition signatures to get the redistricting measures on the November ballot.

The ruling apparently sets the case for a July 26 hearing before Fulford. But attorneys for Roberts and former Gov. Bob Graham, who has intervened as a defendant in the case, said Monday they will now ask the Florida Supreme Court to hear the challenge.

"The case either should be dismissed or it belongs before the Supreme Court, which already has reviewed the matter once," said Ron Meyer, Graham's attorney. "It shouldn't be relitigated."

U.S. Reps. Mario Diaz-Balart, a Miami Republican, and Corrine Brown, a Jacksonville Democrat, are looking to overturn the FairDistricts amendments. They say the ballot summaries are misleading, although the Supreme Court issued an advisory opinion in January 2009 upholding them.

Fulford did grant a motion dismissing FairDistricts Florida from the case. That leaves Roberts and Graham, who are representing petition signers, as the lone defendants in the case.

Brown and Diaz-Balart have been joined by the state House and Senate in seeking to block Amendments 5 and

6 from appearing on the ballot. Legislative leaders oppose the measures, which are aimed at blocking lawmakers from favoring incumbents or political parties when drawing legislative or congressional district lines.

The Legislature suffered a setback last week when Leon Circuit Judge James Shelfer stripped from the ballot Amendment 7 which had been put on the ballot by the Legislature. Lawmakers said that measure was designed to “clarify” the meaning of Amendments 5 and 6, although the NAACP and Florida League of Women Voters, which challenged Amendment 7, said it was chiefly designed to confuse voters.

Shelfer’s ruling siding with the opponents is expected to be appealed. But lawyers on both sides said the fate of all three amendments likely will be settled by the Florida Supreme Court.

-END-

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7/13/10

## Cloud tool helped Florida with 2010 Census count

July 13, 2010

The 2010 Census is over, but many are still talking about the new technologies that were used for the count this time around.

Gail Thomas is vice president for state and local government at Microsoft, and explains that she and others at the company worked on a project called MyFloridaCensus, which helped the state of Florida count citizens during the Census.

She tells Fed Cloud Blog all about the goal of the tool.

**GT:** We were excited to partner with the state of Florida on this cloud solution from Microsoft, which is all about enhancing the efforts around ensuring that they had a complete count of residents during the 2010 Census.

---

Really, it was meant to sort of supplement the door-to-door canvassing. . . . This solution is a final push to be able to count state residents and it's through a website called myfloridacensus.gov. It's a web-based application which allows . . . citizens to provide dynamic feedback and visual representations of that feedback. It's really an innovative way to capture census information and to really have citizens take part in gathering that information.

It's an opportunity for citizens to speak, as well, on what could help improve their community.

**FCB:** Is this [a place] where people can comment on a blog or take pictures? Give our listeners a little bit more information on that front.

**GT:** For starters, it's hosted on Windows Azure, which is our cloud platform. It runs using Silverlight for cross-browser compatibility, as well. With the support of a Bing maps interface . . . It allows visitors to really share their experiences, provide feedback. [It is] an opportunity for social, user generated experiences around the census information count that they're doing. [There] are visual representations in terms of providing feedback, so it really is sort of an interactive type of a program.

**FCB:** You mentioned Azure — and we know, talking with other people from Microsoft Federal . . . that it recently launched. Define Azure — what is it — and talk a little about cloud computing. How has it evolved, and what's Microsoft doing in the world of the cloud with Azure right now?

**GT:** Our strategy around the cloud and hosted offerings is really broad and comprehensive.

We provide software in the cloud, which is software delivered as a service — things like your traditional email and collaboration type activities that people can do in the cloud.

Then, we provide infrastructure in the cloud and platform in the cloud, and Azure is our platform in the cloud, which allows people to develop applications in the cloud. It is language agnostic, so its completely open. . . . [Azure] allows applications that are hosted up there the ability to expand and contract the use of the server space, and it helps reduce the overall cost of those solutions when they're not in peak use.

So, MyFloridaCensus, for example — there's obviously a peak usage time that will die down. . . . It really is very cost effective as far as a solution goes and really provides a lot of flexibility. Another good example of that is we've got a solution called Hey Gov, which was built from the Miami 311 solution, which is a 311 online solution for citizens to be able to record non-emergency type incidents, and see exactly what the status of that incident is online.

**FCB:** So, are you doing anything like this or looking to do anything like this with other states or other local governments?

**GT:** Absolutely. . . . This solution that we worked on with Miami 311 now has a broader applicability — Hey Gov — and we're starting to talk to a number of cities that are interested in doing similar things with a 311 system in the cloud, as well.

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# The Florida House of Representatives State Helps Improve Census Counts, Avoids \$300,000 in Capital Costs with Cloud Services

*Every 10 years, the Florida Legislature draws its district boundaries. The public is encouraged to participate, but previously had only a desktop application to submit recommendations for new district boundaries. For the 2010 census, the Florida House of Representatives wanted to develop a web-based application to allow even greater public participation, but the cost to build the infrastructure for the application was prohibitive. The Florida House of Representatives decided to implement the Windows Azure platform, including Microsoft SQL Azure, but first tested the technology with another project: My Florida Census, a website that helps residents report whether or not they've been counted by the U.S. Census. By using Windows Azure for both projects, the House avoided capital expenditures, quickly scales up or down based on demand, and facilitated a positive impact on the state budget.*

### Situation

The Florida House of Representatives is composed of 120 members who are elected from single-member districts across the state of Florida. The state of Florida had an estimated population of 18.5 million people in 2009—the fourth-largest state population in the United States.

One of the duties of the Florida House of Representatives is to create a redistricting plan in response to the United States Census. Redistricting is the process by which the state must change its political boundaries for Congressional, House, and Senate districts after each census. The redistricting process is a spirited political process, and many citizens feel passionate about participating in

—■ ■ ■  
 “An accurate census count helps ensure that we can put money to the right programs and help our citizens in the best way possible. Windows Azure moves us toward that accurate count.”  
 Bob West  
 Director of the Office of Reapportionment, Florida House of Representatives

the process. However, in the previous redistricting, to participate and submit drawings for suggested district boundaries, residents purchased a then-state-of-the-art desktop application developed by the Florida Legislature and installed it on their computers. The House wanted to make it easier and more accessible for citizens to participate in the redistricting process and felt that a web-based application—one that didn't require citizens to purchase and install on-premises software—would be the best option.

” The IT department at the Florida House of Representatives analyzed the costs involved with building an infrastructure that would host the web-based redistricting application that the organization envisioned and could meet the application's data storage needs. To build that on-premises infrastructure to support the proposed redistricting application, the IT department estimated that it would cost at least U.S.\$300,000 over a four-year period for just the hardware and software licenses alone. This calculation took into consideration that the infrastructure would need to handle peak usage during a relatively short period of time leading up to the reapportionment final redistricting plan. Beyond that peak period, the

—■ ■ ■  
 application and supporting infrastructure would sit idle most of the time, making it a cost-prohibitive and inefficient option. The IT department required a solution that could cost-effectively scale up to meet peak demand, yet also quickly scale down to avoid underutilizing the infrastructure.

The House also wanted to ensure that it could use the chosen solution across multiple projects to help improve the various services it offers to Floridians. To meet that objective, the House planned to first test the selected technology solution with a smaller pilot project: improving the accuracy of the census in Florida.

During the redistricting process in 2001, the Florida House of Representatives learned that certain areas seemed to have more voters than the 2000 census had recorded for the voting-age population. That discovery led the House to conclude that Florida's population had been undercounted during the 2000 census. Accurate census results are crucial for any state, and in Florida, each person counted in the census represents up to \$1,500 each year in federal funding.

In preparation for the 2011–2012 redistricting process, the House wanted to enable Floridians to notify the House about whether they were counted or missed during the 2010 census. For ease of access, it envisioned a web-based application where residents could check and report their census status. Much like the redistricting application, a website dedicated to the census would also have extremely high usage for only a couple of months, making it a perfect test case for validating a technology solution for the redistricting application, which required similar scaling for peak usage.

### Solution

To meet its need for cost-effective scalability, and instead of building its own infrastructure to support the web-based applications, the Florida House of Representatives decided to implement the Windows Azure platform. Windows Azure is the development, service hosting, and service management environment for the Windows Azure platform, which is hosted in Microsoft data centers.

—■ ■ ■  
 “By using Windows Azure, we can quickly scale up to handle the peak traffic, but without the cost required to build an on-premises infrastructure and without then running the risk of underutilizing servers during slower periods of site usage.”  
 Brad Boyce  
 Information Systems Engineer, Florida House of Representatives

The Florida House Office of Reapportionment evaluated other cloud services. However, no other cloud service offered relational database services with more than 2 gigabytes (GB) of spatial extensions. “We require a significant amount of storage for our geographical information,” explains Bob West, Director of the Office of Reapportionment for the Florida House of Representatives. “Windows Azure was the only solution that had current capabilities—and a road map for future support—to meet our needs.”

#### Pilot Service Helps Better Ensure Accurate Census Data

To validate Windows Azure, the Florida House of Representatives developed the My Florida Census application ([www.myfloridacensus.gov](http://www.myfloridacensus.gov)) to enable its citizens to report, and the state to capture, the 2010 census status of participating Floridians. As increasing numbers of citizens visit the site, the House can easily add Windows Azure Web roles, scaling up to handle peak volumes.

When citizens visit the My Florida Census site, they first enter their address. A Microsoft Geocoding web service translates the address information to latitude and longitude coordinates. An accurate aerial image of that location is presented from Bing Maps, along with census data for their surrounding areas, including road maps with census lines layered on

top to highlight possible areas where citizens may have been missed from the U.S. Census. By using Bing Maps, the application presents highly accurate images of streets and addresses, which are often more accurate than census roads. The citizens confirm that the image and location are accurate. The application enables them to report to the Florida House of Representatives whether or not they have been counted by the U.S. Census. The House follows up with a U.S. Census Department representative to ensure that those Floridians are properly counted.

Brad Boyce, Information Systems Engineer at the Florida House of Representatives, did the programming work for My Florida Census. The application is a Microsoft ASP.NET application that uses a Windows Communication Foundation communication protocol to access two 10-GB databases that run Microsoft SQL Azure and store census geography and data, as well as names and addresses that citizens report. To gain cross-browser compatibility for the My Florida Census website interface, the application uses the Microsoft Silverlight 3 browser plug-in. “This comprehensive Microsoft technology stack of ASP.NET, Silverlight, Bing Maps, Windows Communication Foundation, and SQL Azure allowed me to develop completely in the Microsoft Visual Studio 2008 development system and transfer easily to Windows Azure—the development process was straightforward,” says Boyce.

#### New Redistricting Application Developed from Pilot Code

After establishing that the Windows Azure platform provided a scalable solution for the pilot, the Florida House of Representatives decided to adopt the platform for its larger redistricting application. With the new application, citizens will be able to participate in the redistricting process online, by submitting drawings for suggested district boundaries. In addition to the Windows Azure platform, a key component for the redistricting application will also be Bing Maps. “Just like with My Florida Census, Bing Maps helps bring our data to life,” says Boyce. “Coupled with SQL Azure, which stores massive amounts of data, it’s a great combination.”



A sample view of a Florida neighborhood with Bing Maps in the My Florida Census application – green lines are land parcels, blue lines represent U.S. Census paths, and red areas indicate where some residents may have been missed by the U.S. Census.

The application uses an architecture that is similar to the My Florida Census application, so the developers working on the redistricting application will be able to reuse code from the My Florida Census application. Because the redistricting application will require additional storage, the Florida House of Representatives will use a 50-GB SQL Azure database and may consider supplementing its storage solution with Table storage in Windows Azure.

The redistricting application also uses Silverlight 3, which has the advantage of cross-browser compatibility and isolated storage. “House leadership wanted us to design the system so that any citizen who submits drawings of proposed district boundaries would be assured that their plans were under lock and key on their own system, using the isolated storage available to them,” explains Boyce. “With Silverlight, we can help ensure that only the individual users have access to their own plans until they’ve decided to make them public.”

The Florida House of Representatives plans to make the application available for the 2011–2012 redistricting process.

#### Benefits

By creating the My Florida Census and distributing the applications on the Windows Azure platform, the Florida House of Representatives found a solution that will enable it to quickly scale up to meet demand for applications that have very high traffic volume for only a short period of time, while still avoiding large capital expenditures. The House also developed its solutions for a fraction of what an on-premises version would have cost. With the My Florida Census application—which was

<p>“Windows Azure helped us avoid capital investments, such as server hardware, which would have otherwise cost at least \$300,000.</p>	<p>essentially a test case to prove that the Windows Azure platform met the requirements for the redistricting application—the Florida House of Representatives helped provide more accurate census data, potentially increasing Florida’s share of federal dollars for the next 10 years. The Florida House of Representatives found so much success with the Windows Azure platform that it plans to use it for future IT projects as well.</p>
	<p>””Avoided Capital Expenditures</p>

Bob West  
Director of the Office  
of Reapportionment,  
Florida House of  
Representatives

By taking advantage of Microsoft data centers rather than expanding its own server infrastructure, the Florida House of Representatives avoided significant expenses. “Windows Azure helped us avoid capital investments, such as server hardware, which would have otherwise cost at least \$300,000,” says West. Instead of buying server hardware and licensing server software, the Florida House of Representatives predicts it will spend only \$15,000 in operating expenses over a four-year period—a total of \$285,000 in expenses were avoided. What’s more, that \$285,000

savings is for the redistricting application alone.

#### Can Scale Quickly to Meet Demand

The Florida House of Representatives knows that both the My Florida Census application and the redistricting application were likely to have extremely high traffic during only a short period of time for the life cycle of the applications. “By using Windows Azure, we can quickly scale up to handle the peak traffic, but without the cost required to build an on-premises infrastructure and without then running the risk of underutilizing servers during slower periods of site usage,” explains Boyce.

#### Positive Impact on State Budget and Federal Funding

By June 2010, Floridians from 19,000 unique home addresses reported the status of their U.S. Census count to the My Florida Census website. Based on this information, the Florida House of Representatives learned that, of those 19,000 addresses, 2,250 households were initially missed by the U.S. Census Department. The House followed up with census representatives to ensure that those residents were eventually accounted for. This discovery has positive fiscal repercussions for the citizens of Florida. Each resident of Florida represents as much as \$1,500 each year in federal funds for the next 10 years. Therefore, by tracking the status of those addresses and making sure that the census counts all of the individuals living at those addresses, the Florida House of Representatives has the potential to impact its state budget significantly, receiving several additional million dollars in federal funding each year.

“We won’t know the full impact until we receive our U.S. Census results in December 2010, but it could be even more. That calculation assumes only one resident per household, and in fact many of those have more than one resident,” explains West. “In addition, there can be a trickle-down effect. If even just a few residents report that they weren’t counted, it could alert the U.S. Census Department to count an entire subdivision, apartment complex, or condominium building that may have been missed.”

Census data helps determine not only the amount of federal funding that the state receives, but also helps the state decide where to invest those funds for economic programs. “An accurate census count helps ensure that we can put money to the right programs and help our citizens in the best way possible. Windows Azure moves us toward that accurate count,” says West.

#### Supports Plans for Future Technology Projects

With the success of the My Florida Census application, and the ease of development predicted for the redistricting application to follow, the Florida House of Representatives plans to rely on the Windows Azure platform for other services in the future. “Now that we’ve had this positive experience with Windows Azure and have shown it to be a scalable, cost-effective solution for our technology and organizational needs, we are considering it for other key projects going forward,” says Scott McPherson, CIO for the Florida House of Representatives. For example, the House is considering the use of SQL Azure in the cloud as part of its disaster recovery strategy.

### ***Windows Azure Platform***

***The Windows Azure platform provides an excellent foundation for expanding online product and service offerings. The main components include:***

- ***Windows Azure.*** Windows Azure is the development, service hosting, and service management environment for the Windows Azure platform. Windows Azure provides developers with on-demand compute and storage to host, scale, and manage web applications on the Internet through Microsoft data centers.
- ***Microsoft SQL Azure.*** Microsoft SQL Azure offers the first cloud-based relational and self-managed database service built on Microsoft SQL Server 2008 technologies.
- ***Windows Azure platform AppFabric.*** With Windows Azure platform AppFabric, developers can build and manage applications more easily both on-premises and in the cloud.
  - ***AppFabric Service Bus*** connects services and applications across network boundaries to help developers build distributed applications.
  - ***AppFabric Access Control*** provides federated, claims-based access control for REST web services.
- ***Microsoft "Dallas."*** Developers and information workers can use the new service code-named Dallas to easily discover, purchase, and manage premium data subscriptions in the Windows Azure platform.

***To learn more about the Windows Azure platform, visit:***

***[www.windowsazure.com](http://www.windowsazure.com)*** 

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For more information about the Florida House of Representatives, call (850) 488-1157 or visit the website at:

**[www.myfloridahouse.gov](http://www.myfloridahouse.gov)** 

#### **Additional Resources:**

**Training:** [Channel9 Windows Azure Training Course](#) 

**Download:** [Windows Azure Training Kit](#) 

**Download:** [Windows Azure SDK](#) 

**White paper:** [Security Best Practices for Developing on the Windows Azure Platform](#) 

#### **Solution Overview**



[Email Link](#)

- Download

Organization Size: 120 employees

#### Organization Profile

The Florida House of Representatives is part of the Florida Legislature and has 120 members, each representing a political district in the state.

#### Business Situation

The Florida House wanted to encourage public participation during its redistricting process through a web-based application, yet avoid the high cost of building the necessary server infrastructure.

#### Solution

In a pilot project, to prove the viability of the Windows Azure platform, the Florida House developed My Florida Census—a website that helps identify neighborhoods that might be missed in the census.

#### Benefits

- Avoided capital expenses
- Quickly scaled to meet demand
- Positively impacted state budget
- Supports plans for future projects

#### Software and Services

- Windows Azure
- Windows Azure Platform
- Bing Maps
- Microsoft Visual Studio 2008
- Microsoft Silverlight 3
- Microsoft SQL Azure
- Windows Communication Foundation

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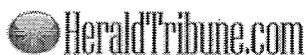
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## Lawsuits take toll on voter ballot questions

By GARY FINEOUT H-T Capital Bureau Correspondent

Published: Saturday, July 24, 2010 at 1:00 a.m.

Florida voters were supposed to get a crammed ballot this November that would ask them to weigh in on everything from school class sizes to federal health care reform and property taxes.

But a flurry of lawsuits coming from opponents of the amendments -- most of which were placed on the ballot by the Republican-controlled Legislature -- could block many of those proposals from being voted on this fall.

Six of nine proposed constitutional amendments on the 2010 ballot are tied up in court fights. And two measures have already been tossed from the ballot by lower court judges, although each of the cases probably will not be resolved until the state Supreme Court rules.

The latest to fall came Friday when a Leon County judge threw out a proposed amendment that advocates said would have been a boost to Florida's ailing real estate industry.

The amendment, if approved, would have given a property tax exemption worth as much as \$100,000 or 25 percent of the value of the home to residents who had not owned a home for eight years. The tax break would then gradually be lowered back down over a five-year period.

It also would have cut the amount assessors could raise nonresident property assessments in a year from 10 percent to 5 percent.

But Judge John Cooper said the amendment was misleadingly written and could confuse voters.

Also on Friday, the Florida Education Association sued to take Amendment 8, the controversial class size measure, off the ballot. The state teachers union -- which was joined in the lawsuit by FEA president Andy Ford and a Miami-Dade parent -- asserts the amendment misleads voters because it does not tell them the measure will reduce funding to school districts by loosening class size restrictions.

Voters passed the class size amendment in 2002 despite the objections of then Gov. Jeb Bush, who said its costs would "blot out the sun." That amendment called for a gradual reduction of class sizes, but this fall school districts are supposed to take the final steps to comply with the measure.

School districts contend that forcing individual classes to meet the class size limits -- which vary from 18 to 25 students based on grade levels -- would be too expensive and difficult to carry out.

If passed by 60 percent of the voters, Amendment 8 would freeze class sizes at their current levels, but it would also allow some classes to go up slightly in size in the future.

Rep. Will Weatherford, R-Wesley Chapel and the main sponsor of the measure, said



the amendment was "definitely not misleading." He said the point of the measure is not to save money but give school districts flexibility so they do not have to move students in order to comply with class size restrictions.

"It has nothing to do with the money; it has everything to do with flexibility," said Weatherford.

Ron Meyer, a Tallahassee attorney who is representing the teachers union and is involved in two of the other legal battles over amendments, said that it is lawmakers who are responsible for all the recent lawsuits. He said that legislators have ignored past court rulings that require that the ballot clearly spell out to voters what an amendment will do.

One example was Amendment 7, passed by the Legislature to counter two other citizen initiatives on the ballot that seek to change the process by which legislators draw up election districts. A judge said Amendment 7 was so confusingly written that after reading it for three days he did not understand it.

"The Legislature tries to hide the ball and deceive people," Meyer said.

Cooper, the Leon circuit court judge, had the same complaint Friday when he tossed Amendment 3 from the ballot.

Cooper said that voters could be confused by what the amendment -- which included a five-year break on property taxes for first-time homebuyers -- actually covers. Cooper said, for example, the amendment does not make it clear the tax break applies only to homes purchased on or after Jan. 1, 2010.

"A voter might be persuaded to vote for the amendment in the mistaken belief that he or she would be entitled to the new exemption," wrote Cooper.

Rep. Carl Domino, R-Jupiter and one of the sponsors of the measure, said he was disappointed with the ruling, but he noted that lawmakers tried to change the wording of the amendment during the past session but they could not reach an agreement.

There are a few different ways to get an amendment on the ballot, but the two main ways require either a citizen petition drive or a three-fifths vote of the Legislature. But amendments proposed by outside groups are reviewed by the state Supreme Court, while one proposed by the Legislature can go straight to the ballot.

Four of the six amendments targeted by lawsuits were passed by the Legislature. The other two amendments -- which were pushed by FairDistrictsFlorida.org and deal with redistricting -- have been challenged in court by two members of Congress and the Legislature.

Sen. Mike Haridopolos, R-Merritt Island and the sponsor of a redistricting amendment that has been tossed by the court, contends that lawmakers are not trying to hoodwink voters. He said that legislators took time and held hearings before voting to place their measures on the ballot. He contrasted that with citizen amendments that have been put on the ballot.

"We did all of our work in the sunshine," Haridopolos said. "With those other amendments, who knows what a person told another person to get them to sign a petition."

But Haridopolos said he would not be surprised if voters wind up rejecting all the amendments put on the ballot this year.

"I would be fine if everyone voted no on all the amendments," said Haridopolos, who

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is also the incoming Senate president. "I would not be surprised, given with all the politics and contradictions, a lot of voters to say just better to vote no on all of them."

This story appeared in print on page A1



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## Primary challengers line up to oust Brown from House

By [Chad Smith](#)  
Staff writer

Published: Tuesday, August 3, 2010 at 6:49 p.m.

After 18 years in Washington, Corrine Brown is a political heavyweight in her hometown of Jacksonville, and the candidates lining up to send her home have all heard it: She can't be beaten.

She has name recognition, money, and a district heavily populated by Democrats and minorities.

But the challengers -- Democrat Scott Fortune; Republicans Dean Black, Chris Nwasike and Michael Yost; and independent Terry Martin-Back -- vying for her District 3 seat in the U.S. House of Representatives say Brown hasn't done enough for her constituents, something they think they can exploit in an election year expected to test incumbents nationwide.

How well Fortune does against Brown in the Democratic primary on Aug. 24 could be an indicator of how the winner of the GOP primary could fare in November.



For local elections coverage visit [gainesville.com/elections](http://gainesville.com/elections).

Fortune, a 54-year-old civil rights attorney from Jacksonville Beach, is one of only three Democrats since the mid-1990s to run against Brown in the party's primary, and he's doing so because he thinks he can be more effective in Congress.

Fortune, who has never held public office, said he agrees with Brown on most major issues like health care reform.

"The bigger issue is that the folks in the 3rd District do not have a representative that is working for them," he said. "We have a representative presently that is working for the powerful interests in the 3rd District."

The district -- including parts of nine counties: Alachua, Clay, Duval, Lake, Marion, Orange, Putnam, Seminole and Volusia -- has been a point of contention itself.

Fortune has accused Brown of gerrymandering the "serpentine, bizarrely shaped" district along racial lines to ensure re-election.

He also thinks the government should be doing more to encourage renewable energy there.

Not to mention, he said, that there are many people out of work who could benefit from an injection of industry.

Brown, though, says she has done more than her fair share, pointing to a recent Florida Times-Union story that ranked her third among the 435 representatives in the House for bringing home earmarked federal money.



As “pork” becomes a more and more damning term, she embraces it.

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At a Gainesville stop in March, the congresswoman said she believes bringing home funding is part of her job on Capitol Hill.

As the chairwoman of the House Subcommittee on Railroads, Pipelines and Hazardous Materials, she is working to expand rail travel in Florida, where the prospect of high-speed rail has been debated for years, and across the country.

“I don’t talk about it. I make it happen,” the 63-year-old said. “I don’t just show up for the parade.”

For whoever wins the Democratic primary, there will be two other names on the ballot -- a to-be-determined Republican and Martin-Beck, an independent from Gainesville.

All three Republicans hail from Jacksonville, none has held public office, and all three have similar reasons for running: Since Brown took office, they say, unemployment, crime and education haven’t gotten better in North Florida.

“Eighteen years of representation, and it’s just been mediocre,” said Nwasike, a 31-year-old financial consultant. “Nothing has actually changed for the better.”

Nwasike thinks more vocational schools will do a lot to combat all three of those problems, educating and employing people who otherwise wouldn’t have gone to college.

“The idea is: create education opportunities, create employment opportunities, crime will begin to subside,” he said.

Yost, 56, an auto mechanic, said he thinks his lack of political experience won’t matter with voters.

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“People are not looking for candidates that are career politicians,” he said. “People are looking for leaders.”

In office, Yost said he would work to get rid of some regulations, be they environmental or in hospitals, that discouraged business.

“That’s the key: getting people to work,” he said.

In his criticism, Black was more extreme, saying he believes Brown is a socialist for her support of the federal health care overhaul that Congress passed and President Barack Obama signed in March.

“It was about extending government control into yet another aspect of American life,” said Black, a 44-year-old AAMCO franchisee.

He said he believed the district -- and the country -- could solve its problems, “but growing government, creeping socialism is not the answer.”

When asked about Black’s comments, Brown paid them little mind.

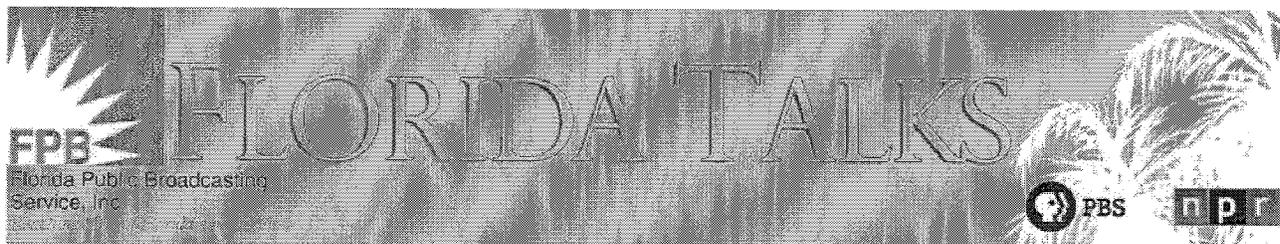
“I don’t care what he says,” she said, saying her record stands on its own.

She said she voted for health care reform and the federal stimulus package last year because unemployment and foreclosures are too high.

Simply put, she said, “People need jobs.”

Contact Chad Smith at 338-3104 or [chad.smith@gvillesun.com](mailto:chad.smith@gvillesun.com).

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## On First Coast Connect: Fair Districts and City Affairs

Posted on August 4, 2010 by wjctfm

Monday morning, Jim Gordon, President of [Cape Wind at Energy Management, Inc.](#) joined us by phone to discuss the push for a clean energy economy in Florida. A member of [Environmental Entrepreneurs](#), the independent business voice for the environment, Jim has two biomass clean energy factories under construction here in Florida—one in Gainesville and the other in White Springs (north-central Florida). Jim, along with others, is working diligently for a clean energy and climate policy that will reduce our oil dependency, curb carbon pollution, and create economic growth and new jobs.

Next, Steve Waterhouse, President of [Predictive Results](#), called in to discuss the recent closure of Jacksonville's Glenwood Nursing Center

due to abusive conditions at the home. Steve's Jacksonville-based firm reviewed results of an e-mail survey conducted by the [Florida Health Care Association](#). The survey is an assessment of the state's 625 nursing homes and their administrators. The idea of this project is to improve the overall quality of nursing homes across Florida. Steve spent his time on the show discussing this survey, and how nursing homes can improve through better hiring and management.

Tuesday's show was kicked off with Ellen Freidin, campaign chair for the [Fair Districts Florida](#) movement. She came on the show to discuss Amendments 5 and 6, and how the measures would change Florida if voters approve them this November. The initiatives are aimed at curtailing gerrymandering that benefits incumbents and political parties in legislative and congressional redistricting. The Legislature is trying to get both of the Amendments thrown off the ballot, arguing they are vague, unworkable and misleading to voters. If approved by voters, however, the citizen-led Fair Districts effort would place constraints on state lawmakers in their once-in-a-decade redistricting process, when they draw lines for legislative and congressional races.

Later in the show, [Food Network](#) star and *New York Times* bestselling author, Sandra Lee, joined us on the show to discuss her own culinary tricks and to share some cool ideas for the summer. She gave helpful hints on how to throw a backyard bash without breaking the bank and introduced her new 16 icecream flavors ranging from Camp Carmel Crunch to Krispy Kite Flight for everyone to enjoy! She also talked about her recent charitable effort to help fight childhood hunger. A donation of \$25,000 is being made to the "[Share our Strength](#)" program to help end childhood hunger.

To start the show off this morning, Wednesday, we had Jimmy Orth, Executive Director of the [St. Johns Riverkeeper](#), in the studio and Mark Aubel, who is with [Green Water Laboratories](#) in Palatka, Florida, join us by phone. The two discussed the latest efforts to identify the recent emergence of foam in the St. Johns River. Environmentalists claim the strange foam that is coating parts of the river is the latest evidence of pollutants in the water. Orth and Aubel also spoke of the ongoing debate over tougher EPA regulations to protect the waterways of the First Coast.

Next, Quinn Eddins, Director of Reseach at [Radar Logic](#), called in to discuss the struggling housing market and how First Coast compares to the rest of the country. Eddins, whose research firm tracks real estate values around the country, expects homes to continue to lose more value over the next year. Along with many other metro areas, Jacksonville's real estate market continues to suffer with little recovery in view.

Check out WJCT's blog [here](#)!

Filed under: [First Coast Connect](#), [WJCT](#)

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**[Florida Politics- Fair Districts](#)**

 August 4th, 2010 |  Author: [cyrpress1492](#)

Over the past few months, we have celebrated unanimous statewide editorial support and legal victories. Now it's time to take the fight for FairDistricts to your community! We have to tell every voter about our amendments, what they do and how important they are to our state.

Mark the date on your calendar! On **Saturday, August 28th**, we invite you to host a house party for FairDistricts Amendments 5 and 6. **Our goal is to have 56 house parties across Florida in support of our effort.**

WE NEED YOUR HELP to achieve our goal! [Will you host a house party on August 28th?](#)

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Hosts will be able to sign up on our website. We will help you invite friends and colleagues to your house party. Most importantly, as part of the house party agenda, you will be able to show your guests a DVD of exclusive Florida outtakes from the movie Gerrymandering (to be released in theaters in October). In addition to the DVD, we will also send other materials to help educate guests about how FairDistricts Amendments 5 and 6 will put power back in the hands of the people to choose their representatives.

**Amendments 5 and 6 will STOP politicians from drawing districts to favor themselves.**

Will you spread the word by signing up to host a house party?

We hope you will help us educate voters throughout Florida's cities to vote YES on Amendments 5 and 6!

Thanks,

Jackie

Jackie Lee

Campaign Manager

FairDistrictsFlorida.org

**VOTE YES ON AMENDMENTS 5 & 6**

Posted in [Liberty](#) | Tags: [Florida Fair districts](#)

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## Tuesday, Aug.3: Fair Districts, Dignity U Wear, and Sandra Lee

Category: [WJCT's First Coast Connect](#) / Tag: [WJCT's First Coast Connect](#) / [Add Comment](#)

On Tuesday, August 3, we were joined by Ellen Freidin, campaign chair for the [Fair Districts Florida](#) movement. She came on the show to discuss Amendments 5 and 6, and how the measures would change Florida if voters approve them this November. The initiatives are aimed at curtailing gerrymandering that benefits incumbents and political parties in legislative and congressional redistricting. The Legislature is trying to get both of the Amendments thrown off the ballot, arguing they are vague, unworkable and misleading to voters. If approved by voters, however, the citizen-led Fair Districts effort would place constraints on state lawmakers in their once-in-a-decade redistricting process, when they draw lines for legislative and congressional races.

Next, Jonathan Daugherty, City Commissioner in Atlantic Beach, came on the show to talk about back-to-school efforts being made to help children in need go back to class in style. [Dignity U Wear](#), a local nonprofit, is working to raise money in the Atlantic Beach area to help these students.

Lastly, [Food Network](#) star and *New York Times* bestselling author, Sandra Lee, joined us on the show to discuss her own culinary tricks and to share some cool ideas for the summer. She gave helpful hints on how to throw a backyard bash without breaking the bank and introduced her new 16 icecream flavors ranging from Camp Carmel Crunch to Krispy Kite Flight for everyone to enjoy! She also talked about her recent charitable effort to help fight childhood hunger. A donation of \$25,000 is being made to the "[Share our Strength](#)" program to help end childhood hunger.

Please add your own comments, as we love to have your continued support!

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Turn It Up ([radiovolume](#)) wrote in [ontd\\_political](#),  
 @ 2010-08-06 12:03:00



**Entry tags:** [blacks](#), [civil rights](#), [voting](#)

## 45 Years Later, Voting Is A Big Fucking Deal



**"A few years ago, people could not vote simply because of the color of their skin," recalls Georgia Congressman John Lewis, former chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). "You had to count the number of jelly beans in a jar or the number of bubbles in a bar of soap. Black teachers and college professors could not pass [those] literacy tests."**

Lewis, who spoke recently at a small political dinner in Jacksonville, Fla., was jailed 40 times as a young man fighting for the right to vote. As a freedom rider, he was beaten bloody by a white mob in Montgomery, Ala. And a police beating while he was protesting the denial of voting rights in Selma gave Lewis a concussion. Congressional colleagues call him the Legend. His efforts, and those of his colleagues, not only led to the franchisement of African Americans but also contributed to unprecedented numbers of black political leaders being elected into office across the country.

The Voting Rights Act, signed into law August 6, 1965, dramatically increased black voting strength, especially in the South. In Alabama, there were just 53,336 black voters in 1960; three decades later, there were 537,285 -- a tenfold increase. Selma's notorious Sheriff Jim Clark was voted out of office in 1966 (and in 1978 was sent to prison for smuggling marijuana).

**Acutely aware that Southern soil is soaked with black people's blood, Lewis said he cried tears of joy when Barack Obama was sworn in as president. However, warned Lewis, "We can't stop now. If we don't do what we must do, we will not be crying tears of happiness, but tears of pain."**

Lewis was in Jacksonville to support Congresswoman Corrine Brown's efforts to get Florida voters to reject two "Fair Districts" constitutional amendments on the November ballot. The amendments would redraw state legislative districts; Brown describes the legislation as "bleaching" her district.

**But new challenges to black power are not the only concern of activists who fought and organized for voting rights. Talk to them and you often hear something between weariness and worry and even outright anger at black elected officials.** "Most look like a band of hustlers to me," says Muriel Tillinghast, who in 1964 directed a voting rights drive in Issaquena County, Miss. "The courage of Mississippi blacks" is what remains strongest in her mind. **"I don't think people understand what Mississippi was like." She lives in New York City now, "and when I talk to New York blacks, they are awash in excuses about everything." She sighs. Winning voting rights was an important battle, but "it takes two or three generations to win the war."**

In Georgia, the other "legend" is Charles Sherrod, husband of the now suddenly famous Shirley Sherrod. A Petersburg, Va., native, Sherrod was the first of the sit-in students to leave college to work full-time for the SNCC. In 1961 he began organizing in southwest Georgia -- a region as hostile to black voting rights as any part of Mississippi. Reflecting on this dangerous work that was sometimes punctuated by murder, Sherrod rejects the idea that what he did was heroic. **"All we really did was speak to and listen to people. They had the power to do the rest. We got them to see that voting was important enough for people to suffer whatever they had to in order to prevail."**

**Today, Sherrod says, "We have political power but not economic power. There are plenty of churches. Where are the economic-development projects that hire people?"**

**And this, he quickly adds, is not just about what white people do or don't do. "We have money, or at least I'm told we have money. We don't have the trust to put money in the hands of brothers."**

The movement in southwest Georgia was powerful. It helped win the right to vote. Why isn't the collective effort that defined it still at play? He's not sure. "We did things together out of the urgency of the hour then, and I saw it in the [Flint River] flood of 1994 -- people helping people. I have not seen it since."

Bob Mants, an Atlanta native, worked with Charles Sherrod in southwest Georgia, then came to Lowndes County, Ala., with Stokely Carmichael in 1965. He is emphatic: **"Yes, after 400 years of being in this country disenfranchised, getting voting rights was worth everything we went through to get them."**

**But, he adds, some black elected officials, "elected because of their color, lack understanding of the struggles black people had to go through to get them in public office."**

Lowndes County was known as "Bloody Lowndes" for its racist violence. When Mants arrived, 80 percent of its population was black, yet no black person was registered to vote. In less than a year, blacks were a majority of the county's registered voters. But this very rural county is as poor now as it was in 1965.

**"A lot of us were caught up in the whole thing of race. I've learned you've got to look beyond color to who is really going to represent you."**

**Black politicians caught up in scandal and at risk of jail or expulsion from office get no sympathy from Mants. "We came up under Pharaoh and can't do what the Canaanites do," he says. "These politicians should know they're under scrutiny. They get caught, then they want you to have a defense team for them. That dog don't hunt for Bob no more."**

*Source says get out the motherfucking vote.*

*I will say, though, that I think black-majority districts are there for a reason. This was in interesting story to think about.*

# the ROOT

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## The Voting Rights Act, 45 Years Later

By: Charlie Cobb Jr.

Posted: August 6, 2010 at 7:02 AM

On the anniversary of President Johnson's landmark legislation, *The Root* talks to those who fought the good fight in getting black folks the vote.

"A few years ago, people could not vote simply because of the color of their skin," recalls Georgia Congressman John Lewis, former chairman of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). "You had to count the number of jelly beans in a jar or the number of bubbles in a bar of soap. Black teachers and college professors could not pass [those] literacy tests."

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*Charles Cobb Jr. is a regular contributor to **The Root**.*

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August 9, 2010

## Put an end to gerrymandering in Florida

By Leon W. Russell and J. Gerald Hebert, special to the Times

*After decades of partisan abuse of the redistricting process, citizens simply want the chance to vote on two ballot initiatives to end the practice that for decades has enabled politicians to choose their voters instead of voters choosing politicians.*

Floridians' chance to curb partisan gerrymanders is once again in the hands of the Florida Supreme Court. After decades of partisan abuse of the redistricting process, citizens simply want the chance to vote on two ballot initiatives to end the practice that for decades has enabled politicians to choose their voters instead of voters choosing politicians. But politicians aren't about to give up that advantage without a fight - and that fight is now before the state's highest court.

The idea behind gerrymandering is simple. Those in power redraw election districts to benefit themselves and their political party, packing most voters from the opposition into only a few districts. This creates "safe seats" for them and marginalizes the opposition.

Florida's congressional districts perfectly illustrate the corrosive effects of gerrymandering. Democrats and Republicans alike, from former Gov. Bob Graham to former State Comptroller Bob Milligan, point out that Florida has fewer competitive elections than almost any state in the union. In 2008, for example, only two of the state's 25 U.S. House races were decided by a margin of less than 10 points. Even in 2006 - remember the anti-incumbent backlash? - only one of Florida's members of Congress lost. And more than 10 percent of the state's congressional seats are so politically safe that incumbents rarely even draw an opponent.

Creating districts that lack any meaningful political competition means an officeholder's only challenge will occur in the primary. When the real election becomes who wins the primary, candidates pander to their base. This produces politicians who lean further left or right, shrinking the political middle (where most of us are). Think of the shrinking number of officeholders today who reach across party lines - in Washington or Tallahassee - to work on legislative solutions to very serious problems. This is a direct result of extreme partisan gerrymandering.

Of course, districts have to be redrawn following every census, and with any plan, it's possible, even likely, that some group is going to gain and another is going to lose. For that reason, the most promising proposals for redistricting reform focus not on whether we redraw the lines, but on who does the drawing and on how they do it.

Yet in state after state where redistricting reform efforts have been proposed in the Legislature, bills have died a quiet death, often without even a committee hearing in state capitols. The only real way to bring about such reform is through the initiative process - where voters (not politicians) can decide to put an end to extreme gerrymandering by self-interested politicians.

In 2008, California voters approved a referendum that gives the responsibility for legislative redistricting to an independent citizens' commission. Hopefully later this year, Floridians will get a chance to vote on their own reform

initiative.

Unlike the California reform, Florida Amendments 5 and 6 don't take redistricting out of the hands of the Legislature; they simply prohibit excessive political gerrymandering - favoring incumbents or one political party over the other. But you'd think from the strong opposition of some federal and state officeholders that Florida's politicians were being asked to give up their firstborn. Not only have they started a misinformation campaign about the proposed reforms, they even offered an initiative of their own in an effort to derail the real reform measure by confusing voters.

And while the Florida Supreme Court has already ruled that Florida Amendments 5 and 6 meet the requirements of state law, a lawsuit was recently filed attacking the initiative and, if successful, would stop Florida's voters from getting to decide the redistricting reform issue for themselves this fall.

We need to change the broken redistricting system that puts almost no restraints on political gerrymandering and lets politicians manipulate lines to protect themselves and their parties and bludgeon their opponents. Redistricting reform isn't going to come easy. It's going to take a sustained effort from citizens like Fair Districts Florida, because it won't come from politicians.

The opportunity is at hand to put some meaningful rules in place that will force politicians to put voters, not incumbents, first when it comes to redistricting. Let's hope the politicians aren't successful in killing off Amendments 5 and 6, Florida's best chance for meaningful reform. The State Supreme Court will decide the matter of the legal challenges in the coming weeks and then, ideally, Floridians will have the opportunity to decide the matter of gerrymandering once and for all.

Leon W. Russell is the past president and current chairman of the legislative committee of the Florida NAACP. J. Gerald Hebert is the executive director of the nonprofit Campaign Legal Center and represented Florida's congressional Democrats in the post-2000 redistricting cycle and the U.S. Justice Department in the post-1990 round of Florida redistricting.

St. Petersburg Times



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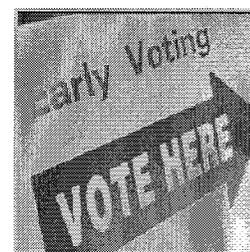
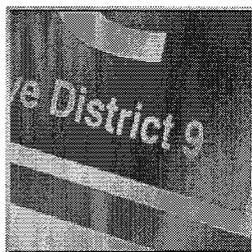
## State News

Mike Vasilinda Productions

### Legislature Battles for Amendments

August 13th, 2010 by Whitney Ray

Three of the six constitutional amendments the state legislature approved for the November ballot have already been kicked off. Judges call the measures, which deal with health care, property taxes and drawing political boundaries, misleading, but as Whitney Ray tells us, the legislature is challenging the rulings.



The state legislature bogged down the November ballot, voting to put six proposals in front of voters in November.

There was an amendment to halt part of the new federal health care overhaul, a tax break for first time home buyers, a plan to preserve legislative control over the way political districts are drawn... and a freeze on class size.

Three were kicked off the ballot... and class size is being challenged. Judges called the ballot language drafted by the legislature misleading.

Political Strategist Steve Vancore says the Republican led legislature was politically motivated.

“The one to undo the Fair Districts was to keep power in the hands of lawmakers. The health care amendment was clearly a political move to try and increase the base.”

The three ballot initiatives in questions have been appealed to the Florida Supreme Court, and Wednesday the legislature will make arguments defending the all. Adam Unger, who voted early in the primary elections, says ballot language is always confusing if you haven’t done your homework.

“If we are going to have the politicians who are going to mislead people and do these types of things, it’s up to us to go one step ahead and get informed,” said Unger.

And if the Supreme Court finds no problems with the lower courts rulings, there will be a lot fewer amendments to study. It’s not unusual for ballot proposals to die in the courts. Of the nine amendments that qualified for this year’s ballot six have been challenged.

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## Jeff Reichert: Redistricting Reforms Worth Watching

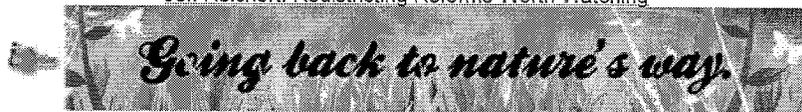
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Back in my first blog post here a few months ago , I briefly described how the research and production of my film Gerrymandering led me inexorably to the conclusion that our redistricting system needs an overhaul and that, having made a movie about it, I might be in a position to help. Last week, in the wake of the New York State Senate's passage of a bill ending prison-based gerrymandering , I received an e-mail from one of my film's stars, the dynamic Peter Wagner of the Prison Policy Initiative (who will be guest blogging about the prison gerrymandering issue in this space shortly), telling me to take a little bit of credit for the win. He'd been screening the section of the film covering prison gerrymandering at events around the state and streaming it on his website; he felt that our little clip helped explain the issue to voters more succinctly than anything previously available. Of course I really can't claim any responsibility, but was flattered to think that my film had played any small part in a reform effort, especially so far from its wider theatrical release. But Peter's e-mail got me thinking: this is really the moment to be actively involved in redistricting reform. There are battle lines being drawn that will determine what our legislative bodies look like over the course of the next decade, and there are a host of redistricting-related ballot initiatives and pieces of legislation circulating around this fall that voters should know about. I'm going use some space in this column in the weeks leading up to our release (more on that later) to discuss these initiatives, starting with the two highest profile, both of which the Gerrymandering team wholly supports, and, in some cases, is actively working with. Both will be hotly contested in November. California voters will have a golden opportunity to finish overhauling their state's redistricting system by voting Yes on Proposition 20 . Prop. 20 extends the jurisdiction of the independent commission established by the passage of Prop. 11 in 2008 (which we cover in-depth in Gerrymandering ) to include congressional districts. Currently those lines are drawn by the state legislature, with healthy input from the California congressional delegation resulting in a set of uncompetitive races "won" by longtime incumbents who have often crassly carved up emerging communities to preserve their power. As with most attempts at taking redistricting away from the parties in California, Prop. 20 has been described as a Republican power grab, even though it's being supported by many of the same folks who pushed Prop. 11: California Common Cause, League of Women Voters, AARP, etc. My own personal politics might land somewhere left of Karl Marx, and while I hope Democrats maintain control of government at all levels, our side's electoral successes shouldn't rest on shaky foundations. I'd like Nancy Pelosi to continue her tenure as Speaker of the House, but she should still have to compete for the privilege. (California folks will know this is a somewhat hyperbolic example: it'd be VERY difficult to draw a competitive district for Pelosi to run in, but the point holds for many others in the delegation.) There's also a major reform push underway in Florida, one of the most gerrymandered states in the nation, courtesy of a bipartisan group of folks calling themselves Fair Districts Florida (we interviewed many members of the campaign, but ~~opted to tell a different story of Florida districting in the film, one that includes swamp cabbage, armadillo races and a 200-mile-long district~~). Obama won the Sunshine State by a wide margin, but the Republicans took home a whopping two-thirds of legislative and congressional seats due to creative line drawing back in 2001. This November, voters will have the chance to approve Amendments 5 & 6, which set standards the legislature must follow when drawing the lines. There will be no independent commission established, but putting these standards in place will not only give those who wish to challenge a plan a legal leg to stand on in court but should also give the legislature pause before enacting another heavily partisan gerrymander (though the shamelessness of a legislature in line-drawing heat can never be underestimated). Notably, the Democratic party supports this effort, while largely opposing Prop. 20 in California. One important thing to know about redistricting reform is that support for change is most often opportunistic. And, finally, for those interested in seeing the film, Gerrymandering will be in select theaters nationwide on 10/15 . We will announce dates here shortly (and regularly). Stay tuned. More on Film

Read the rest here:  
[Jeff Reichert: Redistricting Reforms Worth Watching](#)



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## Cannon to Supremes: Give us Amendment 7 back

Uncategorized — posted by aaron deslatte on August, 18 2010 9:49 AM

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TALLAHASSEE — House Speaker-designate **Dean Cannon** took the unusual step of appearing before the Florida Supreme Court on Wednesday, but his defense of a legislatively drawn redistricting amendment that had been removed from the November ballot by a judge got a hostile reception from two justices.

Cannon, a Winter Park Republican and lawyer, was a key architect of Amendment 7, which would have broadened lawmakers' powers during the once-a-decade redistricting process that re-draws legislative and congressional maps.

Amendment 7 was the Republican-controlled Legislature's response to the lawyer and union-backed Amendments 5 and 6, which were designed to limit the powers of legislators to gerrymander districts to help incumbents and particular political parties hold onto power.

But Leon County Circuit Judge **James Shelfer** concluded last month that Amendment 7 was misleading, noting it took him three days to figure out that the amendment would make every other standard for redistricting subservient to the considerations of Amendment 7 itself.

Specifically, Amendment 7 would have given lawmakers the discretion to consider lumping together in districts communities of racial and language-minorities, as well as "communities of common interest."

"That doesn't tell me anything," said Justice **Peggy Quince**. "I can understand racial and language minorities, but what in the world is a community of interest?"

"It can mean the dictionary definition..." Cannon began to answer.

"So that means anything?" Quince said.

Several justices were also dubious that voters would be able to figure out that Amendment 7 was meant to effectively block the implementation of Amendments 5 and 6 if they pass, as well as override existing constitutional guidelines



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### Election 2010



"It can mean the dictionary definition..." Cannon began to answer.

"So that means anything?" Quince said.

Several justices were also dubious that voters would be able to figure out that Amendment 7 was meant to effectively block the implementation of Amendments 5 and 6 if they pass, as well as override existing constitutional guidelines for drawing districts contiguously.

Quince said voters would have no idea in the booth that Amendment 7 was designed to weaken 5 and 6, amendments that Cannon conceded were designed to "prohibit political favoritism."

Voters "will have no idea that 7 is really there to negate or explain or do something about 5 and 6," Quince said. "It seems to me we are doing voters a disservice if we just put these on the ballot and don't even explain to voters (that relationship)."

Justice **Fred Lewis** took issue with the notion that the amendment deals with "standards" when it empowers lawmakers to basically do anything they want in re-drawing the maps.

"I'm having trouble saying it's standards when it's all discretion," Lewis said. "You don't have to follow any of them so long as you give due consideration and balance."

Chief Justice **Charles Canady**, though, appeared to side with Cannon to a degree, grilling Florida Education Association lawyer **Ronald Meyer** on whether the court had the power to remove an amendment just because it was vague.

Florida law requires that ballot summaries must be clear and unambiguous, but not amendments themselves. Lawmakers, in an effort to negate a challenge to the original summary language, had substituted the actual text of the amendment for the ballot summary.

Meyer said the original summary— and the amendment itself — were misleading because they contained no reference to either amendment 5 and 6, or the current constitutional mandate that districts be drawn contiguously, all of which would be made secondary to Amendment 7, if it passed.

"If you don't tell the public that's what you're doing, then you run afoul of the constitutional duty to tell them clearly and unambiguously what it does," Meyer said.

As an example, Meyer said Amendment 7 would allow lawmakers to marry the cities of Destin in the Panhandle with Daytona Beach on Florida's east coast in one district, for no other reason than they shared common interests as beachfront communities.

Cannon called that analogy "illogical," and argued lawmakers were trying to avoid any allegation of "wordsmithing or editorializing" in the summary by substituting the ballot language itself.

"Nothing can be more faithful to the text than the text itself," Cannon said.

The state Supreme Court is expected to rule on whether to place the question back on the Nov. 2 ballot sometime before absentee ballots get printed in early September. The court is also hearing challenges today to two other amendments also removed from the ballot: Amendment 3, which would give Save Our Homes-styled property tax breaks for first-time home buyers; and Amendment 9, which would attempt to water down the federal health-care mandate requiring people to have insurance.

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Male, Age: 34, Pensacola

About Me: I am the local government reporter for the PNJ. I write about the Pensacola City Council, the Escambia County Commission, the ECUA board, the Community Maritime Park Associates board, and other local government agencies in Escambia County.

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The local government beat in Escambia County

What are the amendments about?

Posted 8/18/2010 2:04 PM EDT

I know the Nov. 2 election may seem like a long way away to be talking about the constitutional amendments that will be on the general election ballot, but it's never too early to start educating yourself on what can be a sometimes confusing choice at the ballot box.

The League of Women Voters has done a nice public service by writing a summary, along with pros and cons for each amendment, as well as the referendum, that will be on the November ballot.

Some of the amendments are being challenged in court, and three amendments — 3, 7 and 9 — have been removed and the removal is being appealed. The Florida Supreme Court will have the final say.

Since it's unclear what the final list of amendments will look like, here's the full list of all nine amendments and the one non-binding referendum.

Amendment #1

Repeal of public campaign financing requirement

Ballot Summary: Proposing the repeal of the provision in the State Constitution that requires public financing of campaigns of candidates for elective statewide office who agree to campaign spending limits.

Effect of Passage: Would repeal the public campaign financing requirement in the Florida Constitution, (Article VI, Section 7, Fla. Const.)

Sponsor: The Florida Legislature

Background: 64 percent of Florida voters approved using public financing for campaigns in 1998, raising to constitutional status public financing of statewide campaigns.

Article VI, section 7 is implemented by statute which establishes the voluntary campaign spending limits that candidates who accept public financing must adhere to. In 2005, the Florida legislature dramatically increased the spending limits by more than 300%, distorting the original purpose of the public financing system which was to hold down the cost of campaigns.

In 2010, those voluntary spending limits are \$24.9 million in the gubernatorial race and \$12.5 million for other cabinet races. Candidates for governor and four cabinet offices received a total of \$11 million in public funds to finance campaigns in the last statewide election in 2006. The Legislature could reduce the spending limits but have thus far refused to do so.

To qualify for public funding, gubernatorial candidates also must raise at least \$150,000 from Florida residents and other cabinet candidates must raise \$100,000. Candidates qualify for public financing if they loan themselves no more than \$25,000 and receive no more than \$250,000 from a political party.

A Vote For Amendment #1...

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**Sponsor:** The Florida Legislature

**Background:** Senator Evelyn Lynn (R-Ormond Beach) sponsored the bill to place this proposal on the ballot. Governor Crist, together with the Florida Realtors, lobbied for the tax breaks in this proposal in the past session. According to bill analysis, over the next three years the proposed non-homestead cap would save property owners \$551 million and the additional exemptions would reduce local non-school collections by \$386 million.

**A Vote For Amendment #3...**

- will cost schools and local governments over \$1 billion over the next few years.
- might help to stimulate Florida's economy.
- would create new incentives for home ownership and real estate investment.
- would encourage first-time home buyers.
- would increase complexity and inequity in Florida's tax structure.

**A Vote Against Amendment #3...**

- would continue to treat new homestead owners and current homeowners as they are treated presently.
- would not place tax exemptions in the Florida Constitution where they will be difficult to modify or repeal.

**Amendment #4**

***Referenda required for adoption and amendment of local government comprehensive land use plans***

**Ballot Summary:** Establishes that before a local government may adopt a new comprehensive land use plan, or amend a comprehensive land use plan, the proposed plan or amendment shall be subject to vote of the electors of the local government by referendum, following preparation by the local planning agency, consideration by the governing body and notice.

**Effect of Passage:** Would amend Fla. Constitution to require voter approval of development proposals that conflict with already established comprehensive land use plans. Comprehensive plans are blueprints that cities and counties use to define how the lands in local communities may be developed. Article II, Section 7.

**Sponsor:** Florida Hometown Democracy, Inc., PAC

**Background:** Florida Hometown Democracy has collected signatures since 2003 to place its initiative on the ballot. Supporters

contend the proposed amendment is necessary to deal with overdevelopment and unfunded, inadequate infrastructure in Florida.

The opponents argue it will delay comprehensive plan changes and adoptions by requiring each change be approved by referendum.

The Hometown Democracy petition initiative is led by a land use attorney and an environmental attorney with backing from groups such as Sierra Club of Florida. The Florida League of Cities, the Florida Association of Counties and the Florida Chamber of Commerce are among groups that oppose passage of the proposal.

**A Vote For Amendment #4...**

- would change the current land use planning system to require citizen referendums on comprehensive plan changes.
- would reduce the authority of local elected officials for comprehensive land use plan adoption and change.
- would entail extra cost for referendum elections and could slow the comprehensive land use process.
- would introduce the potential for political advertising to influence referendum voting on land use decisions.

**A Vote Against Amendment #4...**

- would continue the current method of land use planning as established by the legislature.
- would maintain the current level of public input.
- would maintain the status quo for lobbyists to influence decisions of local elected officials on land use plans.

**Amendment #5**

***Standards for Legislature to follow in legislative redistricting***

**Ballot Summary:** Legislative districts or districting plans may not be drawn to favor or disfavor an incumbent or political party. Districts shall not be drawn to deny racial or language minorities the equal opportunity to participate in the political process and elect representatives of their choice. Districts must

be contiguous. Unless otherwise required, districts must be compact, as equal in population as feasible, and where feasible must make use of existing city, county and geographical boundaries.

**Effect of Passage:** Would set standards for drawing legislative districts after each census to reduce gerrymandering. (Would add a new section 21 to Article III, Fla. Const.)

**Sponsor:** FairDistrictsFlorida.org

**Background:** FairDistrictsFlorida.org is a bi-partisan organization which includes the League of Women Voters of Florida, NAACP, and Democracia Ahora.

This proposal would place standards in the constitution that would prohibit the manipulation of legislative district lines for political purposes. It would also prohibit the drawing of districts that reduce the ability of minorities to equally participate in the political process. It would make compactness and community based boundaries constitutional requirements, which the Florida Supreme Court previously found were not constitutionally mandated.

Opponents of the proposed amendment argue the standards are conflicting and will be difficult for the legislature to implement. They also contend it could potentially reduce minority representation.

#### **A Vote For Amendment #5...**

- would set non-political standards for redistricting.
- would reduce gerrymandering or the drawing of districts for political purposes.
- would protect the ability of minorities to participate in the political process.
- would likely increase competition within elections
- could lead to filing of litigation in implementing the provisions.

#### **A Vote Against Amendment #5...**

- would continue to allow the legislature to draw districts to favor an incumbent or a particular political party.
- would allow many incumbents to remain unchallenged.

### **Amendment #6**

#### ***Standards for Legislature to follow in congressional redistricting***

**Ballot Summary:** Congressional districts or districting plans may not be drawn to favor or disfavor an incumbent or political party.

Districts shall not be drawn to deny racial or language minorities the equal opportunity to participate in the political process and elect representatives of their choice. Districts must be contiguous. Unless otherwise required, districts must be compact, as equal in population as feasible, and where feasible must make use of existing city, county and geographical boundaries.

**Effect of Passage:** Would add a new section 20 to Article III, Fla. Const.

**Sponsor:** FairDistrictsFlorida.org

**Background:** (This proposal is identical to proposal 5, except that it would provide for federal congressional districting.) FairDistricts-Florida.org is a bi-partisan organization which includes the League of Women Voters of Florida, NAACP, and Democracia Ahora.

This proposal would place standards in the constitution that would prohibit the manipulation of legislative district lines for political purposes. It would also prohibit the drawing of districts that reduce the ability of minorities to equally participate in the political process.

It would make compactness and community-based boundaries constitutional requirements, which the Florida Supreme Court previously found were not constitutionally mandated.

Opponents of the proposed amendment argue the standards are conflicting and will be difficult for the legislature to implement. They also contend it could potentially reduce minority representation.

#### **A Vote For Amendment #6...**

- would set non-political standards for redistricting.
- would reduce gerrymandering or the drawing of districts for political purposes.
- would protect the ability of minorities to participate in the political process.
- would likely increase competition within elections.
- could lead to filing of litigation in implementing the provisions.

#### **A Vote Against Amendment #6...**

- would continue to allow the legislature to draw districts to favor an incumbent or a particular political party.

- would allow many incumbents to remain unchallenged.

#### **Amendment #7**

##### ***Standards for Legislature to follow in legislative and congressional redistricting***

**Ballot Summary:** In establishing congressional and legislative district boundaries or plans, the state shall apply federal requirements and balance and implement the standards in the State Constitution. The state shall take into consideration the ability of racial and language minorities to participate in the political process and elect candidates of their choice, and communities of common interest other than political parties may be respected and promoted, both without subordination to any other provision of Article III of the State Constitution. Districts and plans are valid if the balancing and implementation of standards is rationally related to the standards contained in the State Constitution and is consistent with federal law.

**Effect of Passage:** Would effectively override standards contained in Amendments 5 and 6, and add a new Section 20 to Article III, Fla. Const.

**Sponsor:** The Florida Legislature

**Background:** Following ballot qualification by the Fair District initiatives, the legislature, which will oversee redistricting in 2012, added proposal 7 to the ballot with virtual party-line approval. The League of Women Voters of Florida and other groups sued in May of this year to have proposed amendment 7 removed from the ballot because its summary and title fail to inform voters of its chief purpose and effect. A Leon County Circuit Judge has ruled in the League's favor to remove the amendment from the ballot, but the decision is being appealed.

##### **A Vote For Amendment #7...**

- would allow the drawing of districts to favor election of members of undefined "communities of common interests."
- would weaken the minority voter protections that are contained in Amendments 5 and 6.
- would allow the manipulation of district lines for political purposes.
- could lead to filing of court cases in implementing the provision.

##### **A Vote Against Amendment #7...**

- would maintain present minority voter protections.
- would mean that re-districting is done based on current standards in the State Constitution and those in Amendments 5 & 6 if approved by voters.

#### **Amendment #8**

##### ***Revision of the class size requirements for public schools***

**Ballot Summary:** The Florida Constitution currently limits the maximum number of students assigned to each teacher in public school classrooms in the following grade groupings: for pre-kindergarten through grade 3, 18 students; for grades 4 through 8, 22 students; and for grades 9 through 12, 25 students.

Under this amendment, the current limits on the maximum number of students assigned to each teacher in public school classrooms would become limits on the average number of students assigned per class to each teacher, by specified grade grouping, in each public school. This amendment also adopts new limits on the maximum number of students assigned to each teacher in an individual classroom as follows: for pre-kindergarten through grade 3, 21 students; for grades 4 through 8, 27 students; and for grades 9 through 12, 30 students.

This amendment specifies that class size limits do not apply to virtual classes, requires the Legislature to provide sufficient funds to maintain the average number of students required by this amendment, and schedules these revisions to take effect upon approval by the electors of this state and to operate retroactively to the beginning of the 2010-2011 school year.

**Effect of passage:** Would amend the Constitution to increase permissible classroom size. (Would create new Section 31 in Article XII, Fla.Const. that would increase permissible classroom size)

**Sponsor:** The Florida Legislature

**Background:** Current class size limits were passed in 2002 by 52% of Florida voters. These limits set caps on a class-by-class basis. The current limits are being phased in and are scheduled to take full effect in August 2010. The state estimates it has spent approximately \$16 billion since 2002 to implement the class size limits. An additional \$2.9 billion is proposed for the 2010-2011 school year to meet the current limits.

The proposed amendment would ease the existing class size limits in the constitution by changing the maximum number of students allowed in the classroom. Senator Don Gaetz (R-Destin) and Representative Will Weatherford (R-Wesley Chapel) sponsored the resolution to place this amendment on the ballot and they argue the current class size limits are too inflexible and cost the state too much. The Florida Education Association opposes the amendment and the teachers' union is calling on the state to fulfill the constitutional mandate approved by voters in 2002.

# The Palm Beach Post

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## Cerabino: We need an amendment against constitutional amendments

Updated: 5:06 p.m. Wednesday, Aug. 18, 2010  
Posted: 4:53 p.m. Wednesday, Aug. 18, 2010

I spent some time Wednesday reading over the ballot language on the nine proposed amendments to the Florida Constitution.

I don't recommend this. The whole point of so many ballot amendment summaries is to craft the language in a way that makes reading comprehension impossible. Or to put it another way, to get you to vote for something you don't understand.

The more words in the amendment summary, the more mischief. That's my theory, at least.

But lucky for us, we have those pesky "activist judges" who get to step in and blow the whistle on ballot language that's deemed to be too confusing for voters to understand.

This week, the Florida Supreme Court heard arguments on the ballot language of three of the nine amendments that have been flagged by a lower court as too confusing, and therefore in danger of being removed from consideration in November. All of them were written by our state legislature.

One of the offenders is Amendment 9. This was the Florida Legislature's response to the national health care bill.

The creators of this amendment could have kept things pretty simple, asking Florida voters in a straightforward manner to reject participating in the federal health care reform program.

But instead, Amendment 9 is an eye-glazing 310-word paragraph that obfuscates its real intention with unsupported political talking points.

It asks voters if they want to "ensure access to health care services without waiting lists, protect the doctor-patient relationship," and "guard against mandates that don't work."

Leon County Circuit Judge James Sheifer struck down the amendment language.

"Someone voting on the amendment, reading those introductory statements would have a false understanding of what they were voting on," the judge ruled.

Sheifer also struck down Amendment 7, which took him three days to figure out the hidden meaning behind its language, he said.

Amendment 7 is the legislature's attempt to negate Amendment 5 and Amendment 6 on the November ballot, two citizen initiatives to prevent legislative gerrymandering of state and congressional districts.

Amendments 5 and 6 are pretty clear. They say that legislative districts "may not be drawn to favor or disfavor an incumbent or political party." And that districts must be contiguous, and they "shall not be drawn to deny racial or language minorities the equal opportunity to participate in the political process."

So state legislators, in an effort to slyly supersede those two amendments if they passed, created Amendment 7. It's a wordy stew that leaves out the contiguous requirement of districts, gives legislators the power to create districts by grouping "communities of common interest", and in the vaguest of ways, negates Amendments 5 and 6 if they were passed.

What are "communities of common interest?" Anything legislators say they are.

All this deceptive gamesmanship points to a need for an Amendment 10 - an amendment to the Florida Constitution that would mandate a warning label on any ballot amendment coming from the state legislature.

## Real World Windows Azure: Interview with Bob West, Director of the Office of Reapportionment, Florida House of Representatives



WindowsAzure 9 Sep 2010 10:34 AM 0

As part of the Real World Windows Azure series, we talked to Bob West, Director of the Office of Reapportionment for the [Florida House of Representatives](#), about using the [Windows Azure](#) platform to help capture accurate U.S. Census statistics. Here's what he had to say:

**MSDN: Tell us about the Florida House of Representatives and how you use technology to help serve your constituents.** **West:** The Florida House of Representatives is part of the Florida Legislature and has 120 members, each representing a political district in the state. We rely on technology to help us communicate with residents and to support several initiatives, one of which is the redistricting process, which, by law, must happen every 10 years after the census is taken.

**MSDN: What were the biggest challenges that the Florida House of Representatives faced prior to implementing the Windows Azure platform?**

**West:** We wanted to develop a web-based application to encourage residents to participate in the redistricting process, but after analyzing the infrastructure changes required to support the kind of application that we envisioned, we realized that it was too costly—topping U.S.\$300,000 over a four-year period to host the application and data. We also took into consideration that we'd have to build an infrastructure to handle extremely high volumes of traffic during peak periods. Furthermore, we wanted to ensure that any technology solution we implemented could be used for multiple projects that could help us to better serve citizens

**MSDN: Can you describe the solution you built with Windows Azure to address your need for cost-effective scalability?**

**West:** Prior to developing a redistricting application for [Windows Azure](#), we developed a pilot service to evaluate the platform. MyFloridaCensus (<http://www.myfloridacensus.gov/>), which uses the [Microsoft Silverlight 3](#) browser plug-in and is hosted in Windows Azure, uses [Bing Maps](#) and a Microsoft Geocoding web service, along with census data, to highlight areas that may have been missed by the U.S. Census Department. Citizens can use the [Microsoft ASP.NET](#) application to report whether or not they've been counted, and, in turn, the House works with the U.S. Census Bureau to count those citizens who were missed. We use a [Windows Communication Foundation](#) communication protocol to access two 10-gigabyte [Microsoft SQL Azure](#) databases to store census geography and data.



Green lines are land parcels, blue lines represent U.S. Census paths, and red areas indicate where some residents may have been missed by the U.S. Census.

**MSDN: What makes your solution unique?**

**West:** The technology stack—with its scalability and visually appetizing design—will create a direct line of dialogue between Floridians and Florida politicians on what is traditionally one of the most politically charged, but unfortunately ambiguous, issues for the average person. We've proven the Windows Azure platform as a scalable solution, and therefore we can reuse much of that code for our redistricting application. That said, because the redistricting application will require additional storage, we will use a 50-gigabyte SQL Azure database, and may consider supplementing our storage solution with Windows Azure [Table storage](#). These features will support the new application that will allow citizens to participate in the redistricting process online by submitting designs for suggested district boundaries.

**MSDN: What kinds of benefits are you realizing with Windows Azure?**

**West:** Based on the information we gathered from MyFloridaCensus, we learned that of the 19,000 citizens who reported their census status, 2,250 households were initially missed by the U.S. Census Department. Each resident represents \$1,500 in federal funds that we receive, so having accurate census data has a positive fiscal impact for our state. In addition, we can quickly scale up without the costs of an on-premises infrastructure. In fact, we estimate that we will avoid approximately \$300,000 in infrastructure costs. However, the savings and federal funding are only part of the story. The big picture is that Floridians will be able to attain unprecedented levels of participation in defining their elected representation for the decade to follow.



Read the full story at: <http://www.microsoft.com/casestudies/casestudy.aspx?casestudyid=4000007975>

To read more Windows Azure customer success stories, visit: [www.windowsazure.com/evidence](http://www.windowsazure.com/evidence)

## The Observer

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"If we are to build a better world, we must remember that the guiding principle is this — a policy of freedom for the individual is the only truly progressive policy."

Friedrich Hayek

"Road to Serfdom," 1944

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## our view

# The amendments

Here we are again, on the cusp of another round of voting on amendments to the Florida Constitution.

There are no "pig-cage" amendments on this year's ballot, but as always, there are controversial proposals. In the past two months, Florida judges have struck three of nine proposed amendments from the ballot, and those rulings all are being appealed.

Meantime, six proposed amendments are still on the statewide ballot, although even three of those are awaiting final state Supreme Court approval.

Over the next few weeks, we'll analyze the amendments and provide recommendations. Our analysis always applies a fundamental question that serves as the basis for our recommendations: Does the proposed amendment protect and expand individual freedom, or does it restrict freedom? Almost always, if the answer is it protects and expands freedom, we recommend a yes. If not, vote no.

In this week's installment, we address Amendments 1, 2, 5, 6 and 8.

### Amendment 1

**Article VI, Section 7.** *Summary:* This proposes the repeal of the provision in the state constitution that requires public financing of campaigns of candidates for elective statewide office who agree to campaign spending limits.

Back in 1998, the Constitution Revision Commission put on the ballot a sweeping amendment that included six changes related to elections. This was on top of 11 other proposed amendments on the ballot. Voters were overwhelmed.

Of the six changes in the elections amendment, four were good. The mangy dog in the pack was the creation of taxpayer-financed campaigns. As usual, there were all kinds of prattle about big-money buying elections and how public campaign financing would "level the playing field" for the little guy/gal running against the rich guy/gal.

We advocated against public financing of political campaigns back then. Talk about criminal looting and a horrible transfer of wealth. Worse, we all know the saying about "voting for the lesser of two evils" — two candidates you don't support. It makes no sense for your tax dollars to help elect evil.

When put to the freedom test, Amendment 1 passes. It will give us more freedom by taking power away from government bureaucrats to waste your money on enriching sleazy advertising agencies and political hatchet men who produce those slimy, mudslinging campaign ads. **Vote yes.**

### Amendment 2

**Article VII, Section 3, Section 31.** *Summary:* To require the Legislature to provide an additional homestead property-tax exemption for members of the U.S. military or military reserves, U.S. Coast Guard or its reserves or the Florida National Guard who receive a homestead exemption and were deployed in the previous year on active duty outside the continental U.S., Alaska, or Hawaii, in support of military operations designated by the Legislature. The exempt amount will be equal to a percentage of the taxable value of serviceman's homestead property. The applicable percentage shall be calculated as the number of days during the preceding calendar year the person was deployed on active duty outside the United States, Alaska, or Hawaii, in support of military operations designated by the Legislature divided by the number of days in that year.

Typically, subsidies of any kind should be despised; they're an unearned benefit. But it's difficult to reject a subsidy

when it comes to those who voluntarily sacrifice and put their lives at risk in defense of our freedom and nation.

They volunteer to give up a lot — their families and personal safety and security, topping the list. There often is an opportunity cost. Many service men and women postpone their ability to advance in the private-sector work place.

As part of paying our debt to our armed forces for protecting our freedom, this subsidy would be a small price.

To some extent, you could argue Amendment 2 adds to our freedom. It rewards those who protect us, our nation and our freedom. **Vote yes.**

### Amendments 5 & 6

#### Article III, Sections 20 and 21.

*Summary:* Legislative and congressional districts or districting plans may not be drawn to favor or disfavor an incumbent or political party. Districts shall not be drawn to deny racial or language minorities the equal opportunity to participate in the political process and elect representatives of their choice. Districts must be contiguous. Unless otherwise required, districts must be compact, as equal in population as feasible, and where feasible must make use of existing city, county and geographical boundaries.

Before examining these amendments, we have to wonder about them, particularly when we see some of the names behind the group sponsoring the amendment, FairDistrictsFlorida.org.

The group's honorary chairs include a mix of Democrats and Republicans, an obvious attempt to make the amendments appealing to both sides. The Democrats: former Gov. and U.S. Sen. Bob Graham; former U.S. Attorney General Janet Reno; and former Miami Mayor Manuel Diaz. The Republicans: former George Bush lawyer Thom Rumberger; and former Florida Comptroller Bob Milligan. And let's not forget Nat Reed, founder of 1000 Friends of Florida (mostly a liberal group). In a head count, the Democrats outnumber the Republicans. That may suggest motivations — such as Democrats tired of Republicans controlling the Legislature and Florida's congressional seats.

In any event, look at the language of the amendments: What they offer sounds great and fair. Everyone would agree that legislative and congressional districts should favor no one, especially political parties. And the wording of the amendments sounds as though they are intended to protect your freedom, i.e. make sure your vote counts.

But as they say, the devil is in the details. In a report to the Legislature on these proposed amendments, Florida lawyer George Meros of the Gray Robinson law firm wrote:

"... The requirement that every district be drawn so as not to favor or disfavor any incumbent or political party will spawn challenges to virtually every district, census tract by census tract, without guidance on what 'favor' or 'disfavor' means in this highly specialized context.

"... The court will be required to create new legal standards for evaluating the intent of the Legislature and the political influence of minority groups to define the concept of compactness and to engage in a completely subjective analysis of whether the use of existing boundaries would have been feasible.

"... The new subjective and fact-specific inquiries will subject each district individually to attack, whether by political parties, incumbents, challengers or interest groups, and will invite a proliferation of experts to analyze each district according to the new constitutional standards.

"Adversary interests can be expected not only to assail the legislatively drawn plan but to present plans that each purport to comply with the constitutional mandate. The 30-day period allotted to the court will likely require it to appoint special masters to evaluate the evidence and argument presented by adversary interests.

"The Legislature ... will be required to defend every boundary of every district against every attack ..."

Then multiply all of those challenges by 25 congressional districts. *Aye-yi-yi.*

The Legislature's fiscal analysis of the amendments indicate they will increase litigation costs at least seven to 10 times those experienced in the 2000 apportionments. That would mean between \$43.4 million and \$62 million.

Suffice it to say the intentions of these amendments are good. But their practicality will be nightmarish. An avalanche of lawsuits requiring taxpayer funds to pay for them will constrict freedom, not increase it.

What's more, as we look back over three decades of elections, there haven't been constant complaints, injustices or lawsuits that Floridians are being denied proper representation because of the boundaries of their voting districts.

The authors of these amendments made a valiant attempt to depoliticize political redistricting. But their solution is one that will create a plethora of legal ambiguities. Under their model, draw a new district anywhere on the Florida map, and you can be sure anyone can — and will — claim to be an aggrieved voter.

Florida's redistricting system — for all of its faults and albeit not to the minority party's satisfaction — has been working for more than a century. **Vote no on Amendments 5 and 6.**

### Amendment 8

**Article IX, Section 1; Article XII, Section 31.** *Summary:* The Florida Constitution currently limits the maximum number of students assigned to each teacher in public-school classrooms in the following grade groupings: for pre-kindergarten through grade three, 18 students; for grades four through eight, 22 students; and for grades nine through 12, 25 students. Under this amendment, the limits on the maximum number of students assigned to each teacher would become limits on the average number of students assigned per class to each teacher, by specified grade grouping. This amendment also adopts new limits on the maximum number of students in an individual classroom: for pre-kindergarten through grade three, 21; for grades four through eight, 27; and for grades nine through 12, 30. This amendment specifies that class-size limits do not apply to virtual classes, requires the Legislature to provide sufficient funds to maintain the average number of students required by this amendment and schedules these revisions to take effect and to operate retroactively to the beginning of the 2010-2011 school year.

The original amendment limiting public-school class sizes never should have passed to begin with in 2002.

It took Floridians eight years to figure out the consequences that opponents spoke of then, namely it would be cost prohibitive. Yes, small class sizes are good. But they are not the magic elixir that automatically results in better student performance.

This amendment is a step toward more freedom. Let school districts decide their own class sizes. A better amendment would eliminate limits on class sizes altogether. **Vote yes.**

**Next installment: Amendment 4, "hometown democracy."**

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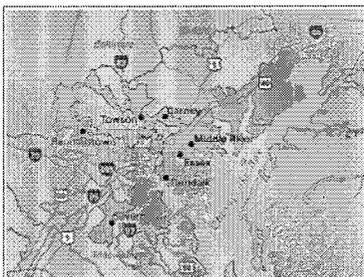
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## More String on Redistricting: Apps Edition

Nancy Scolia | September 30, 2010 - 2:51pm | Email This!

In case you missed it, we've been collectively pulling together notes on what might be happening in the world of redistricting technologies, in preparation, of course, for the coming district boundary redrawings triggered by the 2010 Census. Now, a few comments. The first is yes, many people have considered and worked on and studied tech-enabled redistrict projects and research; this isn't anything particularly new, but it does seem to something that's enormously important, politically, and within our wheelhouse. We may as well explore the topic together. The second is that someone suggested that the framing of previous posts on the topic had a baked-in assumption that tech would making district drawing *better*. If that assumption was implied, it was unintentional, and the critique is a useful check. The only assumption is that technology can carry with it a power, and the hope here is to take a good long look at what that power might be, when it comes to drawing the boundaries that shape our political units that, in turn, shape our politics and...yadda yadda...our country.



With that, a few more pointers have come in to stand-alone apps in particular:

- Word is that the Florida House of Representatives is building something called the MyDistrictBuilder app. It seems to have a Twitter account, but no public demo as of yet.
- A former Microsoft engineer has built Dave's Redistrict App, and there's a related blog.
- ESRI.com, the GIS giant, is building an online app called "Redistricting Online" whose functionality will include, says the company, "plan creation and editing, map navigation, feature selection, data export, printing, plan integrity and management, and thematic mapping."
- And B-Districting is an open-source online district mapper, and its affiliated blog promises "the story of writing redistricting software and other thoughts on redistricting."

Who knows what might come out of this? Perhaps we can host a chat at some point with various people working on software tools paired with experts on political geography. We'll see. In the meantime, we'll keep poking around, and you should be sure to keep your tips coming.

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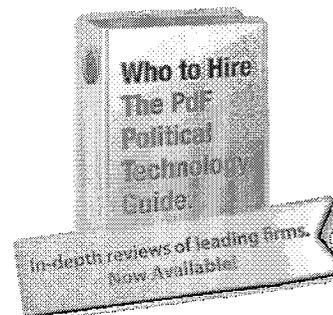
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# James Madison Institute urges Floridians to vote 'No' on Amendments 5 & 6

<http://saintpetersblog.com/2010/09/30/james-madison-institute-urges-floridians-to-vote-%E2%80%99no%E2%80%99-on-amendments-5-6/>

December 30, 2010

Citing concerns over the “confusing and contradictory standards” in Amendments 5 and 6, the nonpartisan Florida-based James Madison Institute recently released recommendations in opposition to Amendments 5 and 6 as part of their “2010 Voter Guide for the State Ballot Proposals.”



“Florida simply cannot afford to add these unrealistic and unworkable requirements to our elections law,” said former Florida Secretary of State and Protect Your Vote Chairman Kurt Browning. “Passing these requirements will throw Florida’s redistricting process into chaos and put representation from Florida’s diverse communities at risk.”

In addition to concerns over the amendments’ language, the Institute also highlighted the fact that the amendments would “increase the likelihood that any redistricting plan devised by the Florida Legislature would be subject to protracted litigation and would ultimately be replaced by a plan devised by appointed judges rather than by the people’s elected representatives.”

Chaired by former Florida Secretary of State Kurt Browning with Congresswoman Corrine Brown and Congressman Mario Diaz-Balart serving as national steering committee members, the Protect Your Vote campaign consists of a bipartisan group of state leaders representing a host of Florida’s diverse communities and political backgrounds. Amendments 5 and 6 are supported by outside groups including ACORN, the ACLU, trial lawyers and other special interest insiders with no ties to Florida. More than half of the \$4.2 million raised to put amendments 5 and 6 on the ballot came from personal injury lawyers, labor unions and ACORN.

**Tags:** [Ballot Proposals](#), [Bipartisan Group](#), [Congresswoman Corrine Brown](#), [Corrine Brown](#), [Diverse Communities](#), [Elections Law](#), [Florida Legislature](#), [Florida Secretary Of State](#), [James Madison Institute](#), [Kurt Browning](#), [Labor Unions](#), [Mario Diaz Balart](#), [National Steering Committee](#), [Personal Injury Lawyers](#), [Political Backgrounds](#), [State Ballot](#), [Steering Committee Members](#), [Trial Lawyers](#), [Vote Campaign](#), [Voter Guide](#)



orlandosentinel.com/news/opinion/os-ed-fair-districts-florida-myword-120101001,0,5847646.story

## OrlandoSentinel.com

### My Word by Deirdre Macnab: Stop political protection plan

By Deirdre Macnab

October 3, 2010

Gerrymandering, the process by which politicians draw districts so they can win again and again, has been around for a long time — so long there have been districts named "Abe Lincoln on a Vacuum," "The Earmuff" and the "Flying Giraffe" to describe the wacky shapes that result.

Over the years, many states have begun to fix the problem. Today, almost all states have standards that govern redistricting; Florida has none.

A nonpartisan group of citizens has proposed Amendments 5 and 6, which will appear on this November's ballot. The amendments will create simple and fair rules to stop politicians from drawing districts in backrooms to protect themselves and their political parties.

A recent Orlando Sentinel article focused on whether Amendments 5 and 6 would benefit one party over the other. The truth is that the amendments do not benefit either side, as their purpose is to minimize partisanship in the redistricting process. Amendments 5 and 6 are intended to benefit all Florida voters. While carefully protecting minority voting rights, the amendments will require that voting districts be compact, follow existing geographic boundaries, and not be drawn for the purpose of favoring any particular incumbent or political party.

The amendments have been endorsed by many well-respected organizations such as: League of Women Voters, NAACP, AARP, Florida Association of Counties and Florida League of Cities. Republican, Democratic and Independent leaders are also backing the amendments. And every major newspaper in the state has written in support of the amendments.

What is no surprise is that current officeholders are challenging the amendments because they see them as a threat to their political-protection plan. Voters beware: These incumbent politicians are trying to confuse you only to protect their own power. Amendments 5 and 6 are the best hope we have of a fair election system, more competitive elections and far greater accountability in our government.

Amendments 5 and 6 will keep communities together so voters can know who their representatives are. I will never forget addressing a Rotary group in Orlando and asking those present if they could name their state legislators and congressmen. Out of a crowd of 350, only three raised their hands. One was a former state legislator. It is simple: Politicians now get to handpick their voters during redistricting.

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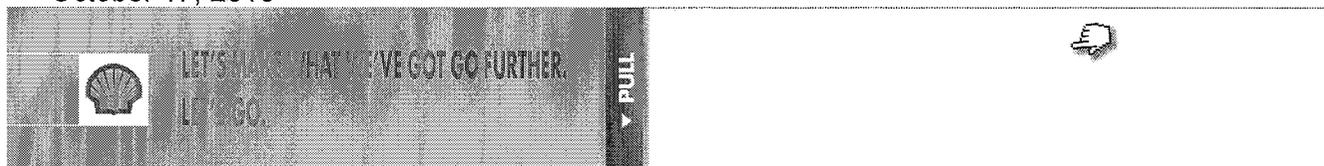
Amendments 5 and 6 will place power back in the hands of all Florida voters to select their representatives.

Join us in voting yes on Amendments 5 and 6 so that we can stop politicians from drawing districts like "Abe Lincoln on a vacuum" simply to protect their own seats. Creating rules for politicians to follow will put the voters of Florida back in charge.

**Deirdre Macnab is president of the League of Women Voters of Florida.**

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October 17, 2010

This is the print preview: [Back to normal view »](#)**Richard Hebert**

Award-winning investigative reporter, formerly of The Atlanta Constitution

Posted: October 7, 2010 11:07 AM

## Florida's Gerrymander War: The Pols vs. The People

Politics may make strange bedfellows, but once in a while it also makes surprising adversaries. So it is this year in Florida's Gerrymander War. In one corner, a bipartisan tag team of minority congressional members, Black Democrat Corrine Brown and Hispanic Republican Mario Diaz-Balart, plus state legislators, including some Blacks. Facing off against them, longtime champions of minority rights -- the NAACP, ACLU and a host of other organizations.

Florida's legislative district maps are crazy-quilts designed by politicians for politicians. The quilt-makers are the state legislators. Armed with today's technologies, they select the census tracts where their likeliest supporters live, in effect picking their voters, not the other way around. Fort Lauderdale, for example, is sliced and diced among four congressional districts.

After every Census, states must redraw their legislative and congressional districts to reflect population shifts. Only Indiana and Rhode Island have fewer rules than Florida for doing this. As a blogger on Swing State Project put it, "Florida is perhaps the most masterful Republican gerrymander in the nation."

It doesn't matter that registered Republicans are a minority, 35.8 percent to 42 percent Democrat and 19 percent independent. More than 60 percent of Florida's House and Senate members are Republican. So are 15 of Florida's 25 congressional representatives. Only 10 of the 505 incumbent legislators who sought re-election since 2000 were defeated. Why? Gerrymandering.

No two Florida congresspersons are more protected by the gerrymandering than Reps. Brown and Diaz-Balart. Look at their districts. Brown's, District 3, snakes through parts of nine counties, from Jacksonville to Orlando, with heavy Black populations.

Diaz-Balart's case is even more bizarre. He represents District 25, the southern tip of the state's

mainland from western Miami to Naples on the Gulf Coast, including much of the Everglades. (In 2002 he chaired the legislative committee that mapped it.) Meanwhile, his brother, Lincoln Diaz-Balart, represents neighboring District 21, a heavily Hispanic strip that curls like a question mark from western Broward County on the north to Homestead south of Miami. Lincoln isn't seeking reelection, so brother Mario is switching districts (his victory margins in District 25 have been narrowing). He is unopposed in his bid to succeed Lincoln.

One of his future constituents, Marcia Finkel, emailed me: "I have more in common with others in my ZIP code than I do with people in Broward -- and...others in my ZIP code (who live in D-25) have more in common with me than they do with people in Naples."

Reformers have been trying since the early 1970s to end gerrymandering. This year, with Amendments 5 and 6 on the ballot, they believe they have a real shot at getting the 60 percent approval needed for adoption.

FairDistrictsFlorida, a nonpartisan citizens group, and the League of Women Voters gathered more than 1.7 million signatures to put two amendments on the ballot setting some rules the Legislature must follow. FairDistricts chair is Ellen Freidin, a veteran of past efforts including membership on the state's 1992 Constitutional Review Commission, and honorary co-chairs include former senator and governor Bob Graham, and former Atty. Gen. Janet Reno.

Amendments 5 and 6 are identical except that one applies to state legislative districts, the other to congressional districts. They forbid drawing districts "to favor or disfavor a political party or an incumbent" or to deny or abridge "the equal opportunity of racial or language minorities to participate in the political process." Further, they mandate that "where feasible, (districts) utilize existing political and geographical boundaries."

