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The Buzz

From the staff of the St. Petersburg Times

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JANUARY 03, 2011

Sen. Mike Fasano withdraws from redistricting committee

State Sen. **Mike Fasano**, a Republican from New Port Richey, today submitted his resignation from the Senate redistricting committee to Senate President **Mike Haridopolos**. Fasano, who said he plans to file ethics reform legislation this session, said he didn't feel comfortable serving on the committee because he may run in 2012 for an office that might be redrawn in the process. Fasano said he doesn't know what office he will run for and even for sure whether he will. Fasano, though, who is term-limited out of his current post in 2012, said he still wants to serve the people of Pasco County and the Tampa Bay area. Fasano said it could be a local office, a state House seat, or a Congressional seat. "I just don't want any perception that I'm on the committee of reapportionment or redistricting for the purpose of drawing a district that would benefit me," Fasano said. "Perception is everything." See the letter below.

*

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Weatherford to chair redistricting committee | Community News Publication, The Laker

<http://cnewspubs.com/?p=4931>

March 7, 2011

Tuesday, January 4th, 2011

By Kyle LoJacono

State Rep. Will Weatherford (R-Wesley Chapel) has been named the redistricting committee chairman. The committee is responsible for redrawing the boundaries for the state's legislative and congressional districts.



Will Weatherford

Weatherford was named to the position by House Speaker-Designate Dean Cannon (R-Winter Park).

"It's a tremendous honor," said Weatherford, who just won re-election for House District 61. "I'm happy Speaker-Designate Cannon put his faith in me. It's a long process that is very complicated, but I'm up for it."

Weatherford said he understands how important redistricting is to all of Florida's elections and will make the process something its citizens can be proud of. Florida voters this year approved a pair of constitutional

amendments that require districts to be drawn without favoring any particular candidate or party.

"My goal is to have the most open and transparent redistricting process ever," Weatherford said.

"We are looking for a lot of our citizens' input while obviously following the law and constitution."

The redistricting job recently got a little more complicated with the release of U.S. Census numbers that pushed Florida's U.S. House seats to 27, the same number as New York. The Sunshine State now has 29 electoral votes.

Weatherford, who will become the next Speaker-Designate at a ceremony in March, is in the process of creating a website where people can get information on the redistricting, give opinions and even create their own district maps.

"It's going to be very interactive," Weatherford said. "We may get some very interesting looking maps by the end, but it will allow us to really see what the people are looking for and where their concerns are."

District 61 currently covers Land O' Lakes, Odessa, Wesley Chapel, Zephyrhills, Dade City, San Antonio and the rest of east Pasco County along with portions of northern Hillsborough County. Every 10 years after the federal census, the Florida Legislature redraws the state's legislative and congressional districts. This redistricting will happen during the 2012 session after two years of hearing public testimony about the district lines.

"In addition to passing the budget, redistricting is the only other constitutional mandate the members of the Legislature must pass," Cannon said. "Representative Weatherford's hard work and proven leadership abilities make him a perfect fit for this important, but very challenging assignment."

Along with redistricting, one of Weatherford's main focuses in the future is to create an environment for jobs to come to Florida.

"We're doing a lot of prep work for the coming months," Weatherford said. "Creating jobs is going to be the key to making Florida more prosperous and we'll be doing everything we can to do that."

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Will Weatherford's redistricting nightmare

<http://suncoastpasco.tbo.com/content/2011/jan/05/PNVIEWO1-will-w-weatherfords-redistricting-nightmare/>

March 7, 2011

BY TOM JACKSON

PASCO TRIBUNE COLUMNIST

Published: January 5, 2011

State Rep. Will Weatherford, chairman of the state House of Representatives committee overseeing the drawing of U.S. House and legislative district lines, vows to pursue a redistricting process that is without precedent in its clarity, transparency, openness and accessibility.

(This is also what the Pasco County School Board members promise whenever they have to recast attendance 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, R-Wesley Chapel, 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 nonpolitically."

The problem lies within the two Fair Districts constitutional amendments voters approved in November. While allowing for federal mandates and court precedent, legislators also are required under the amendments 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."

That last bit 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.

Rod Smith plots comeback for Florida Democrats

<http://jacksonville.com/opinion/blog/403455/abel-harding/2011-01-06/rod-smith-plots-comeback-florida-democrats>

March 7, 2011

In print: January 7, 2011

He doesn't exactly fancy himself a savior, but former state Sen. Rod Smith has ambitious goals for Florida's beleaguered Democratic Party.

Smith, poised to take over as party chair this weekend, said he's set goals of re-electing Sen. Bill Nelson, helping President Barack Obama carry Florida and gaining two Florida state Senate seats.

If he achieves that third goal, it will be largely due to the issue he anticipates will occupy much of his time — fighting for implementation of Amendments 5 and 6, the fair districts measures passed by voters in November.

Legal challenges are unavoidable, and Smith said he expects the party to play a key role.

"We will intervene to defend any attacks on Fair Districts," he said in an interview. "The real issue is whether we have districts that look like octopi just so one incumbent is re-elected or one particular party has an advantage."

Smith said competitive districts will benefit both parties, but by promising to wade into legal battles the party places itself at odds with Northeast Florida's most prominent Democrat, U.S. Rep. Corrine Brown. Brown, a vociferous opponent of Amendment 6, has already filed a lawsuit challenging its constitutionality, something Smith said wouldn't weaken his resolve. He pointed to a South Florida Republican, newly-elected Rep. Allen West, an African-American, as proof that districts don't need to be dominated by minorities to allow a minority candidate to win.

"People don't want incumbents protected," Smith said.

More balanced districts will make it easier for the party to recruit top-tier candidates.

"We could recruit Tim Tebow in every district" and still not win because of stacked districts, Smith said.

He pointed to Deborah Gianoulis, the former news anchor who challenged state Sen. John Thrasher, as the type of candidate he wanted to field more of in the future.

The former prosecutor who gained fame through his successful prosecution of serial killer Danny Rolling, said his success in creating a more competitive political environment in the state will be how he ultimately judges himself.

"If my legacy is nothing more than success in re-districting," he said, "I'd be happy with that."

Politics First

- **Sean Hall** landed a coveted endorsement in his bid for the At-Large Group 5 Jacksonville City Council seat. Jaguars legend **Tony Boselli** was a featured guest at Hall's Springfield gathering Thursday night.

- Speaking of Boselli, he was among the locals spotted at Scott's Inaugural Ball. Also in the crowd, Duval County GOP Chair **Lenny Curry**, Clay County GOP Chair **Leslie Dougher**, Jacksonville Developer **Toney Sleiman**, Tea Party executive director **Billie Tucker** and GOP activists from around the region.

- One big draw was a reception honoring Lt. Gov. **Jennifer Carroll**, GOP Chairman **John Thrasher**, Scott campaign manager **Susie Wiles** and Peyton chief of staff **Adam Hollingsworth**

at the prestigious Governor's Club. The event, hosted by **Mike Hightower** and former Ambassador **John Rood**, drew a slew of notables, including Jacksonville Mayor **John Peyton** and state Rep. **Daniel Davis**. Despite differences in the GOP primary, "Team North Florida always pulls together," Hightower said.

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U.S. Census and Fair Districts Act Could Change Dunedin's Representation

<http://dunedin.patch.com/articles/us-census-and-fair-districts-act-could-change-dunedins-representation>

January 6, 2011

You fulfilled your civic duty by filing with the [U.S. Census Bureau](#) back in the spring. Now that the findings have been released, what does it all mean?

The short answer: [The 2010 U.S. Census data](#), released on Dec. 21, revealed that Florida's population increased by 17.6 percent since the last Census. The increase means that Florida gains two congressional seats in the U.S. House of Representatives to ensure its citizens are properly represented.

"I'm very pleased to hear that we will be getting two new congressional seats," said state [Sen. Mike Fasano](#) (R-New Port Richey), whose district encompasses parts of Pinellas, Pasco, Citrus and Hernando counties.

Now, the longer answer: The data means that Florida's legislative and congressional districts must be redrawn, a lengthy and potentially contentious process.

In November, Floridians voted to amend the state constitution's rules on redistricting. The new rules, proposed by a group called [Fair Districts Florida](#), will change the game.

The changes to the state constitution require that districts neither favor nor disfavor an incumbent or political party. The districts must not disenfranchise minorities or people who don't speak English. They must also be compact, contiguous and as equal in population as possible.

The proposed amendments drew heavy opposition from Republican lawmakers and support from many Democrats.

The new rules will lessen district gerrymandering, but they are almost impossible to follow to the letter, said Fasano, who opposed the amendments. The state is sure to see legal action from residents claiming lawmakers didn't redistrict right, he said.

"I think the amendment is set up in such a way that it will automatically trigger lawsuits," he said.

State [Sen. Dennis Jones](#) (R-Seminole), whose district includes Dunedin, could not be reached for comment at the writing of this story.

Pinellas County's population has dipped slightly since the 2000 Census, meaning it could lose representation, Fasano said. The populations of Hernando and Pasco Counties, however, grew, and they could potentially gain representation, he said.

Figures from the [2000 Census](#) indicate that Dunedin's population was 35,691. Although the official state, county and local counts needed for redistricting will not be released until February, an American Community Survey estimates that, from 2005 to 2009, Dunedin's population bucked county trends; it rose to 36,215.

The U.S. Census Bureau scheduled the release of states' demographic profiles in May. Florida's redistricting won't happen until 2012.

Majority Whip in the state House of Representatives [Jim Frishe](#) (R-St. Petersburg) said Pinellas County could lose at least one state House seat because of its population drop.

Frishe, whose district includes parts of Southern and Middle Pinellas County up to the Dunedin border, said he also fears the Fair Districts changes will open the state up to lawsuits.

The Legislature is making its redistricting computer program available to the press and public to provide transparency, he said.

"This is going to be a very open process, and anybody who has a computer or can use a library computer can participate," he said.

On Politics: Rick Scott to be sworn in as Florida's 45th governor

[http://jacksonville.com/node/451523?](http://jacksonville.com/node/451523?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+JacksonvillecomNews+%28Jacksonville+Local+News+%E2%80%93+Jacksonville.com+and+The+Florida+Times-Union%29)

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March 7, 2011

When William Dunn Moseley, a former North Carolina state senator, was sworn in as Florida's first elected governor in 1845, there was no nip in the air. It was June, after all.

Moseley had upset a more widely known opponent, former territorial governor Richard Keith Call, in Florida's first statewide race. He faced the heady task of leading the nation's newest, and among its least populous, states.

Nearly 166 years later, Richard Lynn Scott will take the stage to be sworn in as the state's 45th governor. He'll stand in front of the Old Capitol Building christened when Moseley took the oath. It will likely be cold, at least by Tallahassee standards, and he'll face his own set of challenges, including a budget shortfall estimated in the billions.

But before the dignified pomp and circumstance that marks the swearing-in of a governor, Scott celebrated Florida's veterans at a concert that rocked the Leon County Civic Center.

His lieutenant governor-elect, Jennifer Carroll, a 20-year Navy veteran, made note of Scott's own military service when she took the stage.

"Rick served in the Navy as well, but he doesn't outrank me," Carroll said. "At least until tomorrow."

Scott is the first military veteran to serve as the state's chief executive since the late Lawton Chiles, a veteran of the Korean War.

That background should serve him well in a state where the economy is reliant on military spending and military retirees.

"He's spent time with wounded warriors nearly every time he's visited Jacksonville," state Sen. John Thrasher said at the event.

Taking the stage after country stars Aaron Tippin and John Michael Montgomery, Scott praised the state's veterans and poked a bit of fun at one of them.

"Jennifer will always have better shoes than I do," he said, gesturing at the turquoise pumps worn by the retired lieutenant commander.

"And more hair," Carroll quickly retorted.

Insider

What's next for **Charlie Crist**? That's the question many political observers are asking. Crist may not be leaving office with sky-high approval ratings, but 50 percent of Florida voters still have favorable opinions of him, according to a new poll by Public Policy Polling. If Crist decides to pursue office again - and there's speculation that he might have his eyes on the congressional seat held by Rep. C.W. "Bill" Young - it will likely be as an independent or Democrat. Republicans aren't fond of their once-rising star, the poll showed. ...

More than 100 volunteers turned out to erect signs for the campaign of Jacksonville mayoral candidate **Audrey Moran** over the New Year's weekend. Many of the signs - along with a slew of new ones from rival **Rick Mullaney** - are visible as you head west on Beach Boulevard after

passing over the Mathews Bridge. ... Don't expect the immigration debate to fade away anytime soon in Florida. Senate President **Mike Haridopolos** has scheduled a series of meetings to study the issues before any debate on proposals takes place in the next legislative session. The meetings will be chaired by Sen. **Anitere Flores**, a Miami Republican.

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THE CAPITAL, TALLAHASSEE, Jan. 6, 2011 --

Days after a fourth straight inauguration of a [Republican governor](#) - and a new, all-GOP Cabinet to go with him - Florida Democrats are retreating to central Florida this weekend to plan a path back to power in Tallahassee.

In Orlando Saturday afternoon, the party will hold an election that is expected to turn its leadership over to former state Sen. Rod Smith - he is the only candidate. But Smith is not waiting until then to make like new Gov. Rick Scott and get to work.

"I'm not on the payroll yet, but I'm sitting in the office working," Smith said Thursday, acknowledging his status as de-facto leader of a party in the wilderness.

Smith, a former Gainesville prosecutor, was on the losing end of the recent election as the Democrat's candidate for lieutenant governor. Smith was also a [candidate for governor](#) in 2006 but bowed out in the primary.

But after Saturday, he will be chairman, replacing outgoing party chairwoman Karen Thurman.

His chief announced opposition, Tallahassee City Commissioner Andrew Gillum, did the math after Smith locked up enough support from the party's base to be elected and ended his nascent bid.

Friday night, Democrats will honor Thurman's tenure, which saw the party's [presidential nominee](#) win the state for the first time since 1996, but also saw a whole slate of state candidates decimated. The next day, they will turn the reins over to Smith.

Smith told the News Service of Florida he already has his eyes turned toward what is likely to be the biggest battle his party faces with the Republican-led Legislature in the next two years: reapportionment. Smith said he will use the full weight of his new post to defend the so-called "FairDistricts" amendments - 5 and 6 on last year's ballots - which are already headed for the courts.

Those measures were widely seen as the only glimmer of hope for Democrats in an election that saw them lose the closest governor's race in state history, all three seats on the Florida Cabinet and enough seats in the Legislature to give the Republicans supermajorities in both chambers. They also lost several seats in the state's congressional delegation.

"We have an absolute obligation to implement FairDistricts," which he points out were approved by supermajorities of [voters](#). "We'll immediately defend 5 and 6 from lawsuits. I intend to put every energy into seeing (them implemented)."

Democrats are clearly counting on their new chair to do exactly that. Former state Sen. Dave Aronberg said this week that Smith was the man for the job in part because of his legal background.

"We're very fortunate that he was willing to take on this challenge and I think he's going to help the Democrats in redistricting," Aronberg said after Scott's inauguration. Smith, he said, is "an experienced lawyer (who) knows how to litigate with Amendments

5 and 6 to see that the seats are fairly drawn.”

However, Aronberg cautioned that winning the fight of reapportionment alone will not be enough to return Democrats to any semblance of power in Florida, where Republicans have ruled since the mid-1990’s.

“Beyond that, I think it’s better candidate recruitment and organization,” he said. “We did not have an effective get out the vote effort this last cycle and that’s got to change. We know where the problems are. Absentee voting and now early voting was a problem for us....You have to identify the problem before you can fix it and Rod Smith has correctly identified it and I think he’s the right guy to lead us back.”

With diminished numbers in the Legislature and not many viable statewide candidates in sight, Aronberg acknowledged Smith’s new job will be tough.

“When I looked on stage (at the inauguration), there was not a Democrat on the stage and that’s because the bench got wiped out in this last election,” he said.

For his part, Smith dismissed suggestions from critics that the new requirements preventing favoring incumbents or parties disenfranchise minority voters or that they may violate the Voting Rights Act. Those complaints have been led by U.S. Reps. Corrine Brown of Jacksonville, a member of the party Smith is poised to lead, and Republican Mario Diaz-Balart of Miami.

