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REDISTRICTING COMMITTEE

THURSDAY, SEPTEMBER 1, 2011

8:00 A.M.

CLEWISTON, FLORIDA

HENDRY COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Transcribed by:

CLARA C. ROTRUCK

Court Reporter

## 1 P R O C E E D I N G S

2 SENATOR GAETZ: Good morning, ladies and  
3 gentlemen. Thank you very much from being  
4 here, and we would ask if you are here for the  
5 hearing on redistricting and reapportionment  
6 that you take your seats. If you are a member  
7 of the Committee, please find a spot.

8 The Joint Senate House Redistricting  
9 hearing is called to order. We are pleased to  
10 be joined today by several members of the  
11 Florida House of Representatives and the  
12 Florida Senate, who serve on those chambers'  
13 respective redistricting committees, and in a  
14 moment we are going to ask them to indicate who  
15 they are and whether they serve in the House or  
16 the Senate and the area of the state they come  
17 from just so you will know who you are sharing  
18 your opinions with.

19 We want to thank the Hendry County  
20 Department of Health for allowing us to use  
21 this facility. This is not my first time here.  
22 I was here about a year ago where we met with  
23 folks from this county to talk about primary  
24 care issues, and many of the things that were  
25 said in this room turned out to influence

1 healthcare legislation that we passed this past  
2 year in the Florida Legislature.

3 We particularly want to thank those who  
4 have come here to share their comments and  
5 their recommendations to help share  
6 Congressional, Senate and House Districts for  
7 the next decade.

8 I am Don Gaetz. I am a member of the  
9 Florida Senate. My District runs from  
10 Pensacola to east of Panama City. I serve the  
11 five coastal counties of northwest Florida's  
12 Gulf Coast, and I will be chairing today's  
13 hearing which is also being webcast statewide  
14 by the Florida Channel over the Internet, and  
15 here is what that means.

16 It means that you are on television. So  
17 before you stand up to testify, check your  
18 makeup, check your hair, straighten your tie,  
19 because there are typically thousands of people  
20 across Florida who are following each one of  
21 these hearings on the webcast.

22 Our focus today is to hear from the public  
23 about how you believe the legal standards  
24 governing redistricting should be applied in  
25 your community.

1           The question is not if those standards  
2 will be applied. The question is not if  
3 Amendments 5 and 6 will be followed. The  
4 question is how, and as we have learned in each  
5 one of the hearings from testimony, there are  
6 differences of opinion among people in  
7 communities, people of goodwill as to some of  
8 the fine points of how the Federal standards  
9 ought to be applied or State standards ought to  
10 be applied. So we are interested in your views  
11 on that question.

12           Our procedures today are simple but  
13 important. It is important that you sign in so  
14 that we create an accurate public record. We  
15 have a little form for you to sign. This just  
16 shows that you are here, but it is the same  
17 form if you want to speak.

18           So if you have not signed in or if you  
19 just want to observe or if you want to speak,  
20 please raise your hand. We will get you one of  
21 these forms and make sure that you have an  
22 opportunity to share your views with the  
23 members of the House and the Senate this  
24 morning.

25           Why don't we at this point take a moment

1 so that you will know who you are talking with  
2 this morning, and let's pass the microphone and  
3 let's start if we can with Representative  
4 Denise Grimsley.

5 We are in Grimsley world here and want to  
6 thank you very much for allowing us to be in  
7 your part of Florida.

8 REPRESENTATIVE GRIMSLEY: Thank you,  
9 Mr. Chairman, and good morning, and members,  
10 welcome to District 77, one of the sweetest  
11 towns in America. We appreciate you being  
12 here, and for you of the community, thank you  
13 very much for coming out today. I see  
14 Commissioner Toller out there as well.

15 I have talked to a lot of I and I know it  
16 was early, but I really appreciate you guys  
17 coming out to offer your testimony today and  
18 welcome, members welcome.

19 You are in a great town, stop and spend a  
20 little money over here and get to know some of  
21 the residents.

22 REPRESENTATIVE PASSIDOMO: I am Kathleen  
23 Passidomo, House District 76, which is Collier  
24 County. I represent the City of Naples, the  
25 City of Marco Island and Everglades City and I

1 am so thrilled to be here. Thank you.

2 REPRESENTATIVE ROGERS: Good morning, I am  
3 Hazelle Rogers from Broward County, a large  
4 base. It is approximately 1.8 million  
5 residents, the most diverse county in the State  
6 of Florida. I represent District 94, eight  
7 cities, Lauderdale Lakes, Margate,  
8 Oakland Park, Tamarac, Plantation, Sunrise and  
9 it is good to be here to listen to what you  
10 have to say. Thank you.

11 REPRESENTATIVE CAMPBELL: Good morning, my  
12 name is Daphne Campbell, District 108, which  
13 includes four cities, North Miami, Miami  
14 Shores, (inaudible) Biscayne Park. Welcome.

15 REPRESENTATIVE ALBRITTON: Good morning.  
16 My name is Ben Albritton, I serve in the  
17 Florida House. I represent south Polk, Hardee  
18 and northwestern Highlands counties.

19 REPRESENTATIVE JULIEN: Good morning, my  
20 name is John Patrick Julien, representing House  
21 District 104, which is in Miami Dade County.

22 House District 104 represents the cities  
23 of North Miami Beach, North Miami, Miami  
24 Gardens, Opa Locka, Miami and unincorporated  
25 Miami-Dade. It is a pleasure to be here.

1           SENATOR NEGRON: Good morning, I represent  
2           District 28 in the Florida Senate. That is the  
3           Treasure Coast and northern Palm Beach County,  
4           a little bit of western Palm Beach County and  
5           Okeechobee.

6           A VOICE: Do you have a name?

7           SENATOR NEGRON: Joe Negron.

8           REPRESENTATIVE BERNARD: Good morning, my  
9           name is Mack Bernard. Since we are in the  
10          sweetest county in the -- in Florida I  
11          represent the sweetest cities in Florida, which  
12          includes the cities of Belle Glade, Pahokee and  
13          South Bay, and also it is good to be in Taylor  
14          country, and I want to welcome everyone who is  
15          here because I represent the districts right  
16          down the street.

17          REPRESENTATIVE CALDWELL: Good morning, my  
18          name is Matt Caldwell. I represent District  
19          73, which is just a little west of us, Lehigh  
20          Acres, Ft. Myers, down into rural Corkscrew.

21          SENATOR JOYNER: Good morning, I am  
22          Arthenia Joyner, I represent Senate District  
23          18. That is Hillsborough, Pinellas and  
24          Manatee, St. Petersburg and Bradenton and I am  
25          happy to be here this morning.

1           REPRESENTATIVE KIAR: Hello, everybody.  
2           My name is Martin Kiar. I represent District  
3           97 in the Florida House, which is located  
4           solely within Broward County. Thank you all so  
5           much for coming out today to share your input  
6           with us.

7           REPRESENTATIVE REED: Good morning, I am  
8           State Representative Gwendolen Clarke- Reed. I  
9           represent House seat 92 in Broward County,  
10          representing seven cities, and this is my 26th  
11          hearing.

12          So I have had the distinct honor of  
13          traveling with Senator Gaetz all the way.  
14          Welcome this morning. Looking forward to  
15          hearing from you.

16          REPRESENTATIVE THURSTON: Good morning, I  
17          am Perry Thurston and I represent House  
18          District 93, and it is a pleasure to be in your  
19          area this morning.

20          REPRESENTATIVE JONES: Good morning, I am  
21          State Representative Mia Jones, representing  
22          Jacksonville, District 14.

23          REPRESENTATIVE CHESTNUT: Good morning.  
24          My name is Chuck Chestnut, House District 23.  
25          That is a portion of Alachua County and a

1 portion of Marion County. Glad to be here.

2 REPRESENTATIVE TRUJILLO: Good morning, my  
3 Nam is Carlos Trujillo. I represent Florida  
4 House District 116 which is southwest Miami  
5 Dade County.

6 REPRESENTATIVE WILLIAMS: Good morning, I  
7 am Trudi Williams, House member from District  
8 75, which is Lee and Collier, parts of Collier  
9 County. Glad to be here.

10 SENATOR GAETZ: Joining me in chairing  
11 today's hearing is the former Speaker Pro Temp  
12 of the Florida House of Representatives, and  
13 now back serving his community, Representative  
14 Dennis Baxley, and Representative Baxley and I  
15 will be working together today.

16 You may see me having to leave a little  
17 bit early to catch my transportation all of the  
18 way back to the central time zone in northwest  
19 Florida, but I can assure you that if I do miss  
20 any testimony that I will look at the video  
21 record of the testimony so that I hear every  
22 single word that every single person here  
23 testifies with.

24 And before we go any further I would like  
25 to ask Speaker Baxley if he would explain how

1           today's hearing fits into our redistricting  
2           process and into the schedule.

3           Mr. Speaker.

4           REPRESENTATIVE BAXLEY: Thank you,  
5           Chairman Gaetz. Every ten years the  
6           Legislature is required by our Constitution to  
7           redistrict the state based on increases,  
8           decreases and movements of the population.

9           Because Florida has grown more than other  
10          states in the last ten years we will move up  
11          from 25 to 27 members of the U.S. House of  
12          Representatives.