In response, Florida's legislators drafted their own amendment for the November ballot. It pledged to protect "communities of interest" and contained a "poison pill" that would nullify the rules written into Amendments 5 and 6 should they also be approved.

The battle lines were drawn. Newspapers throughout the state railed against the Legislature's proposal. The Miami Herald called it a "sham." A St. Petersburg Times columnist called it "a sneaky attempt to trick Florida voters." The Gainesville Sun said legislators "should be ashamed of their self-serving arrogance."

Supporters of Amendments 5 and 6 challenged Amendment 7 in court as "flying under false colors." Tallahassee Circuit Judge James Shelfer agreed, after three days trying to grasp what it meant. He didn't think voters would understand it in their few minutes in the voting booth. The state Supreme Court agreed with him. Amendment 7 was dead.

By then Reps. Brown and Diaz-Balart had reciprocated with a lawsuit of their own, challenging Amendments 5 and 6 as also misleading. A judge ruled against them. The language of the amendments had already passed muster with the state Supreme Court -- a prerequisite for getting citizen-sponsored measures on the ballot. The score: FairDistricts 2, Legislature 0.

Undeterred, Brown and Diaz-Balart continue to campaign against the amendments, insisting they will reduce minority representation despite explicit language that forbids "denying or abridging" minorities' voting rights.

Spokesperson Kelly Penton says FairDistricts is optimistic it will secure the necessary 60% voter approval for several reasons. Those 1.7 million signatures, to begin with. Plus the outreach of the high-membership community groups supporting them: in addition to the Florida chapters of NAACP, ACLU and the League of Women Voters, the list includes the Florida League of Cities, Florida

League of Mayors, Legislative Black Caucus, Florida Black Caucus of Local Elected Officials and Democracia Ahora (Democracy Now).

"The only opposition," Penton says, has come "from incumbent politicians, lobbyists and special interests." The "timing" is right, too, she said. While not saying so explicitly, the anti-incumbent mood among voters can't be hurting a campaign that seeks to take map-drawing decisions away from entrenched incumbents.

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## Reshaping Florida's political map

October 8, 2010

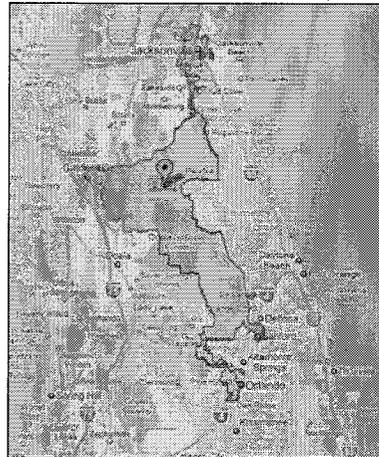
By **Sarah Wilson**  
Guest Reporter

As the November mid-term elections loom, the debate over the amendments on the ballot heats up.

Amendments 5 and 6 are causing a stir over how the entire state will be represented in the future. If passed, Amendment 5 would set standards for the drawing, or redrawing, of legislative districts, and Amendment 6 would set the same standards for congressional districts.

The amendments have sparked two active campaigns: those supporting this new "fair districting" method and others calling for Floridians to protect their vote and "nix 5 and 6."

Amendments 5 and 6 call for standards in the redistricting process that would call for all districts to be contiguous, compact, and where feasible, equal in population and making use of existing city, county and geographical boundaries. The amendments also state that no district can be drawn to deny minorities the equal opportunity to participate in the political process.



"I'm not going to tell you this is going to make everything perfect, but it's going to help," Nancy C. Jacobson, an elected member of the Democratic National Committee, said.

Jacobson, a vocal supporter of the amendments, said that passing 5 and 6 would be a step in the right direction toward ending the gerrymandering — legislators drawing districts to benefit their political party — process in Florida.

The support for her position, she says, is in the current map of Florida's congressional and legislative districts.

"Look at the map and see if it makes sense to you," she challenges citizens.

Charley Williams, the president of the League of Women Voters in Orange County, also uses the maps as a defense, pointing out congressional district 3, headed by U.S. Rep. Corrine Brown. It stretches from Jacksonville, over to Gainesville and down to parts of Orlando.

"What do these people living in Jacksonville have in common with us living in Orlando?" he asked.

They both hope that the passing of these amendments would lead to "fairer" redistricting come 2011.

Others, however, do not see the passing of amendments 5 and 6 as the best way to go about handling Florida's districting issues.

"The amendments both have some good and some bad, but the question is do the good outweigh the bad?" Florida District 22 Senator David Simmons said.

He's not so sure. Simmons is wary that the language in the amendments weigh more heavily toward the bad. He cites that when the amendment states that districts cannot be drawn "to diminish" the racial minorities ability to elect representatives of their choice, some districts could be frozen the way they are.

Like Williams, Simmons cited congressional district 3 as an example. This district, he said, has significant minority citizenship. If the amendment passes, he fears that this district could be frozen in its current state because, as stated in the amendments, racial and language minorities cannot have any less ability to elect the representative of their choice.

That means, he argues, that if the amendments are passed, district 3 could not be redrawn with any less minority representation than it has right now. This, he says, invalidates the intention of the amendments.

"There is a strong argument that this is the way it's going to be interpreted, and that initiates the question of why we're doing this," Simmons said.

Simmons also states that using geographical boundaries, as the amendments suggest is not necessarily logical. He offers instead that lines should be drawn if anything by community relationship boundaries.

"What is the use of using boundaries like the Orange/Seminole county line? That doesn't have a whole lot of meaning for anyone and has been in place for over 100 years," he said.

Supporters on each side may not agree on the amendments themselves, but they both agree on one thing, citizens need to inform themselves by reading the amendments before forming an opinion. And most importantly, they need to get out to the polls on Nov. 2 and vote.

For more information, visit the Collins Center for Public Policy at [www.collinscenter.org/page/FL\\_Amend\\_Home](http://www.collinscenter.org/page/FL_Amend_Home).

**Photo (above): U.S. Congressional District 3 stretches from Orlando to Jacksonville. The passage of Amendments 5 and 6 could make districts more compact but some say minorities will lose representation. Map courtesy of Google**

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## Amendments 5 & 6 would reshape Fla. redistricting

MIKE SCHNEIDER, Associated Press Writer

Published: 10:55 a.m., Monday, October 11, 2010

ORLANDO, Fla. (AP) — Every 10 years, after the release of the U.S. Census count, lawmakers in Tallahassee battle over how Florida's legislative and congressional districts should be redrawn.

This time, the fight is happening beforehand.

Two proposed amendments to the Florida Constitution on the Nov. 2 ballot would set new standards for how the districts are sketched. Amendment 5 deals with legislative districts, while Amendment 6 addresses U.S. congressional districts. Like all state constitutional amendments, each requires a 60 percent majority to pass.

The battle has pitted several of Florida's best-known black and Hispanic lawmakers against advocates who argue the current methods create gerrymandered districts that protect political power and incumbency while producing noncompetitive races.

Gerrymandered districts have contorted or unusual shapes. They are created to get particular voters into a district, whether for racial, economic or political reasons.

"Politicians currently have an ability to draw districts to protect themselves and political allies, or to draw their political adversaries out of seats," said Ellen Freidin, campaign chairwoman of FairDistrictsFlorida.org, the group leading the push for the amendments. "It doesn't matter which party is in power. Whichever party is in power wants to take advantage of redistricting so it can enhance their ability to stay in power."

The amendments' supporters include the Florida League of Women Voters, Common Cause, AARP and the American Civil Liberties Union. Fair Districts' leaders include former Gov. and ex-U.S. Sen. Bob Graham, a Democrat, and former Comptroller Bob Milligan, a Republican.

The black and Hispanic lawmakers argue that the new standards could threaten Florida's six congressional districts where blacks and Hispanics are either in the majority or close to being in the majority. The black or almost-black-majority seats currently are held by Reps. Corrine Brown, Alcee Hastings and Kendrick Meek, all Democrats, while the Hispanic-majority seats are held by Reps. Lincoln Diaz-Balart, Mario Diaz-Balart and Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, all Republicans.

In the state Legislature, 13 House seats and three Senate seats are black-majority, while 11 House seats and three Senate seats are Hispanic-majority.

"I'm saying that these amendments would disenfranchise African American voters. Period," said Brown, whose district is one of Florida's most serpentine, stretching from Jacksonville to Orlando.

But supporters of the amendments say that Brown and the others are just worried about their own jobs, not minority representation. They say language in both amendments explicitly prohibit minorities from being denied the chance to participate in the political process or prevented from electing representatives of their choice and point out the measures have the backing of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and Democracia Ahora, two minority rights groups. Blacks currently make up 15.6 percent and Hispanics 21.5 percent of Florida's 18.5 million residents.

"We wanted to make sure the politicians can't use redistricting, as they have in the past, to silence the voices of any segment of the population in Florida," Freidin said.

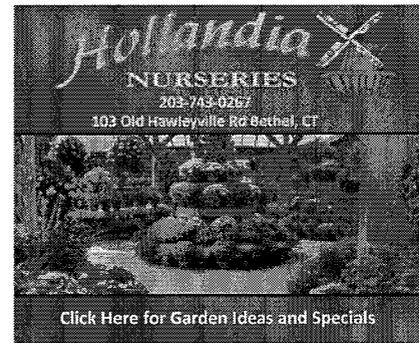
When it comes to redistricting, Florida currently has one of the most laissez-faire approaches in the entire country. The only requirement is that districts be contiguous, or sharing a common border. The new amendments would require that both legislative and congressional districts be compact, equal in population and make use of existing city, county and geographical boundaries. The amendments also would prohibit drawing districts to favor or disfavor an incumbent or political party.

Similar efforts failed in Florida in 1978, 1993 and 1998. But Barry University political science professor Sean Foreman said this year's effort has a better chance of passing given voter anger at the status quo.

Any changes to Florida's redistricting process would likely hurt Republicans more than Democrats since they control both chambers in the Legislature and account for 15 out of Florida's 25 congressional districts. The lack of competition in Florida's House races was evident in 2008, given that only four had a winner who won with less than 55 percent of the vote. Many are uncontested.

"Certainly the party in power will be impacted more," Foreman said. "Because Republicans have a disproportionate edge in elected officials compared to registered voters, they stand to lose as a result."

The amendments already have survived court challenges. Brown and Mario Diaz-Balart filed an unsuccessful challenge in court to get Amendment 6 taken off the ballot. The Florida Legislature tried to put on the ballot a separate amendment that opponents said would undermine Amendments



5 and 6, but it was struck down by a judge who called it misleading and confusing.

If voters approve Amendments 5 and 6, they likely will face even more court challenges that could threaten to delay the redistricting process set to begin next year and extend into 2012.

"If this passes, we will go the next day to federal court," Brown said. "We'll take it all the way to the Supreme Court."

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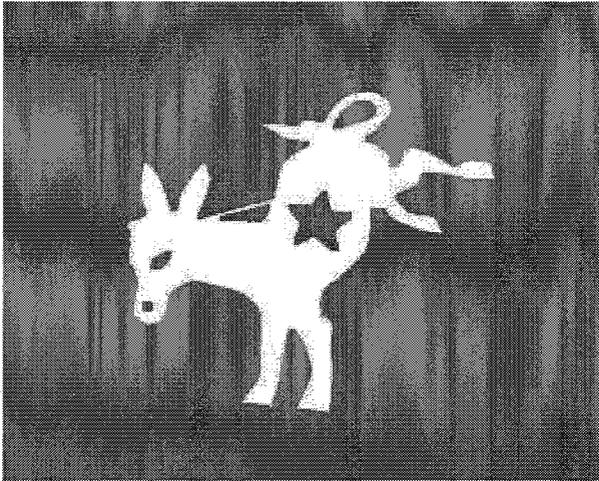
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## FL-Sen: It really is about the governor's race

POST FROM DAILY KOS ON 11 OCTOBER 2010 05:30:04 PM. © DAILY KOS

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Right now pollster.com has Meek and Crist combining for 50% with Rubio at 44%. A lot of folks have looked at those numbers in the last few weeks and concluded that if one out of Meek and Crist would just drop out their combined support would be enough to defeat Rubio.

One number in the results we'll release tomorrow points to a big problem with that theory: 48% of Floridians want Republicans in charge of the next Senate while only 43% want Democrats in charge.

Still, Democratic chances would certainly improve with a Meek withdrawal. It wouldn't guarantee a Crist victory, but the odds would be better. Whether you think that's a good idea or not is pretty irrelevant at this point. It won't happen, as this new radio ad for Meek by President Barack Obama confirms.

The reason has become fairly apparent --

Democrats have no real optimism about the Senate race. They're reading the same polls we are. This push on Meek's behalf is all about one thing -- the governor's race.

While Meek has been a dud across much of Florida, he *has* had some success in the African American community -- a constituency critical for Democratic gubernatorial chances:



Democrats need this governor's race badly -- it would be a propaganda coup in a year in which Democrats will lose significant number of governorships. But who wouldn't trade Wyoming, Kansas, and Oklahoma for Florida?

More importantly, having Sink in the governor's mansion would significantly boost Obama's reelection bid in the state in 2012.

And finally, assuming Florida's redistricting process isn't reformed by ballot initiative this November, the governor will provide a critical veto of federal redistricting in 2012. Florida is grossly gerrymandered in the GOP's favor. A more rational map would create significant opportunities for Democratic congressional pickups in the state.

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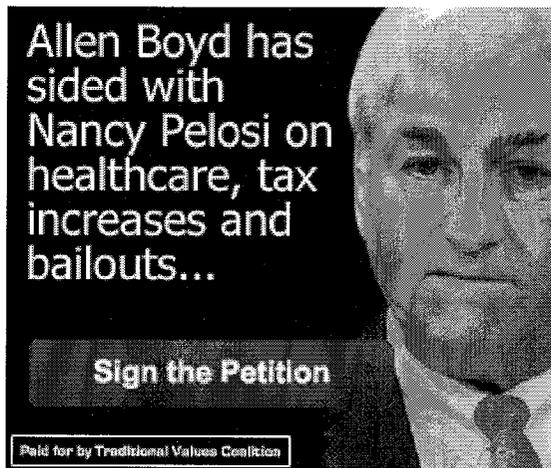
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Hence, this is no longer about Meek. Absent a political earthquake, we're going to be saddled with Rubio for the next six years. The big goal is now to boost African American turnout to help snag the governorship, thus providing that boost to Obama's reelection bid and electing several new House Democrats from Florida after the 2012 redistricting.

And given that 10 percent of residents in FL-25 are African American, a few extra votes from that community might be the deciding factor in *this* year in that hard-fought open-seat race featuring O2B candidate Joe Garcia.

All that would be great consolation for losing what was once a gettable Senate seat.

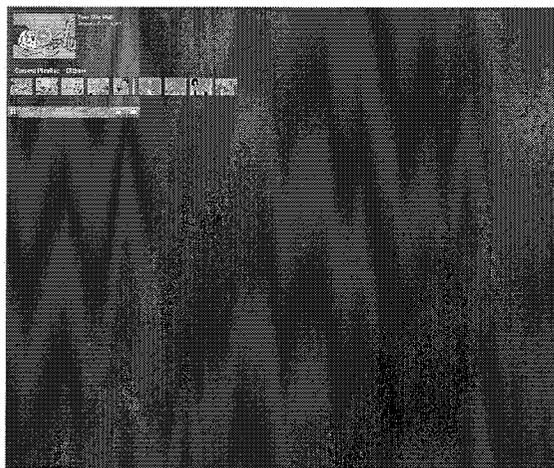


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# The Miami Herald

Posted on Mon, Oct. 11, 2010

## Amendments 5 & 6 would reshape Fla. redistricting

By MIKE SCHNEIDER  
Associated Press Writer

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This time, the fight is happening beforehand.

Two proposed amendments to the Florida Constitution on the Nov. 2 ballot would set new standards for how the districts are sketched. Amendment 5 deals with legislative districts, while Amendment 6 addresses U.S. congressional districts. Like all state constitutional amendments, each requires a 60 percent majority to pass.

The battle has pitted several of Florida's best-known black and Hispanic lawmakers against advocates who argue the current methods create gerrymandered districts that protect political power and incumbency while producing noncompetitive races.

Gerrymandered districts have contorted or unusual shapes. They are created to get particular voters into a district, whether for racial, economic or political reasons.

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"Politicians currently have an ability to draw districts to protect themselves and political allies, or to draw their political adversaries out of seats," said Ellen Freidin, campaign chairwoman of FairDistrictsFlorida.org, the group leading the push for the amendments. "It doesn't matter which party is in power. Whichever party is in power wants to take advantage of redistricting so it can enhance their ability to stay in power."

The amendments' supporters include the Florida League of Women Voters, Common Cause, AARP and the American Civil Liberties Union. Fair Districts' leaders include former Gov. and ex-U.S. Sen. Bob Graham, a Democrat, and former Comptroller Bob Milligan, a Republican.

The black and Hispanic lawmakers argue that the new standards could threaten Florida's six congressional districts where blacks and Hispanics are either in the majority or close to being in the majority. The black or almost-black-majority seats currently are held by Reps. Corrine Brown, Alcee Hastings and Kendrick Meek, all Democrats, while the Hispanic-majority seats are held by Reps. Lincoln Diaz-Balart, Mario Diaz-Balart and Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, all Republicans.

In the state Legislature, 13 House seats and three Senate seats are black-majority, while 11 House seats and three Senate seats are Hispanic-majority.

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"I'm saying that these amendments would disenfranchise African American voters. Period," said Brown, whose district is one of Florida's most serpentine, stretching from Jacksonville to

Orlando.

But supporters of the amendments say that Brown and the others are just worried about their own jobs, not minority representation. They say language in both amendments explicitly prohibit minorities from being denied the chance to participate in the political process or prevented from electing representatives of their choice and point out the measures have the backing of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and Democracia Ahora, two minority rights groups. Blacks currently make up 15.6 percent and Hispanics 21.5 percent of Florida's 18.5 million residents.

"We wanted to make sure the politicians can't use redistricting, as they have in the past, to silence the voices of any segment of the population in Florida," Freidin said.

When it comes to redistricting, Florida currently has one of the most laissez-faire approaches in the entire country. The only requirement is that districts be contiguous, or sharing a common border. The new amendments would require that both legislative and congressional districts be compact, equal in population and make use of existing city, county and geographical boundaries. The amendments also would prohibit drawing districts to favor or disfavor an incumbent or political party.

Similar efforts failed in Florida in 1978, 1993 and 1998. But Barry University political science professor Sean Foreman said this year's effort has a better chance of passing given voter anger at the status quo.

Any changes to Florida's redistricting process would likely hurt Republicans more than Democrats since they control both chambers in the Legislature and account for 15 out of Florida's 25 congressional districts. The lack of competition in Florida's House races was evident in 2008, given that only four had a winner who won with less than 55 percent of the vote. Many are uncontested.

"Certainly the party in power will be impacted more," Foreman said. "Because Republicans have a disproportionate edge in elected officials compared to registered voters, they stand to lose as a result."

The amendments already have survived court challenges. Brown and Mario Diaz-Balart filed an unsuccessful challenge in court to get Amendment 6 taken off the ballot. The Florida Legislature tried to put on the ballot a separate amendment that opponents said would undermine Amendments 5 and 6, but it was struck down by a judge who called it misleading and confusing.

If voters approve Amendments 5 and 6, they likely will face even more court challenges that could threaten to delay the redistricting process set to begin next year and extend into 2012.

"If this passes, we will go the next day to federal court," Brown said. "We'll take it all the way to the Supreme Court."



# Amendments 5 and 6 would reshape Florida redistricting

Christopher Collette

6 days ago



explicitly prohibits that from happening.

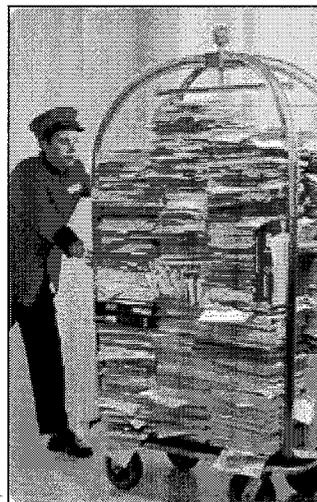
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ORLANDO, Florida (AP) -- Florida voters will decide if they want new standards for how legislative and congressional districts are redrawn.

Amendments 5 and 6 on the Nov. 2 ballot would require that both legislative and congressional districts be compact, equal in population and make use of existing city, county and geographical boundaries. The amendments also would prohibit drawing districts to favor or disfavor an incumbent or political party.

Several of Florida's best-known black and Hispanic lawmakers oppose the amendments, saying they could threaten Florida's six congressional districts where blacks and Hispanics are either in the majority or close to it.

But supporters say language in both amendments



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Feedback

**Orlando Sentinel** — The Fair Districts folks are ramping up their campaign on behalf of Amendments 5 and 6, which would set new standards for how the Legislature draws congressional and legislative district lines. ~ Besides going up with a new ad — watch it below — the group is bringing in New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg for a Miami press conference on Friday. Bloomberg will join Former Miami Mayor and Chairman of FairDistrictsFlorida.org Manny Diaz . ~ Bloomberg is a vocal advocate of redistricting reform. The billionaire founder of Bloomberg LLP is also known for spending \$100 million or more of his own money to win election as New York City's mayor, and an equal amount to win a referendum defeating the city's two-term limit for mayors. No word if he intends to share some of his wealth with the FairDistricts campaign. ~ ~ Mayor Bloomberg has been a vocal advocate of redistricting reform in New York and California. He will urge support of Amendments 5 and 6 to fix the broken ...More

Source: Bloomberg Television and Redistricting on Freebase, licensed under CC-BY

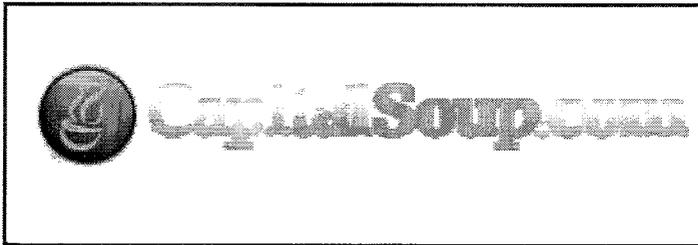
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## **Home » Education » Currently Reading:**

# **Former NAACP Head Dr. Chavis Discusses Opposition to Amendments 5 and 6 with Central Florida Pastors**

October 12, 2010 [News Advisories](#) No Comments

Tallahassee, Fla. – Former National Executive Director and CEO of the NAACP Dr. Benjamin Chavis,

Jr. today will join Congresswoman Corrine Brown and a group of Central Florida pastors to express opposition to Amendments 5 and 6, which threaten minority representation in Florida. On Monday, Dr. Chavis issued a challenge to backers of Amendments 5 and 6, asking them to draw one map using their unworkable requirements without harming minority representation.

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Please see attached press release dated Monday, October 11, 2010.

What: Media Availability with Dr. Benjamin Chavis, Jr.

Where: Mama Nems'  
805 S Kirkman Rd  
Suite 106  
Orlando FL, 32811

When: Tuesday, October 12, 2010

2:30 p.m.

Who:

- Dr. Benjamin Chavis
- Congresswoman Corrine Brown
- Sen. Gary Siplin
- Local pastors

#### PROMINENT NATIONAL CIVIL RIGHTS LEADER SPEAKS OUT AGAINST AMENDMENTS 5 AND 6, CHALLENGES PROPONENTS TO DRAW THEIR DISTRICTS WITHOUT HARMING MINORITY REPRESENTATION

Coral Springs, FL – Dr. Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr., former National Executive Director and CEO of the NAACP and a 50-year veteran of the Civil Rights Movement in the United States today expressed tremendous concern about Amendments 5 and 6 and the negative impact they would have on minority representation.

“I am categorically opposed to Constitutional Amendments 5 and 6 on the ballot in the upcoming elections in the state of Florida because these proposed amendments fundamentally violate the voting rights of all Floridians, especially minority voters,” said Dr. Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr. Dr. Chavis in the 1960s was the N.C. State Youth Coordinator for the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and in the 1970s and 1980s he became the Executive Director and CEO of the 1.6 million-member United Church of Christ Commission for Racial Justice. Additionally, Dr. Chavis challenged backers of Amendments 5 and 6 to draw Florida’s political boundaries using their own requirements without reducing the number of minorities elected to office. “Supporters of Amendments 5 and 6 cannot guarantee their guidelines will not reduce minority representation in Florida, which is why they have yet to produce a map,” said Chavis. “The Protect Your Vote campaign challenges Amendment 5 and 6 supporters to prove their requirements will not silence minorities across Florida.”

Additionally, Dr. Chavis commended other African-American leaders for standing against Amendments 5 and 6. “No one knows the value of voting rights more than Congressman John Lewis (D-GA). Today I stand with John Lewis, Corrine Brown, T. Willard Fair, Rodney Hurst and other civil rights leaders throughout America and across Florida who are opposed to Amendments 5 and 6,” Dr. Chavis said. “The so-called Fair Districts Amendments are unfair to Florida’s minority voters. We marched, bled, and went to jail to get the Voting Rights Act. We need to move forward in Florida and not backward to

dismantle the progress that we have made to ensure the equal voting rights for all. The proposed Amendments are deceptive and will set the stage for the disempowerment of minority voters.”

Congresswoman Corrine Brown (D-FL) continues to be a leader for full voting rights in Florida and throughout the United States. Joining Dr. Chavis, Congresswoman Brown today said, “One goal of the Voting Rights Act was remediation of past discrimination and the legal rights of many, many residents of majority-minority districts or minority access districts that were required or inspired by the Voting Rights Act to elect a person of their choice would be violated if this intent were ignored in favor of districts that look better on a map.”

To date, the ideas have never been tried in any state in the nation and no one supporting the amendments has drawn a map that meets the rigorous requirements in the language. Additionally, Amendments similar to 5 and 6 have been consistently rejected by voters in other states.

Dr. Chavis is the latest prominent African-American leader to express concern over Amendments 5 and 6. Recently, a top staffer of House Majority Whip James Clyburn expressed his concerns over the amendments.

Additionally, a recent report from the Southern Coalition for Social Justice points out, among other things, “Contrary to claims by proponents, the Amendments do not provide greater protections for minority voters and specifically do not incorporate the Section 5 non-retrogression standard under the VRA into the Florida Constitution.” To read the report, please visit <http://bit.ly/cg4Y2w>.

Currently, Dr. Chavis is President of Education Online Services Corporation based in Coral Springs, Florida. Dr. Chavis concluded, “As a Florida resident, I am concerned that there are some who are planting seeds of confusion about these discriminatory Amendments. That is why I am speaking out. I will not be silent when the political interests and quality of life of African Americans, Hispanic Americans and others are all at stake. Vote no on Amendments 5 and 6.”

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To learn more about the Protect Your Vote campaign, please visit our website at <http://www.protectyourvote.com> and follow us on Facebook and Twitter.

###

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## ADVERTISEMENTS

**SFGate**.com**Prop. 20: Fair redistricting empowers dissenters**

Bill Mundell

Tuesday, October 12, 2010

Albert Einstein defined insanity as doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results.

We've seen redistricting initiatives appear on the California ballot and, except for 2008, all have failed. Reformers have struggled with the burden of trying to pitch a complex "inside baseball" issue that is loved by political junkies but very hard to explain simply to the general public.

That's why we decided to make the movie "Gerrymandering," which has received critical acclaim and will open in theaters throughout the country this week. In fact, hundreds of thousands of copies of our film will be sent directly to homes in California. My hope is that this will lead voters to vote yes on Proposition 20 (which would give the existing redistricting commission the power to draw the new district lines for Congress) and no on Proposition 27 (which would eliminate the commission altogether).

Gerrymandering is America's best-kept secret. It has effectively disenfranchised the majority of voters - and they don't even know it. But they do know our country's infrastructure is crumbling, our economy has cratered and our government is broken. It turns out our ability to address those problems is directly affected by the arcane rules of redistricting.

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James Madison wrote that "the genius of representative government comes from excluding the people in their collective capacity from the direct business of governing." It's a terrific idea, but it presumes a well-functioning, responsive system.

The failure of representative democracy in this state has led citizens to overutilize the initiative process to express their will. Originally conceived as a reserve power, the initiative has become a full partner to the legislative process. This initiative inflation has given us unfunded, uncoordinated mandates that cannot be adjusted to deal with changing circumstances, leading directly to our recurring budget disaster. Whoever is elected governor of California in November will be trapped by this system.

The passage of Prop. 20 and the defeat of Prop. 27 will take the power to draw the district lines for Congress away from the politicians and give it back to the people. Fair district lines are sure to again produce a significant number of competitive House races in those areas of the state with both Democrats and Republicans.

Even if redistricting reform doesn't produce a single newly competitive district, taking the power to draw lines away from the party caucuses still will have a salutary effect on our representative democracy.

When the line-drawing process is in the hands of the party leaders, legislators feel compelled to toe the party line to preserve their futures. If it does nothing else, redistricting reform will empower intra-party dissenters in a way that enhances the free flow of ideas that should be a normal part of the legislative process. This reform is unquestionably an initiative of the people and not of the politicians nor of the special interests that control them. An honest redistricting system will give us the chance to overcome the undemocratic and self-interested schemes of career politicians.

Bill Mundell is the executive producer of the film "Gerrymandering" and the former chair of Californians for Fair Redistricting. His film will be released nationally on Friday.

<http://sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?f=/c/a/2010/10/12/EDGD1FR9PA.DTL>

This article appeared on page **A - 10** of the San Francisco Chronicle

# Florida Redistricting: Amendments 5 and 6 Pit Power Against Voters - Florida Redistricting Elections Primer 2010 | FlaglerLive

<http://flaglerlive.com/12700/amendments-5-6-florida-redistricting>

December 16, 2010

[FlaglerLive](#) | October 13, 2010

Lack of representation is an old story for Flagler County.

Redistricting, which happens every 10 years, is the redrawing of political boundaries—congressional, state house and senate, school board districts, and so on. It's done following the decennial census, to keep up with population trends.

In every democracy in the world, redistricting is the job of independent commissions. Not in Florida.

Florida is among 45 states where the state Legislature takes on redistricting. In those 45 states, a few of which have advisory commissions, whoever controls the Legislature controls the outcome, which is to say that politicians in power get to choose their own voters. In Florida, when Democrats were in charge in the last century, they drew boundaries to favor them and diminish Republicans' chances of a take-over as much as they could. It worked for decades. Since Republicans took over the Florida Senate in 1992 and the Florida House in 1996, they were able to control redistricting in 2001, much to their advantage. They'll do it again next year.

Two proposed constitutional amendments would change that, to a degree: Amendments 5 and 6. The initiatives are identical but for one difference. Amendment 5 applies to the redistricting of state legislative boundaries. Amendment 6 applies to congressional district boundaries.

Neither initiative would create an independent commission. Rather, the initiatives call for districts to be "contiguous" and "compact, as equal in population as feasible, and where feasible must make use of existing city, county and geographical boundaries."

Whoever controls the Legislature would still control the process. Even if the initiatives pass—they'll need 60 percent of the vote to do so—redistricting in Florida would remain a politicized process. It would merely be somewhat less politicized, and possibly diminish the staying power of incumbents as well as the influence of the party in power, when it comes to redistricting. For example, computer programs legislators use now to pinpoint and separate heavily Democratic neighborhoods from heavily Republican one would no longer be allowed when redistricting.

The lack of precision in the amendments may make litigation more likely, although when Democrats redistricted in the early 1990s, the result ended up in court, and when Republicans did so in 2001, they ended up in court as well. Litigation following redistricting is a norm when legislatures are involved instead of independent commissions.

The initiatives have not created entirely predictable camps favoring and opposing them, although generally speaking, conservatives and incumbents oppose the amendments, liberals favor them. A few black and Hispanic lawmakers in Tallahassee worry redistricting under the proposed rules would hurt their chances of keeping their seats in six congressional districts where they have a majority, or something close to one. The districts include those of Democrats Corrine Brown, Alcee Hastings and Kendrick Meek, and Republicans Lincoln Diaz-Balart, Mario Diaz-Balart and Ileana Ros-Lehtinen.

The initiatives are supported by [Fair Districts Florida](#), a non-profit, non-partisan organization led by former Miami Mayor Manny Diaz, an independent, former Senator and Governor Bob Graham a Democrat, former Attorney General Janet Reno, a Democrat, former State Senator Daryl Jones a Democrat, former Comptroller

Bob Milligan, a Republican, former Assistant Secretary of the Interior Nat Reed, a Republican, and former Judge Thom Rumberger, a Republican. Their supporters include the NAACP, the League of Women Voters, the Florida League of Cities, the Florida Association of Counties, the Florida School Board Association, and the American Civil Liberties Union. Some 1.7 million Floridians signed petitions to put the initiatives on the ballot.

Brown and Mario Diaz-Balart are openly against the initiatives, as are Florida's business lobbies and the Florida Chamber of Commerce. They have coalesced around an organization called [protectyourvote.com](http://protectyourvote.com), led by former Secretary of State Kurt Browning. Brown is worried because a non-majority-black district would make her re-election more difficult—a distinctly self-serving rather than principled opposition to the amendments.

Some black or Hispanic state legislators are also worried, for the same reason. In the state Legislature, 24 House seats and six Senate seats are majority black or Hispanic. But looking beyond incumbents—whose anxiety always spikes at redistricting time regardless—popular support for redistricting is more pronounced because of popular discontent with incumbents.

Florida tried to reform its redistricting system in 1978, 1993 and 1998, and failed every time. California voters will also be voting in a redistricting amendment of their own in November, though in California the ballot initiative would create an independent commission.

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# FLORIDATODAY.com

## Your views: The political divide (Oct. 13)

October 13, 2010

### Port ignores economic potential to Brevard

FLORIDA TODAY's gee-whiz endorsement of Port Authority District 5 candidate Tom Weinberg, who has no experience in cargo, passenger or tourism, is not much help to a county in fiscal peril.

We have had a culture at Port Canaveral that for decades has ignored its economic potential to Brevard. Economic potentialities that will never change until the culture changes.

Our port provides the public with an economic impact report that is utter nonsense and excuses not to engage in local tourism. The voice of the people should acknowledge that Port Canaveral has never published a financial profit-and-loss statement in its annual report like the other Florida ports.

My website, [www.MakeChangeWithNichols.com](http://www.MakeChangeWithNichols.com), provides real economic potentialities that most other candidates only script with vague job phrases.

I am hands-on with cargo, cruise and tourism. I understand port matters and recall that in 2008, when the newspaper endorsed the port culture of the other District 5 candidate, it used the phrase, "hands down," when it should have used the phrase, "hands up."

**Pete Nichols**

### Port commissioner candidate, District 5 Cape Canaveral

### Reject redistricting Amendments 5 and 6

I fully agree with Sunday's "Other Views" article by State Sen. Mike Haridopolos, R-Merritt Island, "Outside interests behind redistricting," supporting a "no" vote for Amendments 5 and 6 in the state Constitution for redistricting in Florida.

When outside money is funneled into a state the way it has been in Florida, one has to take a deeper look to measure the impact of outside interests and their intentions. Why, one might ask, has this lobby of

supporters not taken the same interest and concern in Northeast states where gerrymandering began in Massachusetts around 1812.

Perhaps it's because these states are as liberal as they can possibly be without allowing dead Democrats to vote. With Florida becoming more and more of a swing state, beware of the true intentions of this amendment.

Until states in the Northeast and left coast are equally addressed, I implore all Republicans and independents to vote for the status quo with a "no" vote on Amendments 5 and 6.

**Don Burns**

### Merritt Island

### Pass Amendments 5, 6 to end gerrymandering

I commend FLORIDA TODAY for its Sunday editorial in favor of Amendments 5 and 6 to the state Constitution.

It was interesting to see Sen. Mike Haridopolos' view against the two amendments, warning voters to "just follow the money."

He believes the effort to eliminate the gerrymandering in this state is a plot to bring liberals into Congress and Tallahassee. He did not mention how unbalanced the state Legislature is due almost entirely to the partisan redistricting that took place in a Republican-dominated Legislature in 2001.



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Talk about highly partisan tactics, Mr. Haridopolos, the very conservative element of the Republican Party has for years used them to ensure their hand-picked candidates are elected, forcing out any chance for moderate views to even be heard in the Legislature.

It is time we return power to the electorate and let them decide who they want to represent them in Tallahassee rather than corrupt politicians of both major parties drawing lines to ensure they stay in power.

Please vote yes on Amendments 5 and 6.  
**James W. Gaidry**

## Palm Bay

### Begin fixing problems by voting out Democrats

You don't fix your hair while you're bleeding to death. We're too involved with the small stuff while the country is going down the tubes.

President Obama was against the surge in Iraq, but he's sure for it in the U.S. We have been drifting toward socialism for nearly 100 years. Now, Obama is pushing hard to close the deal, so hard that he has awakened the sleeping giant, which is being manifested by the tea party and others.

Why do so many people want to tell others what to do? They think they can manage your life better than you can because they are smart and you are dumb. Society prospered best with freedom. There is intelligence and there is wisdom, and those smart folks aren't very wise. They don't seem to realize we are not sheep.

We need to stop the hemorrhaging now. Then we can work on fixing our other problems. The best option is to throw out the Democrats in Washington to keep Obama in check until the 2012 election.

They say the Republicans in Washington are obstructionists. Thank heaven. Of course, they need fixing, too.  
**Tom Mahone**

## Titusville

### Amendment 4 is full of negatives

It is so rare that FLORIDA TODAY writes an editorial in favor of business and private property rights that I had to read it twice. Thank you for recommending a "no" vote on Amendment 4 to the state Constitution.

Amendment 4, with a down-home very deceiving name, Hometown Democracy, is nothing more than a guaranteed trial lawyer retirement fund.

A yes vote for Amendment 4 guarantees the loss of tens of thousands of jobs, will hurt small businesses and working families and result in our taxes skyrocketing to pay for legal fees and endless elections.

If you have any doubts why you should vote no on Amendment 4, check with St. Petersburg Beach, which passed a similar amendment in 2006 and watched its legal fees soar defending itself against lawsuits, putting the city in financial free fall.  
**Deanna M. Reiter**

## Merritt Island

### Congressman Posey is friend of seniors

It's the silly season of politics again. Whenever Washington Democratic leaders get close to an election, they insult senior citizens by telling us that Republicans will cut Medicare and Social Security.

These scare tactics won't work this year, and here is why.

Our congressman, Rep Bill Posey, R-Rockledge,

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voted against the national health care bill because the bill cut over \$500 billion from Medicare.

Richard Foster, who runs the budget office at Medicare, issued a report in August saying the Medicare cuts in that bill are so deep that seniors will lose necessary services. His report also says Congress is unlikely to let seniors suffer and will instead be forced to restore some of these services if they can find the money to do so.

That means the health care bill had fundamental budget flaws and wasn't really paid for as we were told.

Not only has Posey shown his support for seniors by voting against massive Medicare cuts, but he showed his commitment to Social Security by introducing the Senior Citizens Income Security Act, HR 5725, which ends the double taxation of Social Security benefits.

Thank you, Rep. Posey, for doing the right thing for seniors. Posey should be re-elected.

**Carol Hurst**

**Merritt Island**



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## Tony Fransetta: Why retirees should support Amendments 5 and 6

*Published: Wednesday, October 13, 2010 at 11:37 a.m.*

On November 2 voters will have an historic opportunity to vote for meaningful political reform by voting "Yes" on the "Fair Districts" Amendments 5 and 6. To help ensure fair elections and to reign in political corruption, almost 1.7 million Floridians signed petitions to place these very important amendments on the ballot.

Amendments 5 and 6 add strong and clear language to Florida's Constitution to end the self-serving practice of legislators drawing their own districts and creating districts to favor a specific political party. The Legislature would be required to follow these standards when it re-draws the lines for legislative and congressional districts. No longer will politicians be able to draw district lines to favor themselves or their allies, or to use redistricting to draw their adversaries out of office.

These amendments will eliminate "gerrymandering," or the practice of drawing "safe" districts for incumbents, which has been the practice of the Legislature for many years. Because of how they draw the districts, legislators do not have to fear any serious election opposition so they vote according to instructions from their political parties or, worse, special interests.

In 420 elections for the legislature over the last six years only 3 incumbents have been defeated. Under our current system, voters clearly do not have a voice because the Legislature has elections rigged. Amendments 5 and 6 will fix the corrupt system we have now and plant the seeds for real democracy to Florida.

All of Florida's major newspapers support Amendments 5 and 6. One major newspaper put it succinctly, 'Amendments 5 and 6 will give control back to Florida's voters, where it belongs.'

The stakes could not be higher. The passage of Amendments 5 and 6 will reshape the Legislature. Legislative leaders know this. Senator Mike Haridopolos, the next President of the Senate, and Representative Dean Cannon, the next Speaker of the House, worked hard last session to pass a joint resolution that would have placed a competing amendment on the ballot that would have nullified Amendments 5 and 6. Fortunately, the courts struck down this "poison pill" amendment. We are appalled by the actions of Haridopolos and Cannon, who now continue to advocate the defeat of Amendments 5 and 6. A \$4 million media fund is being created to confuse and trick voters into voting against Amendments 5 and 6. Voters should reject these negative media ads and the disingenuous antics of Haridopolos and Cannon.

Most egregious is the claim by Haridopolos and Cannon that Amendments 5 and 6 will weaken minority representation. The NAACP testified last session that they support Amendments 5 and 6. The fact of the matter is that federal law will continue to ensure minority representation. What worries legislative leaders is that these amendments will make it much more difficult for special interests to perpetuate their influence in the legislature. And special interests fuel the campaign war chests of politicians.

Our organization, the Florida Alliance for Retired Americans (FLARA), is disgusted with political corruption in Tallahassee, and we have made passage of these

amendments our number one priority. We have urged all of our more than 200,000 members to go to the polls this November 2 to vote for Amendments 5 and 6 and to bring their friends and neighbors with them.

These amendments are supported by some of the most respected organizations in Florida, including the League of Women Voters, the NAACP, the Florida Public Interest Research Group, Common Cause, and the AARP.

FLARA is proud to support these two amendments, which we believe are the most important ever to appear on the ballot. The Florida Alliance for Retired Americans is a thriving statewide activist retiree organization with over 200,000 members in Florida and over 4 million members nationally. We aim to influence government on retiree legislative and political issues at the federal, state and local levels. Our mission is to ensure social and economic justice and full civil rights for all citizens, so they may enjoy lives of dignity, personal and family fulfillment and security.

Tony Fransetta,

President,

Florida Alliance for Retired Americans

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## Effects of Amendments 5 and 6, redistricting debated

TBO.com

Every 10 years, the state Legislature redraws Florida's legislative and congressional district boundaries to reflect the latest census data. But the results tend equally to reflect the political ambitions of those wielding the pen.

It may sound like the ultimate insider's game, but voters have a lot at stake. How lawmakers divvy up the electorate into legislative districts, for example, can factor heavily into which party controls the Legislature, which policies it adopts and how it spends the state's money.

FairDistrictsFlorida.org is the citizens initiative responsible for Amendments 5 and 6, Backed by teacher and service employee unions as well as the Florida NAACP and ACLU, Fair Districts claims its proposals would end gerrymandering.

Congressional and legislative districts could not be drawn to favor or disfavor incumbents under the Fair Districts plan, and could not diminish opportunities for minority voters to elect candidates of their choice.

Districts would have to be contiguous and compact wherever possible, following pre-existing city and county boundaries.

But state lawmakers [are](#) primarily Republicans [are](#) fighting it, claiming its mandates cannot be accomplished legally.

"It's mathematically impossible to do what they describe," said state Sen. Mike Haridopolos, R-Merritt Island, who steered a third redistricting amendment through the Legislature this spring.

Redistricting automatically favors one candidate over another, he said, and the amendments threaten existing minority districts, both by requiring compactness and by banning consideration of incumbents.

AMENDMENT 5"Legislative districts or districting plans may not be drawn to favor or disfavor an incumbent or political party. Districts shall not be drawn to deny racial or language minorities the equal opportunity to participate in the political process and elect representatives of their choice. Districts must be contiguous. Unless otherwise required, districts must be compact, as equal in population as feasible, and where feasible must make use of existing city, county and geographical boundaries."

AMENDMENT 6"Congressional districts or districting plans may not be drawn to favor or disfavor an incumbent or political party. Districts shall not be drawn to deny racial or language minorities the equal opportunity to participate in the political process and elect representatives of their choice. Districts must be contiguous. Unless otherwise required, districts must be compact, as equal in population as feasible, and where feasible must make use of existing city, county and geographical boundaries."

**The issue:**

Amendments 5 and 6 seek to prevent gerrymandering in the drawing of districts for the state Legislature and Florida congressional delegation. They require lawmakers to draw "compact" and "contiguous" districts instead of the current requirements that lawmakers draw contiguous districts that follow federal law and the Voting Rights Act.

**Who's against it:**

Republicans fear the amendments will result in districts less friendly to Republicans, who currently hold majorities in the Legislature and the U.S. House delegation. Opponents Former Florida Secretary of State Kurt Browning, U.S. Reps. Corrine Brown, a Democrat, and Mario Diaz-Balart, a Republican, Associated Industries of Florida and the Florida Chamber of Commerce. Brown and Diaz-Balart argue the amendments will lead to the dissolution of minority representation by challenging gerrymandered "minority access districts" like Brown's, which lack court protection since their make-up is less than 50 percent minority.

Group: Protect Your Vote. TECO Energy has contributed \$25,000 to the group, which includes Republican lawmakers Dean Cannon, Don Gaetz and Will Weatherford  
Website: [protectyourvote.com](http://protectyourvote.com)

Generally, Democrats, who are in the minority in the Florida legislature, support the amendments. Supporters argue that 5 and 6 protect minorities and reinforce the federal Voting Rights Act and other safeguards by preventing politicians from drawing district boundaries to suit their own self-interests.

Group: Fair Districts Florida, which collected 1.7 million signatures to add its proposals to the ballot. Honorary co-chairmen include former Gov. Bob Graham, former State Sen. Daryl Jones, former U.S. Attorney General Janet Reno, former Lt. Gov. and state comptroller Bob Milligan.

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

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**Redistricting Creates Florida Alliances**  
 (<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748704029304575525992383827092.html?KEYWORDS=redistricting>)

(The Wall Street Journal)

Article Type: News Article

This article has to do with the relationship between redistricting and gerrymandering. Redistricting is the redrawing of Congressional Districts based on the census every ten years. Gerrymandering is the use of redistricting for the advantage of a legislator's political party. Gerrymandering includes "cracking" which spreads same sided voters apart, and "packing" which groups same sided voters together. Both of these help legislators by giving them the voters who will vote for their party.

The relationship between redistricting and gerrymandering is that when a legislator is ready to draw their district's lines, they want to gain as many seats in Congress as possible for their party, so they will use gerrymandering to get more supportive voters even if it means creating a district that looks like a big maze, looping around and branching out. These oddly shaped districts are known as "bugsplats" in Florida.

In this article an organization from Florida called "Fair Districts Florida" has asked for two amendments to the Florida Constitution that will ban legislators from creating "bugsplats". These two new amendments, Amendment 5 and Amendment 6, restrict legislators to the drawing of compact districts that follow preexisting government lines. If 60% of Florida's voters agree with these amendments on the next ballot then gerrymandering may not be a problem for Florida's citizen much longer. A California congressman is also battling against strangely drawn districts by proposing a law that mirrors the amendments for Florida's Constitution. This representative wants independent commissions to create the districts therefore making them less political.

Though many people say that laws such as these will make redistricting an easier and less confusing task, some legislators say that it would not be practical and would cause courts to become in charge of redistricting. Legislators really do not want this. Right now, whether the states will win their battle over redistricting is hard to say. It's up to the voters to decide.

Posted by Lindsey Conway at 8:08 PM  
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## Parker on Politics: Look who's paying for Florida redistricting amendment ads

By Betty Parker • Special to news-press.com • October 16, 2010

**1:10 A.M.** — Like almost all political TV ads, those opposing amendments 5 and 6, and now running regularly in Southwest Florida, are so over-stated as to be almost laughable.

While there's much talk about "liberal" out-of-state interests, and the implication that your vote is in danger, there's less information about who's behind the ad.

But first, let's recall what the amendments do. They're designed to help prevent gerrymandering, or drawing political districts for a political party's advantage, regardless of common interests in the communities.

That's how Southwest Florida's Senate District 27, with its inclusion of west and east coast communities, became the textbook example of gerrymandering. Along with that often comes the congressional district that lumps parts of Collier and Naples into a district dominated by Hispanic areas of Miami.

Overall, Lee County has been carved up to become part of three Senate districts; the result is that none of the three senators representing Lee live in it, and county residents are outnumbered by voters elsewhere.

Candidates from both parties agree those districts make no sense and should be changed. As long as the current system continues, that's a tough job. But — despite what the ad indicates — the amendment effort, called "Fair Districts," is bipartisan. Its leaders include Republicans Bob Milligan and Nat Reed and Democrats Bob Graham and Janet Reno, along with the League of Women Voters, AARP, and other groups.

Legislative leaders fight any potential loss of their power to draw districts, and they've helped organize efforts to oppose the amendments. Hence the ads, credited to a group called "Protect Your Vote," attacking the amendments.

The cash comes from a handful of sources, but the

biggest donor so far is the Republican Party of Florida, which gave \$750,000. Republicans control the Legislature and the redistricting process; in years past the Democrats did the same.

Other donors to the ad effort include U.S. Sugar, \$100,000; Florida Realtors, \$250,000; with the Florida Chamber of Commerce and TECO energy giving smaller amounts.

### Mack speculation

With redistricting around the corner, regardless of how the amendments turn out, politicians and would-be candidates are eying any extra seats that may develop in Southwest Florida.

A new congressional district that's a major part of this area is unlikely, although the population growth indicates the existing district, now held by U.S. Rep. Connie Mack IV, R-Fort Myers, may shrink geographically because of population growth.

And there's already speculation that Mack's considering a statewide run in 2012 against Democratic U.S. Sen. Bill Nelson. Fueling the talk is Mack's opposition to Arizona's immigration law, a stand that ran contrary to many of his current constituents, but one that could help him gain Hispanic support in a statewide race.

Mack "understands there is some interest building for him to consider running against Sen. Nelson," said a Mack spokeswoman Stephanie DuBois, adding that while you "never say never" in politics, Mack "is



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not considering a Senate run right now.”

### Scott's future?

Lee County Sheriff Mike Scott's name comes up repeatedly as a possible candidate for Congress if Mack decides to leave.

Scott said Friday he expects to seek re-election in two years, but he won't make a firm decision until after the holidays. Even if he did decide to do something different, he said, it could be something other than elected office, and it's unlikely he would run for Congress under any circumstances.

Congress' glacial rate of action, as well as the distance between D.C. and home, he said, makes that choice less appealing than several other possibilities — including an appointed post in government, teaching, or even going back to school for a law degree.

“But if I had to say right now what I'll do, I think I'll go for one more four-year term,” Scott said.

### Trap shooting

In the contested race for state House 73 — one of the more evenly balanced districts in the area, with about 34,000 Republican, 32,000 Democrats, and 20,000 “other” voters — Democratic candidate Cole Peacock picked up GOP support this week from Bob Shrader, the former Republican state committeeman from Lee County. Shrader is still a Republican but said he thinks Peacock is the best candidate in the race.

Peacock also won Nelson's endorsement.

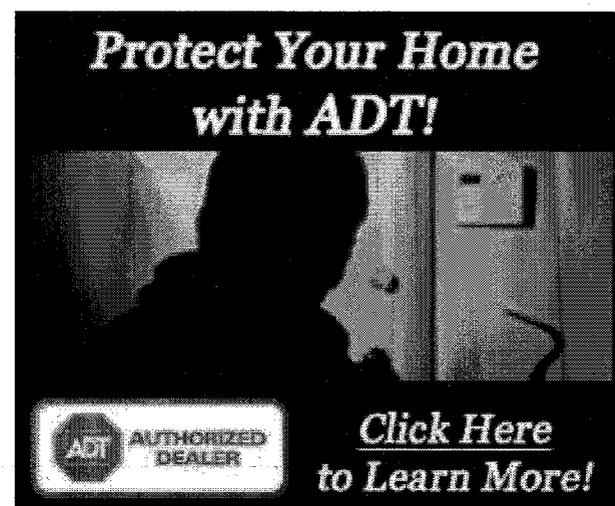
Matt Caldwell, the Republican candidate for the state House seat, has joined forces with Lizbeth Benacquisto, the Republican candidate for Senate District 27, and three other GOP state House candidates from west central Florida, for a different kind of fundraiser. They're the beneficiaries of a dove hunt today in Punta Gorda, which includes “unlimited trap shooting” and, for an extra donation, a “European Pheasant Tower Shoot.”

### Ag fundraiser

Republican candidate for agriculture commissioner Adam Putnam has been on TV in Southwest Florida for weeks; on Sunday he'll be in Fort Myers in

person at a 5:30 p.m. fundraiser at The Veranda. Hosts include Lee County Sheriff Mike Scott, Bill Barnwell, Joe Coleman, Joe Flint, Rich Galvano, Tammy Hall, Larry Hart, Fort Myers Mayor Randy Henderson and Jenna Persons.

— Betty Parker is a freelance journalist who specializes in politics. Her column appears on Saturdays. Contact her at [parkerspolitics@aol.com](mailto:parkerspolitics@aol.com).



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## Play fair with district lines

There aren't many issues that can unite Republicans, Democrats, tea partiers, the League of Women Voters and business leaders with the Future of Hampton Roads. There's probably only one.

All of those groups gathered in Norfolk last month with the same message: the existing system for drawing legislative and congressional districts in Virginia is badly broken.

Their audience was polite but not particularly sympathetic. The forum was sponsored by the House of Delegates committee that draws the districts. For incumbents desiring a safe seat, the results are pretty nifty. For people who have to live in chopped up neighborhoods and cities, the political confetti is frustrating and divisive.

Norfolk was a fitting location for the public hearing. Two state senators and six delegates represent some piece of Norfolk, but only two delegates have districts located wholly within city limits. One speaker suggested the city was being punished because it favors Democrats. But the Republicans in Chesapeake didn't seem very happy either. Their city is represented by four senators and seven delegates.

Pete Burkheimer, chairman of the city's GOP committee, told legislators that city residents were depressed enough over the recession and didn't need them "slicing and dicing and gerrymandering our beloved Chesapeake."

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The most outspoken advocates for reform came from three tea party leaders who lined up to demand that an independent commission be established to draw the new districts. Their advocacy may have come as a surprise, but it shouldn't have. Candidate recruitment is more difficult for their new political movement because of the confusing political lines, they said.

That's probably not a strong motivator for the legislators at the forum who'd rather not face a tea party challenger in next year's General Assembly elections. But they shouldn't have the power to snuff out opposition without giving voters a say.

At the beginning of the forum, Suffolk Del. Chris Jones defended the districts drawn 10 years ago, noting that they survived court challenges. At the close of the hearing, a speaker reminded him of those words and added, "The courts didn't ask the citizens how they felt about the redistricting lines."

The court of public opinion has made its feelings known, and the jury verdict is unanimous. It's time for reform.

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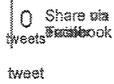
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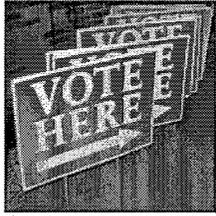
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## Vote No to Amendments 5 & 6 Says Civil Rights Leader

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Dr. Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr, former National Executive Director and CEO of the NAACP and a 50-year veteran of the Civil Rights Movement in the United States today expressed tremendous concern about **Amendments 5 and 6** and the negative impact they would have on minority representation.



"I am categorically opposed to Constitutional Amendments 5 and 6 on the ballot in the upcoming elections in the state of Florida because these proposed amendments fundamentally violate the voting rights of all Floridians, especially minority voters," said Dr. Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr. Dr. Chavis in the 1960s was the N.C. State Youth Coordinator for the Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr and the Southern Christian Leadership Conference (SCLC) and in the 1970s and 1980s he became the Executive Director and CEO of the 1.6 million-member United Church of Christ Commission for Racial Justice.

Additionally, Dr. Chavis challenged backers of Amendments 5 and 6 to draw Florida's political boundaries using their own requirements without reducing the number of minorities elected to office.

"Supporters of **Amendments 5 and 6** cannot guarantee their guidelines will not reduce minority representation in Florida, which is why they have yet to produce a map," said Chavis. "The Protect Your Vote campaign challenges Amendment 5 and 6 supporters to prove their requirements will not silence minorities across Florida."

Dr. Chavis commended other African-American leaders for standing against Amendments 5 and 6.

"No one knows the value of voting rights more than Congressman John Lewis (D-GA). Today I stand with John Lewis, Corrine Brown, T. Willard Fair, Rodney Hurst and other civil rights leaders throughout America and across Florida who are opposed to Amendments 5 and 6," Dr. Chavis said. "The so-called Fair Districts Amendments are unfair to Florida's minority voters. We marched, bled, and went to jail to get the Voting Rights Act. We need to move forward in Florida and not backward to dismantle the progress that we have made to ensure the equal voting rights for all. The proposed Amendments are deceptive and will set the stage for the dis-empowerment of minority voters."

Congresswoman Corrine Brown (D-FL) continues to be a leader for full **voting rights** in Florida and throughout the United States. Joining Dr. Chavis, Congresswoman Brown today said, "One goal of the Voting Rights Act was remediation of past discrimination and the legal rights of many, many residents of majority-minority districts or minority access districts that were required or inspired by the Voting Rights Act to elect a person of their choice would be violated if this intent were ignored in favor of districts that look better on a map."

To date, the ideas have never been tried in any state in the nation and no one supporting the amendments has drawn a map that meets the rigorous requirements in the language. Additionally, Amendments similar to 5 and 6 have been consistently rejected by voters in other states.

Dr. Chavis is the latest prominent African-American leader to express concern over Amendments 5 and 6. Recently, a top staffer of House Majority Whip James Clyburn expressed his concerns over the amendments. Additionally, a recent report from the Southern Coalition for Social Justice points out, among other things, "Contrary to claims by proponents, the Amendments do not provide greater protections for minority voters and specifically do not incorporate the Section 5 non-retrogression standard under the VRA into the Florida Constitution." To read the report, please visit <http://bit.ly/cg4Y2w>.

Currently, Dr. Chavis is President of Education Online Services Corporation based in Coral Springs, Florida. Dr. Chavis concluded, "As a Florida resident, I am concerned that there are some who are planting seeds of confusion about these discriminatory Amendments. That is why I am speaking out. I will not be silent when the political interests and quality of life of African Americans, Hispanic Americans and others are all at stake. Vote no on Amendments 5 and 6."

To learn more about the Protect Your Vote campaign, please visit our website at <http://www.protectyourvote.com> and follow us on Facebook and Twitter.

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# Bloomberg throws his support behind Fair Districts amendments

<http://floridaindependent.com/10685/michael-bloomberg-throws-his-support-behind-fair-districts-amendments>

December 23, 2010

Perhaps the two most well-known politicians involved in campaigning against Amendments 5 and 6 (which would effectively disallow representatives from redrawing their own district lines to ensure their reelection) are Reps. Corrine Brown, D-Jacksonville, and Mario Diaz-Balart, R-Miami. Brown and Diaz-Balart both represent strangely drawn districts that consist overwhelmingly of minority voters belonging to each representative's own political party. Both have been staunch in their [opposition](#) to the amendments that, if passed, might lead to the end of their political reigns.

With the election nearing, the hotly-contested battle over the amendments has also grown to include politicians from states well outside of Florida.

New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg has made his support for Amendments 5 and 6 known in the past few days. Last week, Bloomberg [joined](#) former Miami Mayor Manny Diaz for a press conference detailing the pros of the two amendments. Today, in an email sent out by [Fair Districts Florida](#), Bloomberg reiterated his decision to support the amendments that he says will “will answer the call of voters frustrated with incumbents who seem more interested in protecting their own jobs than in creating jobs for everyone else.”

Read the email in full:

Last week, I traveled down to Florida and spoke in front of a large crowd and many news cameras about why **Amendments 5 & 6 have my full support.**

**I support Amendments 5 & 6** because I believe they will answer the call of voters frustrated with incumbents who seem more interested in protecting their own jobs than in creating jobs for everyone else.

The single best job-protection program for incumbent legislators happens every ten years, when they re-draw their district lines. They zig-zag up and down streets and across whole regions to find the people who will be most likely to vote for them. Elections are determined before the first voter goes to the polls.

Instead of voters choosing legislators, we have legislators choosing voters! Amendments 5 & 6 will stop that because they create rules against drawing districts to favor incumbents of political parties.

[Will you join me in supporting FairDistricts Amendments 5 & 6?](#)

I urge Florida voters to strike a blow for democracy and bi-partisanship by voting **YES on Amendments 5 & 6.**

In California, voters have passed similar districting reforms, and [it is time to make this happen in Florida too!](#)

If ever there was an issue that should bring together voters from across the political spectrum, putting an end to incumbents' current political protection plan is it.

[Please take a moment to donate to this real opportunity for fairness.](#)

And remember, early voting starts today!

Sincerely,  
Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg

# Sen. Mike Haridopolos" Vote no on Amendments 5 & 6.

<http://www.gainesville.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20101018/NEWS/101019428/1109/sports&Title=Sen-Mike-Haridopolos-Vote-no-on-Amendments-5-6-&template=printart>

December 23, 2010

Published: Monday, October 18, 2010 at 1:04 p.m.

In 2008, President Obama won twenty of Floridas forty Senate districts, the same districts that have been described as uncompetitive and politically gerrymandered. While everybody supports fair redistricting, Amendments 5 and 6 are not the answer.

First, lets be clear: Fair Districts, the amendments sponsor, is not a nonpartisan, grassroots organization. It is a well-funded arm of powerful, liberal political interests, many located outside Florida.

Fair Districts has raised \$3 million from lawyers and large labor unions, including \$1 million from state and national teachers unions and \$625,000 from SEIU, the labor union that spent millions to elect President Obama. It even accepted \$25,000 from the Florida affiliate of ACORN, the shady, left-wing organization suspected of nationwide voter registration fraud.

These highly partisan, liberal groups did not invest millions for nothing. Their agenda is not disinterested civic reform, but a more liberal Congress and Legislature.

Tellingly, Fair Districts has paid \$2.7 million to a California-based consulting firm that specializes in progressive initiatives such as euthanasia, liberal drug laws, and government-run health care. It has also paid nearly \$1 million to an advertising firm dedicated to democratic candidates and progressive organizations. Fair Districts is not a grassroots movement of mainstream, Florida citizens.

Even worse, Fair Districts refuses to explain how Amendments 5 and 6 would work. The Legislature held ten meetings to study the amendments vague and conflicting mandates. Fair Districts declined several invitations. When it finally accepted, it avoided direct answers and refused to draw a district map that implements its own proposals. If Fair Districts believes in its amendments, it should welcome every opportunity to promote them and prove that they work.

Last March, during a presentation for members of the media, legislative staff showed that the amendments are unworkable. The media were invited to prepare maps, and were offered all available resources. Still, not one map has been produced.

Meanwhile, the Legislature heard from minority leaders who oppose Amendments 5 and 6. It listened to U.S. Representatives Corrine Brown, an African-American Democrat, and Mario Diaz-Balart, a Hispanic Republican, who testified that the amendments would diminish minority representation. State Senator Gary Siplin, who chairs the black caucus, echoed their concerns.

Minorities have made historic gains through redistricting. The number of African-American members has increased dramatically, from twelve in 1982 to twenty-six under the current, Republican-drawn plan. These achievements should never be jeopardized.

Fair Districts suggests that Republicans owe their legislative majority to gerrymandered districts. Not so. Republicans gained their majority under a plan drawn by Democrats. The number of Republicans in the Legislature today (under Republican-drawn districts) is the same as a decade ago (under Democratic-drawn districts). And while Republicans hold 63 percent of seats drawn by the Legislature, they fare even better where redistricting is not a factor, winning 73 percent of Floridas statewide elections during the last decade.

The Legislature takes redistricting seriously and supports sensible reforms. It even passed an amendment (stricken by the courts) that would have prohibited map-drawing to promote political parties. But not all change is reform. Floridians should say no to union bosses, trial lawyers, and special interests, and vote no on Amendments 5 and 6.

Mike Haridopolos

Incoming Senate President

Tallahassee

# Legislative and Congressional Redistricting in Florida - Room for Debate

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<http://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2010/10/18/will-florida-move-further-to-the-right/legislative-and-congressional-redistricting-in-florida>

December 23, 2010

**Aubrey Jewett** is a political science professor at the University of Central Florida who specializes in American national, state and local politics. He is a co-author of "[Politics in Florida](#)" and "[Political Rules of the Road.](#)" is an associate professor of political science at the University of Central Florida.

While Florida is a battleground for statewide elections like president and governor, it has not been very competitive for Congressional House and State Legislature races for the past decade. Republicans took control of the Legislature and the Congressional delegation in the 1990s and used partisan gerrymandering in 2002 to increase their lead, and actually dominated these bodies in the subsequent years.

Ballot initiatives, if passed, could improve Democrats chances in 2012.

Thus the Republicans have a 76- to 44-seat lead in the Florida House and 26- to 14-seat lead in the Florida Senate and a 15- to 10-seat lead in the Congressional delegation (these numbers were actually worse for Democrats before the Obama victory in 2008). This despite the fact that Republicans have never had more registered voters (coming within about 3.5 percentage points at one stage), and that currently there are about 600,000 more registered Democrats in the state than there are Republicans (a 41 percent to 36 percent lead among all registered voters).

The biggest policy change potentially affecting the state after this election concerns redistricting. There are two proposed initiatives on the ballot that would amend the Florida Constitution by setting up standards for drawing lines for legislative and Congressional districts.

These measures would require that the Legislature draw compact, contiguous districts that follow local political and geographic boundaries and do not hurt minority chances to win seats, but also would forbid creating districts with the intent of favoring or disfavoring any political party or incumbent.

If the measures pass, they would constrain the rampant partisan gerrymandering otherwise expected from the likely G.O.P.-controlled Legislature. This would improve the chances that Florida's Democratic Party would pick up seats in the Legislature and in Congress in 2012.

The measures have a reasonable chance of passing, but under Florida law they need to get 60 percent of the vote to become part of Florida's Constitution. While theoretically these are nonpartisan, good-government measures designed to restrict gerrymandering over the long run, politics is almost always played out over a short time frame.

Thus Democratic and liberal groups are funding a campaign to seek passage and Republican and conservative groups are seeking to defeat them. The potential stakes are the viability of the Florida Democratic Party in district-based elections for the coming decade and potentially control of the U.S. House since Florida is expected to gain two seats in Congress after the release of the 2010 census data.

# Democrats' Sneaky Plans in Florida Redistricting

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[http://www.usnews.com/opinion/blogs/peter-roff/2010/10/18/Democrats-Sneaky-Plans-in-Florida-Redistricting.html?s\\_cid=rss:peter-roff:Democrats-Sneaky-Plans-in-Florida-Redistricting](http://www.usnews.com/opinion/blogs/peter-roff/2010/10/18/Democrats-Sneaky-Plans-in-Florida-Redistricting.html?s_cid=rss:peter-roff:Democrats-Sneaky-Plans-in-Florida-Redistricting)

December 23, 2010

A bizarre alliance of so-called “good [government](#) groups” working with the usual suspects are trying to engineer an end run around the will of the people in Florida.

Fronted by a woman who used to be the cochair of Sen. [John Kerry's](#) 2004 presidential campaign in the state, the group “Fair Districts Florida” is trying to overlay atop the existing redistricting process a series of limitations and restrictions that will make it that much easier to get the post-2010 Census remap into court.

[\[See where Kerry gets his campaign money.\]](#)

Why? “A fair map,” meaning one favorable to the [Democrats](#), “would probably produce another three to five Democratic [House] Districts,” the ultra-liberal National Committee for an Effective Congress’s Tom Bonior told *Politico's* Ben Smith.

While not exactly “shady,” to borrow a word very much in vogue, it is nonetheless suspicious that Fair Districts Florida recently received a large cash infusion of more than \$1 million, Smith reported, “most of it filtered through local groups” from “three major national Democratic allies,” all of whom hope to help Democrats win in court what they may lose at the [ballot box](#).

All the usual suspects are there, in one form or another. One group is linked to liberal financiers George Soros and Peter Lewis. The National Education Association has given money. So have the Service Employees International Union and the pro-abortion Emily’s List operation. Even the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now wrote a check, *Politico* says, before it stopped being ACORN.

Using its several million dollar bankroll, Fair Districts Florida is pushing for two amendments to the state constitution that, which seemingly innocuous, would almost guarantee any new state legislative or congressional district would end up in front of some judge who would have to rule on its “fairness.”

This, in itself, is not new. It is increasingly the practice, regrettably in both parties, to short-circuit the political process by assigning to judges the responsibility for making the kinds of decisions elected officials should, and then be held accountable for doing so.

Under Florida’s Amendment 5, currently appearing on the November ballot, members of the state legislature retain the responsibility for and authority to draw state district lines but with the added caveat that “legislative districts or districting plans may not be drawn to favor or disfavor an incumbent or political party,” among other new requirements. The proposed Amendment 6 would apply the same standard to U.S. congressional districts.

Who makes the determination as to whether favoritism was shown? Some judge, asked to rule on a lawsuit probably filed by some aggrieved public interest group funded by a combination of union money and, no doubt, government grants.

Notice that this is being pushed in Florida, which has term limits for state legislators but is arguably a [Republican](#) state, despite the fact that Barack Obama carried it in 2008 and several of its statewide elected officials are Democrats.

It is not, however, being pushed in Massachusetts, where this seemingly sound piece of liberal public policy could be enacted quite easily.

Massachusetts, it is worth noting, has a seemingly permanent liberal Democratic majority in its legislature and, for the moment at least, has a delegation in the U.S. House of Representatives that is both all Democrat and all white, despite the 2000 Census having determined that Boston was now a majority-minority city.

It is also not being pushed in Illinois or New York, where the Democrats might just wield all the redistricting pens come January 2010.

No, the target is Florida, where the Democrats seem to think they just might be able to rewrite the constitution to achieve a political end favorable to their interests. It is not as though they are offering a nonpartisan commission to do the job or proposing that the responsibility for redistricting be shifted to a panel of retired federal judges; they are trying to keep the politics in the process, but in a way that helps them overturn the will of the electorate, which, if it wants a GOP-led state legislature, will vote one into office.

Having listened for months to “the smart set” opine that the U.S. Constitution is sacrosanct and only changeable by lawyers and judges--rather than by amendment as the founders and several of the more prominent Tea Party types running for office have suggested--it is surprising that this effort in Florida has not gotten more attention. Or maybe the people who are afraid to even discuss amending the U.S. Constitution don't think that state constitutions, or the states themselves, are just that important anymore.

**Corrected on 10/18/2010:** An earlier version of this blog post incorrectly indicated the census at issue. It is the 2010 census.

# On Politics: Districts' lines spark status quo

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<http://jacksonville.com/opinion/blog/401026/abel-harding/2010-10-19/politics-districts-lines-spark-status-quo>

December 23, 2010

The dirty little secret is out.

Florida's political status quo wants gerrymandered districts to stay as they are.

So, who is the status quo? The Republican Party of Florida, Associated Industries of Florida, The Florida Chamber of Commerce and U.S. Rep. **Corrine Brown**.

Sure, Republicans leaders have used ethically challenged Brown as a foil to rile activists, but they've emerged from behind the curtain as one of the powers working to keep her district intact, publicly denouncing Amendments 5 and 6. Also known as the Fair Districts Amendments, they would require legislative and congressional districts to be drawn in the most un-American of manners — fairly.

In other words, incumbents might be forced to campaign in competitive districts. Why would Republicans be in favor of gerrymandered districts? It's simple math.

Democrats outnumber Republicans by more than 590,000 registered voters in Florida, but congressional districts have been drawn to ensure Republicans outnumber Democrats in 60 percent of them.

In the three districts represented by African-Americans, Democrats outnumber Republicans by more than 550,000 voters. That essentially guarantees re-election for incumbents of both parties, for as long as they wish. Only 10 incumbent legislators, out of 505, have lost in Florida over the past 10 years, according to Fair Districts Florida, the group behind 5 and 6.

[Flag as offensive](#)

# Amendments 5 and 6 - GatorCountry.com Swamp Gas Forums

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<http://www.gatorcountry.com/swampgas/showthread.php?t=170833>

December 23, 2010

[Amendment 5](#)

[Amendment 6](#)

At quick glance these amendments look appealing, especially considering Corrine Brown's district. I think everyone on this board supports fair redistricting, especially considering we are in a census year and Florida will most likely gain seats in the House. But the standards proposed in the two amendments are contradictory at best and any plan that our legislature presents would be subject to protracted litigation and would be replaced by a plan devised by appointed judges as opposed to our elected representatives.

If you do a little research on the sponsor of these amendments, Fair Districts, the real motive becomes clear. From the links above, 3 of the top 5 donors who support the amendments are the Service Employees International Union, Florida Education Association and the National Education Association.

[Additionally, Fair Districts has raised \\$3 million from lawyers and large labor unions, including \\$1 million from state and national teachers unions and \\$625,000 from SEIU, the labor union that spent millions to elect President Obama. It even accepted \\$25,000 from the Florida affiliate of ACORN, the shady, left-wing organization suspected of nationwide voter registration fraud.](#)

Fair Districts has paid \$2.7 million to a California-based consulting firm that specializes in progressive initiatives such as euthanasia, liberal drug laws, and government-run health care. It has also paid nearly \$1 million to an advertising firm dedicated to democratic candidates and progressive organizations. Fair Districts is not a grassroots movement of mainstream, Florida citizens.

House Majority Leader Adam Hasner said, "It is a stealth agenda funded by the left to do in the courts what they can't do at the ballot box. This is the top priority of Democrats in 2010 and it must be stopped."

Sen. Mike Haridopolos describes the redistricting amendments as the "full employment for lawyers' bill." According to Haridopolos, if the amendments are approved by voters it will lead to lengthy and costly court battles because of the proposed guidelines. The senator supports the FREDs 2000 program, a software program used in 2001-2002 by state lawmakers to lay out district lines. The software, he said, helps lawmakers be "contiguous and meet the standards of the voting rights act to draw district lines," according to reports.

Former NAACP Chairman Dr. Benjamin F. Chavis, Jr., joined the Protect Your Vote Campaign to express his opposition to Amendments 5 and 6. In a written campaign statement, the former NAACP leader: I am categorically opposed to Constitutional Amendments 5 and 6...because these proposed amendments fundamentally violate the voting rights of all Floridians, especially minority voters. Also, Chavis challenged the supporters of Amendments 5 and 6 to draw up their boundaries using their methods to prove that minorities would not be effected.

# More than you wanted to know about Florida redistricting

<http://therickwilson.amplify.com/2010/10/21/more-than-you-wanted-to-know-about-florida-redistricting/>

December 30, 2010

There are big prizes to be won on Election Day 2010. Congress, the Senate, Governors, state legislatures...all important, but if you're not following the fight to control redistricting, you're missing one of the biggest political stories of the year.

Control of Florida's redistricting is the biggest prize of all in the eyes of a coalition of national liberal and far-left special interest groups.

They've made a bold play to seize control of the political process in Florida, the 4th largest (soon to be 3rd largest) and most important swing state in the 2012 elections, especially with the projected gain of [2 more seats](#) from the 2010 Census. Two obscure ballot questions (Amendments 5 and 6) could give liberal judges and special interest groups complete control of the political map.

Decades of Republican gains in Florida, earned by hard work, a strong message and great leaders? Kiss them goodbye.

## Who Is Really Behind 5 and 6?

I'll bet FairDistrictsFlorida – the sponsor of Amendments 5 and 6 – tested really well in focus groups. It certainly doesn't *sound* like a wholly-owned subsidiary of the Vast Left Wing Conspiracy...but when one peels back their public record the ugly truth is revealed.

Early in the game, FairDistricts posted a [list of the groups](#) supporting their effort: the SEIU, ACORN (remember them?), the AFL-CIO, Common Cause, the Florida Education Association, the United Transportation Union, the Communication Workers of America, the United Auto Workers, International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, the Plumbers and Pipefitters Union, the Florida ACLU, Planned Parenthood, People for the American Way, EMILY's List, the League of Women Voters and a host of Florida progressive and far-left groups.

Not exactly your average non-partisan good-government movement, is it? I will leave it to your imagination why FairDistricts scrubbed that list off their site and went to great lengths to hide it.

Their association with these groups would prove the case in itself, but the money trail is even more damning:

## Follow The Money

FairDistrictsFlorida has been on the receiving end of a firehose of enormous donations. Far from being a grassroots effort, the \$7+ million dollars they've raised to date reads like a Who's-Who of the progressive movement. This is on top of almost \$4 million spent in 2006 in a direct effort to take redistricting away from the Legislature and give it to a commission. It didn't make the ballot, but at least they were honest about their plan then.

Big union money – over \$1.8 million as of today, with \$359,000 from the NEA, \$650,000 from the SEIU and \$650,000 from the Florida Education Association has flooded in, along with smaller donations from the Teamsters and the AFL-CIO.

You'll be unsurprised to find Florida's robust trial lawyer community (which donated to Barack Obama's 2008

campaign in staggering numbers) is also deeply involved in FairDistricts, donating over \$1.1 million.

The Soros front-group [America Votes](#) funneled \$900,000 through a series of shell groups to FairDistricts. Amazingly, the FairDistricts staff denied any knowledge of the transfers, but state and Federal records prove otherwise. (“What? Where? Soros? Unions? Never heard of 'em.”) George Soros has a long record of trying to influence the elections process, and never, ever in a good way. In all the current chatter about secretive flows of anonymous donations, you'd think this one might draw the attention of the media.

America Votes funds and advocates redistricting "reform"...but strangely, only in states where the Republicans control the process. Coincidence, I'm sure.

Let's not forget that FairDistricts had early seed money (pardon the pun) from ACORN and Emily's List. Finally, and other major liberal donors who have played a role in similar takeover efforts in Colorado and Texas.

### **The Democratic Activists Running 5 and 6:**

The staff and consultants of FairDistrictsFlorida are all Democratic party and the progressive movement activists:

The Chairman of FairDistricts is Ellen Friedan, John Kerry's 2004 Florida chairman. Friedan is also a major Democratic fundraiser and bundler and – shocker – a liberal trial lawyer from Miami. The campaign manager has a gold-plated Democratic resume: she was Obama Florida campaign manager, worked for John Edwards in 2004 **and** 2008 and was field director for the Democratic Party of Florida.

The signatures for the amendments were collected by Progressive Campaigns Incorporated (Clients include...wait for it...the SEIU, the ACLU, George Soros, the National Education Association, Michigan Democratic Party and so on.). Four years ago they used ACORN subsidiary Citizen Services to collect petitions. They apparently weren't available this time...

They're dropping metric tons of fluffy-looking, high-minded direct mail...all sent from the Democratic mail house Mission Control Inc. Clients include the SEIU (again, shocked), Planned Parenthood, and NARAL Pro-Choice America.

Also on board as their lead consultant is one Amy Walker...formerly of Organizing for America. This list goes on, but suffice to say, no one connected to their campaign ever pulled the lever for George Bush or John McCain.

### **Look At What They Do, Not What They Say**

When you look under the hood of Amendments 5 and 6, the weird contradictions and deeper political objectives become apparent.

An odd, contradictory bit of language in the amendments states that “districts cannot be drawn to favor or disfavor an incumbent or political party.” Huh? Aside from the algorithmic impossibility of this, it presents the first cause of action for litigation under these amendments. This language – untested tested anywhere in America – would suddenly become embedded in the Florida Constitution. Good thinking.

Another poison pill: the amendments forbid the use of partisan political data...but the [Voting Rights Act](#) mandates it under Federal law to ensure minorities have equal opportunity to elect candidates of their choice. Yep: the people behind this are willing to destroy minority voting representation to win this.

Black and Hispanic representation has been **rising** in the Florida Legislature since the 1990s...but if this passes, it

will plummet, meaning the Legislature and Congressional delegations will be as white as they were in the 1950s. This is lawsuit bait of the highest order, as the FairDistricts folks

Here's the reality: you cannot draw these districts under the rules in these amendments. It's why FairDistricts won't produce a map based on their own rules: they can't. When challenged by the Legislature, they refused outright.

Clearly, the smart lawyers who drew up these amendments had to be aware of the impracticality and legal jeopardy of the provisions imbedded in them, right?

Of course they were...because **purpose** of the highfalutin', good-government talk in both amendments isn't to have them actually **implemented**, but rather to induce so much chaos and litigation that they break the system and have electoral lines drawn by Florida's very liberal Supreme Court (for a retrospective take on this, see Recount 2000).

They **want** a thousand lawsuits, a trainwreck and a crisis that forces the Obama Justice Department (and we know how well **that** will work out) and liberal judges to decide who represents us.

These outcomes are a **feature**, not a bug.

They **want** 2011 and 2012 to be a firestorm of litigation, election delays and endless wrangling...even a political meltdown that means every district in Florida is decided on an at-large basis.

Democrats want to paralyze the political process in Florida, wrecking the GOP Presidential Preference Primary, delaying the ability of candidates to know where they're actually running and continuing the story of Florida as a political Dysfunction Junction during the 2012 GOP convention in Tampa. It's a staggeringly ambitious effort...amoral, but ambitious. Who says the Democrats are bankrupt of ideas?

**It's imperative Republicans and independents and minorities in Florida crush Amendments 5 and 6** – it only takes 40% to stop them, thankfully – not only for the political goal of protecting conservative gains, but for the larger purpose of striking a blow against the efforts of the liberal apparatus that will stop their efforts other states. Winning in November will feel great, unless we're also doomed to decades of political chaos and control by liberal special interest groups.

My message to them is simple: if you want to control redistricting, fight it out with us at the ballot box, head-to-head in Congressional and legislative elections. Run better campaigns, get better candidates and work harder than we do. We beat you in the 1990s when you controlled the district maps...as you had for decades.

I would normally end with a snarky comment, but allow me to quote Florida Senate Democratic Majority Leader Al Lawson, who said yesterday "...the reason Democrats did not have more elected officials is because of their poor candidates...I know we went out there to recruit, and there were not very good candidates. They did not want to work hard, and wanted [the Florida Democratic Party] to fund their campaigns. As long as you have that, districts won't matter."

We sometimes fail to recognize the depth and scope of the ambition of the Left. This attempt by liberal special interest groups, unions and the Democrats to hack the system with these phony and deeply dishonest amendments speaks to their deep contempt for democracy and how boundless their ambition to subvert it really is.

I strongly encourage you to reject Amendments 5 and 6.



# WMNF 88.5 FM Community Radio, Tampa

[http://www.wmnf.org/news\\_stories/fair-districts-florida-amendments-5-and-6-see-to-stop-gerrymandering](http://www.wmnf.org/news_stories/fair-districts-florida-amendments-5-and-6-see-to-stop-gerrymandering)

December 30, 2010

10/21/10 Seán Kinane

[WMNF Evening News Thursday](#)

Leon Russell is vice president of the national board of directors of the NAACP and supports Amendments 5 and 6.

photo by Seán Kinane/WMNF

Florida voters are deciding on two proposed amendments to the state Constitution that establish new rules for redistricting. Some say the current system is unfair and point to the statistics: over the last six years, only three incumbents have been defeated out of more than 420 races for the Florida Legislature. But opponents say minorities could lose seats.



If passed, Amendments 5 and 6 would establish more guidelines for the Legislature to follow when districts are realigned. They call for contiguous, compact districts that make use of existing municipal boundaries and don't favor or disfavor incumbents, parties or minorities. Florida ACLU President Michael Pheneger says the measures would reduce gerrymandering.

"Right now there's only one rule, and that is they have to be equal in size. Given that they only have one rule, they can literally draw districts anywhere they want and any way they want. They basically draw them to insure incumbency. That's why we have a professional politician class, because right now in large measure, politicians in Florida are running in districts where they're largely safe from actually losing an election."

According to the Florida Division of Elections, 650,000 more Democrats are registered to vote in the state than Republicans. Yet the GOP holds a commanding advantage in both the state Legislature and Congress. Pheneger is a long-time Republican, but even though the current gerrymandered districts favor his party, he wants the amendments to pass. Organized labor is on board as well. Aaron Carmella, with the West Central Florida Central Labor Council told a small gathering at a Unitarian Universalist church in Clearwater that some citizens don't get fair representation from their legislators

"It's really about accountability for the representatives back to their constituents. And right now, there's nothing in this state really forcing them to do that as they're picking their voters, not so much us picking our representatives right now."

Some elected officials have come out against the redistricting amendments, perhaps fearing they will lose their seats. One is U.S. member of Congress Corrine Brown, a Democrat. But Pheneger from the ACLU says her district is a poster child for gerrymandering.

"Well, Corrine Brown's district is kind of notorious because it begins in Jacksonville and snakes through nine different counties, parts of nine different counties, not all of them, and comes all the way down to the outskirts of Orlando. Nobody would draw a district that way unless they had an ulterior purpose. And the ulterior purpose is either to exclude voters that they don't want in their district or to include voters that they want in a district to ensure somebody's election or reelection."

Critics, including former NAACP Chair Benjamin Chavis, argue the amendments could affect minority

representation. Representative Brown agrees.

"For one time we have a voice in every level of government. And this [Amendments 5 and 6] will take these voices away. You've had at-large, square districts, but did not represent communities of interest. And I think communities of interest is key. And to think that for 129 years, a state that has 30% African-Americans and we didn't have any [elected representatives], and you're talking about going back to that. It is unacceptable. It's crazy."

But supporters say the amendments would safeguard civil rights protections. Leon Russell is vice president of the national board of directors of the NAACP and is chair of the legislative committee of the Florida state conference of NAACP.

"Corrine Brown right now has a 47% minority district; she doesn't have a majority district, yet she's been elected for 17 years to her Congressional district. So these amendments would continue to protect that district. It might not look like it looks today and there might be some different constituents in it. But it still has the ability to influence the election of candidates of the folks' choice."

Supporters like Pheneger also point out that right now the Voting Rights Act only applies to five counties in Florida but if the so-called Fair Districts amendments pass they would add similar language to the state Constitution.

"The Black Legislative Caucus has voted by majority vote to support the Fair District Amendment[s], as has the NAACP, Democracia, things like that, because they understand that we don't need to draw districts that way to ensure that we have African-Americans [elected]. In fact the Amendments 5 and 6 each say that you can't redistrict in ways that have the tendency or the effect of actually diminishing the rights of racial- and language-minorities to basically vote for Legislators of their choosing. That basically parallels the Voting Rights Act."

There is some bipartisan support for the measures, and [Fair Districts Florida](#), the group behind the amendments, has raised more than \$4 million. The financial backing comes from a few big donors, including the Democratically-aligned SEIU and National Education Association and a combination of thousands of individual donors. Another political action committee, [Protect Your Vote](#), formed to defeat the measures.

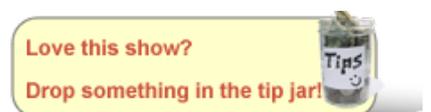
The Republican-controlled state Legislature added a third amendment that, if passed, would have canceled out the other two. But the Florida Supreme Court tossed it off the ballot because it found the wording misleading. Early voting and absentee voting has already begun in Florida. Amendments 5 and 6 need 60% support to pass.

[The text of Amendment 5](#)

[Text of Amendment 6](#)

[Fair Districts Florida](#)

[Protect Your Vote](#)



# Patriot Room Radio #99: Florida Redistricting Fraud; plus, Arkaday from Right Condition

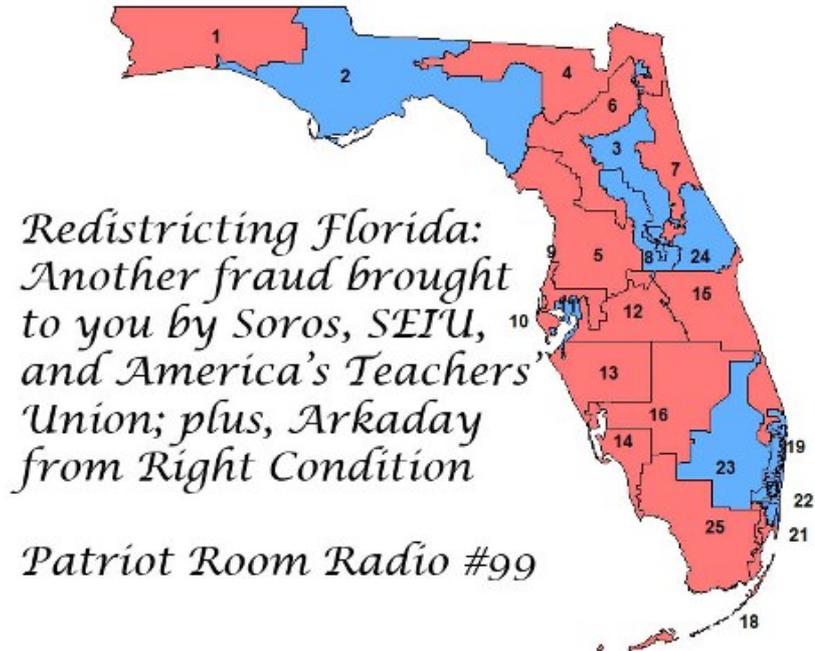
<http://libertypundits.com/2010/10/patriot-room-radio-99-florida-redistricting-fraud-plus-arkaday-from-right-condition/>

December 30, 2010

October 22, 2010

Clyde welcomes Arkaday from [Right Condition dot com](http://RightCondition.com) to discuss the Massachusetts and national elections. They pass through conditions in the Middle East on their way to an extended discussion of China's intentions and (in)ability to disrupt the EU. The final segment is a fascinating discussion with Kurt Browning, former Florida Secretary of State and current president of [Protect Your Vote](http://ProtectYourVote.com). They discuss the Soros – SEIU – Teachers' unions multi-million dollar campaign to overturn a recent SCOTUS redistricting decision by amending Florida's Constitution with proposed Amendments 5 and 6.