“Democrats passed the Voting Rights Act in 1965,” he said. “We reauthorized it in the 1970s and in 2006. There’s no question of our support for the Voting Rights Act.”

He also said recent political history showed that putting majorities of minority voters in districts isn’t the only way they could be elected.

If that’s true, Smith said, “how did Barack Obama carry Florida (in 2008) and Allen West just win a seat (in a district) less than 5 percent black?”

Speaking of Obama, Smith said that he would also get to work right away on making sure Obama could carry Florida again in his re-election bid in 2012, which some political observers have questioned after the Republican tsunami in the most recent elections here.

Smith is not one of them.

“Florida will be enormously involved in the next (presidential) election,” Smith said, and not just because Republicans are planning to nominate their candidate in Tampa.

Smith said the 2010 election doesn’t say anything about 2012. In off years, presidents are being compared by voters to history – how they stack up against other presidents throughout the years.

“In actual elections, they’re running against somebody on the other side who has their own record,” Smith said.

Smith said Obama may be helped by Scott’s promised more conservative administration and the Legislature, which has already clearly moved further to the political right under House Speaker Dean Cannon and Senate President Mike Haridopolos. Scott’s inaugural address this week contained “a certain narrowness” that was designed to “appeal to the base” of the Republican Party, Smith said.

“To the degree that the Republicans continue to move to right, they misread the Florida electorate, and I hope they continue do to that,” he said.

Bondi's office reviewing options in anti-Amendment 6 lawsuit

<http://floridaindependent.com/18718/pam-bondis-office-reviewing-options-in-anti-amendment-6-lawsuit>

January 7, 2011

Responding to a Florida Independent [report](#) about a motion filed by the ACLU of Florida to join the state in defending Amendment 6, the office of newly inaugurated Attorney General Pam Bondi says it is still reviewing its options in the case, and will make its intentions known when it files a response early next week.

The ACLU filed the motion to help defend Amendment 6 in the suit brought by Reps. Corrine Brown, D-Jacksonville, and Mario Diaz-Balart, R-Miami, because it says its “interests are not adequately represented by existing parties.”

The lawyer representing the ACLU in the matter, Randall C. Marshall, says that’s not a criticism of Florida’s new attorney general, just a reflection of the ACLU’s desire to ensure that Amendment 6 remains enshrined in the state Constitution.

Speaking with The Florida Independent, a spokesperson for Bondi said that the attorney general’s office is still weighing its options in the case, including whether it will support the ACLU’s intervention as co-defendants. Bondi must file a response to the lawsuit by next Tues., Jan. 11.

When asked whether Bondi’s opposition to Amendments 5 and 6 — the so-called [“Fair Districts”](#) amendments that limit the legislature’s ability to gerrymander districts — during her campaign would affect her decision-making in the case, her spokesperson said that Bondi would make her decision based on the legal issues at hand, not on any personal views of the amendments’ merit.

Florida House narrows proposed redistricting maps | narrows, proposed, redistricting

BILL KACZOR / The Associated Press

TALLAHASSEE — Subcommittees in the Republican-controlled House narrowed the number of redistricting maps the chamber is considering in separate and largely partisan votes Monday.

Most Democrats opposed the maps. Some called for public hearings around Florida before final roll calls are taken.

The panels approved three maps each for the House and Florida's congressional delegation as well as the Senate's single proposal for redistricting itself.

The House began with five maps for itself and seven for Congress. House and Senate redistricting leaders have agreed to not to draw maps for each other's chamber.

Lawmakers are beginning their annual session on Tuesday, two months earlier than usual so the maps can be passed and reviewed by the courts and federal government before the Aug. 14 primary election. Lawmakers also are considering a proposal to move the primary back a week.

The Senate Reapportionment Committee is scheduled to vote on its plans — one each for the Senate and Congress — on Wednesday and floor votes are expected next week. The full House Redistricting Committee is set to consider its maps on Jan. 20.

Only one member of the public, Democratic congressional candidate Jim Roach of Cape Coral, appeared before the Congressional Redistricting Subcommittee.

Roach said the congressional maps pack high percentages of Democrats into a handful of districts, which would give Republicans a better chance of winning more seats.

"I know you didn't plan it that way, but it's time to look at that again," Roach said. "We're going to be doing this for 10 years; we're going to be using these maps, stuck with these maps. They're politically not fair."

Republicans say they didn't consider the political consequences due to a pair of new state constitutional amendments that prohibit lawmakers from gerrymandering in favor of incumbents or political parties.

The GOP holds 19 of Florida's current 25 congressional districts. The state will add two more seats this year due to population growth.

Lawmakers also will be redistricting the 120-seat House and 40-seat Senate. Republicans, as well, hold overwhelming majorities in both although Democrats still hold an edge in voter registration statewide.

The Legislature held 26 public hearings around the state before drafting the maps. Neither chamber plans more hearings outside Tallahassee, but the Senate Reapportionment Committee did seek public comment on its maps by way of telephone, email and video recordings before voting to introduce its plans — one each for the Senate and congressional delegation — last month.

"I don't believe you can have too much public participation," said Rep. Dwayne Taylor, D-Daytona Beach. "We're going to do our citizens a disservice."

"That sounds like a fair enough idea, but in terms of the time frame it's probably impractical," responded Rep. Scott Plakon, R-Longwood.

The legislative maps automatically go to the Florida Supreme Court and Gov. Rick Scott has veto power over the congressional plan. All three maps are subject to Justice Department review to make sure they comply with the federal Voting Rights Act because of past racial discrimination in five Florida counties.

Lawsuits challenging the maps also are likely as they are the first to be drawn under the Fair Districts amendments. Besides barring lines from being drawn to benefit incumbents or political parties, the amendments protect minority representation and require districts to follow city and county lines when possible.

The proposals in both chambers generally retain existing black and Hispanic-access and majority districts and keep more cities and counties intact than the existing maps.

The congressional maps also include a central Florida district with a Hispanic voting age population of 38 percent to 40 percent that could open the door for a fourth Hispanic U.S. House member from Florida. Most central Florida Hispanics, though, are Democratic leaning Puerto Ricans. Florida's three existing Hispanic U.S. representatives are Cuban-American Republicans. Florida also would retain its existing three black-access and majority congressional districts.

The public will have a chance to review the maps and other details on the Legislature's website — <http://www.leg.state.fl.us>. — before final votes are taken, said Rep. John Legg, a Port Richey Republican who chairs the congressional panel.

Rep. Betty Reed, D-Tampa, said that's not good enough because many people don't have Internet access or computers. Legg said he'd talk to House Speaker Dean Cannon, R-Winter Park, about finding other ways to make the plans available to the public.

Capital Soup » Blog Archive » Florida House to Hold Pre-Session Information Session

<http://capitalsoup.com/2011/01/10/florida-house-to-hold-pre-session-information-session/>

March 7, 2011

Redistricting Briefing and Exclusive Preview of MyDistrictBuilder Software

Tallahassee—The Florida House of Representatives will host a pre-session information session for members of the media on January 20, 2011, from 9:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. Members of the media will have access to the top substantive experts among the senior members of the House staff during various information sessions and will have the opportunity to ask questions related to complicated issues of public policy likely to come before the Florida House during the upcoming 2011 Legislative Session. Additionally, senior staff from the House Redistricting Committee will present an in-depth timeline of Florida's redistricting process as well as an exclusive preview of the *MyDistrictBuilder* software.

Pre-Session Information Session

Date: Thursday, January 20, 2011

Time: 9:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Location: The Capitol, Room 333

Draft Agenda

9:00 a.m. – 9:45 a.m.: Redistricting Presentation and Preview of *MyDistrictBuilder Software*

9:45 a.m. – 10:15 a.m.: Constitutional Amendment and Ballot Reform

10:15 a.m. – 10:45 a.m.: Florida Retirement System

10:45 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.: Break

11:00 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.: 2011-2012 Budget

11:30 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.: Education

12:00 p.m. – 12:30 p.m.: Medicaid

Members of the media wishing to attend the information session should contact the House Office of Public Information at (850) 921-7747 or via publicinfo@myfloridahouse.gov.

Members of the media wishing to fully participate in the exclusive preview of the *MyDistrictBuilder* software are encouraged to bring their laptops to the event. Additionally, it is recommended that you visit MyDistrictBuilder, at <http://floridaredistricting.cloudapp.net/MyDistrictBuilder.aspx>, prior to the event. When you log onto *MyDistrictBuilder*, you may be prompted to download the most recent version of [Microsoft Silverlight](#). Additionally, you will be asked to dedicate storage space in the isolated storage of your computer.

*****PLEASE NOTE:** The redistricting presentation and preview of *MyDistrictBuilder* as well as other information sessions will be presented by House staff, not members of the Florida House. As such, these sessions are intended as **information sessions only** with the goal of providing background information for members of the media. There will be a brief question and answer session following each topic. House staff will not comment on specific pending or potential legislation, but will be available to answer background questions on various issues. ***

BACKGROUND: Redistricting Process and *MyDistrictBuilder* Software Development

In late 2009, at the direction of then-Speaker-Designate Dean Cannon, House staff began planning to implement a web-based district builder, via cloud server technology.

In April 2010, the House announced the launch of www.MyFloridaCensus.gov, a precursor to *MyDistrictBuilder* designed to promote the 2010 census. Estimates 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.

During the summer and fall of 2011 the Florida House will conduct meetings around the state to take public testimony regarding redistricting. Members of the public will be able to submit partial or complete redistricting plans to the House Redistricting Committee via *MyDistrictBuilder*. Open public testing of the “beta” version of *MyDistrictBuilder* will begin in early March.

If you would like to follow the redistricting process and the development of *MyDistrictBuilder*, you are welcome to follow us at either [Facebook](#) (MyDistrictBuilder) or [Twitter](#) (@MyDistrictBuilder), or send a request to be included on the *MyDistrictBuilder* e-mail list via mydistrictbuilder@myfloridahouse.gov.

###

Contact: Katie Betta

(850) 488-1450

Schaeffer to address Democratic Club of the Islands - CaptivaSanibel.com

<http://sanibel-captiva-islander.com/page/content.detail/id/510018/Schaeffer-to-address-Democratic-Club-of-the-Islands.html?nav=5051>

March 7, 2011

One of the Democratic Club of the Islands' own, Bob Schaeffer, will be the featured speaker at its 7 p.m. membership meeting on Thursday, Jan. 20 being held at the Sanibel Public Library, 770 Dunlop Road.

Schaeffer, a Sanibel resident, annually addresses the Club just prior to elections to illuminate to its members in his always informed, insightful and entertaining way of the perennially-complex ballot issues. Schaeffer attended M.I.T. as both an undergraduate and graduate student and was the Editorial Writer at NBC-TV in Boston and the host of a regional NPR political talk show.

Now a strategic planning and communications consultant for national non-profit organizations, foundations, grassroots activist groups and socially responsible businesses, Bob is a tireless worker in national, statewide and local campaigns for candidates and ballot questions, and a frequent leader of workshops on political campaign management, media relations, public advocacy across Florida and in virtually every other State in the Union.

Over the years, Bob have given generously of his time and talents as a board member of numerous political organizations including the Democratic Club of the Islands, ProgressFlorida and many others.

During the meeting, Schaeffer will discuss the 2010 general election results and address its implications and the impact for future campaigns especially in light of Florida's Redistricting reforms and its new Congressional Districts.

Members are encouraged to attend, as are other islanders, whether full-time or most-of-the-time residents or snowbirds, interested in getting active in the Democratic Party activities. The Democratic Club of the Islands welcome persons of all races, color, religion, sex, age, disability, sexual orientation, marital status and national origin.

The Democratic Club of the Islands is an authorized organization of the Lee County Democratic Executive Committee, organized to stimulate interest in political and governmental affairs, to educate the electorate about issues, to further the ideals and principles of the Democratic Party, to support Democratic Party nominees in national, state and local campaigns and to foster good fellowship among Democrats on Sanibel and Captiva Islands

For more information, contact Ken LaMotte at 472-3271 or send an e-mail to demclubislands@gmail.com.

Florida attorney general wants Corrine Brown's lawsuit tossed out

http://jacksonville.com/news/florida/2011-01-14/story/florida-attorney-general-wants-corrine-brown-s-law-suit-tossed-out?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+Jacksonville.comNews+%28Jacksonville+Local+News+E2%80%93+Jacksonville.com+and+The+Florida+Times-Union%29

March 7, 2011

The News Service of Florida

TALLAHASSEE — Attorney General Pam Bondi has asked a federal court to dismiss a case filed by Jacksonville's U.S. Rep. Corrine Brown that attempts to strike down a recently passed amendment to the Florida Constitution changing the way congressional districts are drawn.

Bondi, a Republican, filed the motion in the federal Southern District Court this week, arguing that the court does not have jurisdiction over the case filed by Brown, a Democrat, and Miami Republican U.S. Rep. Mario Diaz-Balart. Amendment 6 prevents lawmakers from drawing districts that favor themselves or political parties and was passed last fall by Florida voters.

The new amendment would require congressional districts — set to be redrawn in time for the 2012 elections — to basically take the gerrymandering out of the process, requiring lawmakers to draw more regular, compact districts that try to follow traditional map boundaries, rather than drawing odd-shaped districts meant to help incumbents or the party drawing them.

A separate constitutional amendment voters also approved, Amendment 5, outlines the same requirements for state legislative districts.

Brown and Diaz-Balart filed the suit to scuttle Amendment 6, which passed with 63 percent of the vote, the day after Election Day, arguing that it violated federal election law guaranteeing equal access for minority candidates. Some districts have essentially been gerrymandered to guarantee the election of a minority.

Bondi, in her filing, said that the Southern District Court should dismiss the case because Brown and Diaz-Balart didn't file it in the right court. The court that covers Washington, D.C., hears cases dealing with congressional districts, she said.

A spokeswoman for Bondi could not be reached for comment on whether the new attorney general will continue to defend the new constitutional requirement, which many members of her political party tried to defeat over the past year, if it is moved to the court she says should hear it.

Fla. AG wants congressional redistricting suit tossed

<http://www.legalnewsline.com/news/230675-fla.-ag-wants-congressional-redistricting-suit-tossed>

March 7, 2011

Fla. AG wants congressional redistricting suit tossed

BY JESSICA M. KARMASEK

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (Legal Newsline) - Florida Attorney General Pam Bondi filed a motion on Tuesday to dismiss a lawsuit by two of the state's U.S. Representatives that seeks to strike down an amendment on congressional redistricting.

U.S. Reps. Corrine Brown and Mario Diaz-Balart filed the lawsuit in U.S. District Court in the Southern District of Florida in November -- just one day after the general election.

In September 2007, the Florida Department of State's Division of Elections approved an initiative petition prepared by FairDistrictsFlorida.org for circulation that establishes new criteria for congressional redistricting.

The Congressional Petition obtained the necessary number of signatures and was certified for placement on the November 2010 general election ballot as Amendment 6.

The amendment was approved by more than 60 percent of the voters casting ballots on the question.

Upon its receipt of more than 60 percent of the votes cast, Amendment 6 became Article III, section 20 of the Florida Constitution, which provides:

- No apportionment plan or individual district shall be drawn with the intent to favor or disfavor a political party or an incumbent; and districts shall not be drawn with the intent or result of denying or abridging the equal opportunity of racial or language minorities to participate in the political process or to diminish their ability to elect representatives of their choice; and districts shall consist of contiguous territory;

- Unless compliance with the standards in this subsection conflicts with the standards in subsection 1 or with federal law, districts shall be as nearly equal in population as is practicable; districts shall be compact; and districts shall, where feasible, utilize existing political and geographical boundaries; and

- The order in which the standards within sub-sections 1 and 2 of this section are set forth shall not be read to establish any priority of one standard over the other within that subsection.

In their eight-page complaint, Brown and Diaz-Balart say the constitutional amendment creates an "irreconcilable contradiction."

The representatives wrote that the amendment "represents an impermissible effort by Florida to limit the discretion directly delegated by the United States Constitution to the Florida Legislature."

The suit asks that the court declare the amendment unconstitutional.

Bondi, in her two-page motion, argues that the court lacks subject matter jurisdiction over the plaintiffs claim under Article I of the U.S. Constitution, based on the state's 11th Amendment immunity.

She also argues that the court lacks subject matter jurisdiction over the plaintiffs' claim under the Voting Rights Act because the District Court for the District of Columbia has exclusive jurisdiction over substantive claims under the act.