13          Because some parts of our state have  
14          increased or decreased disproportionately in  
15          population, many State and House Districts will  
16          change, either adding or losing population.

17          When redistricting is completed,  
18          Congressional Districts must be equal in  
19          population and contain 696,345 people. The 40  
20          Senate Districts must be nearly equal at about  
21          470,000 people and our 120 House Districts must  
22          all be nearly equal to about 156,700.

23          We have displays at the front of the room  
24          in the entrance foyer showing the current  
25          boundaries of districts in this area of the

1 state and the number of persons which must be  
2 added to or subtracted from current districts  
3 to achieve this equal representation.

4 The quality of representation isn't the  
5 only legal requirement redistricting plans must  
6 meet.

7 The laws and important court cases  
8 governing redistricting are explained in detail  
9 on the House and Senate websites. Those  
10 websites are listed on the Redistricting 2012  
11 brochure that was available to you when you  
12 came in or you can pick one up as you leave.

13 Our Redistricting 2012 brochure summarizes  
14 the Federal and State laws and it outlines the  
15 topics we hope to discuss here at today's  
16 hearing.

17 If you did not get a copy when you came  
18 in, they are available on the tables outside  
19 this meeting room in the foyer. Our staff will  
20 be happy to get you a copy of the brochure if  
21 you need it.

22 The brochure also lists the House and  
23 Senate websites. These websites are packed  
24 with information about redistricting in  
25 Florida, including explanation of laws and

1 important court cases governing redistricting.

2 The two websites are complimentary and are  
3 updated frequently. Visit both and check back  
4 often. It is a great way to stay current about  
5 how your new Congressional State Senate and  
6 State House Districts are taking shape.

7 The websites also deliver to your  
8 fingertips all of the demographic information  
9 that is used in drawing districts and the exact  
10 same computer programs that Legislators and  
11 professional staff will be using.

12 You, the public, can participate in  
13 building plans or seeing maps submitted by  
14 Legislators or citizens. Before, during and  
15 after this hearing Senate and House  
16 professional staff are here available to show  
17 anyone the simple steps to getting online,  
18 building districts and submitting a plan now or  
19 in the weeks to come.

20 Recommendations from citizens and groups  
21 of citizens will be made publicly available on  
22 this website. In fact, as of this morning, 51  
23 public submissions of partial or complete maps  
24 and new ideas for maps are available on that  
25 website.

1           After this week I am sure those numbers  
2 will increase and you can follow the process.  
3 The submission of proposed maps that makes  
4 sense for your community is the single most  
5 effective form of public participation in this  
6 redistricting process.

7           The redistricting schedule under which we  
8 are operating is imposed by the State  
9 Constitution. The Constitution does not permit  
10 the Legislature to act on State legislative  
11 maps before the second year after the census,  
12 in other words, not before 2012.

13           We accelerated this process as much as  
14 possible by moving up the 2012 legislative  
15 session from March to January, and I don't  
16 think that has ever been done before, and by  
17 beginning our statewide hearings five months in  
18 advance of the 2012 session.

19           It has been suggested that the Legislature  
20 should draw maps first and then ask the public  
21 for comment. We believe that that puts the  
22 answer ahead of the question.

23           There should be no preconceptions created  
24 by politicians, but rather public testimony  
25 should be free and unrestricted. In fact, a

1 principle author of Florida's New Redistricting  
2 Standards and the chair person for Fair  
3 Districts Campaign are on record in agreeing  
4 with us the notion that new maps should not be  
5 drawn until after the public has had an  
6 opportunity to comment on this process.

7 Our intent is to use the recommendations  
8 made at these 26 public hearings and through  
9 our internet sites as the basis for developing  
10 one or more options for District maps.

11 We discuss those options in open public  
12 meetings before any votes are taken in any  
13 committee.

14 In other words, what we are literally  
15 saying is if you look at those maps to our  
16 right, your left, the ones actually submitted  
17 to the Legislature by Florida residents, we are  
18 literally starting the legislative process with  
19 those maps and other suggestions from the  
20 public.

21 So if you want to know where we will begin  
22 our deliberations, it is with those public  
23 submissions, testimony from these meetings and  
24 other public input.

25 Throughout the process we will solicit

1 additional public comment so that proposed maps  
2 can mature with the public involved, all before  
3 the Legislature approves the final maps.

4 Whatever the Legislature passes then is  
5 submitted for judicial review to ensure that  
6 the final plans meet every legal requirement.

7 Because our purpose today is to hear from  
8 you, all of the time between now and the close  
9 of this meeting at 11:00 will be used to ensure  
10 that every member of the public who is here and  
11 wishes to speak will have time to present  
12 testimony, be listened to respectfully without  
13 interruption or argument.

14 If after every citizen has had his or her  
15 say there is time remaining before our  
16 scheduled adjournment, then any member of the  
17 committee may make any statement or offer any  
18 observation and, of course, any member of the  
19 Legislature may today or at any time propose a  
20 map or plan and we will make it available to  
21 the public.

22 Mr. Chairman, I hope this description of  
23 our schedule and process helps set the stage  
24 for a very successful hearing.

25 SENATOR GAETZ: Thank you very much,

1 Representative Baxley. We, the good news is we  
2 have a goodly number of people who have already  
3 signed up to speak, and if this hearing is like  
4 other hearings, during the hearing there will  
5 be people coming in or people who are in the  
6 audience now who hadn't planned to speak, but  
7 the spirit will move them and they will decide  
8 they would like to speak, and if so, we want to  
9 hear from you.

10 So what we have done in each one of our  
11 hearings is to be fair to the people who are at  
12 the back end and haven't signed up to speak yet  
13 or who may be coming in a little bit late in  
14 the hearing, on their way now and the people  
15 who are at the end of those who have already  
16 signed up, we try to have a little time limit  
17 out of respect for those people who are going  
18 to come later, your friends and neighbors who  
19 also want to testify.

20 So what I am going to do is call out three  
21 names at a time so you know that you are on  
22 deck. If I call you out, be ready if you can  
23 so that you can be ready to come forward,  
24 because we don't want to miss a single word of  
25 what you might want to share with us.

1           And we are going to hold to a time limit  
2 of about three minutes. If you run two or  
3 three or four seconds over, I am not going to  
4 get upset, but if you sort of kind of roll on  
5 like a preacher we used to have at my church,  
6 we may -- we may point out to you that there  
7 are others behind you who would like to speak.

8           Our first speaker is Joshua Deese and then  
9 Brian Whitehall and then Clayton Williams.

10           So Joshua Deese with the Hendry County  
11 Young Democrats, you are up. We are delighted  
12 to have you begin our hearing this morning and  
13 the floor is yours, sir.

14           MR. DEESE: Thank you. Good morning,  
15 everyone. My name is Joshua Deese, I am a  
16 senior at Clewiston High School and a pre-law  
17 student at Edison State College. I am here  
18 representing the Hendry County Young Democrats.

19           SENATOR GAETZ: And if I could just ask  
20 you, the microphone is sort of off center  
21 there. If you wouldn't mind speaking as  
22 directly as you can into the mike.

23           MR. DEESE: Sure.

24           SENATOR GAETZ: Thanks, Joshua.

25           MR. DEESE: Okay. So I thank you for

1 allowing me this opportunity to voice my  
2 opinion.

3 With Congressman Thomas Rooney, I along  
4 with many other people in this community feel  
5 that he has neglected us in his constituency.

6 He hardly comes here and he has made it  
7 quite clear that we are -- that he is slightly  
8 interested in representing our constituency.

9 I among the others feel that he represents  
10 his sole community in Palm Beach, Wellington  
11 and Stuart, which are more upscaled  
12 communities.

13 There are people here in Clewiston, Moore  
14 Haven and Labelle, they do not contain a large  
15 population of people with a high socioeconomic  
16 status.

17 It has been my understanding that  
18 Representative Hastings has wanted to draw into  
19 our constituency. It would be easier for him  
20 to do so, apart from us being represented with  
21 Congressman Rooney, as the line divides  
22 straight through Clewiston and Belle Glade.

23 This would not only boost Representative  
24 Hastings' population to a more ideal standard  
25 to whether he would like to boost his

1 population up, but it would also give both  
2 racial minorities and minorities of lower  
3 socioeconomic statuses a better feel to be  
4 represented by their constitu -- in their  
5 constituency.

6 So I -- I hope that you would take into  
7 consideration to allow Congressman Hastings to  
8 be joined into our District. I yield the rest  
9 of my time. Thank you.

10 SENATOR GAETZ: Thank you very much, and  
11 thanks so much for coming here today and for  
12 your leadership as a high school student. I  
13 mean, hey, as a State Senator you would be  
14 highly articulate.

15 As a high school student you are doing  
16 really great. Let's give this guy a round of  
17 applause.

18 And next if we could hear from Brian  
19 Whitehall and following Mr. Whitehall, Clayton  
20 Williams and then Mayor Paul Puletti from the  
21 City of Labelle.

22 Mr. Whitehall, thank you for coming, and  
23 you are recognized.

24 MR. WHITEHALL: Thank you. Brian  
25 Whitehall, City Administrator from your

1 neighbors to the north, Okeechobee, and we  
2 bring greetings today.

3 I am representing not only the City but  
4 the County, as we have no other representation  
5 here.

6 I am like the prior person, I think we are  
7 well represented from Senator Joe Negron and  
8 our other Representatives and Senators.