Podcast: [Play in new window](#) | [Download](#)



# The truth about Amendments 5 & 6 » Suwannee Democrat » Suwannee Democrat

<http://suwanneedemocrat.com/suwannee/x847474475/OUR-VIEW-The-truth-about-Amendments-5-6>

December 30, 2010

Live Oak — We've backed the the Fair Districts amendments, Nos. 5 and 6 on the Nov. 2 ballot, from the start. And from the start we've made clear this never was and never will be a partisan issue.

All we want is to be heard in Tallahassee, by way of a state senator who can claim at least a passing acquaintance with folks in Suwannee and neighboring counties.

Hardly what we have now. No offense to our current senator, former Citrus County Sheriff Charlie Dean, but his ties to these parts are tenuous at best.

Nonetheless, some folks have gotten the idea that this is about party dominance -- a mere attempt to wrest control of the legislature from Republicans.

For some it probably is.\* Since there are more registered Democrats (4,630,000) in Florida than Republicans (4,040,000), they figure that Republican control of the state Senate and House must be the result of gerrymandering.

They're wrong, and a new study proves it.

Political scientists at the University of Michigan and Stanford have shown that gerrymandering has little or nothing to do with Republican dominance in Florida politics. In fact, the July 2010 study concludes that "Republicans can expect to win around 59 percent of the seats [even] without any 'intentional' gerrymandering."

That's because Florida Democrats are often concentrated in urban districts, note authors Jowei Chen and Jonathan Rodden, while Republicans tend to be more evenly distributed throughout the state.

(Never mind what we already knew -- that plenty of Democrats vote Republican in general elections, as is often the case in Suwannee. Some folks, Republicans at heart, stay registered as Democrats so they can vote in local primaries, which tend to be dominated by Democratic candidates.)

So the advent of compact, contiguous and "fair" districts -- as opposed to monstrosities like our own Senate District 3 -- won't likely alter the balance of power in Tallahassee.

Fine. That's not what we were after to begin with.

All we want is our own voice in the Florida Senate.

It's that simple, folks.

If you feel you'd be better served in Tallahassee by a senator who hails from, say, Suwannee, Hamilton or Lafayette than one from Citrus or Marion counties -- the seats of money and power in District 3 -- you'll vote yes on Amendments 5 & 6.

Hopefully folks in other underrepresented regions across the state will do the same and soon we'll have our own voice in Tallahassee.

## Who is John Ferentinos?

There's a third name on the ballot for Florida House District 11, right between Debbie Boyd and Elizabeth Porter.

John Ferentinos calls himself a Tea Party candidate, but has no affiliation with the national group so named.

He originally registered to run for state Senate, District 26, but was disqualified for failing to complete the required paperwork. He moved upstate and declared for House District 11.

Early on, some folks thought him a foil, a decoy candidate meant to take votes from Republican Porter.

We don't know about that, but we do know he's a hard man to find. We've tried for some time to contact Ferentinos, to no avail. He has no website, at least not that we could find, and hasn't actively campaigned. State records show he's spent a total of \$1,781.82 to date.

We question the seriousness of Ferentinos' candidacy.

However, we thought it wise to mention him so as to avoid possible confusion at the polls.

As you recall, we endorsed Porter in this race.

*\*See Franz Metz's Guest Commentary, Page 6A. Metz opposes Amendments 5 & 6 in part because, as he notes, some pretty liberal folks support them. Of course, liberal Congresswoman Corrine Brown strongly opposes the amendments, so the "enemy of my enemy" reasoning may not work here.*

*As for Franz's fear that judges, rather than legislators, may end up drawing district lines, that's a fair concern. However, as we noted in last week's endorsement of Amendments 5 & 6, redistricting battles often, and unfortunately, end up in court anyway.*

# Amending our concept of what's 'fair'

<http://www2.tbo.com/content/2010/oct/22/221746/amending-our-concept-of-whats-fair/>

December 30, 2010

By TOM JACKSON | The Tampa Tribune

Published: October 22, 2010

Updated: 10/22/2010 05:46 pm

Right out of the box, give the folks behind (and also way, way behind) Amendments 5 and 6 credit. They couldn't have picked a better name for their project: *Fair Districts Florida* .

You may shoulder a quiver bristling with sharp opposing arguments, but you're down a dozen bull's-eyes before you've even drawn your bow. One side favors fairness. It says so right in their incorporation papers and all their advertisements. If you're not for fairness, you must be for ... *unfairness* .

Who could stand against fair districts? If you believe the editorial pages of Florida's newspapers, only grasping, desperate incumbents fearful that if they are unable to pick their voters, their voters will pick someone else.

Well, yeah, all of them. Plus Kurt Browning. And whatever we think of the incumbent class, Browning's presence at the tip of the opposition's spear elevates their argument before he's uttered a word.

Florida's immediate former Secretary of State and before that Pasco's longtime elections supervisor, the man's reputation for public service is spotless; his advocacy on behalf of honest, true and accurate elections unsurpassed; and his anticipation of election disasters unrivaled. Years before *Bush v. Gore*, he warned elected officials about the bomb lurking inside the punch-card ballot system, waiting only for the spark of a deadlocked election.

If Browning is against it, attention to the resistance must be paid.

**Now, add** the idealistic and benign-sounding provisions of 5 and 6. No favoring or disfavoring political parties or incumbents. Account for minority representation. Apply existing political (city limits, for instance) and geographical boundaries, *where feasible* . And make your districts compact and contiguous. Obvious – likely purposeful – loggerheads abound.

It is an exercise in the impossible, Browning says. Call it the Attorney Full-Employment Amendment of 2010. "They want the Legislature to throw up its hands and turn it over to the courts," where – according to Browning's reading – the black robes will gather behind closed doors for the drawing of lines not limited by Amendments 5 and 6 (the rules apply only to state lawmakers), nor subject to ongoing public scrutiny.

Of course. Consider the sponsors pouring millions into the effort: Politico's Ben Smith points out pro 5 and 6 contributors include liberal rabble-rouser George Soros, the Service Employees International Union and ACORN, all in pursuit of a game-changing scenario that has proved elusive on Election Day.

Florida's voter registration is lopsidedly Democratic, but its legislative and congressional representation is substantially Republican. Proponents of 5 and 6 point to this inverse relationship as a symptom of something sinister. Browning says history suggests otherwise.

Florida has favored Republicans in three consecutive gubernatorial races, and may yet make it four straight come Nov. 2. Republicans have won 5 of 6 statewide cabinet elections since 2002, and lead the polls in all three races this year.

The state tilted GOP in eight of the last 11 presidential elections. And in a sure sign of quirkiness, since 1980, Florida has elected Republicans in four of nine (soon to be five of 10) U.S. Senate races.

In short, if Democrats have not been able to turn their advantages in registration into ballot-box victories, it's a sure sign of something, if not exactly what Fair District Florida supporters would have us believe.

Browning's advice: "Run better candidates." And leave the state constitution the heck alone.

Listen to the one honest man in the fight. Sounds fair to us.

Tom Jackson hosts "The Jax Files Weekend" Saturdays at 11 a.m. on WGUL, 860 AM.

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# Amendments 5 and 6 sponsored by powerful, liberal political interests » TCPalm.com

<http://www.tcpalm.com/news/2010/oct/23/mike-haridopolos-amendments-5-and-6-sponsored-by/>

December 30, 2010

Mike Haridopolos

In 2008, President Barack Obama won 20 of Florida's 40 Senate districts — the same districts that have been described as noncompetitive and politically gerrymandered.

While everybody supports fair redistricting, Amendments 5 and 6 are not the answer.

First, let's be clear: Fair Districts, the amendments' sponsor, is not a nonpartisan, grassroots organization. It is a well-funded arm of powerful, liberal political interests, many located outside of Florida.



Fair Districts has raised \$3 million from lawyers and large labor unions, including \$1 million from state and national teachers unions and \$625,000 from the Service Employees International Union, the labor union that spent millions to elect President Obama. It even accepted \$25,000 from the Florida affiliate of the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now, the shady, left-wing organization suspected of nationwide voter registration fraud.

These highly partisan, liberal groups did not invest millions for nothing. Its agenda is not disinterested civic reform, but a more liberal Congress and Legislature.

Significantly, Fair Districts has paid \$2.7 million to a California-based consulting firm that specializes in “progressive” initiatives such as euthanasia, liberal drug laws, and government-run health care. It also has paid almost \$1 million to an advertising firm dedicated to “democratic candidates and progressive organizations.”

Fair Districts is not a grassroots movement of mainstream, Florida residents.

Even worse, Fair Districts refuses to explain how Amendments 5 and 6 would work. The Legislature had 10 meetings to study the amendments' vague and conflicting mandates. Fair Districts declined several invitations. When it finally accepted, it avoided direct answers and refused to draw a district map that implements its own proposals. If Fair Districts believes in its amendments, it should welcome every opportunity to promote them and prove that they work.

Last March, during a presentation for members of the media, legislative staff showed that the amendments are unworkable. The media were invited to prepare maps, and were offered all available resources. Still, not one map has been produced.

Meanwhile, the Legislature heard from minority leaders who oppose Amendments 5 and 6. It listened to U.S. Reps. Corrine Brown, an African-American Democrat, and Mario Diaz-Balart, a Hispanic Republican, who testified that the amendments would diminish minority representation. State Sen. Gary Siplin, who chairs the black caucus, echoed their concerns.

Minorities have made historic gains through redistricting. The number of African-American members has increased dramatically, from 12 in 1982 to 26 under the current Republican-drawn plan. These achievements should never be jeopardized.

Fair Districts suggests that Republicans owe their legislative majority to gerrymandered districts. Not so. Republicans gained their majority under a plan drawn by Democrats. The number of Republicans in the

Legislature today (under Republican-drawn districts) is the same as a decade ago (under Democratic-drawn districts). And while Republicans occupy 63 percent of seats drawn by the Legislature, they fare even better where redistricting is not a factor, winning 73 percent of Florida's statewide elections during the last decade.

The Legislature takes redistricting seriously and supports sensible reforms. It even passed an amendment (stricken by the courts) that would have prohibited map-drawing to promote political parties. But not all change is reform. Floridians should say "no" to union bosses, trial lawyers and special interests, and vote "no" on Amendments 5 and 6.

Haridopolos, R-Merrit Island, is president-elect of the Florida Senate.

# Stop the bleaching of Black and Latino voting districts on The Louisiana Weekly

<http://www.louisianaweekly.com/news.php?viewStory=3447>

December 20, 2010

Black Americans once again stand at a critical junction in helping to determine the future of the United States of America, and thereby also the future of the world. Fifty million African Americans with a spending power of \$1 trillion and millions of potential votes in the upcoming November 2, 2010 mid-term elections across the nation are well strategically situated to play a major role in determining the outcome of these important elections.

There are some who say that every election should get our attention. But, it would be major oversight for us not to see that 2010 will be seen as an evaluative referendum on what happened back in 2008 and a foretaste of what might happen in the 2012 predicted re-election of President Barrack H. Obama. Will the Tea Party be successful this year in its backlash tactics against the Obama Administration? Will the jubilation of the election of the first African American president of the United States, two years ago, give way this year to the forces of bigotry and reactionary politics? Will the majority of all Americans be too quick to forget the shameful and disastrous economic condition that President George W. Bush left the country in when he departed the White House in January 2009? These questions and many more will be answered by the civic action or inaction of African Americans and others who care about the future of America, as we prepare to hopefully have an unprecedented turn out of our votes on or before November 2, 2010.

One of the leading national research bodies, the Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies in Washington, D.C., just released a study on the power of the Black vote in America in advance of the fast approaching mid-term elections. Dr. David A. Bositis led the study for the Joint Center. He concluded that if there will be a strong turnout of the African-American vote, the results of who will be in control of the U.S. Senate and House, as well as 14 different state governorships will be determined.

Millions of dollars, however, are now being spent to confuse African-American voters. One such deceptive ploy is going on once again in the state of Florida with the so-called "Fair Districts" Constitutional Amendments 5 and 6 that will re-determine how voting districts are to be drawn across that state. There are similar measures on the ballot in the state of California. These proposals are unfair and will lead to the "bleaching" of voting districts in those states and later in all states. Of course, this will be a undermining disaster to the Voting Rights Act. The proposed "whitening" of voting districts has a lot of Black people confused and when we are confused, it can cause a low voter turnout.

In Florida, more than four million dollars has already been spent to promote the "bleaching" of Black and Latino voting districts. Some of my colleagues in the Civil Rights Movement have been unfortunately sucked into supporting these latest tactics of voter suppression and disempowerment of Black political interests and progress. I stand firmly with Congresswoman Corrine Brown, Congressman John Lewis, Congresswoman Barbara Lee, Congressman James Clyburn, and many other members of the Congressional Black Caucus who have publicly spoken out against these regressive and backward ballot initiatives that are designed to undermine and replace the Voting Rights Act with State's Rights Constitutional Amendments.

We need a large Black voter turnout throughout the nation. Let's not sit back and watch others dismantle our progress. Our communities deserve better. Let us not be confused or apathetic. Let's tell our young voters and our senior voters that the future is in our hands: Vote early and vote strong. Don't lose hope. Don't be confused. Stop the bleaching! Vote for freedom, justice, and equality for all.

*This article was originally published in the October 25, 2010 print edition of The Louisiana Weekly newspaper*

# Massive confusion or even playing field?

<http://www.nwfdailynews.com/common/printer/view.php?db=nwfdn&id=34219>

December 30, 2010

2010-10-25 01:00:52

DESTIN Former Mayor Craig Barker knows firsthand the confusion voting districts can cause.

It caused massive confusion, not only here in my race but also all over the state of Florida, said Barker, who lost in the Republican primary for the District 4 state House seat in March. I understand that there can be some demographic similarities, that you try to draw the district boundaries to incorporate those differences, but at the same time, it was kind of a big laugh around here after the special election that Destin wasn't even contiguous with Destin, but was contiguous with Niceville.

On Nov. 2 voters will decide on Amendments 5 and 6, which would set standards for legislators to follow when redrawing district boundaries.

New House and Senate districts are drawn every 10 years. The proposed amendments would require that the new districts not be drawn to favor one political party over the other.

If approved by 60 percent of the voters, the amendments will take effect Jan. 4.

According to the Wall Street Journal, Florida could add one or two congressional seats by the 2012 election because of its population growth.

While he admittedly is not passionate about these amendments getting done, Barker said it would be a step in the right direction.

I think this is more of a long-term proposition than a short-term fix, Barker said. We need to continue to do a better job with political boundaries that are contiguous with their neighbors.

For his part, state Rep. Matt Gaetz will not vote for the redistricting amendments.

I opposed them because the standards are incomprehensible, said Gaetz, R-Fort Walton Beach. If they were to pass, no district lines would be drawn that could favor or disfavor the incumbent. No matter where you drew the lines, one could argue they could favor or disfavor an incumbent.

Gaetz, who defeated Barker in the GOP primary to replace Ray Sansom, said the wording on the ballot also is confusing and could send the entire redistricting process into endless litigation and leave courts and judges to draw district lines.

It's something that we don't want or need, he said.

# Fair Districts a Good Idea. Hope It Works

<http://rantingsfromflorida.blogspot.com/2010/10/fair-districts-good-idea-hope-it-works.html>

December 30, 2010

There is no process I have ever witnessed in a decade of covering government which better demonstrates the old sausage-making metaphor than the outwardly corrupt reapportionment process. This is one of those exercises so painfully bureaucratic that few voters even realize it is going on, and then one day show up at a poll and say "but I thought I was in so-and-so's district."

That is why [I support Amendments 5 and 6](#) . Not because I think they will work. I fear they will do very little. But something needs to be done, and it needs to happen before the redistricting process begins in 2012.

The amendments basically say that when the state Legislature convenes to redraw district lines for themselves and for Florida's Congressional delegation, the lines cannot be drawn to favor an incumbent political party. Amendment 5 affects state House and Senate lines. Amendment 6 covers the Congress.

Now, I have my questions about the effectiveness of this. The full text of the amendments do not detail any enforcement of the law. Basically, that is up to the courts. Of course, judges already can, and have, called for district lines to be redrawn. The [snake-like district](#) which Corrine Brown holds was drawn one way by the Legislature in 1992 and then tossed by a judge later. It still is one of the most clearly racially-gerrymandered districts in the country, but at least you can drive from end to end.

That district and others were the product of an unholy alliance back then between state Republicans and the NAACP which helped create districts where black Congressman could reliably get elected and portion many Democratic voters out of districts which Republicans wanted to win. But the NAACP [supports](#) 5 and 6 now, probably because of some language intended to make sure minority voters are not disenfranchised.

At least the ends of racial gerrymandering in the past were noble, even if the means were unsettling. When I watched the 2002 redistricting process play out, it was amazing to me just how brazenly political the entire affair became. Tom Feeney, then the state Speaker of the House, had his members draw him a [bizarre-shaped district](#) which had an odd satellite poking out to the west in order to include his Oviedo power base. State Rep. Mario Diaz-Balart, who headed up the redistricting committee in the House, created a [Cuban-heavy district](#) in South Florida that allowed him to move to Washington and hang out with his brother Lincoln. Katherine Harris, who was Secretary of State during a [somewhat controversial vote recount](#) , had a district hand-drawn for her as well. The most atrocious example to me, though, was when state Sen. Ginny Brown-Waite, Diaz-Balart's counter-part in the Senate, [redrew the seat](#) of a sitting Congresswoman so that it leaned Republican. Rep. Karen Thurman ended up losing the election in a hard-fought contest which I covered. Now, both Brown-Waite and Thurman are legislators for whom I hold respect, but that race came down to the lines being rigged against the incumbent. That isn't democracy at work. It is politicking at its worst. Brown-Waite's big defense was that the district had just been hand-drawn for Thurman was Thurman was in the state Senate 10 years prior. The only reason that defense isn't deplorable is that it is 100-percent true.

But then, that is just more evidence the process is riddled with problems. Historically, the legislators who chair the committees on reapportionment have ended up with hand-drawn seats in Congress. That is true whether Republicans are running Tallahassee or if the Democrats are in power.

So can these amendments make the reapportionment process apolitical? I doubt it, but it offers one more check against corruption, and that can't be a bad thing.

# The Battle of Less Bad

<http://www.sunshinestatenews.com/print/1581016>

January 5, 2011

Posted: October 25, 2010 3:24 PM

FairDistricts Florida and its supporters say Amendments 5 and 6 will put an end to the way incumbents draw voting district lines every 10 years. But opponents say the rigid requirements would make the Legislature's job of redistricting nearly impossible and have potentially unintended consequences.

"How about I just ask everyone to stand up," said incoming Senate President Mike Haridopolos to a crowd of about 200 Florida Chamber of Commerce members. "Line up in alphabetical order by height, weight and age -- that's literally what's happening here."

The crowd chuckled at the analogy, but Haridopolos says there are serious challenges with the proposal. Earlier this year he tried to put an additional amendment on the ballot that would modify 5 and 6, but the courts rejected it.

The summary of Amendments 5 and 6 as they will appear on the ballot reads as follows:

Congressional districts or districting plans may not be drawn to favor or disfavor an incumbent or political party. Districts shall not be drawn to deny racial or language minorities the equal opportunity to participate in the political process and elect representatives of their choice. Districts must be contiguous. Unless otherwise required, districts must be compact, as equal in population as feasible, and where feasible must make use of existing city, county and geographical boundaries.

"There are few things more hazardous in politics than a bad idea that sounds good," said Rep. Dean Cannon, the House speaker designee. "I like FairDistricts, but the premise is flawed and the structure is flawed."

Haridopolos and Cannon say the FairDistricts' premise is flawed because it assumes the reason districts have such sprawling shapes, and Republicans are in the majority because incumbents draw districts to favor themselves.

## **[Video: Watch interview with Dean Cannon on Amendments 5 and 6](#)**

In Cannon's view, the imbalance is reflective of voters who simply choose not to always vote along their party lines. He took the two U.S. Senate seats and four Cabinet seats in Florida as an example. Four of the six are Republican.

"Now you can't accuse us of drawing the state of Florida in some peculiar configuration," said Cannon. "Voters have crossed party lines. Voters are smart. They choose among candidates and they differentiate."

But Sen. Dave Aronberg, D-Greenacres, sees it differently.

"[He's] right about the state, but the districts are different," he said. "The districts are skewed to only elect one member of a party -- to elect either a Democrat or a Republican. There are very few competitive districts left."

Aronberg is one of FairDistricts' strongest voices in support of Amendments 5 and 6. He says his district, which stretches from West Palm Beach to Fort Myers and down to Naples, is an example of gerrymandering.

"This is the typical game of incumbents trying to make a fake argument; trying to scare people into rejecting this and make people believe the current system, the status quo, is somehow better," Aronberg said.

FairDistricts' claims support by more than 50 nonpartisan Florida organizations -- including League of Women

Voters, AARP, NAACP and Democracia Ahora -- but they receive most of their financial support from unions, including \$500,000 from the Florida Education Association and \$250,000 from the SEIU labor union.

They describe their purpose as working to establish constitutional rules to stop politicians from drawing districts to favor themselves. They accuse politicians, particularly Republicans, of manipulating district boundaries to keep themselves and their friends in power by drawing lines based on voter registration records.

Opponents of the amendments say, ultimately, the FairDistricts' requirements would make it so convoluted that anyone can take it to a judge claiming it doesn't meet requirements.

If the courts twice strike down the FairDistricts' attempt, the Constitution says the Florida Supreme Court would then have to draw the map itself.

"That's one of the basic premises of our federal republic, that courts don't make political decisions; and yet 5 and 6, left unchecked, may result in courts drawing political districts."

Aronberg argues that would still be better than the alternative.

"I'd rather have the courts draw the lines than the politicians themselves," he said. "Do you think it's a better system to have incumbents draw their own districts? It's a terrible system."

Cannon says he and Haridopolos asked those who drafted the amendments to explain some of the seemingly contradictory requirements. He says they refused to give an answer.

"The fact that the drafters wouldn't explain how they would work to the legislative branch that would be governed by them -- that raised a red flag," Cannon said.

He added that because support of the amendments is primarily funded by trial lawyers and unions, "that sends up a red flag, too, that there's sort of a partisan motive behind them."

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# Crazy gerrymandering of districts is why we need Amendments 5 and 6 » TCPalm.com

<http://www.tcpalm.com/news/2010/oct/25/letter-crazy-gerrymandering-of-districts-is-why/>

December 30, 2010

Another election with few choices for Tallahassee or the U.S. Congress: Do you wonder why? Have you ever considered running yourself?

The truth is that current office holders in Florida have stacked the deck against you, me, or any outsider who might consider being citizen legislators. In St. Lucie County, we have had some excellent folks consider running who had served on the county commission or school board. Most of us mere citizens would think someone who successfully was elected to a countywide office could be very competitive for higher positions.

But the districts are drawn in crazy pattern which is senseless to all but the computer programmers and current politicians. Instead of a congressional district of one, two or even three counties, they are spread out

over nine or more counties with a few streets here and a few in next county and a few in the next. What does this mean to us?

When a citizen wants to run, instead of buying time in one or two media markets for television ads, the district is spread out over many, which means it is prohibitively expensive to run for office. This means the office holders pick who elects them rather than the voters picking their representatives as was intended by our Founding Fathers.

Many folks are going back to their old offices without even facing the voters in next week's election at all. This result of the back-room drawn districts is special interests and out-of-state forces bankrolling the guys who serve their purposes instead of the folks these politicians are supposed to be representing.

Lets take back our rights as citizens. Vote for Fair District Amendments 5 and 6 on Election Day.

Timothy Williams

Port St. Lucie

advertisement

published: Thursday, October 28, 2010

## What does Amendment 6 mean?

BRAD BUCK | Staff Writer

[bradbuck@dailycommercial.com](mailto:bradbuck@dailycommercial.com)

Four people represent Lake County in Congress -- Corrine Brown, Ginny Brown-Waite, Alan Grayson and Cliff Stearns.

Brown-Waite represents all of Sumter County.

And none of them lives in Lake or Sumter County.

"I'd like to see Lake County have one congressional district, but that isn't going to happen," said Joe Rudderow, chairman of the Lake County Republican Committee.

Nancy Hurlbert, chair of the Lake County Democratic Committee, cannot get over the fact that in her area, Mount Dora, Grayson represents almost everyone. But there's one sliver of Mount Dora represented by Brown.

"Some of these districts are absolutely ridiculous," Hurlbert said.

The congressional districts of the four House members who represent Lake skirt all over the place.

Brown's district starts in Jacksonville and meanders down and across the St. Johns River. Grayson's district is just about as twisted.

A question voters must decide Nov. 2 is whether to let the Legislature redraw congressional district boundaries to make them more "fair."

By "fair" in this case, Amendment 6 asks voters if they want congressional districts that do not favor or disfavor any candidate or party.

After each census, a legislative commission redraws district boundaries based on population shifts. So this will happen in the next year, whether Amendment 6 passes or not. But if the amendment does pass, it will theoretically make the districts more fair.

If the amendment gets approved, congressional districts should be compact, contiguous and respect minorities.

"The intent is good," Rudderow said. "They're trying to do away with gerrymandering." That's the practice of drawing legislative and congressional district boundaries to protect particular candidates and/or parties. The boundaries wind up meandering all over the place. And gerrymandering, as Rudderow knows, "has been around for as long as politics has been around."

But the main problem with Amendment 6 is that it's only two paragraphs long, and the issue of redistricting is far more complicated than that, he said. Attorneys will be in court forever, battling over what's a "fair" district boundary.

Even if it passes, though, Rudderow doesn't think the amendment will affect Lake County voters.

"We're never going to get it fair to all people," he said. "Population isn't situated like that." It grows in all different directions.

There's a different way to make elections fairer to the electorate, Rudderow said.

"I'd rather see term limits on (the ballot)," he said.

Aubrey Jewett, a political science professor at the University of Central Florida, said neutral groups such as the League of Women Voters favor the amendment because in the long run, more people will know who their representative is. The theory is that the districts will be more compact and make sense to the average voter, Jewett said.

But that's not what's really going on, he said.

In the short run, Democratic groups are pushing Amendments 5 and 6 because they know Republicans will control the Florida House and determine congressional district boundaries, he said.

There are other inherent problems with the amendment, Jewett said.

You might redraw a district to help a black, but you'll more than likely help the Democratic Party, and that's a no-no under this measure. Or you could draw a district to help a Cuban get elected and that would invariably help Republicans, he said.

"In many ways, it's beneficial to have more representatives in state or federal government because the more voices you have," the better off you are, Jewett said.

With only one person representing your town or your county, you don't have as many people with a vested interest in your issues, Jewett said.

# Money flows to incumbents - Other Views

<http://www.miamiherald.com/2010/10/28/1895514/money-flows-to-incumbents.html>

December 30, 2010

There are two ways to look at the state of black politics in Miami.

In the "glass half-cracked" version, black communities are stuck with ineffective politicians who often help themselves but not their constituents, and who can't lose because of the impenetrable shield of money surrounding incumbents. Pols like U.S. Rep. Corrine Brown, Democrat of Jacksonville (and U.S. Rep. Mario Diaz-Balart, Republican of Miami) are trying to scare minority voters away from redistricting reform, the better to cling to power for another 20 years.

In the "glass mosaic" version, black politics has never been more vibrant: more and more, diverse candidates are running for state and federal offices than at any time in recent memory.

In Miami's District 5, for the third time in two years, the battle is on for a commission seat that's seen multiple occupants leave the dais indicted.

Incumbent Richard Dunn was appointed on a promise not to run in November. He's running anyway, and not only do the commissioners who set that unheard-of precondition not mind a bit, Dunn claims the support of Mayor Toms Regalado, Commission Chair Marc Sarnoff, Miami Commissioner Francis Suarez and Miami-Dade County Commissioner Audrey Edmonson. Sarnoff consultant Steve Marin, once a Dunn adversary, is now his consultant.

Dunn has raised more than \$240,000; about 10 times what the next best funded of his five opponents, Alison Austin, has taken in. The cash is largely from developers and construction companies expected to join the soup line for the glut of money set to flow from the CRA (community redevelopment agencies) and into the Port of Miami.

"Nobody thought God would give me the ability to win these people over with my leadership," Dunn said of his newfound allies. And he points to his record on the commission and a petition with 1,500 signatures on it from District 5 residents urging him to run.

Austin supporters claim a "climate of intimidation" is keeping funders from supporting other candidates, but Dunn denies it. He calls the monetary pull of incumbency "one of the general, normal, basic, fundamental things in politics."

On that score, he's right.

County Commissioner Dorrin Rolle has raised about \$329,000 to extend his tenure in District 2 -- double what Eugene Flinn, the top money raiser in District 8 has taken in to fill that district's open seat, and four and a half times the haul of Rolle's opponent, Jean Monestime. Controversies over Rolle's stewardship of the James E. Scott Community Association (JESCA) and the battered condition of much of his district haven't slowed him down a bit.

Former Miami Mayor Maurice Ferre calls the pressure to give to incumbents par for the course, but also a "legal way to be unethical," and even "a clear and present danger to the republic."

"It's almost an unwritten rule that wealthy, interested parties [like] developers and builders give money," Ferre said without commenting on specific races. "That's why you get people who otherwise wouldn't seem worthy of public office raising \$300,000 and \$400,000 and getting elected with 5,000 votes."

Indeed, cities and counties all over the country have for decades lived a microcosm of the money tsunami the U.S. Supreme Court unleashed with its Citizens United decision that allows unlimited funds from corporations and

labor unions.

APK

## State Senate race is likely 'dumbbell district's' last

### East vs. west campaigns may soon come to end

By GLENN MILLER • gmiller@news-press.com • October 28, 2010

**1:10 A.M.** — State Senate District 27 stretches from the hubbub of Fort Myers to the hurly-burly of West Palm Beach - urban areas as different as east and west.

The former is predominately Republican; the latter Democratic. The district is linked by rural patches of Charlotte and Glades counties and a watery swatch of Hendry County.

"It looks like a dumbbell," state Sen. Dave Aronberg, the current District 27 officeholder, said.

The Nov. 2 race between Republican Lizbeth Benacquisto and Democrat Kevin Rader, both of Palm Beach County, may be the last hurrah for the "dumbbell district," which was cobbled together in 2002.

Redistricting is likely by 2012, and politicians from both major parties have said this district should be reconfigured.

The outcome of next week's vote on Amendments 5 and 6 will likely determine the district's future.

For now, the electoral heft is weighted overwhelmingly on the west and east ends. The district's two big counties have 303,337 voters (99.15 percent of the total). Charlotte has 174 voters and Glades has 2,399.

Democrats and Republicans decry the district as a gerrymandered contrivance.

"We'd like to have north and south districts in the next cycle," said Gary Lee, chairman of the Lee County Republican Party.

He's echoed by Lee County Commissioner Frank Mann, a Republican who lost the 2002 race for the district office. He said the district as configured is an embarrassment.

"This is the worst I ever saw," Mann said.

Aronberg, who lives on the east coast, would like to see the district redrawn.

"I do think it's a shame that Lee County, with its population, doesn't have its own state senator," said Aronberg, who couldn't run again because of term limits and lost the Democratic primary for attorney general in August.

FGCU political science professor Peter Bergerson said Lee candidates are at disadvantages competing against rivals from more populous Palm Beach County.

"It really would take a monumental effort for someone from this area to win," Bergerson said.

Both Lee County candidates lost in the August primary. Republican Sharon J. Merchant, who has a home in Lehigh Acres, placed second to Benacquisto, who resides in Wellington and earned 39 percent of the vote in a three-candidate field.

Rader, a Delray Beach resident, trailed Fort Myers resident Pete Burkert most of election night, but as the returns trickled in from Palm Beach, he edged ahead and won with 53 percent of the vote.

The district's far-flung reaches and dimensions put candidates on the road often.

"I know I got one speeding ticket," Mann said, recalling a 2002 late-night drive home when he was pulled over between LaBelle and Clewiston.

The campaigning sometimes takes candidates into



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Charlotte's lone precinct in the district.

"That's another absurd thing," said Mann. "Those people, for all practical purposes, have no representation."

Oh, and what about Hendry County, which shows up on state Senate district maps?

"It's only fish," Aronberg said. Just a chunk of Lake Okeechobee.

"They used that ribbon of water to tie the district," Mann said.

Lee acknowledges the way the district is shaped is unfair to many.

"It's unfair to the candidates, but more important, it's unfair to the population because the common interests we have on this side are different than on that side," Lee said.

State Senate District 27's electoral heft is weighted overwhelmingly on the west and east ends.

**Lee County**

- 143,967 registered voters in the district
- 47 percent Republicans
- 29 percent Democrats

**Palm Beach County**

- 159,370 registered voters in the district
- 49 percent Democrats
- 25 percent Republicans



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# Florida's Elections and Black Politics

<http://www.theroot.com/views/florida-s-elections-and-shifting-terrain-black-politics>

December 30, 2010

Florida's Republican Gov. Charlie Crist, now the "independent" U.S. Senate candidate, trails the official Republican candidate, Marco Rubio, by six points, and political forecasters in the state now predict a Rubio victory. Kendrick Meek, the state's first black Democratic candidate, is given no chance at all. Every poll since Labor Day has him with no more than 25 percent support. Some Democratic Party leaders have quietly urged him to drop out of the race and throw his support to Crist, but Meek told a *USA Today* interviewer, "I'm comfortable playing the role of David."

From the beginning, the election has been in the national headlines. Immigration and health care have been a large target of Republican campaign advertising. "Vote to rescue America" and "the America that was is no more" are two constantly repeated Republican refrains on television, usually accompanied by images of Barack Obama or Nancy Pelosi, even in races that seem distant from Washington, D.C., like state attorney general or chief financial officer. For those of us old enough to remember, such slogans hint at yearnings for the racist society that existed until the struggle for civil rights and the 1965 Voting Rights Act began redefining Southern politics and America.

But the manner in which race has been turned on its head is one of the interesting dynamics here in this Florida election season. What might be called "the skin test" may have to be thrown out the window. State Sen. Al Lawson, minority leader in the Florida Legislature and the only black Democrat representing northern Florida, has endorsed Crist -- not Meek. Lawson lost the August primary for the congressional seat held by Blue Dog Democrat Allen Boyd in large part because both the state Democratic Party and President Obama endorsed Boyd.

Their endorsements were a politically pragmatic effort to aid the seven-term conservative Congressman, who, down nearly a dozen points in the polls, now seems likely to lose his seat to his Republican opponent. Some speculation suggests that the endorsement of Boyd is the Democratic Party's way of sending a subtle message to black voters that it is OK to vote for Crist. With Meek virtually out of the running, Democratic leadership much prefers Crist over Tea Party favorite Rubio, whose victory would put a crucial U.S. Senate seat in the hands of a Republican.

In the tight race for Florida's 22nd Congressional District, which includes Fort Lauderdale and Palm Beach, Republican Allen West has the Tea Party and Sarah Palin in his corner. He is one of 32 African Americans running for congressional seats as Republicans this November.

The former Army lieutenant colonel was forced to retire after firing a gun near a detainee's head in Iraq to get information about a possible ambush. During the 2008 presidential campaign, he compared Obama campaign events to Nazi rallies and has accused Obama and Pelosi of Gestapo tactics. Should he win, however, West says he wants to join the Congressional Black Caucus.

Redistricting is the stealth issue in the election. It has the greatest potential consequence for Florida's black electorate and also reflects the changing face of "black" politics. Two "Fair Districts" constitutional amendments on the state ballot would prohibit state lawmakers from drawing legislative or congressional districts that favor incumbents or political parties.

The often bizarrely drawn districts have also guaranteed a black majority district that has repeatedly sent Rep. Corrine Brown to Congress since 1992; and unsurprisingly, Brown opposes the amendments. She calls them an effort to "bleach" her district, arguing that minority representation in Florida will diminish if the amendments pass.

But the state NAACP and nearly every member of Florida's Legislative Black Caucus say the amendments would give minorities more power. Redistricting in 1992 shifted Democratic voters, many of them minorities, out of other districts, resulting by 1996 in Republican control of the Legislature for the first time in nearly 120 years.

Politicians like former Atlanta Mayor and U.S. Rep. Andrew Young have proved that blacks can win white votes in unexpected places, but of the 42 black Democrats in the House, all but two represent districts in which blacks are a majority or plurality. An important question raised in Florida and other Republican campaigns around the country is, With Republicans fielding more black candidates than Democrats in federal races, how relevant are the accusations of racism that have been a staple of Democratic Party campaigning?

*Charles Cobb Jr. is a regular contributor to **The Root**.*

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# More cash for Florida redistricting fight - Ben Smith

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[http://www.politico.com/blogs/bensmith/1010/More\\_cash\\_for\\_Florida\\_redistricting\\_fight\\_.html#](http://www.politico.com/blogs/bensmith/1010/More_cash_for_Florida_redistricting_fight_.html#)

December 30, 2010

**October 30, 2010**

I [wrote recently](#) about the big money, mostly from the left, flowing into the campaign to depoliticize Florida's redistricting process, a move with the very political consequence of tilting the field back toward the Democrats.

The latest contributions include \$250,000 from Mike Bloomberg, \$250,000 from the Atlantic Advocacy Fund, the liberal charity that underwrote Health Care for America Now, and a big \$800,000 from the National Education Association, waging a battle over teaching rules in the state.

Posted by Ben Smith 05:20 PM

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# Haridopolos wrong on amendments 5, 6; real people favor them » TCPalm.com

<http://www.tcpalm.com/news/2010/oct/30/letter-haridopolos-wrong-on-amendments-5-6-real/>

December 30, 2010

I think the Florida voters who signed the 1.7 million petitions to get Amendments 5 and 6 on the ballot would disagree with Mike Haridopolos' Oct. 23 column. Don't be misled by his scare tactics. Look who is really supporting amendments 5 and 6.

Every major newspaper in the state has said vote "yes" on Amendments 5 and 6. Organizations including the League of Women Voters, AARP, NAACP, Democracia Ahora, Florida's Legislative Black Caucus, Florida Black Caucus of Elected Officials, Florida League of Cities and the Florida Association of Counties have all endorsed amendments 5 and 6.

Now, look who is opposing: legislators who fear losing their secure seats and the lobbyists and special-interest corporations who influence them.

We can no longer afford to allow legislators to go behind closed doors with their supporters to create backroom deals for their own political gain and protection. This is our chance to ensure that elected officials can be held accountable by the voters they represent. The way for Florida voters to truly protect their vote is by voting yes on amendments 5 and 6.

Lisa Sloat

Miami

# PolitiFact Florida | Opponent of Amendments 5, 6 claims "liberal, out-of-state" donors have spent millions

<http://www.politifact.com/florida/statements/2010/oct/31/protect-your-vote/opponent-amendments-5-6-claims-liberal-out-state-d/>

December 30, 2010

The group fighting a proposal to change how the state Legislature draws state and congressional district boundaries says in a new TV ad that the issue is being funded and supported largely by liberal, out-of-state special interests.

Amendments 5 and 6, which will appear on the Nov. 2, 2010, ballot, seek to amend the state Constitution so that districts are compact, contiguous and rely on existing city, county and geographical boundaries.

The group backing the changes, [Fair Districts Florida](#), says the changes to the Constitution would prevent elected leaders from drawing legislative boundaries to benefit incumbents or one political party. But opponents, including the group [Protect Your Vote](#), say the changes create standards that are impossible to meet and may actually make preserving minority representation more difficult. Instead, the opposition group — [funded primarily by the Republican Party of Florida](#) — characterizes the amendments as "designed to elect more Democrats."

A new ad by the group says:

"Take a close look at Amendments 5 and 6. They are a con job and a power grab.

"Liberal out-of-state special interests are spending millions on 5 and 6 to change the way Florida draws its congressional and legislative districts so they can elect more liberals to support the Obama-Pelosi agenda.

"More taxes, more spending, more debt, more job loss.

"How can the same liberal groups that helped bring America to its knees put Florida back on its feet?"

The "liberal, out of state special interests" claim is accompanied by symbols of the [AFL-CIO](#), [SEIU](#), the [American Trial Lawyers Association](#), the [American Civil Liberties Union](#), and [ACORN](#) — the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now. Below the symbols is text that says "Spending on 5 & 6 ... \$5,786,364."

In this claim, we're checking that "liberal, out-of-state special interests are spending millions" supporting Amendments 5 and 6.

For the record, here are official summaries of the two amendments. They are almost identical, with 5 applying to the state Legislature and 6 to Florida's congressional districts.

[Amendment 5](#) — Legislative districts or districting plans may not be drawn to favor or disfavor an incumbent or political party. Districts shall not be drawn to deny racial or language minorities the equal opportunity to participate in the political process and elect representatives of their choice. Districts must be contiguous. Unless otherwise required, districts must be compact, as equal in population as feasible, and where feasible must make use of existing city, county and geographical boundaries.

[Amendment 6](#) — Congressional districts or districting plans may not be drawn to favor or disfavor an incumbent or political party. Districts shall not be drawn to deny racial or language minorities the equal opportunity to participate in the political process and elect representatives of their choice. Districts must be contiguous. Unless otherwise required, districts must be compact, as equal in population as feasible, and where feasible must make use of existing city, county and geographical boundaries.

Through Oct. 8, Fair Districts Florida had raised \$6.9 million, more than two-thirds of which came in large

donations of \$25,000 or more. We're looking at contributions before Oct. 8 because new reporting Oct. 28 wasn't taken into account for Protect Your Vote's ad.

It's well-covered ground that "liberals" — or at least groups that traditionally support Democrats — are dominant contributors to Fair Districts Florida. The *Orlando Sentinel* and other news organizations characterize the issue as one of incumbents vs. those out of power, since Republicans will draw the new lines in 2012 based on fresh data from the 2010 census. Republicans also [drew them 10 years ago](#), since they had gained control of the state Legislature after a redistricting effort led by Democrats the previous decade had been redrawn by the courts. The resulting congressional delegation had 15 Republicans and 10 Democrats even though registered Democrats outnumber Republicans in the state. The *Orlando Sentinel* [analyzed campaign contributions](#) and concluded in an Oct. 20 article that "Democrats and their traditional allies have provided more than \$5.7 million of the \$6.9 million raised by Fair Districts Florida."

But what about the part of the claim that says "out of state?" Campaign contributors provide an address, so it's easy to separate contributions inside Florida from those outside it. PolitiFact Florida removed contributions from Florida addresses (ignoring a handful of small contributions that didn't come with an address), and came up with [\\$2.2 million](#) in outside funding, with large contributions from the [liberal group America Votes](#) and labor union the National Education Association. That \$2.2 million is about 32 percent of Fair District Florida's funding through Oct. 8.

PolitiFact Florida also wondered about contributions from the groups whose logos appeared in the ad along with the amount "\$5,786,364." How much had they contributed? We confirmed that SEIU contributed \$625,000; Florida ACORN, \$25,000 (back in 2007); and AFL-CIO chapters more than \$18,000. But we were unable to find contributions from the American Trial Lawyers Association or the American Civil Liberties Union.

We contacted Ryan Duffy of public relations firm Ron Sachs Communications, who had provided us with a link to the ad and a four-page document supporting its claims. Did the Protect Your Vote campaign also come up with \$2.2 million in out-of-state contributions and zero campaign cash from the ATLA and ACLU?

On the "out-of-state" question, he responded that [according to Politico](#), America Votes had contributed \$500,000 to the [Florida Watch Ballot Committee](#), which in turn handed the money to Fair Districts Florida — making it out-of-state money that merely looked like in-state money. The same was true of a Florida Education Association donation of \$500,000 after it received the same-sized donation from the National Education Association, he wrote.

He added: "These findings suggest the possibility that even more money than this is being filtered through local organizations that has yet to be uncovered."

Meanwhile, he acknowledged that the American Trial Lawyers Association and American Civil Liberties Union were not direct contributors to Fair Districts Florida. Rather, he said, they were included in the ad because donations from attorneys amounted to \$1.2 million and 18 percent of the total contributions made to Fair Districts Florida, while the ACLU used its own money to [organize rallies](#), distribute campaign literature, issue news releases and send out e-mail alerts in support of Amendments 5 and 6.

"Thus while the ACLU does not show up as a donor, it is clear that both the Florida and national organizations have contributed numerous resources (e-mails to their mailing list, organization of rallies, promotion on their website etc) to Fair Districts Florida," Duffy wrote.

What does the Truth-O-Meter make of all this?

When it comes to the phrase "Liberal, out-of-state special interests are spending millions on 5 and 6," the Protect Your Vote group does reasonably well. PolitiFact Florida identifies \$2.2 million in out-of-state money — though

it's not immediately possible to confirm all 230 contributions are from "liberal" donors or "special interests." Many donations come from individuals. But arguments from Duffy about the Florida Watch Ballot Committee and National Education Association hold some weight, providing an additional \$1 million that fits the "out-of-state special interests" category and tipping the claim closer to true.

But this claim wasn't made in isolation: The words appeared just as five logos and a number flashed on the screen for viewers. The AFL-CIO, SEIU, American Trial Lawyers Association, American Civil Liberties Union and ACORN logos appear above text that says: "Spending on 5 & 6 ... \$5,786,364." We know two of those organizations didn't contribute directly to Fair Districts Florida, and the rest contributed less than \$669,000 combined. Also, the number on the screen represents "liberal" donations to Fair Districts Florida — not just those from out of state. Anyone watching without other background could fairly conclude that nearly \$5.8 million had been contributed by "liberal, out-of-state special interests," with significant contributions from the organizations on the screen. That's simply not the case.

Meanwhile, it's not clear that the message itself came from a partisan group — the top six donations to Protect Your Vote come from the Republican Party of Florida: [\\$750,000 as of Oct. 8, and \\$1.9 million since then](#).

"Liberal, out-of-state special interests" is the claim we're checking, and there are clearly more than \$1 million in donations that fit that category, and possibly more. But the mix of group logos and dollar figures is misleading. Not all those groups contributed money directly. Those who did contributed less than \$1 million combined. And the number dramatically overstates "liberal, out-of-state special interests" since it represents all "liberal" donations from both inside and outside the state. We rate this claim Half True.

# Redistricting Fight Starts Nov. 2 (Florida Gov. race is pivotal)

<http://www.freerepublic.com/focus/f-news/2615465/posts>

December 30, 2010

Redistricting Fight Starts Nov. 2

Florida Republican gubernatorial candidate Rick Scott stands with running mate Jennifer Carroll at a campaign stop Tuesday in New Port Richey, Fla.... View Enlarged Image Republicans are poised to retake control of the House after the midterm elections. Big state-level gains should bolster their chances of winning and holding more seats in the coming years.

Population trends should give more House seats and electoral votes to "red" states at the expense of typically "blue" states. Additionally, Republicans will get a boost in redistricting battles next year from expected big gains in statehouses and governorships.

the rest of the article:

Nevertheless, there are many mitigating factors that could limit the GOPs gains.

Final census estimates, on which reapportionment depends, wont be finished until year-end.

Estimates provided by the firm Election Data Services show Texas gaining an additional four House seats. Florida will gain two seats, while Arizona, Georgia, Nevada, South Carolina, Utah and Washington will gain one each.

States likely to lose one seat are Illinois, Iowa, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Michigan, Missouri, New Jersey and Pennsylvania. New York and Ohio could each lose two.

Red States Get Bigger

Washington is the only state poised to gain a seat that usually votes Democratic. Louisiana is the lone red state likely to lose a seat.

It is somewhat of a trend from bluer states to redder states, said Kim Brace, president of Election Data Services. But its more a trend from the Northeast and Upper Midwest to the South and West. Thats where the population movement has been since World War II.

Democrats hold 26 governorships vs. 24 for Republicans. Election analysts generally predict the GOP will pick up 6-8 governorships.

A lot of those House seats seem to be going to states where Republicans are likely to control the process, said professor Keith Gaddie, a redistricting expert at the University of Oklahoma. But thats not as certain as we thought it was.

Texas Republicans currently control the governors mansion and statehouse.

Recent polls show Gov. Rick Perry solidifying his lead over strong Democratic challenger Bill White. In Florida, the GOP controls the legislature but may lose the governorship. Republican Rick Scott and Democrat Alex Sink are neck-and-neck.

Of the states projected to lose House seats, six have state legislatures controlled by Democrats.

But the parties split control of the legislatures in Ohio, Michigan and Pennsylvania. The GOP has a solid chance of regaining full legislative control in Ohio and Michigan and Republican gubernatorial candidates are currently leading in both states.

When you have a governor of one party and a legislature of the other party, the gains or losses are more likely to get shared, Gaddie said. If they cant make a deal, it goes to litigation that can cost the state millions.

Texas population has grown by nearly 4 million over the past decade, but most of that has been among Hispanics. Hispanics tend to vote Democratic, and Gaddie suggests that one or two of the likely new Texas districts may have heavy concentrations of Hispanics.

Finally, ballot initiatives that seek to strip politicians of their redistricting power could also play a role.

No More Gerrymanders?

California voters will decide on Proposition 20, which would let a citizen commission created in 2008 to determine state legislative seats draw up congressional districts. Though the Golden State is not projected to gain or lose House seats, the panel could put in play more of the 53 seats which now almost never switch hands, due to gerrymandering.

The current process for doing redistricting is Americas best kept dirty little secret, said Gerry Hebert, program director at Americans for Redistricting Reform. Politicians use the process to choose the voters they want in their district. That leads to fewer competitive districts.

However, state Democrats are promoting Proposition 27, which would eliminate the panel entirely.

Democratic groups are taking a different stance in Florida, hoping Amendment 6 will produce more Democratic seats. It would let state courts reject any redistricting plan designed by state legislators with the intent to favor or disfavor a political party or incumbent.

A few states already have panels that draw congressional districts, but most still let governors and state legislatures alter the plans.

The state legislature, on its own, is unlikely to give up the redistricting power, Hebert said.

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# Florida voters to decide on redistricting amendments in November

<http://fsm.org/audio/florida-voters-decide-redistricting-amendments-november/7706>

December 30, 2010

- 
- **Length:** 4:39 minutes (4.26 MB)
- **Format:** MP3 Mono 44kHz 128Kbps (CBR)

Yesterday, we looked at how redistricting, the process of redrawing district boundaries, could shape congress for years to come after the November elections. Today, we take a look at how that could play out on the state level. In Florida, voters will decide on two proposed amendments to the state Constitution that would establish new rules for redistricting. The Amendments supporters say the current system is unfair: over the last six years, only three incumbents have been defeated out of more than 420 races for the Florida Legislature. But opponents say elected officials of color could lose seats. From WMNF Community Radio in Tampa, Seán Kinane reports.

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# Fair districts mean truer representation

<http://www2.tbo.com/content/2010/nov/01/fair-districts-mean/news-opinion-editorials/>

December 30, 2010

The Tampa Tribune

Published: November 1, 2010

Of all the amendments on the ballot Tuesday, 5 and 6 could have the most lasting significance to Florida voters.

This pair would change the way lawmakers configure congressional and legislative districts by setting new and fair standards for redistricting in the state constitution.

The U.S. Constitution requires states to use new U.S. Census data every 10 years to redraw their federal and state lawmakers' districts. Each decade, the boundaries are redrawn, and that time is almost upon us.

Tuesday's vote culminates a years-long and bipartisan effort to bring some sanity to the process.

As it stands now, the party in power has total control of what has become an incumbent-protection project.

Most of the proponents for change are Democrats. They're out of power and would stand to benefit most from a yes vote. Most Republicans, meanwhile, have reservations about the proposals. They're in power, and they want to stay in control.

But while both parties may have political motives in their stands, the goal of the "Fair District" amendments is not to help either party but to empower voters.

Redistricting and reapportionment have become more about politicians choosing their voters than about voters choosing their representatives, which is why this newspaper, like every other major daily in Florida, has urged a yes vote on both counts.

Under amendments 5 and 6, state lawmakers would retain the responsibility for drawing their district lines. But the guidelines would lead to more compact and sensible boundaries and more competitive races.

The rules would do away with districts that stretch hundreds of miles and sometimes bounce from one side of the street to another. Small towns like Temple Terrace would likely not be served by three members of Congress.

Approving the proposed standards would bring order to the process. Wedges should not be driven between communities, counties and voters.

And politicians would be more likely to listen to all their constituents. Because the current system tends to lump like-minded voters in the same districts, elected officials often have little incentive to consider opposing views.

Democrats in safe districts can be as liberal as they like without regard for the welfare of small business owners. Similarly, safe Republican lawmakers can dismiss the concerns of union members.

Districts that are drawn to reflect communities, rather than to segregate voters according to parties, would likely make more responsive elected officials.

The amendments are aimed at getting rid of rigged results and offering a truer representation of voters, achievements that members of both parties should support.

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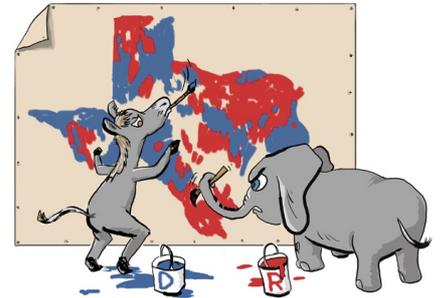
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# ThinkProgress' Things To Be Thankful For: Redistricting Reform

<http://therightwing.rsscrawler.com/2010/11/thinkprogress%e2%80%99-things-to-be-thankful-for-redistricting-reform/>

December 30, 2010

There are few aspects of politics that appeal to politicians' worst demons more than redistricting. The process begins after the decennial census is conducted and population data is given to the states, which then use various methods to redraw their congressional districts accordingly. In many states that task is delegated to the state legislature and governor. When both are controlled by the same party, as will be the case next year in states like Georgia, Pennsylvania, and Illinois, redistricting often descends into [gerrymandering](#), the process by which one party deliberately manipulates the map in order to put the other party at a disadvantage.



But fortunately, we've seen several substantive efforts at redistricting reform this year. Ridding our political system of gerrymandering is an issue that puts voters ahead of incumbents and benefits both Republicans and Democrats. Ensuring more fairness and competitiveness in our elections has been pushed by people across the political spectrum, from [Tea Partiers](#) to [progressives](#), and from [establishment Republicans](#) to [establishment Democrats](#). Because redistricting benefits the party in power, a party's position on the issue often depends on their status.

Thankfully, voters in a growing number of states are pushing for changes that remove — or severely restrict — politics from redistricting. Four such states are California, Florida, Iowa, and Arizona:

**CALIFORNIA** — For the past ten years, California has been a model of the ill-effects of partisan redistricting. A decade ago, California legislators opted to draw a new map with the primary goal of protecting incumbent officeholders. It worked [beyond belief](#). In the following election, every single incumbent in California's House, Senate, and congressional delegation won reelection, taking an average 69 percent of the vote. Over the ensuing decade, none of the 120 legislative seats and just one of the state's 53 congressional seats have [switched parties](#).

This time around, California voters opted to draw the map themselves. In November, they overwhelmingly passed [Proposition 20](#), which turned over congressional redistricting to a citizen commission. Out of [31,000 applicants](#), eight Californians — [including](#) a bookstore owner, an engineer, and an insurance agent — were chosen at random last week to serve. Those eight will soon choose another six citizens to finalize the 14-member commission, which will be evenly split between five Democrats, five Republicans, and four unaffiliated voters. Together, the commission will draw a new map using "strict, nonpartisan rules." In order to become law, the new map must be supported by at least nine of the 14 members — three Democrats, three Republicans, and three unaffiliated voters.

**FLORIDA** — Like California, Florida's current map is an egregious example of gerrymandering. A perpetual swing state, Florida backed President Bush in 2004 with 52 percent of the vote and President Obama in 2008 with 51 percent of the vote. However, thanks in large part to Republican gerrymandering in 2001, the GOP's 55 percent of the state's [congressional vote](#) in 2010 translated into capturing 75 percent of the state's congressional seats.

Thankfully, Florida voters passed a redistricting reform [initiative](#) in November by a whopping 25 points, despite opposition from the state Republican Party, who stood to lose a new opportunity to

gerrymander the state's districts. Now, despite a Republican governor and large majorities in the state legislature, the GOP is barred from drawing congressional districts that "favor or disfavor an incumbent or political party."

**IOWA** — Iowa is a model for fair, nonpartisan redistricting. Rather than allowing legislators to pick which voters they want to represent, Iowa gives the power of redistricting to an independent body, the [Legislative Services Agency](#). The LSA draws a map that uses specific formulas to keep districts as compact and contiguous as possible, while also preserving city and county boundaries. Where current legislators live is a factor that is prohibited from consideration. The map is then voted on in the state legislature, but if it's rejected, the LSA is then charged with producing another map that the legislature may like less.

There are a few demographic aspects unique to Iowa that make the state's redistricting restrictions less complicated and more apt to the type of reform it has implemented. For instance, as Stateline.org [notes](#), "Iowa is so overwhelmingly white that it does not have to craft districts that favor minority voters, as required under the federal Voting Rights Act. Plus, Democrats and Republicans are spread pretty evenly throughout the state." Still, Iowa's approach is laudable and other states would do well to replicate its system.

**ARIZONA** — Like Iowa, Arizona employs an [independent redistricting commission](#) comprised of two Democrats, two Republicans, and one independent. Instead of protecting incumbents and ensuring their reelection, the commission is charged with drawing as many competitive districts as possible while still creating compact, contiguous and fair borders. Unlike California, Arizona succeeded at prompting competitiveness in its congressional elections over the past decade. Nearly 40 percent of the state's districts switched parties once, while a quarter switched parties twice. Rather than disenfranchising voters, Arizona has taken positive steps to ensure that its elections are representative and fair.

# Ballot Access News » Blog Archive » Redistricting Reform Passes in Florida and California

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<http://www.ballot-access.org/2010/11/02/redistricting-reform-passes-in-florida-and-california/>

December 23, 2010

On November 2, redistricting reform ballot measures passed in both Florida and California. In Florida, the measures require the legislature to draw congressional and legislative district boundaries without regard for partisanship and without regard for helping incumbents. The lines must respect county boundaries to the extent possible. Both measure (one for U.S. House boundaries, and one for legislative boundaries) needed 60%, but both attained it.

In California, over 60% of the voters voted to transfer authority for drawing U.S. House district boundaries to the same Citizens Commission that was already in place for drawing legislative boundaries. A rival measure, to eliminate the Citizens Commission, failed with only 40% of the vote.

# Gag order on redistricting study? || Gulf Coast Business Review

<http://www.review.net/section/detail/tuesdays-cup-gag-order-on-redistricting-study/>

January 14, 2011

By: Gulf Coast Business Review

November 02, 2010

Millions of dollars have been flowing from left-wing interests outside the state to support FairDistrictsFlorida.org, the elections redistricting campaign. Count the likes of left-wing financier George Soros, national labor unions such as SEIU and the controversial Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN) among its contributors.

Miami attorney Ellen Freidin, who co-chaired John Kerry's presidential campaign in Florida in 2004, heads FairDistrictsFlorida.

Proposed state constitutional Amendments 5 and 6 would change how the redistricting process works in Florida by setting constitutionally mandated standards for drawing legislative and congressional district lines.

Critics claim the result will be a confusing set of state and federal standards leading to litigation and judicial determination of voting districts. And that may be what liberals ultimately want.

One key standard requires districts be compact to eliminate gerrymandering.

But an academic study co-authored by Jowei Chen of the University of Michigan and Stanford University's Jonathan Rodden, refutes Freidin's group's main claim: that partisan gerrymandering in 2002 led to the Legislature and Florida's congressional delegation being dominated by Republicans even though Democrat voters outnumber Republicans voters. See the study at [http://www.stanford.edu/~jrodden/chen\\_rodnen\\_florida.pdf](http://www.stanford.edu/~jrodden/chen_rodnen_florida.pdf).

That 45-page study, subtitled, "Why Compact, Contiguous Districts are Bad for the Democrats," points out that it's the fact that Democrats are concentrated in compact urban areas where they win big — but mostly lose in suburban and rural areas — that causes what FairDistrictsFlorida mistakenly blames on gerrymandering. The change could also cost minorities their representation, which explains why many African-American and Hispanic legislators, and U.S. Rep. Corinne Brown, D-Jacksonville, oppose it.

The study's authors conclude that, "The best hope for Democrats to reclaim the Florida Congressional delegation or state legislature is to insist on a districting scheme that minimizes the importance of compactness." But that's the opposite of what Amendments 5 and 6 seek to do.

So Coffee Talk asked state Rep. Keith Fitzgerald, D-Sarasota, also a political science professor at New College, what he thought of the study. Fitzgerald, who supports the amendments, and has read the study, referred to it as "a good study," "a carefully done study," and said, "It's a really good study."

But then, Fitzgerald told Coffee Talk, "The Fair Districts people have tried to get me not to talk about that study."

Fitzgerald says it wasn't Freidin who tried to put the gag on him, but wouldn't name names. Freidin admitted that she hadn't read the study though she was aware of it.

Apparently, it's not relevant, though Fitzgerald says, "Democrats are going to be sorely disappointed." No doubt those will include those multi-million dollar contributors.

# Florida redistricting standards pass while class-size changes, Hometown Democracy fail

<http://www.tampabay.com/news/politics/elections/article1131899.ece>

December 30, 2010

By [Becky Bowers](#) and Ron Matus Times Staff Writers

In Print: Wednesday, November 3, 2010

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Voters followed the money on citizen-led constitutional amendments Tuesday, narrowly passing two redistricting measures backed by a \$9 million campaign and rejecting a dramatically outspent Hometown Democracy effort.

Meanwhile, Florida voters didn't endorse the Legislature's attempt to put some flexibility into the class-size amendment they approved eight years ago.

"We didn't have the money and the organization that our opponents had," said state Sen. Don Gaetz, R-Niceville, a former Okaloosa County superintendent and a leading supporter of Amendment 8. "For the teachers union, class size is the holy grail. And the teachers union worked very hard in this campaign. They raised a lot of money."

Having the cash to communicate with voters is especially important on constitutional measures, said Susan MacManus, a political scientist at the University of South Florida.

"Advertising matters when it comes to amendments, because voters find them so confusing," she said.

However, two of three other legislative measures passed without big spending:

Amendment 2, which gives a property tax break to military personnel deployed overseas, passed easily. "Who would not want to give those folks who are in active service a little bit of a break, right?" said Aubrey Jewett, a political scientist at the University of Central Florida.

A nonbinding referendum that asked voters if they want to see the U.S. Constitution amended to "require a balanced federal budget without raising taxes" also appealed to voters, though it's merely a survey of public opinion.

Amendment 1, which would have ended public financing of state political campaigns, attracted a simple majority of voters, but not the 60 percent required to pass. "Most Floridians don't even know we have public financing in campaigns," said Daniel Smith, a political scientist at the University of Florida.

Constitutional amendments from any source have been harder to pass since 2006, when voters approved what else an amendment requiring 60 percent approval instead of a simple majority. Still, in 2008, a citizen-led measure defining marriage passed, as did three of five non-citizen-led changes.

Floridians, who generally love citizen-led constitutional amendments, bucked more than a decade of "yes" votes to reject Amendment 4, which would have given voters a say in land use plan changes. Florida Hometown Democracy spent just \$2.3 million over several years, compared with nearly \$16 million by opponents \$11 million just this year by Citizens for Lower Taxes and a Stronger Economy, backed by Realtors, builders and the Florida Chamber of Commerce.

Ryan Houck, executive director for Vote No on 4, said that in addition to advertising, the campaign built a network of 4,000 volunteers, attracted 15,000 fans on Facebook and worked with 320 business, labor and civic groups.

"It all goes together," he said.

Lesley Blackner, who started the Hometown Democracy movement seven years ago, issued a statement Tuesday night: "Unfortunately, it is very difficult to have a rational discussion of a solution to Florida's horrible growth management problem in 30-second television ads that cost millions of dollars to air."

The redistricting effort, led by Fair Districts Florida, passed the 60 percent threshold with for each initiative. The measures, one for legislative districts and one for congressional districts, had more than a 2 percent cushion with the vote count nearly complete Wednesday morning.

Backers of the measures raised the majority of their campaign cash for Amendments 5 and 6 from traditional Democratic supporters ultimately putting up \$9 million against \$3.6 million from primarily Republican sources.

"I'm disappointed that they're passing," said state Sen. Garrett Richter, R-Naples. "If you follow the money, those amendments are intended to create a more liberal Legislature, and a more liberal Congress, and the money trail tells it all."

Republicans, who will have control as the Legislature prepares for redistricting in 2012 based on fresh census data, will now have standards directing them to create districts that don't favor incumbents or a political party and that consider geographic and community boundaries. They predict extra litigation as Democrats use the amendments to challenge GOP-drawn districts.

"There will clearly be litigation challenging these new districts, but it has the potential of leveling the playing field in Florida, a field that has heavily favored Republicans," said Smith, the UF political scientist.

Tuesday's vote also doesn't end debate over class sizes.

"The Legislature has tried time and time again to tell the people they're wrong (about the original 2002 class-size amendment) and they weren't," said state Sen. Alex Villalobos, R-Miami, a leading opponent.

State education officials will determine later this month whether school districts met the limits imposed by the 2002 amendment or face potentially millions of dollars in penalties.

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# Florida Redistricting Amendments Pass

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[http://www.wctv.tv/news/headlines/Fla\\_redistricting\\_amendments\\_pass\\_106588578.html](http://www.wctv.tv/news/headlines/Fla_redistricting_amendments_pass_106588578.html)

December 23, 2010

ORLANDO, Fla. (AP) --

Voters approved two amendments setting new rules for how legislative and congressional districts in Florida are redrawn each decade.

Amendment 5 dealt with legislative districts, while Amendment 6 addressed U.S. congressional districts.

The battle over the amendments pitted several of Florida's best-known black and Hispanic lawmakers against advocates who said the current methods create gerrymandered districts that protect incumbents.

The new amendments require that both legislative and congressional districts be compact, equal in population and make use of existing city, county and geographical boundaries. The amendments prohibit drawing districts to favor or disfavor an incumbent or political party.

# Congressmen Challenge Florida's Redistricting Law

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[http://www.wtv.com/home/headlines/Congressmen\\_Challenge\\_Floridas\\_Redistricting\\_Law\\_106633948.html](http://www.wtv.com/home/headlines/Congressmen_Challenge_Floridas_Redistricting_Law_106633948.html)

December 30, 2010

ORLANDO, Fla. (AP) - Two members of [Congress](#) are challenging a new amendment that sets rules for drawing congressional districts in Florida, less than 24 hours after it was approved by voters.

U.S. Reps. Corrine Brown and Mario Diaz-Balart filed a lawsuit challenging Amendment 6 Wednesday in federal court in Miami.

The lawsuit asks that the amendment be declared invalid and stopped from being enforced.

They claim the new standards could threaten Florida's six congressional districts where blacks and Hispanics are either the majority or close to being in the majority, a contention strongly disputed by the amendment's supporters.

The amendment requires districts be [compact](#), equal in population and make use of existing city, county and geographical boundaries.

## [Alan Fein](#)

Sports lawyer, former Carter Domestic Policy staffer

Posted: November 8, 2010 02:01 PM

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Here in Florida, there was an important story of reform -- real, perhaps revolutionary election reform -- that was lost in Tuesday's carnage. Florida Constitutional Amendments 5 and 6, designed to limit the power of legislators to design their districts to guarantee their reelection, were approved by over 62 percent of Florida voters. Reforms like Amendments 5 and 6 are have been pushed by good government advocates in both parties, have been instituted in handful of other states, and are needed everywhere.

The abuse the reforms have addressed is gerrymandering. In Florida, it has been regular practice by both parties for generations. Over the last few years, however, gerrymandering has literally become a science. Computer programming allows the party in power to draw district lines block-by-block, carving voters of a particular persuasion in or out of district. Ultimately, legislators were picking their voters rather than voters picking their legislators.

The fruits of the labors of gerrymandering are no clearer than they are in Florida. Florida actually has more registered Democrats than Republicans. In most statewide races over the last few years, including Tuesday's governor's race, the margins of victory are very slim. You may remember our close presidential election a few years back, and, of course, Floridians supported Barack Obama. Yet, at the end of the Tuesday, 20 out of 25 Florida congressional seats were in Republican hands. Republicans have had similar control in the Florida House and Senate.

How can this be? The Republican legislators who draw the lines pack as many Democrats in to as few districts as possible. The Democrats who did win garnered 86, 79, 62, 62, and 61 percent of the vote in their districts, respectively. In the districts around the small number of Democratic bastions, Republicans have the clear advantage. In California, Governor Schwarzenegger tried to get his Democratic legislature to address the mirror-image problem, to no avail.

A classic example of the system that has been created is that of Representative Mario Diaz-Balart. Diaz-Balart had been laboring for years in the Florida legislature, and made it known in 2000 that he would retain his seat for one more term, so he could chair the legislative committee that would draw the lines after the next census. Diaz-Balart's goal, which he successfully achieved, was to create his own seat in the United States Congress.

The district Diaz-Balart created for himself in 2000 is ridiculous. It begins in Miami's heavily Republican western suburbs, carves out all African-American voters nearby, then stretches across the Everglades, where no one lives, to include heavily Republican bastions in Southwest Florida.

Other examples abound. State Senate District 19 has a doughnut hole in the center which isolates residents and puts them in another district. Congressional District 11 is "contiguous" only by including a causeway over Tampa Bay, and includes three separate counties. And the small Florida city of Winter Park is carved up among four separate Congressional districts.

This nonsense is repeated throughout the country, and its impact on the level of our discourse is profound. Because so many districts are rigged ahead of time, the real battle for a district often occurs in lightly-attended primaries, where candidates on a party's fringe are more likely to be successful, and much less likely to seek compromise or moderation once elected.

In Florida, at least, the voters had enough of legislators choosing their voters rather than allowing voters to choose who they want to elect. The amendments passed Tuesday prohibit drawing district lines to favor or disfavor any incumbent or political party; they require districts to be compact and to utilize existing political and geographical boundaries, while at the same time protecting minority voting rights.

Of course, the legislators who are now constricted by the Florida Constitution will not simply roll over. Congressman Diaz-Balart did not even wait until dawn on Wednesday to file an action in Miami's federal court challenging the amendments, even though a similar action was rejected by the Florida Supreme Court. The lawsuit will be disposed of, and the Florida legislature will ultimately be dispatched to reluctantly carry out the new provisions of Florida's constitution.

Now, it's time for this effort to be replicated around the country. In the meantime, we live in a democracy in which 80 percent of its voters have utter disregard for their legislators, yet the lion's share of these people are almost automatically reelected. Fair redistricting is a revolution within our system that needs to happen. Throughout the country. Now.

# Florida redistricting measures cleared the ballot but face a possible legal challenge | Ballotnews

<http://ballotnews.org/2010/11/04/florida-redistricting-measures-cleared-the-ballot-but-face-a-possible-legal-challenge/>

November 16, 2010

November 4, 2010

**By Bailey Ludlam**

TALLAHASSEE, **Florida**: Redistricting measures - [Amendment 5](#) and [Amendment 6](#) – in Florida were cleared by voters by more than 60% of the votes in favor. <sup>[1]</sup> However, On [November 3, 2010](#), hours following the November 2 general election, [Rep. Mario Diaz-Balart](#) and [Rep. Corrine Brown](#), opponents of Amendments 5 & 6, announced that they are suing to block the measures.

Both lawmakers argue that the measure is unconstitutional. According to their statement, they argue “The reason is simple: because traditional redistricting principles, such as maintaining communities of interest or minority access districts, will become entirely irrelevant if Amendments 5&6 are implemented, primarily because of the Amendments’ requirement of ‘compact districts.’ Certainly, minority communities do not live in compact, cookie-cutter like neighborhoods, and so district ‘compactness’ would defeat the ability of the state Legislature to draw access and majority-minority seats, since minority communities would become fragmented across the state.” <sup>[2]</sup>

In reaction to the lawsuit, Ellen Freidin of [Fair Districts Florida](#), supporters of the two measures said, “I can’t imagine how this can be anything other than more effort by politicians to try and have districts drawn with no rules.” <sup>[3]</sup>

Both state representatives previously [challenged the measures in May 2010](#). However, in late August 2010 the high court dismissed challenges to two both citizen proposed redistricting initiatives – Amendment 5 and Amendment 6.

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## [Nicholas Stephanopoulos](#)

A fellow at Columbia Law School, specializing in election law

Posted: November 4, 2010 03:33 PM

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# [Redistricting Reform: A Rare Progressive Success](#)

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Tuesday was a disaster for Democrats, of course, but it was perhaps the best day ever for a cause that many progressives hold dear: redistricting reform. In [California](#), Proposition 20 passed with over 60 percent of the vote, giving the citizen commission established in 2008 responsibility for Congressional redistricting as well as state legislative redistricting. Proposition 27, which would have dismantled the commission and returned redistricting to the legislature, was soundly defeated. In [Florida](#), similarly, the two Fair Districts initiatives both passed, again with over 60 percent of the vote. As a result, Florida's legislature will now have to abide by a set of fairly rigorous rules--compactness, respect for political subdivisions, no intent to favor any party or incumbent--when it conducts its next round of Congressional and state legislative redistricting.

The success of California's Proposition 20 more than doubles the number of Congressional districts nationwide that will be redrawn by commission in 2011. In the next cycle, about 20 percent of districts (an all-time high) will not be crafted by self-interested politicians. Within California, Proposition 20's passage makes it unlikely that the bipartisan gerrymandering that has long shielded the state's incumbents from any serious challenge will be repeated in the next decade. The citizen commission can be expected to devise a district map that is more competitive as well as more reflective of the state's demographic and geographic realities. In Florida, similarly, the state legislature will now be more constrained in its ability to gerrymander in favor of the dominant Republican Party. Any highly partisan plan will immediately be challenged on the ground that it was designed "to favor or disfavor an incumbent or political party."

It is quite surprising that the California and Florida initiatives managed to pass (particularly since the Florida measures had to clear a 60 percent threshold). A few years ago, I [examined](#) all redistricting initiatives in American history and found that the vast majority of them (especially in recent years) failed. Typically, the measures were popular when they were first introduced, but then were discredited by fierce opposition from the majority party in the state, which stood to

lose seats if the initiatives prevailed. True to form, both the Democrats in California and the Republicans in Florida vigorously resisted this year's measures. California Democrats placed the rival Proposition 27 on the ballot, while Florida Republicans first tried to have the Fair Districts initiatives disqualified by the Florida Supreme Court and then (unsuccessfully) attempted to add their own poison-pill measure to the ballot.

How, then, did the California and Florida initiatives pass despite such determined opposition? One answer is that they did not try to do too much. Proposition 20 merely entrusted California's existing citizen commission with one more responsibility (Congressional redistricting). Not coincidentally, it received much more support than Proposition 11 in 2008, which created the commission in the first place and passed with just 51 percent of the vote. Similarly, the Fair Districts initiatives only sought to provide the Florida legislature with rules to follow when it redistricts. They did not try to actually take away the legislature's redistricting authority. They thus prevailed at the same time that every Democratic candidate for statewide office was defeated.

A second answer is that the California and Florida measures enjoyed significant media and financial backing. The vast majority of newspapers in both states (including all the major ones) endorsed the initiatives. In California, activist Charles Munger poured in \$12 million on behalf of Proposition 20, singlehandedly outspending the combined opposition. Similarly, Fair Districts Florida raised substantially more money (largely from Democratic-leaning interest groups) than its opponents. It is not a surprise that newspaper endorsements and campaign ads exert at least some influence on the electorate.

Finally, and most speculatively, today's voters may be more receptive to good-government reforms than their predecessors. In a climate of widespread disgust with all politicians, voters may now be willing to embrace redistricting reform even if it is opposed by the party they otherwise support. If that is the case, then proponents of fair redistricting would be wise to strike while the iron is hot. Major states that permit popular initiatives but currently lack Congressional redistricting commissions include Colorado, Florida, Illinois, Massachusetts, Michigan, Missouri, Ohio, and Oregon. Here's hoping this year's successes generate an even bigger wave of reform in 2012.

orlandosentinel.com/news/politics/os-scott-maxwell-friday-files-110510-20101104,0,991978.column

## OrlandoSentinel.com

### What's fair about districts? Voters paid attention

Scott Maxwell

TAKING NAMES

7:18 PM EDT, November 4, 2010

Advertisement

Today we're looking back at this week's elections — the winners and losers, the game-changing moments and some details you may not know about the folks you just elected.

**Losers: Dean Cannon and Mike Haridopolos.** No, they didn't get bounced from office. (Heck, most of these legislative districts are drawn so safely that incumbents could get caught stoned, naked and stealing swans from Lake Eola and still cruise to re-election.) Instead, these two guys put their reputations on the line to fight the fair-districting amendments ... and got beaten like a bass drum. You know why? Because their defense of gerrymandering was transparent and lame. And 62 percent of voters knew it.

**Loser: Corrine Brown.** Brown also tried to fight fair districts in a self-serving attempt to protect a district that snakes through nine counties and across 200 miles. What makes Brown even worse is that, the day after the election, she and GOP Congressman **Mario Diaz-Balart** filed a federal lawsuit, trying to overturn the voters' will. Nothing unites politicians like protecting their own rear ends.

**Winner: Walt Disney World.** You might not think Mickey could deliver a fatal blow, what with his soft-gloved, four-fingered hands and all. But when Disney backed **Teresa Jacobs** in the race for Orange County mayor, it was too much for **Bill Segal's** already struggling campaign to bear. You can't very well claim you're the business-backed candidate when the biggest business in town just backed someone else.

**Winner: Deep-pocketed outsiders.** Our airwaves were filled with nasty ads — many of them funded by outside groups whose identity you knew little about. Both sides did it. But an *Orlando Sentinel* analysis showed that conservative groups such as **Karl Rove's** American Crossroads and the U.S. Chamber of Commerce dwarfed spending by liberal groups such as the National Education Association by a 5-1 margin. And since most of those business-backed candidates won, expect lots of those outsider nasty-grams next time as well.

**Sometimes I'm really right.** Like with **Sandy Adams**. More than a year ago, I wrote that Adams was probably the Republican most capable of ousting Democrat **Suzanne Kosmas**. But if you remember, the D.C. Republicans tried their best to mess that up. They were trashing Adams and trying to recruit everyone from little-known city officials to ESPN's **Lou Holtz**. Adams, however, stuck to her guns. Now she's going to Washington, owing little to the party hacks.

**Sometimes I'm really wrong.** Like with **Rick Scott**. Early this year, I scoffed at readers who asked me if Scott had any chance of winning. I mistakenly thought the fact that he ran a company that stole from taxpayers would be an impediment. In fact, on May 6, when a worried supporter of **Bill McCollum** came calling, I wrote: " ...if Scott gains any traction, his competitors shouldn't have to do much more than point to his track record to effectively wipe out his chances." Not.

**What's the common link?** 1) Less money for public schools. 2) More drilling off Florida's coast. 3) A ban on gay adoptions. These are all things most Floridians oppose — and things supported by the man they just elected governor.

**Soiling God's name.** Did you know that the Christian Coalition tried to con its followers into opposing fair districts, too? As if God is a big proponent of gerrymandering. (You remember the scripture, right? "For God so loved John Mica, he gave him a 100-mile-long district without too many liberals.") It's one thing to mount a lame defense of a corrupt system. It's another to drag God's name into it.

**Voters paid attention.** At least, when it comes to constitutional amendments. Politicians who fear the grass-roots power of the people sometimes try to argue that citizens are too stupid to cast informed votes on complicated issues. Tuesday's results said otherwise, since voters passed only three of six amendments and by wildly different margins. I'm always amused by politicians who think you're too stupid to cast informed votes, except when you vote them into office.

**What can you buy with \$73 million?** The governor's mansion, obviously. Rick Scott proved as much by digging into his own deep pockets to shatter all kinds of spending records. But to put the amount in perspective, \$73 million could also buy 330 of the region's median-priced homes, school supplies for 102,000 middle-school students and one space shuttle (used price: \$28 million).

**For more winners and losers -- including some losers listed above who won in other ways -- and to add your own candidates to the list, check out [orlandosentinel.com/takingnames](http://orlandosentinel.com/takingnames).**

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# And it begins: U.S. Reps. Diaz-Balart and Corrine Brown launch legal challenge to Amendments 5 & 6

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<http://saintpetersblog.com/2010/11/04/and-it-begins-u-s-reps-diaz-balart-and-corrine-brown-launch-legal-challenge-to-amendments-5-6/>

December 30, 2010

U.S. Rep. Mario Diaz-Balart and Democratic U.S. Rep. Corrine Brown won their congressional bids on Tuesday. On Wednesday, they issued this joint statement launching a legal challenge to Amendments 5 & 6

“The implementation of Amendments 5 and 6 as prescribed in the ballot initiative would inevitably lead to a dilution of the voting rights of African-Americans and Hispanics in the state of Florida, as well as a significant loss in the number of representatives elected from minority communities – on the federal and state levels, and on local levels such as city councils, across the state of Florida,” said the representatives in a joint statement released on Wednesday.

“The reason is simple: because traditional redistricting principles, such as maintaining communities of interest or minority access districts, will become entirely irrelevant if Amendments 5 and 6 are implemented, primarily because of the amendments’ requirement of ‘compact districts.’ Certainly, minority communities do not live in compact, cookie-cutter-like neighborhoods, and so district ‘compactness’ would defeat the ability of the state Legislature to draw access and majority-minority seats, since minority communities would become fragmented across the state.

“I was extremely disappointed in the passage of Amendments 5 and 6,” added Brown. “Congressman Diaz-Balart and I introduced a lawsuit this morning, and will continue our fight against these misguided, deceptive amendments in the federal courts. I am absolutely convinced that if they are carried out as prescribed, our state will immediately revert to the time period prior to 1992, when Florida was devoid of African-American or Hispanic representation.”

“Amendment 6 is blatantly unconstitutional and could cause irreparable damage to the federal electoral process and prohibit the drawing of districts where minorities have the opportunity to elect candidates of their choice,” said Diaz-Balart. “My colleague, Congresswoman Corrine Brown, and I said that if this amendment passed, we would file suit the following day and that is what we have done today. I am confident that once the federal courts consider the case they will decide based upon constitutional issues, not politics.”

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# ACLU cheers passage of Florida's Amendments 5 & 6

- November 6th, 2010 9:10 am ET
- By [Karl Dickey](#), West Palm Beach Libertarian Examiner

Floridians won a significant victory for voting rights on Tuesday with the passage of Fair Districts Amendments 5 & 6. This historic vote will move Florida forward towards more fair elections with less gerrymandered districts, and a system far less likely to allow politicians to rig elections.

The ability of politicians to gerrymander districts in order to protect their seats and reward their friends and allies is diminished, and the protection of minority voting rights has been strengthened – added to the Florida Constitution for the first time.

In past three election cycles, Florida's redistricting process has given incumbents running for reelection to the Florida Legislature an unfair and decisive advantage – the product of an incumbent-protecting process that denied voters competitive elections. The odds were so stacked against fair and competitive districts that only 3 out of 420 incumbents in those election cycles lost. No wonder our political system is broken and the public has such a cynical view of government.

But now we have hope for the future and Amendments 5 and 6 are a great start for historic change in Florida. The ACLU of Florida played a major role in this victory, and we thank our staff, volunteer leaders, and members. Our political committee, People over Politics, assembled a campaign team, located in Jacksonville, Tampa and Miami to work alongside FairDistrictsFlorida.org.

ACLU Chapter volunteers across the state worked to support Amendments 5 & 6 by taking the Fair Districts message to hundreds of thousands of voters in their local communities who came out to support reform. The ACLU of Florida held hundreds of voter education events, engaged the media and spread the word about Amendments 5 and 6. This was a significant victory that crossed party lines.

The ACLU of Florida also secured important endorsements from some of the country's foremost civil rights leaders, including Dr. Julian Bond, former President of the N.A.A.C.P. and Reverend Joseph Lowery, founder of the Southern Christian Leadership Conference. At a critical time in the campaign, these leaders weighed in on the debate, lending their voices of support for Amendments 5 and 6 and assuring voters that the rights of minority communities would be strengthened with the passage of these amendments. Both leaders recorded messages for the campaign that reached more than half a million voters through recorded calls and radio ads.

The ACLU of Florida's voting expertise helped shape the campaign's message to counteract the opposition's misinformation and scare tactics.

Now, we must turn our attention to monitoring the implementation of Amendments 5 & 6.

"Given the willingness to distort the truth about the Fair Districting amendments by opponents, it may be the elevation of hope over reality to expect that the Amendments will be faithfully implemented," said Howard Simon, Executive Director of the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) of Florida.

“It is most likely that the redistricting plan that will be drawn up next year by those who bitterly opposed Amendments 5 & 6 – who even went to court to try to prevent voters from having the opportunity to take back their electoral system – will end up in protracted litigation to force the Legislature to adhere to the rules that were imposed on them by the voters.”

The ACLU is poised to keep an eye on the Legislature and make sure that the letter and spirit of Amendments 5 & 6 are respected and carried out as legislators redraw district lines in 2011. While this is a great victory for all Floridians, we will remain vigilant and committed to protecting the voting rights of citizens of Florida.

# Gaetz to chair redistricting committee

<http://www.nwfdailynews.com/common/printer/view.php?db=nwfdn&id=34892>

November 22, 2010

2010-11-14 20:44:25

State Senate President Mike Haridopolos handed fellow lawmaker Don Gaetz a headache last week when he named him chairman of the Senate Committee on Redistricting.

Gaetz, R-Niceville, said he hadn't had the title five minutes when he began hearing from lobbyists and politicians about pending reapportionment and the creation of two new congressional seats.

This would be a challenging job anytime, but particularly at this time, he said.

Gaetz's committee will be charged with drawing maps delineating Florida state House and Senate districts as well as state congressional districts.

Census figures have dictated that Florida increase its number of seats in the U.S. House of Representatives from 25 to 27.

Gaetz and his committee will likely be paired with a House committee headed by state Rep. Will Weatherford, a Republican from Pasco County. The appointments represent both a plum assignment and hefty responsibility for the two rising leaders; Gaetz is set to be Senate president and Weatherford to be speaker of the House in 2013.

Their committees have until May 2012 to produce district maps in time for election qualifying.

The always-frenzied reapportionment process will be further complicated during Gaetz's tenure by the implementation of newly passed Constitutional Amendments 5 and 6.

The amendments, which apply to state and national reapportionment, call for lines to be drawn that neither favor nor disfavor a political incumbent or political party.

The amendments also require map designers to ensure that minority rights to representation are protected and that efforts be made to respect the integrity of existing communities.

Gaetz foresees a lot of litigation resulting from Amendments 5 and 6. He said his first order of business will be to consult incoming Attorney General Pam Bondi about the wording of the two new amendments.

These amendments contain a series of loaded terms, he said. We want to see what they are loaded with.

Gaetz said he also intends to hold hearings across the state to find out what Floridians residents are looking for when political district lines are put down.

Gaetz said among those he wants to talk to are the states supervisors of elections.

Okaloosa County Supervisor of Elections Paul Lux said the states supervisors have recently completed a first-ever census block map that attempts to point out areas that shouldn't be split by reapportionment lines.

He said he hopes having Gaetz serve as chairman of the redistricting committee will allow him access to voice Supervisors of Elections concerns as they arise during reapportionment.

# Print Article: EDITORIAL: Gaetz's juggling act

<http://www.waltonsun.com/common/printer/view.php?db=newsherald&id=88568>

November 14, 2010

Congratulations, Don Gaetz. For your outstanding service to the Florida Senate and the Republican Party, you've just been thrown into the meat grinder.

Incoming Senate President Mike Haridopolos announced last week that he was appointing Gaetz chairman of the reapportionment committee, which will redraw the state's legislative and congressional districts. In the past, this would've been a plum assignment, a seat with significant power.

After voters approved Amendments 5 and 6 on Nov. 2, though, the business of drawing lines changed. Legislators don't have the latitude they used to, and they potentially have more legal land mines to avoid.