From Legal Newsline: Reach Jessica Karmasek by e-mail at jessica@legalnewsline.com.

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Florida House to Hold Pre-Session Information Session Redistricting Briefing and Exclusive Preview of MyDistrictBuilder Software

Posted by [nsc screenings north carolina](#) on Jan 14th, 2011 and filed under [News](#). You can follow any responses to this entry through the [RSS 2.0](#). You can leave a response or trackback to this entry

Capital Soup — Fri Jan 14 19:00:04 UTC 2011 Tallahassee – The Florida House of Representatives will host a pre-session information session for members of the media on January 20, 2011, from 9:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m. Members of the media will have access to the top substantive experts among the seni... about: Constitutional Amendment Florida House florida house of representatives Florida House of Representatives Florida Retirement Government Governor House Office of Public Information Microsoft Silverlight MyDistrictBuilder [Software](#) redistricting Redistricting Technology_ Internet at: Florida House of Representatives State of Florida

Read the original:
[Florida House to Hold Pre-Session Information Session Redistricting Briefing and Exclusive Preview of MyDistrictBuilder Software](#)

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Florida House to Hold Pre-Session Information Session

Leave a Review

Capital Soup — Mon Jan 10 14:27:54 UTC 2011 Redistricting Briefing and Exclusive Preview of MyDistrictBuilder Software Tallahassee—The Florida [House](#) of Representatives will host a pre-session information session for members of the media on January 20, 2011, from 9:00 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.

Here is the original post:

[Florida House to Hold Pre-Session Information Session](#)

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January 14, 2011

By: Jay Brady | Government Editor

January 14, 2011

Pamela Goodman and the League of Women Voters pushed for the redistricting amendments.

The admonition to be careful what one hopes for may apply doubly so for Florida backers of two redistricting amendments that passed — primarily Democrats.

Democrats blame their losing streak in recent years to gerrymandering, pointing out that representation by Republican legislators and members of the U.S. House is disproportionate to the number of registered Democrats and Republicans in the state.

“Districts are very politically unbalanced,” says Pamela Goodman, a director of the League of Women Voters of Florida. She debated the issue with state Senate President Pro-tempore Mike Bennett, R-Bradenton, at a recent Sarasota Tiger Bay Club luncheon.



It’s still a hot issue because the amendment dealing with congressional seats is being challenged in court by African-American U.S. Rep. Corinne Brown, D-Jacksonville, and others.

Goodman notes that there are 4.6 million registered Democrats in Florida compared to 4 million Republicans and 2.2 million registered as independents or from other minor parties.

Goodman and other supporters of state constitutional amendments 5 and 6 (one deals with legislative districts and the other with congressional districts) claim the imbalance is totally due to partisan gerrymandering, that is the intentional drawing of districts by legislators to best ensure re-election of those in power drawing the district boundaries.

But here’s the rub: They probably have it flat out wrong, according to the only definitive detailed academic study of Florida redistricting published about a month before the November election.

Goodman, who says she’s aware of the study, admits she’s only “briefly” looked at it, but hadn’t read it. Miami attorney Ellen Freidin, the leader of FairDistrictsFlorida (the group that put the amendments on the ballot), gave the same response to the Business Review when asked about the study prior to the election. (See “Gag order on redistricting study?,” Nov. 2, 2010 Business Review.)

In Goodman’s world, based on voter registration, Democrats should have about 43% of the 40 state Senate seats, 120 House seats and the 25 congressional seats. That means she believes Democrats should have five more Senate seats, 12 more state House seats, and five more U.S. House seats.

As it is, Republicans now hold 28 state Senate seats, 81 state House seats and 19 congressional seats. Those numbers give Republicans veto-proof majorities in both chambers of the Legislature, something the GOP would easily lose in Goodman’s new world order.

But what Goodman, the League of Women Voters and supporters of FairDistrictsFlorida, pretend they don’t know or choose to ignore, is that Florida’s Democratic registered voters are largely concentrated in the larger urban

areas, particularly Tampa Bay and Miami-Dade. And because of that concentration, Democrats win by large margins in those areas, but mostly lose in suburban and rural areas where Republicans live in greater relative numbers.

Making redistricting more compact, as required by the two amendments, can only be to the detriment of Democrats and minorities.

Those are major findings of the study co-authored by professors from the University of Michigan and Stanford University, who subtitled the work, "Why Compact, Contiguous Districts are Bad for Democrats."

They examined expected election results based on about 1,000 different computer-generated ways of drawing district boundaries consistent with federal and state legal requirements. They concluded that no matter how districts were drawn that Republicans could fully expect to win a disproportionate number of seats compared to GOP voter registration numbers.

The authors even go as far to suggest that the only way Democrats could increase representation would be to draw pie-shaped districts emanating out from these big urban areas.

Sounds exactly like gerrymandering.

One other pretty big detail Goodman and those of like mind tend to ignore: Republicans actually vote in larger numbers than Democrats. Democrats cast only 35.2% of all votes cast statewide in the November general election despite their registration advantage. Republicans cast 59.5% of the votes though only accounting for 36% of the state's registered voters.

Leaving that fact out starts making the backers just look partisan.

Five Takeaways from Tallahassee – ‘It’s really cold up here’ edition

<http://saintpetersblog.com/2011/01/14/five-takeaways-from-tallahassee-its-really-cold-up-here-edition/>

January 18, 2011

I’m still debating driving to Orlando for the Republican Roogoodoo this weekend, but here are my Five Takeaways from a really cold committee week in Tallahassee.

1. There is still a glimmer of hope for Florida Democrats. At least that’s the feeling I get when I see Dave Aronberg walking the halls of the Capitol (albeit as a Special Counsel in Attorney General Pam Bondi’s office) and Rod Smith running the Florida Democratic Party. President Barack Obama’s stock is improving, both nationally and in Florida. And two of the newly elected Republican congressmen, Dave Rivera and Allen West, are already on lists as ‘one-termers.’ After a very dark November and December, a glimmer of hope now shimmers for the opposition party.
2. The difference in governing style and tone between the Florida House and Senate could not be more stark than the contrast between the two bodies’ approach to the reapportionment process. On one hand, the Florida House, under the leadership of young Committee Chair Will Weatherford, is embracing the latest technology, including crowdsourcing and cloud-based computing, to guide the process. On the other hand, the Florida Senate seems to be taking a ludditan approach. Another contrast can be found in the obvious fact that Senate President Mike Haridopolos has already named which members will be on the Reapportionment Committee, while Speaker Dean Cannon, perhaps looking to keep a tighter rein on his members, has yet to name his committee members.

In other words, the Florida Senate knows which members will be working on reapportionment, but they have no tools to do so, while the Florida House has all the technology it needs to begin drawing political lines, but no members to do the drawing.

3. The Florida Press Corp is about as obsessed with Rick Scott’s airplane as [Hervé Villechaize](#) was with the one on Fantasy Island. I sat through my first presser in the Senate President’s office and was amazed at the Pulitzer chase, err, press conference I witnessed. Basically, Haridopolos would make some statement like, “There is a \$3.5 billion hole in the state budget...” and then some reporter would, quite harshly, “Yes, but what if there is a flight attendant on Rick Scott’s airplane and they serve you a bag of peanuts. Would that be a violation of the gift ban?” I am not going to say give it a break, because Scott’s executive approach to state government is an issue, but when a third of the questions at a press conference are about the state airplane, the press is not only wasting their time, but everyone else’s.

4. Senator Mike Fasano is going to Congress...via The Taj Mahal. His dressing-down of Judge Paul Hawkes was about as good theater as one can expect in a state with one-party rule. It’s going to be very hard to not draw one of the two new Congressional seats somewhere near where Fasano’s name stands out.

5. Has anyone heard from Dean Cannon lately? Just seems like Rock Scott is everywhere. Pam Bondi is everywhere. Marco Rubio is everywhere. Mike Haridopolos is everywhere. But Speaker Cannon is veerrryy quiet. Funny thing is I saw him twice on Thursday, once during a drop-by at a prominent firm off of the Capitol and again, enjoying what looked like a romantic, err, collegial dinner with Chris Dorworth at Shula’s. Keeping a low profile may not be a bad thing though; otherwise he’d have to answer questions about the state airplane.

Other thoughts: I’m launching my new latest project — a website dedicated to the reapportionment process — next week...thought it was very nice for Senator LeMieux to stop by our table last night at Shula’s, but it was very, very cool to have one of the newest members of the press corp, who will go unnamed, sit down to dinner with us...the place to be this week was Wednesday’s Florida State basketball game versus Duke; the club seats were stocked with legislators and lobbyists enthralled by FSU’s upset win over the #1 Blue Devils (Noles fans

should be especially excited that quarterback EJ Manuel was hanging out with Rhodes Scholar Myron Rolle.)



Map of Florida's non-partisan Congressional redistricting amendment

http://uselectionatlas.org/FORUM/index.php?topic=130781.0

April 3, 2011

- Atlas Forum
- Other Elections - Analysis and Discussion
- Gubernatorial/Statewide Elections (Moderators: Hitler Revivalist, Joe Republic)
- Map of Florida's non-partisan Congressional redistricting amendment**



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 Author Topic: Map of Florida's non-partisan Congressional redistricting amendment (Read 980 times)

[nclib](#)
YaBB God



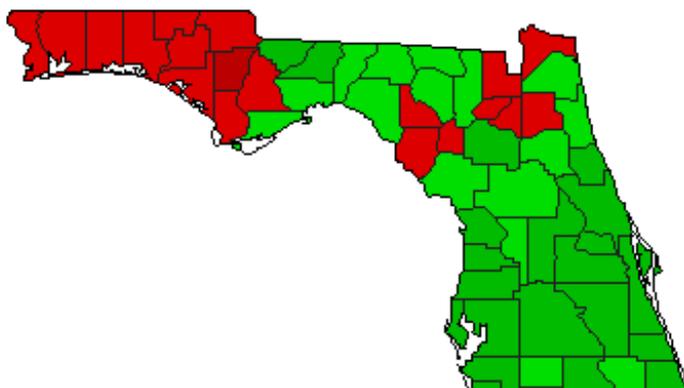
on: January 16, 2011, 10:52:22 pm



★ Posts:
7572

★ [Political Matrix](#)

★ E: -5.42,
S: -7.48



Hyperfast added this to the [contributions page](#).

Certainly Democrats as expected were more in favor of this than Republicans, but how would you explain the other patterns in this map? The Panhandle was far more opposed even compared to other

GOP areas.



Last Edit: January 16, 2011, 10:54:43 pm by nclib



Logged



On George W. Bush:

[H]e has shattered the myth of white supremacy once and for all. -- Congressman Charles Rangel (D-NY)

"George Bush supports abstinence. Lucky Laura."

- sign seen at the March for Women's Lives, 4/25/04



The Face I Make When You're Crying

BRTD
YaBB God



Reply #1 on: January 16, 2011, 11:22:12 pm



Kind of amusing since the panhandle is the only part of the state sanely drawn.

★ Posts: 57352

Looks like the Cubans ignored Diaz-Balart's fearmongering (logical since drawing three Cuban districts is easy.)



★ **Political Matrix**

★ E: -6.06,
★ S: -6.61



Logged





I notice many liberals like songs that nobody really hears about. A fake example would be like "Green and Red Apples" by Killer Nailbiter. or some crap like that.



Hyperfast

Full Member



Reply #2 on: January 17, 2011, 01:07:01 am



Posts:
147



[Political Matrix](#)

E: -5.42,
S: -
3.65



Well, the Panhandle and the outer Jacksonville area are more Republican as a whole than the other Republican areas of the state. Most of the counties that opposed this amendment also voted 70% or more for McCain. Then you have the House Majority Leader Adam Hasner saying this, "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." Opposition was mostly from Republicans and a few elected minorities in gerrymander districts. The Republicans don't want to lose the 19 - 6 majority they have in the House.



The counties that were against the amendment, voted for McCain 69/30/1
The counties that voted for the amendment and also voted for McCain 54/45/1

What it probably all comes down to is how partisan the Republicans in those areas are.



Last Edit: January 17, 2011, 01:03:49 pm by Hyperfast



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krazen1211

YaBB God



Reply #3 on: January 17, 2011, 02:20:18 pm



Posts:
686



Seems to me like that FL-22 backfired.



If they had just cleaned that district up and ceded it (which automatically cleans up a couple other districts), the initiative probably would not have had as much steam.



Still, now that Boyd is gone the Republicans should be able to effectively lock the Democrats out of North Florida, minus a couple districts.



Logged



[nclib](#)

YaBB God



Reply #4 on: January 17, 2011, 07:32:34 pm



Posts:
7572



[Political Matrix](#)



E: -5.42,
S: -7.48



Well, the Panhandle and the outer Jacksonville area are more Republican as a whole than the other Republican areas of the state. Most of the counties that opposed this amendment also voted 70% or more for McCain. Then you have the House Majority Leader Adam Hasner saying this, "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." Opposition was mostly from Republicans and a few elected minorities in gerrymander districts. The Republicans don't want to lose the 19 - 6 majority they have in the House.

The counties that were against the amendment, voted for McCain 69/30/1
The counties that voted for the amendment and also voted for McCain 54/45/1

What it probably all comes down to is how partisan the Republicans in those areas are.



There must have been sizeable support from Republicans, especially considering that Obama-McCain would have tied among FL's 2010 electorate, and some minority Dems voting 'no'. All the 'no' counties went for McCain over 60% (except Escambia which was 59%). The McCain 60% counties that voted 'yes' were:

- Collier 60.8%
- Wakulla 61.7%
- Levy 62.6%
- Sumter 63%
- Franklin 63.1%
- Hardee 64%
- St. Johns 65.3%
- Columbia 66.2%
- Taylor 68.8%

Do you know any other demographic/geographic patterns among Republicans who put practicality above partisanship?



Logged



On George W. Bush:

[H]e has shattered the myth of white supremacy once and for all. -- Congressman Charles Rangel (D-NY)

"George Bush supports abstinence. Lucky Laura."

- sign seen at the March for Women's Lives, 4/25/04





Hyperfast

Full Member



Reply #5 on: January 17, 2011, 08:56:33 pm



Posts:
147



[Political Matrix](#)

E: -5.42,
S: -
3.65



Well, the Panhandle and the outer Jacksonville area are more Republican as a whole than the other Republican areas of the state. Most of the counties that opposed this amendment also voted 70% or more for McCain. Then you have the House Majority Leader Adam Hasner saying this, "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." Opposition was mostly from Republicans and a few elected minorities in gerrymander districts. The Republicans don't want to lose the 19 - 6 majority they have in the House.

The counties that were against the amendment, voted for McCain 69/30/1
The counties that voted for the amendment and also voted for McCain 54/45/1

What it probably all comes down to is how partisan the Republicans in those areas are.

There must have been sizeable support from Republicans, especially considering that Obama-McCain would have tied among FL's 2010 electorate, and some minority Dems voting 'no'. All the 'no' counties went for McCain over 60% (except Escambia which was 59%). The McCain 60% counties that voted 'yes' were:

- Collier 60.8%
- Wakulla 61.7%
- Levy 62.6%
- Sumter 63%
- Franklin 63.1%
- Hardee 64%
- St. Johns 65.3%
- Columbia 66.2%
- Taylor 68.8%

Do you know any other demographic/geographic patterns among Republicans who put practicality above partisanship?

Yes, there was a sizable amount of Republican support for it, in those counties, especially in the Panhandle. Escambia, Santa Rosa, Okaloosa, Walton and Bay Counties have a large military presence. All of those counties you listed besides Collier, Sumter and St. Johns also have a majority Democratic registration. They'll support conservative Democrats for local office and sometimes statewide.

Collier, Sumter and St. Johns Counties have had a large amount of growth and influx of people from out of state, so probably the Republicans from out of state are less partisan? *shrugs*

 Logged

[jimrtex](#)

YaBB God

 **Reply #6 on:** January 18, 2011, 03:36:32 am

 ignore

★ Posts:
4095

★
★ Certainly Democrats as expected were more in favor of this than Republicans, but how would you explain the other patterns in this map? The Panhandle was far more opposed even compared to other GOP areas.

★
★ Voters probably thought it was intended to get rid of the ugly VRA districts.