9 We have kind of a unique situation in  
10 Okeechobee inasmuch as we have an influence  
11 from the Treasure Coast area, but we also have  
12 our roots predicated in agriculture and central  
13 Florida values.

14 And so the uniqueness presents a dilemma I  
15 think for redistricting inasmuch as we would  
16 prefer to have representation from the Treasure  
17 Coast and central Florida.

18 Our current districts are set up perfectly  
19 in our estimation, and I think as I said, our  
20 Representatives and Senators do a great job  
21 representing us. So it is short and sweet  
22 message that I wanted to deliver today, that is  
23 it.

24 And I also want to, if it is possible, to  
25 present you with a resolution from the City of

1 Okeechobee that articulates that.

2 SENATOR GAETZ: Please do, please do.

3 Thank you very, very much.

4 Now, Clayton Williams, we are delighted to  
5 have him here, representing the City of  
6 Okeechobee, and then following Mr. Williams,  
7 Mayor Puletti and then if Janet Taylor from the  
8 Hendry County Commission will be on deck.

9 Mr. Williams, the floor is yours and we  
10 are looking forward to your testimony.

11 MR. WILLIAMS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman,  
12 and members of the Committee. Clayton  
13 Williams, City Council, Okeechobee. We enjoy  
14 our representation that we have from Senator  
15 Negron, Senator Alexander and Mike Horner and  
16 Dr. Berman.

17 Like the City Manager just said, we are  
18 kind of unique. We are part Treasure Coast  
19 part, center part of the state. I personally  
20 serve on the Central Florida Regional Planning  
21 Council and we enjoy this representation and we  
22 appreciate your consideration.

23 I just want to say also, nothing against  
24 the sweetest town in the country, but we have  
25 low calorie speckled perch. We are the home of

1 the speckled perch in Okeechobee.

2 SENATOR GAETZ: I see where this hearing  
3 is headed.

4 MR. WILLIAMS: Yes, so -- so come to  
5 Okeechobee some time and we will feed you some  
6 speckled perch.

7 SENATOR GAETZ: Sounds like --

8 MR. WILLIAMS: Thank you for coming.  
9 Thank you very much. Appreciate it. And now,  
10 Mr. Mayor, if you are here we would be  
11 delighted to hear from you, followed by  
12 Commissioner Taylor, and then I think it is Mel  
13 Karau. Mel Karau, I apologize.

14 Mr. Mayor, thanks for your service to the  
15 city and the community and you are recognized,  
16 sir.

17 MR. PULETTI: And thank you for the  
18 opportunity to be here. What I would like to  
19 speak on is our legislative, our Florida  
20 legislative lines.

21 There are three main issues that the City  
22 of Labelle is concerned with. One is that  
23 Hendry County remain whole in whichever  
24 District we end up in.

25 Secondly we prefer State House District 77

1 to retain its characteristics of representing  
2 the central portion of the state.

3 And the third issue that the residents of  
4 Labelle and the city government of Labelle is  
5 concerned with is, we would prefer our Senate  
6 District, we are currently in Senate District  
7 39 and it is very hard for us to find  
8 commonality.

9 I represent a city of 4,800 people who  
10 share with Miami-Dade County, and we would  
11 prefer to be not included with Miami-Dade  
12 County, but be included in a Senate District  
13 that represents the interior portions of the  
14 state.

15 SENATOR GAETZ: Thank you very much,  
16 Mayor.

17 MR. PULETTI: Thank you.

18 SENATOR GAETZ: Thank you, sir.

19 MS. TAYLOR: Good morning.

20 SENATOR GAETZ: Thank you very much for  
21 allowing us to be here, and if everybody who is  
22 new to this area, I visited here before, but if  
23 you turn around you will see the Janet B.  
24 Taylor name and picture on the back of this  
25 room, and Commissioner, thank you for letting

1           us come to your house today. You are  
2           recognized.

3           MS. TAYLOR: We are more than glad to have  
4           you and you have to forgive my voice. I had  
5           surgery, but we really welcome you to Hendry  
6           County and we have been pleased with our  
7           representation that we have had.

8           But, you know, Hendry County is one of the  
9           five pre-clearance counties by the Department  
10          of Justice for election laws and we are hoping  
11          when you are doing the redistricting that you  
12          will remember that, and some of what the young  
13          Democrat said is quite true.

14          We are now split with two Representatives  
15          from Congress for our little small town and I  
16          don't know that it is an advantage or a  
17          disadvantage for us to have two  
18          Representatives, but when you are doing your  
19          redistricting maps we hope that you would take  
20          into consideration that we do want to remain  
21          whole, whole as a community and the  
22          representation from Congressman Hastings I  
23          think that would do us well.

24          Again, we thank you for coming and just  
25          please remember that we want to stay whole here

1 in our county.

2 SENATOR GAETZ: Thank you very, very much,  
3 Commissioner, and Mel Karau is next and  
4 following Mr. Karau, Robert Rense, and then  
5 Terry Koopman.

6 Mr. Karau, thank you for being here, sir,  
7 and the floor is yours.

8 MR. KARAU: Thank you for allowing me to  
9 be here today. I am Chairman of the Republican  
10 Party in Hendry County and I will echo much  
11 what our Mayor said, Paul Puletti.

12 We would like to remain whole as a county  
13 and we don't feel that we are getting the  
14 representation from the east coast that we  
15 deserve and we are quite happy with the  
16 representation of our Representative Grimsley  
17 and Tom Rooney. They represent us well.

18 And if we could stay within the central  
19 part of Florida, I think that represents our  
20 county best as opposed to splitting it up with  
21 the east coast.

22 And I would just like to add that Labelle  
23 is the home of the famous armadillo race that  
24 is put on by Rotary.

25 SENATOR GAETZ: We are going to hear more

1           about this. I know that. Thank you,  
2           Mr. Chairman.

3                     Next, Robert Rense, Mr. Rense, and  
4           following Mr. Rense, Terry Koopman and then if  
5           Donna Storter, Glades County Commissioner, will  
6           be ready to speak as well.

7                     Mr. Rense, we are very pleased, you could  
8           have been someplace else this morning. You  
9           came to spend time with us and we are grateful.

10                    MR. RENSE: And thank you for coming too,  
11           Mr. Chairman, Representatives. My name is  
12           Robert Rense, and I am the President of the  
13           Glades Area Minestorial Association which  
14           consists of the western Palm Beach County,  
15           Okeechobee and Hendry county.

16                    And I am just coming to say that the most  
17           important thing to us is that we have the  
18           districts drawn up so that you have one voice  
19           and one vote, and that the power vote of those  
20           who are minorities of those are not diminished  
21           by redrawing the districts in such a way that  
22           they do not have an impact.

23                    We also are concerned about making sure  
24           that when you draw those districts, that you  
25           consider communities of interest, that those

1           who have common interest are together in those  
2           districts so that they can be represented very  
3           well.

4                    But again we look forward to seeing what  
5           your districts will end up looking like and  
6           give our support when it is drawn in such a way  
7           that all citizens have an equal right or equal  
8           voice in the voting process. Thank you.

9                    SENATOR GAETZ: Thank you, great words,  
10          sir. We really appreciate that. And next,  
11          Terri Koopman, Ms. Koopman and then  
12          Commissioner Storter and then Teresa Jenkins,  
13          if you could be ready.

14                   Ms. Koopman, thank you for taking time  
15          from your day and we look forward to your  
16          testimony.

17                   MS. KOOPMAN: Good morning, my name is  
18          Terri Koopman, I live in beautiful Lake placid  
19          and part of District 77.

20                   I am here this morning to talk about the  
21          fact that I want my county to be altogether.

22                   Representative Albritton you are a really  
23          nice man, but he has this little hunk of  
24          Highlands County and we want Highlands County  
25          to be of a piece. So please, the people in

1 Avon Park really want to be part of the rest of  
2 us.

3 The other thing is, the voters of this  
4 state overwhelmingly approved Amendments 5 and  
5 6, and I would ask in the strongest possible  
6 terms for you to withdraw your lawsuit in a  
7 time when you are spending money that our  
8 schools need your money.

9 It is our money, and as far as the  
10 Congressional Districts are concerned, I am  
11 sorry, I live in Highlands County and it is a  
12 rural area, it is a beautiful rural area. We  
13 have nothing in common with the high rise  
14 condos in Palm Beach or the people on the Gulf  
15 Coast either.

16 So please, put us with people that have  
17 more of our interest, with Glades County, with  
18 Desoto county, with Hardee County. Keep us  
19 together with people of similar interest,  
20 because essentially our rural interests are not  
21 well represented by someone who has way more  
22 constituents on the coast.

23 The other thing is, thank you so much for  
24 coming and for listening to us. My husband  
25 gave his life to defend our rights for liberty,

1 and I want representative government.

2 I want to be able to vote for those people  
3 who will represent me well and not have  
4 Representatives choose who the voters are.

5 Thank you.

6 SENATOR GAETZ: Thank you, and, ma'am,  
7 thank you for the service and sacrifice of your  
8 husband.

9 Next we will have Commissioner Storter, we  
10 appreciate you being here, Commissioner, then  
11 Teresa Jenkins and then Martha Hoover from the  
12 League of Women Voters.