The News Herald supported the ballot initiatives, nicknamed Fair Districts, because redistricting had been abused by politicians to cement their legislative majority. Sophisticated computer programs were employed to cherry-pick voters by demographic into or out of districts, virtually guaranteeing they would elect a specific kind of candidate, with little regard to geography. Critics have rightly denounced this practice as legislators selecting their voters rather than voters choosing their legislators.

It's why in the 10 years prior to Nov. 2, of the 505 incumbent Florida legislators who have stood for reelection, only 10 have lost. Those weren't competitive elections. They were rubber stamps.

The Fair Districts measures, which were approved by 62 percent of voters, now require districts to be compact, to utilize existing political and geographical boundaries and not to favor incumbents or any party, while at the same time protecting minority voting rights.

We support those goals. But we never said it would be easy.

Opponents of the amendments warned that the new standards are virtually impossible to comply with and will invite legal challenges. Indeed, the day after the election two Florida lawmakers, U.S. Reps. Corrine Brown, D-Jacksonville, and Mario Diaz-Balart, R-Miami, filed suit in federal court to block Amendments 5 and 6. That's no surprise considering their districts are exactly the kind the initiatives targeted.

Brown's majority-African-American district snakes its way from Jacksonville to eastern Gainesville and into Orlando. Diaz-Balart was a longtime state legislator who chaired the redistricting committee for the 2000 census and neatly designed the congressional district he would run for (and win) two years later. It runs from heavily Republican suburban Miami, across the uninhabited Everglades, to heavily Republican Southwest Florida.

Their lawsuit charges Fair Districts with being an unconstitutional state interference with federal offices, and with violating the Voting Rights Act. The latter takes a particularly interesting spin that voters in majority-minority districts are somehow entitled to re-elect incumbents because of their legislative influence. Three Supreme Court cases in the 1990s narrowed the scope by which districts can be gerrymandered according to race.

It's not unusual for districts to be challenged in court even under the old system in which the majority party enjoyed the spoils of its victory by rigging the playing field for the next decade. If Amendments 5 and 6 survive the Brown/Diaz-Balart test, we'll see how many lawsuits pop up in response.

That's the needle that Gaetz and his colleagues on the committee will have to thread as they stitch together a new tapestry of legislative and congressional districts. They undoubtedly will be under pressure to reward Republicans even if Fair Districts can't remove all politics from the process while complying with the new law and keeping an eye on the Voting Rights Act.

Gaetz says he wants to hold public hearings around the state and solicit opinions from voters about common-sense solutions. That's an encouraging start. It's good to have a Northwest Florida lawmaker in the driver's seat, especially one who represents Bay County. Let's hope he successfully navigates a difficult obstacle course.

# Voters said yes to how districts are redrawn, but details are sketchy

<http://jacksonville.com/opinion/blog/403455/matt-dixon/2010-11-06/voters-said-yes-how-districts-are-redrawn-details-are> November 16, 2010

In 2002, the Legislature re-carved Florida's congressional districts under the guise of making them more accurately reflect new census data. The process, which is mandated every 10 years, affected Melinda Gallup's neighborhood in a big way.

"They jumped the river and took a little piece out," said Gallup, who lives in Jacksonville's University Park area, which borders the east bank of the St. Johns River.

"I'm in that little piece."

The redistricting changed her member of Congress from Republican Ander Crenshaw to Democrat Corrine Brown. It baffled her.

"The river seems like such a natural boundary," Gallup said. "It just does not make sense."

Marcella Lowe, her mother, stands as another witness to what the process did to the area. She lives less than a mile from her daughter.

"You go two blocks away, and it's another district. The whole neighborhood is cut up," Lowe said. "We need something to be done so the neighborhood is together."

On Tuesday, Florida voters approved Amendments 5 and 6 with the aim of, among other things, requiring that state and congressional districts be drawn along more compact borders. Because the new amendments will inevitably be challenged in court, however, the effects of the changes, and what direct impact they will have on diced-up neighborhoods like University Park, is not yet fully understood.

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# Ballot Access News » Blog Archive » Two Florida Members of Congress File Federal Lawsuit to Overturn Redistricting Reform

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<http://www.ballot-access.org/2010/11/08/two-florida-members-of-congress-file-federal-lawsuit-to-overturn-redistricting-reform/>

November 16, 2010

On November 3, two members of the U.S. House of Representatives filed a federal lawsuit to overturn the Florida redistricting measures that passed last week. See [this](#) story. The two members are Democrat Corrine Brown and Republican Mario Diaz-Balart.

The measures do not remove the power to draw district boundaries from the legislature, but they require the legislature to draw plans that do not favor any particular incumbent, and also plans that do not favor any particular political party. The two plaintiffs argue that this violates the Voting Rights Act. The case is *Brown v State of Florida*, southern district, 1:10-cv-23968. Thanks to Justin Levitt and Rick Hasen for the case name and case number.

# Florida redistricting measures cleared the ballot but face a possible legal challenge

[http://www.ballotpedia.com/wiki/index.php/Florida\\_redistricting\\_measures\\_cleared\\_the\\_ballot\\_but\\_face\\_a\\_possible\\_legal\\_challenge](http://www.ballotpedia.com/wiki/index.php/Florida_redistricting_measures_cleared_the_ballot_but_face_a_possible_legal_challenge)

November 16, 2010

## From Ballotpedia

By Bailey Ludlam

TALLAHASSEE, **Florida**: Redistricting measures - [Amendment 5](#) and [Amendment 6](#) - in Florida were cleared by voters by more than 60% of the votes in favor.<sup>[1]</sup> However, On [November 3, 2010](#), hours following the November 2 general election, [Rep. Mario Diaz-Balart](#) and [Rep. Corrine Brown](#), opponents of Amendments 5 & 6, announced that they are suing to block the measures.

Both lawmakers argue that the measure is unconstitutional. According to their statement, they argue "The reason is simple: because traditional redistricting principles, such as maintaining communities of interest or minority access districts, will become entirely irrelevant if Amendments 5&6 are implemented, primarily because of the Amendments' requirement of 'compact districts.' Certainly, minority communities do not live in compact, cookie-cutter like neighborhoods, and so district 'compactness' would defeat the ability of the state Legislature to draw access and majority-minority seats, since minority communities would become fragmented across the state."<sup>[2]</sup>

In reaction to the lawsuit, Ellen Freidin of [Fair Districts Florida](#), supporters of the two measures said, "I can't imagine how this can be anything other than more effort by politicians to try and have districts drawn with no rules."<sup>[3]</sup>

Both state representatives previously [challenged the measures in May 2010](#). However, in late August 2010 the high court dismissed challenges to two both citizen proposed redistricting initiatives - Amendment 5 and Amendment 6.

The lawsuit was filed [November 3, 2010](#). The case is Brown v State of Florida, southern district, 1:10-cv-23968.

## See also

## References

- <sup>↑</sup> [Florida Division of Elections,"November 2 unofficial election results"](#)
- <sup>↑</sup> [Politico,"Florida districting fight heads to court, as expected," November 3, 2010](#)
- <sup>↑</sup> [Associated Press,"US reps. challenge Florida's redistricting law," November 3, 2010](#)

**BALLOTPEDIA**  
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MIAMI (CN) - Two members of Florida's congressional delegation have challenged a new, voter-approved amendment to the state constitution that changes the way congressional districts are redrawn. Democrat Corrine Brown, who is black, and Republican Mario Diaz-Balart, who is Latino, say Amendment 6 will deprive minority voters of their right to representation.

Brown's long, oddly shaped district appears to be most directly threatened by the new rules. Both representatives asked a federal judge to enjoin the amendment as unconstitutional.

The honorables claim the harm threatened to Florida citizens - and to them - "is sufficiently real and/or imminent to warrant the issuance of a conclusive declaratory judgment."

Florida voters on Tuesday overwhelmingly approved two amendments setting new rules for drawing legislative districts, but the two officeholders challenged only one, Amendment 6.

Amendment 6 requires districts to be compact, equal in population and to use city, county and geographical boundaries if possible. It prohibits drawing districts to favor or disfavor an incumbent or a political party or to deny minorities the chance to elect representatives of their choice.

Brown and Diaz-Balart claim the new standards threaten the continued existence of six congressional districts in Florida where African-Americans and Latinos are either the majority or nearly equal in number to white voters.

"Certainly, minority communities do not live in compact, cookie-cutter-like neighborhoods," the complaint states.

Previously, the only redistricting requirement in Florida was that districts be contiguous.

After the returns on Amendment 6 became apparent Tuesday night, Brown, who represents an oddly shaped district that snakes from Jacksonville on Florida's East Coast to Gainesville on the West Coast, issued a statement vowing to fight what she called "misguided, deceptive amendments."

Both lawmakers claim Amendment 6 violates the federal Voting Rights Act of 1965, which prohibits diminishing the electoral power of minority groups.

They claim that protecting minority incumbents also protects the ability of minority groups to elect representatives of their choice.

The Florida Legislature will redraw legislative and congressional districts next year, after the release of 2010 Census data.

The lawmakers are represented by Stephen Cody of Palmetto Bay.

# Read the Redistricting Lawsuit in Florida

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<http://electionlawblog.org/archives/017865.html>

November 16, 2010

## Read the Redistricting Lawsuit in Florida

Following up on [this post](#), you can read the Corrine Brown and Mario Diaz-Balart lawsuit [at this link](#). In addition to raising a somewhat unusual claim under section 5 of the VRA, the complaint also alleges a violation of the U.S. Constitution, Article I, Section 4, which vests in each state *legislature* the power to choose the rules for selecting members of Congress (subject to congressional override). I don't think that argument is likely to succeed, for reasons I've explained in [this article](#) on a related topic: the ability to use the ballot measure process for changing the rules for choosing presidential electors.

Posted by Rick Hasen at November 6, 2010 04:28 PM

## Rep. Corrine Brown: 'Extremely Disappointed' in Passage of Amendments 5 and 6

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JACKSONVILLE, Fla. -- Two of the people who likely will be affected by redistricting thanks to the passage of amendments 5 and 6 in Tuesday's general election are speaking out.

Representatives Corrine Brown (D-3rd) and Mario Diaz-Balart (R-25th) both actively campaigned against the two amendments, which both passed with more than 60 percent support.

Amendments 5 and 6 aim to eliminate gerrymandered districts -- districts drawn up to help minorities get candidates elected.

Brown and Diaz-Balart today issued the following joint statement:

*"The implementation of Amendments 5 and 6 as prescribed in the ballot initiative would inevitably lead to a dilution of the voting rights of African-Americans and Hispanics in the state of Florida, as well as a significant loss in the number of representatives elected from minority communities: on the federal and state levels, and on local levels such as city councils, across the state of Florida. The reason is simple: because traditional redistricting principles, such as maintaining communities of interest or minority access districts, will become entirely irrelevant if Amendments 5 and 6 are implemented, primarily because of the Amendments' requirement of 'compact districts.' Certainly, minority communities do not live in compact, cookie-cutter like neighborhoods, and so district 'compactness' would defeat the ability of the state Legislature to draw access and majority-minority seats, since minority communities would become fragmented across the state."*

Brown added her own dissent to the passage of the amendments, and said she isn't finished arguing against them.

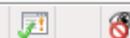
"I was extremely disappointed in the passage of Amendments 5 and 6," said Congresswoman Brown. "Congressman Diaz-Balart and I introduced a lawsuit this morning, and will continue our fight against these misguided, deceptive amendments in the federal courts. I am absolutely convinced that if they are carried out as prescribed, our state will immediately revert to the time period prior to 1992, when Florida was devoid of [African American](#) or Hispanic representation."

Diaz-Balart said Amendment 6, similar to 5 but for congressional districts, is "blatantly unconstitutional" and could cause "irreparable damage" to the electoral process.

The districts were drawn in 1992 to enable for diverse representation in Florida.

The new amendments will undo those districts and create new ones based more on geography than demographics.

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# Capitol News Service » Blog Archive » Future of 5 & 6

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<http://www.flanews.com/?p=10755>

November 16, 2010

November 4th, 2010 by Whitney Ray

The day after voters told lawmakers they no longer wanted them to draw district lines to control election results, two lawmakers cried foul. Amendment 6 will keep lawmakers from gerrymandering congressional districts. Suit was filed against the amendment yesterday in Miami. Amendment 5 will implement the same protections for legislative districts. Senate President-designate Mike Haridopolos fought hard to keep the amendments from getting the 60 percent voter support needed to pass. Today he told reporters there's no lawsuit against five on the horizon.

"I think that's still something we are going to look at. I think voters spoke and I respect that very much, but I think there are still concerns," said Haridopolos.

Even if state lawmakers don't challenge the amendment, if a judge finds a problem with Amendment 6, then the judge's ruling could be used to defend lawmakers if they decide not to follow the will of the people.

Posted in [Elections](#), [Legislature](#), [State News](#) |



# Cannon appoints 'Fair Districts' foe as chair of state House redistricting committee « Florida Independent: News. Politics. Media

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<http://floridaindependent.com/13837/dean-cannon-appoints-fair-districts-foe-as-chair-of-state-house-redistricting-committee>

November 16, 2010

In advance of the state legislature's organizational meeting and special session tomorrow, incoming state House Speaker Dean Cannon, R-Winter Park, today [unveiled](#) the names of state House committee chairs. Among them: state Rep. Will Weatherford, R-Wesley Chapel, who will head up the committee overseeing the redistricting process after the conclusion of this year's census.

Weatherford was a vocal foe of Amendments 5 and 6, the so-called "[Fair Districts](#)" amendments that limit the legislature's ability to gerrymander districts that passed a statewide vote on Nov. 2. He was a supporter of the group [Protect Your Vote](#), the political action committee whose efforts to fight 5 and 6 were [largely bankrolled](#) by the Republican Party of Florida.

The Protect Your Vote website (nix5and6.com) has been taken down, but a cached version accessed through Yahoo! Site Explorer [lists](#) Weatherford as a person "acting on behalf of the organization." Also listed as such is state Sen. Don Gatez, R-Destin, [recently appointed](#) by Florida Senate President Mike Haridopolos, R-Merritt Island, as the chair of the committee in charge of redistricting on the Senate side of the Florida legislature.

That means that the two legislators most responsible for making sure that the legislature follows the redistricting rules laid out in Amendments 5 and 6 were both members of a group explicitly created to defeat those rules.

# We Will Have Nonpartisan Redistricting!

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<http://grassrootsindependent.blogspot.com/2010/11/california-and-florida-voters-we-will.html>

November 16, 2010

California continues to lead the way in political reform. Back in June, passage of Prop 14, the Top Two Open Primary referendum, enfranchised 3.4 million independent decline-to-state voters in the state in the first round of voting.

And now, as Committee for a Unified Independent Party ([IndependentVoting.org](http://IndependentVoting.org)) Chief of Staff John Opdycke reported last week, voters in Florida are speaking out on the need for political reform:

Proposition 20-which expanded the California Redistricting Commission's mandate to include Congressional districts-passed by 20 points. In addition, Proposition 27, a bi-partisan ploy to dismantle the Commission, was defeated by a similar margin.

And in Florida, the voters passed Amendment 5 by a 25 point margin. Its passage establishes clear, non-partisan guidelines for the drawing of legislative districts.

Opdycke goes on to point out the significance of these votes:

While the big story yesterday was the new Republican Congressional majority, the victory for redistricting reform in California and Florida was an important subtext. The Democratic and Republican Parties have mastered the non-developmental game of capturing and recapturing the approximately 60 competitive Congressional districts. But this back and forth blood sport-while making for good copy-does not provide the American people the opportunity to fully express their desire for change. When voters have the opportunity to speak directly, as they did in Florida and California, without being filtered by the political parties, reform passes overwhelmingly.

**REFORM**

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# GOP Maxes Out In Florida, Sets Stage For 2012 Fights

<http://hotlineoncall.nationaljournal.com/archives/2010/11/gop-maxes-out-i.php>

November 16, 2010

By **Dan Roem**

November 12, 2010 | 1:16 PM

The Republican wins in Florida that grabbed the most headlines last week were the Senate race -- where Republican rising star **Marco Rubio** (R) trounced independent Gov. **Charlie Crist** -- and the governor's race -- where Republican businessman **Rick Scott** (R) defeated Democrat **Alex Sink**.

But a closer look at the results shows that the GOP made its biggest strides in the House, where it picked up the maximum number of districts that are remotely hospitable to Republicans. And in so doing, the Florida GOP elected the most diverse Republican congressional delegation in the country and set the stage for a highly competitive 2012.

Republicans will hold a 19 to six advantage over Democrats in the Sunshine State's House delegation in the 112th Congress. The six remaining Democrats represent districts that are a deep shade of blue. Entering this year, the *Cook Political Report's* Partisan Voter Index gave a double-digit Democratic advantage in each district -- the 3rd, 11th, 17th, 19th, 20th, and 23rd.

That means Democrats enter 2012 with little left to lose. Without the need to play defense, the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee will have the advantage of devoting their resources to offense in 2012.

Redistricting may provide the main battleground in 2012. Florida is projected to gain two seats in the House, increasing its Electoral College total to 29. Though Scott recaptured the governor's mansion for the GOP, a newly-passed, voter-approved redistricting law may neutralize any GOP advantages in gerrymandering. That, of course, assumes the law stands a [court challenge](#) filed by Reps. **Corrine Brown** (D) and **Mario Diaz-Balart** (R).

Florida's new Republican congressional delegation will also be its most diverse in the nation -- though it will still be more homogeneous than many of the Democrats'.

Florida voters elected seven freshmen GOP House members as well Rubio. The former state House Speaker gives the GOP a Latino member of the Senate more than a year after former Sen. **Mel Martinez** (R), a native of Cuba, resigned and ceded control to Crist's hand-picked placeholder, Sen. **George LeMieux** (R).

Joining Rubio in Florida's 2010 Class will be Rep.-elect **David Rivera** (R), who shares Rubio's Cuban heritage. The seat was previously held by Diaz-Balart, who will now represent the neighboring 21st District after his brother, Rep. **Lincoln Diaz-Balart** (R), retired. Rivera, Diaz-Balart and veteran Rep. **Ileana Ros-Lehtinen** (R) will serve as the GOP's three Hispanic House members in the 112th Congress.

The election of Rubio will mean that there will be two Cuban-Americans in the Senate with Sen. **Robert Menendez** (D-N.J.) being the other.

Rep.-elect **Allen West** (R) is one of two African-American Republicans slated to enter Congress next year, with Rep.-elect **Tim Scott** (R-SC) being the other. Including Rubio, that will give the Florida GOP five non-white members, by far the party's most diverse showing in the country.

Florida's Republican delegation will still feature only two women, Ros-Lehtinen and Rep.-elect **Sandy Adams** (R), compared to 17 men. Rep.-elect **Rich Nugent** (R) replaces Rep. **Ginny Brown-Waite** (R) in the 5th District, meaning the ration of men to women in the Florida delegation will stay the same.

Florida Democrats, meanwhile, will have four women and two men in their House delegation. That group includes two white women -- Reps. **Kathy Castor** (D) and **Debbie Wasserman Schultz** (D) -- and two African-American women -- Brown and Rep.-elect **Frederica Wilson** (D). Wilson faced no Republican opposition in the general election in the district dominated by Haitian and African-Americans and currently held by Rep. **Kendrick Meek** (D), who lost the Senate race against Rubio and Crist.

With the loss of Rep. **Allen Boyd** (D), the Florida Democratic House delegation lost its only white Christian male member. Rep.-elect **Ted Deutch** (D) is Jewish and Rep. **Alcee Hastings** (D) is African-American.

# U.S. Rep Corrine Brown challenges Florida redistricting decision

<http://jacksonville.com/news/politics/2010-11-03/story/brown-files-suit-over-congressional-redistricting>

November 16, 2010

As expected, U.S. Rep. Corrine Brown, D-Fla., filed suit Wednesday against a new, voter-approved amendment to the Florida Constitution that sets rules for drawing congressional districts in the state.

Brown, of Jacksonville, joined U.S. Rep. Mario Diaz-Balart, R-Fla., to file a lawsuit challenging Amendment 6 in federal court in Miami. The lawsuit asks that the amendment be declared invalid and stopped from being enforced.

Florida voters approved Amendments 5 and 6 on Tuesday by 63 percent of the vote each. Amendment 5 sets rules for drawing legislative districts but it is ignored in the lawsuit.

Brown and Diaz-Balart claim the new standards set out in Amendment 6 could threaten Florida's six congressional districts where blacks and Hispanics are either the majority or close to being in the majority, a contention strongly disputed by the amendment's supporters.

"I can't imagine how this can be anything other than more effort by politicians to try and have districts drawn with no rules," said Ellen Freidin, campaign chairwoman of FairDistrictsFlorida.org, the group leading the push for the amendments. "There is not even a redistricting plan proposed yet, much less drawn. The idea that there could be a lawsuit is kind of strange to me."

The amendment requires districts to be compact, equal in population and make use of existing city, county and geographical boundaries. The amendment prohibits drawing districts to favor or disfavor an incumbent or political party and says districts should not be drawn to deny minorities the chance to elect representatives of their choice.

Until Tuesday, Florida's only redistricting requirement was that districts be contiguous, or share a common border.

The lawsuit claims that Amendment 6 conflicts with provisions in the federal Voting Rights Act of 1965 prohibiting measures that take away electoral power from minority groups. The lawsuit also claims that protecting minority incumbents also protects the ability of minority groups to elect representatives of their choice.

"The Florida Constitution now contains an amendment that directly conflicts with the United States Constitution," said Stephen Cody, an attorney for Brown and Diaz-Balart.

The lawsuit names Gov. Charlie Crist and the Florida Legislature as defendants. The Legislature is charged with drawing new legislative and congressional districts after the release of the 2010 Census data this year. The governor has power to approve or veto any redistricting plan.

# US reps. challenge Florida's redistricting law - Politics AP

<http://www.miamiherald.com/2010/11/03/1906956/us-reps-challenge-flas-redistricting.html#ixzz14GJt8vc5>

November 16, 2010

ORLANDO, Fla. -- Two members of Congress on Wednesday challenged a new amendment to the Florida Constitution that sets rules for drawing congressional districts in Florida, just hours after it was approved by voters.

U.S. Reps. Corrine Brown, D-Fla., and Mario Diaz-Balart, R-Fla., filed a lawsuit challenging Amendment 6 in federal court in Miami. The lawsuit asks that the amendment be declared invalid and stopped from being enforced.

Florida voters on Tuesday approved Amendments 5 and 6 by 62 percent of the vote. Amendment 5 sets rules for drawing legislative districts but it is ignored in the lawsuit.

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The lawsuit names Gov. Charlie Crist and the Florida Legislature as defendants. The legislature is charged with drawing new legislative and congressional districts after the release of the 2010 Census data later this year. The governor has power to approve or veto any redistricting plan.

## Haridopolos on Amend 5: lawsuit possible, but 'voters spoke'

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<http://miamiherald.typepad.com/nakedpolitics/2010/11/haridopolos-on-amend-5-lawsuit-possible-but-voters-spoke.html> November 16, 2010

A day after a new constitutional amendment on redistricting was challenged in federal court, incoming Senate President **Mike Haridopolos** told reporters that a legal challenge to a companion amendment is not off the table, but that he will work to implement the new provisions to the Constitution. "I think that's still something we're going to look at," he said. "But the voters spoke and I respect that very much."

The Fair Districts citizen amendments added new restrictions on the Legislature as they draw new boundaries for legislative and congressional seats -- with the hope of creating more competitive districts. Haridopolos argues the standards are unworkable. "To their credit, they had a great bumper sticker, and they put \$10 million into it," Haridopolos said.

"But my first responsibility is to the United States Constitution," he said, in a reference to a supremacy clause claim in [a lawsuit against the amendment](#) concerning seats in Congress. "That's where this will be challenged in the courts by a variety of groups who have said pretty consistently that there's inherent contradictions."

He added: "We don't want this to be a rigged game when we start to actually draw the lines and just know they're going to challenge it and win in the courts. Then we get our second run at it -- we're going to draw it and they're going to win in the courts. We've seen already a very activist court. We'll see how that plays out."

# Corrine Brown

<http://mpapolitical.com/tag/corrine-brown/>

November 22, 2010

The easiest way would be to diminish the support for Democratic candidates among minority communities. Enter the aftermath of Florida's victory on 5&6, a legal challenge led by prominent black leader, Congresswoman Corrine Brown (D-Jacksonville/Orlando) and prominent Cuban leader, Congressman Mario Diaz-Balart (R-Miami) to block 5&6 on the basis of detriment to black and Hispanic representation.

I will not waste time hashing out whether or not their claim has merit, though I find it without merit, but rather focus my concern on how this will impact the Democratic party regardless of the outcome. The racial equality components of the Voting Rights Act are Federal Law and must be adhered to regardless of state redistricting policy. 5&6 will be utilized within those confines, reducing the incumbent friendly absurdly shaped districts but maintaining majority-minority (or near majority) districts.

The media will be eager to cover a dispute between the Democratic Party and a number of key constituencies of the Democratic party. There will be briefings filed, legal processes, press releases launched and interviews on local, state and national TV. None of it will be focused on what we should be talking about. It will be at best a distraction and at worst, a public relations nightmare. The discussions in the media will not be centered around the tremendous leap forward in Democracy 5&6 represent, it won't be about the underhanded efforts of the (Republican) opponents to add opposing measures to the ballot, it won't be about how badly the current and incoming legislatures misrepresent the people of Florida on so many issues. The focus will be about racial conflict where little exists, relatively small disagreements inflated to maximum proportions to sell newspapers and gain TV viewers. At the end of the battle, the loser, regardless of legal outcomes, will be the Florida Democratic Party – if the FDP is seen as the primary defending force of 5&6, which is exactly what it will be if Rod Smith runs the defense of 5&6 and serves as Chair of the Florida Democratic Party. One might even question the desirability of him heading the defense of 5&6 should he not seek the chairmanship officially, as the Democratic Nominee for LG and a past candidate for Governor as a Democrat, there is no doubt he is part of the "Democratic Establishment."

The notion of one person occupying both of those roles is foolish at best...but really malpractice is the best word I can come up with. This idea flies in the face of the atmosphere that the Fair Districts campaign was based on, separating party from the issue and focusing on what is best for the people of Florida. Why would we abandon that attitude now in such a big way?

I encourage Democratic leaders to step forward and help lead the discussion about why 5&6 are good for Florida, I also hope they restrain their role to unofficial – cheerleaders and counter weights to the attacks lobbed by their Republican counterparts. Let people unaffiliated with the party take up the defense, in a vigorous manner, with minimized detriment to the Democratic Party.

Those in the media, the opposition party and supporters thereof, will do their best to take full advantage of the situation. Images that reflect poorly on our party will be easy to find, emphasizing racial and class based rifts, ignoring the much larger chasms of the same regard within the Republican party. Discussions of the failures of Democrats to correct or even understand issues within minority communities will be given center stage for the duration of the process, re-hashed with each new development, however insignificant. The Republicans know that they just need to suppress minority turnout for Democrats a small percentage to secure victory the Republican Presidential nominee and the nominee for Bill Nelson's Senate seat (George Lemuix?), not to mention down ticket pickups at all levels.

We must make the 2012 election one of expansion and growth, not retraction. We must have a full time party chair, dedicated to recruiting candidates, developing and disseminating a message, overseeing strategy, training and execution, on a much higher level than the FDP has been operating at in recent years. We need contested

primaries and we need candidates that will be proud of their Democratic values.

One attribute being peddled as “key to being a successful chairman” I have seen repeated often is that the next chair must be able to raise money. Indicating there is a talent or history required to show this – in most situations, this is valid, though less of a priority than one might think – more important is the willingness and time to do the work needed to fund raise, the institution and success/competence thereof will drive fundraising, regardless of the talent level of the chairmen. In other words, it is like gym class, the effort is what is graded, not the talent. This is more true than ever in the 2012 election cycle. As in 2008, a guy from Chicago will be on the ballot. President Barack Obama will be seeking re-election, Florida is a crucial swing state and fund raising will not be a challenge for the Presidential campaign, DNC or state parties. It only takes effort. A part time chairman is NOT ACCEPTABLE – this is a full time job that needs a full time commitment. Anyone not willing to give that, and more (40 hours/week doesn’t get the job done) should not apply.

For candidates, the talent of fund raising is more important, but also it is incumbent on the FDP to do more to ensure that all our candidates are better trained at fund raising and all other aspects of campaigning. We left a lot of votes on the table due to inadequate or non-existent training in 2008 and 2010, we must do better in 2012.

Show me... a chairman who will dedicate themselves to improving the way the FDP operates, increasing the talent level of staff and county DEC members through training where possible and replacement where necessary. A chair that will not only recruit candidates themselves, but will provide the resources for staff (current or new) that will systematically work to fill as many races in all 67 counties with viable candidates that can inspire and disseminate the Democratic message. A chair that will encourage primaries rather than compromise the values of the party to avoid them. A chair that will do more to involve young people, minorities and technology. A chair that will act with independence from establishment figures, putting the party as a whole above the election or re-election of any one individual. Show me that chair and I’ll get excited in a hurry...

# Our take on: Fair districts & Unneeded districts

<http://www.orlandosentinel.com/news/opinion/os-ed-soil-and-water-conservation-20101104,0,841733,print.story>

November 16, 2010

orlandosentinel.com/news/opinion/os-ed-soil-and-water-conservation-20101104,0,493300.story

## Fair districts

U.S. Reps. Corrine Brown and Mario Diaz-Balart sued unsuccessfully in the spring to keep the amendments that could end gerrymandering off the ballot. Now that the electorate has rendered its verdict on amendments 5 and 6, passing them with nearly 63 percent of the vote, Ms. Brown and Mr. Diaz-Balart say it's time to file another lawsuit. Ugh.

They're asking a federal court in Miami to declare invalid Amendment 6, which deals with the drawing of Congressional districts, because it threatens minority districts.

Except it doesn't. Like Amendment 5, which deals with legislative mapping, Amendment 6 requires that lawmakers draw contiguous and compact districts that respect city and county boundaries; that don't favor political parties; and that don't diminish the opportunity of minorities to elect representatives of their choice.

The election's over. Ms. Brown and Mr. Diaz-Balart should give up litigating. Try governing.

## Unneeded districts

Here's some free advice for the next self-proclaimed budget-cutting political candidate who is vexed by the question, "What would you cut?"

Instead of dodging and stammering, why not suggest that Florida should get rid of its more than 60 soil and water conservation districts? Declare them a Depression-era anachronism that should have ceased to exist long ago. Say that their modest conservation or federal grant functions could easily be absorbed by other agencies. Proclaim that Florida would be ridding itself of a bureaucracy that few people know or care about.

It also would spare conscientious voters the trouble which they faced again this week of sorting through the parade of unknowns who run for district supervisor posts, sometimes to pad their political resumes.

It's a mystery why the state hasn't moved to get rid of an office that is to politics what an appendix is to the human body something you can easily live without.

# Zombie » The Top Ten Most Gerrymandered Congressional Districts in the United States

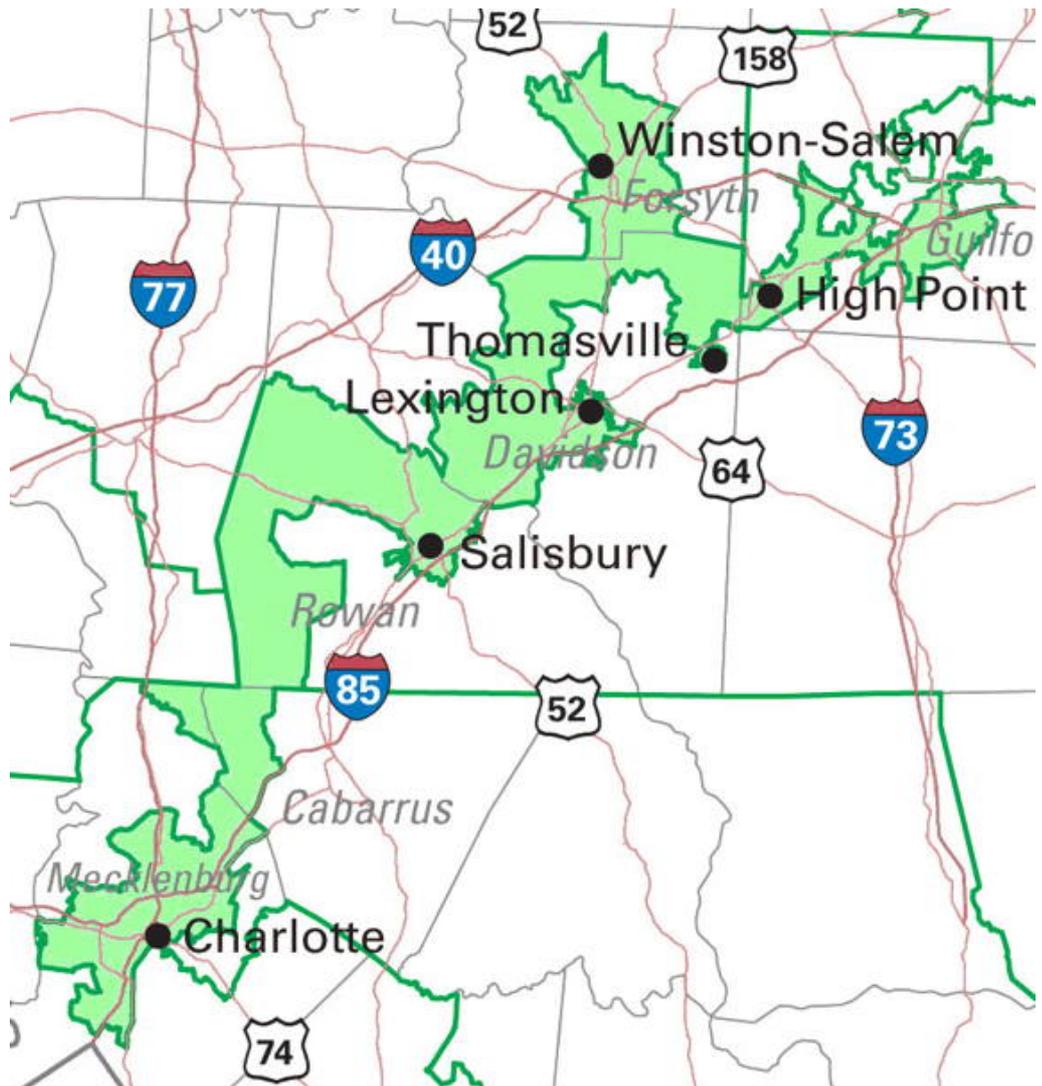
<http://pajamasmedia.com/zombie/2010/11/11/the-top-ten-most-gerrymandered-congressional-districts-in-the-united-states/>

November 16, 2010

(In the first half of this essay, [Gerrymandering 101](#), I explained how gerrymandering works and why it's so ubiquitous. Here in the exciting conclusion I name and shame the ten most gerrymandered districts of the current 111th Congress — plus 20 bizarre bonus districts not mentioned in the title.)

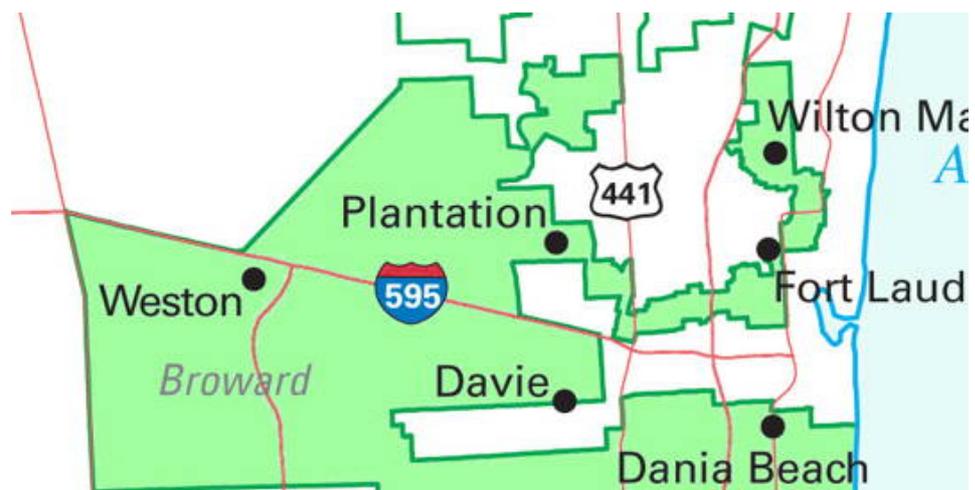
## (10.) North Carolina-12

This is what most people imagine when they think of a gerrymandered district — what I call “Gerrymander Classic.” NC-12 looks very much like the gerrymandered districts of the 19th century, but taken to extremes. As bad as it is, NC-12 at least *looks* like a congressional district, with meandering lines, consistent width, and hand-drawn appearance. As we'll soon see, modern gerrymandering is often another animal altogether, with jarring shapes and artificial boundaries that are not just offensive to the eye but somehow feel like an insult to rationality.



## (9.) Florida-20

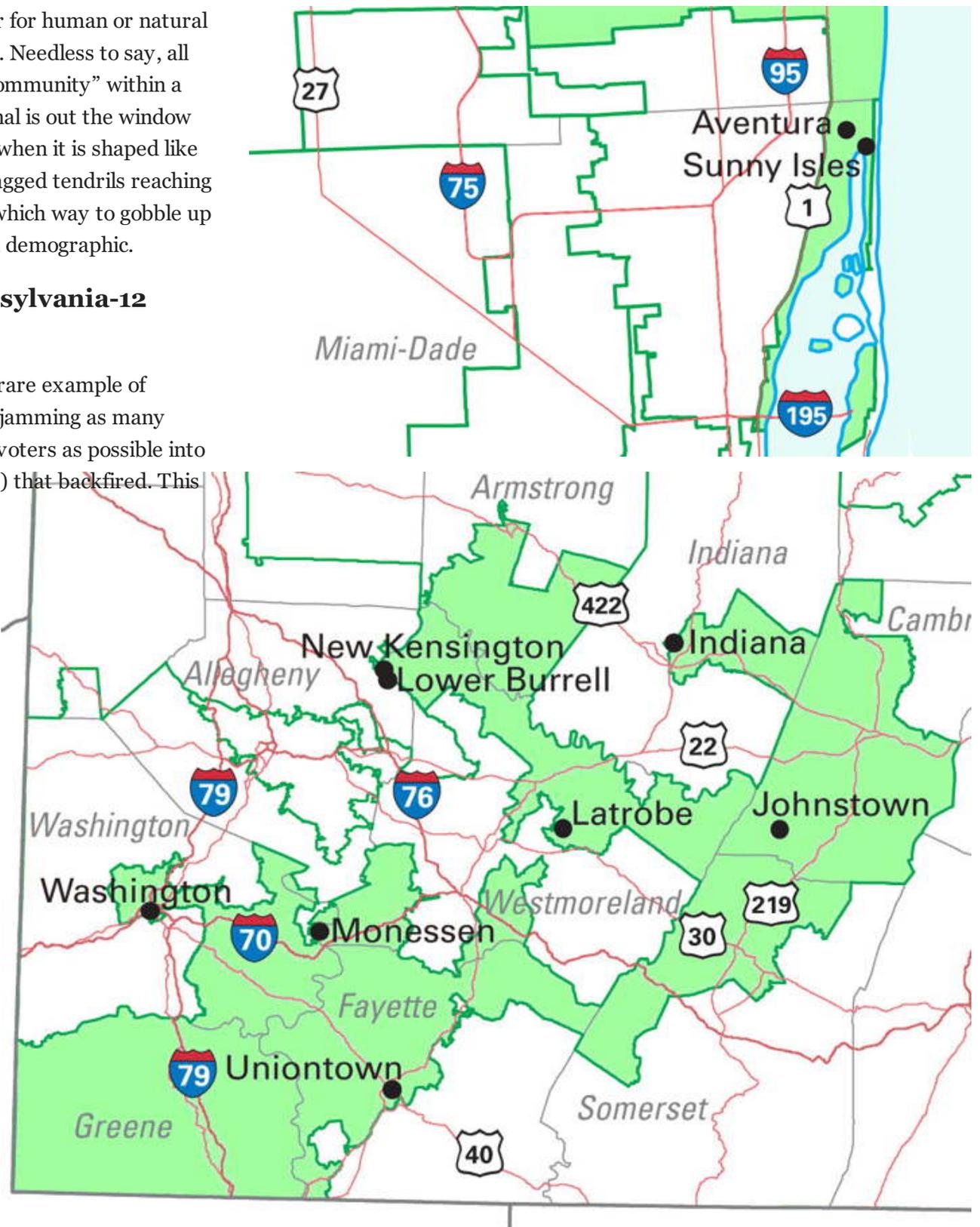
This is what gerrymandering looks like in the modern era: ugly. Gone are any attempts at aesthetics. In the old days, redistricters at least tried to disguise their gerrymandering by drawing district lines that looked almost kinda sorta reasonable. No more. Nowadays many districts, with FL-20 being a good example, seem to be the result of computer algorithms with no regard



whatsoever for human or natural boundaries. Needless to say, all sense of “community” within a congressional is out the window altogether when it is shaped like this, with jagged tendrils reaching out every which way to gobble up the desired demographic.

### (8.) Pennsylvania-12

PA-12 is a rare example of “packing” (jamming as many opposition voters as possible into one district) that backfired. This district [was created to be a](#)

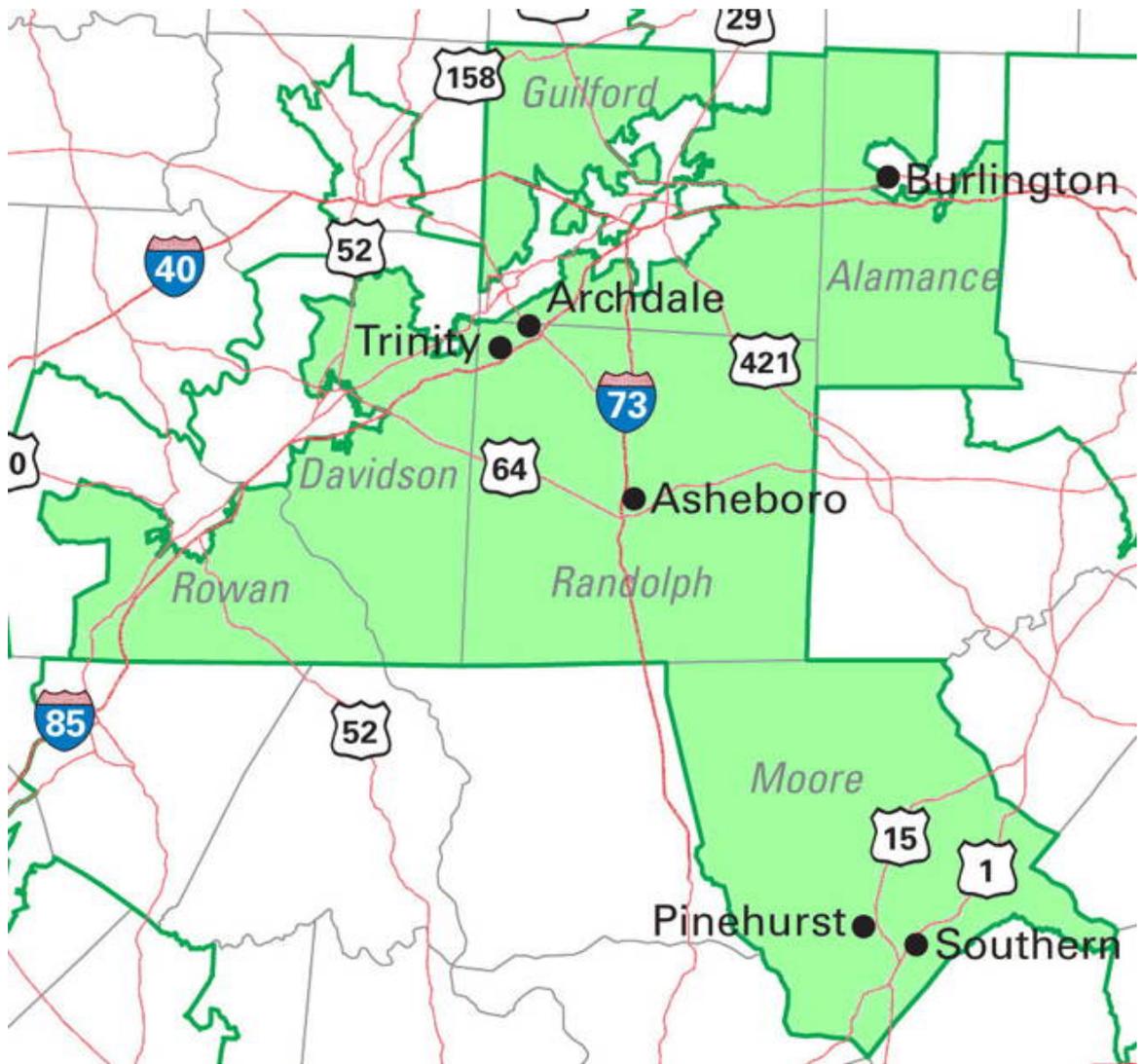


[Democratic stronghold](#) formerly held by Congressman Jack Murtha, who was assumed to have a lock on the district. At the last redistricting in 2000, the Republicans in charge gave up on the area, which is solidly unionized, and decided to “pack” Murtha’s new district with as many Democrats as possible, to allow the remaining districts in the region a chance to have slim Republican majorities. But in the intervening ten years everything has changed: the area grew more and more conservative, and the locally popular Murtha died, opening up the seat to possible challengers. In the 2010 election, PA-12 *barely* remained Democratic with Mark Critz winning by a hairsbreadth 50.8%-49.2% margin — while most of the surrounding districts overwhelmingly went Republican. Thus, if the foolish 2000 Republican redistricters had not consciously set out to create a “packed” Democratic district, and had instead just drawn the boundaries at random, they could have easily won all the races in the area, instead of losing this one (and the adjacent PA-4) by the slimmest of margins. Note to gerrymanderers:

THINGS CHANGE. What may appear to be a wise gerrymander maneuver today may blow up in your face sometime in the future.

### (7.) North Carolina-6

I have included NC-6 as a perfect example of “inverse gerrymandering,” a district that is partly hollowed out internally by a different gerrymandered district — in this case, the northern end of NC-12, our first example above. NC-6 is a stark reminder that no gerrymander is freestanding: all congressional districts are interlocked like jigsaw puzzle pieces, and every time you enclose

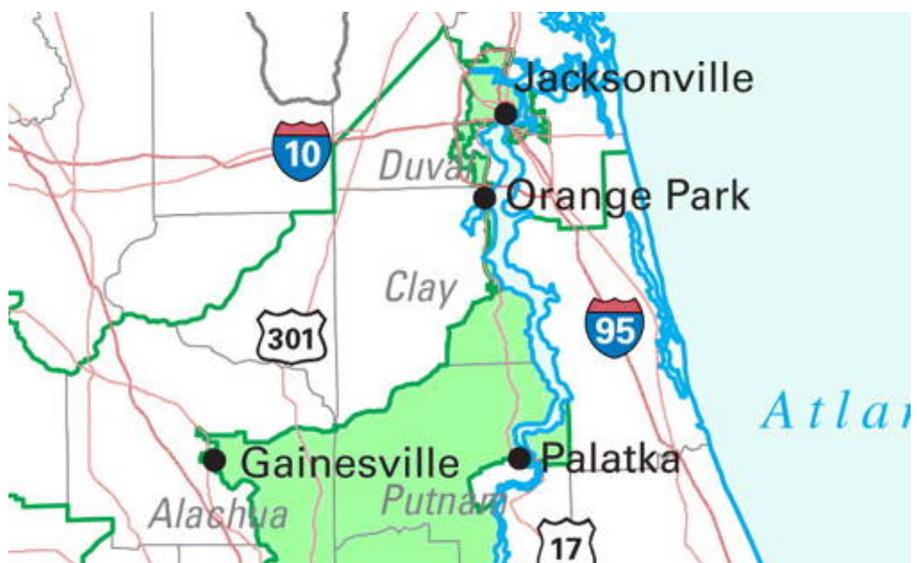


any area by some outrageous boundary line, you are *disincluding* that same area from some surrounding district. So for every gerrymander you create, you are likely to also have a less-noticeable but just as offensive inverse gerrymander next door.

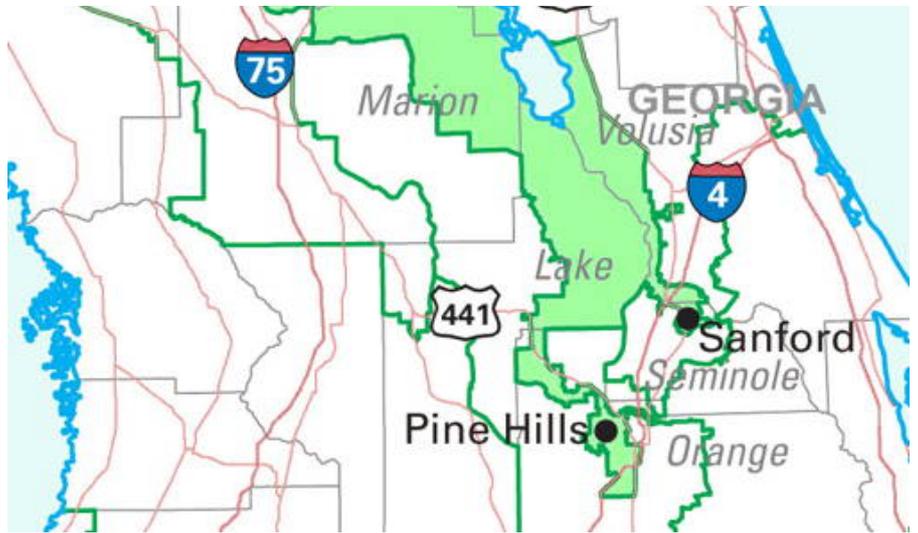
### (6.) Florida-3

Florida has more than its fair share of gerrymandering nightmares. But while many of the state’s districts were admittedly drawn to favor Republican candidates, FL-3 is instead a federally mandated “minority-majority” district [gerrymandered to give black voters a voice](#):

[FL-3] was drawn in 1992 to be North Florida’s black-majority seat and Democrats were shifted



from the surrounding districts to make the surrounding districts more Republican. It currently stretches from Jacksonville's downtown in the north to Orlando's in the south, and stretches east and west to include other largely minority and Democratic areas such as Gainesville, Sanford and Eatonville. As a result of this gerrymandering, the district is strongly Democratic with a Cook

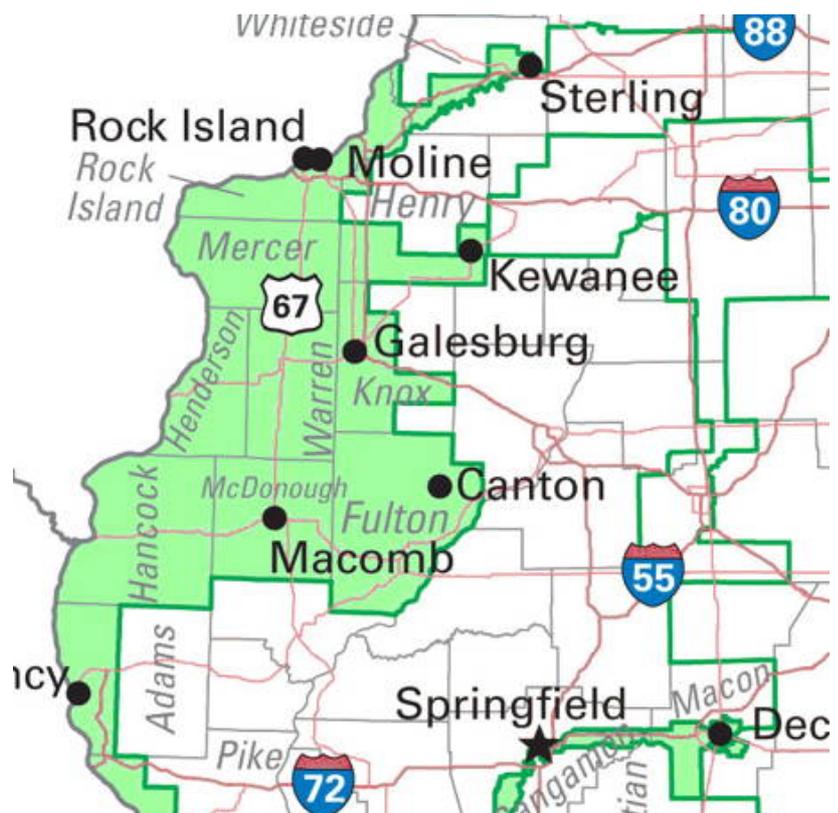


Partisan Voting Index of D +18 and gave Obama 73% of its vote in the 2008 election. It is 50.9% black and 35.4% white. ... The 3rd District is at the center of the debate over the potential impact of the FairDistricts initiative. Due to its shape, the 3rd is one of several districts that violate restrictions in the initiative which require compact districts that conform to geographical and political boundaries. On the other hand, **the 3rd District is protected by the Voting Rights Act and a non-compact shape may be necessary to ensure it remains an effective African-American seat.**

The “FairDistricts Initiative,” ballot proposals designed to finally make Florida’s redistricting theoretically nonpartisan, was finally approved by voters this year on November 2 — but was immediately challenged in court not by the Republicans as you might imagine but by none other than Corrine Brown, [the representative of FL-3!](#) Why? Because the new law stipulates that districts be geographically compact, which would eliminate her voting bloc and most likely her seat in Congress, when FL-3 is totally reconfigured next year. Which is ironic, because [Republicans also view the new law with disdain](#), seeing it as a plot to swing the redistricting advantage back to the Democrats. *Sigh.* Can’t we all just get along? (Answer: NO!)

**(5.) Illinois-17**

Political scientists love to cite IL-17 as the prototypical gerrymandered district, and you are likely to see IL-17 used as the illustration in many academic treatises about redistricting. And we can see why here. Its shape has often been described as “[a rabbit on a skateboard](#),” though to me it looks more like an embryonic ichneumon wasp with a pancreatic cyst. We saw above how PA-12 was a gerrymandering blunder by the Republicans; IL-17 is the opposite, a gerrymandered district created by Democrats to ensure themselves a seat in western Illinois — but which this year was snatched from their grasp by Tea Party candidate and now congressman-elect [Bobby Schilling](#). Oops! The Democrats went out on a limb when drawing IL-17 — several limbs, by the looks of it — but the wave election of 2010



changed the electoral landscape. Let me repeat my warning to over-confident redistricters next year: THINGS CHANGE. Gerrymander at your own risk.

#### (4.) Florida-22

Florida-22 isn't a congressional district: it's series of random lines generated by a malfunctioning dot-matrix printer. What else could explain the sheer purposelessness of the innumerable jagged ins and outs of a district so thin that in a few places you could run across it in under a minute? All of this to achieve — what? A district that [is almost perfectly balanced between Democrats and Republicans](#). Couldn't the same result have been effected a little more simply, perhaps by circling some random part of a Florida map with a felt pen? But all is forgiven, Florida-22, because on November 2 you elected as your representative Allen West MFC (My Favorite Congressman), quite obviously [the next President of the United States](#).

#### (3.) Arizona-2

Arizona's second district is the one most likely to make people burst out laughing. I mean, *c'mon*. And [the explanation for this atrocity](#) only makes it seem worse:

The odd shape of the district is indicative of the use of gerrymandering in its construction. The unusual division was not, however, drawn to favor politicians. Owing to historic tensions between the Hopi and the Navajo Native American tribes and since tribal boundary disputes are a federal matter, it was thought inappropriate that both tribes should be represented in the U.S. House of Representatives by the same member. Since the Hopi reservation is



completely surrounded by the Navajo reservation, and in order to comply with current Arizona redistricting laws, some means of connection was required that avoided including large portions of Navajo land, hence the narrow riverine connection.



So, the district was drawn this way so that Hopis and Navajos don't give each other "electoral cooties" by having to vote for the same congressman? What — is America now a 3rd-grade playground? Imagine how Republicans in Nancy Pelosi's district feel, or Democrats in rural Texas. All across America people have to line up at polling places alongside people whom they despise. Get over it.

### (2.) Maryland-3

Maryland-3 is the poster child for the lunacy that is gerrymandering. And the funniest part? The Democratic politicians who created it [deny that it's gerrymandered at all](#):

The new district was concocted after the 2000 Census when Maryland, like all states, drew up new congressional and state legislative district boundaries to reflect changes in the population.

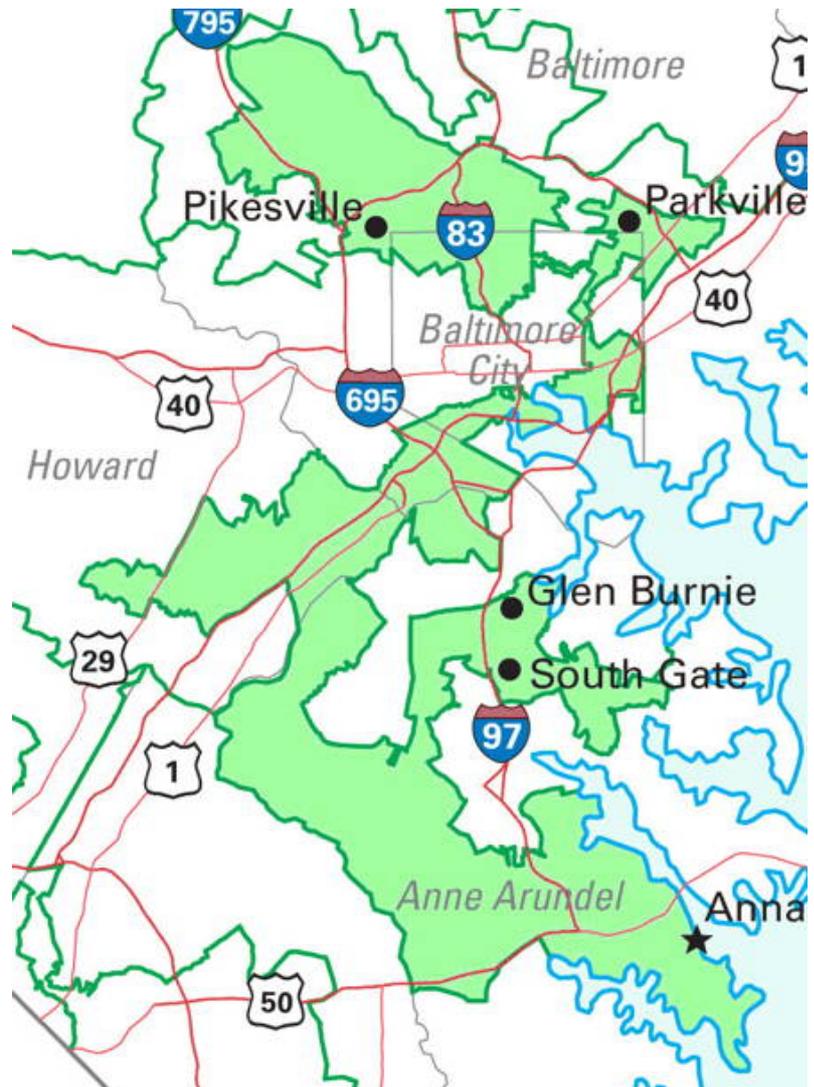
Former Secretary of State John T. Willis, who was in charge of the redistricting as chairman of the Governor's Redistricting Advisory Committee, said **the committee did not mean for the 3rd District to look like it does. That's just how the numbers worked out**, he said.

"It's a very complex situation, and population is the No. 1 driving characteristic," Willis said.

...

The final plan, Willis noted proudly, created eight congressional districts that had almost exactly the same number of people in them.

"All of our congressional districts don't deviate by more than one person," he said.



But Rascovar said that no matter how the committee “painted it”, the new boundaries were drawn to favor Democratic candidates in the 2nd District.

“They needed ‘x’ number of votes . . . what you end up doing is juggling these neighborhood votes, and it becomes absurd,” Rascovar said.

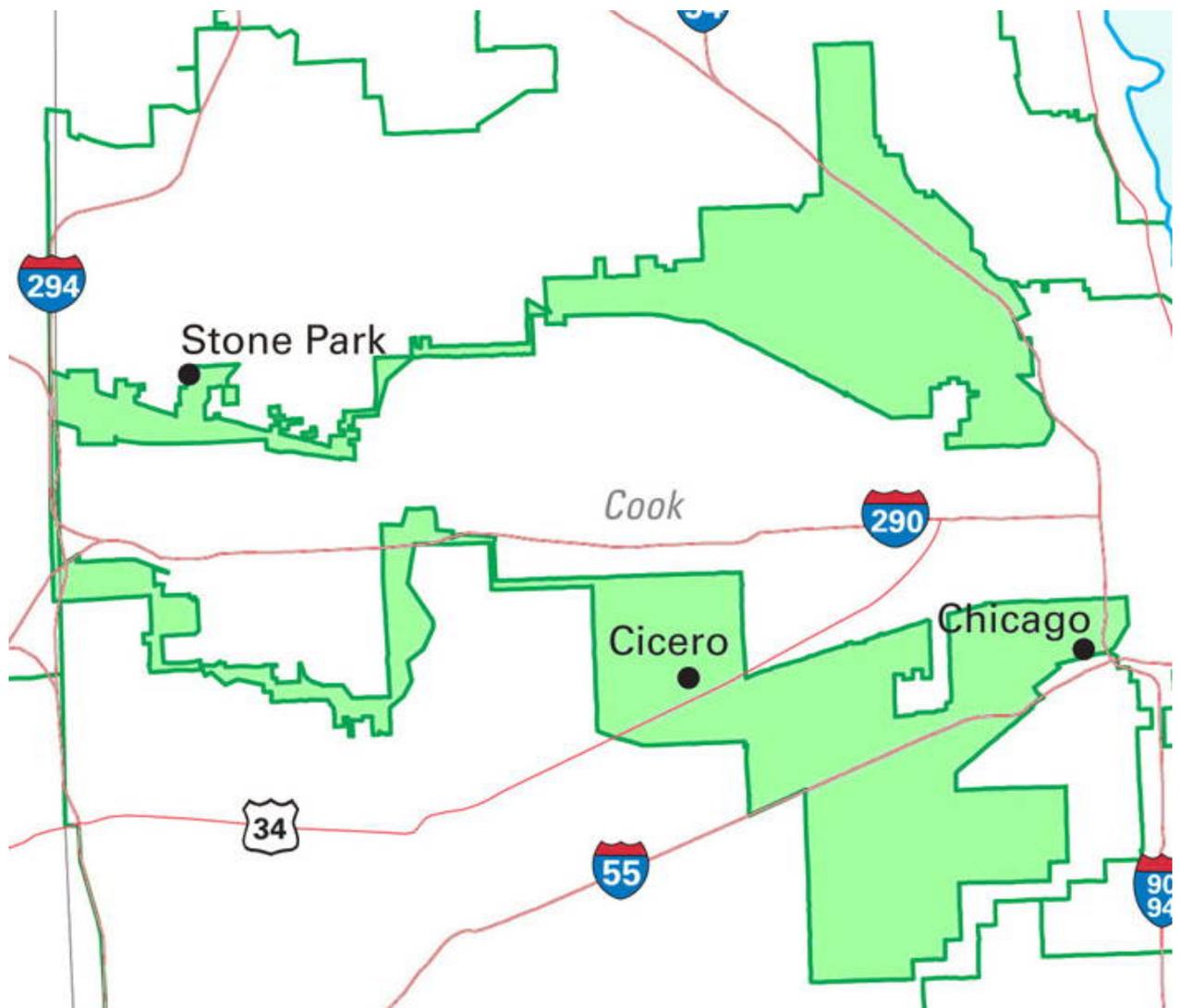
“The most absurd is that the politicians drawing up these districts are no longer concerned with the neighborhoods,” he said. “All they care is, ‘How many loyal Democrats can I get in this district?’ ”

Willis disagreed. Although the interests of incumbent representatives were taken into consideration, he said, no single district was favored.

*We didn't draw the district that way on purpose. It was an accident! Honest!*

### (1.) Illinois-4

Here it is:  
The most  
ridiculous



congressional district in the entire country. No, you're not looking at two districts; IL-4 has two absurdly gerrymandered halves held together by a thin strip of land at its western edge that is nothing more than the median strip along Interstate Highway 294. The end result is a gerrymandered gerrymander, a complete mockery of what congressional representation is even supposed to be. As with AZ-2, the intention behind IL-4 was to create an ethnic enclave, in this case an Hispanic-majority district within an otherwise overwhelmingly non-Hispanic Chicago. Problem is, Chicago has two completely distinct and geographically separate Hispanic neighborhoods — one Puerto Rican, the other Mexican — but neither is large enough to constitute a district majority on its own. Solution? Lump all Hispanics together into a supposedly coherent cultural grouping, and then

carefully draw a line surrounding every single Hispanic household in Chicago, linking the two distant neighborhoods by means of an uninhabited highway margin. Voila! One Hispanic congressperson, by design. And as a side-effect, the most preposterous congressional district in the United States.

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But wait — our gerrymander tour isn't over. If you think those ten were bad, you ain't seen nothin' yet. While they may have indeed been the ten most gerrymandered districts in the nation, at least they shared something admirable in common: They were *legal*. The same cannot be said about our next ten districts, which may not be as crazily shaped as the ones above, but which are in one crucial aspect far worse: they're noncontiguous.

The whole reason gerrymandering even exists as a practice in the first place is to overcome the requirement that each congressional district be **contiguous** — in other words, a unified single enclosed area, however strangely shaped it may be. This self-evident need to create contiguous districts is the whole reason why gerrymandered district boundaries wander all over the landscape, so as to enclose certain sought-after voters while still keeping them geographically connected to the rest of the district. Without the requirement to have each district be contiguous, politicians could easily have created a new level of fantasmagorical gerrymandering in which demographic groupings are enclosed without any regard to where they might be located on a map, forging “districts” out of disconnected topological islands.

Thank heavens *that* can never happen, right? Right?

*Wrong.*

The politicians in charge of redistricting are so brazen in some states that they seem to have gotten drunk on gerrymander wine, tossing caution to the wind and cavalierly creating noncontiguous congressional districts with portions completely cut off from the rest of the voters. How in the world they got away with this, I have no idea — apparently, if you have the hubris to create gerrymandered districts in the first place, it's not so big a step to cross the invisible boundary between unethical and illegal.

That said, I am unaware of any *federal* law stipulating that districts be contiguous; it seems to be legislated on a state-by-state basis. And it could very well be that certain states intentionally fail to pass or enforce such a law, if it serves a political purpose to violate it. After all, who's going to prosecute the redistricters? Themselves?

If this trend continues, perhaps the time has come to enact nationwide guidelines expressly prohibiting noncontiguous congressional districts. Until that time, we'll have...

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# Corrine Brown And Mario Diaz-Balart Sue To Halt Amendment 6

<http://www.redstate.com/tomtflorida/2010/11/06/corrine-brown-and-mario-diaz-balart-sue-to-halt-amendment-6/>

November 16, 2010

**Tom Tillison**

**Orlando Political Press**

In a pro-conservative wave of voter sentiment, against a solid, hard working competitor, Democrat Rep. Corrine Brown won another term in Congress on Tuesday in an overwhelming manner.



After voting in favor of ObamaCare, which is slowly dismantling the greatest healthcare system in the world, voting to support Cap and Trade, the largest energy tax in the history of this country and touting her ability to ‘deliver’ the pork, which only adds to an out of control national debt, Brown still prevails?

How is this possible? I mean, besides bribing the voters with a free sandwich.

Granted, after 18 years, Ms Brown has an effective ground game that comes to life when it’s time to vote. Several poll workers marveled at the audacity and outright boldness displayed by those charged with getting out the vote on her behalf. As one said, “there’s no shame in their game”. Of course, the coupons for a free lunch that were being handed out had to make the job a little easier.

The actual reason for her success in the face of all odds is the layout of her district. FL-CD3 is one of the most gerrymandered districts in the country and it practically ensures her success. In fact, it was designed to do just that, give minorities a clear advantage to vote in a minority representative.

Just to clarify, the term ‘gerrymander’ did not originate with an 18th century white politician named Gerry Mander, as Ms. Brown has mistakenly suggested. The word was created in 1812 in reaction to a redrawing of Massachusetts state senate election districts under the then governor Elbridge Gerry. When mapped, one of the contorted districts in the Boston area was said to resemble the shape of a salamander.

After enjoying the success of this initiative for 18 years, Corrine Brown knows a golden goose when she sees one. Which explains why she spent very little time celebrating her re-election. On Wednesday, she sued in federal court in Miami to block a constitutional amendment approved by voters Tuesday to change the way congressional districts are drawn.

Less than a day after Florida voters approved Amendment 6, Brown and Rep Mario Diaz-Balart, a Republican, filed suit to prevent the newly approved proposal from taking effect. Named in the lawsuit are the Florida House and Senate. Ironically, the Republican-led Senate spearheaded efforts to derail the amendment, with its leadership saying it was unworkable.

Even more ironic, hardcore Democrat staples such as the NAACP, SEIU and the ACLU supported the passage of Amendment 6.

So, time for those involved to lawyer up and determine what is yours and what is mine...meanwhile, there will be no reflection on how these chopped up districts have impacted the residents who live there.

With crime and unemployment a rampant problem in CD3, you’d think this would be a concern, but there we go again being practical in an impractical world!

What will be interesting is the list of potential witnesses called by the Republican Party, considering that the Florida NAACP and most black Democratic lawmakers have rejected claims that the changes from this

amendment would hurt minorities, saying federal protections are unaffected.

# California, Florida and Minnesota Free Themselves of Gerrymandered Districting

<http://riseofthecenter.com/2010/11/11/california-florida-and-minnesota-free-themselves-of-gerrymandered-districting/>

November 16, 2010

As a new documentary that picks apart the corrupt absurdity of gerrymandering that partisan redistricting brings, three states have passed reforms aiming to find a better, more fair, way.

Via [Common Cause](#):

Voters in California, Florida and Minnesota embraced redistricting reform ballot measures on Election Day, sending a strong message that they are fed up with party leaders and incumbents hand-picking their own districts.

California voters strongly rejected a proposal to eliminate an independent redistricting commission, while also voting to expand its scope to draw congressional boundaries, as well. Through a coalition effort led by Common Cause, Prop. 11 or the Voters FIRST Initiative, was approved by voters in 2008, and established a new citizens' commission comprised of five Democrats, five Republicans, and four other members to draw political boundaries for the California legislature.

In Florida, voters approved two ballot amendments by margins of more than 60 percent that set new rules for redrawing legislative and congressional districts, requiring that both be compact, equal in population and make use of existing city, county and geographical boundaries. The amendments prohibit drawing districts to favor or disfavor an incumbent or political party.

To the north, voters in Minneapolis approved a referendum that removes political parties from the redistricting process. Political parties will no longer be able to directly appoint people to the redistricting commission – now a judge will do that using an application process.

“Voters are tired of politicians putting their self interest over the public interest by carving up our communities to create safe seats for themselves,” said Bob Edgar, president of Common Cause. “It’s time to put an end to the corrupt practice of gerrymandering, and I’m glad to see voters in two of our largest states, California and Florida, and in Minneapolis, leading the way.”

“This is a big win for holding government accountable to the people,” Edgar said.

In California, more than 30,000 people have applied to serve on the citizens redistricting commission – a pool which has now been narrowed to 120 finalists that is more reflective of California’s ethnic diversity than the legislature is. The commission will begin its work in January, once census data is available.

In addition to every major newspaper in the state, a broad coalition of civic groups including the AARP, California Forward, NAACP, MALDEF, the League of Women Voters of California, the Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce, and ACLU of Southern California joined Common Cause in opposing Proposition 27, which would have abolished the independent citizens redistricting commission. Proposition 27 was defeated at the polls.

California also approved a second measure, Proposition 20, extending the scope of the citizens redistricting commission to draw congressional boundaries as well. This will be a significant change from 2001, when the Republican and Democratic parties struck a deal to protect every incumbent member of Congress.

“With the 2010 elections behind us, political consultants and pundits will now turn to redistricting as the next battleground,” noted Edgar. “In most states, we will witness a process where politicians choose their voters for the next decade, crippling the ability of voters to make meaningful choices in who represents them for years to

come.”

In many states, Common Cause will be forming advisory citizen boards to demand transparency and fairness in the redistricting process, armed with new mapping tools and legal advice needed to draw their own districts and shame politicians out of the worst forms of gerrymandering.

A new documentary film, *Gerrymandering*, opened in theatres across the country over the past two weeks and documents some of the past abuses of redistricting, going back to the days of the founding fathers where Patrick Henry drew his political foe James Madison out of a district to make it harder for him to be elected to Congress. The United States is the sole remaining western democracy that allows incumbent legislators to draw their own political districts.

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*[Common Cause](#) is a nonpartisan, grassroots organization dedicated to restoring the core values of American democracy, reinventing an open, honest, and accountable government that works for the public interest, and empowering ordinary people to make their voices heard.*

# FLORIDA SPACeREPORT: November 7, 2010

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<http://spacereport.blogspot.com/2010/11/november-7-2010.html>

November 16, 2010

'Apollo 18' Movie to Focus on Alien Link to 'Canceled' Mission (Source: Deadline.com)

The Weinstein Company won a bidding battle to make Apollo 18, an extraterrestrial film that is being creatively spearheaded by Wanted director Timur Bekmambetov. The picture, which is well into production and will be released March 4, 2011, shapes up as the next in a line of films that use a tinge of reality to launch into thriller story lines. Bob Weinstein met several times with Bekmambetov before making a deal that came after Bekmambetov presented film footage purported to have been shot by the crew of Apollo 18.

Redistricting Promises Changes in Florida Representation in Washington (Source: SPACeREPORT)

With Florida's population growth, the state will probably add two new Congressional Districts for the 2012 election. The Florida Legislature will be responsible for the redistricting in 2011. Previous redistricting allowed powerful state legislators to establish Congressional districts that were tailor-made for their own congressional campaigns. (This was considered the case when the Cape Canaveral Spaceport was split into two districts, allowing State House Speaker Tom Feeney to become a Congressman.)

Two newly approved Florida ballot initiatives are designed to prevent the kind of politically motivated redistricting that occurred in previous years. Nevertheless, Florida's Congressional influence on space policy could change profoundly after 2012, with the potential addition or subtraction of a Space Coast district, and more members available to serve on relevant committees. (11/7)

# Corrine Brown takes redistricting amendment to court

<http://staugustine.com/news/local-news/2010-11-04/corrine-brown-takes-redistricting-amendments-court>

November 16, 2010

TALLAHASSEE -- Less than 24 hours after its surprise passage, a constitutional amendment that restricts state lawmakers when they draw new congressional districts was challenged in court by two members of Congress.

The amendment, along with a similar proposal concerning state legislative districts that is not under legal challenge, passed with nearly 63 percent of the vote Tuesday despite polls indicating both would fail.

In filing suit against the state just before 2 a.m. Wednesday, U.S. Reps. Mario Diaz-Balart, R-Miami, and Corrine Brown, D-Jacksonville, leveled two basic claims against Amendment 6:

- Florida voters can't change the standards for congressional district-drawing because the issue is governed by the U.S. Constitution, not the Florida Constitution.
- Because Amendment 6 prohibits lawmakers from intending to favor incumbents when they draw districts, it violates the federal Voting Rights Act, which requires lawmakers to weigh incumbency to ensure that already elected minority legislators remain in power.

"You can't take that out of the mix," said Stephen Cody, a Palmetto Bay lawyer for Diaz-Balart and Brown.

J. Gerald Hebert, a Voting Rights Act expert and supporter of both redistricting amendments, says the lawsuit is "frivolous and misleading."

"They're misinterpreting the Voting Rights Act," he said. "It protects voters, not incumbent politicians." Approval of the two proposals was a rare bright spot for Democrats on Tuesday in an election that saw Republicans pick up four new members of Congress and veto-proof majorities in the Legislature and narrowly hold onto the Governor's Mansion.

The once-a-decade redistricting effort is the essence of political power-brokering. The ruling party tries to draw districts that spread its voters throughout more districts, while the minority party's voters are packed into relatively few districts.

The process is slated to begin as soon as December when lawmakers receive U.S. Census data that could give Florida two more seats in Congress. The new maps will be crucial for both parties, as Republicans hope to maintain lopsided legislative and congressional majorities. Democrats hope the new restrictions will result in more competitive races.

Cody said he hopes for an expedited ruling on Wednesday's challenge so legislators will know what laws to follow when they draw the new maps.

The lawsuit targets restrictions on drawing congressional districts addressed in Amendment 6. There are not yet challenges to Amendment 5, which put similar restrictions on drawing state-level districts.

The text of the amendments sounds straightforward, saying no district shall be drawn "with the intent to favor or disfavor a political party or an incumbent" and that districts shall not deny minorities the ability to "elect representatives of their choice."

The amendments also say that lawmakers can't violate federal law when they draw the districts.

"We're tired of politicians picking their voters," said Ellen Freidin, chairwoman of Fair Districts Florida, which sponsored the amendments. "In a democracy, people should pick their politicians."

But opponents say the amendments are simply a sneaky way for Democrats and liberals to sue over the districts.

"This is about intent. Anytime you start talking about intent you've got a lawsuit on your hands," said Miguel De Grandy, a redistricting expert and lawyer for the state House of Representatives, which was named in the suit along with the governor and Senate.

# Gaetz to chair redistricting committee

<http://www.thedestinlog.com/common/printer/view.php?db=nwfdn&id=34892>

November 16, 2010

2010-11-14 20:44:25

State Senate President Mike Haridopolos handed fellow lawmaker Don Gaetz a headache last week when he named him chairman of the Senate Committee on Redistricting.

Gaetz, R-Niceville, said he hadn't had the title five minutes when he began hearing from lobbyists and politicians about pending reapportionment and the creation of two new congressional seats.

This would be a challenging job anytime, but particularly at this time, he said.

Gaetz's committee will be charged with drawing maps delineating Florida state House and Senate districts as well as state congressional districts.

Census figures have dictated that Florida increase its number of seats in the U.S. House of Representatives from 25 to 27.

Gaetz and his committee will likely be paired with a House committee headed by state Rep. Will Weatherford, a Republican from Pasco County. The appointments represent both a plum assignment and hefty responsibility for the two rising leaders; Gaetz is set to be Senate president and Weatherford to be speaker of the House in 2013.

Their committees have until May 2012 to produce district maps in time for election qualifying.

The always-frenzied reapportionment process will be further complicated during Gaetz's tenure by the implementation of newly passed Constitutional Amendments 5 and 6.

The amendments, which apply to state and national reapportionment, call for lines to be drawn that neither favor nor disfavor a political incumbent or political party.

The amendments also require map designers to ensure that minority rights to representation are protected and that efforts be made to respect the integrity of existing communities.

Gaetz foresees a lot of litigation resulting from Amendments 5 and 6. He said his first order of business will be to consult incoming Attorney General Pam Bondi about the wording of the two new amendments.

These amendments contain a series of loaded terms, he said. We want to see what they are loaded with.

Gaetz said he also intends to hold hearings across the state to find out what Floridians residents are looking for when political district lines are put down.

Gaetz said among those he wants to talk to are the states supervisors of elections.

Okaloosa County Supervisor of Elections Paul Lux said the states supervisors have recently completed a first-ever census block map that attempts to point out areas that shouldn't be split by reapportionment lines.

He said he hopes having Gaetz serve as chairman of the redistricting committee will allow him access to voice Supervisors of Elections concerns as they arise during reapportionment.

# Two Florida Members of Congress File Federal Lawsuit on Redistricting Reform — The Florida Law Journal

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<http://www.thefloridalawjournal.com/2010/11/two-florida-members-of-congress-file-federal-lawsuit-on-redistricting-reform.html>

November 16, 2010

## Courtesy of Ballot Access News

Two members of the U.S. House of Representatives filed a federal lawsuit to overturn the Florida redistricting measures that passed last week. See [this](#) story. The two members are Democrat Corrine Brown and Republican Mario Diaz-Balart.

The measures do not remove the power to draw district boundaries from the legislature, but they require the legislature to draw plans that do not favor any particular incumbent, and also plans that do not favor any particular political party. The two plaintiffs argue that this violates the Voting Rights Act. The case is *Brown v State of Florida*, southern district, 1:10-cv-23968. Thanks to Justin Levitt and Rick Hasen for the case name and case number.

Related posts:

1. [Class Action Filed Against Toyota](#)
2. [Feds File to Dismiss Healthcare Suit](#)

# Redistricting Post Carries Dual Goals

<http://www.theledger.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20101114/COLUMNISTS/11145018/1001/BUSINESS&Title=Redistricting-Post-Carries-Dual-Goals&template=printart>

November 16, 2010

Published: Sunday, November 14, 2010 at 12:01 a.m.

Other than passing the annual state budget, lawmakers have only one other constitutional mandate: They must redraw congressional and legislative district lines every 10 years, based on a new federal census.

In the state Senate, that effort will be led by Don Gaetz, a 62-year-old Niceville Republican who is in line to become the Senate president after the 2012 elections.

The chairmanship of the Senate Reapportionment Committee will enhance Gaetz's already considerable influence in the 40-member Senate.

But after incoming Senate President Mike Haridopolos, R-Merritt Island, tapped him for the redistricting job, Gaetz noted it will not be an easy task.

Gaetz, a former Okaloosa County school superintendent who also helped found the VITAS hospice company, said he expects redistricting to be "a difficult process and involve a great deal of legal wrangling."

Redrawing legislative and congressional district lines is normally a challenging task. For one, nearly all 160 members of the Florida Legislature, as well as the 25 members of the state's congressional delegation, have a deep personal interest in their districts.

Add into the mix, the likelihood that Florida could gain as many as two new congressional seats - based on population growth - and the line drawing becomes even more complicated.

In Gaetz's favor, as well as his yet-to-be-named House counterpart, Republicans have such strong majorities in the House and Senate, as well as incoming Republican Gov. Rick Scott, the Democrats will not be much of an obstacle in the legislative process.

The real battle will take place in the courts, after Democrat-backed constitutional amendments were approved by voters this month. The amendments set new standards for drawing the district lines. Democrats will use those amendments to make the case for districts that could be more competitive for their party members.

In naming Gaetz as the Senate redistricting leader, Haridopolos noted he was giving the senator a "very difficult assignment."

"With the recent passage of Amendments 5 and 6 by Florida voters, this will be the most challenging committee chairmanship of all," Haridopolos said.

Senate leaders say the new constitutional requirements - which are already being challenged in federal court by congressional members - will have a "drastic impact" on how lawmakers draw the new district lines in their 2012 session.

Lawmakers said because of the many legal questions about the amendments' impact, the final lines may end being drawn by a court. Gaetz said that is something he wants to avoid.

"It is my hope that we will be able to get these new district lines drawn without having the court intervene," Gaetz said. "I am looking forward to traveling around the state and hearing the public testimony on this

important process."

### **WINNER OF THE WEEK**

J.D. Alexander. The Lake Wales Republican was tapped for another two-year stint as chairman of the state Senate's Ways and Means Committee, the powerful panel that oversees all state spending. It will be a challenging year for Alexander and other lawmakers because they face slow growth in state revenue, a \$2.5 billion budget deficit and a new governor who wants more than \$2 billion in tax cuts.

### **LOSER OF THE WEEK**

Joyce Kaufman. The conservative talk show host abruptly quit her new job as chief of staff for U.S. Rep.-elect Allen West after the national media began to focus on some of the controversial statements she has made as a commentator, including her line "if ballots don't work, bullets will." Kaufman said she resigned because she did not want to be "used in an electronic lynching by proxy." West, a Republican who will represent parts of Palm Beach and Broward counties, said he stands by Kaufman.

### **QUOTE OF THE WEEK**

"It's a new day in Tallahassee," said Gov. Charlie Crist as Gov.-elect Rick Scott made his first post-election visit to the state capital.

# Corrine Brown: Congresswoman's antics are egregious, annoying

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<http://www.topix.com/forum/city/jacksonville-fl/TOVC65GL6KEC8VBH0>

November 16, 2010

Read full article <http://jacksonville.com/opinion/blog/401026/r...>

You can't see me as I write this column, but when I say I've had it up to here with Corrine Brown, I'm pointing to about six feet over the top of my head.

Her asinine statements are bad enough as are her ethical challenges.

There's no need to go into details about sweet deals for her daughter, a [luxury car](#), sandbags during a hurricane and meal coupons for voters, to name just a few.

But this is too much.

On Tuesday, voters went to the polls and approved Amendment 6, which will add some common sense to how congressional district lines are drawn.

And it wasn't a close vote. In fact, it broke the hard-to-accomplish barrier of 60 percent that an amendment needs to pass, with 63 percent voting yes.

Brown had campaigned against the amendment so what does she do now that she lost?

She slaps Florida's voters in the face by immediately filing a federal lawsuit in Miami, along with U.S. Rep. Mario Diaz-Balart, asking that the amendment be declared invalid.

Her excuse is that enforcing the amendment will deprive minorities of the opportunity to elect representatives of their choice.

In reality, it's about her keeping her seat in [Congress](#), which she holds onto because of her ridiculously gerrymandered district.

Read full article <http://jacksonville.com/opinion/blog/401026/r...>

# Its Fraud! No Longer Needed!

<http://blackpoliticalbuzz.blogspot.com/2010/11/gerrymandering-101-its-fraud-no-longer.html>

November 17, 2010

(10.) North Carolina-12

(6.) Florida-3

Florida has more than its fair share of gerrymandering nightmares. But while many of the state's districts were admittedly drawn to favor Republican candidates, FL-3 is instead a federally mandated "minority-majority" [district gerrymandered to give Black Voters a voice:](#)

[FL-3] was drawn in 1992 to be North Florida's black-majority seat and Democrats were shifted from the surrounding districts to make the surrounding districts more Republican. It currently stretches from Jacksonville's downtown in the north to Orlando's in the south, and stretches east and west to include other largely minority and Democratic areas such as Gainesville, Sanford and Eatonville.

As a result of this gerrymandering, the district is strongly Democratic with a Cook Partisan Voting Index of D +18 and gave Obama 73% of its vote in the 2008 election. It is 50.9% black and 35.4% white. ...

The 3rd District is at the center of the debate over the potential impact of the FairDistricts initiative. Due to its shape, the 3rd is one of several districts that violate restrictions in the initiative which require compact districts that conform to geographical and political boundaries. On the other hand, the 3rd District is protected by the Voting Rights Act and a non-compact shape may be necessary to ensure it remains an effective African-American seat.

The "FairDistricts Initiative," ballot proposals designed to finally make Florida's redistricting theoretically nonpartisan, was finally approved by voters this year on November 2 — but was immediately challenged in court not by the Republicans as you might imagine but by none other than Corrine Brown, the representative of FL-3! Why? Because the new law stipulates that districts be geographically compact, which would eliminate her voting bloc and most likely her seat in Congress, when FL-3 is totally reconfigured next year. Which is ironic, because Republicans also view the new law with disdain, seeing it as a plot to swing the redistricting advantage back to the Democrats. Sigh. Can't we all just get along?

(Answer: NO!)

(4.) Florida-22

Florida-22 isn't a congressional district: it's series of random lines generated by a malfunctioning dot-matrix printer. What else could explain the sheer purposelessness of the innumerable jagged ins and outs of a district so thin that in a few places you could run across it in under a minute? All of this to achieve — what? A district that is almost perfectly balanced between Democrats and Republicans. Couldn't the same result have been effected a little more simply, perhaps by circling some random part of a Florida map with a felt pen?

But all is forgiven, Florida-22, because on November 2 you elected as your representative Allen West MFC (My Favorite Congressman), quite obviously the next President of the United States.

# Pols try to undermine your vote -- OrlandoSentinel.com

<http://www.orlandosentinel.com/news/os-scott-maxwell-not-fair-districts-120101116,0,5881111,print.column>

November 22, 2010

orlandosentinel.com/news/os-scott-maxwell-not-fair-districts-120101116,0,7688513.column

My question seemed simple enough: *Whose money was it?*

Sure, I knew the names of the politicians who opposed the fair-districting amendments, which we overwhelmingly approved at the polls earlier this month.

I knew that **Dean Cannon** and **Mike Haridopolos** had fought them before the elections seeking to cling to rules that basically allowed legislators to customize district lines for themselves and their buddies.

And I knew that U.S. Reps. **Corrine Brown** and **Mario Diaz-Balart** had filed a lawsuit, trying to block our votes from counting.

Still, I wanted to know specifically who was funding the lawsuit, paying the court costs and paying the lawyers' bills.

Voters deserve to know who's trying to overturn their will.

As it turns out, getting the answer wasn't that easy by design.

For starters, Brown, a Democrat, and Diaz-Balart, a Republican, wouldn't say. Brown's chief of staff simply ignored questions. And all Diaz-Balart's spokeswoman would say was "a legal defense fund" without further explanation.

So I began trying to find the records for myself. I mean, this is America, right? Where freedom-of-information reigns!

What I learned is that Congress doesn't allow you to access information about legal funds online, by phone or any way other than personally traveling to Washington and visiting a basement-level records room.

Most of you can't do that.

Fortunately, I have access to a secret weapon: **Mark Matthews**.