★
★ The concept of fairness appeals to Republicans. The idea that districts should also follow county lines also sounds fair. Most people don't realize how difficult this is to do in states like Florida which has large populous counties, and a narrow equality requirement. Those advocating for the amendment never drew any illustrative plans. And they were very careful to show any of the existing VRA districts. But I suspect that most voters believe that it will get rid of districts like CD-3.



If voters are even conscious of the relationship between the amendment and the plan that is ultimately drawn, they will think something like: "those politicians up in Tallahassee managed to find some loopholes" or "I read that there was some lawsuit, and so they couldn't actually implement it"



 Logged



[The Face I
Make When
You're
Crying](#)

 **Reply #7 on:** January 18, 2011, 03:47:02 am

 ignore

BRTD
YaBB God

★ Posts:
57352

★
★ Most people just hate ugly districts, and don't pay close enough attention to see if it benefits their side or not. That might explain why the least ugly district in the state was most opposed.

★ [Political
Matrix](#)
E: -6.06,
S: -6.61

★  Logged



I notice many liberals like songs that nobody really hears about. A fake example would be like "Green and Red Apples" by Killer Nailbiter. or some crap like that.



[The Legitimate Government Monopoly on Force \(see vid in sig\)](#)

wormyguy
YaBB God



Reply #8 on: January 18, 2011, 08:24:24 am



Most people just hate ugly districts, and don't pay close enough attention to see if it benefits their side or not. That might explain why the least ugly district in the state was most opposed.

★ Posts: 3872



It might be difficult for you to understand, but most people actually don't have the slightest clue what their congressional district looks like.

★ [Political Matrix](#)

★ E: 9.23,
★ S: -9.53



Logged



[Dr Ambedkar, I presume](#)

Lewis
Trondheim
YaBB God



Reply #9 on: January 18, 2011, 10:17:49 am



Kind of amusing since the panhandle is the only part of the state sanely drawn.

★ Posts: 10150

It's probably part of the reason. It's not as if anyone would dare molest it with a

40155



gerrymander, either, so they voted for extra Republican representatives at other people's expense.



[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 right, it's just maybe not as much fun."
Devil to Ray Wylie Hubbard



[Jos Peterson](#)
Linus Van Pelt
YaBB God



Reply #10 on: January 19, 2011, 12:12:41 am



Posts: 954

I can't find any exit poll on this to confirm or disconfirm, but what that map says to me is, the old were more for it than other Republican voters. Which wouldn't seem terribly surprising - your stereotypical central Florida retiree is more comfortable with the Republicans but isn't terribly involved in politics and probably has a slightly sentimental image of old-style American fair play.



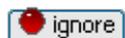
Logged



[krazen1211](#)
YaBB God



Reply #11 on: January 19, 2011, 12:28:46 am



★ Posts:
686

★
★ I can't find any exit poll on this to confirm or disconfirm, but what that map says to me is, the old were more for it than other Republican voters. Which wouldn't seem terribly surprising - your stereotypical central Florida retiree is more comfortable with the Republicans but isn't terribly involved in politics and probably has a slightly sentimental image of old-style American fair play.

★
★ This. It's kind of the same with photo voter ID, which is a no brainer to most people.



 Logged



[The Face I
Make When
You're
Crying](#)
BRTD
YaBB God

 **Reply #12 on:** January 19, 2011, 01:40:34 am

 ignore

★ Posts:
57352

★ It might be difficult for you to understand, but most people actually don't have the slightest clue what their congressional district looks like.

★ [Political
Matrix](#)
E: -6.06,
S: -6.61

Unless there's a big campaign letting people know how horrendously hideous their districts are.

★
★ The thing about Florida's map is that it's just not so ugly, it's unnecessarily ugly, as the GOP needs to only draw a few of the really ugly seats that way to win them. What the hell is the point of the old Mark Foley seat for example, it combines points on the opposite ends of the state which have basically nothing in common but probably can't be drawn into a non-Republican district anyway. I suppose it juts down into the Gold Coast a bit maybe to dilute some Democratic voters, but this doesn't really benefit the GOP as otherwise they'd just end up in a Dem pack district, actually if that area was left out the GOP could've actually held the seat in 2006 even with their candidate being forced to run under the name "Mark Foley". And why does Alcee Hastings' seat have to stretch all the way up north to pick up some white rural areas? Why does the 6th have to be as ugly as the 3rd after the 3rd has already picked up not just all the blacks but also Gainesville making it impossible to draw any winnable district next to it?



Last Edit: January 19, 2011, 01:42:23 am by The Awful Truth of  Lovina

I notice many liberals like songs that nobody really hears about. A fake example would be like "Green and Red Apples" by Killer Nailbiter. or some crap like that.

[Dr Ambedkar, I presume](#)

Lewis
Trondheim
YaBB God



Reply #13 on: January 19, 2011, 06:30:11 am



★ Posts: 46153



The same is true of quite a few 90s and also 2000 maps. Think Maryland. Think the 2002 Georgia map. Pointless. The Frostrocity had some way overdone districts, too. It's like legislators had discovered the joys of computerized mapping for the first time and went wild with it.

Logged



★ [Political Matrix](#)

★ 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 right, it's just maybe not as much fun."
Devil to Ray Wylie Hubbard



[The Face I Make When You're Crying](#)

BRTD
YaBB God



Reply #14 on: January 19, 2011, 11:30:32 pm



★ Posts: 57352



Here's something else too: The Cuban districts. There is no reason they have to look the way they do when any reasonably drawn map would easily include three Cuban-majority seats.

But yeah, maybe in 2000 redistricters were like preschoolers with a new set of fingerpaints.

★ [Political Matrix](#)

★ E: -6.06, S: -6.61





I notice many liberals like songs that nobody really hears about. A fake example would be like "Green and Red Apples" by Killer Nailbiter. or some crap like that.



Latino leaders: Hispanic growth deserves new congressional districts

<http://www.orlandosentinel.com/news/local/os-puerto-rican-new-congressional-dis20110115.0.3333270.print.story>

January 19, 2011

orlandosentinel.com/news/local/os-puerto-rican-new-congressional-dis20110115.0.6555988.story

Florida's population growth has earned it two more seats in Congress. Because Hispanics in Central Florida have been key to that growth, Latino leaders are gearing up to try to claim one of those seats.

They also want the Florida Legislature to ensure that the 900,000 Hispanics living in the Interstate 4 corridor are better represented in Tallahassee.

Members of the Democratic National Committee, the Latino Justice Program and the National Association of Latino Elected Officials are among those already working to make that happen.

"There's no question the state gained congressional seats because of the growth of Latinos," said John Garca, redistricting manager for the Latino Justice Program, headquartered in New York. "The I-4 corridor represents the largest growth of Latinos in the entire state. We want to see a much more equitable representation of their voice in the Florida Legislature and look at the data to see if there could be a congressional district as well."

Earlier this month, census officials released raw data from the 2010 count showing that Florida's population grew by 17.6 percent since 2000 and now tops 18.8 million. That will result in two new congressional districts for the 2012 elections, bringing Florida's total to 27 members in the U.S. House.

Because the data aren't broken down by demographics yet that report comes out in April it is premature to start drawing district lines. But the 2009 estimates already show an exponential growth of Latinos in Central Florida. Jackie Coln, the Florida director of the Latino elected-officials association, said they should be prepared to make their case.

"We want our leaders to be able to hit the ground running when the numbers are released," said Coln, a former Brevard County commissioner. Her organization is hosting a redistricting seminar in Washington early next month to train Latino elected officials how to advocate for redistricting. Kissimmee City Commissioner Wanda Rentas, Osceola County School Board Vice Chairman Julius Melendez and Longwood Deputy Mayor Bob Cortes are among the local elected officials who have confirmed their attendance.

"To do what they have to do locally and in Tallahassee, our leaders have to be well-versed," Coln said. "We want to make sure that's the case."

Region a 'political battleground'

Florida and eight other states gained congressional seats, thanks to an increase in Hispanic population, according to an analysis of census data by the Pew Hispanic Center. In these states, Hispanics also make up, on average, 15.2 percent of the eligible-voter population, compared with 5.4 percent of eligible voters in the 10 states that lost seats, mostly in the Northeast and Midwest.

In Florida, Hispanics may account for more than half of the state's population growth through this decade at least 51 percent. In the Central Florida counties of Orange, Osceola, Lake, Polk, Seminole and Volusia, the Hispanic population grew by 70 percent, from 347,000 in the 2000 census to almost 590,000 in 2009.

That growth, and the fact that Central Florida Hispanics are the state's largest swing-vote bloc, make the region a political battleground for any election, said attorney Andrs Lpez, a White House appointee to the Democratic

National Committee.

"There is power in those numbers," Lopez said. "The region, unquestionably, should be considered for one of the two seats."

Other groups will vie for seat

Latinos won't be the only group going after a seat. During redistricting, other minority, political and interest groups are all likely to propose hundreds of district maps to the Legislature for consideration.

The lengthy and complex process involves multiple committees, hearings and town-hall meetings before the Legislature agrees on the plans to submit to the state Supreme Court by June 2012.

Legislators have to follow the rules approved by voters last year in the "Fair Districts" amendments, which require congressional and legislative 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, however, 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.

State Rep. Darren Soto, D-Orlando, the only Hispanic legislator from the I-4 corridor, called those lawsuits "ill-founded and self-serving" and dismissed the notion that the new rules hurt minority districts. Soto has been recommended to serve on the state Senate's redistricting committee.

"I think the amendments will actually give us better districts," Soto said. "They favor compact districts that respect county boundaries."

The state also has to abide by the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which, among other things, says that minority votes should not be diluted through redistricting.

"The way district lines are drawn determines whether Latinos can have an effective voice in electing their representatives," said Rosalind Gold, senior director of policy and research for the National Association of Latino Elected Officials.

The more Latinos in a district, Gold said, the higher the likelihood that they will be represented by someone with the same economic, civic and social interests. That doesn't mean the candidate elected is always Hispanic.

"But it does mean that the candidate is more likely to be responsive to the needs of the community," she said.

Jeannette Rivera-Lyles can be reached at jrivera@orlandosentinel.com or 407-420-5471.

House Democrats continue redistricting ‘listening tour’ – Central Florida Political Pulse – Orlando Sentinel

TALLAHASSEE — House Redistricting Chairman **Will Weatherford** asked minority-party Democrats for their votes Wednesday, and said it “was not in the plan” to roll over their objections when the re-drawn political maps hit the House floor.

Weatherford’s committee will workshop three alternatives for House and congressional plans this Friday, all of which would appear to create more competitive Democratic seats but maintain a GOP-tilt to the statewide playing field. The committee won’t cast votes until Jan. 27, and House floor votes are planned a week later.

Senate Republican leaders on Wednesday used their two-thirds majority to steamroll Democrats on its maps, forcing final floor votes instead of the normal procedure of questioning and amending a bill and then waiting at least one day to cast final votes.

At a meeting of the House Democratic Caucus Wednesday, lawmakers wanted to know from Weatherford if they could expect the same treatment.

“It seemed procedurally, the majority party surprised the minority party,” asked Rep. **Richard Steinberg**, R-Miami Beach. “Do you expect that to happen in the House as well?”

“The only way I anticipate us rolling to third reading would be if that’s what you guys wanted to do,” the Wesley Chapel Republican replied. “If there was an agreement between the two parties and our leaders we would, but that is not part of the plan.”

Weatherford also asked the Democrats to consider voting for the House districts as a showing of support for the process that produced them.

“I would ask the caucus to strongly consider supporting the House map,” he said. “I understand some of you might not like everything about it. I can assure you there are a lot of members of my caucus who do not like everything about it.”

Weatherford told reporters after the meeting that “drawing maps that are fair and legal it can sometimes cause issues where you have two members running in the same district. You may have members who don’t live in their district. ...

“That’s probably unfortunate, but the truth is in order for us to draw legal maps, we can’t pay attention to those types of things. I’m not here to try and draw people into their seats.”

Before the caucus meeting started, several House Democrats grumbled they couldn’t voice concerns with the map in the meeting because reporters were present.

“We’re continuing our ‘listening tour,’” incoming House Minority Leader **Perry Thurston**, D-Plantation, cautioned his members before Weatherford’s briefing.

“Does that mean he won’t make the changes I want?” joked Rep. **Geraldine Thompson**, D-Orlando.

Redistricting Winner Is Still to Be Determined : Roll Call

http://www.rollcall.com/issues/56_68/-202503-1.html

March 7, 2011

- By Stuart Rothenberg
- Roll Call Contributing Writer
- Jan. 18, 2011, Midnight

Shortly after the 2010 census numbers were released, new Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee Chairman [Steve Israel](#) commented that the report pours cold water on Republicans hype that redistricting is a disaster for Democrats.

The New York lawmakers comment, I suppose, was a response to veteran GOP insider Ed Gillespie, who chairs the Republican State Leadership Committee. Gillespie has been quoted in multiple media reports as saying that, because of his party's recent electoral successes in state races, redistricting will help Republicans gain or protect 15 to 25 seats in 2012.

Of course, it isn't at all unusual for strategists from the two parties to differ over the potential fallout from redistricting.

I searched newspaper articles from a decade ago, before and during the last round of redistricting, and saw a public duel between Tom Davis, then the chairman of the National Republican Congressional Committee, and Martin Frost, who chaired the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee at the same time.

Even after the 2002 elections, Davis and Frost couldn't agree on who got the better of redistricting, though most nonpartisan handicappers and journalists thought the Republicans won redistricting.

Until lines are actually drawn, it's hard to know whether Israel or Gillespie is right. And, as President Bill Clinton might say, any conclusion depends on the meaning of the word disaster.

Reapportionment moved more Congressional districts to the South and the West, with the bulk of the losses coming from the Northeast and around the Great Lakes.

Five of the eight states gaining districts were carried by Sen. [John McCain](#) (R-Ariz.) in the 2008 presidential election, while seven of them went for President George W. Bush four years earlier. In contrast, eight of the 10 states losing seats went for then-Sen. Barack Obama (D-Ill.) in 2008, and six of the 10 were carried by Sen. [John Kerry](#) (D-Mass.) in 2004.

But while reapportionment clearly benefits the GOP in the Electoral College, that doesn't guarantee Republicans will benefit from the redrawing of districts in the 43 states that have more than a single at-large district.

My own state-by-state assessment suggests redistricting alone won't net many more seats for the GOP than the party now has a conclusion that seems to support Israel.

Republicans will create more GOP districts or benefit from fewer Democratic districts in North Carolina, Massachusetts and South Carolina, while Democrats should add seats or benefit from GOP losses in Illinois, Louisiana and Washington state. There will be partisan implications in other states, as well, of course.

But even though Republicans aren't likely to add 15 to 20 new seats to their existing majority, redistricting across the country could well make it considerably more difficult for Democrats to reverse the results of the 2010 elections in 2012.

In that sense, at least, redistricting could be a serious setback for Democrats. This conclusion seems to support Gillespie.

Redistricting probably won't be a windfall for the GOP in terms of adding new seats because the party was so successful in November. After their huge gains, Republican mapmakers in many states won't be able to shore up Republican freshmen in districts that they never should have won and, at the same time, also eliminate more Democratic districts.

But the likelihood that Republicans will only be able to cement their strong position in the House rather than add to it is hardly grounds for celebrating by Democratic strategists. And that outcome certainly wouldn't preclude the view that, ultimately, redistricting could be disastrous for Democrats.

After their legislative and gubernatorial victories over the past few cycles, Democratic strategists had every reason to think this time they would be able to redraw a number of large states or, at the very least, that they would be in a much stronger bargaining position than they were a decade ago.

After all, most of the current maps were drawn in 2001 and 2002, when Republican mapmakers in several key states including Ohio, Pennsylvania, Michigan and Florida minimized Democratic opportunities (or, if you prefer, gerrymandered districts to benefit the GOP). Mid-decade redistricting by Republican state legislators in Texas and Georgia did the same thing.

But after the 2010 elections, many of those Democratic hopes of affecting redistricting are dashed.

Instead of winning gubernatorial races in Georgia, Florida and Texas, Democrats lost all three, as well as the top office in Ohio. Instead of retaining at least one legislative chamber in Michigan, Ohio and Pennsylvania, they lost both chambers in all three.