13 Commissioner, you are recognized and we  
14 are delighted you are here.

15 COMMISSIONER STORTER: Thank you. I am  
16 delighted to be here. I recognize Mr. Negron,  
17 Mr. Caldwell and Ms. Grimsley, Senator  
18 Benacquisto is not here. Oh, she just came in.  
19 I didn't see you come in, Liz, thank you.

20 I am one of five County Commissioners in  
21 Glades County. It is probably the fourth  
22 smallest in the state. I had a lot of problems  
23 finding user friendly census data, but we are  
24 physically constrained, you know what that  
25 means. We are (inaudible), which is a real

1 area of critical economic concern and yet  
2 Glades County has no debt. We do have certain  
3 issues though.

4 Senator Benacquisto's District, if you  
5 look at it on a map, it looks like a salamander  
6 squated on the map.

7 We are not happy with that.  
8 Twenty-three percent of the voters in Glades  
9 County live in my District, so obviously we are  
10 going to have to make some District changes  
11 from the Commission level.

12 It includes Old Town and north Labelle,  
13 but 72 percent of my voters have a Hendry  
14 County zip code. At the other geographical end  
15 of Glades County is Buckhead Ridge where  
16 26 percent of the Glades County voters reside  
17 and all of them have an Okeechobee County zip  
18 code.

19 There are other out of county zip codes in  
20 Glades County, residences for Clewiston mailing  
21 addresses, and Venice, and that is Hendry and  
22 Highlands County.

23 A total of 47 percent of the voters  
24 registered in Glades County have an out of  
25 county zip code. So it is probably safe to

1           assume that the total household population  
2           follows those same ratios.

3                   So basing legislative representation on  
4           addresses could result in very unfair  
5           representation with Glades County, so please  
6           consider that.

7                   We have felt very well represented by our  
8           Congressman Rooney and especially by  
9           Representative Denise Grimsley, but we are  
10          divided by those Senate Districts and we would  
11          like to have that whole.

12                   Also we are a part of other Heartland,  
13          Florida consertions, cooperatives. We identify  
14          better as the previous speaker spoke, with the  
15          interior rural counties such as Hardee, Desoto,  
16          Okeechobee and Highlands and even Hendry  
17          County. We do not want to be divided.

18                   You have heard that again and again I want  
19          to thank you for this, for not drawing those  
20          maps until you did hear from us. Thank you.

21                   SENATOR GAETZ: Thank you very much,  
22          Commissioner, and Commissioner, before you  
23          leave, the problem, the anomaly you have  
24          described about the voting addresses, would you  
25          be sure you talk with either Alex Kelly or John

1 Guthrie from our staff to make sure we have a  
2 complete understanding of the -- of that issue,  
3 how many people are involved and where they  
4 are, so that we do not neglect that issue.

5 Thank you very much, Commissioner.

6 Next we will hear from Teresa Jenkins and  
7 then Martha Hoover from the League of Women  
8 Voters and then Jean Finks from the League of  
9 Women Voters.

10 Ms. Jenkins, thank you for coming. The  
11 floor is yours.

12 MS. JENKINS: Well, good morning, and  
13 thank you, Mr. Chairman, Representatives. I  
14 thank you for the opportunity to speak.

15 I also represent the League of Women  
16 Voters. We are from Charlotte County, so we  
17 were on the road at the crack of dawn this  
18 morning to come here to speak about this  
19 important issue.

20 The League has a couple of concerns, one  
21 of which is the Legislature's published  
22 timeline for drawing the District maps.

23 What the League believes is that we feel  
24 that these, the timelines are unfair to our  
25 Florida voters, to our Supervisors of

1 Elections, as well as to potential candidates.

2 The published timeline seems to wait to  
3 finalize the District maps until the end of  
4 session which is March 2012, and then the  
5 courts, of course, the Justice Department have  
6 their time to review the passage of the maps  
7 and then review them.

8 And under the present timeline it seems  
9 highly unlikely that the districts will be  
10 approved before June 8, which is the deadline  
11 for candidates to file their papers to run for  
12 office.

13 So as it is, Florida districts may not be  
14 finalized until August. So we understand that  
15 the legislature's own lawyer has been quoted as  
16 saying take the timeline will cause massive  
17 voter confusion and we believe that as well.

18 We are concerned about our Supervisors of  
19 Elections. They need to have sufficient time  
20 to prepare for the elections and we are  
21 concerned about challengers.

22 We are concerned about new candidates who  
23 need to have sufficient time to mount an  
24 effective campaign.

25 And so while the Legislature will hold

1 interim committee meetings from September  
2 through December, perhaps that time could be  
3 used to draw district maps. Then allow the  
4 public to comment and then prepare the final  
5 plans to submit to the full House and Senate  
6 before the Legislature convenes.

7 The uncertainty as to what a district is  
8 going to look like helps incumbents. It  
9 doesn't help challengers, and these incumbents  
10 are already known to the voters.

11 So these efforts to protect incumbents  
12 perhaps, seem to undermine our fair competitive  
13 elections, and some citizens have come  
14 demanding that the timeline be accelerated, and  
15 in response we understand that you intend to  
16 bring the maps to the floor for a vote in  
17 January, but still we don't believe this is  
18 acceptable.

19 So what we are asking is for a published  
20 accelerated timeline to adopt a rule requiring  
21 all maps to be filed by October 3rd of 2011.  
22 Adopt a rule requiring all committee action on  
23 redistricting plans be completed by the end of  
24 2011, and adopt a rule requiring that all plans  
25 be voted on during the first week of 2012

1 session.

2 SENATOR GAETZ: I am sorry. I apologize.

3 MS. JENKINS: Thank you for your time.

4 SENATOR GAETZ: Yes, and Ms. Jenkins, I  
5 hope since you came so far that you will have a  
6 chance to stay until the end of the hearing.  
7 Senator Negron and Representative Baxley will  
8 give you some information I think that may  
9 provide some reassurance.

10 I think it may be possible that the League  
11 is operating off of an a old schedule that you  
12 are troubled by. So I hope you can hang out  
13 until the end of the hearing.

14 MS. JENKINS: That would be wonderful.  
15 Thank you so much.

16 SENATOR GAETZ: All right, sure, thank you  
17 so much, Ms. Jenkins.

18 And next we will hear from Martha Hoover,  
19 representing the League, and then from Jean  
20 Finks, representing the League and then from  
21 Joseph, I am sorry, we already heard from  
22 Joseph. You were there twice you were so good.

23 Then we are going to hear from Ashley  
24 Tripp with the LORE Alliance.

25 And so Ms. Hoover, you are recognized and

1 think you for being here.

2 MS. HOOVER: Well, thank you. My name is  
3 Martha Hoover and I live in Port Charlotte, and  
4 I do represent the Charlotte County League of  
5 Women Voters.

6 We are concerned about three specific  
7 issues relative to redistricting reform.

8 First, the timeline for drawing district  
9 maps is unfair to Florida voters. The plan to  
10 wait to finalize district maps until at least  
11 the end of the session results in Florida's  
12 maps not being finalized until August of 2012.

13 The primary election is August 14th. Your  
14 own lawyer rightfully says that this will cause  
15 massive voter confusion and Election  
16 Supervisors will have insufficient time to  
17 prepare for elections.

18 Challengers and new candidates will have  
19 little or no time to mount their campaigns and  
20 voters will be voting for candidates they do  
21 not know.

22 We therefore ask the Legislators to debate  
23 and pass maps during the first week of session,  
24 holding interim committee meetings from  
25 September through December.

1           Commit to prepare and file district maps  
2 by October the 3rd, 2011. Adopt a rule  
3 requiring all committee action on redistricting  
4 plans be completed by the end of 2011, and  
5 requiring that all plans be voted on during the  
6 first week of 2012 session. The current  
7 timeline is simply an incumbent protection  
8 plan.

9           Our second concern relates to spending  
10 taxpayer money to oppose fair districts. Over  
11 \$1 million of taxpayer money is already spent  
12 hiring lawyers to fight the will of the Florida  
13 voters, with another 30 million set aside for  
14 future court battles.

15           The Florida House is using taxpayer money  
16 to attack and invalidate a provision of our  
17 State Constitution that was supported by  
18 63 percent of Florida voters.

19           All of this money is being spent while  
20 teachers are being laid off and social services  
21 are being cut.

22           We ask the Florida House to immediately  
23 withdraw from the lawsuit and respect the will  
24 of the 63 percent of Florida voters who want  
25 the new redistricting standards applied.

1           Our last point is where are the maps  
2           provided by the Legislature? We had hoped that  
3           you would provide sample maps for public  
4           comment during these hearings. With 26  
5           hearings we have not seen a single map from the  
6           Legislature.

7           We demand that the Legislators commit to  
8           holding another round of public hearings with  
9           real maps that we can see which the citizens  
10          can comment on.

11          So I thank you for your time and on behalf  
12          of the Charlotte County League of Women Voters,  
13          thank you very much.

14          SENATOR GAETZ: Thank you very much,  
15          ma'am, and I hope for the same reasons -- I am  
16          sorry, I am not quite sure how to make this  
17          work.

18          I hope you will have a chance to stay  
19          until the end of the hearing because again I  
20          think it may be possible that the scripts were  
21          written before some events occurred that may  
22          give you some reassurance.