Mark is the Sentinel's Washington reporter. And he was kind enough to go digging through these files that are located hundreds of miles away from the people whose lives they affect.

Mark pulled the papers associated with Brown's and Diaz-Balart's legal funds. Neither was very up-to-date (federal law doesn't require that, either). But they did reveal that each legal fund had received \$10,000 from the two groups: The Florida Leadership Alliance and Citizens for Housing and Urban Growth.

OK. But who is that?

I had to search different set of records to answer that question. After doing so, I learned that the people cutting checks to your federal representatives were, in fact, your state representatives.

The Florida Leadership Alliance is run by state Sen. Don Gaetz.

Citizens for Housing and Urban Growth is controlled by a cluster of legislators, including Sen. **Mike Bennett** of Bradenton and state Rep. **Ron Reagan** of Sarasota.

In other words: The state lawmakers you elected are helping fund a lawsuit filed by the federal lawmakers you elected all in attempt to overturn the amendment you approved.

If you're wondering where the state legislators got their money, well, that's many of the usual suspects: Power companies, law firms, builders, you name it all the people who benefit from the status quo.

It doesn't stop there.

Gaetz the guy who's funding the fight against fair districts was recently appointed to head the Senate committee that's in charge of guess what? redistricting!

Yes, our new Senate president, Mike Haridopolos, made that happen.

Not to be outdone, the new House speaker, Dean Cannon, put another vocal opponent of fair districts, Will Weatherford, in charge of redistricting in that chamber.

Ain't politics grand?

At this point, I'd like to take a time-out to remind you what's at stake here.

For decades, Florida politicians have drawn themselves districts that split neighborhoods in two, sometimes snaking hundreds of miles, just so each one has the right kind of voters to keep incumbents in office.

They have gotten so good at doing this that, after they did it last time, not a single legislative incumbent lost a re-election bid in 2004. In fact, over six years and more than 400 legislative race only three incumbents were ousted.

This also is why we have congressional districts that resemble pythons. It's why Brown lives in Jacksonville and represents Orlando, and why **John Mica** lives in Winter Park but represents Flagler Beach.

Both parties have done it. And voters know it stinks. That's why 62 percent voted to require that future districts be more compact and "not drawn to favor or disfavor an incumbent or political party."

It's that last part stopping the built-in bias that politicians fear the most. If they can't play with loaded dice and stacked decks, they don't want to play at all.

It's why Cannon personally went before the Supreme Court to keep on the ballot an amendment that would've neutered fair-districting. (He failed.)

It's also why the politicians keep fighting you in court, with money from their vested-interest puppet masters, when they think you're not looking.

Because nothing scares them more than the thought of a fair fight.

*Scott Maxwell can be reached at [smaxwell@orlandosentinel.com](mailto:smaxwell@orlandosentinel.com) or 407-420-6141.*

# Florida senators financing redistricting lawsuit – Central Florida Political Pulse – Orlando Sentinel

[http://blogs.orlandosentinel.com/news\\_politics/2010/11/maxwell-florida-senators-financing-redistricting-lawsuit.html](http://blogs.orlandosentinel.com/news_politics/2010/11/maxwell-florida-senators-financing-redistricting-lawsuit.html)

November 19, 2010

*Sentinel* columnist **Scott Maxwell** wanted to do a little sleuthing into who was financing the lawsuit against the Amendment 6 congressional redistricting amendment filed by U.S. Reps. **Mario Diaz-Balart** and **Corrine Brown**.

From Maxwell:

*Voters deserve to know who's trying to overturn their will. As it turns out, getting the answer wasn't that easy ... by design. For starters, Brown, a Democrat, and Diaz-Balart, a Republican, wouldn't say. Brown's chief of staff simply ignored questions. And all Diaz-Balart's spokeswoman would say was "a legal defense fund" without further explanation.*

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*In other words: The state lawmakers you elected are helping fund a lawsuit filed by the federal lawmakers you elected ... all in attempt to overturn the amendment you approved.*

[Keep reading.](#)

# New Florida House speaker picked wrong tone, wrong issue for first speech

[http://www.palmbeachpost.com/opinion/editorials/new-florida-house-speaker-picked-wrong-tone-wrong-1055153.html?cxtype=rss\\_editorials](http://www.palmbeachpost.com/opinion/editorials/new-florida-house-speaker-picked-wrong-tone-wrong-1055153.html?cxtype=rss_editorials)

November 22, 2010

By The Palm Beach Post

Updated: 9:56 a.m. Thursday, Nov. 18, 2010

Posted: 6:06 p.m. Wednesday, Nov. 17, 2010

Florida House Speaker Dean Cannon, R-Winter Park, is half right when he claims to favor a "strong and independent" court system. He favors a strong, independent court system that does whatever the Legislature wants.

Having called Florida's economy Tallahassee's priority, Rep. Cannon made demagoguery the priority Tuesday during his first speech as House leader. The courts are a favorite target of hyper-partisan Republicans, and Rep. Cannon called recent Florida Supreme Court rulings "threats to our liberties."

Fear not. The Florida Supreme Court poses no such threat. Rep. Cannon is mad because the high court knocked three Legislature-sponsored constitutional amendments off this year's ballot. One of them would have tried to exempt Florida from the new health care law.

As a lawyer, Rep. Cannon knows that federal law trumps state law. He also knows that Florida has joined other states to challenge the health care law, and that those lawsuits will sort out which parts of the law stand. The Legislature's Amendment 9 was nothing but chum for GOP voters.

There is long-standing precedent in Florida for high court review of amendments - whether from the Legislature or a petition drive - to make sure that they conform to law and do not mislead voters. Amendment 9 failed because it purported to create a health care system without doing so. Would Rep. Cannon want Big Labor to deceive voters into making it easier for unions to organize?

Rep. Cannon contends that "unelected" justices should not interfere with what elected representatives want voters to place in the Florida Constitution. That's an odd argument from a self-styled conservative, since it advocates against a check on abuse of power by one branch of government.

In fact, Rep. Cannon's argument is political. He implies that justices appointed by Democrats rejected Amendment 9 and the two others because they came from Republicans. The recent record undercuts his case. In 2006, the Florida Supreme Court tossed off the ballot an amendment opposed by Republicans that would have created an independent commission to draw congressional and legislative districts. Only the legislative branch, the judicial branch ruled, has the constitutional authority in Florida to draw those lines. Four justices appointed by Gov. Lawton Chiles, a Democrat, were in the majority.

Backers of the amendment regrouped, redrafted and presented for this year's ballot Amendments 5 and 6, designed to reduce gerrymandering. The court, including three of those four justices from 2006, approved the new amendments, and so did a supermajority of the voters in whom Rep. Cannon places his trust.

Rep. Cannon may be trying to continue the failed effort to deny merit retention, and new six-year terms, to a pair of justices who ruled against Amendment 9. Perhaps the Legislature's new effort will be to propose that Florida's high court justices be elected, rather than appointed.

Such a move would be disastrous. Florida does not want special-interest money bankrolling the campaigns of

Supreme Court candidates making promises about how they would rule.

Nothing in Rep. Cannon's tirade will get one Floridian back to work. If the new Legislature's mission is to establish a political ideology by bullying the courts into submission, we would call that the real threat to our liberties.

- Randy Schultz,

for The Palm Beach Post Editorial Board

# Senators Put Money Behind Redistricting Lawsuits

[http://newsserviceflorida.typepad.com/news\\_service\\_of\\_florida\\_b/2010/11/senators-put-money-behind-redistricting-lawsuits.html](http://newsserviceflorida.typepad.com/news_service_of_florida_b/2010/11/senators-put-money-behind-redistricting-lawsuits.html)

November 22, 2010

*Michael Peltier, News Service of Florida*

The voters may have spoken, but at least one senator says he may not be finished in his quest to derail a pair of constitutional amendments that will change the way political boundaries are drawn.

Sen. **Mike Bennett**, R-Bradenton, said Wednesday he hasn't ruled out continuing to assist a pair of Florida members of Congress -- Democrat **Corrine Brown** of Jacksonville and Republican **Mario Diaz-Balart** of Miami -- who filed suit in federal court to scuttle Amendment 6, which passed Nov. 2 with nearly 63 percent of the vote.

In June, Citizens for Housing and Urban Growth, a political spending committee led by Bennett and Sen. **Greg Evers**, R-Baker, gave \$5,000 each to the legal defense funds of Brown and Balart, who contend Amendment 6 violates federal voting rights protections for minority candidates.

Sen. **Gary Siplin**, D-Orlando, has said he is considering challenging Amendment 5, which deals exclusively with state House and Senate district.

Bennett has been an outspoken critic of Amendments 5 & 6, which will regulate how state and federal political districts will be drawn. He told News Service of Florida Wednesday that he may not be ready to throw in the towel.

"I'm not sure we have any money left in the fund, but I might," Bennett said of continuing his support. "The people have made their decision... but people do have the right to sue."

Another group, The Florida Leadership Alliance, a group headed by Sen. **Don Gaetz**, R-Niceville, also gave \$5,000 a piece to Brown and Diaz-Balart in June. The two members of Congress used the money to help finance an unsuccessful challenge to the redistricting amendment in state court in an attempt to keep the measure from voters.

Their latest lawsuit was filed in Miami federal court within hours of voters approving the redistricting measures this month..

Gaetz now heads the Senate Reapportionment Committee.

"I think it was fair before the election for all of us who have views on both sides of this to play," said Gaetz, who now chairs the Senate Reapportionment Committee.

Gaetz said Wednesday that his committee has not made additional contributions to the defense funds since voters approved Amendments 5 & 6 on Nov. 2.

"I've not contributed a dime to any kind of legal action for or against anything having to do with reapportionment since the election," Gaetz said Wednesday during a break in Senate Medicaid hearings. "I'm a partisan. I think 5 and 6 were wrong-headed and very difficult to comply with. But that was then and this is now. "

Led by FairDistrictsFlorida.org, backers of Amendments 5 & 6 said the new proposals will provide some rational criteria for the way political districts are drawn. The amendments are likely to further strain relations between the Legislature and the judiciary, especially the Florida Supreme Court, which shot down three legislative proposals during the recently concluded election cycle.

Senate Democratic Leader **Nan Rich**, D-Weston, said a judicial clash is inevitable regardless of whether the amendments had passed, since the courts historically have had the final say if the newly crafted boundaries are fair.

But Rich said Republican leaders should be careful in how forcefully they oppose the amendments now because many of the same voters who elected them to office also supported the measures.

"In an election where Republicans won from top to bottom, it's amazing to me that 63 percent voted for the Fair Districts amendment," Rich said. "That means Republicans and independents joined Democrats who voted for it because we know Democrat turnout was low."

<http://www.newsserviceflorida.com>

# Competitive Redistricting

Submitted by [Aldon Hynes](#) on Thu, 11/18/2010 - 15:15

<http://www.orient-lodge.com/node/4343>

They say that a fish rots from the head and that results that people get from using a system are shaped by what went into designing the system. This came home to me last night as I watched the new documentary film, [Gerrymandering](#) at a gathering sponsored by Common Cause CT, the American Constitution Society, and the Yale Law School Democrats. The film highlighted various problems with redistricting and touched on possible ways of improving the process.

One popular idea is to take redistricting out of the hands of legislators and set up independent commissions. The film documented the efforts to get that done in California. Yet some questioned whether an independent commission would be that much better. Whatever ideas come forward, perhaps the best involve making the process more transparent.

This reflected some of what I was hearing at the [National Conference of State Legislatures' \(NCSL\) National Redistricting Seminar](#) I attended in Rhode Island in September.

The major redistricting software vendors were there and they all talked about ways of making redistricting more open to the public. Staffers for the Florida State Senate and the Florida House of Representatives were both there demonstrating early versions of their redistricting tools.

A good place to start with the Florida redistricting effort is at [www.floridaredistricting.org](http://www.floridaredistricting.org). For those interested in digging deeper into the Florida House of Representatives toolkit, take a look at [floridaredistricting.cloudapp.net](http://floridaredistricting.cloudapp.net). While it is great to see a movement towards a more open redistricting process, this application is based on Microsoft's Silverlight and won't run on my computer, so I can't provide further details.

Going much more open source is the [Public Mapping Project](#). This will allow any group with sufficiently technical people to set up their own public mapping server. Various advocacy groups are looking at this as a tool facilitate public involvement in the redistricting process. Competition to make public mapping systems where the public can compete to create better districts may be an important step these districts being more competitive.

Another aspect of this is transparency about what the goals are in redistricting. The Voting Rights Act makes places an emphasis on creating districts that do not discriminate against minorities. Other goals may include recognizing geographic boundaries or existing political boundaries. In Connecticut, for example, county boundaries are not as important as they are in other states. Some states have a bigger emphasis on nesting districts within districts. For example, having a State Senate district that crosses Congressional district lines would be considered a very bad thing in some states. Whatever the goals, they should also be made public and widely discussed ahead of redistricting.

The tools are being built for more competitive redistricting. Will people start using the tools and demand better districts this time around? We can only hope.

# Gaetz, Bennett split on continuing to fund anti-Amendment 6 lawsuit « Florida Independent: News. Politics. Media

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<http://floridaindependent.com/15220/don-gaetz-mik-bennett-split-on-continuing-to-fund-anti-amendment-6-lawsuit>

November 22, 2010

Yesterday, we [blogged](#) about an *Orlando Sentinel* piece on the behind-the-scenes dealings of the lawsuit to overturn Amendment 6, one of the two so-called “Fair Districts” amendments approved by voters on Nov. 2.

The article revealed that political committees consisting of several state legislators, including state Sen. Mike Bennett, R-Bradenton, and state Sen. Don Gaetz, R-Destin, made donations to the legal funds of Rep. Corrine Brown, D-Jacksonville, and Rep. Mario Diaz-Balart, R-Miami, who [are suing](#) to block Amendment 6.

Today, The News Service of Florida is [reporting](#) further on the Republican support that Brown and Mario Diaz-Balart are getting in their battle.

In the article, Bennett and Gaetz made very different statements regarding their support of a lawsuit to overturn Amendment 6. If their comments are to be believed, the two appear to be at odds over the issue:

Bennett has been an outspoken critic of Amendments 5 and 6, which would regulate how state and federal political districts would be drawn. He told The News Service of Florida that he may not be ready to throw in the towel.

“I’m not sure we have any money left in the fund, but I might,” Bennett said of continuing his support. “The people have made their decision ... but people do have the right to sue.”

Gaetz, on the other hand, was seemingly dismissive about any contributions his group had made in the past:

Gaetz said Wednesday that his committee has not made additional contributions to the defense funds since voters approved the amendments.

“I’ve not contributed a dime to any kind of legal action for or against anything having to do with reapportionment since the election,” Gaetz said Wednesday during a break in Senate Medicaid hearings. “I’m a partisan. I think 5 and 6 were wrong-headed and very difficult to comply with. But that was then and this is now.”

# Florida senators financing redistricting lawsuit – Central Florida Political Pulse – Orlando Sentinel

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November 22, 2010

*Sentinel* columnist **Scott Maxwell** wanted to do a little sleuthing into who was financing the lawsuit against the Amendment 6 congressional redistricting amendment filed by U.S. Reps. **Mario Diaz-Balart** and **Corrine Brown**.

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[Keep reading.](#)

# Brown, Diaz-Balart file suit to block 'Fair Districts' amendment « Florida Independent: News. Politics. Media

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<http://floridaindependent.com/13045/corrine-brown-mario-diaz-balart-file-suit-to-block-fair-districts-amendments>

November 22, 2010

Well, that didn't take long. One of the few bright spots for progressive organizations in Florida on election day — the passage of Amendments 5 and 6, which would limit the Florida legislature's freedom to gerrymander districts — is already being challenged in court.

Reps. Corrine Brown, D-Jacksonville, and Mario Diaz-Balart, R-Miami, filed a complaint yesterday seeking to block implementation of Amendment 6, calling it “unconstitutional” ([via Florida Tribune](#)). Amendment 5 deals with legislative districts, 6 with congressional ones.

There is nothing new about Brown and Diaz-Balart's opposition to 5 and 6. Both served as “[honorary national chairs](#)” of the group [Protect Your Vote](#), which sought to defeat the so-called “Fair Districts” amendments. Protect Your Vote's campaign [was largely bankrolled by the Republican Party of Florida](#), which obviously has a stake in how Florida's district lines are drawn. Brown and Diaz-Balart also sued to stop the amendments from even appearing on state ballots. [They lost that case in August](#).

Brown represents a minority-heavy district that snakes all the way from Jacksonville to eastern Gainesville and into Orlando — exactly the kind of district (which clumps together minority votes at the expense of geographic logic) that 5 and 6 will likely change come 2012.

Diaz-Balart, meanwhile, has also benefited from gerrymandering. Rather than face a challenging reelection bid in the district he represents, he [chose](#) this year to switch districts and run for the seat held by his retiring brother, Lincoln, whose district is more solidly Republican.

Read their complaint in full:

[Corrine Brown, Mario Diaz-Balart Lawsuit](#)

# Corrine Brown's political bed is cozy, no matter who's in it

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<http://jacksonville.com/opinion/blog/401820/mark-woods/2010-11-19/corrine-browns-political-bed-cozy-no-matter-who%E2%80%99s-it>

November 22, 2010

At a glance, they seem like the strangest of bedfellows.

Corrine Brown and Republican state leaders?

It's a pairing that brings to mind the "GhostBusters" scene where Bill Murray and his team try to explain the apocalyptic situation. "Earthquakes, volcanoes ... dogs and cats living together."

Brown and the GOP suing together? What's next? Gators and Bulldogs flying each other's flags?

But here's the thing about this union: It shouldn't surprise anyone.

It isn't a shock that state Republican legislators are supporting a lawsuit filed by the Democratic congresswoman from Jacksonville.

Or that some even are helping with the legal bills.

Or that they don't have a problem with the gerrymandered district that runs from here to Orlando, helping ensure that Brown cruises to re-election after re-election.

Her gain is their gain.

It's not just that by rigging a district for her, several others are rigged for Republicans. It's also that she helps the GOP every election. Want to fire up the base and sway moderates? Cue up the best of Corrine, the YouTube clips and ethics issues.

She was, of course, re-elected on Nov. 2.

But soon after the election, she filed a lawsuit along with Mario-Diaz Balart, a Republican congressman from South Florida. They want to overturn two votes. No, not the ones about whether they should stay in office. They both won easily, which a cynic might say is exactly *why* they want to overturn two amendments that would change the way we draw districts.

Brown argues the amendments — which call for districts drawn "not to favor or disfavor an incumbent or political party" — will hurt minority representation. (Among those not buying this argument: the NAACP.)

Here's what it might hurt: incumbent representation.

The way it is now, even when voters are screaming about throwing the bums out, the bums can yawn, knowing Florida has mismatches of Globetrotters vs. Generals proportions. Only more scripted and less fun.

Look at our Legislature: In eight years, there have been more than 500 races. The incumbent has lost eight times.

Changing how we draw districts is one thing Florida voters — Republicans, Democrats, independents — overwhelming agreed on. Sixty-two percent voted yes for Amendments 5 and 6. After getting 49 percent of the votes in his race, Gov.-elect Rick Scott said the people had spoken "loud and clear." If that's the case, then in the case of the constitutional amendments, they spoke in Dolby Surround Sound.

Yet the politicians who opposed this responded by sticking their fingers in their ears and going, "Lalalala, we can't

hear you.”

Not only are GOP legislators helping to fund the legal fight, the new leaders of the state House and Senate appointed vocal opponents of the amendments to head redistricting committees.

Orlando Sentinel columnist Scott Maxwell summed it up quite well: “The state lawmakers you elected are helping fund a lawsuit filed by the federal lawmakers you elected ... all in an attempt to overturn the amendment you approved.”

It just goes to show you can talk all you want about changing the change, but some things never change.

For all their differences, the strange bedfellows have something in common: They want to stay in that bed.

[Flag as offensive](#)

# GOP Florida state senator says he'll help Corrine Brown in lawsuit

<http://jacksonville.com/print/445879>

November 22, 2010

*The News Service of Florida*

TALLAHASSEE — Florida voters may have spoken, but at least one Republican state senator says he will help a Democrat, U.S. Rep. Corrine Brown of Jacksonville, in her quest to derail a constitutional amendment that would change the way political boundaries are drawn.

Sen. Mike Bennett, R-Bradenton, said Wednesday he hasn't ruled out continuing to assist Brown and U.S. Rep. Mario Diaz-Balart, R-Fla., who filed suit in federal court to scuttle Amendment 6, which passed Nov. 2 with nearly 63 percent of the vote.

In June, Citizens for Housing and Urban Growth, a political action committee led by Bennett and Sen. Greg Evers, R-Baker, gave \$5,000 each to the legal defense funds of Brown and Diaz-Balart, who contend Amendment 6 violates federal voting rights protections for minority candidates.

Another group, The Florida Leadership Alliance, headed by Sen. Don Gaetz, R-Niceville, also gave \$5,000 apiece to Brown and Diaz-Balart in June. The two used the money to help finance an unsuccessful challenge to the redistricting amendment in state court in an attempt to keep the measure from voters.

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"I think it was fair before the election for all of us who have views on both sides of this to play," he said.

Gaetz said Wednesday that his committee has not made additional contributions to the defense funds since voters approved the amendments.

"I've not contributed a dime to any kind of legal action for or against anything having to do with reapportionment since the election," Gaetz said Wednesday during a break in Senate Medicaid hearings. "I'm a partisan. I think 5 and 6 were wrong-headed and very difficult to comply with. But that was then and this is now."

Led by FairDistrictsFlorida.org, backers of Amendments 5 and 6 said the new proposals would provide some rational criteria for the way political districts are drawn. The amendments are likely to further strain relations between the Legislature and the judiciary, especially the Florida Supreme Court, which shot down three legislative proposals during the recently concluded election cycle.

# Competitive Redistricting @ LifeStyleValue

<http://lifestylevalue.com/2010/11/competitive-redistricting/>

November 22, 2010

Read the rest of this entry »

They say that a fish rots from the head and that results that people get from using a system are shaped by what went into designing the system. This came home to me last night as I watched the new documentary film, Gerrymandering at a gathering sponsored by Common Cause CT, the American Constitution Society, and the Yale Law School Democrats. The film highlighted various problems with redistricting and touched on possible ways of improving the process. One popular idea is to take redistricting out of the hands of legislators and set up independent commissions. The film documented the efforts to get that done in California. Yet some questioned whether an independent commission would be that much better. Whatever ideas come forward, perhaps the best involve making the process more transparent. This reflected some of what I was hearing at the National Conference of State Legislatures' (NCSL) National Redistricting Seminar I attended in Rhode Island in September. The major redistricting software vendors were there and they all talked about ways of making redistricting more open to the public. Staffers for the Florida State Senate and the Florida House of Representatives were both there demonstrating early versions of their redistricting tools. A good place to start with the Florida redistricting effort is at [www.floridaredistricting.org](http://www.floridaredistricting.org). For those interested in digging deeper into the Florida House of Representatives toolkit, take a look at [floridaredistricting.cloudapp.net](http://floridaredistricting.cloudapp.net). While it is great to see a movement towards a more open redistricting process, this application is based on Microsoft's Silverlight and won't run on my computer, so I can't provide further details. Going much more open source is the Public Mapping Project. This will allow any group with sufficiently technical people to set up their own public mapping server. Various advocacy groups are looking at this as a tool facilitate public involvement in the redistricting process. Competition to make public mapping systems where the public can compete to create better districts may be an important step these districts being more competitive. Another aspect of this is transparency about what the goals are in redistricting. The Voting Rights Act makes places an emphasis on creating districts that do not discriminate against minorities. Other goals may include recognizing geographic boundaries or existing political boundaries. In Connecticut, for example, county boundaries are not as important as they are in other states. Some states have a bigger emphasis on nesting districts within districts. For example, having a State Senate district that crosses Congressional district lines would be considered a very bad thing in some states. Whatever the goals, they should also be made public and widely discussed ahead of redistricting. The tools are being built for more competitive redistricting. Will people start using the tools and demand better districts this time around? We can only hope.

See more here:

[Competitive Redistricting](#)



# Gaetz to chair redistricting committee

<http://www.nwfdailynews.com/common/printer/view.php?db=nwfdn&id=34892>

November 22, 2010

2010-11-14 20:44:25

State Senate President Mike Haridopolos handed fellow lawmaker Don Gaetz a headache last week when he named him chairman of the Senate Committee on Redistricting.

Gaetz, R-Niceville, said he hadn't had the title five minutes when he began hearing from lobbyists and politicians about pending reapportionment and the creation of two new congressional seats.

This would be a challenging job anytime, but particularly at this time, he said.

Gaetz's committee will be charged with drawing maps delineating Florida state House and Senate districts as well as state congressional districts.

Census figures have dictated that Florida increase its number of seats in the U.S. House of Representatives from 25 to 27.

Gaetz and his committee will likely be paired with a House committee headed by state Rep. Will Weatherford, a Republican from Pasco County. The appointments represent both a plum assignment and hefty responsibility for the two rising leaders; Gaetz is set to be Senate president and Weatherford to be speaker of the House in 2013.

Their committees have until May 2012 to produce district maps in time for election qualifying.

The always-frenzied reapportionment process will be further complicated during Gaetz's tenure by the implementation of newly passed Constitutional Amendments 5 and 6.

The amendments, which apply to state and national reapportionment, call for lines to be drawn that neither favor nor disfavor a political incumbent or political party.

The amendments also require map designers to ensure that minority rights to representation are protected and that efforts be made to respect the integrity of existing communities.

Gaetz foresees a lot of litigation resulting from Amendments 5 and 6. He said his first order of business will be to consult incoming Attorney General Pam Bondi about the wording of the two new amendments.

These amendments contain a series of loaded terms, he said. We want to see what they are loaded with.

Gaetz said he also intends to hold hearings across the state to find out what Floridians residents are looking for when political district lines are put down.

Gaetz said among those he wants to talk to are the states supervisors of elections.

Okaloosa County Supervisor of Elections Paul Lux said the states supervisors have recently completed a first-ever census block map that attempts to point out areas that shouldn't be split by reapportionment lines.

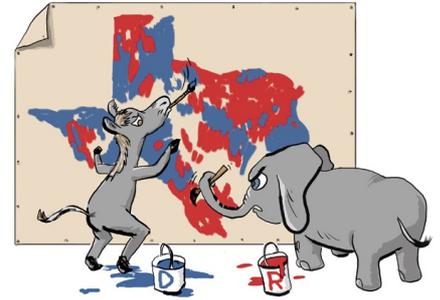
He said he hopes having Gaetz serve as chairman of the redistricting committee will allow him access to voice Supervisors of Elections concerns as they arise during reapportionment.

# ThinkProgress's Things To Be Thankful For: Redistricting Reform : South Capitol Street

<http://southcapitolstreet.com/2010/11/25/thinkprogress%E2%80%99s-things-to-be-thankful-for-redistricting-reform/>

November 30, 2010

There are few aspects of politics that appeal to politicians' worse demons more than redistricting. The process begins after the decennial census is conducted and population data is given to the states, which then use various methods to redraw their congressional districts accordingly. In many states that task is delegated to the state legislature and governor. When both are controlled by the same party, as will be the case next year in states like Georgia, Pennsylvania, and Illinois, redistricting often descends into [gerrymandering](#), the process by which one party deliberately manipulates the map in order to put the other party at a disadvantage.



But fortunately, we've seen several substantive efforts at redistricting reform this year. Ridding our political system of gerrymandering is an issue that puts voters ahead of incumbents and benefits both Republicans and Democrats. Ensuring more fairness and competitiveness in our elections has been pushed by people across the political spectrum, from [Tea Partiers](#) to [progressives](#), and from [establishment Republicans](#) to [establishment Democrats](#). Because redistricting benefits the party in power, a party's position on the issue often depends on their status. Show me a party who can draw the map to their liking, and I'll show you a party who opposes redistricting reform – at least until the next census.

Thankfully, voters in a growing number of states are pushing for changes that remove – or severely restrict – politics from redistricting. Four such states are California, Florida, Iowa, and Arizona.

**CALIFORNIA-** For the past ten years, California has been a model of the ill-effects of partisan redistricting. A decade ago, California legislators opted to draw a new map with the primary goal of protecting incumbent officeholders. It worked [beyond belief](#). In the following election, every single incumbent in California's House, Senate, and congressional delegation won reelection, taking an average 69 percent of the vote. Over the ensuing decade, none of the 120 legislative seats and just one of the state's 53 congressional seats have [switched parties](#).

This time around, California voters opted to draw the map themselves. In November, they overwhelmingly passed [Proposition 20](#), which turned over congressional redistricting to a citizen commission. Out of [31,000 applicants](#), eight Californians – [including](#) a bookstore owner, an engineer, and an insurance agent – were chosen at random last week to serve. Those eight will soon choose another six citizens to finalize the 14-member commission, which will be evenly split between five Democrats, five Republicans, and four unaffiliated voters. Together, the commission will draw a new map using "strict, nonpartisan rules." In order to become law, the new map must be supported by at least nine of the 14 members – three Democrats, three Republicans, and three unaffiliated voters.

**FLORIDA-** Like California, Florida's current map is an egregious example of gerrymandering. A perpetual swing state, Florida backed President Bush in 2004 with 52 percent of the vote and President Obama in 2008 with 51 percent of the vote. However, thanks in large part to Republican gerrymandering in 2001, the GOP's 55 percent of the state's [congressional vote](#) in 2010 translated into capturing 75 percent of the state's congressional seats.

Thankfully, Florida voters passed a redistricting reform [initiative](#) in November by a whopping 25 points, despite opposition from the state Republican Party who stood to lose a new opportunity to

gerrymander the state's districts. Now, despite a Republican governor and large majorities in the state legislature, the GOP is barred from drawing congressional districts that "favor or disfavor an incumbent or political party."

**IOWA-** Iowa is a model for fair, nonpartisan redistricting. Rather than allowing legislators to pick which voters they want to represent, Iowa gives the power of redistricting to an independent body, the [Legislative Services Agency](#). The LSA draws a map that uses specific formulas to keep districts as compact and contiguous as possible, while also preserving city and county boundaries. Where current legislators live is a factor that is prohibited from consideration. The map is then voted on in the state legislature, but if it's rejected, the LSA is then charged with producing another map that the legislature may like less.

There are a few demographic aspects unique to Iowa that make the state's redistricting restrictions less complicated and more apt to the type of reform it has implemented. For instance, as Stateline.org [notes](#), "Iowa is so overwhelmingly white that it does not have to craft districts that favor minority voters, as required under the federal Voting Rights Act. Plus, Democrats and Republicans are spread pretty evenly throughout the state." Still, Iowa's approach is laudable and other states would do well to replicate its system.

**ARIZONA-** Like Iowa, Arizona employs an [independent redistricting commission](#) comprised of two Democrats, two Republicans, and one independent. Instead of protecting incumbents and ensuring their reelection, the commission is charged with drawing as many competitive districts as possible while still creating compact, contiguous and fair borders. Unlike California, Arizona succeeded at prompting competitiveness in its congressional elections over the past decade. Nearly 40 percent of the state's districts switched parties once, while a quarter switched parties twice. Rather than disenfranchising voters, Arizona has taken positive steps to ensure that its elections are representative and fair.

[ThinkProgress](#)

# Redistricting attack was unfair and inaccurate

<http://www.destin.com/common/printer/view.php?db=nwfdn&id=35298>

January 5, 2011

2010-11-29 13:48:51

**NOTE:** This is state Sen. Don Gaetz's response to a Nov. 21 column titled "Who's funding the fight against fair districts?" To read the earlier column, [click here](#).

I admit to being unfashionable: I love good newspapers. I can't wait to read what real reporters write real reporters who dig for stories, interview sources, check facts and give readers a trustworthy understanding of issues we don't get from talking heads who read bullet points off teleprompters. Years ago, I even made my living as a print journalist.

That's why I wince when I see a newspaper strike another self-inflicted blow to its already crumbling business model and credibility. Admittedly, I wince a little extra when I'm in the line of fire while a newspaper steadies its aim to get a clear shot at its own foot.

Last Sunday's Daily News reprinted a lengthy piece by Orlando Sentinel columnist Scott Maxwell. Maxwell, like the Daily News, supported the recent passage of amendments 5 and 6 to the Florida Constitution. I opposed the amendments because they are a not-thinly-veiled attempt by liberals to win redistricting battles in the courts since they can't win elections at the voting booth.

The campaign to pass 5 and 6 was led by Fair Districts, a coalition of ACORN, government labor unions, the trial bar and high-dollar progressive donors such as New Yorker George Soros, whose business entities alone kicked in six figures. Maxwell and the Daily News would have us believe that this group of public-spirited citizens raised and spent more than \$9 million on their side of the question merely because they believe in fairness and want Florida to have some.

I'm the first to say that some of the district lines now on Florida's political map look pretty weird and ought to be changed. Whether 5 and 6 turn out to be the fair solution the Daily News heralds or cynically devised lawsuit bait, as predicted by former Secretary of State Kurt Browning, will be evident in time.

Personally, I hope Browning is wrong because I've been appointed chairman of the Senate Reapportionment Committee. It's what Freedom Communications calls the meat-grinder job of drawing congressional, Senate and House districts that are equitable, balanced and sensible.

That brings us back to Maxwell's column so prominently boosted on the Daily News Second Opinion page. Saying he relied on a Washington, D.C., reporter he calls his secret weapon, Maxwell accuses me, as chairman of the Senate panel responsible for redistricting, of helping fund a lawsuit all in an attempt to overturn the amendment you (the voters) approved.

The lawsuit to which he refers was filed after the Nov. 2 election by two members of the Florida federal congressional delegation, one a Democrat and the other a Republican. Maxwell writes and the Daily News prints that Gaetz (is) the guy whose funding the fight against fair districts following the election, which added amendments 5 and 6 to the state's constitution.

Maxwell's secret weapon jammed and backfired. My only contributions very, very modest in comparison with Mr. Soros left-wing associates were made in support of a lawsuit to fight amendments 5 and 6 before the election, not to overturn the results after the election.

That's an important distinction which a thorough reporter would have picked up and understood. There's a huge

difference between supporting a cause you believe in before the matter is decided that's called free speech and funding a lawsuit to overturn a constitutional provision you're obliged as a committee chairman to try to implement, however difficult that may be. Both are legal but the latter is something I did not do and would not do. I am neither a party nor a contributor to the lawsuit seeking to overturn the Nov. 2 election results.

My contributions, when they were made and to whom, are public record. Other reporters checked out what really happened and reported the story correctly. Other reporters accurately wrote that our Senate committee will operate with more transparency than any previous redistricting effort, with hearings across the state to listen to voters and an opportunity for every citizen to use demographic software to propose districts that make sense.

Scott Maxwell's column was poor journalism. He didn't check his facts so he got the story wrong. When I saw it in the Orlando Sentinel, I winced but shrugged. I don't live in Orlando.

But the Daily News, my hometown newspaper, printed the column. The editorial page editor chose not to invest 15 minutes in fact-checking, and simply cut, pasted and reprinted it. That's lazy journalism.

I still love good newspapers and real reporters. I just wish they were more in fashion.

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Don Gaetz represents Escambia, Santa Rosa, Okaloosa, Walton and Bay counties in the Florida Senate. He lives in Niceville.

# The Jockeying for 2012 is Underway...

<http://shark-tank.net/2010/11/29/the-run-for-2012-begins/>

November 30, 2010

by Javier Manjarres

Long before Republicans like Allen West and Marco Rubio won their respective races on November 2, other aspirants for elected office were already doing the necessary legwork behind the scenes to position themselves for runs at both State and Federal offices in 2012. With Republicans sitting comfortably on supermajorities in both chambers of the legislature and awaiting the opportunity to work with Governor-Elect Rick Scott and cabinet (who are all Republicans), Republicans are avoiding complacency and eyeing potential seat pick-ups in 2012.



These seats in question will be in play, assuming that the anti-Big government/Obama sentiment holds through the next election cycle, which we fully expect.

At the Federal level, there are potential candidates who are sitting back and waiting for next year's re-districting to potentially open up seats that would be favorable to the GOP or make previously "safe" seats for Democrats competitive. Contrary to the so-called 'Wizards of Smart' (hat tip to El Rushbo) that are already assuming where Florida's two new congressional districts will be located, chances are they won't be placed in Southeast Florida, in spite of its population growth. With the GOP controlling the bounds of redistricting, it's a safe bet they won't do anything that harms Republican-held Congressional seats like Allen West's seat in District 22, Tom Rooney's in District 16, David Rivera's in District 25, or skew state house and senate seats that overlap those Congressional Districts. As it stands right now, Congressional Districts 17, 19, 20, and 23 strongly favor Democrats, and Districts 22 and 25 were considered toss-up seats before this past election cycle.

There is the possibility that the GOP could broker a deal with the Democrats to which could solidify existing GOP Congressional seats as well as Democrat seats like District 19 and 23. Two new congressional seats will be drawn—one of the two new seats could be located in Southwest Florida, and the other could split up existing Congressional District 2, creating two GOP-friendly seats. It's also possible that no deal will be brokered and strong Democrat seats like District 17, 19, and 20 could be even made stronger by giving back portions of surrounding Districts that lean 'D', while taking 'R' leaning areas out of either Districts 17 or 19 and redrawing them into part of District 20. We'll have to wait to see what the 'powers that be' will do to redraw the 'battle' lines that were last drawn in 2000.

There is also a lot of buzz going around throughout political circles as to who will be announcing their intentions to seek higher office for the 2012 election cycle. At the Senatorial level, GOP strategists that are in 'the know' believe that Senator George LeMieux will definitely run against Senator Bill Nelson (D) in 2012. Some other well known names being seriously mentioned are Florida State Senate President Mike Haridopolos (R), Congressman Connie Mack, Governor Jeb Bush, and Congressman Vern Buchanan.

At the the Congressional level, Republican Karen Harrington is said to be strongly considering another run in District 20 against Congresswoman Debbie Wasserman-Schultz. Harrington garnered almost 40% of the vote in her loss, and she has already been contacted by the NRCC and both State and National groups about helping in her efforts. Were she decide to run again, her candidacy could prove to be a more formidable one with a strong base of support in an otherwise tough Congressional District.

Other names to watch are Businessman Brian Reilly from Hollywood, and former U.S. Senate candidate Alexander Snitker. Reilly was the front runner in the Republican primary race for Congressional District 20 before withdrawing due to personal issues. Reilly quickly received national media attention and was mingling with the 'who's, who' of the political world. Sources say that Reilly is weighing both his congressional and his state options, but is said to not be interested in



running against Harrington. Snitker was the Libertarian candidate that ran for the U.S. Senate against Marco Rubio, Congressman Kendrick Meek and Governor Charlie Crist. Snitker proved to be an energetic and resilient opponent, but failed to receive any serious financial backing. Several people, including myself, say that Snitker could be a formidable congressional candidate if he were to change his party affiliation from Libertarian to Republican. Snitker made overtures to many Republican voters, but that appeal only went so far, as his party affiliation limits his broader appeal.

# Don Gaetz Faces Tall Task at Senate Reapportionment Committee

<http://www.sunshinestatenews.com/blog/don-gaetz-will-chair-senate-reapportionment-committee>

December 30, 2010

Sen. Don Gaetz will be walking point on what will likely be the most politically charged issue facing the Legislature: reapportionment.

The Niceville Republican will chair the Senate Reapportionment Committee.

As if that weren't enough, Gaetz also will chair the Appropriations Subcommittee on Tourism, Trade, Transportation and Economic Development. He is the only senator to chair two committees.

But Senate President Mike Haridopolos figures that Gaetz, a former superintendent of Okaloosa County schools and an all-around workhorse, is up to the task(s). He chaired three panels last session, including the Select Committee on Florida's Economy.

With the passage of Amendments 5 and 6, and the attendant threat of lawsuits, the job of redrawing new legislative and congressional districts looks to be more complicated than ever.

# Upcoming redistricting could lessen rural representation in state capitols, not just Congress

<http://irjci.blogspot.com/2010/11/upcoming-redistricting-could-lessen.html>

January 5, 2011

Upcoming redistricting could accelerate a decline in rural influence in state capitols, not just Washington. "With the once-a-decade redistricting process, state legislatures will be charged with redrawing the nation's political lines to reflect where people live," [Josh Goodman](#) of **Governing** reports. "A proportionally smaller rural population will mean that fewer state legislators and congressmen represent rural areas in the next decade -- and likely for many decades to come."

"The shift will leave rural areas grappling with a future in which the fate of issues they care about are at the mercy of people who rarely catch a glimpse of a cow," Goodman writes. Texas has been predicted the early winner of the 2010 Census count as it stands to gain as many as four new seats in reapportionment of the U.S. House, but those seats will likely come from the state's metropolitan areas. At the state level, redistricting will likely mean a 35- to 40-county area of West Texas will have only one state senator in Austin.

"Rural areas aren't just losing some of their population -- they're ceasing to be rural at all," Goodman writes. Much of the population growth since 2000 across the country has come in suburbs that were rural areas 20 years ago. "The shift has major implications for a variety of policy issues, most of which have little to do with counting cows," Goodman writes. "Will education funding formulas favor urban districts or rural ones? Will states spend on mass transit or rural roads? Will rural broadband and telemedicine be priorities?"

The remaining rural legislators may try to preserve some of their power by banding together with other rural colleagues. Goodman writes that "the creation of the Maryland Legislature's Rural Caucus about a decade ago helped check the power of lawmakers from Baltimore and the big Washington, D.C., suburbs," according to a rural House member. The days of rural lawmakers controlling state legislatures are over, Goodman writes, concluding, "To get anything done going forward, rural lawmakers will have to find common interests with suburban colleagues or even urban ones." ([Read more](#))

# Setting new boundaries may affect congressional, state districts

<http://mywebtimes.com/archives/ottawa/display.php?id=418738>

November 30, 2010

Despite the political pounding state Republicans gave Democrats during this month's election, Illinois Democrats and House Speaker Michael Madigan, the state's Democratic party chairman, are expected to have the last laugh next year when the U.S. congressional and state legislative district maps are redrawn.

In the once-in-a-decade process, Democrats maintain the General Assembly majority muscle to stamp out new, all-important district boundaries without Republican input or interference.

Candidates, in 2012, will run within the new boundaries when every seat in the Illinois House and Senate and all the state's congressional districts will be on the ballot. The new maps will dictate the political geographic landscape for 10 years, according to state Rep. Frank Mautino, D-Spring Valley.

"Of course, the redistricting process will meet and follow all of the (state's) constitutional requirements, but, in Illinois, you can't take politics out of the process," admitted Mautino. He said he hopes the maps will be as compact and contiguous as possible.

However, after the 2010 Census results are released next spring, many Republicans are rightly concerned Madigan and the Democrats will force them further behind gerrymandered, lines which will weaken their future electoral efforts.

For example, in Illinois there are currently 19 congressional seats, but final census data next year is expected to reduce that number by one.

In 2001, there was also a seat lost in the state. Back then, a deal was pieced together by Republican Speaker of the House Dennis Hastert and William Lipinski, a Democratic U.S. representative from Chicago. The two political pals agreed to a bipartisan plan in which David Phelps, a downstate Democratic congressman, affectedly had his political career ended when his 19th District was merged into three others.

Those in the cross-hairs of Madigan and state Democrats include Republican congressional newcomers Adam Kinzinger in the 11th District, Randy Hultgren in the 14th District, Joe Walsh in the 8th District, and Bobby Schilling in the 17th District.

Kinzinger, on holiday break from setting up his new offices in Washington, told The Times, "Nobody knows what they'll (the Democrats) will do. We're hearing a lot of different things. I just hope they will be fair." Kinzinger said he realizes people have been moving from the state and understands the census numbers will most likely reflect that fact.

The congressman-elect promised he will fight to maintain the integrity of the 11th District for all the people who live in the North Central Illinois territory.

Some districts will most likely be drawn larger geographically as urban areas gain population and rural areas continue to decline.

And since several downstate Democrats, like state Rep. Careen Gordon of Morris, were eliminated in the November firestorm, the Springfield majority will likely be fiercely territorial about keeping themselves in office.

## Now You Know

### THE TOPIC:

With Democrats in full control in Springfield, Republicans are expected to be shut out of 2011 redistricting process.

**WHY DOES IT MATTER:**

The new state district boundaries will remain in place for 10 years.

**WHAT'S NEXT:**

The official U.S. Census statistics will be released in the spring.

**WANT TO LEARN MORE:**

For more information on the redistricting process, go to House Speaker Michael Madigan's website at <http://clients.ecampaigning.com/ilr/main.htm>.

# A Backup Plan for Haridopolos and Others

<http://rantingsfromflorida.blogspot.com/2010/11/backup-plan-for-haridopolos-and-others.html>

November 30, 2010

Speculation is already [running rampant](#) about who will be challenging Bill Nelson, with early focus on Senate president Mike Haridopolos. But I would like to note the biggest challenges we will face in federal elections will come from the redistricting of Florida House seats. Until we know what the map looks like, and how many ambitious pols will end up with Congressional seats drawn for them, the speculation is a bit premature (but certainly still fun, so don't stop.)

I [wrote about redistricting before](#), stressing why it was so critical Democrats get the governor's mansion before this legislative session. But that didn't happen, so we have to deal with the cold reality that little oversight exists for a Legislature with historic GOP majorities and a Senate president promising [the most right-wing agenda](#) ever. Early estimates show Florida most likely will get [two extra House seats](#) once the census numbers are fully tallied this year. That is the same amount we picked up in 2000. Of course, we could pick up less, or more. In 1990, we snagged four seats.

Make no mistake, those will be Republican seats. Even if Fair Districts has a positive effect on the system, something which I [sadly doubt](#), the new seats will be drawn in a way to help the GOP. The map will be challenged, I am sure. It always is. But while new laws may govern how Republicans rig the system, I assure you it will be rigged.

The one good thing we can count on is that with so few Democratic incumbents in the House next cycle, virtually every one will have it easy in 2012. Most have solid blue districts today, and if anything, the lawmakers will try to pack more Democratic strongholds into those districts just to sort them out of red zones.

The real question is, who wants the seats, and what will they do to get them.

Florida Progressives Coalition, linked above, is following Haridopolos' Senate ambitions right now, which I am sure are genuine. But ex-Speaker Johnnie Byrd and former Senate president Dan Webster once had Senate ambitions that got squished by then-HUD Secretary Mel Martinez in 2004. Back then, Byrd fled into obscurity and Webster ran back to the state Senate until a decent House opportunity presented itself this year.

Now, any legislator who is considering a trip to Washington by defeating Bill Nelson knows it could be a tough row. Even if it turns out to be a very bad Democratic cycle (though I sincerely doubt it will be like the one just closed), Florida hasn't booted a sitting Senator since 1986, and it took popular [Gov. Bob Graham](#) and out-of-step [Senator Paula Hawkins](#) to make it happen then.

If I was living around Merritt Island, I would start wondering what House district I might be living in next year. As crazy as it sounds, it would be much easier for a sitting Senate President to draw himself a House seat, as then-state Speaker Tom Feeney did in 2000, than it would be to wage a winning statewide campaign against a fleet of ambitious GOP contenders and Nelson.

For those curious, Haridopolos' district Senate office lies within Republican Bill Posey's Congressional district. The Legislature won't endanger Posey's seat, of course, but they could screw with it. Recall that in 2000, when [reshaping the 5th](#) so that Ginny Brown-Waite would take Karen Thurman's seat, a lot of Republican voters were sucked out of Cliff Stearns' district because they knew Stearns could survive.

I would also watch Speaker Dean Cannon, who has every motive to pull a Feeney this year. Beyond that, we should see who chairs the redistricting committees next year in the House and Senate, as those people virtually always end up running for Congress in custom districts. Past committee chairs include Brown-Waite, Mario Diaz-Balart, Thurman and Peter Deutsch.

Only when we know the map will we know who is still betting the farm to be part of the 100 Kings, and who will

settle for rigged House seat.

# Don Gaetz Faces Tall Task at Senate Reapportionment Committee

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<http://www.sunshinestatenews.com/print/1797306>

November 30, 2010

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As if that weren't enough, Gaetz also will chair the Appropriations Subcommittee on Tourism, Trade, Transportation and Economic Development. He is the only senator to chair two committees.

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# Galvin calls for changes to district redrawing

<http://blackstonian.blogspot.com/2010/12/galvin-calls-for-changes-to-district.html>

December 8, 2010

Galvin calls for changes to district redrawing

By Michael Levenson and Frank Phillips

Globe Staff / December 5, 2010

Secretary of State William F. Galvin is calling on legislative leaders to remove partisanship and back-room dealing from the redistricting process by appointing a special commission to help redraw Massachusetts' congressional districts for the 2012 election.

Under the state constitution, the Legislature redraws the districts every 10 years based on the latest US Census figures, a highly charged and secretive process that has led to lawsuits and shenanigans and could become explosive this year if the state loses one of its 10 US House seats.

Galvin is proposing that the Legislature invite more public input and scrutiny by handing some of the decision-making to an independent panel that includes Democrats and Republicans, residents from across the state, and specialists in demographics. Such a panel, he said, would propose a handful of maps of potential districts to help frame the public debate, although its plans would not be binding.

More and more states are adopting independent redistricting commissions in an effort to depoliticize the process.

Galvin said he recognizes the constitution gives state lawmakers the ultimate power to redraw the boundaries.

"I am not trying to weaken their authority," he said in an interview. "I am only trying to help them define their options."

But there is no indication that state lawmakers will embrace Galvin's proposal and willingly loosen their grip on such a politically powerful task. Indeed, Senate President Therese Murray poured cold water on the idea of an independent commission last week, noting that she and House Speaker Robert A. DeLeo have already launched the process by appointing chairmen to a joint redistricting committee and by hiring a specialist in political mapmaking.

Asked if she would be open to an independent commission, Murray said: "No. We've already set up our own committee last year. It would be a little late to do that."

Seth Gitell, a DeLeo spokesman, declined to comment.

Galvin pointed to the state's current congressional map, with its bizarrely contorted boundaries, as evidence that there is considerable room for improvement. Representative William D. Delahunt's district, he noted, runs from Quincy to Nantucket, and Representative Barney Frank's district stretches from Brookline to New Bedford.

This year, Galvin said, there is a 50 percent chance that the state will lose one congressional seat before the next election; the census plans to finalize its population figures this month, which will determine the allocation of congressional seats nationwide.

Galvin said he is hoping to avoid costly redistricting lawsuits and electoral confusion. Massachusetts, after all, is the state that gave birth to the term gerrymandering and has a long history of drawing districts based on politics.

In 2004, a panel of three federal judges found that the Legislature had discriminated against minority voters by

drawing state legislative districts that favored white incumbents. That case led to former House Speaker Thomas M. Finneran's conviction on federal obstruction of justice charges.

"Any fair and objective look at the past process can only conclude that the proceedings have been shrouded in secrecy and, in some instances, have had elements of political mischief," said Galvin, a Democrat and the state's chief elections officer. "This would create templates for an intelligent public discussion of what these districts would look like."

Pamela H. Wilmot, the executive director of the Massachusetts chapter of Common Cause, said Galvin's plan is a "good start."

"Redistricting shouldn't be about helping any individual, incumbent, or challenger," Wilmot said. "It should be about best representing the communities of Massachusetts."

Common Cause has pushed, without success, to change the state constitution to take redistricting decisions out of the hands of lawmakers.

Wilmot said one of the key goals in changing the redistricting process is to give the public a role in drawing the lines for congressional and legislative seats. Twenty-one states have set up commissions to redraw districts or advise lawmakers on the process, according to the National Conference of State Legislatures.

"In other states where independent commissions make the decisions, there is a better track record for fair districts, without bald political interference," Wilmot said.

A more radical version of Galvin's plan was floated this summer by state Treasurer Timothy P. Cahill, who was running for governor as an independent. Under Cahill's plan, the state Supreme Judicial Court, rather than the Democratic leaders of the House and Senate, would appoint a committee to redraw legislative districts.

"It's time to put the partisan politics aside and restore the people's choice to this process," Cahill said at the time, when he was hoping to capitalize on voter frustration with the two-party system.

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# Crooked lines: Redistricting reformers charge, Albany shrugs

<http://www.capitalnewyork.com/article/culture/2010/12/870203/crooked-lines-redistricting-reformers-charge-albany-shrugs/>

December 6, 2010

**It's not often that you hear a sponsor of a widely supported bill say that it has no chance of passage. But that's just what Democratic Assemblyman David Koon, who was voted out of office last month, told Capital about a proposal to reform the nakedly partisan process by which voting-district lines are drawn in New York.**

"I'd love to see independent redistricting, but I don't see it happening, at least not this year," he said. "If you think leaders in the Senate and the Assembly are going to pass this, you need to think again. They want to have that power over their members."

Koon's statement isn't just arresting for its candor. It's noteworthy because many of the would-be reformers on this geeky but important issue—which is arguably the key to compelling any other change in the behavior of the state's notoriously dysfunctional legislature—genuinely believe that they have achieved a critical level of public momentum.

Advocates for independent redistricting, including Ed Koch's nonpartisan government-reform coalition New York Uprising and blue-chip good-government group Citizens Union, insist they have a good chance of passing a reform bill through both houses of the legislature and having the governor sign it into law. (Koch [claims](#) that fifty-four successful State Senate candidates, along with eighty-four of next year's Assembly members—clear majorities in both houses—signed a pledge during the last election to support independent redistricting.) And Governor-elect Cuomo has promised to veto any redistricting plan that does not include an independent, nonpartisan commission.

The problem, as Koon's defeat now allows him to point out, is that next year's redistricting will still be controlled by the leaders of the majority party in each chamber, who will have a great deal at stake in the outcome of the process, and who will not surrender their prerogative if it's at all possible avoid doing so.

The current reform bill, sponsored last session in the Senate by Democrat Dave Valesky and in the Assembly by Democrat Mike Gianaris, seeks to take redistricting—a decennial process of redrawing political boundaries based on new U.S. Census data—out of the hands of a legislative task force dominated by appointees from the majority party of each house, and give it over to an entity capable of producing a more rational, less gerrymandered outcome. In a process almost as complex as the election of [the Doge of Venice](#), the leaders of the majority and minority parties in both houses will each select two people who together will select a separate pool of people from which the eventual members of the commission will be derived. Commission members would have to be independent: they cannot have been employed by the government or as a lobbyist for the last two years, and they cannot be officials in any political party. The commission cannot have a majority of members enrolled in any single party, and must include members who are registered as neither Democrats nor Republicans. It would hold public hearings, release a draft of the redistricting plan, and then hold more public hearings.

"Redistricting is more incumbents versus challengers, insiders versus outsiders," said Gianaris, the lead sponsor in the Assembly. "The hurdles to this process will come from those who will benefit most from gerrymandering. Here, that's the Senate Republicans. Secondary is the majority in the Assembly."

Gianaris, who is 40, is a political up-and-comer, a prodigious fund-raiser who is replacing George Onorato as the state senator for Western Queens. He's also not a naive outsider: Before he became an assemblyman, he worked as a lawyer and operative for former governor Mario Cuomo, former congressman and Queens Democratic boss Tom Manton, and the Assembly majority.

**HE UNDERSTANDS, THEN, THAT IN ORDER TO HAVE** any prayer of passage, the bill needs the support of Assembly speaker Sheldon Silver, by the far the most powerful legislator in the state, who has not yet signed on to the cause of independent redistricting. By Gianaris' reckoning, "The barometer [for the speaker's support] is if we could actually pass it without Republicans."

That would mean seventy-six supporters from inside the Democratic conference. Right now, the bill has "in the neighborhood of fifty" Democratic co-sponsors. Still, Gianaris is confident that he'll be able to bring enough Democratic holdouts on board, by using, if he has to, Andrew Cuomo's veto threat.

"At some point something is going to have to be passed, and that's going to be the pressure point," said Gianaris. Meanwhile, he feels that "public pressure needs to continue to be applied to members."

The trick, as it has always been, is to figure out a way to convey to the voting public that this is an issue they ought to care about.

"Redistricting is the critical issue around real reform," says Citizens Union executive director Dick Dadey. "People understand that if we are really going to make government operable again, we need districts where the legislators are answerable to their constituents."

Legislators, if not "people," understand that equation perfectly well: The power to draw lines means job security. Silver would therefore be providing a doubly important service for his roughly 100 constituents in the 150-member Assembly by keeping the bill from ever coming to the floor, so they won't ever have to vote against it.

Take straight-up progressive Democrat Debra Glick, who represents the West Village, SoHo, and TriBeCa, and is an old ally of Dadey's. In theory, she should be for reform, or at least somewhat bothered by the prospect of having to explain to her liberal constituents why she's not. But she neither signed New York Uprising's pledge nor sponsored the redistricting commission bill in the Assembly. Her office refused two requests for comment on her position.

For now, Silver—[whose relationship with popular demand is famously casual](#)—has refused to declare an opinion on the bill. Sisa Moyo, a spokeswoman for the Assembly speaker, said only "The Assembly's willing to take a look at different issues [relating to redistricting], but I'm not going to speculate on a bill that hasn't been introduced."

She also declined to discuss the speaker's opinion on the bill that was introduced in the last session.

Another problem for the bill's chances in the Assembly is that since Gianaris is going to the State Senate, he can no longer lead the fight for it in the Assembly. It's not clear who will pick up his mantle and be the new lead sponsor. Gianaris declined to give a name, and Dadey said only, "We've had several conversations with [assembly members] who we're confident will take up this bill."

Moyo disputed the suggestion that the speaker—who controls the members' assignments, allocations for discretionary spending, office space and, to a large extent, district boundaries—has any sway in selecting who will be the lead sponsor of a bill.

"If a member wants to sponsor a bill, that's up to them," she said.

Furthermore, she insisted that moving the bill through the committees would be the decision of the individual committee chairs.

By contrast, Koon, the bill's gloomy co-sponsor from the Rochester area, said that the power to pass redistricting is "100 percent in the control of the Speaker."

This lame-duck session will be Koon's last: an independent Democrat who has been at odds with leadership since he supported a coup against Silver nearly a decade ago, he was beaten by Republican Mark Johns last month. Of

the speaker's power, Koon said that he could write a bill, “work hard, and get my bill all the way to the Rules Committee. The Speaker’s chair of the Rules Committee. If he doesn’t like it, it will never see the light of day.”

**THE RECENT HISTORY OF REDISTRICTING IN ALBANY IS ABOUT** as sordid as you'd expect. For decades, New York had a Democratic Assembly and a Republican Senate (as well as a diminishing congressional delegation, as the state lost population relative to the rest of the country). Although the drawing of lines must be agreed upon by both houses, the majority parties of each house effectively give each other complete discretion over the shape of the districts their own members (and the poor opposition candidates) have to run in.

As Lewis Hoppe, the co-executive director of the legislative task force that currently controls redistricting, and an Assembly employee, explained, “I don’t see the Senate [plans] until we’re done.”

What it amounts to is a gentleman's agreement requiring the Assembly Democrats to betray the interests of their brethren in the minority of the State Senate, and the Senate Republicans to do the same to their powerless counterparts in the Assembly.

The task force also redraws Congressional district boundaries, which this time around will entail eliminating either one or (probably) two House seats, depending on final Census figures. Traditionally, the two parties would often agree to handle the mandated shrinking of the state’s House delegation by drawing one representative from each party into an evenly split “fair fight” district. Other times the parties would be unable to agree on Congressional maps, in which case a judge would force a similar compromise.

The last round of redistricting, in 2001, was ugly. Assembly Democrats expertly drew into other districts individual blocks or even residences in which potential primary challengers lived. The Senate Republicans, using a plan drawn by Dean Skelos, who has since become their leader, did the same. They moved state senator (and now Attorney General-elect) Eric Schneiderman, at the time their most persistent critic, into an overwhelmingly Latino district in the hopes that he would lose in a primary election. (He didn’t.)

Reform of this process would not affect both parties equally. The result of the current redistricting routine, for the Democrats, is a gaudy and unassailable Assembly majority in a state that would have given them a majority whatever the configuration of the district map. The result for the Republicans—who are a couple of recount victories away from winning back their Senate majority, just in time for redistricting—has been the ability to defy physics. Despite the state as a whole leaning strongly Democratic, next year’s Senate will probably have only three Democrats from outside New York City and its suburbs. The city of Rochester is overwhelmingly Democratic, and has a population equivalent to roughly 80 percent of a senate district. It’s represented by two Republican senators. It’s likely that Long Island will be represented next year by one Republican and four Democrats in Congress, while at the same time sending nine Republicans and zero Democrats to the State Senate.

The details of the 2001 New York Senate map are somewhat mind-boggling. District-population variance—the discrepancy between the numbers of people living in one district and another—was stretched to 10 percent, the maximum allowed under the prevailing interpretation of the U.S. Constitution. Virtually every Republican senator elected in 2002 represented 10 percent fewer people than virtually every Democrat. As demographics have shifted throughout the decade, with downstate gaining population and upstate thinning out, this disparity has increased. The Republicans also deployed a new interpretation of an 1894 law to increase the Senate from 61 members to 62, which laid the groundwork for last year’s 31-31 deadlock, a situation that may yet, depending on the results of three outstanding recounts, be reprised next year. Upstate Republican districts further padded their population numbers by counting the inmates of their prisons, the vast majority of whom come from downstate. (\*As noted below by nyc4sanity, the Democrat-controlled legislature [passed legislation](#) this year that would count the prisoners at their pre-prison addresses.)

**IT SHOULD COME AS NO SURPRISE THAT THE CURRENT** Albany consensus—notwithstanding the

optimism of the proponents of reform—is that the chance of all of the rottenness suddenly coming to an end is slim.

“They’ve been talking about it for years, and nothing’s ever made it out of the legislature.” said Hoppe, the current Assembly redistricting guru.

Even if this bill did make it to the floor, and passed, it could conceivably be the target of a legal challenge. The state constitution assigns the legislature the task of drawing its own lines, so even though the legislature would still ultimately have to approve the lines created by the commission, the technical argument might be that the legislature can't abrogate that duty just by statute.

Then there's the question of whether an independent commission would fix the process in any case.

Koon, the soon-to-be ex-member, says he believes that the drawing of district lines by anybody, including an independent commission, would inevitably be biased. Ideally, he said, redistricting “should be taken out of human hands and done with software.”

# St. Louis Democrats hope to preserve black congressional district

<http://www.columbiainmissourian.com/stories/2010/12/06/republicans-take-charge-process-if-missouri-loses-house-seat/> December 7, 2010

Monday, December 6, 2010 | 6:04 p.m. CST

JEFFERSON CITY — Faced with the prospect of losing a U.S. House seat, St. Louis Democrats say one of their top priorities will be ensuring that the state's 1st Congressional District retains its black plurality when the Republican-dominated legislature redraws districts next session.

The 1st District, represented by William Lacy Clay Jr., is the only congressional district in Missouri in which blacks comprise a plurality of voters — just under 50 percent of the total population — and state legislators from that district argue it ought to stay that way.

"It would be devastating to lose this congressional district," said Rep. Steve Webb, D-St. Louis. Webb, the head of the Legislative Black Caucus, said ensuring a continued black plurality in the first district was "extremely important."

Rep. Jamillah Nasheed, D-St. Louis, echoed that assessment.

"When it comes to representing the interests of African-Americans — especially in the city of St. Louis — then it's (the continued existence of the 1st District) very serious, and I think that if we have to fight for it, we'll fight for it to the end," Nasheed said, while predicting it wouldn't come to that.

Preserving Missouri's two black congressional districts was the dominant issue the last time Missouri's legislature had to eliminate a congressional district, 30 years ago.

At the time, Democrats held a majority in the legislature but fought among themselves over protecting two St. Louis-area Democratic congressmen — one black and one white. The dispute involved the St. Louis city district held by Clay's father, William Clay, and St. Louis County's Bob Young.

In the end, the legislature was unable to pass a redistricting plan, and the task fell to a panel of federal judges.

After enjoying record success in last month's midterm election, Missouri Republicans find themselves in a position to lead the redistricting process next year. That could be bad news for Missouri's three Democratic congressmen, one of whom could be out of a job if Missouri, as expected, loses a House seat.

In the once-a-decade process, state legislatures redraw congressional districts based on population shifts revealed in the census.

Webb said he was hopeful that Missouri might not lose a House seat but, if push came to shove, he's got his congressman's back.

"I don't want to see any of the Democratic districts gone, but if I had to choose a district to stay, I'm going to choose Congressman Clay's," Webb said.

The Republican named to become chairman of the House committee charged with redistricting vowed to oversee a bipartisan process.

"We're going to do it in a way that is professional and transparent, and we're going to build a map that fairly and adequately represents all Missourians," said Rep. John Diehl, R-St. Louis County.

Nasheed said she believed the chairman.

"I believe Diehl is a man of his word, and so I have no qualms about how he's going to handle the redistricting process," she said. "I truly believe he's going to be coming to the table looking for cooperation."

The feeling was more reserved on the other side of the state.

"I hope the process certainly is a fair one. We'll have to see," said Rep. Shalonn Curls, D-Kansas City, who said she will serve on the redistricting committee.

Curls said she was heartened by a cordial introductory meeting of the committee earlier this fall.

That meeting was held before the Republicans' big election night in November, though, and Curls acknowledged the new political reality in Jefferson City.

"I think this is a new beginning for any of us," Curls said. "It'll be a new direction for us as Democrats to see the way this process takes place, especially in light of the disparity in numbers" between Democrats and Republicans in the new legislature.

But even if Missouri Republicans are able to effectively translate their large majorities into a favorable redistricting plan, that's no guarantee of political domination.

"Will this give Republicans a leg up in the next election cycle? Yes, but it's been overstated and can easily be exaggerated," explained Tim Storey, a redistricting expert at the National Conference of State Legislatures.

He noted that other factors, including the candidates in each district and the mood of the electorate, tend to play a greater role in determining election results.

"You can't gerrymander the other party into oblivion," Storey said.

And the effect of redistricting tends to decrease over time. A district that is drawn to be reliably Democratic or Republican could, over the course of the ensuing decade, become more balanced because of demographic and ideological changes among the district's voters.

"People move and political opinions change, so as the decade goes on, the effects of redistricting are diminished," Storey said.

After Rep. Ike Skelton's loss to Vicky Hartzler in the 4th Congressional District, Missouri's nine-member House delegation consists of just three Democrats. Those congressmen — Russ Carnahan in the St. Louis suburbs, William Lacy Clay Jr. in St. Louis itself and Emanuel Cleaver in Kansas City — are most likely to see their districts eliminated in any redistricting.

Diehl acknowledged the delicacy of the situation.

"Whenever something like this happens, there are a lot of people who are nervous about it," Diehl said. "I'm sure during the process, there are going to be disagreements."

Any redistricting bill passed by the legislature can be vetoed by Democratic Gov. Jay Nixon. But Republicans will have the required two-thirds majority in the Senate to override a gubernatorial veto and are just three votes short of the two-thirds majority in the House.

If Nixon does veto any Republican plan, Diehl expressed confidence his party has the strength to override it.

"That prognosis looks better now than it did 60 days ago," Diehl said, in reference to the Republicans' good showing in last month's election.

The Democrats aren't ready to be steamrolled, though. When asked whether Democrats have been forming a plan for dealing with Republicans, Curls said not to count the Democrats out.

"That clearly has been something that has been discussed within our caucus," Curls said. "We want to remain as relevant as we can, in spite of our numbers."

# Our view: Redistricting levels playing field in Las Cruces

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[http://www.lcsun-news.com/las\\_cruces-opinion/ci\\_16770516](http://www.lcsun-news.com/las_cruces-opinion/ci_16770516)

December 6, 2010

Las Cruces— At the heart of fair governance is representation of the people's will by those they elect to speak and vote on their behalf.

That's why its not only necessary, but is also good, that Las Cruces is undertaking the task of drawing new district boundaries. It's also a requirement every 10 years, and it follows national Census taking.

It's so that each of the six city councilors represent about the same number of citizens.

If one district is overly large compared to the others, and the people of that district have a special want or need in the municipality, that large group has only one vote on council. That's not well-rounded representation.

Presently, two Las Cruces districts are overly large. They are the fast-growing East Mesa and Legends West near Field of Dreams. Voters in those two districts are about twice as many as in each of the four other districts - districts that are by and large landlocked.

We see few hurdles, if any, when council redraws boundaries. And transparency in this process can be insured by public watchdogs. History in this country shows some electoral boundaries were drawn by an in-power party for political gain. It's known as gerrymandering - hindering a targeted group of constituents. It can be based on such things as race, linguists, religion and political preference.

When the new district map is agreed upon, no council members are expected to be moved outside their district. Some will just have fewer to

represent. That also means some Las Cruces will be in a different district when the next general election takes place in November 2011.

We encourage citizens with any wants, concerns or questions to attend scheduled public hearings. Council will be working on the new boundaries starting next month, and finishing in late June.

Las Cruces is a growing city. Its needs and wants change as that growth takes place. Let the citizens, through their elected officials, oversee the ways and means of handling that growth.

Redistricting is a good thing for Las Cruces.

# Illinois Senate Passes State Voting Rights Act

<http://politic365.com/2010/12/06/illinois-senate-passes-state-voting-rights-act/>

December 7, 2010

As redistricting battles show signs of heating up nationwide next year, the Illinois state legislature is taking steps to include minority protection provisions in legislative district redrawing. Passed 53 to 4 in the Illinois State Senate, a state Voting Rights Act of 2011 would solicit opinions from Illinois voters before redrawing takes place in their districts, while additional provisions add protections for minority voters in the state.

As introduced, the bill reads:

Provides that Legislative Districts and Representative Districts shall be drawn to create crossover districts, coalition districts, or influence districts. Defines “crossover district”, “coalition district”, and “influence district”.

Provides that nothing in the Act shall be construed, applied, or implemented in a way that imposes any requirement or obligation that conflicts with the United States Constitution, any federal law regarding redistricting Legislative Districts or Representative Districts, or the Illinois Constitution.

Provides that, if there is a violation of the Act, the redistricting plan shall be redrawn to the least extent necessary to remedy the violation.

A number of concerns arose this year concerning the legislative district map in Illinois as the 2010 Census came to a close and lawmakers hoped to avoid problems during the 2000 redistricting process. Back then, Chicago’s Chinatown district found itself carved into separate districts with the neighborhood’s predominantly Asian constituency losing political influence and voice. And in the small city of Beardstown, Latino advocates are concerned that lawmakers could severely split up that district and diminish the potential for that jurisdiction’s large Latino population to grow politically.

But, there could be a real concern among African American legislators hoping to maintain their political presence in the state capitol of Springfield. Predominantly Democrats, there are currently 28 Black Senate and House Members in the Illinois state legislature. Given the current political climate, African American politicians aren’t taking any chances, nervous that the GOP wave which wrested control of 19 state legislatures from Democrats in November could reach Illinois. Four of the five lead sponsors of the bill are Members of the Illinois Black Legislative Caucus.

“We got some meaningful input, not only from experts from all over the country but ... everyday individuals,” Sen. Kwame Raoul (D-Chicago), a lead sponsor of the bill, told the State Journal Register during an interview. “We need to get the public’s confidence back.”

The bill, which would also create the Redistricting Transparency and Public Participation Act, now goes to the House for approval by Jan. 11th.

The four “no” votes came from Republicans who felt the bill did not go far enough in providing real reform of the process that is also called “gerrymandering” by critics. GOP protests reflect a growing debate about the redistricting process and whether it is fair. Republicans appear frustrated by their current minority status in the General Assembly, focusing on the redistricting issue as a way to paint Democrats as manipulating the process.

“It fell far short of its potential,” argues the lead GOP redistricting legislator Sen. Dale Righter (R-Mattoon) in the Register. Republicans are calling for more hearings during the preliminary map-drawing process.

**Author: Charles Ellison**



**Charles D. Ellison** is host of *The New School* on Sirius/XM satellite radio, an edge-filled weekly take on the world of politics. He is author of the critically-acclaimed urban political thriller [TANTRUM](#) while a frequent contributor to Politic365.com, The Huffington Post and Politico. Ellison is also Director of the Center for New Politics and Policy, a former Senior Fellow at the University of Denver a former Visiting Fellow at the George Washington University Institute for Politics, Democracy and the Internet. More information can be found at <http://www.cdellison.com>

**Related Articles:**

# California redistricting panel takes shape with Esparto man on panel - Sacramento Politics - California Politics

<http://www.sacbee.com/2010/12/06/3235515/california-redistricting-panel.html>

December 8, 2010

[Stanley Forbes](#) will not run for office, give speeches, court voters or solicit donations, but his decisions could help shape [California politics](#) throughout the coming decade.

The 63-year-old Esparto resident is a member of the state's first citizens redistricting commission, whose initial eight members met for the first time last week to begin selecting six colleagues from a list of finalists.

The 14-member panel – rather than lawmakers – will draw congressional, legislative and Board of Equalization districts, a once-a-decade task that can make or break political careers and tilt districts left or right.

"If we can create districts that the public believes are fair, then I think we've done our job," said [Forbes](#), co-owner of [Sacramento's](#) Avid Reader bookstore, operator of a [family farm](#) and former member of Davis' City Council and school board.

California's new commission is the first of its kind, patterned somewhat after [Arizona's](#) independent panel, and its work will be watched closely nationwide as Democrats and Republicans brace for a brawl over control of [Congress](#) in 2012.

"I think one of the real virtues of this process is to minimize the political component," [Forbes](#) said of determining district boundaries in public meetings rather than having legislative leaders negotiate privately, as was done in decades past.

Redistricting is not expected to vastly expand the number of legislative or congressional seats that change party hands, but it could make some races more competitive, encourage more moderate candidates to run and jeopardize some incumbents protected by the 2001 gerrymander, analysts say.

Voters demanded the citizens commission by approving [Proposition 11](#) in 2008, seven years after legislative leaders struck a deal to draw lines that protected incumbents of both parties.

Forbes' goal is to restore public faith in the process.

"There is a public perception that redistricting in the past has been out of the control of the public – and that the public may not have been the primary consideration in drawing lines," he said.

"Overall, (the commission) can have an effect on how well democracy works in this state," added [Jaime Regalado](#) of the [Pat Brown Institute](#) of Public Affairs at [California State University, Los Angeles](#).

The citizens panel is required to consist of five Democrats, five Republicans and four independent or minor-party voters, with membership reflecting the state's racial, ethnic, geographic and gender diversity.

[Forbes](#) will be paid \$300 per day while doing public business. New maps must be approved by Aug. 15, with support from at least three Democratic, three Republican and three other commissioners.

Five of the panel's eight inaugural members are women. Four commissioners are Asian American, two are white, one is African American and another is Latino.

From a field of nearly 30,000 applicants, finalists were culled by a three-person panel of state auditors based partly on evaluation of analytical skills and impartiality. The eight inaugural members later were selected by random drawing.

"I wouldn't have wanted to bet my life on it," [Forbes](#) said this month of beating the odds in a lottery-style drawing to join the panel.

The screening process resulted in the commission being filled thus far with members who tend to be well-educated with high-paying jobs: Five of the eight commissioners have annual incomes above \$125,000.

Besides Forbes – who has a law degree – the commission consists of two attorneys, one longtime councilman, a former senior research analyst for UCLA, a program director for a nonprofit group targeting urban problems, the chief executive of a high-technology consulting firm and the former director of the 1980 United States census.

Forbes' commission application said the Legislature suffers from "political paralysis" that hinders solving budget, water, education, social service and other problems.

"We must refocus on the goal of solving the people's problems rather than exercising political one-upmanship," he wrote.

"California can have a bright, robust future, but not with (legislators) creating legislative districts."

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*Call Jim Sanders, Bee Capitol Bureau, (916) 326-5538.*

# Print Page - More than one majority black seat in Florida post-redistricting

<http://uselectionatlas.org/FORUM/index.php?action=printpage;topic=128893.0>

December 6, 2010

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Title: **More than one majority black seat in Florida post-redistricting**

Post by: **What I wouldn't give for a million smaller problems** on **December 03, 2010, 11:43:41 pm**

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Does anyone else think this is not going to happen? One black majority seat between central Broward and northern Miami-Dade is easy, but preserving Alcee Hastings' seat, already a monstrosity of the highest order under those new rules doesn't look too likely. And Corrine Brown is probably also done though her seat isn't majority black exactly. Has anyone managed to draw a map with two black majority seats in south Florida?

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Title: **Re: More than one majority black seat in Florida post-redistricting**

Post by: **What I wouldn't give for a million smaller problems** on **December 03, 2010, 11:57:33 pm**

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Ha. I did it.

(<http://img199.imageshack.us/img199/8013/majblackseats.png>)

20 is 52% black. 21 is just over 50% black.

21 obviously is hardly compact though it is significantly less ugly than the current south Florida map (which says A LOT) nor does it really cover "communities of interest" but I suspect the rules will be bent in this case.

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Title: **Re: More than one majority black seat in Florida post-redistricting**

Post by: **fierce bad gobsh!te** on **December 04, 2010, 08:27:58 am**

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nor does it really cover "communities of interest"

Suburban Blacks?

Why are you including the rural precincts (besides the obvious one) - is that place inhabited by Blacks or what?

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Title: **Re: More than one majority black seat in Florida post-redistricting**

Post by: **What I wouldn't give for a million smaller problems** on **December 04, 2010, 10:59:21 am**

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nor does it really cover "communities of interest"

Suburban Blacks?

Why are you including the rural precincts (besides the obvious one) - is that place inhabited by Blacks or what?

Yes actually. On the shore of Lake Okeechobee is Belle Glade, which is basically Florida's Detroit (except much smaller, and the economy was on sugarcane growing instead of auto manufacturing.) The area is currently in Hastings' seat.

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Title: **Re: More than one majority black seat in Florida post-redistricting**

Post by: **fierce bad gobsh!te** on **December 04, 2010, 11:04:30 am**

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The area is currently in Hastings' seat.

I was aware of that much, actually. ^-^

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Title: **Re: More than one majority black seat in Florida post-redistricting**

Post by: **fierce bad gobsh!te** on **December 04, 2010, 11:07:56 am**

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The racial makeup of the city was 30.29% White (13.8% were Non-Hispanic White,) 50.68% African American, 0.17% Native American, 0.19% Asian, 0.04% Pacific Islander, 9.70% from other races, and 8.93% from two or more races. Hispanic or Latino of any race were 27.57% of the population.

(...)

As of 2000, speakers of English as a first language accounted for 61.03% of all residents, while Spanish as a mother tongue consisted of 26.87%, Haitian Creole comprised 11.00%, and French made up 1.07% of the population.

That's a lot of non-Hispanic mixed/others - Haitian mulattoes crossing both black and white?

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Title: **Re: More than one majority black seat in Florida post-redistricting**

Post by: **Verily** on **December 04, 2010, 12:22:44 pm**

---

It's actually really easy to preserve Alcee Hastings' seat. Just drop all of the extensions inland and run along the coast only.

It also helps if you run Frederica Wilson's seat down I-95 to Homestead to take in the black areas along I-95 that otherwise get put in one of the Cuban seats.

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Title: **Re: More than one majority black seat in Florida post-redistricting**

Post by: **Verily** on **December 04, 2010, 12:39:49 pm**

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Here's my version. Note that there's a big black area in Broward County just over the border from Frederica Wilson's district that I didn't include in her seat because I wanted to keep her seat only in Miami-Dade County. But you probably could drop the I-95 to Homestead tail and cross into Broward instead. Also, I dropped Fort Pierce and Belle Glade from Hastings' seat, so it's a lot neater.

Wilson's seat is 52% black; Hastings' seats is 54% black.

This is assuming Florida gains a single seat. On the off chance that it gains two, it's even easier.

(<http://img809.imageshack.us/img809/266/screenshot20101204at124.png>)

---

Title: **Re: More than one majority black seat in Florida post-redistricting**

Post by: **The Hokie Bird** on **December 04, 2010, 12:53:23 pm**

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nor does it really cover "communities of interest"

Suburban Blacks?

Why are you including the rural precincts (besides the obvious one) - is that place inhabited by Blacks or what?

Yes actually. On the shore of Lake Okeechobee is Belle Glade, which is basically Florida's Detroit (except much smaller, and the economy was on sugarcane growing instead of auto manufacturing.) The area is currently in Hastings' seat.

Highest AIDs rate in the state, btw.

---

Title: **Re: More than one majority black seat in Florida post-redistricting**

Post by: **Verily** on **December 04, 2010, 01:02:48 pm**

---

Black majority seat in North Florida, too, for what it's worth (only just barely though, might be able to get it to 51% with finessing).

(<http://img132.imageshack.us/img132/2977/screenshot20101204at106.png>)

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Title: **Re: More than one majority black seat in Florida post-redistricting**

Post by: **The Hokie Bird** on **December 04, 2010, 01:05:16 pm**

---

Black majority seat in North Florida, too, for what it's worth (only just barely though, might be able to get it to 51% with finessing).

(<http://img132.imageshack.us/img132/2977/screenshot20101204at106.png>)

That's probably the most horrific thing I've ever seen. Not your work, that district. :) Plus, that's not a "fair" district.

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Title: **Re: More than one majority black seat in Florida post-redistricting**

Post by: **Estes Kefauver** on **December 04, 2010, 08:09:50 pm**

---

The VRA seats will be made as compact as possible, but still have to bend the rules a bit to pass pre-clearance. This is my solution for FL-3.

(<http://i17.photobucket.com/albums/b99/DrPhillips48/florida.jpg>)

It reaches from Jacksonville to Tallahassee. It's 47% White, 44% Black, 5% Hispanic, so it might be acceptable for the VRA, as NC-12's demographics are.

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Title: **Re: More than one majority black seat in Florida post-redistricting**

Post by: **fierce bad gobsh!te** on **December 05, 2010, 02:42:07 pm**

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The VRA seats will be made as compact as possible, but still have to bend the rules a bit to pass pre-clearance. This is my solution for FL-3.

(<http://i17.photobucket.com/albums/b99/DrPhillips48/florida.jpg>)

It reaches from Jacksonville to Tallahassee. It's 47% White, 44% Black, 5% Hispanic, so it might be acceptable for the VRA, as NC-12's demographics are.

That's just fine - though it wouldn't be if all the Whites were Republicans or if all the Whites were Democrats too - as either way the winner of the race would not be the candidate of choice of the Black community.

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Title: **Re: More than one majority black seat in Florida post-redistricting**

Post by: **Verily** on **December 05, 2010, 04:27:45 pm**

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The VRA seats will be made as compact as possible, but still have to bend the rules a bit to pass pre-clearance. This is my solution for FL-3.

(<http://i17.photobucket.com/albums/b99/DrPhillips48/florida.jpg>)

It reaches from Jacksonville to Tallahassee. It's 47% White, 44% Black, 5% Hispanic, so it might be acceptable for the VRA, as NC-12's demographics are.

That's just fine - though it wouldn't be if all the Whites were Republicans or if all the Whites were Democrats too - as either way the winner of the race would not be the candidate of choice of the Black community.

Well, given where the seat is, all the whites are Republicans (in vote if not in name), except for a few in Tallahassee. It would look like Sanford Bishop's seat, except the Republicans would have won it this year.

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Title: **Re: More than one majority black seat in Florida post-redistricting**

Post by: **muon2** on **December 05, 2010, 09:56:44 pm**

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The VRA seats will be made as compact as possible, but still have to bend the rules a bit to pass pre-clearance. This is my solution for FL-3.

(<http://i17.photobucket.com/albums/b99/DrPhillips48/florida.jpg>)

It reaches from Jacksonville to Tallahassee. It's 47% White, 44% Black, 5% Hispanic, so it might be acceptable for the VRA, as NC-12's demographics are.

That's just fine - though it wouldn't be if all the Whites were Republicans or if all the Whites were Democrats too - as either way the winner of the race would not be the candidate of choice of the Black community.

But the *Bartlett* decision relieves the state of the need to create a district with less than 50% VAP. Specifically it forbids the DOJ from mandating such a district. My guess is that FL could create that district, but there's no way it can be forced to happen in preclearance.

---

Title: **Re: More than one majority black seat in Florida post-redistricting**

Post by: **fierce bad gobsh!te** on **December 06, 2010, 05:16:51 am**

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My guess is that FL could create that district, but there's no way it can be forced to happen in preclearance.

Eh, I've no clue about the legal situation regarding the second part of that sentence, and was talking purely about the scenario in the first part. :)

# Rucho to lead N.C. Senate's redistricting committee

<http://www.charlotteobserver.com/2010/12/07/1892881/rucho-to-lead-nc-senates-redistricting.html>

December 7, 2010

Posted: Tuesday, Dec. 07, 2010

N.C. Sen. Bob Rucho, a Matthews Republican named to lead the Senate's legislative and congressional redistricting efforts, said Monday he hopes to fast-track the creation of "fair and legal districts."

And U.S. Rep. Patrick McHenry of Cherryville, the ranking Republican on a census oversight committee, said he hopes the state can start the process as early as February.

Lawmakers will use the 2010 Census as the basis for the remapping. The Census Bureau guarantees only that all states will have the data by April 1.

"Especially considering our history of lawsuits in North Carolina that in many cases have become legendary, we're very hopeful that we'll be in the early states for data releases," McHenry said Monday.

North Carolina redistrictings have had a history of legal hurdles.

In the 1990s, the 12th Congressional District was the most litigated in the country, according to the "Almanac of American Politics." The district represented by Democratic Rep. Mel Watt was part of four cases that went to the U.S. Supreme Court.

In 2002, a state Superior Court invalidated legislative districts drawn the year before. That case ended up in the state Supreme Court. Legal challenges delayed the start of the 2004 elections.

To complicate matters, under provisions of the Voting Rights Act, any redistricting has to be approved, or pre-cleared, by the U.S. Justice Department.

"We're working hard to get the numbers early for two reasons," Rucho said. "One, we're a voting rights state and need approval of Justice Department. Two, so we can make the February 2012 filing period."

Candidates are scheduled to kick off the 2012 elections by filing for office in February that year.

Incoming Senate Leader Phil Berger of Rockingham County named Rucho to the chairmanship, calling him "a good listener and evenhanded." The House has yet to name a counterpart.

Republicans have long accused Democrats of drawing districts favorable to their party. Former GOP Rep. Ed McMahan of Charlotte, who co-chaired a previous redistricting committee, expects that to change.

"I certainly think Republicans will try to take advantage of this to at least try to make the maps more fair because they have been gerrymandered by the Democrats for so many years," he said.

Rucho said he's excited "about showing the people of North Carolina exactly how it should be done... the way the law says it should be done."

Rucho said he doubts an independent redistricting commission, favored by some, could be truly independent.

"There's always politics involved, one way or another," he said.

**Jim Morrill: 704-358-5059**

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# Cannon taps committee chairs, delays redistricting appointments – Central Florida Political Pulse – Orlando Sentinel

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[http://blogs.orlandosentinel.com/news\\_politics/2010/12/cannon-taps-committee-chairs-delays-redistricting-appointments.html](http://blogs.orlandosentinel.com/news_politics/2010/12/cannon-taps-committee-chairs-delays-redistricting-appointments.html)

December 8, 2010

TALLAHASSEE — House Speaker **Dean Cannon**, R-Winter Park, tapped two dozen lawmakers for committee chairmanships Tuesday, and several Central Florida faces will head up some influential panels.

Those with the money: Rep. **Marlene O'Toole**, R-The Villages, will chair the Higher Education budget committee, and **Mike Horner**, R-St. Cloud, will head up Transportation and Economic Development appropriations.

Those without it: **Rich Workman**, R-Melbourne, will chair Community and Military Affairs; **Bryan Nelson**, R-Apopka, will chair Insurance and Banking; **Steve Precourt**, R-Orlando, will chair the Finance and Tax Committee; **Eric Eisnaugle**, R-Orlando, will chair Civil Justice; **Dennis Baxley**, R-Ocala, will chair Criminal Justice; **Chris Dorworth**, R-Lake Mary, will chair a new "Rulemaking and Regulation" committee; **Seth McKeel**, R-Lakeland, will chair State Affairs; **Steve Crisifulli**, R-Merritt Island, will chair Agriculture and Natural Resources; and **Scott Plakon**, R-Longwood, will chair a new "Federal Affairs" committee.

Cannon also noted in a memo to lawmakers that he was delaying the appointment of members to the redistricting committee until 2011, while staff tries to analyze the impact of Amendments 5 and 6, which add new requirements on the redistricting process that takes place in 2012.

"Because we are still developing the House's redistricting software, analyzing the recently-enacted constitutional amendments, and building a redistricting timeline, I have decided to delay appointments to the redistricting committees until 2011," Cannon's memo reads.

# Will Weatherford Focused on Redistricting

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<http://www.sunshinestatenews.com/blog/will-weatherford-focused-redistricting>

December 7, 2010

While he is in line to become speaker after the 2012 elections, Rep. Will Weatherford, R-Wesley Chapel, is looking forward to handling one of the most challenging assignments in the House -- leading efforts to manage redistricting.

Incoming Speaker Dean Cannon, R-Winter Haven, on Monday designated Weatherford to head up the House Redistricting Committee. Rep. Perry Thurston of Plantation will be the ranking Democrat.