And instead of having total control in New York and North Carolina, as they expected, Democrats lost the New York state Senate and both chambers of the North Carolina Legislature (to say nothing of Wisconsin and Minnesota).

North Carolina was one of the Democrats' successes in the last round of redistricting, so Republicans now have the opportunity to redraw the state dramatically to their advantage.

Of course, voters sometimes frustrate mapmakers in the first election after reapportionment, as happened in Georgia a decade ago. So we won't know the winners and losers from redistricting until after the 2012 elections.

What is clear, however, is that Democrats hoped to be in a far stronger position in redistricting than they now find themselves, and it is Republicans who over the next 18 months will decide how far to push the envelope in state after state.

Stuart Rothenberg is editor of the [Rothenberg Political Report](#).

Redistricting Software:

http://www.wjhg.com/news/headlines/Redistricting_Software_114307489.html

January 20, 2011

The Florida House of Representatives unveiled the software it will be using to redraw legislative and congressional boundaries and it is inviting average citizens to join in and make suggestions.

The Legislature will make the "My District Builder" software available over the internet for anyone who wants to try their hand at creating new political boundaries.

The Legislature's Bob West says the process will involve reams of census data as well as voting records and is able to plot political leaning down to the block level.

Public hearings on redrawing districts begin this summer. Lawmakers will begin considering plans in October, with a final plan due no later than March 2012.

The process is one of the most complex things government does and after the passage of Amendments 5 and 6 in November, the issue is expected to generate more public interest than ever.

House Leaders Lay Out Issues for the 2011 Session

<http://www.sunshinestatenews.com/story/house-leaders-lay-out-issues-2011-session>

January 20, 2011

Speaker Dean Cannon and Ron Saunders touch on budget, judicial branch and redistricting

Speaking in Tallahassee Wednesday, two key leaders of the Florida House offered glimpses into the 2011 session which starts in March.

Addressing the annual Legislative Planning Session held by the Associated Press, House Speaker Dean Cannon, R-Winter Park, addressed the editors and reporters on a host of issues ranging from the budget to the judicial branch.

“As you know, we currently face a significant budget shortfall,” said Cannon. “We have a constitutional obligation to balance that budget and I believe a strong responsibility to do so without raising taxes.

“As you know, our state is facing record unemployment,” continued Cannon. “As a result, many of the policy and budget choices before the Legislature this session will be rooted in our desire to foster an economy that allows businesses to locate and expand in our state, creating the jobs and resulting economic activity that will rekindle our real-estate market and revitalize our small businesses.”

Cannon also focused on health care issues -- including the problem of rising Medicaid costs.

“Additionally, this year we must work to curb the exponential growth of entitlement programs, specifically the Medicaid program, while facing an unprecedented mandate by the federal government,” said Cannon. “The House will propose a comprehensive reform of Medicaid consistent with the principles and approach developed by the Select Council in 2010, and the language included in the Joint Medicaid Memorial passed by the House and Senate last fall.”

Cannon noted that the Health and Human Services Committee, chaired by Rep. Rob Schenck, R-Spring Hill, will hold public hearings on the matter.

The speaker also said the House would focus on education issues.

“We must also work to modernize our education system while dealing with the challenges of the class-size amendment and an education adequacy lawsuit,” said Cannon. “We are taking a hard look at merit pay, school choice and teacher tenure, and looking at ways we can reward our best teachers for their commitment to excellence in the classroom and what we can do to provide parents a greater stake in their children’s education.”

Cannon also touched on pension reform and agreed with Gov. Rick Scott that the state government needed to make Florida more attractive to businesses that can bring new jobs to the Sunshine State.

“We are also taking a hard look at business regulations and examining areas where we can streamline or eliminate regulations,” said Cannon. “We are continuing to review the Scott transition team’s proposals for consolidation of state functions and as we receive more information we look forward to weighing in on various options.”

Cannon said that the House would be forced to make hard decisions in 2011 as it wrestled with the budget.

“There is no doubt that the road ahead is difficult,” said Cannon. “We know that there is no secret stash of money; no hidden account, and no politically easy, pain-free magic bullet. Governing in 2011 is not about choosing between programs that you like and those you don’t like. With our current budget, all levels of government must responsibly make difficult choices between worthwhile ideas.”

Cannon also followed up on comments he made when he took the gavel after the elections in November, taking aim at the state Supreme Court which struck down a number of proposed constitutional amendments that passed the Legislature in 2010.

“I believe that government functions best when each level and branch operates within its proper domain, respecting the others' various roles and fostering a sense of collaboration and mutual respect that our unique form of government anticipates,” said Cannon. “The Legislature’s authority to place questions on the ballot is unique to the Legislature. It is unshared. And, it is self-executing. And, there are very good reasons that the Florida Constitution intentionally omits the authority for either the executive or the judicial branch to stop amendments proposed by the people’s elected representatives from being considered for adoption by the electorate.

“I firmly believe that allowing the court to remove legislatively proposed amendments from the ballot denies the people their right to amend their Constitution,” added Cannon. “I believe that the need for ballot summary reform is critical. But, I also believe it is one of many components of comprehensive court reform that we can and should explore over the next two years.

“Florida’s judicial system has the authority to take away not only a person’s liberty, but also a person’s life,” continued Cannon. “Understanding the severity and irreversible nature of that penalty, we have a responsibility to ensure that justice is administered not only fairly, but also efficiently.”

Cannon pointed to the fact that more death-row inmates have died of natural causes since 2000 than were executed.

“Significant and unreasonable delays plague the current process of conducting state post-conviction review in these cases and it appears that there is little the Supreme Court can do to improve or streamline the process,” said Cannon. “Though the Supreme Court does not publish the amount of time spent hearing and deciding different types of cases, testimony suggests that death-penalty cases constitute about 50 percent of their workload, though only 12 percent of their caseload.

“I believe this imbalance could be corrected through court reform that would capitalize on the expertise of judges specialized in the field of criminal law, while at the same time improve efficiency in the Supreme Court’s handling of civil matters by better utilizing judges with an expertise in noncriminal matters,” continued Cannon. “We need to provide the court a better opportunity to decide and resolve cases correctly and expeditiously, and we need to address the longstanding criticism that the courts are underfunded and judicial dockets are overcrowded.

“I believe the Legislature can and should work with the judicial branch to significantly improve the administration of justice in death-penalty cases,” said Cannon in closing. “I am hopeful that reform could lead to a more equitable judicial system for all Floridians, and as we move forward toward the 2011 legislative session we will continue to explore this issue to determine when and what the right course of action for Florida may be.”

Cannon also addressed the assembled media on communications issues between the Legislature and the press, noting that he was expanding the Office of Public Information and Appointments which was created by former Speaker Larry Cretul.

“Maybe we stopped talking because you stopped listening, or maybe you stopped listening because we stopped talking,” said Cannon. “But either way, we have reached a point where we talk past each other, and that is a problem for the Legislature, for the press, and most importantly for the people who rely on lawmakers to properly represent them and trust the press to accurately and fairly tell the story.

“I am committed to working through this problem and to maintaining an open relationship between the Florida House and members of the press corps,” added Cannon. “One of the ways I hope to address this problem is by confronting the frequent critique of government and lack of transparency,” he noted, pointing to greater efforts to

use technology to make House proceedings and legislation available to the public.

Cannon also said that he expected to have a good relationship with Scott and Senate President Mike Hardiopolos, R-Merritt Island.

“We have a common general philosophy about the role of the private sector in the economy, limited government, things like that,” said Cannon.

House Democratic Leader Ron Saunders of Key West also addressed the meeting, saying that his caucus, which controls 39 of the 120 seats in the House, would shine a light on some issues but also work with the Republican majority on others.

“Republicans are in charge of Tallahassee,” noted Saunders, adding that the GOP has controlled the Legislature and the executive branch for more than a decade. “You would think that every problem in the state of Florida was made by Democrats,” he added, referring to the 2010 campaign cycle and Republican rhetoric about making the state government accountable.

Saunders said the House Democrats would act as a “watchdog” on certain issues and oppose efforts to expand oil drilling in Florida waters, attempts to make women considering an abortion have a mandatory ultrasound, and efforts to bring an Arizona-style immigration law to the Sunshine State.

“There’ll be issues we may work together on,” insisted Saunders. “The No. 1 priority in the state is job creation,” he said, agreeing with Scott.

Saunders also said that he was open to backing Scott’s plans to reduce property taxes as well as the governor’s call for zero-based budgeting of state agencies.

“The governor’s ideas are worth a look,” said Saunders. “He wants to look at agencies top to bottom.”

Saunders predicted that redistricting would be a thorny issue -- and could lead to Democratic gains.

“We’re looking for the Republican majority to adhere to the will of the public and follow Amendments 5 and 6,” said Saunders, referring to two constitutional changes backed by Florida voters in November that alter the redistricting process. “With Amendments 5 and 6, it will be a lot harder to keep their supermajority,” added Saunders, noting there were more registered Democrats than Republicans in the state.

No matter what happened with the new redistricting amendments in place, Saunders said he expected there would be a legal challenge of some sort no matter how the Legislature drew lines for Congress, the Senate and the House. “It’s going to go to court,” insisted Saunders.

Reach Kevin Derby at kderby@sunshinestateneews.com or at (850) 727-0859.



Tuesday, February 22, 2011

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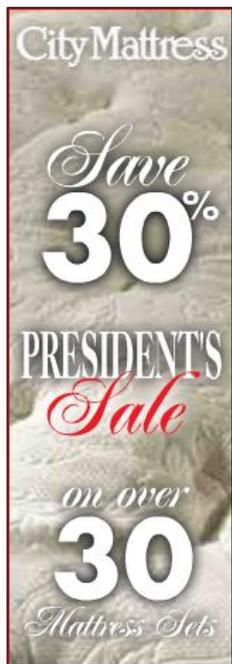
ALERTS

Somali pirates kill 4 Americans



New redistricting hardware for Florida

West Palm Beach, FL



SHARETHIS

Posted: 01/20/2011

TALLAHASSEE, FLA. -- The Florida House of Representatives unveiled the software it will be using to redraw legislative and congressional boundaries and it is inviting average citizens to join in and make suggestions. The Legislature will make the "My District Builder" software available over the internet for anyone who wants to try their hand at creating new political boundaries. The Legislature's Bob West says the process will involve reams of census data as well as voting records and is able to plot political leaning down to the block level. Public hearings on redrawing districts begin this summer.

Lawmakers will begin considering plans in October, with a final plan due no later than March 2012. The process is one of the most complex things government does and after the passage of Amendments 5 and 6 in November, the issue is expected to generate more public interest than ever.

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PRINT SHARETHIS

82° Mostly cloudy Full Forecast

Warm and humid conditions



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“Inside the Lines” Debuts to Track FL Redistricting Process - PRLink | tampabay.com

<http://www.tampabay.com/prlink/Inside-the-Lines-Debuts-to-Track-FL-Redistricting-Process,48994>

March 7, 2011

“Inside the Lines,” a hyper-focused website dedicated to tracking Florida’s historically contentious redistricting process, goes live today at InsideTheLinesFLA.com.

By Peter Schorsch

□ **Contact:** Peter Schorsch
or 631.764.4471

saintpeter4@gmail.com

“Inside the Lines” Website Debuts to Track Florida’s Redistricting Process

ST. PETERSBURG – “Inside the Lines”, a hyper-focused website dedicated to tracking Florida’s historically contentious redistricting process, goes live today at InsideTheLinesFLA.com.

“Inside the Lines” offers the latest news, commentary and information on Florida’s reapportionment process, which is in the initial stage of a two-year process, culminating in the redrawing of the state’s Congressional and Legislative district boundaries.

The content for “Inside the Lines” will be provided by Peter Schorsch, executive editor of two of Florida’s most-trafficked and influential political websites, SaintPetersblog.com and BattlegroundTampaBay.com.

“I will bring the same insight and new media perspective to the redistricting process that my blogs have brought to Florida’s political arena,” said Schorsch, who was one of the first bloggers in the state to receive Capitol Press credentials.

Utilizing the latest in content management and social networking technology, “Inside the Lines” features a genesis-level, WordPress content management system and is search-engine optimized. Along with the website, the following Twitter account has been created to provide additional content: [@insidethelines1](https://twitter.com/insidethelines1).

“Inside the Lines” is being underwritten by Three Bridges Advisors (TBA), a boutique government affairs firm that represents clients in Washington, DC and Tallahassee. Schorsch describes the relationship as one that provided a significant initial investment in the development and operation of the website. TBA will not contribute to the site’s editorial content.

“Reapportionment will be one of the biggest political stories in Florida over the next 18 months. We believe “Inside the Lines” will provide the perfect new media platform for timely reporting breaking news and insights while also demonstrating new methods of underwriting delivery of issue-specific news content,” said David Jolly, President of TBA.

###

Extensive Enterprises owns and operates SaintPetersblog.com, [Battleground Tampa Bay](http://BattlegroundTampaBay.com), and [Inside the Lines](http://InsideTheLines.com), websites combining first-rate original content with news and information aggregated from many of Florida’s media outlets and social networks — all of it search engine optimized. The mission of Extensive Enterprises is to provide the kind of in-depth analysis and on-the-ground coverage of the state, region, congressional, legislative and local political arenas which were once the hallmark of the so-called traditional media. SaintPetersblog.com was recently named 2010 Florida Netroots Winner for Best Local Blog, Best Ongoing Series, Best

Use of Twitter, and Best Social Media. The blog was also named 2010 Creative Loafing "Best of the Bay" Winner.

Three Bridges Advisors Inc., is a boutique government affairs and advocacy firm representing clients before the United States Congress and the Executive Branch, with additional qualifications in State of Florida government relations. Led by experienced industry professionals, Three Bridges Advisors offers its clients the opportunity to work with specialists in a personal and attentive manner to quickly create and implement effective federal market strategies. Visit www.threebridgesadvisors.com for more information about the firm.

A New Resource in the Florida Redistricting Saga

<http://warnerkirby.blogs.com/spencerian/2011/01/a-new-resource-in-the-florida-redistricting-saga-.html>

January 23, 2011

If you're like me, you kind of fudged your way through Amendments 5 and 6 in the last election. Oh, you knew they were important, and you checked out the very well done [Fair Districts Florida website](#) to learn all you could. (Click here to read [about Fair Districts Florida](#), why it's a good thing they were successful in having Amendments 5 and 6 pass, and find the link to the ballot language that passed). For the record, here is the far less impressive [Florida House Redistricting Committee website](#). Sorry, guys.

I should have known a dude as ambitious as [Peter Schorsch of Saint Petersblog](#) would come up with a good website to track what's happening with redistricting here in Florida, and he has: [Inside the Lines](#).

“Inside the Lines” offers the latest news, commentary and information on Florida’s reapportionment process, which is in the initial stage of a two-year process, culminating in the redrawing of the state’s Congressional and Legislative district boundaries.

Follow them on Twitter [@insidethelines1](#).

Well, leave it to Peter to fill a vacuum. I mean, come on: who else was doing this?

The usual and increasingly less necessary Peter Schorsch caveats in a moment, but first let me say, I have no idea how the guy does it: he runs [Saint Petersblog](#), of course, on which he's kindly and generously promoted this little blog a lot more than he's needed to; [Battleground Tampa Bay](#), which I think sometimes focuses a bit much on the Tampa side of the bay, but that's me being picky -- it's really quite good; and now he's got this deal. On top of all the other stuff I know he's got a lot going on with respect to politics and campaigns.

You may have strong personal feelings about Peter -- everybody I've met that knows him sure does -- but you have to admit, the guy works pretty damn hard.

I've said it before: Peter's got enemies. In fact, his most recent back-and-forth with Irreverent View's Chris Ingram made [the Michael Hussey/Kenneth Quinnell duel](#) look like sunshine and lollipops at Disney.

The apparent object of Mr. Ingram's ire is [Michael Cifti](#), who is running for Tampa City Council. Mr. Ingram has equated Mr. Cifti with, well, squirrel poop. And I gather that Peter has Mr. Cifti as a client. This has... *displeased* Mr. Ingram, per [this post on Mr. Ingram's blog](#).