23          MS. HOOVER: I hope so.

24          SENATOR GAETZ: Thank you so much, ma'am.

25          Next, Jean Finks from the League of Women

1 Voters.

2 MS. FINKS: Good morning, and thank you  
3 for the opportunity to speak, Mr. Chairman. I  
4 am from Charlotte County now, but I used to  
5 live in Volusia County in Deland, and also in  
6 Tallahassee. So I see some of my  
7 Representatives, former Representatives here.

8 Mr. Chairman, thank you for telling us  
9 that it is not if, but how, but my question to  
10 you is, how much.

11 In the name of transparency can you tell  
12 us how much all of these hearings have cost us,  
13 the taxpayers, and we don't have a map to show  
14 for it? We don't think the Legislature should  
15 be spending our money needlessly.

16 Although there have been good comments at  
17 this hearing and I am sure you are hearing them  
18 from some of the others, we could have done  
19 that by e-mail.

20 The Legislature shouldn't be spending  
21 money on opposing fair districts and the  
22 lawsuit that is presently pending is another  
23 waste of our tax dollars.

24 We are on both sides of that lawsuit and  
25 we are spending money on both sides. All that

1 money could be set aside as our people have  
2 said, for more schools, more arts in the  
3 schools, more science in the schools. We think  
4 this is a poor waste of our tax dollars.

5 It is very clear that you are asking to  
6 protect your own incumbencies and you are  
7 trying to fight new people who might have new  
8 ideas.

9 The Legislature should be working to  
10 uphold the constitutional provisions that two  
11 thirds of us have already approved. So we ask  
12 the House to immediately withdraw from the  
13 lawsuit and respect the will of the people in  
14 letting fair districting go forward in a more  
15 expeditious and hopefully not as tax --  
16 unworthy a process. Thank you.

17 SENATOR GAETZ: Thank you very much,  
18 ma'am, for being here this morning.

19 And next, Ashley Tripp, if Ms. Tripp is  
20 here, followed by Joseph Spratt, then Kevin  
21 McCarthy.

22 Ms. Tripp, thank you for taking the time  
23 to be with us and the floor is yours.

24 MS. TRIPP: Good morning. Thank you for  
25 the opportunity to speak. I appreciate the

1 opportunity. I think it is important that we  
2 do have this opportunity to share with you our  
3 thoughts.

4 Again, I am with the Lake Okeechobee  
5 Regional Economic Alliance of Palm Beach  
6 County.

7 We are really working hard to improve the  
8 economy in that region, but one thing that we  
9 have in common all the way around the lake is  
10 that we have Lake Okeechobee at the center and  
11 the heart of our industries.

12 I would like to propose that when you look  
13 at your redistricting that you encompass Lake  
14 Okeechobee in the Senator, the Florida Senate  
15 as well as the Florida House congressional maps  
16 and the congressional maps because of our  
17 common interest.

18 I have heard several times from many of  
19 the different speakers this morning was  
20 commonalities, commonalities, and then as our  
21 agriculture industry, our tourism industry as  
22 well as Lake Okeechobee and we need greater  
23 representation, strong, stronger representation  
24 in this whole region of south Florida and  
25 central Florida.

1           We are the Belle Glade, Pahokee and South  
2 Bay is part of the Freddie district, the  
3 Florida rule heartland and it is great, we fit  
4 into that because of our lifestyles yet it  
5 often works against us because we are in a  
6 metropolitan county and metropolitan  
7 districting.

8           So we would just like for you to consider  
9 when you do the redistricting to consider the  
10 commonalities that the communities around Lake  
11 Okeechobee and all of the different counties  
12 around there have in place.

13           So I thank you for your time, and anything  
14 I can ever do for you, please let me know.

15           SENATOR GAETZ: Thank you. Thank you very  
16 much for that very useful testimony. Joseph  
17 Spratt is next, following Mr. Spratt, Kevin  
18 McCarthy and then Dr. Deborah Misotti, if I  
19 have that name pronounced correctly.

20           Mr. Spratt, thank you very much, and you  
21 are recognized, sir. We are glad to have you.

22           MR. SPRATT: Mr. Chairman and members.  
23 First let me welcome you to Hendry County, and  
24 thank you very much for coming here to listen  
25 to our request and our concerns.

1           Our House District has worked well for 30  
2 plus years. We have been blessed to have very  
3 well-qualified and dedicated Representatives,  
4 at least for the last 16 years, okay, okay,  
5 for the last eight. Thank you, Representative  
6 Grimsley.

7           This is because it has been comprised of  
8 like communities, the like interests and we  
9 have had Representatives that have walked the  
10 walk, talked the talk. They are part of our  
11 communities that understand our people, their  
12 jobs and their industries, their problems and  
13 the solutions thereto.

14           We are a rural agricultural based district  
15 comprised of hard working, caring, God fearing  
16 and conservative people. Our Senate district  
17 on the other hand has always been attached to  
18 the coast one way or another, and they have  
19 very different problems, ideas and solutions.

20           We are kind of like a flea on the dog's  
21 back. Mainly, just a nuisance, sometimes  
22 getting a scratch. In fact, today our Senate  
23 District runs from where you sit to Key West.

24           Senator Bullard, and I served in the House  
25 with Senator Bullard and she is a good friend,

1 represents us well. However, I do not believe  
2 that you can fairly represent a district with  
3 such diversity that is over seven hours from  
4 one end to the other.

5 We have nothing in common with the  
6 majority of the constituents in this district  
7 and we feel we need a more level playing ground  
8 when it comes to our State Senate District.

9 I have invested most of my adult life in  
10 representing and fighting for the people in  
11 this county, as well as this district on rural  
12 and agricultural issues.

13 First as a City Commissioner, then a  
14 County Commissioner, and as a Senate  
15 Representative. These people are the very core  
16 of our society, working every day, providing  
17 jobs, producing food and fiber and thus  
18 contributing to the economic stability of this  
19 state no matter what the circumstances.

20 I strongly urge you to seriously consider  
21 drawing a House District much as it has been  
22 for the past 30 years, and that our Senate  
23 District be drawn to one of like communities  
24 with like interest and like problems looking  
25 for like solutions.

1           Let's preserve Florida's Heartland with  
2 proper representation and not draw us to  
3 coastal communities where our voices will not  
4 be heard.

5           Again, thank you for being here and  
6 listening to us, you have a daunting task. May  
7 God speed.

8           SENATOR GAETZ: Thank you. Thank you,  
9 Representative, for your great service to this  
10 community.

11           Next we will hear from Kevin McCarthy,  
12 then Dr. Deborah Misotti, and then Margaret  
13 Shaw, please.

14           Mr. McCarthy, thank you for being here,  
15 and we welcome your testimony.

16           MR. MCCARTHY: Thank you, and I want to  
17 thank you for being here and coming out and  
18 listening to the people, particularly here in  
19 the Glades.

20           I have been a private business owner for  
21 24 years, spent six years on the City  
22 Commission in Clewiston and eight years on the  
23 County Commission, and from a congressional  
24 standpoint I think we have been very fortunate.  
25 I think we are well represented by Congressman

1           Rooney and we are well represented by  
2           Congressman Hastings, but I think that  
3           primarily is because he was born out in the  
4           Glades and he has a real appreciation and I am  
5           very grateful for his representation of our  
6           area.

7                    I am a little afraid of what might happen  
8           if we have a new election with somebody else  
9           representing that has the same problem as our  
10          Senate District. Our Senate District does not  
11          get represented in this area.

12                   A lot of times in our legislative  
13          delegation meetings our Senator doesn't show  
14          up. We have Senator Benacquisto here, before  
15          her, Senator Aronberg who doesn't have a single  
16          voter in Hendry County. They cut across the  
17          lake, they are at our legislative delegation  
18          meetings.

19                   I think it is very important that we have  
20          a Senate that represents our area, represents  
21          the center part of the state, the rural areas.  
22          Ashley Tripp made mention of the Freddie  
23          region, also in the reset region they get  
24          pulled next the tri cities in Palm Beach County  
25          and we go up into the center of the state and

1           it makes a lot of sense.

2                   We have a lot in common but our Senate  
3           District does not represent us and does not  
4           represent us well. So I would ask you that  
5           when you start drawing those lines that you,  
6           you remember that, and draw us a Senate  
7           District that makes sense.

8                   Our House of Representatives seat has been  
9           great and Joe went back 16 years, but I think  
10          we go back long before that with Burt Harris,  
11          we have been well represented for a long time.

12                   I have been in Tallahassee every year for  
13          the past 24 years, spent six trips up to D. C.  
14          and it is very welcoming when you walk in and  
15          you make those appointments and you go see your  
16          Representative as opposed to when you make your  
17          appointments and you see a staff member and you  
18          see the staff members because they don't think  
19          we are important.

20                   You see the Representatives because they  
21          know who we are and they want to represent us.  
22          So I think it is important, it is important for  
23          the people that are here.

24                   Once again, thank you for coming out and  
25          seeing the people. I think it is so much

1 better than an e-mail. So thank you so much.

2 SENATOR GAETZ: Thank you, sir. We  
3 appreciate your comments.

4 Dr. Misotti, did I have that name  
5 pronounced correctly, ma'am?

6 DR. MISOTTI: Yes, yes, you did.

7 SENATOR GAETZ: Thank you so much for  
8 being here and the floor is yours, ma'am.

9 DR. MISOTTI: Okay, I would like to say  
10 that I have lived in this area for almost nine  
11 years now, and the one thing that I have  
12 noticed is the great divisiveness in the area  
13 simply because there is not the proper  
14 representation for the demeanor and the  
15 economic stature of the people in this area.