"In addition to passing the budget, redistricting is the only other constitutional mandate the members of the Legislature must pass," said Cannon. "Representative Weatherford's hard work and proven leadership abilities make him a perfect fit for this important, but very challenging assignment."

With Florida voters supporting two amendments changing redistricting, Weatherford does not have an easy task.

"Over the next two years, Florida will face the challenging constitutional mandate of redistricting." Weatherford stated. "I am honored that Speaker-designate Cannon has such confidence in me to guide this difficult, but necessary process.

"I look forward to hearing our citizens' concerns on this very important process," added Weatherford. "We will seek to give all parties a voice on this vital issue affecting every Floridian."

# Residents: Redistricting should be fair, free from gerrymandering

<http://www2.insidenova.com/news/2010/dec/07/residents-redistricting-should-be-fair-free-gerrym-ar-701184/>

December 8, 2010

[vote](#)

[now Buzz up!](#) PRINCE WILLIAM COUNTY, Va. --

Members of the [House of Delegates](#) redistricting subcommittee on Monday heard a little bit about what residents want out of the upcoming legislative boundary changes.

Those who spoke to the subcommittee at the [Stafford County](#) campus of the University of Mary Washington said they wanted fairness and didn't want gerrymandering.

Legislative lines are redrawn every 10 years after the U.S. Census is taken. Political districts are reworked to reflect changes in population and to ensure that they each include roughly the same number of constituents.

Political parties in power generally draw redistricting maps, leaving seats safe for members of their party.

In the General Assembly, the House is controlled by Republicans, while Democrats rule in the state [Senate](#). That's led some to believe that the coming redistricting might be the fairest seen in years.

Others fear that the two houses might agree to leave the districts relatively unchanged to maintain the status quo.

Subcommittee Chairman [Mark L. Cole](#), R-88th, and members [Johnny S. Joannou](#), D-79th, Algie T. Howell Jr., D-90th, Robert B. Bell, R-58th, [Chris S. Jones](#), R-76th and Manassas' Jackson H. Miller, R-50th, met to listen to residents.

Four people spoke at the meeting that lasted about 20 minutes.

Former [Prince William County](#) resident Horace McCaskill said he lives in the 1st Congressional District, which "snakes" from Hampton Roads to [Prince William County](#).

He can't see how that district wasn't a result of gerrymandering.

"It was very creatively drawn," said McCaskill, [a retired Army colonel](#).

Like others who spoke, McCaskill said that fairness is often the victim of partisan bickering, and that the people ought to be able to choose their representatives instead being left with districts that are safe for incumbents.

"I think elections ought to be protected. I think people ought to be able to make the choice and vote on the best candidate and offer solutions," said McCaskill who now lives in Spotsylvania County. "Draw the lines where the lines ought to be drawn and not necessarily where the politicians want them. Incumbent protection ought not to be the driving force. It ought to be the will of the people and what the people want, so they can make choices and we can have a democracy."

[Olga Hernandez](#), [president](#) of the League of Women Voters of [Virginia](#), said that there were maybe 15 seats in the [Virginia](#) legislature that were truly competitive.

"Right now, there's a lot of protection of incumbents and a playing with political lines to make very safe seats," [Hernandez](#) said.

She told the commission that the [League of Women Voters](#) considered redistricting a constitutional right to "fair

and equal representation.”

“It’s a core principle,” she said.

This year there will be others looking at redistricting, and they might be of help to the General Assembly if the legislators choose to listen.

Teams from [Virginia](#) colleges and universities will offer their own takes on redistricting, [Hernandez](#) said.

The teams of students, led by faculty members, will compete to draw the best redistricting map with districts that are compact, contiguous and equal in population.

[Christopher Newport University](#), [George Mason University](#), [James Madison University](#), [Longwood University](#), the University of Mary Washington, [Norfolk State University](#), Old Dominion University, the [University of Richmond](#), Roanoke College, the University of [Virginia](#), the [College of William and Mary](#), and [Virginia Commonwealth University](#) will field the teams competing in the Virginia Redistricting Competition.

[Hernandez](#) said the maps the students come up with might show the legislators a “different — maybe a better way.”

*[Senior reporter Keith Walker](#) can be reached at 703-369-6751.*

# Speaker Cannon explains why he is delaying appointments to redistricting committee

<http://saintpetersblog.com/2010/12/08/speaker-cannon-explains-why-he-is-delaying-appointments-to-redistricting-committee/>

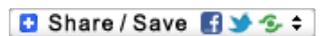
December 30, 2010

Lost in the, um, excitement regarding yesterday's announcement of who is on what committee in the Florida House was what was not announced: appointments to the House's committee on redistricting. Speaker Dean Cannon explained why:

“In addition, because we are still developing the House's redistricting software, analyzing the recently-enacted constitutional amendments, and building a redistricting timeline, I have decided to delay appointments to the redistricting committees until 2011.”



**Tags:** [Appointments](#), [Cannon](#), [Committees](#), [Constitutional Amendments](#), [Dean](#), [Excitement](#), [Lost](#), [Redistricting Committee](#), [S Committee](#), [Timeline](#)



# Florida House Wants to Restrict Court's Role

<http://www.theledger.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20101209/NEWS/101209711&template=printart>

December 10, 2010

Published: Thursday, December 9, 2010 at 4:38 a.m.

TALLAHASSEE | The Florida House has begun exploring steps giving the Legislature more authority to get proposed state constitutional amendments before voters without risking having measures struck down by a court.

House Speaker Dean Cannon, R-Winter Park, lashed out at the courts for judicial activism after three proposed ballot measures approved by the Legislature last spring were barred by judges as unconstitutional.

Among them was an amendment aimed at blocking the federal health care overhaul from taking effect in Florida a measure Senate President Mike Haridopolos, R-Merritt Island, has retooled and steered Wednesday through a Senate committee.

"I respect the courts, it's part of the checks and balances," Haridopolos said. "But when in doubt, and it's a gray area, I'd hope they'd defer to the elected representatives, especially when there's a super-majority vote involved."

A three-fifths vote of the Legislature is required to put a measure on the ballot.

But House analysts reported Wednesday that only four of the 10 legislative proposals challenged in courts since 1982 have been cleared for the ballot.

Overall, courts have rejected the ballot language in 70 percent of cases involving proposed amendments by the Legislature.

The Florida Supreme Court has proved a particularly stern test for lawmakers, approving only one of six ballot summaries put before it this year.

Among the possible changes in play: Give lawmakers authority to put measures before voters without judicial review.

"It might be the way to go," Haridopolos said.

# Our View: Redistricting reform in Illinois? Don't believe it - Peoria, IL

<http://www.pjstar.com/opinions/ourview/x2115285443/Our-View-Redistricting-reform-in-Illinois-Dont-believe-it>

January 4, 2011

Sponsors of a bill moving through the Legislature dealing with redistricting - the process of drawing a new legislative map, required every 10 years - claim it would offer members of the public a chance to have their voices heard, letting lawmakers "get the public's confidence back."

Don't believe the hype. The measure barely qualifies as "reform lite," and only then because it would offer minor improvements to an abominable process, rendering it merely awful. Lead sponsor Sen. Kwame Raoul, D-Chicago, crafted a bill that would among other things require there be four public hearings - each held in a different part of the state - on new House and Senate district boundaries.

There's plenty more that could have been done to make this a fair process. Republicans tried to add amendments stating that map-makers wouldn't take into account the voting history of citizens who live in the districts - that is, no more letting politicians choose their voters. They also sought more public hearings, noting that even the Democratic plan this spring would have required twice as many. No dice.

Both those changes were key planks in the Fair Map Amendment that the GOP and good-government reformers tried to push earlier this year. It also attempted to remove at least some of the politics from the process by requiring a special commission - not the Legislature - draw the maps, and would have mandated that commission members not be lobbyists, lawmakers' relatives or state employees. It also insisted on supermajority legislative votes to approve the maps, and barring those would have put the power in the hands of a "special master," a compromise decision-maker agreed to by top Democratic and Republican judges.

Sadly, Illinois voters who talk a better game than they play about changing the status quo and curtailing political corruption didn't sign enough petitions to get the measure on the ballot. Democrats killed an attempt to put it there legislatively. Without the constitutional amendment, we're stuck with the old system, wherein politicians draw their own maps, embracing the "incumbent protection racket" that essentially ensures their re-elections.

So while more hearings might look like progress, it's really nothing compared to what could have been achieved.

Conceivably the map could be even more egregious this time around, with hearings or without them. The last three times redistricting has occurred - 1981, 1991, 2001 - party representation was more balanced, with Democrats and Republicans able to check each other's ambitions and force a random drawing to decide which side of the aisle got to draw the final map. To have unilateral control of the process, the governor's office and the Senate and House must be held by the same party. In the previous three decades, that wasn't the situation, but it is now with Democrats firmly in charge across the board. As a result, they can pretty much draw maps that favor the party and, with a like-minded governor willing to affix his signature, the GOP can't do a thing about it short of challenging it to an Illinois Supreme Court with - you guessed it - a Democratic majority. Suffice it to say, Democrats could rule Illinois, for better or worse, for some time.

The House still has to approve these changes by mid-January. It isn't likely that Democrats running the show there will go for more transparency or fairness in map-making, but that doesn't mean Republicans shouldn't try to achieve both by offering up amendments. Maybe lightning will strike. We wouldn't count on it, but if nothing else, at least Democrats will also have to stand up and cast votes to show whether they're for or against *real* reforms, in a Springfield that has long had an allergy to them. We just wish Illinois voters would hold them more accountable.

# Final Word on Redistricting Not Until 5 Months Before the 2012 Election

<http://rootswire.org/content/final-word-redistricting-not-until-5-months-2012-election>

December 10, 2010

Original Author:

Kenneth Quinnell



[Florida's redistricting timeline:](#)

- \* Summer 2011, legislature conducts hearings around the state to get public input
- \* Jan. 10, 2012, legislature meets for its 60-day legislative session.
- \* March 9, 2012, session ends
- \* March 10, 2012, legislature petitions the Florida Supreme Court for its required review of the districts; the court has 30 days
- \* April 16, 2012, the FSC completes its review and legislature sends the redistricting plan to the U.S. Department of Justice for its required review; the DOJ has 60 days
- \* June 18 districts are finalized and candidates may start qualifying for newly drawn districts.

This is so not designed to give Republicans running for Congress and the legislature a huge advantage, right?

More to come on this...

EXTRAS:

- \*Questions: Can we sue over a bad redistricting timeline?
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# State Senate discusses redistricting software and timeline, possibility of lawsuit

<http://floridaindependent.com/16894/state-senate-discusses-redistricting-software-and-timeline-possibility-of-lawsuit#>

January 4, 2011

The Florida Senate's reapportionment committee met yesterday to discuss a contentious issue — the redrawing of district lines to reflect data gathered in the newest census. It's an issue that has become more convoluted thanks to the recent passage of Amendments 5 and 6, the so-called "Fair Districts" amendments that created strict rules for how politicians can draw up district maps.

The distribution of seats in the Florida legislature and the state's congressional delegation will have to shift to even out the population distribution among districts and account for as many as two additional congressional seats Florida is expected to receive.

During the last round of redistricting, which followed the 2000 census, people could send a \$20 check to get a CD that would allow them install desktop software, which they could use to explore demographic data and tinker with district boundaries.

This year, the public will have access to a pair of web applications that will allow them to track different redistricting proposals and draw their own lines using "an easy set of tools" similar to Google Maps, according to John Guthrie of the Senate reapportionment committee's staff.

One application, District Explorer, will allow anyone to look at redistricting proposals as they are submitted and analyze the boundaries and demographics. The other, District Builder, will allow anyone who obtains a username and password to try their own hands at drawing the districts. The House will have a separate but largely similar system.

"No other state is providing the level of public access that the House and Senate are going to provide in Florida," Guthrie said.

The process begins later this month, as the census data become available and the congressional seats are distributed among states. After that:

- + In June, the first full version of District Builder software is set to become available.
- + Later in the summer, public hearings begin around the state. Committee chairman Don Gaetz, R-Niceville, said he wanted the software online before the hearings begin, so people could present their own district maps and weigh in on other proposals.
- + In January 2012, the Florida legislature begins its regular session, which ends on March 9. Once both houses approve a redistricting proposal, they'll have to submit it to the attorney general, who will have 15 days to send it to the Supreme Court.
- + Then the Supreme Court has 30 days to review the proposal.
- + Then the U.S. Department of Justice has 60 days to review the proposal.
- + Mon., June 18 is the first day candidates can qualify to run for the new seats created by the redistricting process.

That leaves only 100 days between the end of the session on March 9 and the start of qualifying on June 18. State Sen. John Thrasher, R-Jacksonville, worried that with little time to spare, the process could be derailed by a lawsuit.

Under Amendments 5 and 6, which passed in the November elections, districts must be as contiguous as possible, and may not be drawn with the intent of marginalizing minority groups or favoring any incumbent or political party.

State Sen. Jack Latvala, R-St. Petersburg, warned fellow committee members that “intent” could be determined by analyzing lawmakers’ electronic communications, which could become evidence in such a lawsuit.

# Civil liberties at risk - Other Views

<http://www.miamiherald.com/2010/12/11/1968367/civil-liberties-at-risk.html#>

January 4, 2011

You don't need to be Max Mayfield to know that a Category 5 disaster is headed straight for our civil liberties. Here's what's coming from Tallahassee:

**Redistricting:** The new Fair District Amendments will help end gerrymandering (and racial and political packing) of legislative and congressional districts. But first this historic victory must be protected.

U.S. Reps. Mario Diaz-Balart and Corrine Brown have challenged the congressional redistricting amendment in federal court. Their analysis strangely morphs the Voting Rights Act from a law protecting the right of minority voters to elect candidates of their choice to one that ensures "the preservation of minority incumbents in positions of legislative influence and leadership."

Speaker Dean Cannon and Senate President Mike Haridopolos were bitter opponents of Amendments 5 and 6. It's not likely that their first draft of new district lines will reflect what voters intended.

**Religious freedom:** Gov.-elect Rick Scott has said that school vouchers are high on his priority list. These are code words for repealing Florida's 150-year-old constitutional prohibition on taxpayer funds for churches or sectarian institutions.

Repealing the "no aid" provision is cleverly and dishonestly sold as "ending discrimination against religion," and aid to church-run schools described as "ending the monopoly of government schools."

When former Gov. Jeb Bush's crusade to "improve" public schools with "Opportunity Scholarships" was struck down by the Florida Supreme Court, he tried, unsuccessfully, to get the Legislature to remove constitutional obstacles to funneling tax dollars to church-run schools through vouchers. His allies then used the Tax and Budget Reform Commission until the court declared that an abuse of its authority.

It is hard to overstate the disastrous consequences the loss of the "no aid" constitutional provision would have for Florida families, most of whom depend on their neighborhood public school, and on efforts to improve schools and address depressingly low graduation rates.

The incoming Tallahassee regime, however, seems bent on creating two systems of education: impoverished neighborhood public schools mostly for poor and minority children alongside mostly church-run schools supported by tax-funded vouchers.

**The adoption ban:** Another likely target is the ACLU's legal victory ending Florida's 33-year-old law that banned adoptions by lesbians and gay men. The victory allowed Martin Gill to adopt two brothers the state placed in his foster care six years ago. Striking down the adoption ban also increased the number of loving, forever homes available to children languishing in Florida's foster care system.

Anti-gay obsessed opponents have vowed to undo our victory in the courts by mischief in the Legislature or a constitutional amendment for the 2012 ballot.

**Abortion rights:** In the 2010 Legislature, abortion rights opponents enacted legislation requiring all women seeking an abortion during the first trimester to pay for and undergo an ultrasound. Unless the woman could prove she was a rape or incest victim, she would be required to view the ultrasound or hear a description of the fetus before being allowed to have the procedure. Another provision prohibited employers from providing health insurance for their employees that includes abortion coverage. Gov. Crist vetoed the bill.

More radical measures are now tempting, including making it more difficult for a girl to obtain a court order allowing her to have an abortion, if notifying a parent would have harmful consequences, or a "fetal personhood" constitutional amendment that would ban abortions and some forms of birth control -- and trigger a lawsuit to invite the U.S. Supreme Court to revisit *Roe v. Wade*.

**Curbing racial and ethnic profiling:** Scott and Haridopolos are unsure whether enacting an Arizona-style immigration law is a priority. So, it was all about politics. Shocking!

Zealots, however, may seek legislation requiring law enforcement to stop anyone they think might be illegal, demand their papers and detain those who don't have papers. A law that is enforced by targeting people because of skin color or language they speak will trigger a legal challenge.

For the coming attacks on civil liberties, the only questions are: How many and how ferocious will they be and how prepared will we be to confront them?

*Howard Simon is executive director of the American Civil Liberties Union Florida.*

# Only a strong message, not fair districts, will help Florida Democrats

<http://www.dailykos.com/story/2010/12/12/14212/087>

January 4, 2011

Share 9 3

**Sun Dec 12, 2010 at 11:02:12 AM PST**

Let me be clear: as great as Fair Districts Florida's victories are, they are not a Democratic nor Republican tool for victory - and never should be. Democrats have been equally guilty for drawing beneficial lines & cutting out voters they didn't want. These standards are a good step forward for all Florida voters to elect their representatives from fairer districts. But let's be real, the final district lines won't even be finalized until **June 18, 2012!**

Florida Democrats are about to elect a new state party Chair who has signaled his number one priority will be making sure Fair Districts remains the "savior" of the FDP (*Facing Florida* 11/5/10). We haven't had an open forum on what went wrong in 2010 and where we need to go in 2012. The [process remains broken](#), and that means our party is broken - and worse, focused on the wrong message.

New district lines will not save Florida Democrats - only a strong message and clear platform will. Our party priorities are clearly off track and out of line **still**.

Many supporters of Rod Smith and the current establishment say that the most important work the FDP has to do right now is stay on top of the redistricting process. They say the redistricting process is the number one priority as Rick Scott, Dean Cannon and Mike Haridopolos make plans to further destroy the public school system if not privatize education completely. They say the redistricting process is the number one priority as the GOP pushes to privatize hospitals and waste taxpayer dollars over suing/refusing to implement healthcare reform. They say the redistricting process is the number one priority as Republicans move ever closer to privatizing prisons and dismantling every state agency piece by piece. They say the redistricting process is the number one priority as the teachers and public employees are attacked and Florida's working families are left behind.

I say the number one priority is being the clear alternative, holding the GOP accountable, and presenting a progressive vision for Florida. We need a Chair and a state party that can present a platform and communicate a message that represents the true interests of Florida's working families. We have the opportunity to elect a leader who can begin to build the necessary infrastructure around the state so Democrats are in a position to fight the terrible GOP agenda being put forward.

The fight has already begun. Waiting for new districts will not be productive. Here's the [proposed Republican timeline](#):

\* Summer 2011, legislature conducts hearings around the state to get public input \* Jan. 10, 2012, legislature meets for its 60-day legislative session. \* March 9, 2012, session ends \* March 10, 2012, legislature petitions the Florida Supreme Court for its required review of the districts; the court has 30 days \* April 16, 2012, the FSC completes its review and legislature sends the redistricting plan to the U.S. Department of Justice for its required review; the DOJ has 60 days \* June 18 districts are finalized and candidates may start qualifying for newly drawn districts.

It is very important to stay on top of the redistricting process, I understand that. But it should not be the number one priority of the party, nor should it be the pressing priority for the Chair given the current state of Florida

Democrats.

[As I have said before](#), Democrats need to be able to communicate a platform effectively in order to counter the Republican agenda. There is much work to do. Democrats are demoralized, they crave leadership and a vision to rally behind. They crave a voice and at the end of the day "fair districts" drawn by this legislature will only take our party so far. We don't need small gains in a few seats. **We need to contest the GOP agenda everywhere.**

*This blog cross-posted at [Florida Progressive Coalition Blog](#).*

# Bloomberg Pushes Party-Free Redistricting (Updated)

<http://polhudson.lohudblogs.com/2010/12/13/bloomberg-pushes-party-free-redistricting/>

December 30, 2010

Count independent New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg as part of the movement to re-draw legislative districts in the state along non-partisan lines.

Bloomberg, who is launching the non-partisan [“No Labels” Committee today](#), said in a statement the current system of having political parties control how federal and state legislative lines are drawn is unfair and limits voter choice.

“The current system for drawing districts protects incumbents, promotes ideological extremism, and reduces voter choice,” Bloomberg said. “Gerrymandering is part of the reason why compromise and bi-partisanship are so rare these days. Voters in California and Florida overwhelmingly passed redistricting reforms in recent elections, and there’s no reason why, working with Ed Koch and our state legislative leaders, we can’t do the same here. It would be one of the best things to happen to Albany since the building of the Erie Canal.”

Bloomberg joins former New York Mayor Ed Koch, whose [New York Uprising political action committee](#) has pushed for the redistricting reform as well. Senate Republicans, who will likely control the upper house of the Legislature next year, have signed the pledge (see update below).

Legislative districts are redraw every 10 years based on the most recent census data. New York will draw the lines in 2012. The state is [expected to lose several seats](#) in Congress based on its population loss.

Bloomberg’s drive for a political world without parties is being seen by some as a precursor to a 2012 presidential run, which he has [strenuously denied](#) is [the case](#).

Here’s the full statement from Bloomberg:

Mayor Michael R. Bloomberg today released a report showing that nonpartisan reforms to the redistricting process can increase the competitiveness of legislative elections at the state and federal level. In the most recent elections, the report found that across the country, 49 percent of candidates elected to the U.S. House of Representatives, and 57 percent of candidates elected to state legislatures won their races with margins of victory greater than 30 points, or faced no opposition at all. States with nonpartisan redistricting had races that were, on average, 14 percent closer for the state legislature and 24% closer for congress, and candidates in state legislative districts drawn through a nonpartisan process were 20 percent less likely to run unopposed. Mayor Bloomberg joined former Mayor Ed Koch in urging the New York State Legislature to create an independent commission to re-draw state legislative and congressional district lines in advance of the 2012 elections.

“The current system for drawing districts protects incumbents, promotes ideological extremism, and reduces voter choice,” said Mayor Bloomberg. “Gerrymandering is part of the reason why compromise and bi-partisanship are so rare these days. Voters in California and Florida overwhelmingly passed redistricting reforms in recent elections, and there’s no reason why, working with Ed Koch and our state legislative leaders, we can’t do the same here. It would be one of the best things to happen to Albany since the building of the Erie Canal.”

The report compared state and federal legislative elections in 35 states that give redistricting authority to the legislature to the 13 states where there is some form of a nonpartisan process (only 7 states have non-partisan congressional redistricting). The 13 states with a nonpartisan process

have, on average, 20 percent fewer uncontested state legislative races. Margins of victory were 14 percent lower (24 points vs. 28 points) in state legislative races and 24 percent lower (21 points vs. 28 points) in congressional races. The experience of the two states (Arkansas and Ohio) that give the governor and other state-wide elected officials control over the redistricting process largely mirrored that of the 35 states in which partisan redistricting occurs through the legislature.

The report also found that the three states with a “Top Two” election system or a nonpartisan legislature (Louisiana, Washington, Nebraska) also produced substantially more competitive elections, and large cities with nonpartisan elections were found to have city council races that were 24 percent closer than their partisan counterparts. Mayor Bloomberg supported recent, successful efforts in California and Florida to remove or reduce partisan control from the redistricting process.

Koch has released a statement praising Bloomberg for his stance on the issue:

“The cause of nonpartisan redistricting today gained a nonpartisan champion in the form of Mayor Mike Bloomberg. Mayor Bloomberg represents what Albany doesn’t. He has earned respect across the board for making New York City work for New Yorkers—and not by playing politics to protect Democrats, or Republicans, or incumbents. He is the third New York City mayor to declare support for impartial redistricting, including Rudy Giuliani and me. If our state’s political leaders still think that they can keep gerrymandering their own districts and those of their party, and no one will notice, they’re dead wrong. I look forward to working with Mayor Bloomberg on getting this important reform enacted into law.”

# PolitiFact Florida | Reform advocate says "dozens" of Florida political districts split counties and splinter cities

<http://politifact.com/florida/statements/2010/dec/21/ellen-freidin/districts/>

December 29, 2010

Following a polarizing midterm election, and with intensifying partisan bickering over everything from taxes to health care, a group dubbing itself No Labels is hoping to start an earnest discussion about policy over politics. The group, comprised of Democrats, Republicans and independents, launched its website on Dec. 13, 2010, in the hopes of starting a movement that "encourages leaders to 'put the labels aside' in an effort to seek common sense solutions to our nation's problems."

The launch brought out independents like outgoing Florida Gov. Charlie Crist and New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg, who both spoke at a kickoff event in New York City that was live-streamed on the No Labels website.

Also speaking was Ellen Freidin, chairwoman of Fair Districts Florida, a group behind the passage of two constitutional amendments that set new guidelines for how legislative and congressional districts are drawn up. Freidin used the occasion to note: "We have dozens of districts that go for 150 to 200 miles, splitting counties, splintering cities and connecting areas that have very little in common."

We decided to take a closer look at Freidin's statement. The Fair Districts Florida [website](#) cites two examples of such districts, but we were curious to see if there were dozens of examples, as Freidin stated.

## About redistricting

First, some background on how Florida's districts are created. It's an issue bound to be back in the limelight as state legislators restart the process of translating those numbers into political boundaries on a map.

Every 10 years -- two years after U.S. Census figures are compiled -- state lawmakers redraw state and congressional legislative districts. The objective is to adjust district sizes to reflect changes in the population. Occasionally, new congressional districts are added when a state gains population. For example, Florida gained two House seats this time.

The civics book reason for periodic redistricting is to protect the value of each voter's ballot by preventing it from being diluted by a population surge -- the goal being for each person's vote to carry relatively equal weight in elections. But the process of redistricting is never without accusations of "gerrymandering" often brought up against the party in power.

The term dates back to 1812 when Massachusetts Gov. Eldbridge Gerry signed a bill to redistrict Massachusetts. A newspaper noted that the contorted districts on the map resembled salamanders, and the term "gerrymander" has since come to mean creating districts for political motive over geographical proximity.

The Florida [website](#) for the redistricting that was carried out in 2002 gives a sense of the process and numbers involved.

The Legislature divided the state's population evenly into 120 state House districts, each containing a little over 130,000 people. Records show the number of registered voters per district ranged between 45,000 and 98,000.

The same population is divided evenly into 40 state Senate districts. Each district's population hovered around 399,000, with the number of registered voters varying from about 134,000 to 280,000.

Florida's Congressional districts contained a uniform population of 639,295, give or take a few people, and had voter registration ranging from about 232,600 to 418,700.

During the November 2010 election, Florida voters approved two amendments to the state constitution that set specific guidelines in the creation of such districts. Amendment 5 was geared toward state districts and Amendment 6 was to be applied to congressional districts.

Both amendments say districts should not be drawn to favor incumbents or a particular political party. Districts must be contiguous, compact and follow local and geographical boundaries. The districts shall also not be drawn to interfere with minority representation as provided for in the Voting Rights Act.

The amendments were brought forth by Fair Districts Florida, a group that collected 1.7 million signatures to get the questions on the state ballot.

### **A look at our districts**

So, do the districts created in 2002 "go on for 150 to 200 miles, splitting counties, splintering cities and connecting areas that have very little in common?"

Here, with the distances for the larger districts approximated by plugging cities into Mapquest, are some examples we found of both state and congressional districts that speak to the issue at hand:

#### **The 2nd Congressional District**

This Panhandle [district](#) represented by newly elected Republican Steve Southerland contains the largest number of counties in the state's delegation -- 16. It takes in some or all of Bay, Calhoun, Dixie, Franklin, Gadsden, Gulf, Jackson, Jefferson, Lafayette, Leon, Liberty, Okaloosa, Suwannee, Taylor, Wakulla and Walton counties. Approximate distance covered: 240 miles.

#### **The 3rd and 4th Congressional Districts**

The [3rd District](#), represented by Democratic Rep. Corrine Brown, contains portions of larger cities like Jacksonville and Orlando, while also taking in smaller communities like Gainesville and Apopka. The 2010 edition of the *Almanac of American Politics* notes that the district has three sets of borders. Designed in 1992 to be North Florida's black majority seat, from a partisan point of view it was also created "to shift as many Democrats as possible to the 3rd District to strengthen Republicans elsewhere," the *Almanac* says. It taps Democratic voters in the center of Jacksonville, then picks up voters in Orlando and Gainesville, with stops in Sanford and smaller communities. Approximate distance covered: 210 miles.

Meanwhile, Republican Rep. Ander Crenshaw's [4th District](#) stretches across the northern border of the state from the Atlantic shore in Nassau County to Tallahassee in the center. It includes, as the *Almanac* notes, "much of Jacksonville, minus the African-American neighborhoods," and runs west through Baker, Union, Columbia, Hamilton, Madison, Jefferson and Leon counties. Approximate distance covered: 165 miles.

#### **The 5th Congressional District**

Carved from west-Central Florida, this [district](#) represented in the upcoming Congress by Republican Rich Nugent stretches from the northern tip of Polk County to include nearly all of distant, rural Levy County, large portions of Lake, Marion and Pasco counties and all of Sumter, Citrus and Hernando counties. Approximate distance covered: 140 miles.

#### **The 6th Congressional District**

Republican U.S. Rep. Cliff Stearns' [district](#) is another that takes a bite out of the metropolitan Jacksonville area. From there it wobbles south through wooded north-central Florida, shaving off part of Gainesville and stopping

in Lake County, a short drive from Orlando. In the process it takes in some or all of Duval, Clay, Bradford, Alachua, Gilchrist, Levy, Marion and Lake counties. Approximate distance covered: 146 miles.

### The 10th and 11th Congressional Districts

Democratic Rep. Kathy Castor's [11th District](#) used to be entirely in Tampa and Hillsborough County, but during the 2002 redistricting, a sizable pocket of Democratic voters in South St. Petersburg were frog-marched across Tampa Bay, electorally speaking, to be joined with Democratic kindred spirits. The district also picked up a piece of Manatee County. The effect boosted the GOP margins in Pinellas County, where Republican Rep. C.W. Bill Young holds the [10th District](#), which voted for Bill Clinton in 1996 and Al Gore in 2000. Young's district is the only one in Florida contained wholly within a single county's borders.

### The 16th Congressional District

Represented by Republican Tom Rooney, the [district](#) stretches from the Atlantic coast on the east almost to the Gulf of Mexico, and was described in the 2010 edition of the *Almanac of American Politics* as "one of the most oddly designed districts in the nation." The district spans parts of Charlotte, Glades, Hendry, Highlands, Okeechobee, St. Lucie, Martin and Palm Beach counties. Approximate distance covered: 155 miles.

### The 22nd Congressional District

While the district was once a Democratic stronghold, it recently traded hands into the Republican party when Allen West defeated Democrat Ron Klein. the narrow coastal district, which stretches from Palm Beach Gardens down to Cooper City Broward County, may be a straight shot down the coast, but the western portion of the district is a series of electoral cul-de-sacs.

### The 25th Congressional District

The needs of voters in the largely Hispanic enclaves of West Miami-Dade County like Hialeah Gardens may have little in common with the needs of older rural voters in Collier County, but the two Republican-leaning areas are linked in the same congressional [district](#). The 25th District was one of two new districts carved out by the Legislature in 2002. Mario-Diaz Balart, who was Florida House majority leader at the time, also chaired the redistricting committee that created the district. Diaz-Balart, a Republican, was subsequently elected the district's first congressman in 2002. It is about to pass to newly elected U.S. Rep. David Rivera, also a Republican.

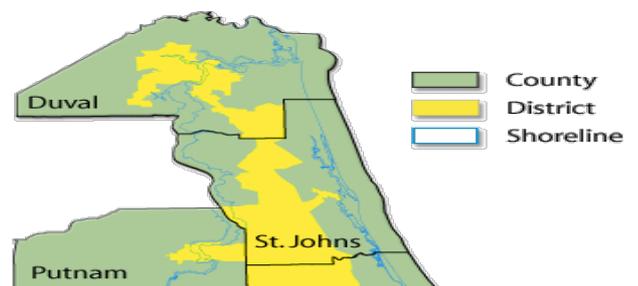


### State Senate District 1

Sen. Tony Hill's district cascades south through Duval County, spreading out in central St. Johns, and sending a spur line into Putnam County, and dips south to take in a large swath of Flagler County and a looping portion of Volusia County. Approximate distance covered: 108 miles.

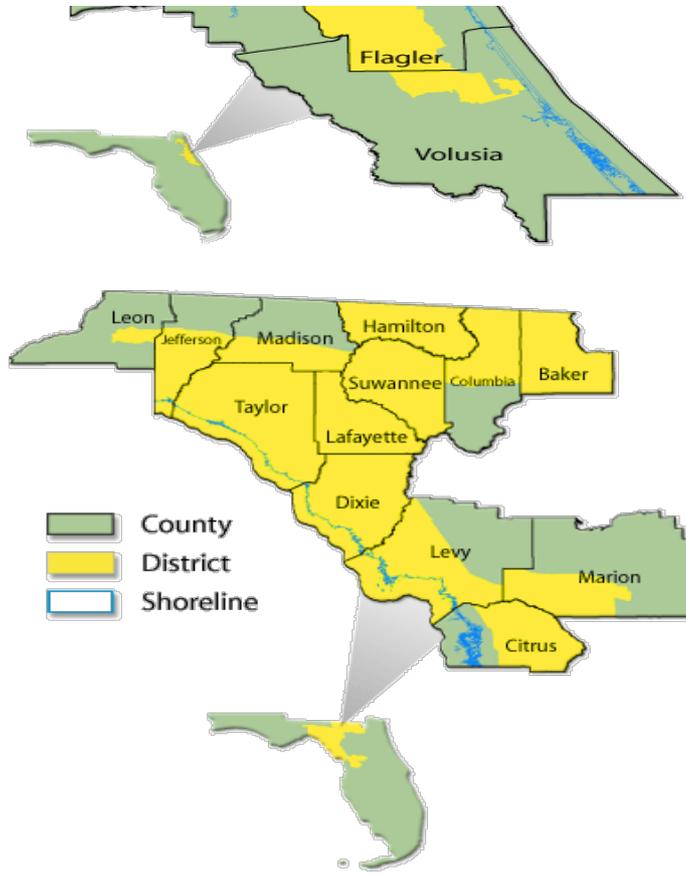
### State Senate District 3

State Sen. Charlie Dean's district covers Baker, Dixie, Hamilton, Lafayette, Suwannee and Taylor counties, in addition to parts of Citrus, Columbia, Jefferson, Leon, Levy, Madison and Marion counties. Approximate distance covered: 272 miles.



**State Senate District 7**

Represented by Republican Sen. Evelyn J. Lynn, this district snakes from Clay County down to Putnam and Marion counties and covers most of Volusia County. Approximate distance covered: 165 miles.

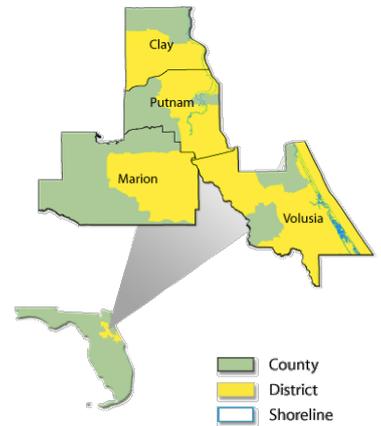


**State Senate District 8**

Republican Sen. John Thrasher’s district is spread along the Atlantic coast, running through Nassau, Duval, St. Johns, Flagler and Volusia counties. Approximate distance covered: 144 miles.

**State Senate District 14**

Republican Sen. Steve Oelrich's district covers Alachua, Bradford, Gilchrist and Union counties with portions of Columbia, Levy, Marion, and Putnam counties in the fold. Approximate distance covered: 85 miles.

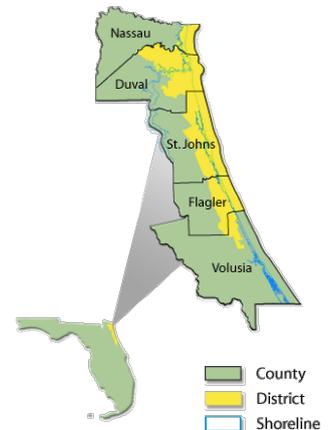


**State Senate District 15**

Republican Sen. Paula Dockery's district is carved where four counties converge -- Hernando, Sumter, Lake and Polk, throwing in a piece of Osceola County to fill it out. Approximate distance covered: 159 miles.

**State Senate District 18**

The district, represented by Democratic Sen. Arthenia Joyner, covers parts of East and South Tampa, South St. Petersburg in Pinellas County and a sliver of Manatee County. Approximate distance covered: 57 miles.



**State Senate District 21**

Republican Sen. Mike Bennett's district covers nearly all of Manatee County, plus pieces of Sarasota, DeSoto, Charlotte and Lee counties (and the Senate misspells Charlotte on its website map). Approximate distance covered: 124 miles.

**State Senate District 26**

The district represented by Republican Senate President Mike Haridopolos covers coastal areas of Brevard County, but also covers portions of Osceola and Indian River counties. Approximate distance



covered: 164 miles.

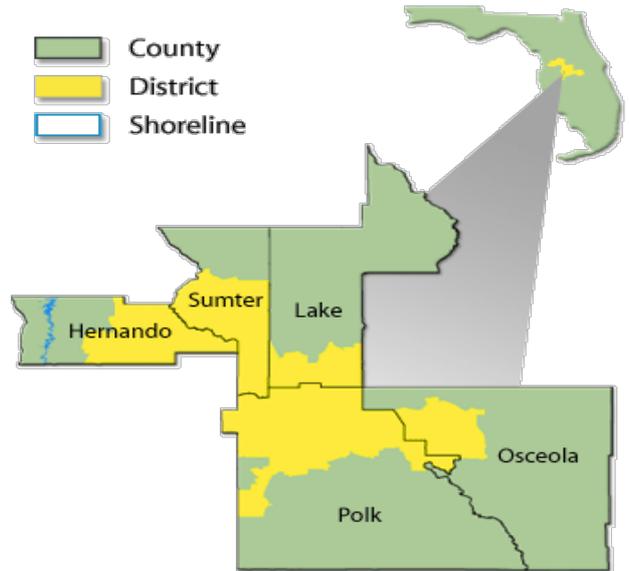
### State Senate District 27

The district, currently represented by Palm Beach County Republican Lizbeth Benacquisto, spans five counties (Palm Beach, Glades, Hendry Charlotte and Lee) and travels nearly coast to coast from West Palm Beach in the east to Fort Myers in the west. Approximate distance covered: 140 miles.



### State Senate District 28

Republican Sen. Joe Negron's district hugs the highly developed southeastern coast, except when it veers deep into the state to pick up portions of Okeechobee, St. Lucie, Martin and Palm Beach counties. Approximate distance covered: 109 miles.



### State Senate District 39

Democratic Sen. Larcenia Bullard's district covers a vast geographic terrain from Hendry County to rural Immokalee in Collier County, plus urban areas in Broward, Miami-Dade and Palm Beach counties and down to the Florida Keys in Monroe County. Approximate distance covered; 268 miles.



State House districts are more compact because they take in a smaller population, but they do meander from time to time, with electoral ramifications for the counties and towns affected. Here are a few notable clusters:

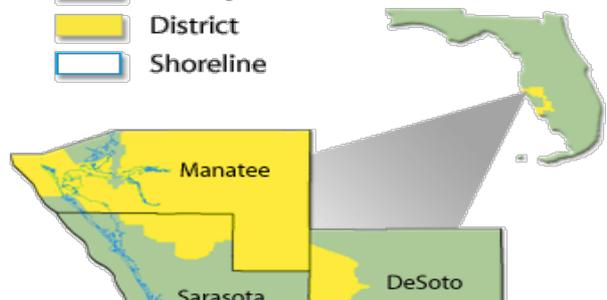
### State House Districts 29, 30, 31, 32

This Atlantic coast region is solidly Republican, with Tom Goodson in [district 29](#), Ritch Workman in [district 30](#), John Tobia in [district 31](#) and Steve Crisafulli in [district 32](#). Despite the GOP nature of the territory, it is still carved into byzantine interlocking connections of neighborhoods and towns around Melbourne and the beach communities to the north and south.



### State House Districts 35, 36, 38, 39, 40, 41, 49

These districts, taken together, are a case study of the political lgerdemain when district lines are drawn.



Districts 36, 39 and 49 rub shoulders in the urban Orlando area, and present three faces of the Democratic Party -- white liberal, African American and Hispanic. The state House district interactive map puts them in political perspective. [District 36](#), represented by liberal Democrat Scott Randolph, is shaped vaguely like a lobster, with its claws in northern and eastern Orange County and its body in the center of Orlando.

[District 39](#), represented by African American Rep. Geraldine Thompson, is a more solid, cohesive block of voters.

[District 49](#), represented by Darren Soto, tracks the Hispanic population through west Orlando, down to Kissimmee and elsewhere, spreading across Orange and Osceola counties.

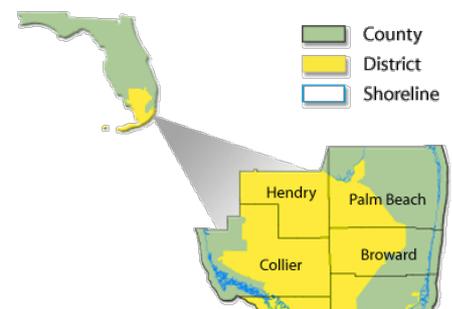
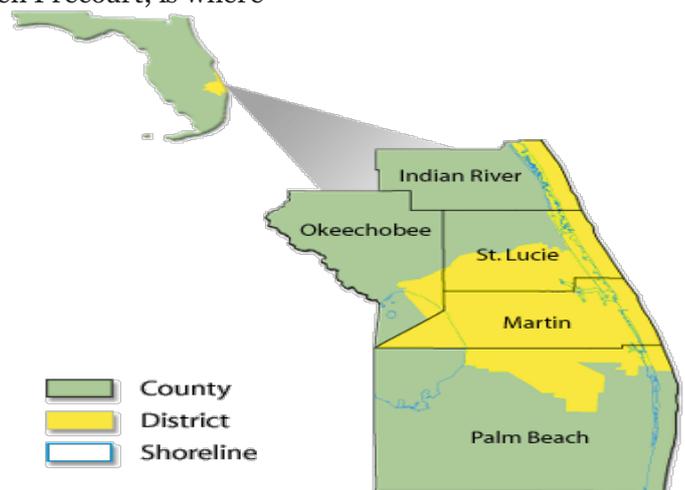
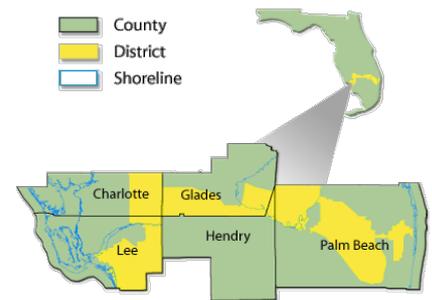
All around them are Republican districts enjoying a carefully crafted symbiotic relationship. Between the lobster's claws rests the wealthy enclave of Winter Park, in [district 35](#), home to Republican House Speaker Dean Cannon. Nearby is the southern edge of Apopka Republican Rep. Bryan Nelson's [district 38](#), which picks up voters in the gaps between Democratic districts 36 and 39.

[District 40](#), represented by Republican Eric Eisnagle, is another odd configuration, cobbling together disparate suburbs in lumps and bulges constituting southern GOP border of this political nexus.

Neighboring [district 41](#), represented by Republican Stephen Precourt, is where the tidy urban divisions really begin to break down. With districts 36 and 39 holding large groups of Democrats across the border, this Republican district sprawls west from Orange County into the old Florida region of south Lake County, and dips into Osceola County to the south.

### State House Districts 55, 67, 68 and 69

With its southern end sandwiched narrowly between three Republican districts, [district 55](#), represented by Democrat Darryl Rouson, combines voters in Sarasota, Manatee, Hillsborough and Pinellas counties. Meanwhile, Republican Rep. Greg Steube's [district 67](#) takes eastern chunks of Sarasota and Manatee counties along with an oddly shaped section of southern Hillsborough County. Republican Rep. Jim Boyd's [district 68](#) covers the more affluent beach communities around Bradenton, and [district 69](#), represented by Republican Jay Pilon, takes in south Manatee and Sarasota, enveloping the southern tip of Rouson's district.



## State House Districts 78, 79, 80, 84

[District 78](#), represented by Democrat Stephen Perman, contains a large portion of western Palm Beach County, plus odd pieces of Martin, St. Lucie and Okeechobee counties, including what looks like a surgical sliver of metropolitan Fort Pierce. It also wraps around [district 84](#), represented by Haitian-born Democrat Mack Bernard, whose district includes Belle Glade and the surrounding area, then tracks along a road east to pick up more voters in neighborhoods around West Palm Beach. North of this oddly shaped pair of Democratic districts it is solidly Republican. Mike Horner's [district 79](#) runs north from Okeechobee County through Osceola County and picks up chunks of Orange and Polk counties. And Debbie Mayfield's [district 80](#) tracks the jagged edge of Perman's district to the Atlantic Ocean.



## State House Districts 101 and 112

Naples Republican Matt Hudson's [district](#) is a political oddity with two nodes of urbanization separated by thousands of square miles of swamp, farms and open land. To the east it picks up a little of urban Broward County along the edge of Pembroke Pines, then it slides west through a long, narrow passage that includes the Everglades and Big Cypress swamp, emerging amidst a host of suburban neighborhoods around Naples, in Collier County. Approximate distance covered; 108 miles. The same strange geography and approximate distance applies with [district 112](#), represented by Miami Republican Jeanette Nunez.

Winnowing people by party alliance does raise a basic question about representative government -- Should a politician be given carte blanche to discard certain voters, or would the public good be better served if the officeholder were required to take divergent views into account? But that discussion is not why we're here.

So, back to the question at hand. Was Freidin accurate in stating that Florida has "dozens of districts that go for 150 to 200 miles, splitting counties, splintering cities and connecting areas that have very little in common?"

Florida has a total of 185 legislative and congressional districts -- 120 in the state House, 40 in the Senate and 25 in Congress. Of those, 67, or 36 percent, are contained within the borders of a single county. In less populated regions, a district must, of necessity, spread out to meet its population number. But, as the maps above show, that's not always the reason for the shifting lines.

The state's major cities are carved into all manner of peculiar bits and pieces to assemble state House, Senate and even Congressional districts. Fort Lauderdale and Orlando are each divvied up into four congressional districts, often being grouped with smaller rural communities that share little common interest.

It is also clear that the integrity of county lines is not a concern when district lines are drawn. As we mentioned before, only one of the state's 25 congressional districts is wholly contained in one county. Among the rest, one includes some or all of 16 counties, and the average number of counties per district is 4.8. Miami-Dade and Broward counties are in five congressional districts. Hillsborough, Pinellas and Duval counties are in three.

The state House and Senate are not much better. In the House, 59 -- slightly less than half -- of the districts fall within one county. One district takes in portions of 10 counties, and the average number of counties included wholly or partially in a state House seat is 1.96. Only seven of the 40 state Senate seats fall within one county, and on average, senate districts spread over three counties.

What about the claim that districts "go for 150 to 200 miles?"

Many do, as our rough approximations illustrate. Strictly speaking, there are not "dozens" that run over 150 miles, but there are at least nine on our list, and if you loosen the standard slightly to take in those over 140 miles, we found 13. One might argue that districts should be measured not just from end to end, but by the

sprawling territory they take up, which would likely add to the list. Whether it would get it to "dozens" is debatable.

Inarguably, the districts meander and wind in jagged jigsaw patterns that crisscross cities and counties. We highlighted more than three-dozen examples. With a slight penalty for fuzzy math on the number of giant districts, we rate Freidin's claim Mostly True.

# 2010Dec16ACLU Intervenes in Legal Challenge

<http://www.fosterfollynews.com/news/2010Dec16ACLUIntervenesinLegalChallenge.php>

December 30, 2010

**TALLAHASSEE, Fla.** – The ACLU of Florida today filed a motion to intervene as defendants in the lawsuit brought by Congresspersons Mario Diaz-Balart and Corrine Brown, which challenges one of the Fair Districts Amendments that was added to the Florida Constitution when it was adopted by voters on November 2, 2010.

Amendments 5 & 6 passed with over 60% of the vote, and when implemented will end gerrymandering and bring a fair districting process to Florida. They will also add protection of minority voting rights to the Florida Constitution for the first time.

The Congresspersons claim that Amendment 6 violates the federal Voting Rights Act which, according to the Congresspersons, ensures “the preservation of minority incumbents in positions of legislative influence and leadership.” The Congresspersons also claim that Amendment 6 violates the U. S. Constitution, which provides that “The times, Places and Manner of Holding Elections for Senators and Representatives, shall be prescribed in each State by the Legislature thereof.”

The ACLU and its political committee, *People Over Politics*, campaigned throughout Florida in support of the Fair Districts Amendments to end gerrymandering, and political and racial packing of legislative districts. The ACLU, intervening on behalf of its members who are registered Florida voters, is seeking to protect the anti-gerrymandering amendments approved by the voters.

“The passage of Amendments 5 & 6 was a major victory for voters in Florida,” stated Howard Simon, Executive Director of the ACLU of Florida. “Under Florida’s rigged and broken system, the odds have been stacked against fair and competitive elections. When Floridians went to the polls and passed these amendments, they brought an end to the era of gerrymandering that had left many Floridians without a voice in government.

“We hope that the federal courts reject this bizarre analysis of the Voting Rights Act by which the protection of minority voting rights is transformed into a law that protects minority office-holders. The ACLU intends to defend the people’s amendments and put an end to gerrymandering,” continued Simon.

Laughlin McDonald, Director of the National ACLU Voting Rights Project and one of the attorneys for the Interveners, said: “The challenged constitutional amendment doesn’t discriminate against anyone. It only attempts to insure that the redistricting process is fair and that all voters have an equal voice.”

A PDF copy of the motion filed today can be found here:

<http://www.aclufl.org/pdfs/GerrymanderInterveneMotion.pdf>

A PDF copy of the ACLU memo in support that was filed today can be found here:

<http://www.aclufl.org/pdfs/GerrymanderInterveneMemo.pdf>

The motion to intervene names four individuals and the ACLU of Florida – on behalf of its members – as defendant-interveners in the lawsuit. If granted, the Motion to Intervene would permit the ACLU to defend the Fair District Amendments in court.

ACLU attorneys intervening in the federal lawsuit include: Laughlin McDonald, National ACLU Voting Rights Project Director based in Atlanta; and Randall Marshall, ACLU of Florida Legal Director.

## **About the ACLU of Florida**

*The ACLU of Florida is freedom's watchdog, working daily in the courts, legislatures and communities to*

*defend individual rights and personal freedoms guaranteed by the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. For additional information, visit our web site at: [www.aclufl.org](http://www.aclufl.org).*

# NationalJournal.com - Battle Lines: The Next Redistricting Brawl

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by Richard E. Cohen

*Map updated on Dec. 23.*

Murray Clark wants to draw some lines. But his interest wasn't spawned by any great appreciation for art. Instead, Clark, the state Republican Party chairman in Indiana, is eagerly anticipating redrawing the congressional district map in his home state, which Barack Obama narrowly won in 2008.

First, Clark wants something close to a straight east-west line running across the state, a bit south of Indianapolis. He might also want another line to scoot around Monroe County to isolate the liberal campus population of the large state university in Bloomington from more-moderate areas. And he would be glad to draw separate sets of boundaries enclosing the Democratic bastions of Indianapolis in the state's center and Gary in the northwest corner. In the end, he is hoping for a Republican success story that could shift as many as three of the swing state's House seats from the Democrats.

Like politicians across the nation in both parties, Clark has begun planning for the states' decennial redistricting of their congressional boundaries. That process will not formally start until 2011, after April's census count yields the December 2010 announcement of the state-by-state reapportionment of the House for the next decade.

Clark is confident that Republicans will control the process in Indiana under the leadership of GOP Gov. Mitch Daniels, given their party's expectation that it will hold the state Legislature after next November's election. Clark's preparations are a stark warning to Democratic Reps. Brad Ellsworth and Baron Hill in the state's southernmost 8th and 9th congressional districts.

"I suspect that we will do some work on redistricting next year," Clark said in an interview. "The new east-west line would change the dynamics in the 8th and 9th districts, which are very conservative areas.... When Democrats drew the current maps in 2001, our contention is that they were gerrymandered."

One party's gerrymander, of course, is the other party's priceless masterpiece. Top officials on both sides are well aware that, either way, redistricting will have a huge impact on the 2012 congressional elections and on the membership of the House for the next decade. Leaders are beginning to consult with batteries of demographers, lawyers, and political operatives to get ready to try to maximize their party's total seats nationwide.

On Capitol Hill, redistricting veterans are warning fellow incumbents that the complex and little-understood process can wreak havoc -- regardless of a member's seniority, legislative influence, or political experience. "I have seen grown people cry when they find that their own career can be over because other [state] politicians are looking out for their own interests," said Rep. Lynn Westmoreland, R-Ga.

Westmoreland, who participated in multiple rounds of redistricting as a state lawmaker for 12 years, now heads efforts to plan for redistricting at the National Republican Congressional Committee. He has been urging other House Republicans to prepare for 2011. "We want to build relationships in the states and be a resource for the people who draw the maps," he said. Westmoreland is also working to increase GOP control of state legislatures in the 2010 elections.

House Democrats are making their own preparations. "I want to make sure that we have a complete and accurate census, so that our constituents are treated fairly," said Rep. Mike Thompson, D-Calif., an eight-year state Senate veteran whom Speaker Nancy Pelosi, D-Calif., has designated to coordinate redistricting for their party. "I have been meeting with members from each state and have told them that we are watching the data to make sure the process is done fairly."

The zero-sum game of redistricting will inevitably create winners and losers. Some House members will be forced out, either by the mapmaking before the 2012 election or in contests in which they must face new constituents. It's no accident that during each of the past three decades, the highest number of House retirements came in 1982, 1992, and 2002, according to Vital Statistics on

Congress 2008, published by the Brookings Institution. In those three elections, 37 House members lost in party primaries, often in contests in which redistricting pitted them against other incumbents. In the combined 12 other elections since 1980, by contrast, a total of only 31 House members lost renomination.

Although many House members otherwise breeze from one election to the next, redistricting poses formidable and diverse demands for them and their advisers. The Supreme Court has ruled that the Constitution requires all districts within a state to have the same population total -- which, on average, will be slightly more than 700,000 people in 2012. The successful House candidates will be those who find the most favorable partisan mix within their districts.

In trying to come up with just the right formula, politicians will be forced to examine census and other demographic data to review how constituencies have changed in the previous decade, looking at race and ethnicity, jobs and income levels, and partisan voting patterns. Among members of the same party in adjacent districts, testy clashes can break out for control of key precincts.

In most states, members of Congress will be putting their fate in the hands of lowly state legislators who have the authority to draw the new districts. For powerful national lawmakers, it can be humbling to be at the mercy of power brokers in locales from Albany to Springfield to Austin, which have been known for their own dysfunctionality.

"Many members of the California delegation don't have friends in Sacramento," said Brad Smith, the veteran chief of staff to Rep. David Dreier, R-Calif., who has been notably successful in mastering the demands of redistricting. "And with term limits there [in the state Legislature], many of those members want a job elsewhere."

## **Big State Shifts**

Virtually all states are in play during redistricting -- whether they are large or small, and whether they are gaining, losing, or keeping the same number of congressional seats. The chief exceptions are the seven states that have only one House district, all of which are expected to remain unchanged. Both parties face challenges in the three largest states -- California, Texas, and New York. Although California has gained House representation in every decade since 1850, it is expected to remain even at 53 seats or perhaps lose one this time around, according to the latest Census Bureau projections. Democrats control the Legislature, reflecting the state's partisan leanings, but GOP Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger is retiring next year and voters might choose another Republican to succeed him. Further complicating the picture is a possible state referendum on the ballot next November that could hand control of congressional redistricting to an outside commission; voters have already approved an independent panel to draw lines for the state Legislature.

California's huge and still-growing Latino population has gained notable influence in state and local government but has been something of a sleeping giant in congressional elections. In Los Angeles County, nearly half of the 10 million residents are Hispanic, but Latinos hold only four of the county's 13 strongly Democratic districts "It's incredibly important for the Latino community to increase its influence," said Rep. Linda Sanchez, D-Calif. "The desire is there because the numbers are there." Sanchez predicted an increase of perhaps three new Latino members in the Los Angeles area because of redistricting. The results could jeopardize House members in both parties, she cautioned. "All incumbents would be foolish to ignore their prospects."

But some Democratic Party leaders -- and even some Hispanic activists -- prefer to take a conciliatory approach and enhance overall Democratic performance rather than overtly promote Hispanic interests. "The number of Latino members of Congress will grow over time," said Arturo Vargas, executive director of the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials. "It's difficult to take on an incumbent. And Latinos don't necessarily vote for other Latinos." His chief goal, Vargas added, is to elect public officials of all backgrounds who respond to Latinos' concerns. "There is a risk of overplaying your hand." -- former Rep. Tom Davis

House Republicans will have less political leverage in the state's redistricting. Southern California's GOP districts, however, have generally grown more in population than have the more-urban Democratic districts, and that growth could further complicate Democrats' prospects.

Texas, which is likely to add three or four House seats to its current 32, has also seen a huge increase in Latinos. Like California's, Texas's population is 36 percent Hispanic, according to last year's Census Bureau estimates. Currently, the Texas delegation includes six Hispanic Democrats; national and state-based Latino leaders hope they can control three of the new districts, each of which would be likely Democratic: one in the Dallas-Fort Worth area, one in Houston, and another in South Texas.

"The trend is heading in [Democrats'] direction," said former Rep. Martin Frost, D-Texas, who was active in state and national redistricting for three decades before he fell victim to the GOP's controversial mid-decade redistricting in 2004.

Still, Texas has a Republican governor and a GOP-controlled Legislature, although Democrats hope for state legislative gains in 2010. Westmoreland said he expects only two new minority House districts in the state. And Rep. Pete Sessions, R-Texas, who ousted Frost and now chairs the National Republican Congressional Committee, would not concede Hispanic voters in his state to the Democrats. "The Republican Party will continue to be the party of job creation and the values that represent Hispanics," said Sessions, who is married to a Latina and represents a district that is 42 percent Hispanic.

Racial politics may be less contentious in New York, where the total population has barely changed but the number of Hispanics has increased. New York had the largest House delegation until 1970, when it had 41 seats, but it is now third, with 29 seats -- and it is expected to lose one more. The one black-controlled district that could be at risk because it now has a large Hispanic plurality is the Harlem seat held by Ways and Means Committee Chairman Charles Rangel, D-N.Y.

## **Smaller State Changes**

Redistricting politics can be just as intense in relatively small states. Indiana and Tennessee, for instance, are expected to hold steady with nine seats apiece. In each state, Democrats ran the redistricting process in recent cycles and enjoy 5-4 control of the congressional delegation. But Republicans are optimistic that their party will fully control both state governments after next year's election, and they see big opportunities on the horizon.

"We believe that we can gain two or three seats from redistricting," said Chris Devaney, the state Republican Party chairman in Tennessee. "With fair lines, we believe that all three are sustainable." That might leave Democrats with only two seats, based in Nashville and Memphis. But Devaney cautioned that he doesn't want to put the redistricting cart before the horse of the 2010 election, in which all three of the targeted Democratic districts could be in play. "Redistricting would be insurance in case we don't win any of those seats in 2010," he said.

Those targeted districts are represented by Democratic Reps. Lincoln Davis, Bart Gordon, and John Tanner, all of whom have easily won re-election in recent years. Obama got only 35 percent, 37 percent, and 43 percent of the vote in those districts, respectively, which are exurban and rural areas where his approval has since dipped. Although the recent retirement announcements by Gordon and Tanner will likely accelerate Devaney's timetable, Republicans could use redistricting to entrench their new GOP members if they win those open seats next year.

Virginia is a third state where Republicans see redistricting opportunities. They took the governor's office and scored gains in the state House in this year's election. Democrats narrowly maintain control of the state Senate, although the Republicans are scheming to force a deadlock there. Virginia will probably retain its 11 congressional seats. Democrats gained three seats in the 2008 election, and Republicans are already targeting all of the freshmen plus 14-term Rep. Rick Boucher, who has not faced a serious challenger since the 1980s. Last year, Obama got less than 40 percent of the vote in Boucher's district, as did Democratic gubernatorial nominee Creigh Deeds this year. Former Rep. Tom Davis, R-Va., who helped to draw the lines in 2001 that gave Republicans 8-3 control of the state's congressional delegation until their setback in 2008, contends that incoming Gov. Bob McDonnell can help the GOP regain its edge. "A return to 8-3 could be done easily," Davis said. "The goal is 9-2, though there is a risk of overplaying your hand."

Boucher dismissed such speculation as highly premature. "They can do very little to my district," he said. He noted that his district is bordered by four other states, which leaves little room for gerrymandering, even though redistricting will need to add more people to his district.

## Partisan Gerrymandering

Many reformers and political pundits have criticized the convoluted congressional lines that have often emerged from recent rounds of redistricting as partisan abuses of democracy that ought to be outlawed or otherwise limited. As a better alternative, they frequently cite Iowa, where a nonpartisan panel of state employees draws the relatively straight boundaries that have resulted in competitive districts.

Sarah Binder of Brookings, Norman Ornstein of the American Enterprise Institute, and other scholars have said that partisan gerrymanders have reduced competition for House districts. In a column this fall, Albert Hunt of Bloomberg News decried the "polarizing effect" of redistricting, which he called a "largely bipartisan scam" that stifles competition. "There are a little more than 50 truly competitive districts," Hunt wrote.

But such criticisms may be overblown. Since 2005, Democrats have a net gain of 56 House seats, even though Republicans had drawn many of those districts' boundaries to try to enhance GOP opportunities. And Republicans next year seem positioned to reclaim some of those seats from junior members, and others from more-senior Democrats, especially among the 49 Democrats in districts that Obama lost last year. These seesaws show, among other things, that partisan-tinged redistricting often cannot withstand the inevitable swings in voter sentiment.

"Recent research provides little basis for the common belief that gerrymandering is a significant cause of contemporary political polarization," political scientist Morris Fiorina wrote in a new book, *Disconnect: The Breakdown of Representation in American Politics*. Fiorina cites the fact that voting is just as polarized in the Senate -- where all members are elected statewide -- as it is in the House. Moreover, he says, many of the states where critics contend that gerrymandering of House districts has benefited one party have two senators from that same party.

In many areas where election returns lean heavily one way, it would make little difference how the district lines are drawn. "Nonpartisan redistricting has had no effect in increasing competition, though the concept may have popular support," Alan Abramowitz, a political science professor at Emory University, said in an interview with *National Journal* several years ago.

Creative redistricting does not seem likely to disappear any time soon. For one thing, the traditional patterns of people of similar backgrounds or interests being confined to cramped apartment buildings or small neighborhoods have broken down. And the growing availability of map-drawing software and census data on the Internet enables many more individuals to weigh in on redistricting. Earlier this year, Dave Bradlee, a Seattle-based software engineer who worked for Microsoft for 20 years, launched "Dave's Redistricting App," which is available free. Bradlee writes on his blog that he has been politically active on issues such as "population and its relationship to climate change."

## Political Firepower

In recent rounds of redistricting, the national parties -- working with House members -- have coordinated with their state affiliates to maximize their success, including by pouring in money and other resources. The 2002 McCain-Feingold campaign finance reform law now bars the parties from raising soft money, the large and mostly unregulated contributions from big donors, but they are sure to find ways to funnel political money into the redistricting process.

Democrats have responded to the new environment with the National Democratic Redistricting Trust. Bob Bauer, the veteran election-law superlawyer who is preparing to become the White House counsel, designed and formally unveiled the initiative this summer. "The trust was created to assure that Democrats have an adequate role in redistricting," said Marc Elias, who has succeeded Bauer as chairman of the political law practice at the Washington firm Perkins Coie. "It raises money to spend on litigation and to work with interested groups that need legal support in drawing the lines."

Although the trust will be nominally separate from the Democratic Party, all three of its trustees recently served in top posts at the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee. The group's executive director, Brian Smoot, a partner in the 4C Partners political consulting firm, was the DCCC's political director in 2008. Smoot will work with Elias on securing courtroom teams for

expected redistricting battles in most states; he will also help House members seek consensus on their states' mapmaking, and coordinate with allied interest groups and state legislators. The trust does not yet have a formal budget, but it is set to raise and spend many millions of dollars. The Federal Election Commission has ruled that the campaign finance law does not cover redistricting activities, Elias said. "We are not independent, but we will operate separately from Democratic groups," he added, parsing his words. For their part, Republicans announced in September the launch of MAPS, or Making America's Promise Secure, to work with party groups on redistricting. The co-chairmen are former House Speaker Newt Gingrich, R-Ga., and former Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott, R-Miss. A House Republican aide who has done early work on redistricting said that the McCain-Feingold law makes it "a challenge to figure out who does what," because the Republican National Committee can no longer directly coordinate. Even election specialists don't understand how the new rules will work, a Republican Party lawyer said. As the House GOP's redistricting coordinator, Westmoreland has initiated his own contacts with state legislators in many states. With the Obama administration in charge of the census, Republicans worry about the potential for Democratic meddling in the count and the use of controversial statistical sampling techniques. Although Republicans resolved their initial objections to Robert Groves's appointment to head the Census Bureau, some fear the influence and political expertise of Bauer and White House Chief of Staff Rahm Emanuel. "I feel very confident that the goal of Dr. Groves is to have an accurate count," Westmoreland said. "But we need to worry that Rahm is like Karl Rove on steroids."

## **Justice Department Review**

The 1965 Voting Rights Act set out a complex regimen for federal review of state and local laws that affect voting, especially in the nine mostly Southern states and the parts of seven others that are required to receive pre-approval of any election-law changes, either from the Justice Department or the U.S. District Court in Washington, D.C. During the subsequent redistrictings in 1971, 1981, 1991, and 2001, a Republican administration was in charge at Justice, but the 2011 redistricting will take place under the watch of the Obama DOJ.

Tom Perez, who took over in October as assistant attorney general for the Civil Rights Division, said that his division is "feverishly preparing" for the census and will be ready to review redistricting plans. "I feel privileged to have a front-row seat in this conversation," said Perez, who served a dozen years as a career lawyer in the division and in 2002 was the first Hispanic elected to the Montgomery County, Md., council. During a recent speech to an alumni club of Brown University, his alma mater, Perez harshly criticized aspects of civil-rights enforcement by the Bush administration and said that part of his job was to "restore trust with the career attorneys."

Perez's selection has raised alarms among some conservatives. "My concern is that with the new leadership of the Civil Rights Division, Democratic redistricting plans will slide right through, but Republican plans will run into a buzz saw of opposition," said Hans von Spakovsky, an election-law expert who was a top official in the division during the George W. Bush administration. The division's lawyers are "highly partisan Democrats," von Spakovsky said, who in handling cases have often reflexively called outside activists for minority groups, "but they didn't get the other side of the story." Gerry Hebert, a former longtime attorney at the division and a prominent lawyer for Democrats on redistricting issues, firmly rejected that view. With Perez, he said, "the Justice Department will be restored to its earlier approach, and decisions will be based on the merits rather than on Republican politics." He predicted more-aggressive enforcement of voting-rights laws, and said that it might lead Republicans to file some of their redistricting plans in federal court, making the process "enormously more expensive."

Perez said he expects to hire about 100 new lawyers in the Civil Rights Division, but some activists worry that the administration has not moved fast enough, especially with the census and redistricting quickly approaching. "I am concerned that it's getting late," Vargas said. "It takes time to sign and train new attorneys."

## **Measuring The Impact**

Most states' redistricting plans will have been implemented in time for the November 2012 election, although some might require additional review. Measuring the change in the number of minority members elected to the House as the result of redistricting should be relatively easy.

At least as much interest will focus on the aggregate partisan gains and losses, but that can be more difficult to calculate. Even the relatively simple cases of Indiana, Tennessee, and Virginia raise several imponderables. When Tanner recently announced his retirement, for instance, a local news report said that a factor in his decision to retire in 2010 was that he otherwise would be "confronted with a hopeless re-election situation for 2012" because of Tennessee redistricting. And some Democrats in these three states might find themselves voted out of office because they lost touch at home, rather than because their district lines changed.

Still, redistricting seems likely to shake up the usual political outcomes. In Indiana, Tennessee, and Virginia, where Republicans now hold 13 of 29 House seats, the party hopes to gain more than half a dozen. (The GOP gained six seats in 2004 from the controversial Texas redistricting.) But some Republicans concede that they could lose nearly that many seats in California in 2012.

Although many members say they haven't given much thought to their redistricting prospects, some might want to create a checklist soon. Sanchez said that, as a new mother, it has become more challenging for her to make the trip from Washington for a long weekend in California. But she now does it once every three weeks, she said, to stay in touch with constituents and local leaders.

"It all boils down to who does the work in their district," Sanchez said. Back in 2002, she won a low-turnout primary against two better-known Democratic state legislators in the newly created district in the southeast corner of Los Angeles County. At the time, some local observers said that she benefited from campaign help from her older sister, Rep. Loretta Sanchez. That personal touch is yet another element that adds mystery to the art of redistricting.

# 2010Dec16ACLU Intervenes in Legal Challenge

<http://www.fosterfollynews.com/news/2010Dec16ACLUIntervenesinLegalChallenge.php>

January 4, 2011

**TALLAHASSEE, Fla.** – The ACLU of Florida today filed a motion to intervene as defendants in the lawsuit brought by Congresspersons Mario Diaz-Balart and Corrine Brown, which challenges one of the Fair Districts Amendments that was added to the Florida Constitution when it was adopted by voters on November 2, 2010.

Amendments 5 & 6 passed with over 60% of the vote, and when implemented will end gerrymandering and bring a fair districting process to Florida. They will also add protection of minority voting rights to the Florida Constitution for the first time.

The Congresspersons claim that Amendment 6 violates the federal Voting Rights Act which, according to the Congresspersons, ensures “the preservation of minority incumbents in positions of legislative influence and leadership.” The Congresspersons also claim that Amendment 6 violates the U. S. Constitution, which provides that “The times, Places and Manner of Holding Elections for Senators and Representatives, shall be prescribed in each State by the Legislature thereof.”

The ACLU and its political committee, *People Over Politics*, campaigned throughout Florida in support of the Fair Districts Amendments to end gerrymandering, and political and racial packing of legislative districts. The ACLU, intervening on behalf of its members who are registered Florida voters, is seeking to protect the anti-gerrymandering amendments approved by the voters.

“The passage of Amendments 5 & 6 was a major victory for voters in Florida,” stated Howard Simon, Executive Director of the ACLU of Florida. “Under Florida’s rigged and broken system, the odds have been stacked against fair and competitive elections. When Floridians went to the polls and passed these amendments, they brought an end to the era of gerrymandering that had left many Floridians without a voice in government.

“We hope that the federal courts reject this bizarre analysis of the Voting Rights Act by which the protection of minority voting rights is transformed into a law that protects minority office-holders. The ACLU intends to defend the people’s amendments and put an end to gerrymandering,” continued Simon.

Laughlin McDonald, Director of the National ACLU Voting Rights Project and one of the attorneys for the Interveners, said: “The challenged constitutional amendment doesn’t discriminate against anyone. It only attempts to insure that the redistricting process is fair and that all voters have an equal voice.”

A PDF copy of the motion filed today can be found here:

<http://www.aclufl.org/pdfs/GerrymanderInterveneMotion.pdf>

A PDF copy of the ACLU memo in support that was filed today can be found here:

<http://www.aclufl.org/pdfs/GerrymanderInterveneMemo.pdf>

The motion to intervene names four individuals and the ACLU of Florida – on behalf of its members – as defendant-interveners in the lawsuit. If granted, the Motion to Intervene would permit the ACLU to defend the Fair District Amendments in court.

ACLU attorneys intervening in the federal lawsuit include: Laughlin McDonald, National ACLU Voting Rights Project Director based in Atlanta; and Randall Marshall, ACLU of Florida Legal Director.

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# Federal Judge Dismisses Challenge To Key Voting Rights Act Provision

<http://legaltimes.typepad.com/blt/2010/12/federal-judge-dismisses-challenge-to-key-voting-rights-act-provision.html>

December 20, 2010

A federal district judge late Thursday dismissed a constitutional challenge to a critical part of the nation's landmark Voting Rights Act—one of two lawsuits aiming for the U.S. Supreme Court.

U.S. District Judge John Bates, saying an opinion would follow, issued the dismissal order in *Laroque v. Holder*, a suit filed in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia by a group of residents of Kinston, N.C., attacking Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act. A second suit—*Shelby County, Ala. v. Holder*—is also before Bates and a merits hearing is scheduled for Feb. 2.

“This is the first of two constitutional challenges to the Voting Rights Act, hoping to find a sympathetic audience in the United States Supreme Court,” said J. Gerald Hebert, executive director of the Campaign Legal Center and co-counsel to a group of intervenors in the case. He added the decision was “an important victory in safeguarding this historic and still very pertinent piece of legislation.”

Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act prohibits certain state and local jurisdictions—mostly in the south—from changing voting procedures without first obtaining federal preclearance that the proposed voting change does not deny or abridge the right to vote on account of race, color or membership in a language minority group.

Jones Day partner Michael Carvin, who is representing the Kinston residents on a pro bono basis, said he will appeal the dismissal to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the D.C. Circuit.

“We can't imagine what the rationale is [for the dismissal], but whatever it is, it can't be right,” said Carvin. The lawsuit is receiving financial support from the Center for Individual Rights, a Washington conservative public interest law firm.

The Department of Justice, which argued in favor of dismissal, said the Kinston plaintiffs lacked standing to bring the lawsuit.

Last year, Attorney General Eric Holder Jr. refused to approve a Kinston voter referendum to switch from partisan to nonpartisan voting in city council elections. The referendum had been approved by a 2-1 margin. The lawsuit noted that blacks constitute 64.6% of registered voters in the city.

The Justice Department stated in its objection letter that “elimination of party affiliation on the ballot will likely reduce the ability of blacks to elect candidates of choice.”

The Kinston suit, which focused solely on Section 5, argued that the preclearance requirement for voting changes exceeds Congress' authority under the Fifth, 14th and 15th amendments.

Laughlin McDonald, director of the ACLU's Voting Rights Project, applauded Bates' decision and said that, without Section 5, “jurisdictions could implement new forms of discrimination and the burden and expense of challenging them would fall upon the victims.”

Shelby County, represented by Wiley Rein's Bert Rein and William Consovoy, contends that Section 5 and its trigger mechanism in Section 4(b) exceed Congress' enforcement powers under the 14th and 15th Amendments. In reauthorizing the act in 2006, the county says, Congress lacked evidence of intentional discrimination that warranted the act's enactment in 1965 and its three subsequent extensions. Its lawsuit is being funded by The Project on Fair Representation, a Virginia-based, conservative nonprofit legal defense fund.

The two lawsuits focus on constitutional questions left unanswered by the Supreme Court's decision last year in *Northwest Austin Municipal Utility District No. One v. Holder*. That case involved a direct challenge to Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act, which Congress reauthorized in 2006 and extended for another 25 years. The justices avoided answering the question of Section 5's constitutionality by deciding the case on other grounds, but Chief Justice John Roberts Jr., in his majority opinion, voiced strong skepticism about its constitutionality, essentially warning Congress to fix it before another lawsuit reached the high court.

## floridatoday.com | Opinion Matters | Florida Today's Opinion Matters Blog

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Tuesday I was one of the 49 citizens that signed up and spoke at the annual Brevard Legislative Delegation meeting. I commend all the engaged citizens who attended or addressed the delegation. It is unfortunate for constituents the meeting was not televised by the county or FLORIDA TODAY newspaper.

During my allotted 3 minutes I expressed concerns about the apparent attempts by our legislators to circumvent the will of the voters and Amendments 5 & 6 "FairDistricts" which were passed by Florida voters exceeding the 60% required majority.

Two legislators, State Rep. Will Weatherford and State Sen. Don Gaetz were appointed to oversee the redrawing of Florida's districts. They will be responsible for making sure that the legislature follows the redistricting rules despite the fact they were both members of a group explicitly created to defeat Amendments 5 and 6.

Senate President Mike Haridopolis did not explain or defend the appointments of these two legislators who so clearly oppose their assigned task.

Haridopolos did predict a lengthy and costly battle, with "the courts ultimately drawing district lines." Haridopolos did not dispute the fact that one of those lawsuits is being funded by The Florida Leadership Alliance and is run by Sen. Don Gaetz, the same Senator he as Senate President put in charge of redistricting.

And Haridopolos did not deny The Citizens for Housing and Urban Growth is controlled by a cluster of GOP legislators who are paying the lawyers challenging the amendments because they allegedly negatively impact minority voters. The Florida Conference of Black State Legislators and the NAACP disagree, both endorsed "FairDistricts".

Why are the state lawmakers we elected funding lawsuits specifically designed to overturn the amendments the voters just approved?

Senate President Haridopolos asked me if I "knew how many districts Obama won?" I fail to see what this has to do with following the will of voters who overwhelmingly passed Fair Districts.

Perhaps Senator Haridopolos's question only illustrates the benefits of gerrymandering and why our GOP dominated legislature will lead a long and messy redistricting fight. Despite having more registered Democrats than Republicans in Florida, the state government is dominated by Republicans.

Floridians of all political parties are fed up with our Florida Legislators quest for power. We voted to restore true democracy in Florida and want to choose our representatives rather than representatives choosing voters by gerrymandering.

We were assured the redistricting process would be open and in the "sunshine". Citizens will be watching to make sure it is.

The time line:

\* Summer 2011, legislature conducts hearings around the state to get public input

\* Jan. 10, 2012, legislature meets for its 60-day legislative session.

\* March 9, 2012, session ends

\* March 10, 2012, legislature petitions the Florida Supreme Court for its required review of the districts; the court has 30 days

\* April 16, 2012, the FSC completes its review and legislature sends the redistricting plan to the U.S. Department of Justice for its required

review; the DOJ has 60 days

\* June 18 districts are finalized and candidates may start qualifying for newly drawn districts.

Do Opinion Matters readers think Haridopolos and those in power have chosen to ignore the will of the voters by funding these lawsuits and appointing leaders in charge of the process which they so clearly oppose?

Labels: [Amendments 5 and 6](#), [FairDistricts](#), [Florida Senate President Mike Haridopolos](#), [State House Speaker Dean Cannon](#)

# Will Florida Redistricting Be Open and in the “Sunshine”? « athenapost.com

<http://athenapost.com/2010/12/20/will-florida-redistricting-be-open-and-in-the-sunshine/>

December 30, 2010

December 20, 2010

**By Vicki Impoco, December 16, 2010, Opinion Matters/Florida Today –**

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Why are the state lawmakers we elected funding lawsuits specifically designed to overturn the amendments the voters just approved?

Senate President Haridopolos asked me if I “knew how many districts Obama won?” I fail to see what this has to do with following the will of voters who overwhelmingly passed Fair Districts.

Perhaps Senator Haridopolos’s question only illustrates the benefits of gerrymandering and why our GOP dominated legislature will lead a long and messy redistricting fight. Despite having more registered Democrats than Republicans in Florida, the state government is dominated by Republicans.

Floridians of all political parties are fed up with our Florida Legislators quest for power. We voted to restore true democracy in Florida and want to choose our representatives rather than representatives choosing voters by gerrymandering.

We were assured the redistricting process would be open and in the “sunshine”. Citizens will be watching to make sure it is.

The time line:

\* Summer 2011, legislature conducts hearings around the state to get public input

- \* Jan. 10, 2012, legislature meets for its 60-day legislative session.
- \* March 9, 2012, session ends
- \* March 10, 2012, legislature petitions the Florida Supreme Court for its required review of the districts; the court has 30 days
- \* April 16, 2012, the FSC completes its review and legislature sends the redistricting plan to the U.S. Department of Justice for its required review; the DOJ has 60 days
- \* June 18 districts are finalized and candidates may start qualifying for newly drawn districts.

<http://opinionmatters.flatoday.net/2010/12/brevard-legislative-meeting.html>

**Tags:** [Fair Districts](#), [Florida](#), [politicsFlorida](#), [Politics](#), [Recent](#)

# Florida could gain two House seats thanks to census count

<http://www.tampabay.com/news/politics/national/florida-will-pick-up-more-political-power-from-us-census-this-week/1140988>

December 30, 2010

By Lesley Clark, Miami Herald

In Print: Monday, December 20, 2010

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WASHINGTON Florida may pick up as many as two seats in the U.S. House further boosting the state's influence in Congress and making it an even bigger prize in the race for the White House.

Though the actual increase in seats won't be known until the U.S. Census Bureau makes it official Tuesday, early projections suggest Florida is a lock for one seat, and in contention for a second.

The creation of seats based on new census data is always a messy political and legal fight in Florida, pitting the parties and ambitious lawmakers from various regions against each other. And it's likely to be further complicated this time around by two voter-approved state constitutional amendments that create strict rules for how politicians can draw district maps.

The addition of two seats would bring the state's total number in the U.S. House of Representatives to 27. It would also boost Florida's Electoral College votes to 29 (the state's two senators are included in that math).

"Two seats would be like both LeBron James and Chris Bosh," said state Rep. Perry Thurston, D-Fort Lauderdale, the top Democrat on one of the legislative committees that will handle redistricting. "To think that we could be more influential than the last couple of presidential elections is saying a lot, but two more seats surely would do it."

The state Legislature will decide where to put the new seats, with a potential nod to Central Florida: The University of Florida's Bureau of Economic and Business Research says that area has grown at a faster rate than any other region.

Florida would get its two seats as part of a broad population migration and power shift with Sun Belt states like Florida, Georgia, Arizona and Texas picking up seats that are being lost in declining Northern states, including Massachusetts, New York, Pennsylvania and Ohio.

The migration, which mirrors population movement in the country since World War II, could be good news for Republicans, with Rust Belt states trending Democratic, while Sun Belt states have leaned Republican.

"It's impossible to see how Republicans don't pick up a dozen or more House seats," said Larry Sabato, director of the University of Virginia's Center for Politics.

Democrats in Florida question whether Republicans, who already control two-thirds of the congressional delegation and the state House and Senate, will have enough voters in the state to create additional districts for the GOP without jeopardizing Republican incumbents. They note that state voter registration rolls show Democrats with an edge.

"I don't think they can draw any more Republican seats," said state Rep. Ron Saunders, D-Key West, the House minority leader. "At a certain point it's got to be hard to sustain."

Some Republicans concede the point privately. But state Sen. Don Gaetz, R-Niceville, who will lead the Senate redistricting committee, says much of the speculation is premature. He promises a transparent process the

computer software that lawmakers will use to draw districts will be available to the public and committees will hold a series of public hearings, beginning this summer.

"It will be the most open, transparent and interactive redistricting in the nation," said Gaetz, who had opposed the redistricting amendments. "We can have 19 million auditors of the process."

Though Republicans will control the committees that put together the new maps, they will be required to abide by the new amendments, which the party had opposed. The state amendments, which are aimed at creating more compact districts and not sprinkling inkblots, dictate that districts can't be drawn to either help or hurt an incumbent or a political party.

U.S. Rep. Mario Diaz-Balart, R-Miami, who is challenging the state amendment that governs congressional redistricting, along with U.S. Rep. Corrine Brown, D-Jacksonville, said he believes the federal courts will overturn the amendment. He and Brown say it violates the Voting Rights Act by diluting minority representation.

"We're hoping for some clarification before redistricting starts up," said Diaz-Balart, who was chairman of the House redistricting committee while in the Florida Legislature.

Ellen Freidin, the Miami attorney who championed the amendments as a way of creating more competitive districts, noted they passed with more than 60 percent of the vote, suggesting widespread discontent with the way districts are drawn by politicians.

"That's been proven beyond a reasonable doubt," she said.

Observers expect the dispute to end up in federal court. Redistricting plans end up in court more than 90 percent of the time, said Douglas Johnson, a fellow with the Rose Institute of State and Local Government at Claremont McKenna College in California.

"Florida's redistricting," Johnson said, "is certainly not going to be a smooth ride."

The new census numbers have implications beyond politics. The figures are used in formulas that determine how much money each state receives in federal subsidies for health care and other services.

The housing crisis, however, may have affected the state's population and the result could be a single seat, rather than two. Figures compiled by Election Data Services, a Washington, D.C., company that tracks demographic and election trends, predicts two seats. But its president, Kimball Brace, said he was surprised by the prediction, given Florida's housing market.

Brace said a second Florida seat is "probably the iffiest" of all of the predictions, which include Texas picking up four seats and Ohio and New York each losing two seats.

Another projection has Florida gaining a single seat.

"All these estimates are based on demographic models and we've never had a situation like the housing and foreclosure crisis," Johnson said. "The models don't know how to capture that. There's likely to be even more surprises than usual."

Still, a single seat is better than none: In 2000, the state of Utah unsuccessfully challenged the census results and sought to have Mormon missionaries living abroad counted as residents after narrowly losing a seat.

Said Stan Smith, director of the University of Florida's economic and business research bureau: "It's no small deal."

*McClatchy Washington bureau reporter Les Blumenthal contributed to this report.*

[Last modified: Dec 19, 2010 11:50 PM]

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# U.S. Census Data to be Released Tuesday

<http://www.sunshinestatenews.com/story/us-census-data-be-released-tuesday>

December 21, 2010

Florida could get two more seats in Congress

The U.S. Census Bureau is scheduled to announce its statistics from the 2010 Census Tuesday, and as a result, Florida is slated to get at least one -- and possibly two -- extra seats in the House of Representatives.

Florida's population has grown substantially in the 10 years since the last census, with the Census Bureau estimating 18.5 million residents in the state in 2009, up more than 2.5 million from 2000 Census numbers.

State legislators involved in the process of redistricting will take notice of the data released Tuesday, but say it is too soon to know where the new districts might be placed or which political party might benefit the most by the shift in district boundaries.

"Our job is to follow the law and draw districts, and we'll let the voters decide who wins the seats," said Rep. Will Weatherford, R-Wesley Chapel, chairman of the House Redistricting Committee.

But following the law will be a difficult proposition for legislators, as the redistricting process is already the subject of court cases before it has really begun.

Voters passed Amendments 5 and 6 to the Florida Constitution during the midterm elections, placing greater restrictions on legislators trying to draw new districts. For instance, new congressional and legislative boundaries must not be drawn to help or hurt incumbents or minority voters.

Those amendments, are already being challenged in the courts. U.S. Reps. Corrine Brown, D-Jacksonville, and Mario Diaz-Balart, R-Miami, have filed suit to have them struck down. State legislators, though, are proceeding under the assumption the amendments will be upheld.

Sen. Don Gaetz, R-Niceville, who chairs the Senate Redistricting Committee, pledged an open and transparent process during a meeting earlier this month, and while federal and state laws will make for a complicated and arduous process, he is reveling in the prospect of two more congressional seats for Florida.

"Imagine how much more powerful Florida will be in Republican and Democratic presidential politics with two more congressional districts," Gaetz said.

The data released Tuesday will go a long way toward determining where legislators will fit in those new districts.

"The new congressional districts will probably go where there's been a disproportionate increase in population," Gaetz said.

Tuesday's numbers are likely to raise some eyebrows, but won't spark any immediate action by legislators. Weatherford's committee doesn't have any members yet (they're expected to be announced in January), and until more specific, block-by-block statistics are released in April, he says there's little for them to do.

If Republicans in charge of redistricting are quiet about what redistricting means for the GOP in the state, they are excited about the party's possible national gains. Most estimates have traditionally blue states like New York, New Jersey and Massachusetts losing seats and red states like Georgia, South Carolina and Texas adding districts.

"I think people are moving out of these states with a high tax structure and highly regulated industries and coming to states with warm weather and friendly to investment capital. Hopefully, we'll continue to create good

policies that will continue the population growth,” Weatherford said.

Reach Gray Rohrer at [grohrer@sunshinestateneews.com](mailto:grohrer@sunshinestateneews.com) or at (850) 727-0859.

# Florida gains 2 seats in Congress as census shows population surge - Wire - Lifestyle

<http://www.bellinghamherald.com/2010/12/21/1782644/florida-gains-2-seats-in-congress.html>

December 22, 2010

WASHINGTON Florida will have two more members of Congress in 2012, with 2010 census figures showing a surge in the state's population, boosting its influence in Washington and giving it more clout in the race for the White House.

The two new seats, announced Tuesday by the U.S. Census Bureau, will bring Florida's representatives in the U.S. House of Representatives to 27 - the same number of congressional seats as New York, which lost two seats as part of a decades-long population migration from the Northeast and Midwest to the South and the West.

Only Democratic-leaning California and reliably Republican Texas will be bigger presidential prizes when it comes to Electoral College votes, though neither state has been considered an up-for-grabs, presidential battleground like Florida, which George W. Bush won by just 537 votes in 2000 and which went for Barack Obama in 2008.