This was a Twitter battle of epic proportions, with Mr. Ingram ([@IrreverentView](#)) doing some pretty heavy baiting of Peter ([@SaintPetersblog](#)) with respect to Peter's previous personal and legal issues. I was disappointed that Peter resorted to violent

language in the comments of Mr. Ingram's blog post ("Pray you don't see me in an alley with no witnesses. Pray for that." Poor form, Peter.) But I was ultimately pleased that he "surrendered" (inasmuch as he was, well, too busy to keep going). In fact, you have to give the decision to Peter on this one, if only because Mr. Ingram's dislike for Mr. Cifti makes him borderline irrational.

What a distraction. A delicious, hilarious, awesome distraction.

Anyway, back on planet Earth, a lot of people will tell you that whatever it is the triumvirate of evil -- Haridoplos, Cannon, and Scott -- decided to merge, downsize, privatize, or cut will be the big news out of Tallahassee. And it'll be big news, but it won't be *the* big news.

The big news will be redistricting. The budget cuts will hurt, and they'll get a lot of attention -- yes, including from me -- but this redistricting thing changes the face of Florida politics and government for a generation (and certainly has national ramifications as well). Check out [the new website](#), and we'll hopefully learn something together about this complex, but terribly important issue.

House wants freedom from redistricting rules

<http://www.heraldtribune.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20110124/BREAKING/110129868/2055/NEWS&Title=House-wants-freedom-from-redistricting-rules&template=printart>

March 7, 2011

Published: Monday, January 24, 2011 at 6:52 p.m.

Nearly 63 percent of Florida voters last November approved sweeping new standards for lawmakers to follow in drawing up new congressional and state legislative districts.

But the GOP-controlled House wants a federal court to remove some of those standards from the state constitution. The Florida House has asked a judge to let it join a lawsuit filed late last year by two veteran members of Congress against Amendment 6.

The stakes for the lawsuit are even higher than they were last fall, now that new U.S. Census numbers have increased the size of Florida's congressional delegation by two seats. Starting in 2012, the state will have 27 members in the U.S. House. It is up to the Legislature to draw those districts' boundaries.

House Republicans on Monday defended the decision to act after voters have already approved the new standards. They maintain Amendment 6 is unconstitutional because it would put limits on how legislators draw up new districts for Congress.

The House believes its constitutional authority has been impeded by Amendment 6, said Katherine Betta, a spokeswoman for House Speaker Dean Cannon. Since the litigation has already been filed, it is prudent for the House to be involved in the discussion considering that the interests of the House and the House's serious constitutional concern with Amendment 6 are being spoken for in this case.

Amendment 6 was one of two amendments placed on the ballot by FairDistrictsFlorida.org. Both amendments mandate that legislators draw compact districts that do not favor incumbents or members of a political party. While some Republicans supported the effort, groups traditionally aligned with Democrats provided most funding for the campaign.

Democrats quickly criticized the House's move, which has not been mirrored by the Senate.

Rep. Perry Thurston, D-Plantation, called it waste of taxpayers' money to try to thwart the will of the people.

Florida Democratic Party Chairman Rod Smith said that clearly the Republicans are more concerned about saving their jobs rather than creating jobs for Floridians.

Cannon and Senate President Mike Haridopolos last year were critical of the two Fair Districts amendments, saying they would be impossible to implement and lead to protracted litigation.

Legislators' response to the amendments was a redistricting measure that would have allowed legislators to create communities of common interest when drawing new boundaries for Congressional and legislative districts.

But Amendment 7 was tossed off the ballot by the Florida Supreme Court. Angry House leaders have responded to that court decision by vowing to pursue changes to how constitutional amendments are placed on the ballot.

U.S. Reps. Corrine Brown, D-Jacksonville, and Mario Diaz-Balart filed their lawsuit against Amendment 6 in November. The lawsuit contends that the new measure will violate federal voting rights laws because the amendment will result in fewer minorities getting elected to Congress.

House (not Senate) tries to stop 'Fair Districts'. Again

<http://miamiherald.typepad.com/nakedpolitics/2011/01/house-not-senate-tries-to-stop-fair-districts-again.html>

March 7, 2011

After losing repeatedly in state court, the Florida House of Representatives has joined a federal lawsuit to stop the new amendments designed to stop the Legislature from drawing political districts that favor or disfavor incumbents or political parties.

[The federal lawsuit was filed just after the November elections](#) by U.S. Reps. Mario Diaz-Balart (R-Miami) and Corrine Brown (D-Jacksonville). The suit, though, only concerned the portion of redistricting concerning Congress, not the Legislature. As a result, the Florida House argues that the Legislature should have a say, too.

"It is the Legislature—not Plaintiffs—which has the primary responsibility for redistricting. And it is the Legislature—not Plaintiffs—whose prerogative will be challenged (and potentially invalidated) under the Amendment," the suit says.

Democrats are crying foul. Along with liberal-leaning groups like the teachers' unions, Democrats backed the amendments, which could loosen the Republicans' grip on the Legislature and in Florida's congressional delegation.

The filing has some other interesting political dynamics. The House is led by Dean Cannon, who has been bristling at the judiciary for throwing some of the Legislature's proposed amendments off the ballot -- including an amendment he sponsored to check Amendments 5 & 6, which he's now trying to kill in court. So on one hand, judicial activism is bad when it comes to acts of the Legislature. But when citizens pass amendments with more than 60 percent of the vote..... then it's time to get the federal judiciary to strike the language from the state constitution.

Hmmm.

There are probably some complicated legal arguments that Cannon can and will muster to rectify the potentially contradictory stances. Still, it's worthy of note.

Another side note: The Florida Senate, where Senate President Mike Haridopolos is running for U.S. Senate, hasn't joined with the House in challenging Fair Districts. At least not yet. Here's the filing:

[Download Redistricting](#)

Why Asians (and Other Minorities) Must Get Involved in CA Redistricting « Arc of '72

<http://arcof72.com/2011/02/02/why-asians-and-other-minorities-must-get-involved-in-ca-redistricting/> February 03, 2011

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NOTE: Originally published on [New America Media](#) on January 24, 2011.

This article has been re-posted with the permission of the authors.

By Eugene Lee and Deanna Kitamura, the Asian Pacific American Legal Center



LOS ANGELES—California has started a new experiment that will affect who represents you in Sacramento and Washington, D.C. Until now, the state Legislature has had the power to redraw the boundaries of state and

congressional districts, a process known as redistricting. Because of recently approved ballot propositions, the Legislature's redistricting authority has been delegated to a 14-member commission made up of California voters. The creation of the new commission presents the public with a golden opportunity to get involved in how the lines are drawn.

The commission's job is to replace existing Assembly, state Senate, Board of Equalization and Congressional districts with new districts based on 2010 Census data. Over the last decade, some areas of the state, such as the Central Valley and the Inland Empire, have experienced significant population growth, while other areas have had stagnant growth or population losses. The commission's task is to account for these changes and create new districts containing roughly the same number of people as other districts of the same kind. Although partisan considerations often dominate how redistricting is carried out, the population equality requirement is the reason why redistricting happens in the first place.

District boundaries drawn in the past have fragmented communities of color, including Asian-American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) communities. For example, in the 2001 redistricting, the San Jose neighborhood of Berryessa was split among four state Assembly districts, even though over half of Berryessa's population is AAPI, sharing common interests and needs. When communities are divided, their ability to appeal to their elected representatives to address their needs is diminished.

By law, the commission must hold two sets of public hearings. These hearings are an opportunity for the public to educate the commission on how different communities believe the commission should draw the electoral maps. The first set of hearings is to receive input before any maps are drawn and the second set is to receive feedback following the drawing of the commission's proposed maps.

Public input is important to the commission's ability to keep together "communities of interest," one of the factors the commission must consider. A community of interest is a population that shares common social and economic interests that should be kept together in order that the population's interests are fairly and effectively represented. If divided, the community's representation would be ineffective because it would be required to appeal to two or more elected officials, as in the case of Berryessa. Many different types of communities can make up a community of interest, such as an immigrant community with shared language-access needs, a low-income neighborhood with specific educational needs, or a geographic area where many of the residents work in the same industry.

Communities of interest are not generally labeled on maps. That's why it is crucial that local community members come forward to educate the commission. Without public input, the commission is unlikely to know whether a specific community of interest exists and is even more unlikely to know the geographic parameters of the community of interest.

If you are interested in ensuring that the commission keeps together AAPI communities of interest, there's a simple way to get involved. The Coalition of Asian Pacific Americans for Fair Redistricting (CAPAFR), anchored by the Asian Pacific American Legal Center, is holding meetings throughout California to focus on AAPI communities of interest. CAPAFR's goal is to submit proposals that show the commission how AAPI communities of interest can be best kept together, while also respecting other communities of interest. To see a calendar of CAPAFR meetings or to learn more about redistricting in general, please visit www.capafr.org.

When will we know how this new redistricting experiment turns out? August 15, 2011, which is the commission's deadline to adopt final redistricting plans. Before that deadline approaches, the commission must hear from the public. If the public does not come forward, communities could get divided in the redistricting process.

The next CAPAFR community meeting in San Francisco and San Mateo will be held February 24th 5:30pm-8pm at the Asian Law Caucus 55 Columbus Ave. San Francisco CA 94111. To RSVP please contact CAPAFR2011@gmail.com or visit <http://www.capafr.org/sf-san-mateo-3rd-community-mtg1>

Eugene Lee is the voting rights project director at the Asian Pacific American Legal Center, a member of Asian Center of Advancing Justice. (www.apalc.org). He directs work on voter protection, Voting Rights Act compliance, and ballot access policy and is currently working to strengthen the voice of AAPI communities during the 2011 redistricting process.

Deanna Kitamura is the statewide redistricting manager at the Asian Pacific American Legal Center, a member of Asian Center of Advancing Justice. She works with community partners to ensure that AAPI communities in California are engaged in the redistricting process.

Filed under: [Census](#), [civil rights](#), [current events](#), [Politics](#) Tagged: | [AAPI](#), [api](#), [Asian Americans](#), [california](#), [elections](#), [Redistricting](#), [San Francisco](#), [voting rights](#)

Florida lawmakers attack will of voters

<http://opinionmatters.flatoday.net/2011/01/florida-house-of-representatives-waste.html>

March 7, 2011



House photo by Mark Foley - House Speaker Dean Cannon, R-Winter Park and Senate President Mike Haridopolis, R-Melbourne

Speaker Dean Cannon and the Florida House of Representatives have filed a lawsuit to challenge "Fair Districts" amendment 6 to the state constitution which was overwhelmingly approved by Florida voters in November. This lawsuit not only attempts to circumvent the will of the voters but wastes precious taxpayer money.

Sick of our politicians quest for power Floridians spoke loud and clear in November. We voted to end

gerrymandering when we approved FairDistricts.

Why are the state lawmakers we elected wasting taxpayer money by filing a lawsuit specifically designed to overturn the amendment voters just approved? Why? Because they are clearly more concerned about saving their own jobs than creating jobs for Floridians.

At the December Brevard Delegation Town Hall Senate President Mike Haridopolos predicted a "lengthy and costly battle, with the courts ultimately drawing district lines." Haridopolos didn't tell us taxpayers would be funding the lawsuit.

It is clear to this voter Senate President Mike Haridopolos, Speaker Dean Cannon and the GOP dominated Florida House of Representatives don't think they can win an election unless their districts are gerrymandered in their favor.

How do Opinion Matters readers feel about this waste of taxpayer money?

Senate President Haridopolos responds to voters FairDistrict concerns at the Brevard Legislative Delegation Meeting Dec. 2010

Orlando Political Press » Blog Archive » Florida House Moves To Join Lawsuit Challenging ‘Fair Districts’ Amendment

<http://orlandonewscenter.com/orlando-political-press-blog-archive-florida-house-moves-to-join-law-suit-challenging-%E2%80%99fair-districts%E2%80%99-amendment/>

March 7, 2011

You are here: Home / [house orlando](#) / Orlando Political Press » Blog Archive » Florida House Moves To Join Lawsuit Challenging ‘Fair Districts’ Amendment

Editor’s Note – Proving that politics do indeed make for strange bedfellows, we have the Republican dominated Florida House joining forces with Democrat Corrine Brown (FL-CD3) in challenging the ‘Fair Districts’ amendment.

And to take it a step further, Ms. Brown finds herself on the opposite side of the issue as the ACLU – bet that doesn’t happen very often!

One thing is certain, the reshaping of districts in Florida will be decided in the courts, not in the halls of Tallahassee.

Florida House Moves To Join Lawsuit Challenging ‘Fair Districts’ Amendment

By Cooper Levey-Baker Florida Independent

Citing its “considerable interest in establishing the unconstitutionality” of Amendment 6 — one of two so-called “Fair Districts” amendments that limit the state legislature’s ability to draw district lines to protect incumbents and ensure one-party control — the Florida House of Representatives has asked a court to allow it to intervene in a lawsuit seeking to have the amendment thrown out.

The lawsuit was filed by U.S. Reps. Corrine Brown, D-Jacksonville, and Mario Diaz-Balart, R-Miami, the day after Amendments 5 and 6 passed in a statewide vote with more than 60 percent support. according to documents filed by Brown and Diaz-Balart, they consider challenging the constitutionality of Amendment 6 one of their “official duties” in Congress.

Since that initial filing, the ACLU of Florida has moved to intervene in the case, hoping to help defend the amendment it says it was “intimately involved” in creating, and Attorney General Pam Bondi — who is tasked with defending the amendment after opposing it on the campaign trail — has asked the court to dismiss the case, citing a lack of jurisdiction.

Read More – floridaindependent.com/19940/florida-house-moves-to-join-lawsuit-challenging-fair-districts-amendment

[Orlando Political Press » Blog Archive » Florida House Moves To Join Lawsuit Challenging ‘Fair Districts’ Amendment](#)

Phoenix Media Network » Blog Archive » Grayson and Guetzloe see redistricting as an early Christmas gift for Democrats

<http://phoenixnetwork.us/news/grayson-and-guetzloe-see-redistricting-as-an-early-christmas-gift-for-democrats/>

January 24, 2011

They may be on opposite sides of the political spectrum, but the liberal former Congressman Alan Grayson and the conservative anti-tax activist Doug Guetzloe agree on one thing: the sweeping victory that Republicans scored in 2010 is about to meet its match in a process called redistricting.

Grayson, who represented the state's 8th Congressional District until he was defeated last November, and Guetzloe, the founder of Ax the Tax and host of The Guetzloe Report radio talk show, took part in a debate on Saturday at the Hilton in Altamonte Springs, as part of the regional gathering of Mensa, the worldwide organizer for people with high I.Q.s.

While the two political activists had their disagreements, they did see eye to eye on the issue of congressional redistricting: namely, that Republicans have a lot to lose in 2012 by the time this process is over.

"Gerrymandering is the process where instead of voters picking their representatives, representatives pick their voters," Grayson said, although he added that starting this year, "Gerrymandering is illegal" in Florida.

Redistricting is the process whereby state lawmakers redraw the lines of the state's congressional, state senate and state House districts to reflect shifts in population. Districts that gained a lot of new voters need to be reduced, while districts that lost population take on new residents.

But it's always been a highly political process, with the dominant party in Tallahassee drawing the lines to maximize partisan advantage, creating districts that have less to do with geographic interests than with how many registered Republicans or registered Democrats can be squeezed together to ensure that party wins the seat.

Republicans now control the state Legislature by two-thirds margins and the governor, Rick Scott, is also a member of the GOP, which would have given them complete control over the process. But last November, Florida voters approved two constitutional amendments called Fair Districts Florida, which require the congressional districts and the legislative ones to be drawn up so that communities are kept intact, and partisan politics stays out of it.

"It said you cannot draw the lines on a political basis anymore," Grayson said. "Today the Republicans have overwhelming majorities, thanks to previous gerrymandering. This will make the districts more compact."

If Republicans in the state Legislature fail to follow this rule and instead create districts designed to boost their own party, the lines will likely be drawn from the state Supreme Court.

Guetzloe said he predicts that's where the issue will be settled next year.

"It's going to end up in court," he said.

Grayson agreed, saying "The Florida Supreme Court will very likely decide the lines."

Every 10 years, the states are required to redraw the lines of the nation's 435 congressional districts. States that lost population or experience slow growth lose districts, while states that gained the most new residents pick up new districts. It's already been estimated that Florida, one of the nation's fastest growing states in the past decade, will gain two new congressional districts, bringing the state's total up to 27.

Grayson and Guetzloe believe Central Florida – and more specifically, the Orlando metropolitan area – is one of the regions slated to get a new district.