16 I would like to reiterate exactly what  
17 Mayor Paul Puletti said. We need  
18 representation for the entire county with the  
19 same Representative. I strongly, strongly  
20 recommend that we follow the District 77.

21 Denise Grimsley, our Representative, has  
22 been wonderful. She has stepped into local  
23 situations. She was easy to speak with. I --  
24 my lifestyle is very different from most  
25 people's. I run an educational primate

1 sanctuary.

2 I have people come in from all over the  
3 world to study the apes and monkeys that I work  
4 with. We ran into a very difficult situation  
5 with the State Senate when they were going to  
6 incorporate into the Everglades clean up bill a  
7 \$10,000 bond that was going to be required for  
8 a sanctuary and because we were a 501-C3, that  
9 was very difficult for us.

10 I attempted to contact my State Senator 11  
11 times, never received one return phone call.  
12 When I finally reached one of her actual staff  
13 members and spoke to them, she said that the  
14 Senator didn't have time for such small issues,  
15 which I really did not appreciate.

16 I went to Representative Grimsley. She  
17 put me in touch with Senator, former Senator  
18 Dave Aronberg, and though he was not my  
19 Senator, he went to the Senator, Senate floor  
20 to speak on behalf of our sanctuary, and I  
21 greatly appreciated that.

22 And the reason he did that is because he  
23 understood the people in this area, he  
24 understood the impact that various things have  
25 on this area, and when you are redistricting I

1 would greatly appreciate it if you could keep  
2 Hendry County whole and you could give us  
3 representation for the people who actually live  
4 here and not those in Miami-Dade County who  
5 have a complete socioeconomic difference from  
6 us. Thank you.

7 SENATOR GAETZ: Thank you, Doctor, very  
8 much. I was going to say, we would provide  
9 everybody with Representative Grimsley's cell  
10 phone number, but it sounds like you already  
11 have it.

12 Our next speaker is Margaret Shaw.  
13 Ms. Shaw, if you are here, and then following  
14 Ms. Shaw, Janice Grove. Margaret Shaw?

15 Thank you for taking time to be here today  
16 and we are very grateful for your testimony,  
17 ma'am.

18 MS. SHAW: Yes, I am here representing  
19 myself as a citizen. I belong to three  
20 political organizations, and I do want to say  
21 that I am proud to say that Denise Grimsley is  
22 my rep and will hopefully be Senator.

23 And I do empathize this -- let's see, with  
24 Joe Spratt and the Commissioner that spoke  
25 about how the city like Okeechobee is divided,

1           this is divided. Avon Park used to be divided  
2           down Main Street.

3           We had Joe on this side and Adam Putnam on  
4           this side. And so these things happen and that  
5           was in a delegate District. I am proud to say  
6           that Highlands County carried Joe Negron over  
7           the top when he ran for Representative.

8           So we do have little pieces and parts of  
9           our county that belong to other districts that  
10          we are not voting as a whole, so I don't know  
11          how to fix that.

12          I look at maps and I don't know how to fix  
13          it, but we are -- it is necessary that we do  
14          combine and put a lot of emphasis on what is  
15          the rural economy and the tourism and  
16          everything.

17          And I do think that some of the testimony  
18          I have heard here today is amazing and I just  
19          want to thank you for the opportunity that we  
20          get our two cents' worth in that we would like  
21          to see the Senate Districts and things that are  
22          hurting these other people thought out real  
23          well, but don't go over board and don't lose  
24          Ms. Grimsley and Paul Rooney as their districts  
25          are now proposed. Thank you very much.

1           SENATOR GAETZ: Thank you very much,  
2           ma'am, for being here this morning. We are  
3           very grateful to you.

4           Now Janice Grove, please, Ms. Grove. We  
5           are very, very pleased to -- that you took time  
6           to be with us today, and we are all anxious to  
7           hear your testimony, ma'am. You have the  
8           floor.

9           MS. GROVES: Well, I am just speaking for  
10          myself. I live out in the sticks. I leave on  
11          a dead end dirt road. No neighbors can see my  
12          house and I can't see any of my neighbors'  
13          houses and I love it.

14          There are 16 deer that come through my  
15          area on a regular basis that we see them and we  
16          even had between fawns this year, so we are  
17          delighted, not too happy about the hogs and the  
18          armadillos, but that is all right, we can't do  
19          much about that. We get what we got.

20          I have been very, very pleased. I am a  
21          native Miamian and we escaped to the real  
22          Florida in 1979, gratefully, and have been  
23          very, very happy with the representation that  
24          we have had.

25          Both on the State and the Federal level,

1 we can always contact the people we need to  
2 contact and they listen to us. I gave up on  
3 e-mails some time ago.

4 It is so impersonal and people can't get  
5 the nuances of what you are really saying and  
6 the tone of your voice when you send an e-mail.  
7 It is just there in print and so I am so very  
8 grateful that you all do come out and listen to  
9 us, because that is important.

10 I am politically active. I try to support  
11 the Constitution and vote for the people I  
12 think will do the best jobs. We have certainly  
13 been blessed with Denise Grimsley and we do  
14 want her to be our Senator, definitely.

15 Please see that those districts that we  
16 stay there so we can get her elected, because  
17 she does, not just work for us, but she works  
18 for the State of Florida and for the goodness  
19 of the people.

20 SENATOR GAETZ: Would you please come down  
21 now?

22 MS. GROVES: I really, really think that  
23 yes, we are primarily rural areas, and, yes, we  
24 do have some areas that are larger. Sebring is  
25 a larger area of population that some of you do

1 not have, but we are still not gigantic.

2 We are not Palm Beach and we are not Tampa  
3 and we do think we are people that care about  
4 what is going on in our area, and that is what  
5 we need.

6 Our county is divided. We do have a small  
7 area up in Avon Park that is in a different  
8 Representative District. If that can be  
9 changed I think that would probably be good,  
10 and we do thank you for being here and letting  
11 the little people actually have something to  
12 say.

13 I have never been elected to anything and  
14 nor do I care to be, thank you very much, but I  
15 do care and I will get up and say what I think.  
16 Thank you.

17 SENATOR GAETZ: And you said it well.  
18 Thank you very much, ma'am. And now we have  
19 someone who came all of the way from Orlando to  
20 be with us, Stephen Garrett.

21 Mr. Garrett, thanks for the long drive and  
22 we look forward to your thoughts.

23 MR. GARRETT: Good morning, and welcome, I  
24 thank you for the welcome. Ladies and  
25 gentlemen of our Legislature, I have only lived

1 in Florida for about three years, but in that  
2 time my Congressional District has been  
3 represented by three different persons of two  
4 different political parties.

5 However, I don't consider this a bad  
6 thing. I did attend two earlier hearings in  
7 this series without commenting. I heard many  
8 concerns that redistricting respect and honor  
9 our Federal Civil Rights laws and that respect  
10 and honor the wishes of the voters for compact  
11 districts. I would like to echo those  
12 concerns.

13 I also heard concerns that these bills  
14 were in conflict. I urge you to recognize that  
15 this is a false dichotomy, meaning both goals  
16 may be more challenging than treating them  
17 either/or, but meeting both goals is assurable  
18 possible.

19 But beyond that I challenge you to honor  
20 the diversity within your districts that you  
21 draw, not diversity of age or race or any  
22 demographic, but rather the diversity of ideas.

23 Our nation is in desperate need of  
24 intelligent considerate civic debate and the  
25 surest way to squelch that is to craft

1 districts in which the outcome of the general  
2 election is a foregone conclusion.

3 Uncompetitive districts deface the value  
4 of each and incremental vote and renders it  
5 virtually meaningless. Competitive districts  
6 raise up the value of the incremental vote and  
7 encourages participation.

8 Uncompetitive districts teach our children  
9 that those in power can act to protect their  
10 own interest at the expense of the peoples.

11 Competitive districts place the people's  
12 interest first, encourage our children and all  
13 citizens to reflect on what truly constitutes  
14 their interest.

15 Uncompetitive District breed distrust,  
16 cynicism and apathy. Competitive districts  
17 enliven debate, engage voters and bring  
18 accountability to the floor.

19 Many may say these are foreign ideals but  
20 they will choose and strive to create districts  
21 to protect your own security in office.

22 My friends, subsequently can reflect  
23 another false dichotomy. I suggest that  
24 securing an office is completely compatible  
25 with competitive districts.

1           I submit to you the true job security for  
2 a public servant rests on consistent delivery  
3 of exemplary public service, and that this is  
4 what makes it possible for her or him to  
5 consistently win vibrant, competitive  
6 electoral elections.

7           Ladies and gentlemen, your own willingness  
8 to craft competitive electoral districts would  
9 be the fairest possible evidence of your own  
10 suspicion that you are running for office. It  
11 would indicate that you would not, you think  
12 would not, you think you would not win a tough  
13 well contested election in a competitive  
14 district.

15           I feel that you may instead to choose to  
16 craft districts which, if you will forgive me  
17 saying so, in a jack-ass or respectively  
18 pachyderm could vote.

19           Show your belief in your own worthiness  
20 and show your belief in your constituents who's  
21 government this is. Craft districts which are  
22 respectful, honorable, legal, compact and  
23 competitive.