"Already a 'must win state' for presidential candidates, Florida becomes even more important," said state Sen. Don Gaetz, the Destin Republican who will lead one of the state Legislature's redistricting committees that will redraw congressional maps before the 2012 election.

The creation of seats - often a chaotic political and legal fight - is likely to be further complicated by two voter-approved state constitutional amendments that create strict rules for how politicians can draw district maps. Republicans largely opposed the amendments and are challenging them in court. On Tuesday, Democrats cautioned the Republican-controlled Legislature to stick to the changes. The amendments call for districts to be drawn in such a way that neither helps nor hurt political parties.

"It is important to remember that the people of Florida have spoken when voters overwhelmingly passed the Fair District Amendments," Florida Democratic Party executive director Scott Arceneaux said. "Floridians of all parties can look forward to districts that truly reflect their communities and representation that reflects the diversity of our great state, rather than the partisan gerrymandering that best describes the current districts."

Florida Senate President Mike Haridopolos didn't mention the amendments, but promised transparency.

"This will be a deliberative process and all Floridians will have a voice," Haridopolos said.

Across the U.S., 12 seats shifted in the 435-seat House, reflecting a drift in population to the South and West. The numbers are largely viewed as a boost for Republicans, with Texas, for example, picking up four seats.

The state Legislature will decide where to put Florida's new seats, with a potential nod to the Orlando area where growth has been faster than any other region. Some analysts suggest a second seat in Southwest Florida, or north of Tampa. More detailed, neighborhood level data will be released by the Census Bureau early next year.

Democrats in Florida suggest Republicans in the state may have a difficult time creating more GOP districts in a state where Democrats lead in voter registration.

"It's a problem I wouldn't mind having, but it's going to be tough," Democratic strategist Steve Schale said of the opportunity to draw two new seats. "I would be surprised if they try to do two Republican seats. You could do it in the short term, but it comes at great peril in the long term."

Republican strategist David "D.J." Johnson noted there will be no shortage of competing forces: from state lawmakers who may be interested in creating seats for themselves to members of Congress who will want to

protect their own districts - often by pinching friendly voters from other districts.

"We got new seats in 2000. I bemoaned then that although you get two new seats, you get no new land, so you've got to force seats where you can," said Johnson, who was executive director of the Republican Party of Florida during the last post-census redistricting. "There's a lot of confusion and chaos, and now there's two new amendments."

The GOP now holds 19 of Florida's 25 congressional seats, and Johnson noted that not all are GOP strongholds.

For example, the Broward-Palm Beach district that Republican Allen West recently won by defeating Democrat Ron Klein was redrawn after the 2000 census to benefit Republicans, but now is closely split between the parties. Both sides will be watching that seat and others like it because any changes to either that include or exclude voters of either party could make a difference at the ballot box.

The numbers have implications beyond the political. U.S. Commerce Secretary Gary Locke noted that the results will be used to allocate more than \$400 billion in annual federal aid for education, services for seniors, law enforcement and transportation.

And Locke said that businesses will use the data to identify new markets and areas to invest.

"The 2010 census will serve as a backbone for our political and economic system for years to come," Locke said.

Florida's official population as of April 1 - Census Day - was pegged at 18,801,310, an increase of 17.6 percent, or 2,818,932 people, over the past 10 years.

Florida's growth, despite the housing crisis, outpaced overall growth in the South, which was the fastest in the country at 14.3 percent.

Just seven states, including Nevada - which at 35.1 percent had the nation's largest rate of population growth - had larger gains than Florida.

(Miami Herald staff writer Amy Sherman contributed to this report.)

# Blogs: Lone Republican» Blog Archive » Who will the Democrats sacrifice?

[http://www.bostonherald.com/blogs/news/lone\\_republican/?p=1219&svc=home&position=recent#](http://www.bostonherald.com/blogs/news/lone_republican/?p=1219&svc=home&position=recent#)

January 6, 2011

It is redistricting time again and the legislature will be up to their old tricks which means taxpayers will be funding another costly legal court battle. Instead of creating an independent commission to draw the new lines, the Speaker and the Senate President will appoint a group of loyalists to protect incumbencies. Districts will not be fair, balanced or concise. Hence, there will be a legal challenge. I see no reason to hope that the legislature will create a Boston-based minority Congressional district. Slicing Boston for the liberal votes is too important piece of the puzzle for keeping all the seats biased for Democrats.

With the population drop in the Commonwealth, we are going to lose a Congressional seat. If none of the Democrat incumbents retire or run for higher office, it is going to be fun to see who the legislature sacrifices. Who do you want to see ousted via redistricting?

Update: For those asking about less representation, I like things to be fair as possible. So if we lost people, then we lose a seat. And yes, I am glad a Democrat will be tossed out. Moreover, I think our decline is a reflection on our poor leadership.

This entry was posted on Tuesday, December 21st, 2010 at 11:02 am and is filed under [General](#). You can follow any responses to this entry through the [RSS 2.0](#) feed. You can [leave a response](#), or [trackback](#) from your own site.



# Florida Politics

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<http://flapolitics.blogspot.com/2010/12/rpof-runs-wild-not-even-former-gov-jeb.html>

January 4, 2011

"When Gov.-elect Rick Scott stood in a church this week and dropped a policy bomb on the education establishment -- a plan to essentially give vouchers to any family that wants one -- 900 voucher kids in the audience cheered. But from South Florida to Tallahassee, apocalyptic thoughts began raining on traditional public education advocates." "When Scott spoke Thursday of giving all students the same opportunities as voucher students, he didn't mention " "[Scott shaking up halls of academia with plan](#)". Related: "[Scott, Superman and what's next for Florida's schools](#)". "[Rick Scott to interview candidates for Florida GOP chief](#)". See also "[Scott to Hold Sit-Downs With GOP Contenders](#)" and "[Scott interviews candidates for chair of RPOF](#)". "[Rick Scott hires New York headhunters to fill state jobs](#)". "[State workforce is lean - but who cares](#)".

## **RPOFers warned not to document their "intent"**

"The Florida Senate's reapportionment committee met yesterday to discuss a contentious issue — the redrawing of district lines to reflect data gathered in the newest census. It's an issue that has become more convoluted thanks to the recent passage of Amendments 5 and 6, the so-called 'Fair Districts' amendments that created strict rules for how politicians can draw up district maps."

*Under Amendments 5 and 6, which passed in the November elections, districts must be as contiguous as possible, and may not be drawn with the intent of marginalizing minority groups or favoring any incumbent or political party.*

*State Sen. Jack Latvala, R-St. Petersburg, warned fellow committee members that "intent" could be determined by analyzing lawmakers' electronic communications, which could become evidence in such a lawsuit.*

"[State Senate discusses redistricting software and timeline, possibility of lawsuit](#)". "[Questions over bump in school grades](#)". "[State should clear activists' records](#)". "[Another political lawsuit: State fighting EPA for insisting on standards like ones Florida developed](#)". "[Peterman case highlights ethics law flaws](#)". "[GOP field already building to challenge Bill Nelson](#)".

## State gains 2 congressional seats

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<http://www.bizjournals.com/jacksonville/news/2010/12/21/state-gains-2-congressional-seats.html>

December 21, 2010

The state of Florida got an early holiday present as it gained two more congressional seats thanks to 2010 census results.

In addition, results from the state's MyFloridaCensus study helped identify 2,333 additional households whose census data was missing that could provide an additional \$35 million in federal funding to the state, counties and cities for the next 10 years.

"Today, Florida is being assigned two additional congressional seats, meaning more adequate representation for the nearly 20 million people residing in Florida," said state Rep. **Will Weatherford**, R-Wesley Chapel, in a prepared statement.

According to census data, Florida has a population of 18.8 million people, a 17.6 percent increase from nearly 15.9 million reported in 2000. The U.S. population increased 9.7 percent to 308.7 million from 281.4 million in 2000.

For the full release from the state, [click here](#).

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For the full release from the state, [click here](#).

# Florida gains two seats in Congress - 12/21/2010

<http://www.miamiherald.com/2010/12/21/v-print/1983504/florida-gains-two-seats-in-congress.html>

December 29, 2010

Posted on Tue, Dec. 21, 2010

Florida has picked up two new seats in the U.S. House of Representatives, making it the biggest up-for-grab state in the race for the White House.

The new seats, announced by the U.S. Census Bureau, give Florida equal standing with New York, and only California and Texas will have more electoral college votes, though neither state is considered up for grabs like Florida.

The boost is expected to help Republicans, who already control two-thirds of the seats in the state, but some say privately the party could have a tough time carving out two new seats without jeopardizing incumbents.

In February the Census bureau will release population and race breakdowns down to the neighborhood level for states to begin redrawing the congressional boundaries. Florida's redistricting will be complicated this time around by two voter-approved state constitutional amendments that create strict rules for how politicians can draw district maps.

The addition of two seats will bring Florida's total number in the House to 27 and boost its Electoral College votes to 29 (the state's two senators are included in that math).

The boost in Florida's population comes as part of a broad population migration -- and power shift -- with Sun Belt states like Florida, Georgia, Arizona and Texas picking up seats that are being lost in declining Northern states, including Massachusetts, New York, Pennsylvania and Ohio.

Texas was the biggest winner in the census, picking up 4 new seats; Ohio and New York each lost two.

The new numbers put Florida's population at 18,801,310 -- the fourth largest state in the nation, behind California, Texas and New York.

# Senate prez promises everyone gets a voice in redistricting

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<http://miamiherald.typepad.com/nakedpolitics/2010/12/senate-prez-promises-everyone-gets-a-voice-in-redistricting-.html>

December 21, 2010

Florida Senate President **Mike Haridopolos** on Florida's new congressional seats: "With today's release of the 2010 census results, Florida's clout among our country's 49 other states continues to rise. The population growth in the state allows Floridians to gain two additional voices in the U.S. House of Representatives – meaning our state will be tied for the third largest congressional delegation in the country with 27 members of Congress. Florida has experienced phenomenal growth and in just 40 years, the number of Floridians has nearly tripled to the 18.8 million residents we have today.

"Now the work begins in the Florida Legislature as we draw new congressional districts as well as seats in the Florida House and Senate. This will be a deliberative process and all Floridians will have a voice. I have the utmost confidence in the Senate Reapportionment Committee led by Senator **Don Gaetz** and look forward to providing an efficient, transparent process to maximize Floridians' voice in Tallahassee and Washington, D.C."

## NationalJournal.com - No. 2. Florida: One New Seat Or Two?

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Florida is certain to gain at least one additional seat in this year's reapportionment of congressional districts; the question is whether it will gain two, as it did in 2002.

If so, Florida would add a 27th seat, potentially tying New York for the nation's third-largest congressional delegation (California has the largest, followed by Texas).

Once again, Republicans control both the governorship and the Legislature, giving them the authority to redistrict. This time they would love to protect the four-seat gain that gave them a 19-to-6-edge in the delegation in 2010.

But the passage of the "Fair Districts Florida" ballot amendments this fall (the one bright spot for the state's Democrats in an otherwise dismal year) could tie Republicans' hands by forbidding them to draw districts that "favor or disfavor an incumbent or political party" and requiring them to draw districts that are "compact, as equal in population as feasible, and where feasible make use of existing city, county and geographical boundaries."

Of course, this amendment is almost guaranteed to produce a legal fiasco over just what exactly constitutes "compact" and "making use" of existing boundaries, but any "neutral" redrawing of districts would almost certainly guarantee Democrats more opportunities in the state.

The question is whether Republicans can find a clever way to draw districts that abide by these new standards and conform to their own political interests. One way that they might be able to skirt the rules is by citing the requirement to preserve minority-majority voting districts. That could allow them to preserve the oddly shaped districts of a pair of African-American Democrats, the 3rd

Congressional District's Rep. **Corrine Brown** and the 23rd's Rep. **Alcee Hastings** -- and thereby shore up those of three newly elected House Republicans: the Orlando area's **Daniel Webster** of the 8th District and **Sandra (Sandy) Adams** of the 24th, and Palm Beach's **Allen West** of the 22nd.

If Florida gains one seat, look for Republicans to attempt to add a new GOP-friendly seat in fast-growing southwest Florida, perhaps combining parts of the 13th, 14th, 16th, and 25th Congressional Districts into a new one in the Naples and Fort Myers area.

If Florida does gain a second seat, look for Republicans to attempt to add another GOP-friendly seat north of the Tampa Bay area, incorporating parts of the fast-growing 5th, 6th, and 8th Congressional Districts. The 5th District includes The Villages, a retirement behemoth, and is the fastest-growing district in the state. Its population has grown by 45 percent since 2000, meaning that the district needs to shed more than 200,000 residents.

But remember, any plan Republicans come up with is likely to end up being challenged in court.

# GOP gains congressional seats in post-Census reapportionment

<http://newmexicoindependent.com/68412/gop-gains-congressional-seates-in-post-census-reapportionment>

December 29, 2010

The Census Bureau announced the results of the decennial process of reapportioning congressional districts by state Tuesday morning, and Republicans stand to gain from the results based on growth patterns in the South and West. New Mexico, however, will retain all of its congressional seats.

The Census apportions congressional districts every ten years, while state legislatures are generally in charge of redrawing the districts based on those apportionments. The population of the United States is now 308,745,538, and each congressional district will average 710,767 persons.

Texas, where Republicans have a supermajority in the House and Senate and hold the governor's mansion, gained four new House seats with the population growing by 20.6 percent in ten years. However, the growth broken down by race will be released in February — the Voting Rights Act could mean that some of those seats have to be drawn with a majority of Hispanics that have [accounted for](#) much of the recent growth.

Florida gained two seats, where Republicans also have a supermajority in both legislative chambers and hold the governor's mansion. Amendment 6, limiting the power of the legislature to redraw congressional districts, passed in the November elections, but it is [being challenged](#) in court by Reps. Corrine Brown (D-Fla.) and Mario Diaz-Balart (R-Fla.).

Arizona, Georgia, Nevada, South Carolina, Utah and Washington all gained one seat.

New York and Ohio lost two seats each, representing the longstanding decline in growth in the Rust Belt. Iowa, Illinois, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Missouri, New Jersey and Pennsylvania all lost one seat.

The reapportionment process will also have implications for the 2012 presidential campaign, as the Electoral College is based on the number of congressional districts in each state. In 2008, Barack Obama beat John McCain by 365 electoral votes to 173. With today's reapportionment, McCain would have picked up six seats and Obama would have lost five.

# State gains two seats@ | NewsOK.com

<http://www.newsok.com/state-gains-two-seats/article/feed/229594>

December 29, 2010

c.2010 [St. Petersburg Times](#)@

WASHINGTON ? Florida will gain two [U.S. House](#) seats as Census Bureau data released Tuesday realigned Congress and continues a steady shift of population and political power to the South and West.

A 17.6 percent population boom in the past decade will give [Florida](#) 27 House members beginning in 2012, boosting the state's clout and ability to draw more federal funding.

Florida now has as many seats as [New York](#), a significant marker that shows how far the state has come since the advent of air conditioning.

Already the biggest swing state in presidential elections, Florida stands to be even more influential. The population growth ? up to 18.8 million from 15.9 million ? will push Florida's Electoral College votes to 29.

"What a great day for Florida!" said [U.S. Rep. Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, R-Miami](#).

Now comes the hard part: determining where the new seats will go, an often bitter political fight that may not be resolved until June 2012.

The Republican-led [Florida Legislature](#) will decide where to put the seats, and there is early talk of [Central Florida](#) getting the attention because of its rapid growth. [Tampa Bay](#) and Southwest Florida also could be a consideration.

Overall, the nation's population April 1 was 308,745,538, up from 281.4 million a decade ago, or 9.7 percent. It was the slowest decade-long growth rate since the [Great Depression](#). Florida remains the fourth-largest state, behind [California](#), [Texas](#) and New York.

The demographic shift made winners out of the South and West and losers out of the Northeast and Midwest.

Texas was the biggest winner, with four new House seats, putting its delegation at 36 members. Gaining one seat each: [Arizona](#), [Georgia](#), [Nevada](#), [South Carolina](#), [Utah](#) and [Washington](#).

[Ohio](#) and New York will lose two House seats each. Losing one House seat are [Illinois](#), [Iowa](#), [Louisiana](#), [Massachusetts](#), [Michigan](#), [Missouri](#), [New Jersey](#) and [Pennsylvania](#).

The gains come as part of the 10-year "resident population" count by the [U.S. Census Bureau](#). Florida began with just four seats a century ago and picked up more each decade.

In 1960, the state had 12 House members. By 2000 it had reached the current 25, of which Republicans hold an overwhelming 19.

According to PoliData, Florida would have gained only one seat, not two, if the census had only counted [U.S.](#) citizens in making its apportionment calculations.

Several other states with large Hispanic populations ? including both illegal immigrants and legal immigrants who have not become naturalized citizens ? would have had different totals as well.

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Florida voters in November passed constitutional amendments requiring the drawing of compact districts, not the

jigsaw boundaries of the past that were designed to benefit one party. Court fights have been common. Republicans opposed the amendments.

State Sen. Don Gaetz, the [Niceville](#) Republican who will head up Florida's redistricting effort, said he has already been flooded with calls from members of Congress and would-be representatives (he would not name names) offering suggestions of where the lines should be drawn.

"Apparently I have new friends everywhere," Gaetz said, laughing. "I don't think anybody can take the politics out of politics. However my goal is to have the most open, transparent and interactive redistricting process in America."

He said a website would be established with detailed maps incorporating census data and current congressional and state legislative seats so the public can see before and after models. Public hearings will be held.

The work will begin in April after the census provides highly detailed block-by-block population data. "Until we really have that," Gaetz said, "it's hard to figure where the two additional congressional seats will go."

The new seats, subject to legislative review, must be complete by June 2012, when candidates will declare their intent to run.

Democrats sought to remind their counterparts of the voter mandate for "fair districts" and called for an end to partisan maneuvering.

But the party shared in the excitement and said it ensures Florida will continue to play a critical role in presidential elections as the "largest and most important swing state."

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Overall, the gains came in Republican-friendly states and that could be a problem for [President Barack Obama](#) as he seeks re-election.

Had the new apportionment numbers been used during the presidential election of 2008, Obama would still have won, but with six fewer electoral votes, according to Election Data Services.

[White House](#) press secretary [Robert Gibbs](#) played down the implications, saying he did not think the census would have "huge practical impact" in national politics.

The [GOP](#) undoubtedly feels more secure, with most of the gains happening in Republican-leaning states and with the GOP controlling a large share of the nation's legislative bodies.

But it's still too early to declare it a boon. In states such as Florida with a large number of Republican districts, it could be tough to carve out more.

"It's not as straight away and clear cut as saying it's all a big gain for the GOP," said [Tim Storey](#), a redistricting analyst with the [National Conference of State Legislatures](#).

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Highlights of census data

? Michigan was the only state to lose population during the past decade.

? Nevada, with a 35 percent increase, was the fastest-growing state.

? For the first time in its history, Democratic-leaning California will not gain a House seat after a census.

? The average population of a new U.S. House district will be 710,767. But each state must have at least one district. So [Wyoming](#), the least populous state with 563,626 residents, will have a representative with considerably fewer constituents.

See changes

over time

For a [New York Times](#) interactive map of apportionment changes in the past century, go to [links.tampabay.com](http://links.tampabay.com).

# New census numbers award Florida 2 more seats in Congress

<http://www.orlandosentinel.com/news/politics/fl-new-congressional-seats-20101221.0.7854228.print.story>

December 22, 2010

orlandosentinel.com/news/politics/fl-new-congressional-seats-20101221,0,4193309.story

By William E. Gibson, Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON -- Florida's population topped 18.8 million this year, a 17.6-percent surge since 2000 that will give the state two more seats in Congress and two more electoral votes in presidential elections.

Count Florida Democrats among the potential winners from the 2010 Census results unveiled on Tuesday.

New political boundaries shaped by the "Fair Districts" constitutional amendments approved by voters this year - - are expected to divide power more evenly between the major political parties in both the Legislature and the U.S. House. At the same time, though, the Republican-dominated Legislature, overseen by a Republican governor, will try to draw lines to maximize their party's chances.

"It's a crap shoot right now. But if we draw the districts in a fair and impartial way, the registration of Florida voters would suggest that we would have a more balanced delegation in Congress and a more balanced state Legislature," said David Colburn, a history professor at the University of Florida and co-author of "Government in the Sunshine State."

"That would likely mean an increase in the number of Democrats," he said. Registered Democrats outnumber Republican voters by roughly 600,000 in the state, despite the huge GOP advantage in legislative and congressional seats.

Census officials released the Florida numbers on Tuesday along with other state and national results, reporting a nationwide population of 308,745,538. The population data, used every 10 years to determine the number of U.S. House seats allocated to each state, shows a continuing shift of people from the Northeast and Midwest to the South and West.

The new numbers will allow Florida to draw a bigger share of more than \$400 billion of federal spending each year that is divvied up among states and communities. But the biggest impact may be the state's additional two seats in the U.S. House, bringing a total of 27 members to be elected in 2012.

New York, which lost two seats, will have the same number. The Florida delegation will trail only Texas, which gained four seats the most of any state - and California, which saw no gain but remains the nation's largest state.

The "Fair Districts" amendments approved by voters this year require legislators to draw congressional and legislative district boundaries that are geographically compact and contiguous, follow city or county lines when possible and are not manipulated to favor any political party. Until now, legislators were required only to draw districts that were contiguous.

The amendments were immediately challenged in a lawsuit filed by African-American U.S. Rep. Corrine Brown, D-Jacksonville, and Cuban-American U.S. Rep. Mario Diaz-Balart, R-Miami. They claim the new standards are unworkable and would jeopardize black and Hispanic representation.

Some political observers who track redistricting issues expect the amendments to hold up under review in federal court.

Daniel Smith, director of the Political Campaigning Program at the University of Florida, predicted that Democrats and Republicans in the Legislature as well as independent citizens groups will each draw up

redistricting plans, and the state Supreme Court will end up deciding which plan best conforms to the intent of the amendments.

"I don't see the state Supreme Court overturning a constitutional amendment approved by 62 percent of Floridians," Smith said. "What is going to be challenged is how to interpret the drawing of the lines as stipulated by Amendment Six."

Amendment Five affects boundaries for legislative districts. Amendment Six applies to congressional districts.

"It's going to mean more compact districts, and it almost inevitably is going to pit some incumbents against one another," Smith said. "It's hard to imagine Democrats doing any worse. I would think they would gain some seats."

Republicans have dominated the Legislature since the last Census and gained enough new members this year to give them veto-proof majorities in both chambers. Voters also elected a GOP governor, Rick Scott, and three Republican Cabinet members. And they ousted four congressional Democrats, giving Republicans 19 members to just 6 Democrats in the U.S. House next year.

The two new House seats will also mean two more Florida electoral votes for a total of 29 -- which will make the nation's biggest swing state that much more important in presidential politics.

Both state parties hailed the results as another sign of Florida's political clout.

"Now, with a larger delegation and increased electoral votes, Floridians are guaranteed to play an even more pivotal role in the next decade," said outgoing Republican Chairman John Thrasher.

Scott Arceneaux, the Democratic Party's executive director, said Floridians can look forward to districts that truly reflect the diversity of the state "rather than the partisan gerrymandering that best describes the current districts."

The Legislature's tentative schedule for setting new boundaries calls for a final court review of the new districts by June 2012 the same time candidates must qualify to run. The timetable has prompted complaints that it would leave little time for non-incumbents to mount a campaign and raise money before the August primaries and the November elections.

*William E. Gibson can be reached at [Wgibson@tribune.com](mailto:Wgibson@tribune.com) and 202-824-8256.*

# Dinerstein, Siegel say U.S. census results to boost Florida's political influence

<http://www.palmbeachdailynews.com/news/dinerstein-siegel-say-u-s-census-results-to-1138851.html?printArticle=y>

December 22, 2010

Updated: 7:12 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 21, 2010

Posted: 7:05 p.m. Tuesday, Dec. 21, 2010

The chiefs of the two major political parties in Palm Beach County both welcomed the news that Florida will pick up two congressional seats and two electoral votes as a result of the latest U.S. Census results.

“It’s a good thing for any state to get more electoral votes, regardless of how the congressional seats work out,” said Sid Dinerstein, chairman of the county Republican Party.

Mark Siegel, chairman of the Democratic Party of Palm Beach County, said Florida will become even more important in future national elections.

“It’s great for the state because it gives us greater throw weight,” Siegel said.

Florida’s population grew 17.6 percent in the last decade, enabling the state to pick up two congressional seats in time for the 2012 elections, the U.S. Census Bureau said Tuesday.

The 2010 Census puts the state’s population at 18.8 million. Florida remains the fourth most populous state, behind California (37.3 million), Texas (25.1 million) and New York (19.4 million).

The U.S. population grew 9.7 percent to 308,745,538 between 2000 and 2010, according to the census data. The rate of growth was the slowest since the Great Depression. The population is continuing to shift away from the Northeast and Midwest and into Republican-leaning states in the South and West.

The number of U.S. House seats from Florida will grow from 25 to 27, meaning the state will have 29 electoral votes in the 2012 presidential election. A state’s electoral votes equal its number of U.S. House and U.S. Senate seats combined.

Only California and Texas will have more U.S. House seats than Florida, with 53 and 36, respectively. New York also will have 27.

In a prepared statement, Governor-elect Rick Scott said Florida’s 2.8 million population gain shows that it remains a destination for economic opportunity, even in tough times.

“With the addition of two U.S. House seats, Florida has become an even more important state in the 2012 presidential election,” Scott said in the statement. “We can attract even more businesses, jobs and people to our state by removing burdensome regulations and putting private industry ahead of government, which I am committed to doing.”

Florida was one of eight states to gain House seats and electoral votes. Texas gained four seats and four electoral votes. Arizona, Georgia, Nevada, South Carolina, Utah and Washington all gained one House seat and one electoral vote apiece.

Those losing seats include Iowa, Louisiana, Missouri, Michigan, New Jersey, New York, Ohio and Pennsylvania.

Thirty-two states saw no change in seats.

The Republican-led Florida Legislature will draw new congressional boundaries before the 2012 elections. When

the new Congress takes office in January, Republicans will command 19 of the state's 25 U.S. House seats.

The U.S. Constitution mandates that new congressional maps be drawn every 10 years based on census data. But the only guideline beyond that has been a U.S. Supreme Court directive that the district populations be roughly equal, said Kevin Wagner, a political scientist at Florida Atlantic University.

But the redistricting process has been complicated by an amendment to the state Constitution, approved by voters in November, that says boundaries "may not be drawn to favor or disfavor an incumbent or political party" and must be "contiguous" and "compact."

The amendment is intended to prevent the Legislature from "gerrymandering," a practice in which the political party in charge draws the districts to its own advantage, Wagner said.

"The purpose of the census is allocation," Wagner said. "But all the census tells us is how many. It doesn't tell us how. We'll see whether we allocate them in a way that says what the State of Florida is, or in a way that is what the people drawing the districts want Florida to be."

Dinerstein figures the two new congressional seats will likely go to Republicans.

"You'd have to go to Utah to find a redder state than we are," he said. "We have the governor, full Cabinet, two-thirds of both houses. We have one U.S. senator and one on the way. We also have 19 out of 25 congressmen. We're one of the most Republican states in the country."

Dinerstein refers to the years 1990 to 2007 as "the great migration" when liberals from Miami and New York City moved to Palm Beach County, making it a stronghold for Democrats.

"The economic meltdown ended the migration and now we, the Republican Party, had success in this election cycle that we haven't had since 1996," Dinerstein said. "So we in Palm Beach County and throughout southeast Florida are going to have a redder complexion in the cycles moving forward."

Siegel said that, in addition to being one of the four largest electoral prizes, Florida is, along with Ohio, the biggest swing state.

"New York, California and Texas, the other three of the big four, it's clear which way they go in the big elections," he said. "Florida is not so clear. My view is we've won three of the last four presidential elections and there's no reason we shouldn't repeat in 2012."

Siegel looks at the passage of the congressional redistricting amendment as a plus to Democrats in the next election.

"The lines will have to be completely redrawn; the current lines are corrupt," Siegel said. "The whole math is going to change, but I expect in Palm Beach County we'll have some outstanding candidates for those congressional districts where we'll have more influence than we have now. Given our population, Palm Beach County should be the controlling voice in three congressional districts and I expect Democrats to win all three of those seats."

Population data within Florida won't be available until February or March.

# Florida's late redistricting deadline - David Catanese

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[http://www.politico.com/blogs/davidcatanese/1210/Floridas\\_late\\_redistricting\\_deadline.html](http://www.politico.com/blogs/davidcatanese/1210/Floridas_late_redistricting_deadline.html)

December 29, 2010

**December 21, 2010**

A left-leaning blogger with the [Florida Progressive Coalition](#) points out that the Sunshine State has one of the latest deadlines in the country for completing redistricting.

The June 18, 2012, drop-dead date is a "Republican protection racket," argues Kenneth Quinnell.

With an August primary, this is nothing more than an incumbent (and Republican) protection racket, since it makes it almost impossible for challengers or underfunded candidates to know what their district is in time to mount a significant campaign for the 2012 elections.

This isn't a coincidence and it's part of a bigger problem and part of the explanation as to why Republicans win so much in Florida — they stack the rules in their favor.

Posted by David Catanese 02:57 PM

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# Representative Will Weatherford praises Florida's census initiatives in state's securing a second additional Congressional seat

<http://saintpetersblog.com/2010/12/21/representative-will-weatherford-praises-florida%E2%80%99s-census-initiatives-in-states-securing-a-second-additional-congressional-seat/>

December 21, 2010

State Representative Will Weatherford (R-Wesley Chapel), Chairman of the House Redistricting Committee, today offered his praise and thanks to the many individuals and organizations who partnered in the 2010 Sunshine Census and other complete count efforts for the State of Florida. Due to their collective body of work, Florida was able to secure a second additional Congressional seat in the apportionment that was announced today.



Representative Weatherford credited the margin of success to efforts like those of Complete Count Committee delegates Speaker Dean Cannon, Representative Hazel Rogers and Representative Perry Thurston, the Legislature's Office of Economic and Demographic Research, and the House's outreach through MyFloridaCensus ([www.myfloridacensus.gov](http://www.myfloridacensus.gov)). "With MyFloridaCensus, Florida was the only state in the country to offer a web-based and interactive mapping application to the public, enabling Floridians to share visually-dynamic information with the state, in-turn allowing Florida to push that feedback to the U.S. Census Bureau and other Complete Count partners," said Representative Weatherford. "Specifically, the House used MyFloridaCensus to target homes, streets and entire communities that were missed in the 2010 Census mail campaign. Through this initiative, Floridians reported 2,133 households and neighborhoods that were initially missed by the 2010 Census."

"The House used MyFloridaCensus to hold the Census Bureau accountable for making sure that these individuals and entire communities were counted," said Representative Weatherford. "Often times, MyFloridaCensus helped highlight entire subdivisions that were initially overlooked in the early phases of the 2010 Census."

"With a basic goal of ensuring that every Florida resident would be counted, MyFloridaCensus added to the collective efforts of nearly every city and county government, many chambers of commerce, colleges and universities, regional planning boards and commissions, and many others throughout Florida. Today, Florida is being assigned two additional Congressional seats, meaning more adequate representation for the nearly 20 million people residing in Florida," concluded Weatherford.

Estimates also show that MyFloridaCensus contributed to at least \$35 million in federal funding for the State of Florida and its counties and municipalities over the next decade. Each additional person counted equates to roughly \$1,500 in combined federal funding for all levels of Florida government. Assuming that each of the 2,133 households and neighborhoods missed equates to at least 2,133 Floridians who would have otherwise not been counted, the return on investment is \$3.5 million per year, \$35 million over the course of the decade.

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# Census Gives Florida Two More House Seats

<http://www.sunshinestatenews.com/story/census-gives-florida-two-more-house-seats>

December 21, 2010

Sunshine State's population growth leads to greater representation in Congress

Florida will send 27 representatives to the U.S. House in 2013, two more than it currently does, thanks to the 2010 Census numbers released Tuesday.

There were 308,745,538 residents in the 50 U.S. states and Washington, D.C., as of April 1. Florida residents made up more than 18.8 million of those, adding more than 2.8 million residents from the 2000 Census.

Rep. Will Weatherford, R-Wesley Chapel, who chairs the Florida House Redistricting Committee, praised the efforts of the Florida House to ensure all state residents were counted, that he said aided in the push for two more congressional seats.

"The House used MyFloridaCensus to target homes, streets and entire communities that were missed in the 2010 Census mail campaign. Through this initiative, Floridians reported 2,133 households and neighborhoods that were initially missed by the 2010 Census," Weatherford said.

Republicans are hoping the new population numbers mean a boost for the GOP, as population growth in the red states in the West and South vastly outpaced that of bluer Northeastern and Rust Belt states. Nevada, Utah, Arizona, Washington, Texas, Georgia and South Carolina also picked up seats. New York, New Jersey, Massachusetts, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan, Illinois, Iowa and Missouri lost seats. Louisiana was the only Southern state to lose a seat, thanks largely to dispersal of the population by Hurricane Katrina.

State houses will begin the redistricting process in April 2011 after more specific data is released by the U.S. Census Bureau, allowing them to target where new districts should be drawn or which should be eliminated. The districts drawn by the legislatures are subject to gubernatorial vetoes and judicial review before being sanctioned ahead of the 2012 presidential election.

In Florida, the 2012 legislative session will begin in January in order to accommodate the redistricting process. Sen. Don Gaetz, R-Niceville, who chairs the Florida Senate Redistricting Committee, has announced plans for town hall meetings throughout the state in the summer of 2011 to hear from constituents about what boundaries should be used and where districts should be drawn.

Florida Democrats are counting on Amendment 5 and Amendment 6, known as the Fair Districts amendments, which voters passed in the midterm elections, to rein in Republicans who hold veto-proof majorities in both chambers of the Legislature and the Governor's Mansion.

"Floridians of all parties can look forward to districts that truly reflect their communities and representation that reflects the diversity of our great state, rather than the partisan gerrymandering that best describes the current districts," said Florida Democratic Party Executive Director Scott Arceneaux.

But with a GOP stranglehold on Florida's government, it's unclear how constraining the amendments will be.

"Now the work begins in the Florida Legislature as we draw new congressional districts as well as seats in the Florida House and Senate. This will be a deliberative process and all Floridians will have a voice," said Senate President Mike Haridopolos, R-Merritt Island.

Florida legislators are awaiting the more detailed statistics to come out next year to see how the political landscape might shift along with the district boundaries, but the census data released Tuesday is already changing

the playing field for national and presidential politics.

States that voted for President Barack Obama in 2008 -- including Florida -- picked up four U.S. House seats, but lost 10 -- a net loss of six votes in the Electoral College. States that opted for his opponent, Sen. John McCain, R-Ariz., gained a net six seats and electoral votes.

Besides Texas, which picked up four seats, Florida was the only state to gain more than one representative. New York and Ohio, which each lost two seats, were the only states to lose more than one.

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# Let the Games Begin...the fight over redistricting starts today

<http://www.sunshinestatesarah.com/2010/12/let-games-beginthe-fight-over.html>

December 29, 2010

The Census Bureau is set to release their much-anticipated 2010 data today, and the key to the 2012 elections is in these numbers.

Based on estimates, Florida is gaining at least one, probably two, new Congressional seats. We're taking over! This actually reflects a nationwide trend of "red" or Republican-controlled states gaining population (e.g., Texas), while "blue" or Democrat-leaning states (New York, Ohio) are losing people. Hmmmm, maybe people like lower taxes?

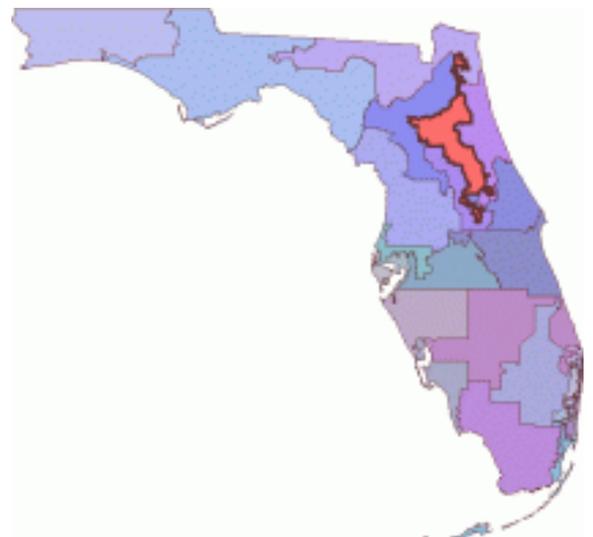
Anyway, the [Washington Post has a helpful write-up about what to expect from the Census numbers](#), and here's their comments on Florida:

*If Florida gains two seats and New York loses two, the Sunshine State will be tied with New York for the third-largest congressional delegation in the country. Republicans control the drawing of the map in Florida, but a ballot measure that passed this year attempts to narrow their ability to draw districts that are too politically motivated. How much they will actually be restricted is an open question, but Republicans feel good about their ability to draw the map. Population gains in southern Florida and the Tampa Bay area should allow Republicans to try and draw two GOP-friendly districts. **At the same time, nothing is for certain here, and we could be headed for a long legal battle either way.***

My money's on a long legal battle. There is just too much at stake. Fortunately, the last election left the Governor's Mansion, the entire Cabinet, and the vast majority of the Legislature in Republican control. The Democrats have been grasping desperately on to the passage of Amendments 5 and 6 - pretty much their only victory in Florida last month - and have already been articulating plans to use those amendments as a weapon to attempt to gain more seats.

**The Democrats' big problem, of course, is that redistricting won't help them with the statewide races.** Draw districts any old way you want, and Rick Scott is still our governor.

One thing redistricting *will* affect is our Congressional districts, *especially* if we add two seats. So, coupled with the effects of Amendments 5 and 6, we will most likely break up Corrine Brown's gerrymandered trainwreck of a district:



In red: Florida's 3rd Congressional District. Indefensible by everyone except for [Corrine Brown and her](#)

[daughter's lobbying clients.](#)

Now, since the Republicans control the Governor's Mansion, the Cabinet, and the Legislature (man, I just love saying that!), they have nearly total control over the redistricting process. When I was little, I knew another little girl who got a shiny new dollhouse and she would not let anyone else play with, or even touch, that dollhouse. Well, with redistricting, the Republicans have the dollhouse and the Democrats don't get to play.



It's MY dollhouse and no, you can't touch it.  
You're lucky I'm even letting you look at it.

Another interesting wrinkle is the *date* by which Florida's redistricting process is supposed to wrap up. According to a liberal site, the [Florida Progressive Coalition Blog](#), Florida's deadline for redistricting is the latest in the country:

*As previously reported Florida's deadline for redistricting is June 18, 2012. With an August primary, this is nothing more than an incumbent (and Republican) protection racket, since it makes it almost impossible for challengers or underfunded candidates to know what their district is in time to mount a significant campaign for the 2012 elections.*

The author, Kenneth Quinnell, has helpfully looked up the redistricting deadlines for other states, which you can see [here](#). What do you think? Do you think Florida's deadline for finishing redistricting is too late? Do you think the lawsuits will even be done by then? And, let's go ahead and start the madness with speculating *who* might be running for those new Congressional seats in 2012!

UPDATED: As expected, [Florida is indeed gaining TWO Congressional seats.](#) [See a map here of which states are gaining and losing.](#)

# Florida Gains Two More Seats in Congress

<http://westorlandonews.com/2010/12/21/florida-gains-two-more-seats-in-congress/>

December 29, 2010

Even with the boom slowing, Florida still grew 17 percent in the last decade and will gain additional congressional clout, getting two more seats in Congress, Census officials announced Tuesday.

Now slated to hold 27 seats in the 435 member House, Florida continues a trend that began in 1930 by gaining at least one congressional seat during each of the past nine decennial redistributions of political power in a nation that continued to grow to the west and south.



Florida, with 18,801,310 residents as of April 1, remained the fourth most populous state. It will have the same number of seats in Congress as No. 3 New York, behind No. 2 Texas, which gained four seats – the most of any state – and California which saw no gain in congressional power, but remains the nation’s largest state.

The biggest growth over the decade was in Nevada, which grew 35.1 percent, Census Director Robert Groves said in a conference call. Michigan was at the other end of the spectrum, with declines in auto making and other industries making it the only state to decline in population in the decade, losing at 0.6 percent of its population.

Nationally, the population revelation looked like continuing good news for Republicans, who made major gains in the November election, and now will gain congressional seats in several Southern and Western states that are generally considered more red than blue. The states losing population are mostly northeastern and Rust Belt states that have traditionally voted more Democratic.

The exact location of Florida’s two new congressional seats – and what they will look like and who they will include – now will be up to state legislators, who are scheduled to redraw the districts during the 2012 legislative session. How, exactly, the process will work this time around isn’t totally clear because of a new constitutional requirement that lawmakers not create districts that favor incumbents or a particular political party.

“Now the work begins in the Florida Legislature as we draw new congressional districts as well as seats in the Florida House and Senate,” said Senate President Mike Haridopolos, R-Merritt Island. “This will be a deliberative process and all Floridians will have a voice.”

The change also has implications for future presidential elections, because it increases the clout of growing states – Southern and Western states – in the Electoral College, while reducing the strength of traditionally Democratic states like New Jersey, Michigan and New York.

Florida will now have 29 Electoral College votes.

“Already a ‘must win state’ for presidential candidates, Florida becomes even more important with the addition of two more electoral votes as a result of gaining two more U.S House seats,” Sen. Don Gaetz, R-Niceville, and the chairman of the Senate Reapportionment Committee, said in a statement.

The U.S. population on April 1 was reported as 308.7 million, reflecting a 9.7 percent increase since 2000. That’s the slowest growth since the 1930s, according to the Census Bureau.

New York and Ohio each lose two congressional. States losing single seats are Iowa, Illinois, Missouri, Pennsylvania, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Michigan and New Jersey.

The Census Bureau is constitutionally required to reapportion congressional seats every 10 years to give all 435

congressional districts roughly the same population. Under the new apportionment, the average population of a congressional district will be 710,767, compared with 646,942 in 2000.

By Michael Peltier  
The News Service of Florida

Editor

# Census May Mean Change for Polk

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<http://www.theledger.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20101222/NEWS/12225010/1410&Title=Census-May-Mean-Change-for-Polk&template=printart>

December 22, 2010

Published: Wednesday, December 22, 2010 at 12:03 a.m.

LAKELAND | Local political leaders say they hope the realignment of Florida's Congressional districts as the result of the 2010 census will mean all of Polk County will lie within a single district.

The U.S. Census Bureau announced Tuesday that Florida will gain two seats in the U.S. House of Representatives, increasing from 25 to 27 seats in the 435-seat body.

Polk County is now split among three Congressional districts.

State Rep. Seth McKeel, R-Lakeland, said at this stage there is no way to predict the outcome of redistricting.

"What I can tell you is that Rep. Will Weatherford, chair of the Redistricting Committee, is putting together the most public and interactive redistricting process that Florida has ever seen," he said. "The Florida House will be putting the district-building program on the Internet and asking members of the public to submit maps and ideas for where districts should be drawn."

McKeel said the Florida Legislature will be holding 30 or more public meetings beginning next summer to get input.

He said it would be premature to project how the congressional districts will be affected.

About 65 percent of Polk County is now in the 12th Congressional District, where Dennis Ross, a Lakeland Republican was elected in November. The district also includes parts of Hillsborough and Osceola counties.

Polk voters make up less than 10 percent of the voters in the 5th Congressional District, which will be represented by recently elected Republican Richard Nugent of Hernando County. The Polk portion of the sprawling district is north of Interstate 4 between Hillsborough County on the west and State Road 33 on the east.

A sliver of northeast Polk is assigned to the 15th District, represented by Republican Bill Posey of Brevard County. Polk residents make up less than 4 percent of the district's voters.

Along with McKeel, other members of the Polk legislative delegation have been thinking about congressional redistricting as well.

"I'm committed to one representative that's reflective of the voters of Polk County," said State Rep. John Wood, R-Winter Haven.

Wood said the decision will not occur until 2012.

Although it's possible Polk County could be within one congressional district, it's still not populous enough to qualify for a single seat of its own.

According to census officials, each congressional district contains 710,767 residents. Polk's estimated 2009 population was 583,403 -- the 2010 county population figures have not been released -- so any district including all of Polk would have to include voters in at least one adjacent county.

The Florida Legislature will convene in January 2012 to make the decision on how the lines will be drawn.

That decision will be governed by recently approved constitutional amendments that require that election districts be compact, contiguous and respect city and county boundaries as much as possible, he said.

State Rep. Kelli Stargel, R-Lakeland, said it's difficult to say what will happen.

"We haven't gotten that far," she said.

County officials are watching the process, too.

County Commissioner Bob English said it's a topic he has thought about in connection with the recently approved state constitutional amendments on redistricting.

The state amendments are aimed at creating fewer spread out districts and prohibiting boundary lines being drawn to help or hurt an incumbent or a political party.

The issue could be raised when county commissioners meet with local state legislators next month to discuss the 2011 session.

Commissioner Melony Bell said she thinks a single district centered in Polk County would be easier on the member of Congress as well because it would be easier to serve.

"It's hard to spread the love," she said.

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# Our View: Our Christmas wish: A fair, common-sense congressional map - Peoria, IL

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<http://www.pjstar.com/opinions/ourview/x1547454623/Our-View-Our-Christmas-wish-A-fair-common-sense-congressional-map>

December 29, 2010

It's easy to identify the political winners and losers now that the details of the once-in-a-decade Census have been released.

The nation's population continued to grow - up just shy of 10 percent since 2000 to nearly 309 million but still the smallest jump since the Great Depression. Meanwhile, the "where" behind that growth shows the trend of Americans moving to the South and West persists, while the Midwest and Northeast lagged (with Illinois suffering especially anemic gains).

That means the latter two regions lost clout when it came to figuring out which states get more representation in Congress and which less in 2012. Of the 10 states to shrink their congressional footprint, five are in the Midwest. Illinois, Iowa, Missouri and Michigan all will lose one congressman, Ohio two. (On average a typical congressional district will now have about 710,000 people; Illinois will come close to that, but if you want the best bang for your vote, move to Rhode Island, where there are a mere 527,624 residents per House member.)

Overall it looks like Republicans end up winning here. Democratic strongholds in the Northeast and across the Rust Belt forfeit seats, while new ones will be created in Texas (four, with three likely going to the GOP), Florida (two), Arizona, Utah and South Carolina (one apiece). Based on voting patterns, Republicans will likely have six more electoral votes in their "safe" states in the next presidential election.

Not everybody on the right side of the aisle should be popping the champagne corks just yet, especially in Illinois. Going from 19 representatives to 18 here - early reports suggest that 75,000 more warm bodies would have let us keep all our seats - probably puts the local 18th Congressional District in play. We've long known it might be in the crosshairs should a seat go bye-bye. Democrats in full control of the Legislature that will draw and OK the maps are much more likely to play around with downstate seats - now largely held by the GOP - than they are to make significant changes in the Chicago suburbs where their influence is growing.

Even before the official announcement, some political wonks began playing the "what if" game to determine what kind of maps could be drawn to give the Dems an edge or easily bump off a Republican by tossing two into the same district. One potential map generated by national political expert Charlie Cook suggests making the grotesquely gerrymandered 17th District - which goes from the Quad Cities to the Metro East suburbs of St. Louis to parts of Springfield and Decatur - a bit more compact by divvying up the current 18th between the 17th and newly elected Republican Rep. Adam Kinzinger's 11th District. Current 18th District Rep. Aaron Schock's residence would land in the 17th, where he could face a primary against new GOP Congressman Bobby Schilling of the Quad Cities area.

And the 18th District? It would land south and west of here, beginning in Hancock County and heading southeast, wrapping around south Springfield and continuing through a large swathe of farm country. Gone would be Peoria's connection to the historic seat held by Abraham Lincoln, Everett Dirksen, Bob Michel and Ray LaHood. That roster should be proof that not just Peoria but the nation as a whole has been well-served by the caliber of lawmaker central Illinoisans have chosen to send to Washington.

Worse, should that map or anything like it come to pass, the interests and influence of this area could potentially be diluted. For an example, look no farther than Springfield, home to parts of three congressional districts, where it's very difficult for a local to get sent to Washington.

When lawmakers sit down at their drafting tables next year to figure out their final maps, our request of them - consider it part of our Christmas list - is simple: We'd like to have a fair, compact map that keeps communities together as much as possible. Ideally they'd leave the partisanship out of it as well, but given that politicians are picking the boundaries that wish is about as likely to be fulfilled as one from a kid who asks Santa for a pony. Not that we wouldn't mind being pleasantly surprised, of course ...

# Census depicts a growing Florida

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<http://www.heraldtribune.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20101222/ARTICLE/12221027/2055/NEWS&Title=Census-depicts-a-growing-Florida&template=printart>

December 22, 2010

Published: Wednesday, December 22, 2010 at 1:00 a.m.

The Florida Dream may have foundered in recent years, but new census numbers released Tuesday showed that the state has still experienced substantial growth since 2000 compared with most of the nation.

Following a national trend that saw Americans migrating to warmer states, Florida's population swelled by 2.8 million people to 18.8 million.

The state's growth rate of 17.6 percent was among the most robust in the nation. Only Texas and California added more people overall during the 10-year period. Michigan was the only state to lose population.

Nationwide the population grew by 9.7 percent over the decade to 309 million, according to the latest once-a-decade federal tally. Growth was stagnant throughout much of the Midwest and East Coast and up significantly through the South and West. Overall, the census documented the slowest rate of growth since the Great Depression decade of the 1930s.

The shifting population has major political ramifications. Florida -- still the fourth largest state in the nation behind California, Texas and New York -- gains two new seats in the U.S. House of Representatives for a total of 27. Only Texas added more Congressional seats, while slow-growth states such as Pennsylvania, Ohio and Iowa all lost seats.

Nevada had the fastest growth rate in the nation at 35.1 percent. The South -- a census grouping that includes Florida and Texas -- grew at a rate of 14.3 percent, faster than any other region.

State leaders have been eager to get their hands on the data and begin the process of drawing new political districts.

State Rep. Will Weatherford, R-Wesley Chapel, is chairing a legislative committee that will help draw Florida's new congressional districts and redraw old ones. He said the state's growing political clout means that presidential candidates will be visiting more often.

"The addition of two new congressional seats is very important," Weatherford said. "It gives Florida a stronger voice in national politics."

Political ramifications aside, the 2010 census figures put a cap on one of the most turbulent 10-year periods in state history. It was a decade of two extremes: rapid growth followed by precipitous decline.

"There are always ups and downs, but they've never been as dramatic as what we've seen," said Stan Smith, an economist and demographics expert with the University of Florida's Bureau of Economic and Business Research.

That Florida still grew by 2.8 million people -- nearly the same number as in each of the past three decades -- despite a historic recession and four years of economic doldrums is an indicator of just how explosive the first half of the decade was, Smith said.

Florida's roller-coaster decade peaked in 2005 when the state added 409,000 people and hit a trough in 2009 when the population grew by 114,000 people, according to previously released census estimates.

Estimates from other sources had the state actually losing population between 2008 and 2009. Based on electrical hookups and building permits, Smith's agency calculated that the state lost 50,000 residents between April 2008 and April 2009.

Smith believes the state's growth was even more explosive during the first half of the decade and weaker during the second half than reported in past census surveys. He expects the Census Bureau's annual population estimates for Florida between 2000 and 2009 to be revised based on the hard count in the 2010 report.

Florida's population boom had dramatic effects across the landscape at the beginning of the decade.

North Port doubled in size to become the largest city in Sarasota County. Condo and retail development reshaped downtown Sarasota. And Lakewood Ranch emerged from scrub land and palmettos to become one of the largest communities in the region.

Sarasota builder John Cannon had his best year in 2005 with \$100 million in sales from 127 new homes. Many were built in Lakewood Ranch.

"A Lakewood Ranch comes along not just once in a lifetime but once in a multi-generational span," Cannon said. "The commitment to a total community like that is more than what would happen in just one lifetime or one person's career."

But the breakneck pace of growth was unsustainable.

"In many respects the second half of the decade is the payment for the first," said Sarasota County Commissioner Jon Thaxton. "We were being driven by this non-existent fuel and the whole damn thing just collapsed."

Thaxton believes the economic collapse will have a "dramatic impact on the first half of the next decade" in terms of population growth.

He said the lesson from the last 10 years is economic diversification, the kind that brings steady growth rather than Florida's boom and bust cycles.

Cannon remains optimistic. After dropping to 25 new homes in 2008, he rebounded to build 50 new homes this year.

"You take the high and the lows out but still overall it's good steady growth, and I think we have a good decade in front of us," Cannon said. "There's a lot of problems that have worked themselves out, and there's not many places like Sarasota in the whole country."

The census data released Tuesday only included state population counts.

Detailed local population tallies, along with information about race and housing, will be released beginning in February.

The state information is used primarily for political purposes and to determine how much federal aid states receive.

The trends reported in the 2010 census were hinted at in state and national population surveys the federal government conducts annually, but the official 10-year count is unique.

Rather than make inferences about the population from a representative sample, the census employed more than a million temporary workers to count each person individually.

Thomas Jefferson managed the first national census in 1790 when the nation's population was just 3.9 million.

A 10-year hard count of every man, woman and child is mandated by the Constitution. The figures are used for a broad range of purposes.

"The 2010 census will serve as a backbone for our political and economic system for years to come," U.S. Commerce Secretary Gary Locke said in announcing the results.

# US House Redistricting: Florida

http://uselectionatlas.org/FORUM/index.php?topic=129746.0

April 3, 2011

- Atlas Forum
- General Politics
- Political Geography & Demographics (Moderator: [muon2](#))
- US House Redistricting: Florida



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[previous](#) [next](#)

Pages: [1] [2](#) [3](#) [4](#)



Author Topic: US House Redistricting: Florida (Read 1897 times)

## [The Face I Make When You're Crying](#)

BRTD  
YaBB God

on: December 22, 2010, 10:59:43 pm

Posts:  
57352

Now that we know it has two new seats (ugh, I was soooooooooooooooooooooo hopi  
its current decline, maybe it'll lose a seat in 2020 ), so I drew this new noi

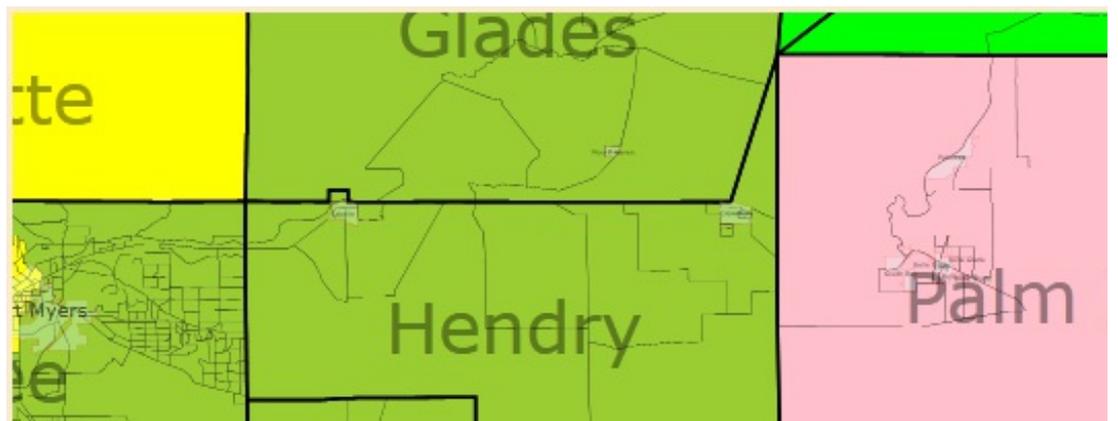
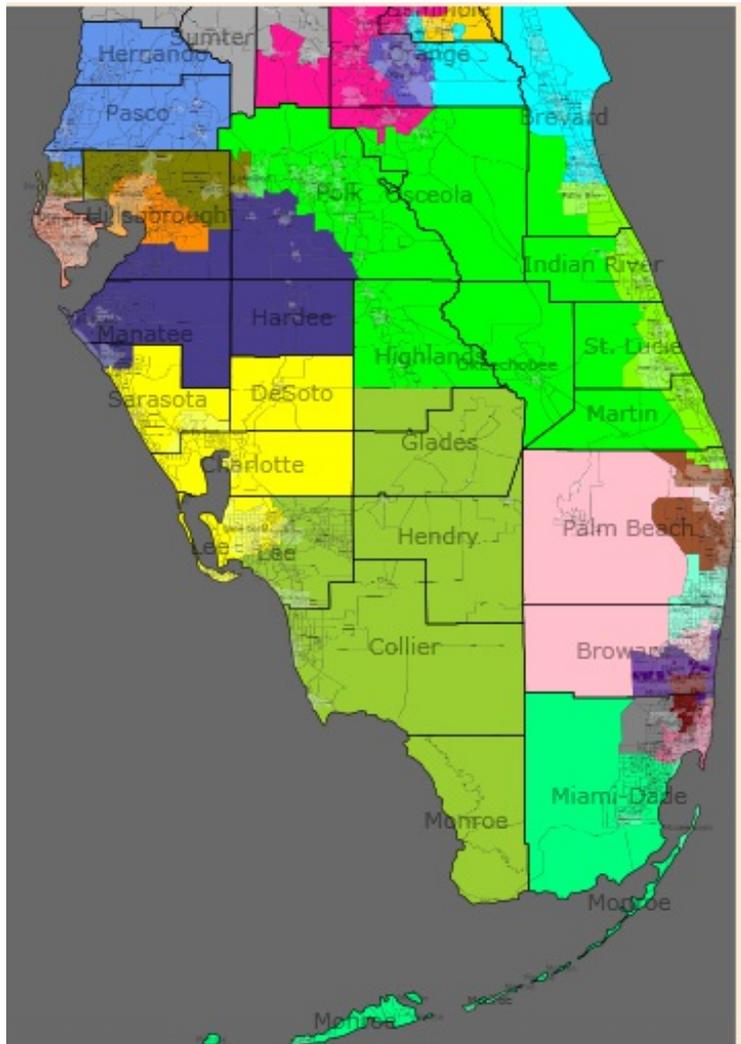


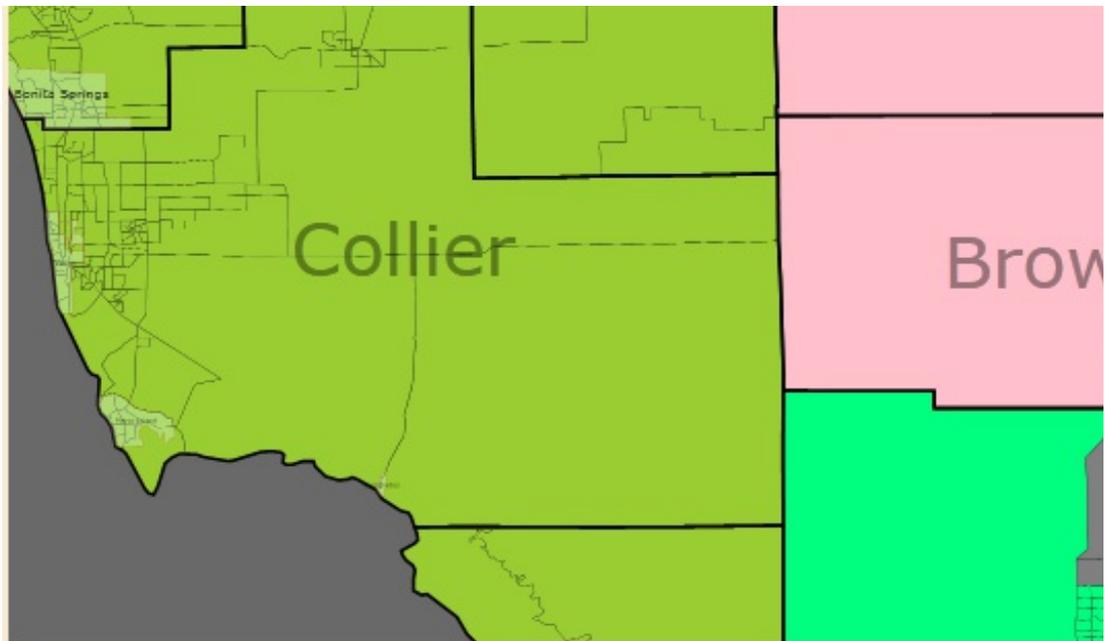
[Political  
Matrix](#)  
E: -6.06, S: -  
6.61





District analysis comi





 Logged

I notice many liberals like songs that nobody really hears about. A fake example "Apples" by Killer Nailbiter. or some crap like that.

[The Face I Make When You're Crying](#)

BRTD  
YaBB God

 **Reply #1 on:** December 22, 2010, 11:13:10 pm

★ Posts: 57352



★ [Political Matrix](#)

★ E: -6.06, S: -6.61



FL-01 (blue): Not much different from the current one. Very safe R seat. FL-02 district isn't as conservative as the other ones Blue Dogs were bounced from, it might flip back in a good year. FL-03 (purple): Quite a safe R seat. It has Gai 04 (red): South bit of Jacksonville plus some very Republican counties. Safe R toss-up. FL-06 (teal): Very interesting seat. Very Republican Nassau county plus black parts. About 35% black. Probably voted for Obama narrowly, but only due could flip all over the place depending on turnout models, kind of like OH-01. C nominate someone other than Corrine Brown. FL-07 (gray): Very safe R seat. now that the gerrymandering in this area has been eliminated. Capable of returning to office! YES YES YES YES YES YES!



FL-09 (teal): A bunch of boring suburbs and R-leaning swing seat. FL-10 (pink): This is the one that will be taking Alan Grayson's seat but isn't fit to probably take. Pretty safe R. FL-11 (olive): (C Only Democratic area is St. Lucie. FL-12 (light blue) counties were only about 51% McCain. But it's an area where there's lots of swing voters on either side. Republican could probably hold it, but it would be tough. Once the now misnamed Young retires, this is the seat for the next 10 years. FL-14 (brown): Tough to tell from partisan data, but must be pretty Republican gerrymandered monstrosity. A bit less safe, but could easily hold it. Kathy Castor should have no problem holding this safe Republican seat. FL-17 (dark purple): S



Buchanan should hold easily. FL-18 (yellow) in a good year. FL-19 (that weird greenish c Hellhole. FL-20 (pink): Majority black, Alcee Also majority black, Frederica Wilson will hc gerrymandered monstrosity that black Repu one will flip Dem. FL-23 (tealish): I don't kno

more likely to run here, but either one will win. FL-24 (purple): Same, the other here. FL-25 (dark pink): Cuban majority, that new nutjob or Diaz-Balart will hok be the seat for Diaz-Balart. FL-27 (light green): Cuban majority, the weakest C moderate like Ros-Lehtinen shouldn't have much problems.



Logged

I notice many liberals like songs that nobody really hears about. A fake exampl Apples" by Killer Nailbiter. or some crap like that.

### [JohnnyLongtorso](#)

YaBB God



**Reply #2 on:** December 24, 2010, 01:18:49 pm

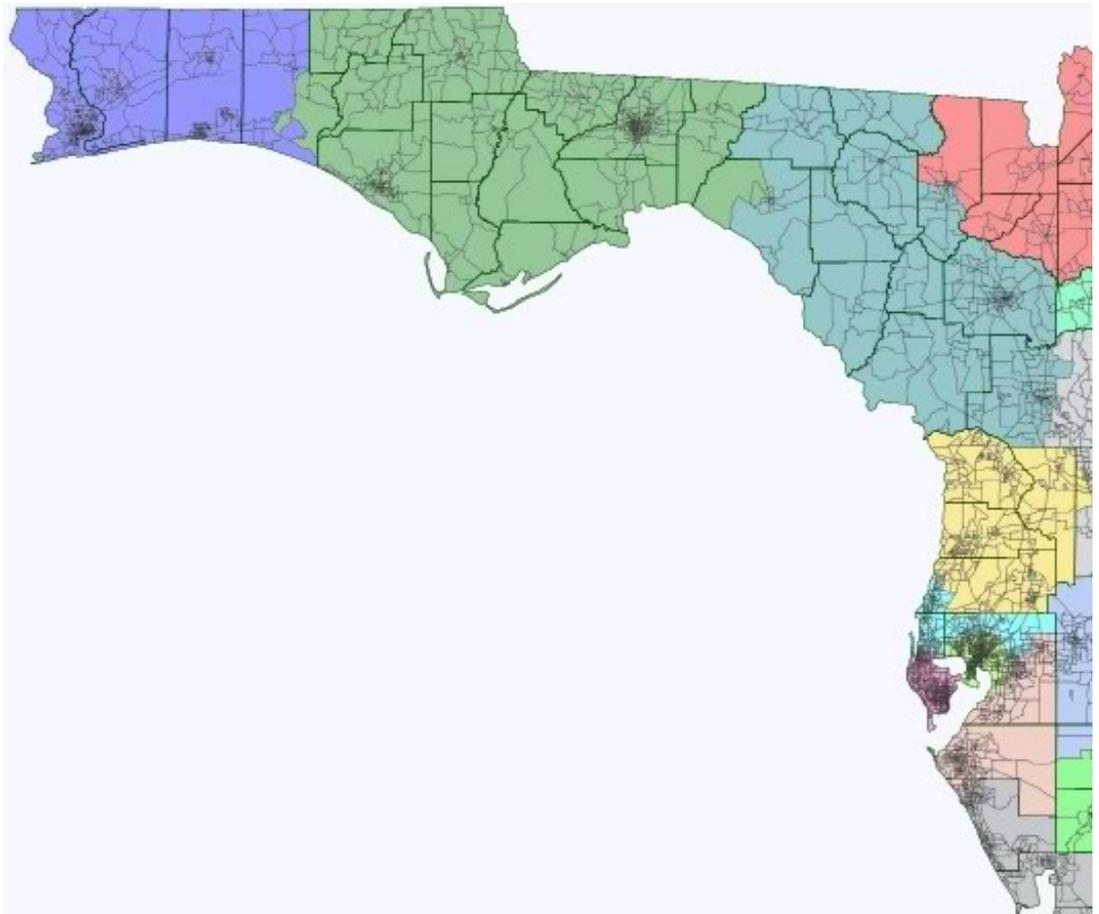
★ Posts: 5122



Did you use the new population estimates or the old ones? I did a map this m proportions look a lot different from yours.

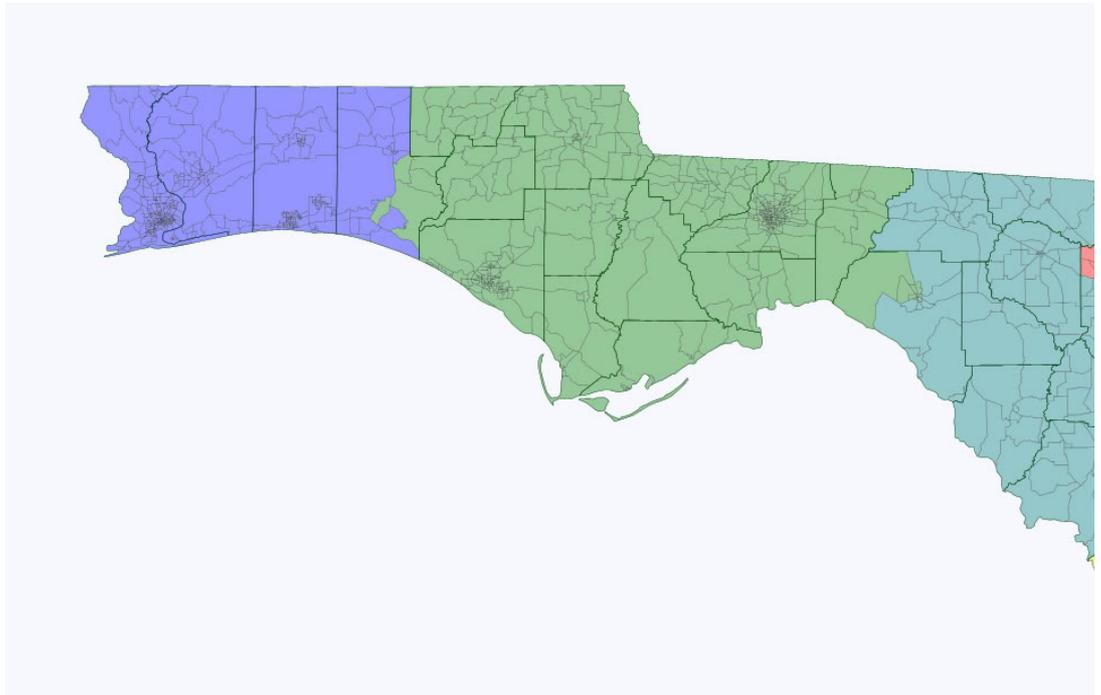


I tried to minimize county splits, but sometimes it's unavoidable. Open the ima more clearly.





panhandle...

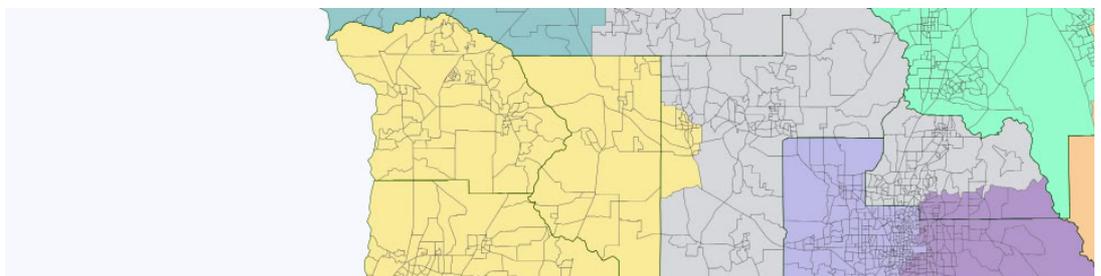


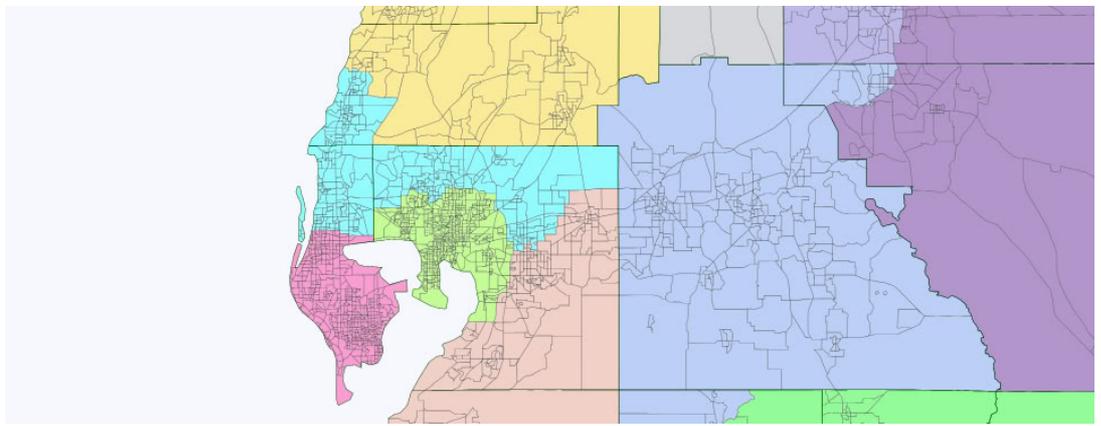
FL-01 (blue, Jeff Miller - R) - Not much changed here (the district shrunk toward  
FL-02 (green, Steve Southerland - R) - Shifts a little to the west accordingly, but  
district.

FL-03 (purple, Corrine Brown - D) - The current monstrosity gets eliminated, a  
Jacksonville area district. Would probably lean to the Dems, but Brown would  
FL-04 (red, Ander Crenshaw - R) - Contracts to become all of the area surround  
FL-06 (dark teal, Cliff Stearns - R) - Gainesville is balanced out by some heavy  
probably still lean R, though elections might actually be interesting in this district  
FL-07 (grey, John Mica - R) - The problem is Mica lives outside this district (he  
lives in the same place Daniel Webster lives). He'd have to move, but this district would  
win a primary here (it's mostly new territory to him).

FL-27 (light mint green, new district) - Open seat consisting of Volusia, Flagler  
Swing district.

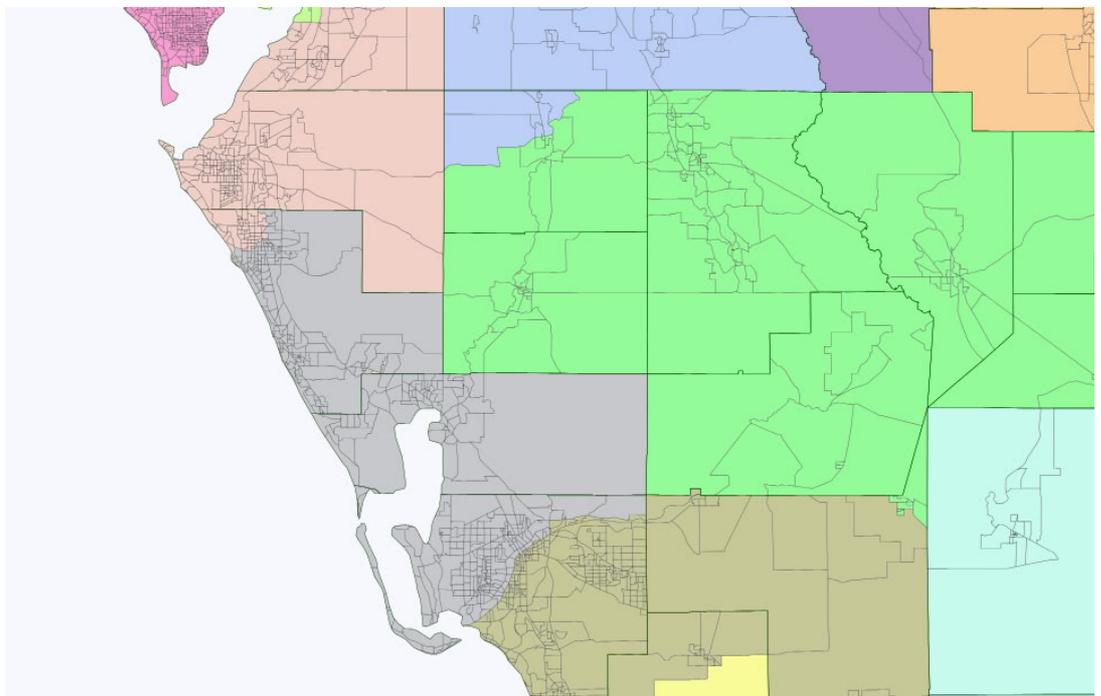
Central Florida:





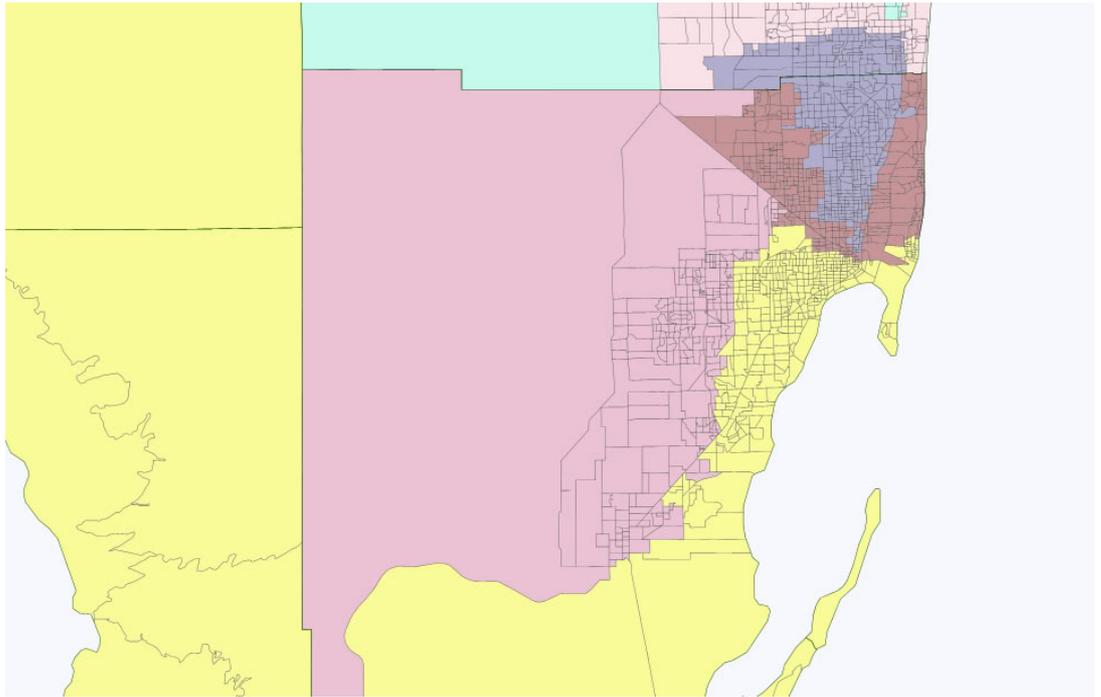
FL-05 (yellow, Rich Nugent - R) - Fairly Republican district. Shouldn't be too t  
 FL-08 (purple, Daniel Webster - R) - Mostly Orlando and western Orange Co  
 Democratic, especially since it's 48% white, 26% black, and 19% Hispanic.  
 FL-09 (light teal, Gus Bilirakis - R) - Mostly unchanged, the borders are a bit c  
 FL-10 (magenta, Bill Young - R) - Basically the entire peninsula of Pinellas Co  
 chopped out currently are Democratic, so it probably moves a few points to th  
 FL-11 (light green, Kathy Castor - D) - Tampa and the surrounding area, safe  
 FL-12 (light purple, Dennis Ross - R) - All of Polk and part of Osceola. Should  
 FL-15 (orange, Bill Posey - R) - Brevard, Indian River, and a little bit of Volusia  
 FL-24 (dark purple, Sandy Adams - R) - I have no idea where Sandy Adams l  
 Orange County, and parts of Osceola and Seminole. I'm guessing this one wo  
 Dem? It's 53% white, 33% Hispanic.

South Florida:



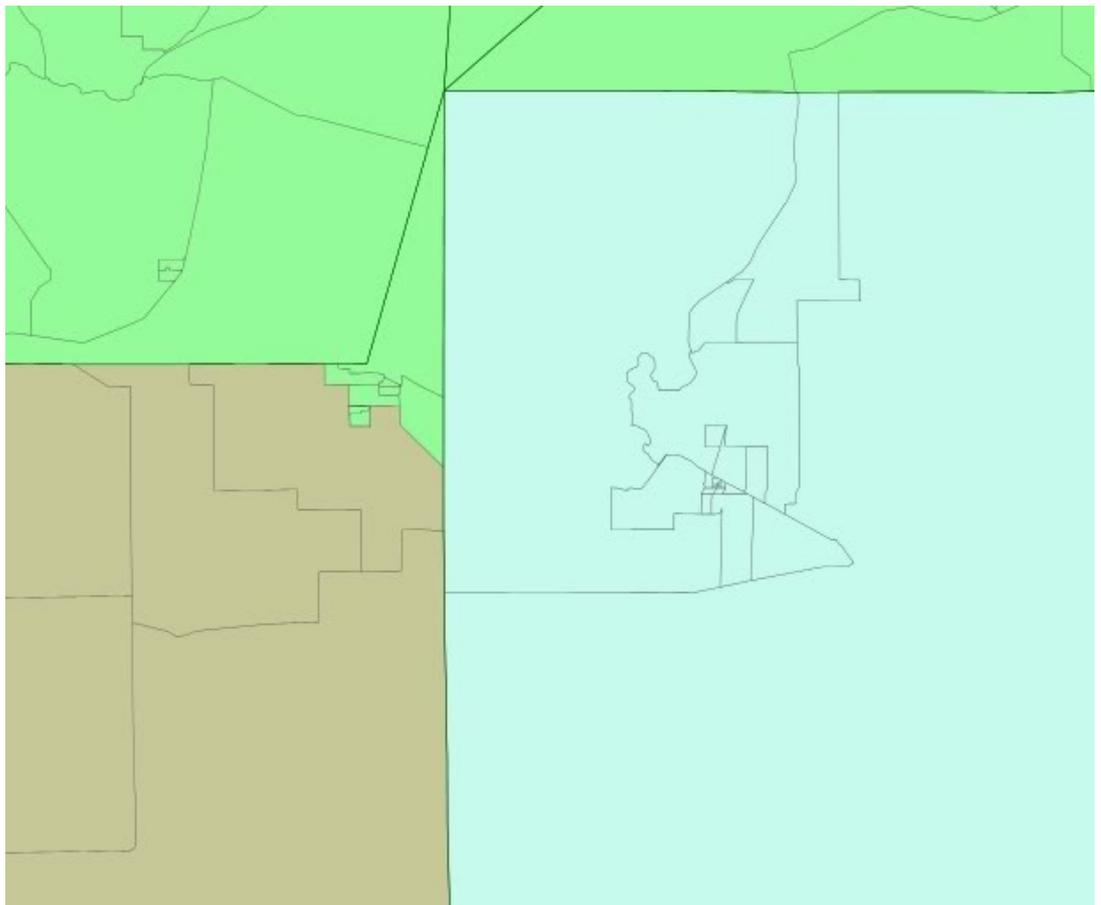
FL-13 (pink, Vern Buchanan - R) - Buchanan lives in Sarasota, which is in the  
 Manatee and parts of eastern Hillsborough. Should have a slight Republican l  
 FL-14 (brown, Connie Mack - R) - Hard to see, but this one's part of Lee, and  
 Safe R.  
 FL-16 (light green, Tom Rooney - R) - Rooney is in the tiny slice of northern Pa  
 stretches across the state from St. Lucie and Indian River to DeSoto and Har  
 Republican lean.  
 FL-26 (grey, new district) - Charlotte and parts of Sarasota and Lee. Definitel

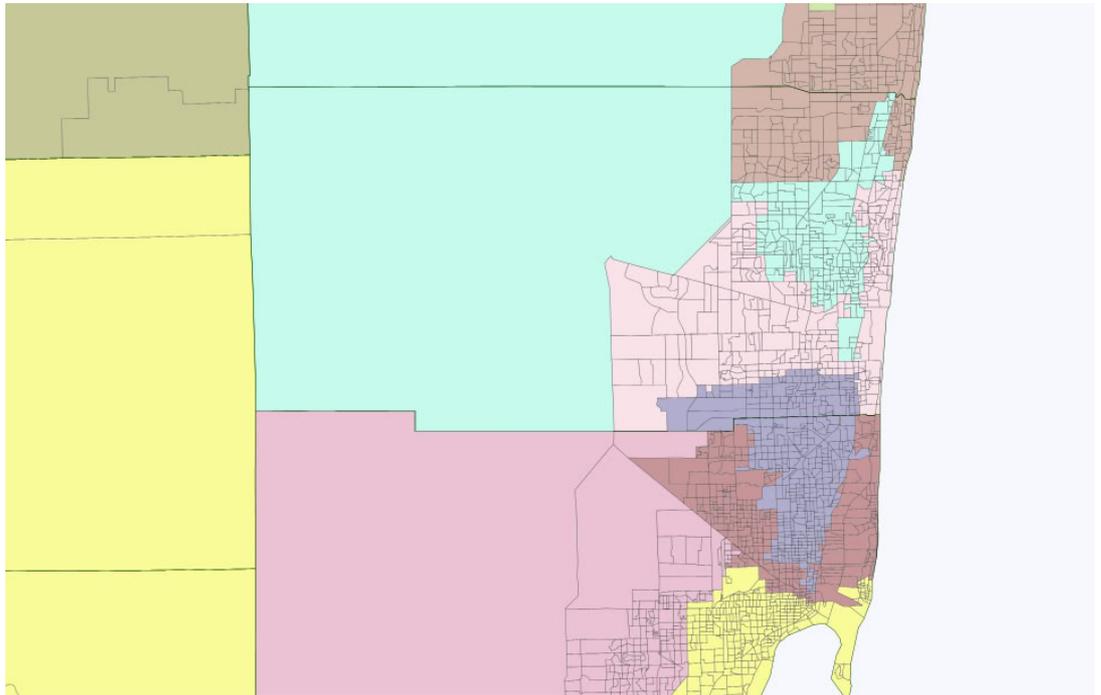
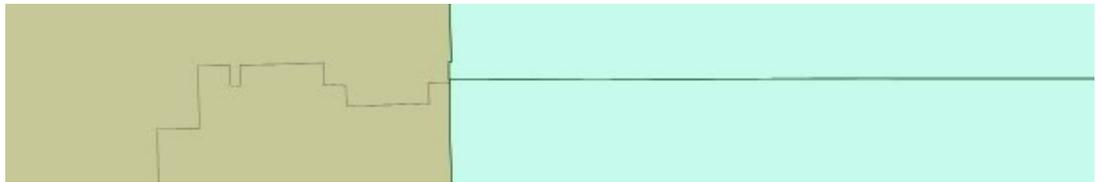
Miami area:



- FL-17 (purple, Frederica Wilson - D) - Pretty much unchanged; 54% black.
- FL-18 (yellow, Ileana Ros-Lehtinen - R) - Also pretty much the same, although Monroe to keep the county within one district. 61% Hispanic.
- FL-21 (dark red, Mario Diaz-Balart - R) - V-shaped to take in all the non-black Hispanic.
- FL-25 (pink, David Rivera - R) - Pretty much the same as before. 73% Hispanic.

Palm Beach and Broward Counties:





FL-19 (brownish yellow, Ted Deutch - D) - Most of the white parts of Palm Beach. I'm both trying to figure out where the Reps in the southeastern part of the state current map is.

FL-20 (pink, Allen West - R) - Picks up quite a bit of territory from FL-22, which Dems.

FL-22 (brownish red, Debbie Wasserman-Schultz - D) - Southern Palm Beach assuming it's still a Dem district, although probably not as packed-in. It picks up

FL-23 (light green, Alcee Hastings - D) - The black parts of Palm Beach and the big tract of vacant land. 52% black.



Logged

[Landslide Lyndon](#)

px75  
YaBB God



**Reply #3 on:** December 24, 2010, 02:56:52 pm

★ Posts: 5416

I assume that if Republicans choose to ignore the fair redistricting amendment could have a court-drawn map.



[Political Matrix](#)

E: -2.58, S: -5.22



Logged



**The United States of Shame**  
What is your state the worst at?



**Padfoot**

padfoot714  
YaBB God



Reply #4 on: December 25, 2010, 12:35:14 am

★ Posts: 4366

★ Shouldn't there be a new Hispanic majority district in South Florida?

★ [Political Matrix](#)

★ E: -2.58, S: -6.96

★ Logged



GOCOMICS.



[The Face I Make  
When You're  
Crying](#)  
BRTD  
YaBB God



**Reply #5 on:** December 25, 2010, 12:44:15 am

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★ Posts:  
57352



★ [Political  
Matrix](#)

★ E: -6.06, S: -  
6.61



Logged

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I notice many liberals like songs that nobody really hears about. A fake example "Apples" by Killer Nailbiter. or some crap like that.



[Verily](#)  
Cuivienen  
YaBB God



**Reply #6 on:** December 25, 2010, 01:25:42 am

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★ Posts:  
16777

★ [Political  
Matrix](#)

★ E: 1.81, S: -  
6.78



Shouldn't there be a new Hispanic majority district in South Florida?

Problem is there's nowhere for one to go. There have to be two black-majority districts. Also, dilute the Cubans too much and you get Democratic seats. A 55% Hispanic district probably elects a white Democrat before any Hispanic of either party as whites are the primary and Cubans would be outvoted by the combined voting strength of whites and Hispanics.



Logged



**[brittain33](#)**

YaBB God

★ Posts: 8956



**Reply #7 on:** December 25, 2010, 09:36:23 am

Also, one of the two new districts added in 2002 was a Hispanic district in South Florida (near Orlando), so it wouldn't make sense to add a new district in the same place.



Logged



**[Padfoot](#)**

padfoot714

YaBB God

★ Posts: 4366



**Reply #8 on:** December 25, 2010, 05:18:28 pm

Shouldn't there be a new Hispanic majority district in South Florida?

[Political Matrix](#)

E: -2.58, S: -6.96

Problem is there's nowhere for one to go. There have to be two black-majority districts. Also, dilute the Cubans too much and you get Democratic seats. A 55% Hispanic district probably elect a white Democrat before any Hispanic of either party as whites are the primary and Cubans would be outvoted by the combined voting strength of white and Hispanics.

I thought someone had posted a previous map which had 4 Hispanic seats in South Florida, but it was mistaken. I'll have to play around with it myself again.



Logged





**Dr Ambedkar, I presume**

Lewis Trondheim  
YaBB God



**Reply #9 on:** December 26, 2010, 05:49:27 am

★ Posts: 46153



Is it technically possible to draw a Non-Cuban Hispanic Opportunity district? N can legally be compelled to even if possible, of course; though it would make a

★ [Political Matrix](#)

E: -4.65, S: -4.52



Logged



I'm this message and I approve of Julian Assange.