"Central Florida is the highest growth area in the state, and Central Florida is probably going to end up with one of those new districts," Guetzloe said.

He also predicted it would be a heavily Democratic district, since all of the congressmen in this region now are Republicans. That includes John Mica of Winter Park, Sandy Adams and Bill Posey of the Space Coast, Dennis Ross of Lakeland, and Daniel Webster of Orlando, the man who defeated Grayson.

As Guetzloe noted, Ross and Adams represent districts where registered Democrats outnumber registered Republicans. To create another solidly Republican district, lawmakers would have to peel off crucial Republican votes from each of these congressmen. A safer choice, he said, would be to take as many Democratic voters as possible out of these districts and create one overwhelmingly safe Democratic districts — which in turn makes the neighboring districts even more safely Republican.

Grayson noted that Republicans did this in the last round of redistricting, when they created a safe Democratic seat in the Tampa area, now represented by Democrat Kathy Castor, even though the Tampa area is fairly evenly divided between the two parties.

If the state Supreme Court takes the partisan edges off the districts and makes them more competitive between the two parties, Grayson predicted that could result in "four to six additional Democratic seats" next year.

Grayson said his own district was a good example of gerrymandering, since it took in a good chunk of the city of Orlando and parts of Osceola County, but also stretched out to solidly Republican precincts in Lake and Marion counties.

"It went all the way from southeast of the airport to 20 miles past Ocala," he said. "They did that because they wanted to create a safe Republican district."

It didn't work in 2008, when Grayson defeated Republican incumbent Ric Keller and Barack Obama carried the district in the presidential race. But two years later the GOP bounced back, and Webster, a former state senator, won with 56 percent to Grayson's 38 percent.

Grayson said it's not clear if this was a lasting political shift or a temporary one.

"We saw an enormous swing from the Democratic Party to the Republican Party," Grayson said. "The whole country went from plus-8 (percentage points) Democrat to plus-9 Republican. Is it a permanent swing, as in Roosevelt's time? It's too early to say."

Some Redistricting Links « Re/Creating Tampa

http://www.recreatingtampa.com/2011/01/24/politics-monday-some-redistricting-links/

March 7, 2011

Not feeling very political today, so just a few links about Florida redistricting.

The industrious Peter Schorsch has launched a new blog covering Florida's redistricting process: [Inside the Lines](#).

“Inside the Lines’ offers the latest news, commentary and information on Florida’s reapportionment process, which is in the initial stage of a two-year process, culminating in the redrawing of the state’s Congressional and Legislative district boundaries.”

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Florida will use the [My District Builder](#) software for the process. The site is still in development.

Mitch Perry at *Creative Loafing* also points to Peter’s new site and [wonders why](#) we don’t have a bigger US House of Representatives.

Pam Bondi, our new AG, [files a motion to dismiss](#) the redistricting lawsuit brought by Reps Brown and Diaz-Balart.



“Inside the Lines” website debuts to track Florida’s redistricting process

<http://saintpetersblog.com/2011/01/24/%E2%80%9Cinside-the-lines%E2%80%9D-w ebsite-debuts-to-track-florida%E2%80%99s-redistricting-process/>

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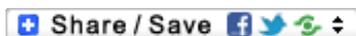
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Broward Politics | Sun Sentinel Blogs

http://weblogs.sun-sentinel.com/news/politics/broward/blog/2011/01/browards_perry_thurston_critc_1.html

January 24, 2011

State Rep. Perry Thurston, D-Plantation, argued Monday that the Republican leadership in the state House of Representatives was wrong to get involved in a court effort to overturn the voter approved amendment to reform Florida redistricting.

The amendment, added to the state Constitution in November by the voters, is aimed at reducing political gamesmanship when congressional, state Senate and state House districts are redrawn to reflect population changes uncovered in the every-10-years census.

The party in power invariably draws districts to give it advantages and hurt the minority party.

Republicans who run the state House moved to intervene in a challenge to the new amendment. [Read their motion.](#)

Here's Thurston's Monday statement:

State Rep. Perry E. Thurston, Jr. (D-Plantation) today expressed deep concern about a recently filed motion by the Florida House of Representatives to join a lawsuit that challenges one of the two "Fair Districts" amendments to the state constitution.

Representative Thurston, an attorney who serves as a Democratic Caucus designee on many redistricting-related issues, issued the following statement regarding the House motion to intervene as a plaintiff in a challenge to Amendment 6.

"With the passage of the Fair Districts amendments last November, Florida voters sent a clear message that they will no longer tolerate excessive partisan politics in the redistricting process. Florida voters want fair and competitive elections, which can only be drawn if the Legislature adheres to the merits of voter-approved Fair Districts' Amendments 5 and 6.

"I am deeply concerned that leaders of the Florida House of Representatives have decided to waste taxpayers' dollars attempting to thwart the will of the people through an ill-intended legal challenge that would only delay opportunities to end the era of gerrymandering that has left many Floridians without a sufficient voice in their government."

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JANUARY 24, 2011

Dean Cannon wants judicial activism -- at least with redistricting

After losing repeatedly in state court, the Florida House of Representatives has joined a federal lawsuit to stop the new amendments designed to stop the Legislature from drawing political districts that favor or disfavor incumbents or political parties.

The federal lawsuit was filed just after the November elections

(<http://www.miamiherald.com/2010/11/04/1907753/congressional-redistricting-law.html>) by U.S. Reps. Mario Diaz-Balart (R-Miami) and Corrine Brown (D-Jacksonville). The suit, though, only concerned the portion of redistricting concerning Congress, not the Legislature. As a result, the Florida House argues that the Legislature should have a say, too.

"It is the Legislature—not Plaintiffs—which has the primary responsibility for redistricting. And it is the Legislature—not Plaintiffs—whose prerogative will be challenged (and potentially invalidated) under the Amendment," the House filing says.

Democrats are crying foul. Along with liberal-leaning groups like the teachers' unions, Democrats backed the amendments, which could loosen the Republicans' grip on the Legislature and in Florida's congressional delegation.

The filing has some other interesting political dynamics. The House is led by Dean Cannon, who has been bristling at the judiciary for throwing some of the Legislature's proposed amendments off the ballot -- including an amendment he sponsored to check Amendments 5 & 6, which he's now trying to kill in court. So on one hand, judicial activism is bad when it comes to acts of the Legislature. But when citizens pass amendments with more than 60 percent of the vote.... then it's time to get the federal judiciary to strike the language from the state constitution.

Hmmm.

There are probably some complicated legal arguments that Cannon can and will muster to rectify the potentially contradictory stances. Still, it's worthy of note.

Another side note: The Florida Senate, where Senate President Mike Haridopolos is running for U.S. Senate, hasn't joined with the House in challenging Fair Districts. At least not yet. Here's the filing:

[Download Redistricting \(http://miamiherald.typepad.com/files/redistricting.pdf\)](http://miamiherald.typepad.com/files/redistricting.pdf)

Posted by Marc Caputo at 7:53:30 pm on January 24, 2011 | [Permalink](#) (<http://blogs/the-buzz-florida-politics/content/dean-cannon-wants-judicial-activism-least-redistricting/>) | [Comments \(15\)](#) (<http://blogs/the-buzz-florida-politics/content/dean-cannon-wants-judicial-activism-least-redistricting/#comments>) | [ShareThis](#) ([javascript:void\(0\)](http://www.sharethis.com/javascript:void(0)))

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League of Women Voters leader presses to implement redistricting reform

<http://allfloridablog.com/league-of-women-voters-leader-presses-to-implement-redistricting-reform/>

March 7, 2011

By at 25 January, 2011, 1:54 pm

Pamela Goodman, former president of the League of Women Voters of Palm Beach County, is pushing back against a move by Gov. Rick Scott's administration to slow implementation of the redistricting reform passed last year by Florida Voters. The amendment, added to the state Constitution in November by the voters, is aimed at reducing political gamesmanship when congressional, state Senate and state House districts are redrawn to reflect population changes uncovered in the every-10-years census. The party in power invariably draws districts to give it advantages and hurt the minority party. Under former Gov. Charlie Crist, the state had submitted regulations to the U.S. Department of Justice. Gov. Rick Scott's administration withdrew those regulations, drawing howls

of protest Tuesday from Fair Districts Now, which called it an abuse of power. Goodman is president of Fair Districts Now, which is policing implementation of the amendments, and redistricting chairwoman of the Florida League of Women Voters. "We will do whatever it takes to see to it that the new standards are implemented. We will not allow our hard earned rights and the clear vote and voice of over 3 million Florida voters to be eviscerated by those intent on avoiding their constitutional duty to create fairly drawn districts," she said. From the Fair Districts Now statement:

See the rest here: 

[League of Women Voters leader presses to implement redistricting reform](#)

Florida House joins challenge to strike congressional redistricting amendment

http://ballotpedia.org/wiki/index.php/Florida_House_joins_challenge_to_strike_congressional_redistricting_amendment

March 7, 2011

From Ballotpedia

January 25, 2011

TALLAHASSEE, Florida: Challenges against voter-approved [Amendment 6](#) continue to develop. On Monday, [January 24, 2011](#), the [Florida House of Representatives](#) formally filed to join the challenge against the redistricting measure.

Approved by 63% of voters on [November 2, 2010](#), the measure called for amending the practice of drawing congressional district boundaries in such ways that they establish "fairness," are "as equal in population as feasible" and use "city, county and geographical boundaries." A day following the general election, [Rep. Mario Diaz-Balart](#) and [Rep. Corrine Brown](#) filed *Brown v State of Florida*. The lawmakers argue that the measure is unconstitutional.

According to House spokesperson Katie Betta, "The U.S. Constitution delegates authority to the state legislatures to draw congressional districts. The House believes its constitutional authority has been impeded by Amendment 6."^{[1][2]} According to reports, the [Senate](#) has not made efforts to join the suit.^[2]

Prior to the 2010 elections, the legislature approved an [additional redistricting measure](#) but it was removed from the ballot prior to the [2010 elections](#) by court order. The state's high court ruled in [late August](#) that the measure was misleading because it did not highlight to voters the effect on the state's district requirements and because it would undermine the state's current requirement that districts be "contiguous."

Amendment 6 also [faced legal challenges in 2010](#) by Representatives Brown and Diaz-Balart but in late August case was dismissed by the [state's high court](#).

In response to the [January 24](#) developments, [Rep. Perry Thurston](#) called the [House's](#) actions a waste of taxpayers' money to try to "thwart the will of the people." Others called the efforts, an attempt by [Republicans](#) to save their own jobs.^[3]

The state of Florida gained two seats from the reapportionment after the 2010 census. The state population increased by 2.8 million residents, or 17.6 percent.^[4] The state will now have 27 members in the U.S. House. The [Florida State Legislature](#) is responsible for drawing those districts' boundaries. However, [House Speaker Dean Cannon](#) announced in [December 2010](#) that committee appointments to the redistricting commission would be delayed until 2011 while staff analyze the impact of Amendments [5](#) & [6](#).^[5]

See also

a [Florida Congressional District Boundaries, Amendment 6 \(2010\)](#)

References

- [↑] [Associated Press](#), "Fla. House challenges redistricting amendment," [January 25, 2011](#)
- [↑] [2.0 2.1 The Ledger](#), "Fla. House Joins Lawsuit to Strike Down Redistricting Amendment 6," [January 24, 2011](#)

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3. [↑ *The Herald Tribune*, "House asking to join lawsuit over redistricting." January 25, 2011](#)
4. [↑ *Naples News*, "Florida picks up 2 congressional seats, 2010 Census shows," December 21, 2010](#)
5. [↑ *Orlando Sentinel*, "Cannon taps committee chairs, delays redistricting appointments," December 7, 2010](#)



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Fl. politicians unite against anti-Gerrymandering law

<http://www.dcjunkies.com/showthread.php?t=18009>

March 7, 2011

Gov. Rick Scott, Dean Cannon and Corrine Brown all want to thwart your vote Scott Maxwell -
TAKING NAMES

7:36 p.m. EST, January 25, 2011

If residents of a Third World country voted and their leaders tried to throw out those votes, Americans would be aghast.

Yet, right here in Florida, your very own leaders have joined forces to overturn your vote.

And it's time for us to get loud.

The subject is **Fair Districts**, which Floridians overwhelmingly passed last fall, trying to end the shady practice of gerrymandering, where legislators draw tailor-made districts for themselves and their cronies.

But the politicians have never wanted a fair fight. So they've crossed party lines to try to overturn your vote.

The latest news broke Tuesday when it was revealed that **Gov. Rick Scott had secretly blocked paperwork needed to make the Fair Districts laws take effect.**

He did so on Jan. 7 three days after he took office and without letting any of his constituents know.

Democrat Corrine Brown wasn't any better. The November votes had barely been counted when she filed a lawsuit, along with South Florida Republican Mario Diaz-Balart, trying to nullify them.

And then Republican House Speaker Dean Cannon decided he wanted to help Brown out by asking the state House to join her lawsuit.

Yes, Republicans and Democrats coming together for the noblest of causes to protect their own rear ends and fiefdoms.

The gist of Brown and Cannon's claim: Florida voters didn't really have the right to pass Fair Districts.

Apparently these guys think you got it right when you voted them into office but were way off-base when you supported a constitutional amendment they didn't like.

I guess you're just selectively stupid.

And it's up to Rick Scott, Dean Cannon and Corrine Brown to set you straight.

In reality, no one is accusing these guys of being Third World dictators.

Most dictators are far more charismatic.

More importantly, they don't dictate anything. They rely on far more modern maneuvers and machinations and the legal system they selectively demonize.

Scott relies upon secrecy and technicalities.

Brown has special-interest donors who fill her legal-expense fund.

And Cannon has legal counsel paid for by the same taxpayers whose vote he wants to overturn.

One of the most interesting things about this political fight, so full of complicated strategies, is that the principle at the center of it all is so simple: Gerrymandering is wrong.

Even schoolchildren know this.

Gerrymandering is why our congressional districts snake through six, seven and even eight counties, sometimes splitting neighborhoods in two.

It's why Brown lives in Jacksonville but represents Orlando; and why Republican John Mica lives in Winter Park but has a district office more than 100 miles away in St. Augustine.

It's also why legislative races are so rarely competitive and why incumbents are so rarely defeated sometimes not a single one in the entire state.

The system has been rigged for years by both Democrats and Republicans.

That's why voters of all partisan stripes joined forces to demand that politicians stop drawing districts based upon party affiliation and start using geographic sense.

The amendments were so popular that they passed 63 percent to 37 percent a victory margin larger than what was earned by many of the politicians now fighting the amendments.

And now the politicians are trying to thwart the public's will.

Tell them to mind their own business. Demand that they respect your vote.

After all, these attempts to obstruct democracy aren't happening in a Third World country. They're happening in your own backyard.

Just another hunch based upon jumping conclusions
Caught up in endless solutions
Backed up against a wall of confusion. Living a life of illusion
☯m mani padme hum

Florida Gov. Withdraws Redistricting Submission

<http://electionlawcenter.com/2011/01/25/florida-gov-withdraws-redistricting-submission.aspx?ref=rss>

March 7, 2011

Florida Governor Rick Scott has withdrawn a submission to the DOJ of new redistricting rules. This story seems to miss the possibilities. It [notes](#) - "earlier this month, new Gov. Rick Scott sent a letter to DOJ withdrawing the request for preclearance of the Florida plan."

Here are a couple of possibilities. Perhaps Governor Scott recognized what this website has been saying for months - submit your plans directly to federal court and by-pass the DOJ. Georgia did it. Maybe Florida is doing it too. States can avoid the secretive DOJ administrative approval process by going straight to an unbiased federal judge. Hopefully that's what Rick Scott is up to.

Another interesting possibility is, what if nothing requires Rick Scott to submit the plan? What if no Florida statute requires the Governor to actually submit changes? Section 5 can function in a peculiar way. If there is a law with which an executive disagrees, the executive can simply refuse to submit the law to the DOJ (or to the federal court) and if there is no legal remedy (or obligation) under state law, it would seem that the law would never take effect. If no state law compels an executive to submit the plan for preclearance, how could a mandamus lie against the executive. A strange quirky possibility indeed. Is this what Rick Scott is up to? If so, he must have some pretty saving Voting Rights lawyers down there. Time will tell.