24           SENATOR GAETZ: Thank you very much.

25           Thank you, sir. This concludes the individuals

1           who had signed up to speak or who, during the  
2           course of the hearing, felt the spirit moved  
3           them to speak.

4                     We appreciate all of the information we  
5           have received. Let me just say before I yield  
6           the chair to Senator Negron because I said that  
7           I wanted to stay for everybody who wanted to  
8           speak but I have to dash now to get my  
9           transportation back to the central time zone.

10                    Let me say that the kind of information  
11           that you provided today is the kind that would  
12           be very difficult to get if all we did was just  
13           check our e-mail.

14                    The information we have gotten from these  
15           hearings about specific neighborhoods and  
16           communities and how those communities should or  
17           should not be boundaried or divided is the kind  
18           of thing we can't get from an echo chamber in  
19           Tallahassee and we can't get, I don't think  
20           just by checking the mail.

21                    You got to get it by talking to people,  
22           listening to people who live in the  
23           neighborhoods and who live in the communities  
24           and you have given us that information.

25                    This has been extraordinarily helpful to

1 me as somebody who lives far, far away to get  
2 firsthand the input that tells me how you feel  
3 these districts ought to be drawn.

4 With that, Representative Baxley, I will  
5 yield the Senate chair to Senator Negron and  
6 thank you all for being here today.

7 Senator Negron and Representative Baxley  
8 and the other members of the Committees will  
9 now have a chance to react, offer any thoughts  
10 they have, answer any questions and to sum up.  
11 Senator Negron.

12 SENATOR NEGRON: Okay, we are now at the  
13 portion of the meeting I will now offer any  
14 House members an opportunity to make any  
15 comments or ask any questions or respond in any  
16 way to the comments that we have heard.

17 REPRESENTATIVE TAYLOR: Thank you,  
18 Mr. Chair, and I want to thank the citizens for  
19 coming out today.

20 There are two things that I think we can  
21 agree on, Mr. Chair, and that is the testimony  
22 from our citizens.

23 When we hear and do what they say,  
24 democracy works best when we do what our  
25 citizens ask us to do.

1           The other thing I wanted to do, and I  
2 think we can agree on, Mr. Chair, is the fact  
3 that with this being our last meeting, I just  
4 want to commend our staff, I want to commend  
5 the Sergeant's office for their work.

6           I mean, we know that this is a difficult  
7 process. We have gone to 26 different  
8 locations and they have done an outstanding job  
9 of making sure we had the information, they  
10 were here and I would like to do something  
11 special for them and let them know that we  
12 really appreciate the work that they have done.

13           I also wanted to thank the Florida  
14 Channel, they have been here, they have been  
15 streaming, they haven't missed a beat for the  
16 most part in making sure that this information  
17 is published out into the public.

18           So with that I know, Mr. Chair, this is  
19 our last meeting, but I wanted to make sure  
20 that those good folks are recognized for their  
21 outstanding work. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

22           A VOICE: Thank you, Mr. Chair, and again,  
23 being the humble gentleman that I am I let  
24 Representative Taylor from Volusia County go  
25 first, but he basically said exactly what I

1 wanted to say.

2 Being one that attended each and every  
3 single one of the meetings, and I tend to like  
4 to get to places early, because if you are not  
5 early, you are late, that is my belief, and  
6 being one that tends to leave places a little  
7 bit later because I like to talk to  
8 individuals, I, too, want to commend the staff  
9 of the great State of Florida, because what we  
10 have seen is dedication exemplified and  
11 executed in a perfect and flawless manner.

12 The Sergeant's office and everybody else,  
13 the Florida Channel, I have talked to you all  
14 because you get here before us, and you leave  
15 after us, and it truly is an honor to be able  
16 to say that I am a co-worker of yours.

17 And I look forward to the rest of this  
18 process in making sure that ever comment that  
19 we have heard throughout these hearings that we  
20 go back and we do the will of the people.

21 Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

22 SENATOR NEGRON: Thank you very much. Any  
23 other members of the House wish to speak? We  
24 will pass the microphone.

25 A VOICE: Thank you very much for coming

1 out this morning. I know it is early and for  
2 those of us who have been to all 26 hearings,  
3 as I have been, it has truly been an honor to  
4 hear from the public and to hear what you have  
5 to say about this process.

6 I -- this is my first time going through  
7 redistricting here in the State of Florida, but  
8 as an elected official in New York when I lived  
9 there I went through redistricting where they  
10 had my living room in one District and my  
11 kitchen in another.

12 So I understand what redistricting is all  
13 about, and I will intently look over the  
14 information that I have taken down and what I  
15 have received so that I will make sure that we  
16 get the best maps out for everyone. Thank you.

17 SENATOR NEGRON: Okay, are there any other  
18 House members that wish to make any comments?  
19 And I think before we turn to, let's see if  
20 there is any members of the Senate that wish to  
21 comment.

22 We had one other member of the public who  
23 has traveled to be here today and we certainly  
24 want to hear his testimony and input, and that  
25 is Joe Thomas. Is Mr. Thomas here?

1           If he is still here we will open public  
2 testimony back up to have an opportunity for  
3 him to speak if he still wishes to speak.

4           A VOICE: I think he left.

5           SENATOR NEGRON: Okay, we wanted to, we  
6 wanted to -- I would rather err on the side of  
7 caution. I think he may have had some vehicle  
8 issues, but if we have a member of the public  
9 that says they want to speak I want to make  
10 sure that we give them that opportunity.

11           So now we will turn it over, are there any  
12 members of the Florida Senate that wish to make  
13 any comments or speak?

14           A VOICE: Well, the only person that we  
15 left out, the only people we left out are the  
16 interpreters, and let me just tell you, their  
17 fingers have been flying.

18           They have been some very fired up people  
19 and they have had to say some things that maybe  
20 they would not like to interpret, or maybe they  
21 would, because some of them were calling us  
22 names. So maybe they were like, oh, this is  
23 great, anyway, thanks for coming.

24           SENATOR NEGRON: Okay, are there any other  
25 members of the Senate that wish to comment? If

1 not, I am going to turn over the floor to  
2 Representative Baxley who is the House co-chair  
3 to make some closing comments and answer any  
4 questions if he wishes to, and then I will wrap  
5 up.

6 REPRESENTATIVE BAXLEY: Thank you,  
7 Chairman. Just so I might pick up any Mojo  
8 left in the room, the high regard for Chairman  
9 Grimsley, I wanted to share a factoid.

10 Many years ago when I was a small child,  
11 my father who was my pastor, conducted the  
12 wedding ceremony for her parents. So I get  
13 part of the credit for my family for her being  
14 here.

15 So she was kind enough to invite me back,  
16 my father had passed away and let me be there  
17 as a part of their 50th wedding anniversary.

18 I share that because I just want to touch  
19 base with you that these are real people  
20 devoting their real lives to try to make a  
21 difference just like you are doing today by  
22 spending time here for your community, and on  
23 that note, today is my 39th wedding  
24 anniversary. So thank you for letting us out  
25 early so I can go home and celebrate that great

1 victory with my wife, five children and seven  
2 grandchildren.

3 So that is just a personal aside that I  
4 just want to thank all of the attendees. Each  
5 of you bring unique perspectives that provide  
6 information to us about Hendry County,  
7 Okeechobee, Glades, Highlands and the other  
8 nearby counties.

9 We could not be successful in this process  
10 without your explanation of how it is that you  
11 would implement these State and Federal  
12 redistricting laws, and to that end and in  
13 response to the points that were raised this  
14 morning about the Legislature's expenditures,  
15 in particular, the cost of having these  
16 meetings, you can visit our site.

17 We truly offer transparency. It is  
18 [www.floridatransparency.gov](http://www.floridatransparency.gov), [www.florida](http://www.florida)  
19 [transparency.gov](http://transparency.gov) and you can examine every  
20 dollar of your tax money that the Legislature  
21 spends, including the investment in these  
22 hearings.

23 I really think that the investment in  
24 doing these meetings is well worth it, because  
25 it reminds us that this is your government. We

1 don't have seats in the Legislature.

2 They are your seats, particularly with  
3 term limits. We go and sit in them for you to  
4 represent you there as Senators and House  
5 members, and so it is an honor to come before  
6 you.

7 I would also like to share as a returning  
8 member, I left the Legislature with term limits  
9 and came back. I am probably one of the few  
10 people in this room that actually has been  
11 through this process as a member of a  
12 redistricting committee.

13 I probably shouldn't say that given the  
14 appearance of the map, but I was a freshman  
15 then.

16 So Joe and Senator Joyner were there, and  
17 of course, they have gone on to the Senate and  
18 so I don't remember any time in our history  
19 that as far as the timeline that we moved the  
20 Legislature's meeting up.

21 That was a record event, and so I think we  
22 have done a lot of things to try to create  
23 adequate time for this process to be effective,  
24 and the League of Women Voters did file maps  
25 last cycle, the last time we did this.

1           They didn't file them until January. We  
2 still got done on time, and incumbents, they  
3 don't know where their districts are yet  
4 either. We don't even know what we are running  
5 for yet.

6           So we are all in this together, but I  
7 thank you for the time that you have invested  
8 and I certainly want to reiterate that I think  
9 it is well worth the cost to hear from you, the  
10 people, and with that I will turn it over to  
11 you, Senator Negron.