"It ain't that it's harder to do what's ri much fun." *Devil to Ray Wylie Hubbard*



**JohnnyLongtorso**

YaBB God



**Reply #10 on:** December 26, 2010, 09:14:17 am

★ Posts: 5122



I think Orlando is the only place outside of Miami with a big enough Hispanic p about a 41% Hispanic district across Orange and Osceola Counties. That's a there aren't Cuban, about which I have no idea.



Logged





[Dr Ambedkar, I presume](#)  
Lewis Trondheim  
YaBB God



**Reply #11 on:** December 26, 2010, 09:36:05 am

★ Posts: 46153

Dade has lots of non-Cuban Hispanics... lots of South Americans especially... Hispanics at Orlando are mostly Portorican IIRC. Lots of Mexicans too.)



★ [Political Matrix](#)



Logged

★ E: -4.65, S: -4.52

I'm this message and I approve of Julian Assange.



"It ain't that it's harder to do what's ri much fun." *Devil to Ray Wylie Hubbard*



[brittain33](#)  
YaBB God



**Reply #12 on:** December 26, 2010, 09:57:01 am

★ Posts: 8956

Dade has lots of non-Cuban Hispanics... lots of South Americans especially... Hispanics at Orlando are mostly Portorican IIRC. Lots of Mexicans too.)



The main problem you might run into is differentials in citizenship rates between followed by whether non-Cubans live in distinct neighborhoods from Cubans or not in Meek's old district is represented by Cuban-American reps so you'd hav redistricting existing seats, which may not work, given how easily the one Diaz another. Interestingly, the Census indicates there are about 400,000 Hispanics included in any of JohnnyLongtorso's Miami-Dade districts. I remember hearin "Westonzuela," and also that Pembroke Pines has a large Latino population, k Cubans.



Logged



[JohnnyLongtorso](#)

YaBB God



Reply #13 on: December 26, 2010, 10:08:37 am

★ Posts: 5122

★ It looks like the Hispanics in Broward are too spread out to make a Hispanic-around with it, and to get about to 35% Hispanic, it has to stretch the entire ler



Logged



[Padfoot](#)

padfoot714

YaBB God



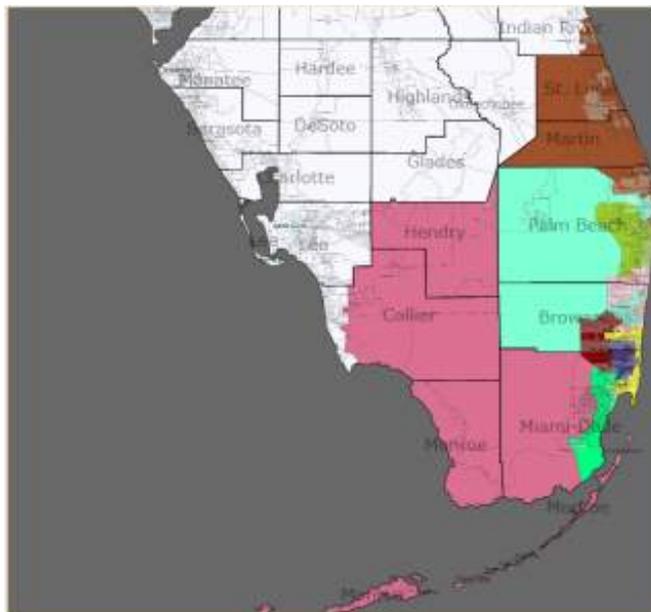
Reply #14 on: December 28, 2010, 12:58:19 am

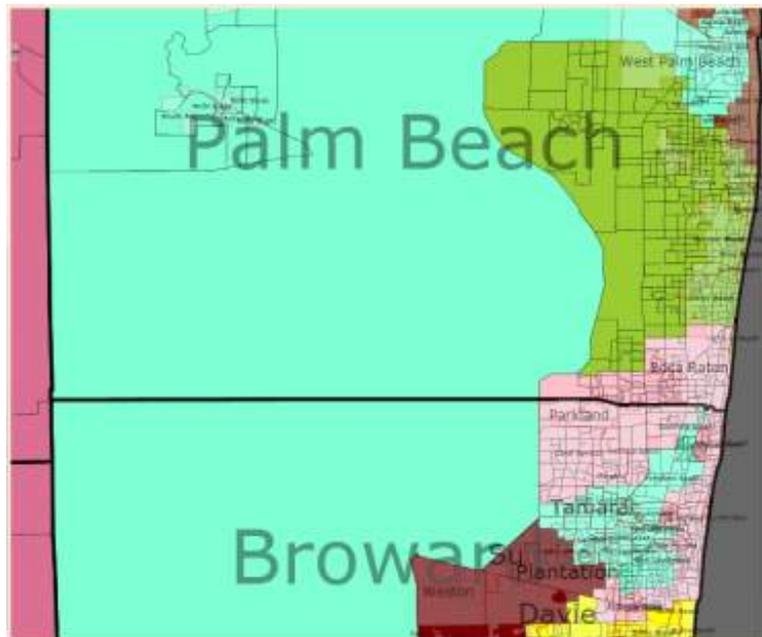
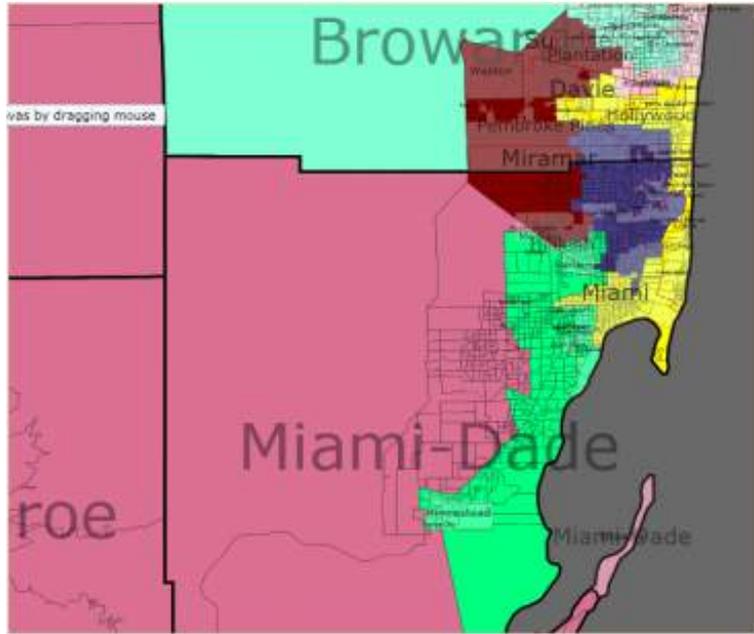
★ Posts: 4366



[Political Matrix](#)

E: -2.58, S: -6.96







# Making sense of the Census

<http://washingtonexaminer.com/print/opinion/columnists/2010/12/making-sense-census>

December 22, 2010

Remember all the fuss about Ohio in the 2004 election? Had he been running on the new electoral map, released yesterday by the Census Bureau, George W. Bush could have won re-election without even carrying Ohio.

That's not to say that Ohio doesn't matter anymore, or that any Republican will have it easy running against President Obama in 2012. Bush had to defeat Sen. John Kerry, D-Mass, in several hard-fought swing states -- Iowa, New Mexico, Florida, Nevada, Arizona, and Missouri -- to get his 286 electoral votes, which translates to 292 electoral votes on the new map. Obama's large victory would still hold up, although the margin would have been 12 votes smaller.

But the point is that the new electoral map is a bit gentler for the GOP, and a bit tougher for President Obama's re-election effort.

Every 10 years, the Census counts America's population to determine which states gain and lose representation in Congress and in the Electoral College. In this process of "reapportionment," states that don't keep up with national population growth are in danger of losing clout.

This time, the count is full of good news for whatever Republican eventually takes on President Obama in 2012. Solidly red states like Texas (+4 electoral votes), Utah (+1), Georgia (+1) and South Carolina (+1) all gained electoral votes and seats in the House of Representatives. Louisiana, after two devastating hurricanes, is the only reliably Republican state at the presidential level to lose representation (-1).

On net, that means the GOP can take six more extra electoral votes to the bank next year than in 2008. That's like winning an extra Arkansas without even trying.

Meanwhile, several deep-blue states lost ground, including New York (-2), Massachusetts (-1), Illinois (-1), Pennsylvania (-1), New Jersey (-1) and Michigan (-1). Only one reliably Democratic state -- Washington (+1) -- gained representation. On net, Democrats can bank on six fewer electoral votes.

Swing states had mixed results -- some will be more significant than before, and others less. Ohio lost two electoral votes, while Iowa and Missouri each lost one. Florida gained two, and Arizona and Nevada each gained one. For the first time, Florida and New York are equals in the electoral college.

The process of reapportionment is more complicated than you might expect. It's not just a matter of dividing the population by 435 U.S. House members and hoping for the best.

After each state gets its mandatory first seat, a mathematical formula distributes the other 385. (For those who love math, you divide a state's population by the square root of its current number of seats times the number it would have if given one more. Do that for all 50, and the state that produces the largest result is next in line to get a seat.) If Congress passed a law to expand itself, then this formula could continue awarding as many seats as you like, and in the best proportion possible. California would get an additional 16 seats before Maine got even one.

This year, the formula gave Minnesota the 435th seat, which means they barely missed losing a district. North Carolina was in line for seat 436 -- too bad for them. Rhode Island continues to be the most overrepresented state in Congress (528,000 people per district) and Montana the most underrepresented (nearly a million people in just one district).

Neither reapportionment nor even redistricting -- the process of drawing the lines, which Republicans will control in most states -- will usher in a new, permanent majority for anyone. But it will tilt the playing field in the Republicans' direction as they seek to take the presidency and preserve their new House majority.

David Freddoso is The Examiner's online opinion editor. He can be reached at [dfreddoso@washingtonexaminer.com](mailto:dfreddoso@washingtonexaminer.com).

# On Politics: GOP in driver's seat for Florida redistricting

<http://jacksonville.com/opinion/blog/401574/abel-harding/2010-12-24/politics-gop-driver%E2%80%99s-seat-florida-redistricting>

December 29, 2010

The battle over redistricting has begun.

Florida will pick up two U.S. House seats and Republicans, who will hold 19 of the state's 25 seats in the new Congress, will look to strengthen swing districts and capitalize on the new ones. Democrats, rendered powerless in the Legislature, will likely have to turn to the courts to lodge complaints.

Some refer to it as the once-in-a-decade moment when members of Congress bother to learn the names of state lawmakers. Tallahassee holds the cards and the calendar is on its side.

Boundaries of Florida's 27 new districts won't have to be finalized until June 18, 2012 — the first day of qualifying for federal and state races. That timing is part Florida Constitution and part legislative calendar, but it leaves outsiders at a distinct disadvantage.

How do you challenge an incumbent without even knowing which district you'll end up in?

Take Flagler County, for example. A newcomer looking to challenge Rep. John Mica, an 18-year incumbent, could be drawn out of Mica's district and into Rep. Cliff Stearns'. Or Rep. Ander Crenshaw's. Or Rep. Corrine Brown's.

A challenger could spend months fundraising and recruiting volunteers, only to learn, perhaps the day of qualifying, that he no longer lived in the district.

The power of incumbency is alive and well.

## Party politics

Donald Foy, a candidate for City Council At-Large Group 5, garnered press when he left the Duval GOP nearly three years ago, but he's not the only council hopeful who's switched parties. In all, 10 candidates have changed their affiliation since January 2008, according to the Duval County Supervisor of Elections. Three of them — Foy, "Big Jim" Breland and Dave Siebert — left the GOP for the Independent Party of Florida. The others — Lindsey Brock, Fritz VanVolkenburgh, Ron Petts, Paul Martinez, Juan Diaz, Jim Robinson and Dane Grey — became Republicans.

*UPDATE: Mr. Diaz challenged the assertion he had ever switched parties, attributing the party change to an error on the part of the Department of Motor Vehicles. The information provided to the Times-Union from the Duval County Supervisor of Elections shows his affiliation changing from Republican to no party affiliation and back to Republican less than one year later. He was a member of the Republican Executive Committee at the time of the change and said he corrected the registration after it was brought to his attention.*

## Insider

If you somehow thought pensions wouldn't be the issue of the 2011 Jacksonville mayor's race, think again. After Rick Mullaney penned a letter outlining his reasons for not seeking union endorsement, Fraternal Order of Police President Nelson Cuba fired back. "[Y]ou enjoy the second-highest city pension ... yet have the audacity to call upon everyone else to sacrifice." Mullaney lamented Cuba's response, calling it a "personal attack." ... City Council President Jack Webb was named partner at Brennan, Manna & Diamond. ... Times-Union columnist Ron Littlepage earned a spate of media attention this week after a lawsuit threat from Rep. Corrine Brown. T-U attorney George Gabel responded with: "Lawsuits by public officials ... challenging criticism ... chill free speech

and freedom of the press.” ... Hundreds turned out last week with ideas to turn around four struggling Duval County schools, but political candidates were in short supply. In fact, state Rep. Mia Jones was the only elected official (other than School Board members) spotted in the crowd. ... Lawyer David Taylor is out of the City Council District 12 race. He’s now running for the At-Large Group 1 seat.

[Flag as offensive](#)

## 2nd new seat due to noncitizens - 12/24/2010

<http://www.miamiherald.com/2010/12/24/v-print/1987166/2nd-new-seat-due-to-noncitizens.html>

December 29, 2010

Posted on Fri, Dec. 24, 2010

BY AARON SHAROCKMAN

St. Petersburg Times

This week's announcement that Florida will pick up two congressional seats and a pair of additional electoral votes certainly enhances the state's clout in Washington.

But that extra political muscle comes with an interesting twist: The state would have gained only one additional seat had the Census counted just U.S. citizens, one researcher found.

It's a strange and little known quirk of the Census process -- that people who cannot vote help influence future elections -- which in 2010 helped Florida at the expense of states like Ohio, Pennsylvania and Missouri.

The methodology has politicians in states that lost seats angry and also puts some Florida Republicans in an awkward position, given tough talk recently over illegal immigration.

Last February, as Marco Rubio waged what proved to be a successful campaign for the U.S. Senate, he ran into criticism when he advocated that only legal U.S. citizens be counted for the purpose of awarding congressional seats. He quickly backtracked, saying he thought the Census should also count legal residents, but not illegal immigrants.

Rubio was unavailable to speak for this story, spokesman Alex Burgos said.

Imagine a reshuffling of the 435 U.S. House seats. The Constitution guarantees each state one seat, so scratch off the first 50.

The Census count then helps allocate seats 51-435, one at a time. While there will be one House member for every 710,767 people, that's not necessarily how the Census Bureau decides how many congressional seats a state receives.

Here's how they do it. All 50 states and their populations are ranked in order. California, being the largest, is at the top, and gets the 51st congressional seat.

Next, the Census Bureau uses a formula to subtract from California's population the portion of the state assigned to that 51st seat.

So now Texas has the highest remaining population, and gets the 52nd congressional seat. Again, some of the state's population is subtracted. And so it goes, with the next seat awarded to the state with the largest remaining population, and that portion of the population removed until seat 435 is awarded.

In every case, the state with the highest remaining number gets the seat, though the margins are much smaller as the apportionment reaches the last 10 or so seats.

Using that process, Florida will have two additional House seats until at least 2020.

But that's only because the entire population was counted.

Clark Bensen, who analyzes political and demographic data for a company he founded called Polidata, estimates that if the Census only counted U.S. citizens for the purpose of apportionment, Florida would gain just one seat,

not two.

Bensen used the same formula the Census Bureau does to hypothetically award congressional seats, but in his calculations he only counted U.S. citizens. Doing that would drop Florida's population from 18.8 million to 17 million, and cost Florida a congressional seat.

According to Bensen, if the Census only counted U.S. citizens, California would have lost five congressional seats, while Montana, North Carolina, Oklahoma and Indiana each would have gained a seat.

``It's one of the things most people don't realize. The Census count, indirectly, sort of gives noncitizens a vote."

Along with congressional seats, the 10-year Census count is used to allocate \$400 billion in federal funding.

In 2009, U.S. Sen. David Vitter, R-La., proposed adding a question to the 2010 Census asking about citizenship status to reshape how seats were awarded and how money might be divided. But the measure failed. And as a result, Vitter's Louisiana will lose a seat.

Some question the count's constitutionality.

John S. Baker, who teaches constitutional law at Louisiana State University, said the Constitution specifically says ``Indians not taxed" are not to be counted when considering congressional apportionment. To Baker, those sovereign Native American tribes are no different from foreign nationals living in the United States.

But others argue that the Constitution proves the opposite. Right before ``Indians not taxed," the 14th Amendment to the Constitution said the Census should be used to count ``the whole number of persons in each State."

``The wording in the Constitution strongly suggests to me that the framers intended the Census to count everybody," said Steve Schwinn, who teaches at the John Marshall Law School in Chicago.

Legal or not, Florida legislators are expected to begin discussing how to add two new congressional districts during the 2011 legislative session.

*Aaron Sharockman can be reached at [asharockman@sptimes.com](mailto:asharockman@sptimes.com).*

# Redistricting Florida | jacksonville.com

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<http://my-sb.jacksonville.com/forums/rants-raves-forum/2010-10-24/redistricting-florida>

December 30, 2010

This morning I read an article by Salena Zito writing in Town Hall as follows,

<<

"Governors are the CEOs of their states; next month, 37 of them will be chosen. Which party controls those state offices will affect the entire country, since governors have the ability to craft state and congressional district lines and, thus, the control of the U.S. House of Representatives for the next decade.

In almost every state or commonwealth, legislators draw the lines - but governors have the authority to approve or veto the maps.

"This is the rawest form of political power in the United States," commented history professor Jeff Brauer at Keystone College."

>>

This is something I knew but that did not register until now. Are we to chose Alex Sink - a Progressive/Marxist for governor whom we know will gerrymander every district in favor of a Marxist takeover of our state?

Or will we chose a conservative businessman who will help assure we maintain a conservative Florida for the good of all of us.

I hope we remain Conservative as we are today - we already know what "Change" has done and I've had had enough of it for one lifetime.

# In Redistricting, Equality Can't Make People Vote

<http://www.nytimes.com/2010/12/24/us/24tramsey.html>

December 29, 2010

*Ross Ramsey, the managing editor of The Texas Tribune, writes a regular column*

You can make political districts the same size, but you can't make them politically equal.

Lawmakers will spend the next six months drawing political maps for Texas, doing their decennial readjustment to make sure each district has roughly the same number of people. But when they're done, some parts of the state will still get more political attention than others, and the voters have only themselves to blame.

Politicians care most about the part of the population that votes. El Paso County has 92,680 more people than Denton County, for instance. But Denton turned out 42,043 more voters in November. Which is more attractive to a statewide candidate?

New 2010 census numbers put the state's population at 25.1 million, up from 20.9 million in 2000. In the next few months, the counters will get more specific about where those people are. The Legislature will divide the total population by the number of members in each body — 36 Texans in Congress, 31 in the State Senate, 150 in the State House and 15 on the State Board of Education — and draw political districts of equal size for each.

Districts must have the same numbers of people so that, for instance, each of the state's 31 Senate districts will have 811,147 Texans. But they're never the same size in voter participation, and ultimately, there's no way to tell without an election or two.

In 2002, State Senator John Whitmire, a Houston Democrat, faced a Republican in his re-election bid and won with 62,458 votes — 60.4 percent of those cast. Joe Sullivan, a San Antonio Democrat, got nearly as many votes — 61,899 — while losing to Senator Jeff Wentworth, Republican of San Antonio. Mr. Sullivan captured just 30.2 percent of the votes cast, in a district the same size in population as Mr. Whitmire's.

In 2004, after new Congressional seats were drawn and district-to-district populations equalized, Representative [Lamar Smith](#), a Republican, was re-elected in a San Antonio-based district that turned out 341,119 voters. At the same time, Representative [Sheila Jackson Lee](#), a Democrat from Houston, was winning re-election in a district where less than half as many people voted: 152,988.

All redistricting does is give officeholders and their peers districts of equal size. It gives residents a chance to choose their representatives. But it doesn't require them to vote, and you can play politics with the results.

Democrats out to beat State Representative Kevin Bailey of Houston in their own primary a few years ago had noticed something about his district that made him vulnerable. Where it might take a large number of votes to knock off someone in a high-turnout district, you could turn Mr. Bailey's anemic district on its head by attracting just a few new people to the polls.

Mr. Bailey got almost 70 percent of the votes in the 2006 primary, but had only 517 more than his opponent. His foes went after him in the 2008 primary, and while turnout was way up with [Barack Obama](#) and [Hillary Rodham Clinton](#) on the ballot, Mr. Bailey lost to Armando Walle, who got out early and started targeting people who hadn't been voting for the incumbent.

The new maps will be drawn by a Legislature that can reasonably be expected to try to institutionalize the results of the Nov. 2 Republican stampede. The 101 Republicans in the House will try to draw 101 safe Republican seats and, failing that, to draw as many safe seats as they can, putting the remaining Democrats into swing districts when they can.

Senators on the other side of the Capitol rotunda will be doing the same thing. Together, the Republicans in both chambers will try to keep their party's stamp on a Congressional delegation of 23 Republicans and 9 Democrats (to keep the same proportions with four new seats, they'd have 26 Republicans and 10 Democrats, or three to the Republicans and one to the Democrats).

The districts will be the same size over all, but not at all equal in adult population, voter registration, voter participation and geographic size. It won't affect each member's clout in Congress, or in the statehouse, or on the State Board of Education, where every vote counts the same. But it'll matter. A governor who gets more votes from one district than from another might find he has a favorite when it comes time to choose winners and losers.

Redistricting is designed to even things up, or to at least give voters an opportunity to do so. You can lead them to the opportunity, but you can't make them vote. The size of their clout is up to them.

# In Southern States, GOP Keeps Gaining

<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB10001424052748703814804576036110157622364.html>

December 29, 2010

*(Please see Corrections and Amplifications [below](#).)*

ATLANTA—Republicans in the South continued to make gains weeks after the midterm elections, as a number of Democrats elected to state offices have switched parties.

*Associated Press*

GEORGIA: Rep. Amy Carter was one of eight Democratic representatives to switch to the Republican side since the Nov. 2 election, giving the GOP 114 seats in the 180-seat House.

Since the vote, in which the GOP took control of the U.S. House of Representatives and solidified control in state governments across the South, at least 18 Democratic state legislators have jumped to the Republican Party. More defections are likely in coming months, officials from both parties say.

While a handful of Democrats became Republicans in other parts of the country, the majority of these defections have come in the South.

Not all Southern states have seen mass defections after this election, but in Georgia, Alabama, Louisiana and Texas, elected Democrats have been crossing over or making plans to do so.

There haven't been any Southern Republican state officials who have turned Democrats since the election, though a Republican county commissioner in Pennsylvania has announced he was going to the Democratic side.

In Louisiana's 105-seat House, Republicans went from 49 seats after the Nov. 2 vote to 53 seats today, their first majority since Reconstruction. A state senator there also switched to the GOP. Alabama Democrats controlled the 105-seat House for 136 years until the midterms, when Republicans finished with 62 seats. Now that majority has increased to 66.

*Associated Press*

LOUISIANA: Rep. Walker Hines left the Democrats and became a Republican, along with three other representatives, after the election. The GOP now has 53 seats in the 105-seat House.

In Georgia, where Republicans control all state offices as well as the legislature, nine Democratic legislators—eight representatives and one senator—have changed sides, strengthening solid GOP majorities. On the local level, even a black county commissioner who was once national president of the College Democrats of America has switched.

While Texas officials aren't allowed to formally change parties until January, Republicans expect to pick up two state representatives and "around a dozen" county officials, judges and commissioners, state party spokesman Chris Elam said.

Southern Democrats said their losses would ultimately strengthen the party.

"Sometimes you have to subtract to add, and once you get down to the real warriors, you can fight," said Joe Turnham, chairman of the Alabama Democratic Party. He said he has made dozens of phone calls in recent weeks to surviving Democrats to make sure they weren't considering leaving.

Stephen Wainscott, a political science professor at Clemson University in South Carolina, said Democrats may be switching as much for political ambition as for ideological affinity with Republicans. "The simple fact is that

working in the majority is a lot more pleasant than banging your head against the wall in the minority," he said.

Candidates and officials have switched party affiliations throughout U.S. history. During the last half century, hundreds of Democratic candidates and millions of voters changed allegiances to Republican in what was once called the Solid South. After this election, it appears that Southern Democrats, in retreat for years, are dealing with a new round of desertions from their most loyal ranks.

### *Associated Press*

ALABAMA: Rep. Mike Millican was among four Democrats to join the GOP after the midterm. With the defections, Republicans have 66 of the House's 105 seats.

Louisiana state Rep. Noble Ellington, a fixture in the Democratic Party for decades, was the fourth representative in that state this month to join the GOP. His defection handed control of the House to the Republican Party. He said he began thinking of switching the day of the midterm election, when he found himself rooting for Republican victories. "I figured I must not be a very good Democrat anymore," said Mr. Ellington, 68 years old.

Mr. Ellington said his own conservative leanings contrasted with national Democratic policies and decisions made in Congress that kept "moving further and further to the left." He grew tired of explaining why he was different.

"A Louisiana Democrat is probably more conservative than some Connecticut Republicans," he said, adding that while he was changing party affiliation, he wasn't changing how he votes on the issues.

Many Democratic state legislators in the South aren't wavering. They are finding solace in U.S. Rep. Jim Cooper (D., Tenn.), a Democratic congressman who survived the midterms—and has no plans to defect.

"I was born a Democrat, and I plan on dying a Democrat," said Mr. Cooper, who added that he gets offers to switch parties "all the time."

Meanwhile, Republicans continue to gain. Ashley Bell, a black commissioner in Hall County in north Georgia, said the GOP had been trying to recruit him for years before he finally agreed to switch earlier this month. "I had to get away from the team-sport mentality and look more at the issues," said Mr. Bell, 30 years old, who said he supported lower taxes, gun rights and helping business.

Mr. Bell, the only Democrat elected in his county, said the decision to go GOP was gradual. He said that this year he edited the political views on his Facebook profile several times, from conservative Democrat to post-partisan conservative and finally to Republican.

### **Corrections & Amplifications**

An earlier version of this article stated that U.S. Rep. Jim Cooper was the only incumbent Democratic congressman in his state to win in midterm elections. U.S. Rep. Steve Cohen also won re-election. Additionally, Rep. Mike Millican of Alabama was among Democrats who joined the GOP after the midterm. A photo caption in an earlier version of this article incorrectly identified Rep. Millican as Rep. Walker Hines of Louisiana. The caption has been corrected.

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# Amendments 5 and 6: The Battle of Less Bad

<http://www.sunshinestatenews.com/story/amendments-5-and-6-battle-less-bad>

December 30, 2010

FairDistricts Florida and its supporters say Amendments 5 and 6 will put an end to the way incumbents draw voting district lines every 10 years. But opponents say the rigid requirements would make the Legislature's job of redistricting nearly impossible and have potentially unintended consequences.

"How about I just ask everyone to stand up," said incoming Senate President Mike Haridopolos to a crowd of about 200 Florida Chamber of Commerce members. "Line up in alphabetical order by height, weight and age -- that's literally what's happening here."

The crowd chuckled at the analogy, but Haridopolos says there are serious challenges with the proposal. Earlier this year he tried to put an additional amendment on the ballot that would modify 5 and 6, but the courts rejected it.

The summary of Amendments 5 and 6 as they will appear on the ballot reads as follows:

Congressional districts or districting plans may not be drawn to favor or disfavor an incumbent or political party. Districts shall not be drawn to deny racial or language minorities the equal opportunity to participate in the political process and elect representatives of their choice. Districts must be contiguous. Unless otherwise required, districts must be compact, as equal in population as feasible, and where feasible must make use of existing city, county and geographical boundaries.

"There are few things more hazardous in politics than a bad idea that sounds good," said Rep. Dean Cannon, the House speaker designee. "I like FairDistricts, but the premise is flawed and the structure is flawed."

Haridopolos and Cannon say the FairDistricts' premise is flawed because it assumes the reason districts have such sprawling shapes, and Republicans are in the majority because incumbents draw districts to favor themselves.

## **[Video: Watch interview with Dean Cannon on Amendments 5 and 6](#)**

In Cannon's view, the imbalance is reflective of voters who simply choose not to always vote along their party lines. He took the two U.S. Senate seats and four Cabinet seats in Florida as an example. Four of the six are Republican.

"Now you can't accuse us of drawing the state of Florida in some peculiar configuration," said Cannon. "Voters have crossed party lines. Voters are smart. They choose among candidates and they differentiate."

But Sen. Dave Aronberg, D-Greenacres, sees it differently.

"[He's] right about the state, but the districts are different," he said. "The districts are skewed to only elect one member of a party -- to elect either a Democrat or a Republican. There are very few competitive districts left."

Aronberg is one of FairDistricts' strongest voices in support of Amendments 5 and 6. He says his district, which stretches from West Palm Beach to Fort Myers and down to Naples, is an example of gerrymandering.

"This is the typical game of incumbents trying to make a fake argument; trying to scare people into rejecting this and make people believe the current system, the status quo, is somehow better," Aronberg said.

FairDistricts' claims support by more than 50 nonpartisan Florida organizations -- including League of Women Voters, AARP, NAACP and Democracia Ahora -- but they receive most of their financial support from

unions, including \$500,000 from the Florida Education Association and \$250,000 from the SEIU labor union.

They describe their purpose as working to establish constitutional rules to stop politicians from drawing districts to favor themselves. They accuse politicians, particularly Republicans, of manipulating district boundaries to keep themselves and their friends in power by drawing lines based on voter registration records.

Opponents of the amendments say, ultimately, the FairDistricts' requirements would make it so convoluted that anyone can take it to a judge claiming it doesn't meet requirements.

If the courts twice strike down the FairDistricts' attempt, the Constitution says the Florida Supreme Court would then have to draw the map itself.

"That's one of the basic premises of our federal republic, that courts don't make political decisions; and yet 5 and 6, left unchecked, may result in courts drawing political districts."

Aronberg argues that would still be better than the alternative.

"I'd rather have the courts draw the lines than the politicians themselves," he said. "Do you think it's a better system to have incumbents draw their own districts? It's a terrible system."

Cannon says he and Haridopolos asked those who drafted the amendments to explain some of the seemingly contradictory requirements. He says they refused to give an answer.

"The fact that the drafters wouldn't explain how they would work to the legislative branch that would be governed by them -- that raised a red flag," Cannon said.

He added that because support of the amendments is primarily funded by trial lawyers and unions, "that sends up a red flag, too, that there's sort of a partisan motive behind them."

*Lane Wright can be reached at [lane@sunshinestateneews.com](mailto:lane@sunshinestateneews.com) or at (561) 247-1063.*

# Testing the limits of Weatherford's interpersonal skill set

<http://www2.tbo.com/content/2010/dec/26/jackson-testing-the-limits-of-weatherfords-interpe/news-pasco/>

December 29, 2010

By TOM JACKSON | The Tampa Tribune

Published: December 26, 2010

WESLEY CHAPEL - For the substantial minority of your neighbors still worrying about the implications of new state constitutional amendments on the coming wrangling over reapportionment, a certain reassurance can be obtained from this fact:

Molly Marie Weatherford arrived in this world Thursday, at the front end of what her proud father calls "the only 10 (consecutive) dead days I have the entire year."

To have calculated this important life event almost down to the hour says much about Will Weatherford's interpersonal skill set, the limits of which will be tested as chairman of the state House of Representatives committee overseeing the drawing of new congressional and legislative district lines.

Let's review. Ability to plan ahead? Check. Ability to anticipate unforeseen obstacles? Check. Ability to weigh and satisfactorily resolve competing interests? Check. Ability to engage cooperatively, cordially and constructively with others when the outcome is very much in doubt? Check.

\* \* \* \* \*

**This being a family** publication, we will not go into the awkward and unsightly collaborative processes required to produce both a beautiful human baby and 27 artful, compact and legal congressional districts (two more than in 2002) – however much the parallels demand comparison – except to say there are certain events even public access cable shouldn't carry, but most likely will, at least in the case of the 30-odd town hall/public hearings Weatherford expects to convene around the state next summer and fall.

Wary of the objections litigants inevitably will attach to their arguments about the redistricted grid that will emerge from the Legislature during its 2012 session, Weatherford vows to pursue a process that is without precedent in its clarity, transparency, openness and accessibility.

(This is also what the Pasco County School Board promises whenever they have to recast district lines, and look at all the trouble that causes.)

"Our thought is, engage the public," Weatherford says. "Have them start the conversation, and once they've had their say, then we (legislators) start working on the problem."

Having done that, Weatherford says – hopes, actually – the likelihood of "losing in litigation decreases ... because we will have set a tone of things on the record that (reapportionment) was done non-politically."

\* \* \* \* \*

**The problem lies** within the Fair Districts amendments' (Nos. 5 and 6, for the record) language. While allowing for federal mandates and court precedent, legislators also are required to draw districts that conform to assorted dictates, not limited to compactness, political boundaries and populations of shared interests – "to the best of their abilities."

This last is weasel language, a free pass through the courthouse door, and those who drew up the amendments knew it. Who decides where to set the "best of their abilities" bar? It's a judicial question.

Small wonder Weatherford chooses only the most carefully selected words to describe the assignment set before him. This Space will say what he cannot: It's a nightmare. However prudently his committee pursues the process, they all can count on being deposed in the spring of 2012.

Talk about arranging your schedule in advance.

Columnist Tom Jackson can be reached at [tjackson@tampatrib.com](mailto:tjackson@tampatrib.com) and (813) 259-7068.

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# Jeremy Wallace: District changes may help Sen. Bennett

<http://www.heraldtribune.com/article/20101227/COLUMNIST/12271009/2416/NEWS?Title=WALLACE-Population-boost-may-help-Sen-Bennett>

December 29, 2010

Bennett, R-Bradenton, now is blocked by U.S. Rep. Vern Buchanan, R-Longboat Key, in the 13th District, where both of them reside. But Bennett is growing hopeful that because of the region's population growth, most of Manatee will be moved into the neighboring 11th Congressional that is mostly a Hillsborough County district now.

Already, new Census numbers show Florida will get two new seats in the U.S. House. While those districts likely will be centered near Orlando and Miami, the ripple effect could be Sarasota and Manatee being split into two separate districts.

If the lines are redrawn with all of Manatee in the 11th District, Bennett would be in a position to challenge Rep. Kathy Castor, a Democrat, in 2012 instead of taking on Buchanan in a primary.

Already that path seems clearer than it did just a week ago. That is because Gov.-elect Rick Scott, a Republican, picked Mike Prendergast to be his chief of staff. Prendergast, a Tampa Republican, ran against Castor in 2010, and would have been a serious contender in 2012 for a reconfigured 11th District if it included more of Manatee County.

Bennett says he would like a shot at Congress and will be interested to see how the new districts are shaped over the next 18 months as the Legislature begins the redistricting process.

Bennett is the Florida Senate Pro Tem, the second highest ranking post in the Senate -- which will be drawing the district lines for Congress.

Hear more about how Bennett sees the region's districts being formed on Jan. 6 when he speaks to Sarasota's Tiger Bay Club. Bennett and Pamela Goodman of the League of Women Voters speak to Tiger Bay at noon at Michael's On East, 1212 East Ave. S., Sarasota.

## **Gruters bids for new term**

Sarasota Republican Party chairman Joe Gruters will be seeking a new two-year term as the local party's chairman on Wednesday.

Gruters is the only announced candidate for the position so far, and that is good news for him as he also bids to become the state Republican Party chairman.

In order to be considered for the state party's top spot, Gruters has to be a county party chairman.

"I'm hoping that all the work we've done this year in Sarasota will get me past that hurdle," Gruters said of his bid to win re-election to the local party.

The Sarasota Republicans meet at 6:30 p.m. Wednesday at the Sahib Temple, 600 N. Beneva Road, Sarasota.

On the state level, Gruters said he has traveled more than 6,000 miles in December meeting party leaders throughout the state to bolster his chances to win the state leadership post on Jan. 15. He said it is hard to know who is really leading the race, but he feels like he is doing the work to give himself a legitimate shot.

Gruters is running against Hillsborough County chairwoman Deborah Cox-Roush, former Charlotte County state legislator Dave Bitner, Pinellas County chairman Tony DiMatteo and Palm Beach County chairman Sid Dinerstein.

## **Staff shuffle**

Buchanan has reassigned members of his office staff in anticipation of a more concentrated role in D.C.

Longtime spokeswoman Sally Tibbetts, stationed in Sarasota, is losing her title as communications director to be the full-time district director.

As a result, Buchanan has promoted former legislative assistant Max Goodman, based in D.C., to be his full-time press secretary based in Washington.

## **This year in Florida**

Before watching the ball drop in Times Square, you can catch me and a panel of experts on WEDU's "Florida This Week" talking about the biggest stories in Florida in 2010.

St. Petersburg Times reporter Steve Bousquet, University of South Florida professor Susan MacManus, former USF professor Darryl Paulson and I count down the 10 biggest stories.

The list includes the [Gulf oil spill](#), Rick Scott's election and the future of high-speed rail.

The program airs at 8:30 p.m. Friday on PBS affiliate WEDU, and then again at 12:30 p.m. on Sunday.

# Florida redistricting won't happen very fast – Political Insider - Sarasota Herald-Tribune - Sarasota, FL - Archive

<http://politicalinsider.blogs.heraldtribune.com/11865/florida-redistricting-won%E2%80%99t-happen-very-fast/>

December 29, 2010

December 27th, 2010 07:53am

by [Jeremy Wallace](#)

[Florida now knows it will get two new seats in Congress thanks to the latest U.S. Census numbers.](#)

But where those seats will be is going to take some time.

The Florida Legislature has created a timeline for redistricting that predicts Florida's new districts will be finalized in June 2012 – just two months before the 2012 primary elections.

Here's how the timeline looks right now.

**March 2011** - Census publishes more detailed population counts for counties and cities.

**June 2011** - First version of redistricting map goes online.

**July 2011 – October 2011** - Statewide public hearings on proposed maps.

**December 2011** - Second version of redistricting maps online

**January 2012** - Legislature holds annual session early to have enough time to produce redistricting map.

**Early March 2012** - Legislature passes redistricting map that then goes to a Supreme Court review for 30 days.

**April 2012 to June 2012** - U.S. Justice Department reviews maps to assure civil rights laws are followed.

**June 2012** - New Districts take effect

**June 18, 2012** - Qualifying for congressional candidates begins

**August 28, 2012** - Florida Primary elections

**November 6, 2012** – Election Day

# Florida's next members of Congress? – Orlando Opinionators – Orlando Sentinel

[http://blogs.orlandosentinel.com/orlando\\_opinionators/2010/12/floridas-next-members-of-congress.html](http://blogs.orlandosentinel.com/orlando_opinionators/2010/12/floridas-next-members-of-congress.html)

December 29, 2010

As expected, the 2010 census has awarded Florida another two seats in the U.S. House. Orlando and Tampa grew faster than other parts of the state, so those areas would have to be the favorites to wind up with the new seats.

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Any other ideas out there?

# Legislative redistricting may be a tough task

[http://www.boston.com/news/local/massachusetts/articles/2010/12/23/legislative\\_redistricting\\_may\\_be\\_a\\_tough\\_task/](http://www.boston.com/news/local/massachusetts/articles/2010/12/23/legislative_redistricting_may_be_a_tough_task/) December 29, 2010

The legislators responsible for drawing the states new political districts will have state-of-the-art computers, a snazzy website, experienced consultants, and the input of Massachusetts residents from every walk of life. At its core, however, redistricting is a nakedly political process, with elected officials fighting over turf and communities of interest seeking fair representation.

With the Bay State losing one of its 10 US House seats, following the 2010 Census, the stakes are especially high as lawmakers begin devising new boundaries for congressional districts and for the 160 House and 40 Senate districts in the Legislature. Many constituencies have a keen interest in the outcome, from incumbent members of the congressional delegation fighting to keep their jobs to advocacy groups concerned about minority representation.

State Senator Stanley C. Rosenberg, Democrat of Amherst and Senate chairman of the redistricting committee, said the panel will hold public hearings in all 10 existing congressional districts and build a website to give residents access to large amounts of information.

Basically, our objective is to have as participatory and transparent a process as possible, said Rosenberg, who had a similar role in the last redistricting.

Because of the proliferation and advancement of communication technology, Rosenberg expects much more input, not only from advocacy groups but from ordinary citizens, many of whom will have the tools to draw and recommend their own maps. He is already receiving e-mails and Facebook messages, Rosenberg said.

A coalition of voting rights and minority advocacy groups is forming and will make recommendations to increase transparency in the process, said Alejandra St. Guillen, the new executive director of the Latino political organization Oiste? These groups hope to have their greatest impact in the redrawing of state legislative districts, where racial and linguistic minorities, despite some recent gains in the House, are underrepresented, especially in the state Senate.

They want to avoid a repeat of the last legislative redistricting plan, which surfaced on a Friday and was approved the following Monday, she said. That produced a voting rights suit challenging the districts. Thomas M. Finneran, then speaker of the House, later pleaded guilty to testifying falsely in the case and was fined and disbarred.

Rosenbergs House counterpart, state Representative Michael J. Moran, Democrat of Brighton, predicted that state legislative redistricting, in which population shifts could spark significant movement of boundaries, will be more challenging than reducing the number of congressional districts.

Everybody wants to talk about Congress, but the real problem is with the [state] representatives, because there are 160 of them, and we will be dealing with precincts, as opposed to towns, Moran said, pointing out that the committee will have a budget of at least \$750,000 for technology, consultants, and staff.[Continued...](#)

Still, the fight over the nine remaining US House seats could be brutal if all 10 Democratic incumbents seek reelection. That would pit two members of Congress in a political death match not seen since 1982, when Democrat Barney Frank and Republican Margaret Heckler were thrown into the same district and Frank prevailed.

Anybody who thinks it can be a nonpolitical process is ignoring history, because the members of Congress have sought to influence the process going back probably to the founding of the republic, Secretary of State William F. Galvin said.

Bruce E. Tarr, the new Senate minority leader and a Republican of Gloucester, said that, like Galvin, GOP legislators want an independent commission to assist in the process, which in recent history has created limited opportunities for his party.

We've suffered from a lack of independence in the process, Tarr said. Now, he said, there's a very high-stakes situation for embedded political interests.

Congressional redistricting will be complicated by where many of the incumbents live.

The four westernmost counties have a combined population of about 825,000, roughly 100,000 more than that of the average new district. Yet there are two seats held by incumbents who live about 25 miles apart in the area, John W. Olver of Amherst and Richard E. Neal of Springfield.

Olver's First District includes 107 of the state's 351 communities and reaches from the New York border to Pepperell in Middlesex County. Neal's Second District extends from the Northampton-Springfield area into the Blackstone Valley and Bellingham in Norfolk County. With one fewer district statewide, both those districts would have to expand eastward.

Rosenberg, who also lives in Amherst, is an advocate for keeping two western districts.

My responsibility is to conduct an open and honest process that produces a result that is best for the whole Commonwealth, but like every member of the committee, my region will expect me to look out for my region, he said.

There is even more congestion in the eastern part of the state, where five US representatives currently represent half the state but live within a 10-mile radius of Boston, assuming newly elected William R. Keating in the 10th District, continues to reside in Quincy.

The result is a series of oddly shaped congressional gerrymanders, with Stephen F. Lynch of South Boston in the Ninth District, Barney Frank of Newton in the Fourth, Michael E. Capuano of Somerville in the Eighth, and Edward J. Markey of Malden in the Seventh.

*Brian Mooney can be reached at [bmooney@globe.com](mailto:bmooney@globe.com).* ■

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# Capital Soup » Blog Archive » Statement By Senate President Mike Haridopolos on U.S. Census Population Figures

<http://capitalsoup.com/2010/12/21/statement-by-senate-president-mike-haridopolos-on-u-s-census-population-figures/> December 29, 2010

TALLAHASSEE – Florida Senate President Mike Haridopolos made the following statement on the release of United States census figures including Florida’s population:

“With today’s release of the 2010 census results, Florida’s clout among our country’s 49 other states continues to rise. The population growth in the state allows Floridians to gain two additional voices in the U.S. House of Representatives – meaning our state will be tied for the third largest congressional delegation in the country with 27 members of Congress. Florida has experienced phenomenal growth and in just 40 years, the number of Floridians has nearly tripled to the 18.8 million residents we have today.”“Now the work begins in the Florida Legislature as we draw new congressional districts as well as seats in the Florida House and Senate. This will be a deliberative process and all Floridians will have a voice. I have the utmost confidence in the Senate Reapportionment Committee led by Senator Don Gaetz and look forward to providing an efficient, transparent process to maximize Floridians’ voice in Tallahassee and Washington, D.C.”

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# Tallahassee Democrat - [www.floridacapitalnews.com](http://www.floridacapitalnews.com) - Tallahassee, FL.

<http://floridacapitalnews.com/article/20101222/CAPITOLNEWS/12220318/1067/RSS15>

December 29, 2010

Florida legislators got the official go-ahead Tuesday to start a two-year argument over redrawing the state's congressional and legislative districts.

Details on how Florida's population has shifted internally remain months away.

ADVERTISEMENT ▼ Because of national population shifts, the state gains two seats in the U.S. House.

▼  
But it also means that state lawmakers will have to draw the district boundaries for themselves 40 in the Senate and 120 in the House as well as the now-27 congressional tracts.

"We'll take the show on the road and have at least 20 public hearings," Sen. Don Gaetz, R-Niceville, who chairs the Senate committee on redistricting, said Tuesday. "Also, we're going to light up a website allowing every citizen in Florida to have access to the same data that we're using."

While Florida gets more seats in Congress, the state Legislature does not grow.

"We know we'll all be representing more people," Gaetz said, "but there won't be any more of us."

Gaetz said the "block by block" breakdown of population shifts will be sent to Tallahassee in April. The 2011 session will then be in its second half, so the data will be fed into computers. It will all be cross-matched with voter registration and election results, so members will know who is affected when they bunch counties together or split them two or three ways.

Eventually, the Florida Supreme Court and federal courts will decide whether legislators get too self-interested in drawing the lines. Hundreds of maps will be haggled over by legislators and lawyers, for review by the U.S. Department of Justice, with judges probably moving a few lines.

The 2011-12 task is complicated by a pair of state constitutional amendments, adopted Nov. 2, requiring districts to be as compact and contiguous as possible while not favoring or handicapping incumbents, political parties or potential candidates. The 1965 Voting Rights Act, protecting the electoral interests of black and Hispanic voters, also applies to Florida.

Scott Arceneaux, executive director of the state Democratic Party, said the Electoral College gain that comes with additional congressional seats makes Florida more critical in the presidential election. Democrats are outnumbered 2-1 in both legislative chambers, but Arceneaux said the GOP majority has to be mindful of the two "Fair District Florida" constitutional amendments voters approved last month.

"Floridians of all parties can look forward to districts that truly reflect their communities and representation that reflects the diversity of our great state," said Arceneaux, "rather than the partisan gerrymandering that best describes the current districts."

Senate President Mike Haridopolos, R-Merritt Island, expressed confidence that Gaetz will run "an efficient, transparent process to maximize Floridians' voice in Tallahassee and Washington, D.C."

# Orlando Opinionators

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<http://mobile.orlandosentinel.com/wap/news/text.jsp?sid=292&nid=32741965&cid=17154&scid=1732&ith=3&title=Orlando+Opinionators>

December 29, 2010

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Story posted 2010.12.22 at 09:30 AM EST

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# The reality of redistricting reform – Orlando Opinionators – Orlando Sentinel

[http://blogs.orlandosentinel.com/orlando\\_opinionators/2010/11/the-reality-of-redistricting-reform.html](http://blogs.orlandosentinel.com/orlando_opinionators/2010/11/the-reality-of-redistricting-reform.html)

December 30, 2010

Opponents of redistricting reform in Florida spent big money to portray it as a “power grab” and “con job” from out-of-state liberal special interests. Voters didn’t fall for it, even in an election when conservatives scored decisive victories in most races.

It’s nonsense that reforming a system designed to protect legislative and congressional incumbents is somehow a liberal plot. Consider that while voters in Republican-run Florida were approving new rules that would bar legislators from drawing district lines to favor incumbents, voters in Democratic-run California were reaffirming and broadening their own, more ambitious plan to give an independent commission the job of drawing districts. And the opponents of redistricting reform in California were some of the state’s top Democrats, including U.S. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi.

Republican politicians in Florida who would prefer to run in safe districts dictated by their party’s majority in the Legislature hate redistricting reform now, but they’ll love it if Democrats ever take control in Tallahassee. The same goes for Democratic politicians in California, if Republicans grab power in Sacramento.

# State Senate discusses redistricting software and timeline, possibility of lawsuit

<http://floridaindependent.com/16894/state-senate-discusses-redistricting-software-and-timeline-possibility-of-lawsuit>

December 30, 2010

The Florida Senate's reapportionment committee met yesterday to discuss a contentious issue — the redrawing of district lines to reflect data gathered in the newest census. It's an issue that has become more convoluted thanks to the recent passage of Amendments 5 and 6, the so-called "Fair Districts" amendments that created strict rules for how politicians can draw up district maps.

The distribution of seats in the Florida legislature and the state's congressional delegation will have to shift to even out the population distribution among districts and account for as many as two additional congressional seats Florida is expected to receive.

During the last round of redistricting, which followed the 2000 census, people could send a \$20 check to get a CD that would allow them install desktop software, which they could use to explore demographic data and tinker with district boundaries.

This year, the public will have access to a pair of web applications that will allow them to track different redistricting proposals and draw their own lines using "an easy set of tools" similar to Google Maps, according to John Guthrie of the Senate reapportionment committee's staff.

One application, District Explorer, will allow anyone to look at redistricting proposals as they are submitted and analyze the boundaries and demographics. The other, District Builder, will allow anyone who obtains a username and password to try their own hands at drawing the districts. The House will have a separate but largely similar system.

"No other state is providing the level of public access that the House and Senate are going to provide in Florida," Guthrie said.

The process begins later this month, as the census data become available and the congressional seats are distributed among states. After that:

- + In June, the first full version of District Builder software is set to become available.
- + Later in the summer, public hearings begin around the state. Committee chairman Don Gaetz, R-Niceville, said he wanted the software online before the hearings begin, so people could present their own district maps and weigh in on other proposals.
- + In January 2012, the Florida legislature begins its regular session, which ends on March 9. Once both houses approve a redistricting proposal, they'll have to submit it to the attorney general, who will have 15 days to send it to the Supreme Court.
- + Then the Supreme Court has 30 days to review the proposal.
- + Then the U.S. Department of Justice has 60 days to review the proposal.
- + Mon., June 18 is the first day candidates can qualify to run for the new seats created by the redistricting process.

That leaves only 100 days between the end of the session on March 9 and the start of qualifying on June 18. State Sen. John Thrasher, R-Jacksonville, worried that with little time to spare, the process could be derailed by a lawsuit.

Under Amendments 5 and 6, which passed in the November elections, districts must be as contiguous as possible, and may not be drawn with the intent of marginalizing minority groups or favoring any incumbent or political party.

State Sen. Jack Latvala, R-St. Petersburg, warned fellow committee members that “intent” could be determined by analyzing lawmakers’ electronic communications, which could become evidence in such a lawsuit.

## Amendments 5 & 6 – Orlando Opinionators – Orlando Sentinel

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[http://blogs.orlandosentinel.com/orlando\\_opinionators/2010/11/an-election-day-irony-amendments-5-6.html](http://blogs.orlandosentinel.com/orlando_opinionators/2010/11/an-election-day-irony-amendments-5-6.html)

December 30, 2010

This might count as the election's top irony. My cursory glance at the races in Central Florida for Congress and the Legislature indicates that, once again, voters reelected most incumbents by overwhelming margins. Voters were, on the whole, happy enough with their officeholders. Right?

And yet Amendments 5 and 6, which would end the practice of gerrymandering that nearly guarantees incumbents' reelection, was still attracting 61 percent of the vote at 11 p.m. – just enough for them to pass. And sufficient to make it far, far harder for incumbent legislators and Congress members to keep their jobs.

Maybe the electorate isn't as happy about its choices as the results of so many races Tuesday would have us believe.

# Redistricting process goes bipartisan | Colorado Statesman

<http://coloradostatesman.com/content/992360-redistricting-process-goes-bipartisan>

December 30, 2010

story\_kicker:

Legislative leaders hope to forestall partisanship

**By Marianne Goodland**

THE COLORADO STATESMAN

Colorado legislative leaders hope to avoid one of the most contentious issues in the 2011 session — redistricting — by putting the process into the hands of a 10-member joint select committee that will solicit input from Colorado citizens on the next congressional district boundaries.

The leadership of the Colorado General Assembly used a press forum on the 2011 session to announce the bipartisan 10-member committee. House Minority Leader Rep. Sal Pace, D-Pueblo, said that putting the initial redistricting discussions into the hands of the select committee would take “one of the most partisan topics [for the 2011 session] off the table” and allow legislators to focus on the session’s top priority, job creation. The Thursday forum is an annual event sponsored by the Colorado Press Association.

Next session’s legislative leaders visit at the annual briefing for statehouse reporters Thursday sponsored by the Colorado Press Association at the Denver Press Club. The subject of redistricting was up front and center. From left: Senate President Brandon Shaffer, D-Longmont; House Speaker-designee Frank McNulty, R-Highlands Ranch; Senate Minority Leader Mike Kopp, R-Littleton; and House Minority Leader-designee Sal Pace, D-Pueblo.



Photo by Ernest Luning/The Colorado Statesman

Gov.-elect John Hickenlooper talks about his plans for the state at the annual Colorado Press Association briefing for journalists on Thursday.



Photo by Ernest Luning/The Colorado Statesman

House Majority Leader-designee Amy Stephens, R-Monument, discusses the upcoming legislative session.



Photo by Ernest Luning/The Colorado Statesman

House Speaker-designee Frank McNulty, R-Highlands Ranch, left, and Senate Minority Leader Mike Kopp, R-Littleton, chat with House Minority Leader-designee Sal Pace, D-Pueblo, on Thursday at a Colorado Press Association event in Denver.

Photo by Ernest Luning/The Colorado Statesman

Senate President Brandon Shaffer, D-Longmont, said the select committee will meet at least once in each of Colorado’s seven congressional districts. It will be made up of five Democrats and

five Republican legislators, and will have co-chairs from each party. Census data that will determine the number of congressional seats from the state won't be available until late February or early March, Shaffer said, so initially the select committee will meet with citizens to get input and opinions.



“This is a remarkable opportunity,” said Speaker of the House-elect Frank McNulty, R-Highlands Ranch. He said the goal in setting up the committee is to take “the heat and politics” out of one of the most partisan issues at the capitol, draw congressional boundaries that are “fair and transparent” and allow legislators to get on with the business of working for the people of the state.



Legislative leaders hope that allowing the select committee to deal with redistricting will avoid a repeat of the legal battle that took place after the 2000 census. The process ended up in the Colorado Supreme Court after a divided 2002 Legislature failed to agree on maps, and the 2003 Republican-dominated General Assembly engaged in a controversial last-minute redrawing of the maps. The Colorado high court eventually threw out the 2003 maps and came up with its own. “Citizens want a fair and open process with competitive districts,” said Senate Minority Leader Mike Kopp, R-Littleton, adding that gerrymandered districts “try the public’s trust.”

Pace pointed out that voters in November gave the General Assembly a “mandate for bipartisan control” and that means a bipartisan solution on redistricting.

The select committee is to make its recommendations to the General Assembly by April 14, and Shaffer said he wants to see the redistricting legislation done before the session’s scheduled end on May 11. Committee appointments will be announced next week.

“We’re taking a chance” on this, said McNulty. Kopp said that the leaders had spoken to some of the state’s congressional delegation, and said they understand that it’s the legislature’s prerogative to draw the maps. “I don’t get a sense they’re hovering over our shoulders. They just want to be sure there’s fairness in the process.”

One issue Republicans will have to tackle is how to deal with the American Constitution Party. Based on its showing in the Nov. 2 gubernatorial election, the ACP is now a major party, and although the party has no representatives at the state capitol, most of the Republicans in the General Assembly endorsed its gubernatorial candidate, Tom Tancredo. McNulty told *The Colorado Statesman* that while the select committee will not have ACP representation, the committee’s members will solicit input from all political parties.

Legislative leaders also spoke about their agendas for the 2011 session, trying to stick to the bipartisan feeling. “Nothing will get done unless the two parties can bridge their ideological differences and find common ground on budget priorities and related issues,” Kopp said.

That feel-good spirit temporarily dissolved when a high school journalist asked them about the biggest issues facing K-12 education, and McNulty launched into an attack on the Colorado Education Association. The biggest barrier to K12 education, he said, is the “public employees union. They don’t stand for students.”

McNulty said that Republicans point out that unions are out to protect their own interests, and Democrats counter by saying Republicans attack teachers. “The proof is in the action,” he said. When legislative leaders from both parties stood up and said the state could do better with SB 10-191, “who opposed it? The teachers’ union,” McNulty said.

Shaffer countered the Republicans' charges, pointing out that his wife is a teacher and board member of the CEA, and their number one issue is children in the classroom and how to improve the quality of education. "I don't think Mike or Frank understand the CEA or what local associations do in their districts. If they did, they wouldn't be making those statements."

Shaffer said the first bill he intends to introduce in the 2011 session is on making education funding a priority. He said his bill would create a check-off on state income tax forms to allow contributions to education, from pre-school through higher ed. He also said his agenda for the session is to ask legislators to look at every decision made in the session, and ask the question, what is the higher value — funding education or the project in the bill. The way "to grow the economy and create jobs is to invest in the education system," he said.

Jobs are also among McNulty's top priorities for next year, and both parties need to find ways to agree on how to move the economy forward. He said Republicans intend to make a "sincere effort" on bipartisanship; there would be times "when Republicans and Democrats disagree, but our focus will be to find those areas of common ground."

McNulty said he is looking forward to working with the businesses that create jobs, having an education system that is "flexible," a strong transportation system, low taxes, and a fair regulatory system rather than the one that he said is a burden to employers and has driven investment out of the state. "We will be bold in our suggestions and ideas."

Kopp's priorities for the session include promoting a jobs-friendly economy, addressing taxation and regulation, and establishing a "taxpayer-focused set of budget priorities." He said he intends to introduce a bill similar to one he sponsored in 2010 that would set up a task force that will create "a blueprint for streamlined government."

Kopp said the budget is not based on the core functions of government ranked in a priority order, and in a "time of forced austerity, we need to focus on the core functions... The state can no longer indulge the pet projects."

Pace's priorities include legislation that will foster a strong environment for small- and medium-sized business and continuing to invest in clean and green energy. He also plans to sponsor a "pay as you go" bill that would require legislators whose bills carry a fiscal note to find the money to pay for it. "We have to be honest about offsetting new spending with cuts," Pace said.

Republicans also said they intend to go after at least some of the so-called "dirty dozen" tax bills that came out of the 2010 session. "We need to repeal as many as we can," said Kopp. But Shaffer dismissed the idea, saying that the higher value is to invest in education rather than looking at an incentive for a specific industry. "Education will win every time in my book," he said. Pace added that if Republicans can show that the exemptions are harming business and how they would pay for the revenues lost if the exemptions were reversed, Democrats "will be happy to have those discussions." He also warned Republicans that such a discussion would break the bipartisan spirit. "It would be a shame to start off the session with acrimonious partisan bickering when we have a real opportunity to work in a bipartisan fashion."

### **A new session, a new governor**

Legislators hope to get off on a better foot with the new governor than they did with the previous one. Kopp said he had met with Gov.-elect John Hickenlooper twice and said they would attempt to communicate "excessively." Shaffer said he had shared a handout on Senate Democrat legislative bills with the incoming governor, which he called "a courtesy" to ensure that they don't have the same communication issues with Hickenlooper that they had with Gov. Bill Ritter in his first year in office. The relationship with the new governor will be very constructive, he said. "I think he will be a good herder of cats."

Hickenlooper also addressed the press during the forum, discussing the state budget, regulation and red tape, job creation and the economy. While he said he wants to see more efficiencies in state government, efficiencies alone are not enough to close the \$1.1 billion budget gap. "There is no hidden pool of money in the state budget. We

have to be direct — there is no immediate short-term solution and we won't turn around a recession of this magnitude in a couple of months.”

He predicted there could be more budget cuts to higher education, and possibly to K-12, Medicaid and transportation. The legislature will have to decide on its core values and priorities, he said. “If we believe kids and the ‘last and least’ are the highest priority, how do we balance cuts in such a way that we create the greatest level of opportunity and protect kids, and let other things slide for a year or two?”

Hickenlooper said part of the solution is to become more pro-business and “to hold ourselves to a different set of standards than any other state.” Being pro-business means defining the difference between appropriate regulation and red tape, he said. On taxes, Hickenlooper said despite a recent report that said the state should ask voters for a tax increase to fund higher education, he couldn't see making that request in this economy.

Hickenlooper also said he would like to make an endorsement about the Denver's mayor's race, although he has been advised against it. “Who knows the job better than I do?” he said. “Shouldn't I express my opinion?”

— [Marianne@coloradostatesman.com](mailto:Marianne@coloradostatesman.com)

## SENATE DEMOCRATS' TOP BILLS, 2011 SESSION

### EMPOWERS

Senator	Short Title	Description
Betty Boyd	Lower Cost Health Care Act	Creates opportunities for small businesses and individuals to obtain affordable health coverage.
Rollie Heath	Small Business Investment Act	Creates opportunities for small businesses to expand, develop and thrive in Colorado.
Joyce Foster	Local Jobs Act	Creates opportunities for local businesses to hire Colorado workers.
Evie Hudak	Better Schools Act	Creates opportunities for turnaround schools to improve services to kids, parents, communities.
Gail Schwartz	Local Foods to Local Markets Act	Creates opportunities for local agricultural producers to access local markets.
Bob Bacon	Public Benefit Corporation Act	Creates opportunities for corporate entities to serve charitable purposes.
Angela Giron	Advancing Students for a Stronger Economy Tomorrow (Colorado ASSET)	Creates opportunities for all students who graduate from Colorado high schools to attend college.
Suzanne Williams	Smart Grid Act	Creates opportunities for updates and technological advancements in Colorado's power distribution grid.
Mary Hodge	The Long Bill	Balances state budget.

### PROTECTS

Brandon Shaffer	Prioritize Education First Act	Protects funding for education.
Cheri Jahn	Homebuyer Fee Reduction Act	Protects homebuyers from paying private transfer fees on home purchases.
Michael Johnston	Less Energy Lower Bills Act	Protects the environment by decreasing energy use, protects consumers by lowering utility bills.
Linda Newell	Healthy Kids Act	Protects children by keeping them on health insurance policies through creating a fair marketplace.
Morgan Carroll	Taxpayer Empowerment Act	Protects the public from fraud, waste and abuse in state contracts with private vendors.
Lucia Guzman	Homeless Protection Act	Protects homeless people by adding them to the Colorado hate crimes law.
John Morse	Defendant Accountability Act	Protects public safety and holds defendants accountable by ensuring they attend court hearings.
Jeanne Nicholson	Keeping Children Safe Act	Protects children by adding Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Educators to mandatory child abuse reporting laws.
Pat Steadman	Civil Unions Act	Protects the rights and responsibilities of all Coloradans by treating them equally in committed relationships.
Lois Tochtrop	Roofers Accountability Act	Protects homeowners from fly-by-night roofing contractors.

# The Coming Battle Over Reapportionment « State of Elections

<http://electls.blogs.wm.edu/2010/11/03/a-prelude-to-reapportionment/>

December 30, 2010

The stakes are incredibly high, reapportionment is looming, and [recent data](#) from Election Data Services shows that neither Democrats nor Republicans will be too pleased come next year. States which have been recently labeled as ‘safe Republican’ in Presidential elections will gain seats, but in more Democratically inclined areas. States recently labeled as ‘safe Democrat’ in Presidential elections will lose some seats. The biggest gain will be in Texas. Texas can expect to gain four House seats, at least some of which will be placed in locations more favorable to Democratic candidates. Meanwhile, New York, a state typically labeled as ‘safe Democrat’ in Presidential elections, will likely lose two House seats. In terms of multi-district moves, Florida will likely gain two seats and Ohio will likely lose two seats. Arizona, Georgia, Nevada, South Carolina, Utah and Washington will all likely gain a seat while Illinois, Iowa, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Michigan, Missouri, New Jersey and Pennsylvania will all likely lose a seat.

Reapportionment is becoming a problem not only for [certain Presidential candidates](#) but also state and federal candidates, especially [candidates in the Midwest](#) where rapid population flight is decimating the electoral landscape. The [close electoral math](#) is mapping onto reapportionment strategy. Democrats and Republicans are locked in a mortal struggle to gain control of state houses and governor’s mansions across the nation, in anticipation of being able to influence the composition of both state legislatures and Congress over the next decade.

Factoring into the reapportionment calculation is the recent Supreme Court [decision](#) in Northwest Austin Mun. Utility Dist. v. Holder, which revolved around the “[preclearance](#)” obligation of the 1965 Voting Rights Act. The 1965 Voting Rights Act preclearance obligation requires certain municipalities in the South to get federal approval before changing election laws or venues. It was designed to eliminate the racial discrimination in those municipalities. Interestingly, the Northwest Austin Municipal Utility District Number One, like many similar areas in Texas, did not exist in 1965 but was still covered by the preclearance obligation. The Municipal Utility District sued the Attorney General, asking to be exempted from the “[preclearance](#)” obligation and challenging the Constitutionality of the 1965 Voting Rights Act. The outcome of the case suggests that the Supreme Court [wants to narrow the scope](#) of the 1965 Voting Rights Act, specifically the preclearance obligation. It is possible that two cases, [LaRoque v. Holder](#) and [Shelby County, Alabama v. Holder](#), both challenging the constitutionality of the preclearance obligation, will make it onto the Supreme Court’s docket in the coming years, allowing the court to further narrow the scope of the 1965 Voting Rights Act.

Given this outcome and the upcoming battles over reapportionment it seems inevitable that the Supreme Court will entertain several reapportionment cases in its 2011 term resulting in the disappearance of the preclearance obligations. This factors into electoral strategy immensely. The legislators who win election in 2010 in the South will likely have the ability to change the electoral landscape in that region far more than any legislators in the past half-century. Despite this, reapportionment will almost certainly not become a major campaign issue in 2010. Although every legislator will acutely feel the need to participate and influence reapportionment the convoluted nature of reapportionment will doom it to a second tier status. Nevertheless, “fair district” crusaders in some states [have managed](#) to get measures, which require that reapportionment occurs without political bias, on the ballot. The impact of these ballot measures, especially those that pass, remains to be seen but one thing is certain – observers ought to expect to see some interesting cases move up through the courts over the next few years.

*Natch Greyes is a first-year student at William and Mary School of Law.*

*Permalink: <http://electls.blogs.wm.edu/2010/11/03/a-prelude-to-reapportionment>*

# Redistricting Reform on November Ballot

<http://www.fairvote.org/redistricting-reform-on-november-ballot>

December 30, 2010

Redistricting is required in all fifty states after the 2010 census results are received. This data gives the state legislatures the information it needs to draw the lines in their states. These numbers will usually not be released until either early in 2011. States then will conduct redistricting procedures in 2011 in time for the 2011 state legislative elections and in 2012 elections across the country. However, in two states the battle for redistricting is starting early. Florida and California have issues on the ballot next week which would dramatically alter congressional and state redistricting in two of our largest states.

## FLORIDA-AMENDMENTS 5 & 6

According to the Florida Secretary of State- [Available Here](#). Amendments 5 & 6 on the ballot in Florida are complementary measures that would impose standards on the legislature for redistricting the state. Amendment 5 applies to standards that must be followed in redistricting for the Florida Legislature and Amendment 6 applies to standards imposed for Congressional redistricting. The standards are the same in both Amendments, which include: no favoring or disfavoring of political parties, districts cannot be drawn with the intent to deny or abridge equal opportunity, and districts shall consist of contiguous territory. Florida law requires that these amendments receive at least 60% of the vote to become law.

The main proponent of this bill (and its sponsor) is Fair Districts Florida([visit here](#)) , a coalition made up of such organizations as the League of Women Voters , AARP, Florida Association of Counties and the NAACP. Fair Districts Florida argue that that this Amendment is necessary so that incumbent politicians do not draw lines in backroom dealings that will only result in their own re-election. They cite the abnormally high re-election rate of Florida politicians for their support behind this bill.

Opponents of these Amendments include the Chamber of Commerce and the James Madison Institute [Here](#) that stress the potential of increased litigation due to the amendment. Some racial minorities like Congresswoman Corrine Brown [Article Here](#) express concern that the new redistricting standards would be detrimental to racial minorities by reducing the number of majority-minority districts.

The bill is supported by every major newspaper in the state of Florida [Here](#) But the combination of some partisan reactions to the amendments (Republicans currently hold 18 of the state's 25 congressional districts and have firm control of the state legislature, although this year's governor's race could be won by either majority party) and the 60% vote required for enactment make the outcome uncertain

## WHAT THESE BALLOT MEASURES MEAN

The very fact that voters in these two states have a big choice on Election Day that will affect the next ten years points to the problem of our current redistricting process: those drawing the lines have too much power over what choices and representation a state's voters are likely to have. Normally when procedures similar to this are implemented in states they are initiated and passed entirely by the state legislature. It is good that voters in these states will have a voice in deciding what they want when relating to such an important issue – a goal that FairVote promotes through its leadership in the EndGerrymandering.com project .

# Duval Democratic chairman: 'No issue' with Rep. Brown's work with Protect Your Vote (Corrected)

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<http://floridaindependent.com/12057/duval-democratic-chairman-no-issue-with-rep-corrine-browns-work-with-protect-your-vote>

December 30, 2010

Rep. Corrine Brown, D-Jacksonville, has taken a lot of heat for her decision to fight against Amendments 5 and 6, the so-called "[Fair Districts](#)" amendments that, if passed, would mean a drastic change in the demographic of her constituents.

Though the Florida Democratic Party and the NAACP have both [announced](#) their support of the amendments, Brown has allied herself with the Republican Party of Florida. In fact, she has become the face of Protect Your Vote, a conservative group campaigning hard against the amendments [with mostly Republican Party dollars](#).

Daniel Conston, communications director for the Republican Party of Florida, had this to say when questioned about Brown's involvement with Protect Your Vote:

The "Fair Districts" scheme is simply unworkable and would be a huge threat to our democracy. It should have bipartisan opposition, but it's unfortunate that outside liberal groups are putting millions into actively hurting our democracy. However, Chairman Thrasher and the Party are happy to welcome any Democrats that recognize Fair Districts would be bad for Florida and don't want to see our state hurt by it.

Many might think that Brown's close ties with Protect Your Vote means tensions with her fellow Democrats, but Duval Democratic Party Chairman Travis Bridges says this isn't the case:

The Florida Democratic party has of course come out in favor of Amendments 5 and 6 ... and we also recommended a "yes" vote on those amendments. Congresswoman Brown has recommended a "no" vote ... and has distributed literature on it in her district, which is perfectly her right, but as far as the Florida Democratic Party and the county party goes, we disagree.

I don't see it as an obstacle, just the right to an opinion. I see nothing wrong with it whatsoever, actually. I was with Congresswoman Brown all day yesterday, and there's absolutely no issue with our difference of opinion. Remember, we're Democrats. We can still disagree and love each other. If we were Republicans, we'd probably be fighting over it.

## **Correction:**

**The Florida Democratic Party has not officially come out in support of Amendments 5 and 6. According to Eric Jotkoff, communications director for the Florida Democrats, "The Florida Democratic Party as a policy does not take sides on Constitutional Amendments campaigns."**

# No: Amendments 5 & 6 benefit outside interests, not voters

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[http://articles.orlandosentinel.com/2010-10-27/news/os-ed-myword-haridopolus-102710-20101026\\_1\\_fair-districts-amendments-florida-voters](http://articles.orlandosentinel.com/2010-10-27/news/os-ed-myword-haridopolus-102710-20101026_1_fair-districts-amendments-florida-voters)

December 30, 2010

In 2008, President Obama won 20 of Florida's 40 Senate districts. Still, there are those who suggest that Florida's districts are uncompetitive and gerrymandered.

Of course, everybody supports fair redistricting. But Amendments 5 and 6 are not the answer. These amendments would impose new rules on redistricting — rules written by liberal union bosses, trial lawyers, and special interests, many located outside Florida.

Just follow the money.

The amendments' sponsor, Fair Districts, has raised \$3 million from lawyers and labor unions, including \$1 million from state and national teachers unions and \$625,000 from the Service Employees International Union.

Fair Districts received \$400,000 from America Votes, a union-backed coalition whose members include the AFL-CIO, Planned Parenthood and MoveOn.org. Its stated mission is "to advance progressive policies." Fair Districts is also funded by EMILY's List, an extremist group dedicated to the election of pro-abortion Democrats. It even accepted \$25,000 in 2007 from the Florida affiliate of ACORN, the shady, left-wing organization suspected of nationwide voter-registration fraud.

These highly partisan, liberal groups did not invest millions for nothing. Their agenda is not disinterested civic reform, but a more liberal Congress and Legislature.

"Tell me what company you keep," Cervantes wrote, "and I will tell you what you are." From the company that Fair Districts keeps, we know that Amendments 5 and 6 are a power grab by liberal interest groups — plain and simple.

Fair Districts is not a grassroots movement of mainstream Florida citizens. In the last four weeks alone, Fair Districts raised nearly \$2 million from four ultra-partisan Democratic mega-donors. Most of these funds came from Washington.

Amendments 5 and 6 are an attempt by Washington special interests to amend our constitution for their political gain. It's no secret. One prominent, out-of-state supporter of the amendments boasted in news accounts that, if the amendments pass, Democrats would gain up to five seats in Congress. Florida voters — not Washington special interests — should make these decisions.

To date, Fair Districts has spent \$5.8 million to convince voters that Florida's redistricting process is broken. They claim that Republicans owe their legislative majority to gerrymandered districts, but plain facts prove otherwise:

First, Republicans gained their majority under a map drawn by Democrats.

Second, the number of Republicans in the Legislature today, under Republican-drawn districts, is exactly the same as one decade ago, under Democratic-drawn districts.

Third, while Republicans hold 63 percent of seats drawn by the Legislature, they fare even better where redistricting is not a factor, winning 73 percent of statewide elections in the last decade.

The Legislature takes redistricting very seriously. Florida will conduct an open and responsible redistricting

process, with or without the partisan rules proposed by trial lawyers and union bosses. Floridians should vote "no" on Amendments 5 and 6.

**Mike Haridopolos is the incoming Florida Senate President.**

# South Florida Times: Miami , Broward, Palm Beach, Breaking News & Weather at SFLTimes.com

[http://www.sfltimes.com/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=5673&Itemid=199](http://www.sfltimes.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=5673&Itemid=199)

December 30, 2010

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Supporters, opponents sharply divided on redistricting



Written by RENEE MICHELLE HARRIS

If Floridians approve Amendments 5 and 6 on Nov. 2, legislators would no longer be able to carve out a meandering district like the Third Congressional District in Jacksonville which helped Corinne Brown become, in 1992, the first African American elected to Congress since Reconstruction.



Legislators would also be prevented from creating a district like Senate District 27, which is held by Dave Aronberg, who lives in Palm Beach County, with the district spanning 115 miles west to Fort Myers and covering five counties.

Instead, districts would be compact, as equal in population as feasible, and where feasible must make use of existing city, county and geographical boundaries, according to the wording of the proposed amendments.

Such a configuration, some black leaders say, will prevent blacks from being elected to legislative and Congressional seats because the districts would not include a sufficient number of black voters, who would, presumably, vote for black candidates.

"If passed, Amendments 5 & 6 would turn back the clock to the days when African Americans watched from the sidelines, said Brown, who is national chairwoman of Protect Your Vote, an organization established to oppose the amendments.

Ellen Freidin, chairwoman of Fair Districts Florida Campaign, the group proposing the amendments, said the measures would level the political playing field and allow voters a stronger say in who gets elected.

Politicians have been using redistricting as a way to protect their own seats, making backroom deals and handpicking the voters that will most likely support them to be in their districts. Amendments 5 and 6 will stop this selfish practice, once and for all, said Freidin, a Miami lawyer.

The Florida ACLU supports the amendments, which have been endorsed also by every major Florida newspaper, and points to Browns district as an example.

"Corrine Browns district is kind of notorious because it begins in Jacksonville and snakes through... parts of nine different counties -- not all of them -- and comes all the way down to the outskirts of Orlando, Florida ACLU President Michael Pheneger said on a Tampa radio program discussing the issue. Nobody would draw a district that way unless they had an ulterior purpose. And the ulterior purpose is either to exclude voters that they dont want in their district or to include voters that they want in a district to ensure somebodys election or reelection."

Redistricting comes into play every 10 years, following the Census. The current law requires that districts be equal in population and that they consist of neighboring territory. However, because a connecting strip a yard wide and miles long satisfies that requirement, constituents of some districts are unlikely to be actual neighbors.

Barbara Howard, Florida state chairwoman of the Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), strongly opposes the amendments and questions why they are supported by the NAACP.

Why would the Florida NAACP promote Amendments 5 & 6 when they know they would lose black districts? Howard said.

Leon Russell, vice president of the NAACP national board of directors and chairman of the legislative committee of the Florida NAACP, has an answer. The amendments would actually protect the Voting Rights Act, Russell said.

The NAACP supports the legislation, he said, because, There should be rules/standards in place that provide an opportunity to make the process fair in terms of offering all voters an opportunity to elect candidates of their choice to the legislature and the Congress and create more balance within the political process, which would allow all citizens an opportunity to affect the development of Floridas public policy.

He added, Most significantly, 5 & 6 would include the language from the Voting Rights Act requiring that the voting rights of minorities must be protected and, to the extent possible, that districts must be drawn that provide an opportunity for minorities to elect candidates of their choice to the legislature and to the Congress.

Russell cited Brown as an example: Corrine Brown right now has a 47 percent minority district. She doesnt have a majority district. Yet shes been elected for 17 years to her Congressional district. So these amendments would continue to protect that district.

While Howard sees the amendments as a ploy to strip away Republican power, Fair Districts Freidin, sees it differently.

"The whole point here is to draw districts that make sense geographically and that are not rigged to accomplish a particular political result," Friedin said.

Supporters also say that the amendments would also help to ensure that incumbents face serious challengers. In the last six years, more than 420 elections have taken place for state senator and state representative and only three incumbents have been defeated.

*Renee Michelle Harris may be reached at [RMHarris15@Bellsouth.net](mailto:RMHarris15@Bellsouth.net) This e-mail address is being protected from spam bots, you need JavaScript enabled to view it .*

Pictured: Corrine Brown

## Guest column: Amendments 5 & 6: Vote yes

<http://staugustine.com/opinions/2010-10-24/guest-column-amendments-5-6-vote-yes>

December 30, 2010

Proposed Amendments 5 and 6 to the Florida Constitution will give voters a chance to reclaim some of the powers they have relinquished to politicians. They are based on the principle that voters should pick politicians -- not the other way around.

David Winston, the consultant who drew the districts in Florida's last redistricting, says, "I can have more of an impact on an election than a campaign, a candidate, and voters." By voting "yes" on Amendments 5 and 6, we're demonstrating that we've had enough of partisan political gerrymandering. Gerrymandering means to divide a territory into election districts to give one political party an electoral majority in a large number of districts, while concentrating the voting strength of the opposition in as few districts as possible. The opponents to the establishment of fair districts are primarily whichever political party is in power and many incumbent politicians. Only three incumbents have been defeated in 420 elections for state legislative seats since 2004. By allowing incumbent politicians to establish political districts to virtually assure their re-elections, we are giving them the sense that they are all powerful.

When they know that their re-election is a certainty, they aren't beholden to voters or the wider public interest. Instead, they are primarily influenced by special interests and corporate lobbyists. The constitution requires that after the census count is taken, state legislatures redraw the boundaries of congressional districts. On the national level, some states may lose a seat or two, and other states may gain seats. For example, in 2012 Florida will likely grow from 25 to 26 congressional seats.

The important thing to keep in mind is currently the redistricting process occurs behind closed doors with no public input. Political strategists on both sides know whichever party controls the state House and Senate and the governorship will be able to maximize their party's representation in Congress.

Ed Gillespie, a former chairman of the Republican National Committee, says, "If you were to fight these seats out cycle by cycle every two years in competitive congressional races, you would probably have to spend more than \$200 million in federal money, which is harder to raise versus the \$18 million in non-federal money that we're going to spend to try to win the state seats to draw those districts in this election year."

To his big donors, Gillespie says, "Money spent on state races is the gift that keeps on giving" until another census in 2020. Amendments 5 and 6 do the following: Prohibit apportionment plans from favoring any party or incumbent, allow for equal opportunity for racial or language minorities, require political districts to be contiguous (land must be physically touching), unless otherwise required, districts must be compact, districts must be as equal in population as feasible, and, where feasible, they make use of existing city, county and geographical boundaries.

These amendments will require a 60 percent approval vote in the November election. If passed, these amendments will add guidelines for legislators to follow and transparency to the apportionment process that will allow us to observe our legislators' actions. They will instill political competition giving voters an opportunity to demand more responsible behavior of elected officials. Presently we see incumbents cling to their seats for decades and assume leadership positions through their seniority. The result is a polarized body of politicians that is unable or unwilling to solve our nation's vexing problems.

Meanwhile those with seniority are the leaders in spending taxpayer monies for earmarks directed to their financial supporters. Amendments 5 and 6 won't resolve all the problems associated with a broken political system, but they are a giant step in the right direction.

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Bill McCormick is the current Democratic state executive committeeman for St. Johns County. He has lived in St. Augustine since 2005. He spent 14 years at the University of Florida as professor and department chair in the College of Pharmacy. He was the founder and chairman of a national management consulting firm and was co-owner of a sporting goods store in Gainesville.

# Florida likely to gain clout in House

<http://staugustine.com/news/local-news/2010-12-20/florida-likely-gain-clout-house>

December 30, 2010

WASHINGTON -- Florida may pick up as many as two more seats in the U.S. House -- further boosting the state's influence in Congress and making it an even bigger prize in the race for the White House.

Though the actual increase in seats won't be known until the U.S. Census Bureau makes it official Tuesday, early projections suggest Florida is a lock for one seat, and in contention for a second.

The creation of seats based on new census data is always a messy political and legal fight in Florida, pitting the parties and ambitious lawmakers from various regions against each other.

And it's likely to be further complicated this time around by two voter-approved state constitutional amendments that create strict rules for how politicians can draw district maps.

The addition of two seats would bring the state's total number in the U.S. House of Representatives to 27. It would also boost Florida's Electoral College votes to 29 (the state's two senators are included in that math).

"Two seats would be like both LeBron James and Chris Bosh," said state Rep. Perry Thurston, D-Fort Lauderdale, the top Democrat on one of the legislative committees that will handle redistricting. "To think that we could be more influential than the last couple of presidential elections is saying a lot, but two more seats surely would do it."

The state Legislature will decide where to put the new seats, with a potential nod to Central Florida: The University of Florida's Bureau of Economic and Business Research says that area has grown at a faster rate than any other region.

Florida would get its two seats as part of a broad population migration -- and power shift -- with Sun Belt states like Florida, Georgia, Arizona and Texas picking up seats that are being lost in declining Northern states, including Massachusetts, New York, Pennsylvania and Ohio.

The migration, which mirrors population movement in the country since World War II, could be good news for Republicans, with Rust Belt states trending Democratic, while Sun Belt states have leaned Republican.

"It's impossible to see how Republicans don't pick up a dozen or more House seats," said Larry Sabato, director of the University of Virginia's Center for Politics.

Democrats in Florida question whether Republicans, who already control two-thirds of the congressional delegation and the state House and Senate, will have enough voters in the state to create additional districts for the GOP without jeopardizing Republican incumbents. They note that state voter registration rolls show Democrats have an edge.

"I don't think they can draw any more Republican seats," said Ron Saunders, D-Key West, the House Minority Leader. "At a certain point it's got to be hard to sustain."

Some Republicans concede the point privately. But State Sen. Don Gaetz, R-Niceville, who will chair the Senate redistricting committee, says much of the speculation is premature. He promises a transparent process -- the computer software that lawmakers will use to draw districts will be available to the public -- and committees will hold a series of public hearings, beginning this summer.

"It will be the most open, transparent and interactive redistricting in the nation," said Gaetz, who had opposed the redistricting amendments. "We can have 19 million auditors of the process."

Though Republicans will control the committees that put together the new maps, they will be required to abide by the new amendments, which the party had opposed. The state amendments, which are aimed at creating more compact districts and not sprinkling inkblots, dictate that districts can't be drawn to either help or hurt an incumbent or a political party.

Rep. Mario Diaz-Balart, who is challenging the state amendment that governs congressional redistricting, along with Rep. Corrine Brown, D-Jacksonville, said he believes the federal courts will overturn the amendment. They say it violates the Voting Rights Act by diluting minority representation.

"We're hoping for some clarification before redistricting starts up," said Diaz-Balart, who chaired the House redistricting committee while in the Florida House.

Ellen Freidin, the Miami attorney who championed the amendments as a way of creating more competitive districts, noted they passed with more than 60 percent of the vote, suggesting widespread discontent with the way districts are drawn by politicians.

"That's been proven beyond a reasonable doubt," she said.

Observers expect the dispute to end up in federal court. Redistricting plans end up in court more than 90 percent of the time, said Douglas Johnson, a fellow with the Rose Institute of State and Local Government at Claremont McKenna College in California.

"Florida's redistricting," Johnson said, "is certainly not going to be a smooth ride."

The new census numbers have implications beyond politics. The figures are used in formulas that determine how much money each state receives in federal subsidies for healthcare and other services.

The housing crisis, however, may have affected the state's population and the result could be a single seat, rather than two.

Figures compiled by Election Data Services, a Washington, D.C., company that tracks demographic and election trends, predicts two seats. But its president, Kimball Brace, said he was surprised by the prediction, given Florida's housing market.

A second Florida seat is "probably the iffiest" of all of the predictions, Brace said, which include Texas picking up four seats and Ohio and New York each losing 2 seats.

Another projection has Florida gaining a single seat.

"All these estimates are based on demographic models and we've never had a situation like the housing and foreclosure crisis," said the Rose Institute's Johnson. "The models don't know how to capture that. There's likely to be even more surprises than usual."

Still, a single seat is better than none: In 2000, the state of Utah unsuccessfully challenged the Census results and sought to have Mormon missionaries living abroad counted as residents after narrowly losing a seat.

Said Stan Smith, director of University of Florida's economic and business research bureau: "It's no small deal."

# FL: Cannon appoints 'Fair Districts' foe as chair of state House redistricting committee

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<http://www.americanindependent.com/156478/cannon-appoints-%E2%80%99fair-districts%E2%80%99-foe-as-chair-of-state-house-redistricting-committee>

November 22, 2010

In advance of the state legislature's organizational meeting and special session tomorrow, incoming state House Speaker Dean Cannon, R-Winter Park, today [unveiled](#) the names of state House committee chairs. Among them: state Rep. Will Weatherford, R-Wesley Chapel, who will head up the committee overseeing the redistricting process after the conclusion of this year's census.

Weatherford was a vocal foe of Amendments 5 and 6, the so-called "[Fair Districts](#)" amendments that limit the legislature's ability to gerrymander districts that passed a statewide vote on Nov. 2. He was a supporter of the group [Protect Your Vote](#), the political action committee whose efforts to fight 5 and 6 were [largely bankrolled](#) by the Republican Party of Florida.

The Protect Your Vote website (nix5and6.com) has been taken down, but a cached version accessed through Yahoo! Site Explorer [lists](#) Weatherford as a person "acting on behalf of the organization." Also listed as such is state Sen. Don Gatez, R-Destin, [recently appointed](#) by Florida Senate President Mike Haridopolos, R-Merritt Island, as the chair of the committee in charge of redistricting on the Senate side of the Florida legislature.

That means that the two legislators most responsible for making sure that the legislature follows the redistricting rules laid out in Amendments 5 and 6 were both members of a group explicitly created to defeat those rules.

# Court sets February date for conference in anti-Amendment 6 lawsuit « Florida Independent: News. Politics. Media

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<http://floridaindependent.com/15375/court-sets-february-date-for-conference-in-anti-amendment-6-lawsuit>

November 22, 2010

In a court order filed Wednesday, United States District Judge Ursula Ungaro set a February 2011 date for a conference in the [lawsuit](#) filed by U.S. Reps. Corrine Brown, D-Jacksonville, and Mario Diaz-Balart, R-Miami, challenging [Amendment 6](#), one of the two so-called “[Fair Districts](#)” amendments that limit politicians ability to gerrymander districts.

Read the order in full, after the jump:

[Amendment 6 Lawsuit Court Order](#)