12           SENATOR NEGRON: Thank you, thank you,  
13 Chairman Baxley, for those comments, and I just  
14 want to offer up a couple of observations in  
15 response to some of the comments that were  
16 made, and again, there are not right opinions  
17 or wrong opinions on how we ought to do this.

18           They are just different points of view,  
19 and in response to one of the comments from the  
20 Charlotte County League representative talking  
21 about, you know, where are the maps, where are  
22 the real maps.

23           Well, I would argue that these are real  
24 maps. These are maps that are drawn by the  
25 citizens of the state of Florida, and in one of

1           our hearings earlier in the week we had a  
2           13-year-old boy who, along with his sister,  
3           drew a map of all 120 House Districts, and I am  
4           sure many members of the Committee, I have  
5           looked at the map, this was something that a  
6           lot of thought was put into and it is something  
7           that we will take into consideration.

8                        So we consider the over 54 or partial maps  
9           that have been submitted, those are real maps  
10          and we do take them into consideration.

11                      Also with this issue about, you know, we  
12          should have had maps now. I would argue that  
13          if we came here with maps I don't know, here is  
14          what my response would be.

15                      I happen to be a lawyer. When I go to  
16          court I would like the Judge to hear the  
17          evidence before she or he makes a ruling, and  
18          so to me if we came in with maps already drawn  
19          I think citizens would have the right to scream  
20          to high heaven and say, let me understand this  
21          process.

22                      You did the work product and now you are  
23          coming to listen to us, this is a charade. I  
24          think the opposite argument would be made. I  
25          think it is much more preferable for us to

1 listen to testimony from the public and then do  
2 our work.

3 And I want to just follow up briefly on  
4 what Chairman Baxley said about the information  
5 that we have received.

6 Last night we were in Lehigh Acres. I  
7 have heard of Lehigh Acres. I have seen it on  
8 a map. I have not spent a significant amount  
9 of time there. I got there early, had dinner  
10 there, talked to some people. Apparently there  
11 was an issue with one of your banks yesterday.  
12 One of your banks was surrounded with police  
13 tape and officers. I think there had been a  
14 little incident there, but I didn't know Lehigh  
15 Acres well, but after we spent time there, we  
16 listened to people, there were specific things  
17 that we would never know but for having been  
18 there.

19 And I am just going to give one example  
20 from the hearing today of something. I grew up  
21 in West Palm Beach and we came to Belle Glade  
22 and Clewiston it and Pahokee, so I know this  
23 area, I was here a year ago with the healthcare  
24 tour that we did, but Commissioner Storter had  
25 the comment about the percentage of people

1 registered to vote here, but their addresses in  
2 another location.

3 I don't mind admitting it, I did not know  
4 that. I was not aware of that, and that is  
5 something that we need to take into  
6 consideration to make sure that when did we do  
7 the reapportionment that we take that into  
8 consideration.

9 So I think the fact that we are here, I  
10 think the most important thing Legislators can  
11 do is listen, and I think there are things that  
12 we have learned today that are very valuable.

13 With regard to the timeline, it is our  
14 goal to make sure that this process is done in  
15 an orderly manner. There is no intent to wait  
16 until the last minute to create confusion, but  
17 I will say this.

18 The legislative process has rules that are  
19 designed to protect the majority and the  
20 minority parties, because those parties change  
21 from time to time, and members have rights to,  
22 there are members that aren't on the  
23 Reapportionment Committee that are going to be  
24 hearing this for the first time in September  
25 when we have our first hearing in the Senate

1           and I think the House has a hearing scheduled  
2           also for September or October.

3           So members have a right to look at the  
4           maps, to file amendments, to say we don't like  
5           the way this is done, we don't think this is  
6           best for our community, and when the  
7           Legislature convenes in regular session in  
8           January, the League has talked about passing it  
9           out the first week.

10          Well, it is up to the presiding officers  
11          to set the schedule, but if you are a House  
12          member or a Senator that has not spent the last  
13          several months talking to voters and getting  
14          this information, don't those House members and  
15          Senators have a right to put their proposals  
16          out, to debate them, to argue their points of  
17          view.

18          So I think that we will do everything we  
19          can to conclude the process in an orderly way,  
20          but there are certain procedures that are set  
21          up not to delay, but to protect all of us and  
22          make sure there is meaningful input.

23          And I know all of you know this, but just  
24          a quick reminder, that we are only one part of  
25          the process. Once this is approved by the

1           Legislature, the Attorney General has a period  
2           of time to review, and then the maps go to the  
3           Florida Supreme Court, and then into the  
4           Federal system to have the Attorney General's  
5           Office look at the maps, especially for those  
6           counties that are a part of previous court  
7           orders.

8                     So there are a number of participants in  
9           the process, but it is our intent to have this  
10          done in plenty of time so that there is a  
11          seamless transition into our electoral  
12          process.

13                    And then I just want to mention one other  
14          thing just as maybe a point of interest to  
15          those of you who took the time to come this  
16          morning. We really appreciate it. There has  
17          been some talk and discussion, I think Senator  
18          Gaetz initially brought it up, and I know  
19          Chairman Weatherford indicated that he was  
20          going to consider it, that maybe for the next  
21          time we do this in ten years, that perhaps we  
22          want to amend our Constitution or give you, the  
23          voters, the opportunity to potentially amend  
24          our Constitution to, if we did it this cycle,  
25          to do this in 2011, so it is completely done by

1 the end of 2011 so that we are not quote,  
2 unquote, cutting it so close, but you have our  
3 assurances that we are going to do everything  
4 we can within the rules.

5 We can't vote on the plan until 2012.  
6 That is in our Constitution, but maybe we want  
7 to give the voters an opportunity to say, how  
8 about we do it a little earlier than our  
9 current rules provide. So that is one of the  
10 things that, that we are going to look at and  
11 possibly consider for the future.

12 Again, I want to thank everyone for your  
13 time, for your interest, I have taken three  
14 pages of notes. I have a file that I keep all  
15 of my notes, from Lehigh Acres last night, from  
16 being in Naples, as we have gone all over the  
17 state, to Key West, to Miami.

18 Every community is different, and just to  
19 show you the kind of issues that have to be  
20 worked out, we have heard in communities where  
21 there is a line down the middle, for instance,  
22 let's say Okeechobee, because that is in my  
23 Senate District.

24 Okeechobee, half of Okeechobee I represent  
25 and half is J. D. Alexander. Well, there are

1           some folks who say, that is pretty good,  
2           because J. D. Alexander is the Chairman of the  
3           Appropriations Committee, frequently ranked as  
4           the number one or number two, at least in the  
5           top three ranked Senators in the State of  
6           Florida, so that is good, and then we have, you  
7           know, a rookie coming along trying to carry his  
8           part of the load, too.

9                        So it is actually good for us to have two  
10           people, but then we heard today from some  
11           citizens that they would rather be represented  
12           by one person.

13                       They feel like it is better to have focus  
14           rather than numbers. It is not that one side  
15           is right or wrong. They were just differing  
16           opinions of people with Good Will.

17                       So those are the things we are going to  
18           work through and I noticed that there seemed to  
19           be some strong opinions particularly in the  
20           State Senate District that being tied into a  
21           District that goes all the way to South  
22           Florida, that doesn't appear that the majority  
23           of the people here today don't want that.

24                       So that carries a lot of weight with me  
25           when we look at the maps, because that is what

1 we are go -- those are the factors that, that  
2 we are going to use.

3 So we really, really appreciate the time  
4 that you took to be here today. Any other  
5 House or Senate members?

6 I think Representative Grimsley should put  
7 on a workshop for all of us, because I have  
8 been to quite a few of these hearings and she  
9 has gotten more shout outs and more compliments  
10 than anybody.

11 So we are all doing the best we can, but  
12 we can learn from you. So we will applaud your  
13 service to this community and we appreciate  
14 everything that you do and even those of us who  
15 live closer to the east coast of Florida, where  
16 I live in Stuart, believe me, we know about  
17 this part of Florida.

18 A lot of my constituents don't. They  
19 think that Florida is just Orlando, theme  
20 parks, gated communities and golf courses. I  
21 actually know that this is Florida. This is  
22 the original Florida, and that meat does not  
23 show up at Publix wrapped in saran wrap, that  
24 someone actually has to have cattle and grow  
25 food for us to eat, and we appreciate this part

1 of Florida.

2 We care about this part of Florida. We  
3 think it is just as important as every other  
4 part of Florida and that is one of the reasons  
5 we chose to come to Clewiston.

6 So with that, Representative Baxley moves  
7 we rise.

8 (Whereupon, the proceedings were  
9 concluded.)

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C E R T I F I C A T E

STATE OF FLORIDA )

COUNTY OF LEON )

I hereby certify that the foregoing transcript is of a tape-recording taken down by the undersigned, and the contents thereof were reduced to typewriting under my direction;

That the foregoing pages 2 through 76 represent a true, correct, and complete transcript of the tape-recording;

And I further certify that I am not of kin or counsel to the parties in the case; am not in the regular employ of counsel for any of said parties; nor am I in anywise interested in the result of said case.

Dated this 5th day of December, 2011.

\_\_\_\_\_

CLARA C. ROTRUCK

Notary Public

State of Florida at Large

Commission Expires:

November 13, 2014