Florida withdrew anti-gerrymandering amendments shortly after Rick Scott took office

<http://jacksonville.com/opinion/blog/403455/brandon-larrabee/2011-01-25/florida-withdrew-anti-gerrymandering-amendments> March 7, 2011

UPDATED 5:45 p.m. ET with comment from Sen. Nan Rich.

UPDATED 3:05 p.m. ET with comment from Scott's office.

TALLAHASSEE -- Shortly after Gov. Rick Scott took office and named his choice for secretary of state, the state halted efforts to gain federal approval for two constitutional redistricting amendments passed by voters last November.

Scott's office said the move is in keeping with his executive order freezing new rules and regulations, which he signed on the first day of his term.

You might remember that Scott was sworn in Jan. 4. On Jan. 5, he named Kurt Browning as his pick for secretary of state. On Jan. 7, the state department -- where Browning hadn't yet formally taken over -- withdrew a request that the U.S. Department of Justice "preclear" the amendments.

Florida is one of several states that must, because of its history of voting discrimination, submit practically all changes in voting and redistricting procedures to the DOJ for preclearance before the changes take effect. According to FairDistricts Now, a group supporting Amendments 5 and 6, the new standards were submitted Dec. 10, while Gov. Charlie Crist was still in office.

Amendments 5 and 6 aim at barring lawmakers from crafting the state's legislative and congressional districts for political reasons in the once-a-decade redistricting process, expected to begin this year and continue through early 2012. Voters approved the amendments in the state general elections in November, despite opposition from U.S. Rep. Corrine Brown, a Democratic congresswoman from a Jacksonville-area district, and others.

Opponents formed a group called Protect Your Vote -- headed by former (and soon-to-be future) Secretary of State Kurt Browning.

On Tuesday, FairDistricts Now released a letter, dated Monday, that called on Browning to resubmit the application:

More than 3.1 million Floridians voted for these reforms in November, and your actions seem calculated to obstruct their implementation. Further, Floridians have a right to know why their Secretary of State and their Governor are engaging in a course of conduct so clearly intended to frustrate their will as expressed at the polls.

FairDistricts Now President Pamela Goodman:

We will do whatever it takes to see to it that the new standards are implemented. We will not allow our hard earned rights and the clear vote and voice of over 3 million Florida voters to be eviscerated by those intent on avoiding their constitutional duty to create fairly drawn districts.

In an e-mail, Scott spokesman Brian Hughes said the withdrawal was part of Scott's efforts to review new regulations and was unlikely to keep the standards from affecting the new maps:

Consistent with Governor Scott's effort to assess the rules, regulations and contracts of the previous administration, he has withdrawn the letter requesting a DOJ review of Amendments 5 and 6. Census data has not been transmitted to the state yet and the Legislature will not undertake redistricting for months, so this withdrawal in no way impedes the process of redrawing Florida's legislative and congressional districts.

But in a sharply worded statement issued late Tuesday, Senate Democratic Leader Nan Rich of Weston blasted that reasoning:

The governor needs to remember that only 48 percent of Floridians voted for his candidacy. The Fair Districts Amendments 5 and 6 passed with 63 percent of the votes cast. If the governor is looking for a mandate, it is undoubtedly the voters' overwhelming desire to end the ability of lawmakers to draw their district boundaries to their own benefit or that of their party. ...

For the governor to shun the will of the majority is unconscionable. For him now to hide behind his ill-advised executive order is absurd. The decision to freeze regulations and contracts has already unleashed a nightmare for those businesses and Floridians eager to 'get to work.' Apparently, shutting down jobs was not enough; now he's shutting down the voice of the people.

[Flag as offensive](#)

Rick Scott moves to delay redistrict plan - Florida

<http://www.miamiherald.com/2011/01/25/2034274/scott-moves-to-delay-redistrict.html>

March 7, 2011

TALLAHASSEE -- Two voter-approved constitutional amendments requiring the Legislature to draw political districts along nonpartisan standards could be jeopardized by one of Gov. Rick Scott's first acts.

Three days after Scott took office, the state quietly withdrew its request that the U.S. Justice Department approve Amendments 5 and 6 as required under the Voting Rights Act of 1965, effectively stalling their implementation just as a Republican-led lawsuit challenges their constitutionality.

At the time, Scott was recruiting as his top elections advisor Kurt Browning, who actively campaigned against the two ballot measures last fall while not working for the state. Browning's spokesman said he had no role in the decision.

"One of the things that we're looking at is the amendments that were passed, how they're going to be implemented," Scott told reporters in Jacksonville on Tuesday. "We want to make sure that with regard to redistricting, it's fair, it's the right way of doing it. So it's something I'm clearly focused on."

Scott's deputy communications director, Brian Hughes, said the withdrawal letter was prompted by Scott's desire to assess all state rules and regulations.

Hughes added: "Census data has not been transmitted to the state yet and the Legislature will not undertake redistricting for months, so this withdrawal in no way impedes the process of redrawing Florida's legislative and congressional districts."

Voters strongly endorsed both measures, each receiving more than three million votes, while Scott and the Republican-controlled Legislature opposed them.

The move injects more partisanship into the politically charged process known as reapportionment and drew criticism from Fair Districts Now, the group that worked for the amendments' passage.

"More than 3.1 million Floridians voted for these reforms in November, and your actions seem calculated to obstruct their implementation," said former state Sen. Dan Gelber, the Democratic candidate for attorney general in November and counsel to Fair Districts Now.

"Further, Floridians have a right to know why their secretary of state and their governor are engaging in a course of conduct so clearly intended to frustrate their will as expressed at the polls."

The two changes to the state Constitution require approval by the U.S. Department of Justice because they affect voting standards for racial and ethnic minorities in Florida, a process known as "pre-clearance" under the Voting Rights Act.

Then-Gov. Charlie Crist sent a letter to the federal government in December asking for pre-clearance. But on Jan. 7, three days after Scott took office, the Department of State sent a one-sentence letter to the Justice Department Voting Rights Section that said, "The Florida Department of State withdraws the above-referenced submission."

The Justice Department had no immediate comment.

The amendments are already the target of a federal lawsuit filed by U.S. Reps. Mario Diaz-Balart, R-Miami, and Corrine Brown, D-Jacksonville, who contend the changes violate the voting rights laws.

On Monday, the Florida House of Representatives signed on to that lawsuit. The Florida

Democratic Party plans to intervene on behalf of Fair Districts Now.

Browning, a former Pasco County elections supervisor, resigned as Crist's secretary of state in April 2010. Scott re-hired him after he was sworn in Jan. 4.

While out of office, Browning served as the unpaid chairman of Protect Your Vote, a political action committee that raised nearly \$4 million, more than half of it from the Republican Party of Florida, in an attempt to defeat Amendments 5 and 6. Realtors, sugar growers, the Florida Chamber of Commerce, TECO Energy and other GOP-aligned groups also donated generously to the PAC.

Browning's spokesman, Trey Stapleton, said Browning had not yet returned to the agency when the Scott administration made the decision to withdraw the pre-clearance request.

Herald/Times staff writer Michael C. Bender contributed to this report. Steve Bousquet can be reached at bousquet@sptimes.com or 850-224-7263.

Scott withdraws state request to have feds review redistricting amendments

<http://miamiherald.typepad.com/nakedpolitics/2011/01/scott-withdraws-state-request-to-have-feds-review-redistricting-amendments.html>

March 7, 2011

In what may be an attempt to keep the U.S. Justice Department at bay as Republicans challenge Florida's two new redistricting amendments, Gov. **Rick Scott** and his Secretary of State **Kurt Browning** have withdrawn a request to have the federal government clear the new amendments.

Federal law requires Florida to have its redistricting proposals cleared by the U. S. Department of Justice to make sure they do not dilute or diminish minority voting access under the federal Voting Rights Act. When voters approved the Fair District's Amendments 5 and 6 by 63 percent in November, they imposed new standards for legislators to follow when drawing district lines in 2012. Before Scott got into office, Florida's acting-Secretary of State **Dawn Roberts** submitted the new standards to the DOJ seeking approval of the new language.

In a Jan. 7 letter to the DOJ, the state has now withdrawn that request for review. Why? No telling, except there is a Republican-led lawsuit to challenge the constitutionality of the voter-approved amendments. Scott appointed Roberts' predecessor, Kurt Browning, to resume his role as secretary of state. During his brief stint away from the Secretary of State's job, Browning was chairman of the campaign to defeat Amendments 5 and 6.

So do they think that DOJ approval of the amendments hurts the lawsuit?

Reached in Jacksonville, Scott didn't shed any light except to say that he's determined to be fair: "One of the things that we're looking at is the amendments that were passed, how they're going to be implemented. We want to make sure that with regard to redistricting, it's fair, it's the right way of doing it. So it's something I'm clearly focused on."

On Browning's role, he said: "My agents will do everything we can to make sure it's fairly done."

Fair Districts spokeswoman **Jackie Lee** called the decision to withdraw the request an attempt "to thwart the will of the overwhelming majority of Florida voters." The organization is now considering whether to sue the state to have the new standards reviewed by DOJ.

Whatever the result of the lawsuit, the redistricting plans will eventually have to go before the federal government and receive "pre-clearance" under the Voting Rights Act anyway.

-- Mike Bender and Steve Bousquet contributed to this report

Scott Maxwell: Scott, Cannon and Brown all want to thwart your vote

<http://www.orlandosentinel.com/news/opinion/view/s/os-scott-maxwell-fair-districts-0126120110125,0,4387247.column>

March 7, 2011

If residents of a Third World country voted and their leaders tried to throw out those votes, Americans would be aghast.

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And Cannon has legal counsel paid for by the same taxpayers whose vote he wants to overturn.

House, Senate will hold 20 hearings on redistricting | Post on Politics

<http://www.postonpolitics.com/2011/01/house-senate-will-hold-20-hearings-on-redistricting/>

March 7, 2011

by Dara Kam | January 25th, 2011

House and Senate leaders will hold at least 20 public hearings throughout the state regarding the drawing of Florida's legislative and Congressional seats, Senate Reapportionment Committee Chairman Don Gaetz announced today.

House Speaker Dean Cannon, who yesterday asked to join the lawsuit challenging one of the amendments approved by voters barring lawmakers from drawing districts that favor incumbents or parties, has yet to appoint his members to the House's redistricting committee.

But Gaetz said that should happen soon and that the House and Senate will hold joint meetings around the state to get the public's input on the new districts.

Florida lawmakers should be able to begin drawing new districts as early as the end of March when the block-by-block census data is scheduled to be released.

Lawmakers draw the new districts for legislative and Congressional seats every 10 years.

But they'll have to do it differently this year based on two amendments overwhelmingly approved by voters in November that bar lawmakers from drawing districts that favor incumbents or parties.

[Days after he took office, Gov. Rick Scott withdrew the state's request to the feds to sign off on the amendments.](#) Florida is one of several states that require U.S. Department of Justice approval before any changes are made to voting rights and elections.

Lawmakers fiercely opposed the amendments last year and tried to put their own redistricting amendment on the ballot to counteract Amendments 5 and 6, or the "Fair Districts" amendments, placed on the ballot through the petition initiative process. But the Florida Supreme Court threw out the legislature's amendment, ruling it was misleading to voters.

Tags: [Dean Cannon](#), [Don Gaetz](#), [reapportionment](#), [redistricting](#), [Rick Scott](#)

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January 25th, 2011 | Category: Civil Rights, National Politics | Leave a comment

Politics Monday: Some **Redistricting** Links

Not feeling very political today, so just a few links about Florida **redistricting**.

The industrious Peter Schorsch has launched a new blog covering Florida's **redistricting** process: **Inside the Lines**.

“Inside the Lines’ offers the latest news, commentary and information on Florida’s reapportionment process, which is in the initial stage of a two-year process, culminating in the redrawing of the state’s Congressional and Legislative district boundaries.”

Peter also maintains the excellent **St. Petersburg & Battleground Tampa Bay**.

Florida will use the **My District Builder** software for the process. The site is still in development.

Mitch Perry at *Creative Loafing* also points to Peter’s new site and **wonders why** we don’t have a bigger US House of Representatives.

Pam Bondi, our new AG, **files a motion to dismiss** the **redistricting** lawsuit brought by Reps Brown and Diaz-Balart.

Florida House joins lawsuit on redrawing of congressional districts

[http://www.tampabay.com/incoming/florida-house-joins-law-suit-on-redrawing-of-congressional-districts/1147429?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+StatelineorgRss-Politics2+\(Stateline.org+RSS+-+Politics](http://www.tampabay.com/incoming/florida-house-joins-law-suit-on-redrawing-of-congressional-districts/1147429?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+StatelineorgRss-Politics2+(Stateline.org+RSS+-+Politics)

March 7, 2011

News Service of Florida
In Print: Tuesday, January 25, 2011

TALLAHASSEE The Florida House of Representatives has joined a lawsuit to strike down a new constitutional amendment that outlines how lawmakers must draw congressional districts.

The requirement, added to the Constitution by voters in November, would essentially ban the practice of gerrymandering, meaning lawmakers would have to draw more regular, compact districts with no favor for incumbents or political parties, rather than odd-shaped districts that favor a party or some other group.

Lawmakers fought the amendment unsuccessfully.

"The U.S. Constitution delegates authority to the state legislatures to draw congressional districts," House spokeswoman Katie Betta said. "The House believes its constitutional authority has been impeded by Amendment 6."

[Last modified: Jan 24, 2011 09:35 PM]



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Fla. House challenges redistricting amendment

<http://www.wflx.com/Global/story.asp?S=13901196>

March 7, 2011

Associated Press - January 25, 2011 3:14 AM ET

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (AP) - The Florida House is asking to join a lawsuit challenging a new state constitutional amendment on congressional redistricting.

The federal court filing in Miami drew criticism Monday from Democrats. They accused Republican House leaders of trying to thwart voters who approved the Fair Districts amendment by more than 60% in November.

The amendment bars gerrymandering to benefit political parties and incumbents. The House says it would infringe on lawmakers' redistricting authority. The Senate so far is not trying to join the suit.

It was filed by U.S. Reps. Corrine Brown, D-Jacksonville, and Mario Diaz-Balart, R-Miami.

Voters approved a similar amendment on legislative redistricting, but it's not being challenged.

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Scott pulls back FL redistricting amendments

<http://www.wtvl.com/mostpopular/story/Scott-pulls-back-FL-redistricting-amendments/4F4pB3HUT0iJFMunaOVYXg.csp>

March 7, 2011

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. (AP) - A spokesman for Gov. Rick Scott has confirmed he quietly pulled back a request for federal approval of two new redistricting amendments to the Florida Constitution.

Brian Huges on Tuesday said the new Republican governor acted just days after taking office Jan. 4 as part of his freeze on new state rules pending review by the new administration. The Justice Department must approve election law changes to ensure they are not discriminatory. Supporters of the Fair Districts amendments, which voters adopted in November, cried foul. Florida Democratic Party Chairman Rod Smith said the withdrawal was "shameful." Huges, though, said there will be plenty of time to get the amendments approved before redistricting is completed next year.

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Florida governor halts redistricting amendments

http://ballotpedia.org/w iki/index.php/Florida_governor_halts_redistricting_amendments

March 7, 2011

From Ballotpedia

January 26, 2011



TALLAHASSEE, Florida: Two redistricting amendments - [Amendment 5](#) and [Amendment 6](#) - have officially been put on hold.

On [January 25, 2011](#) Brian Hughes, a spokesperson for [Gov. Rick Scott](#), confirmed that the [governor](#) pulled a request for federal approval of Amendment 5 and Amendment 6. Scott is reported to have acted three days after taking office on [January 4, 2011](#). The paperwork for approval of the measures was filed [December 10, 2010](#) by [former Gov. Charlie Crist](#).^[1]

According to the federal Voting Rights Act, the state of Florida is required to receive "pre-clearance" of changes to its election laws that affect minority rights.^[1]

On Tuesday, [January 25](#) Scott told the news media, "One of the things that we're looking at is the amendments that were passed, how they're going to be implemented. We want to make sure that with regard to redistricting, it's fair, it's the right way of doing it. So it's something I'm clearly focused on."^[2]

"Census data has not been transmitted to the state yet, and the Legislature will not undertake redistricting for months, so this withdrawal in no way impedes the process of redrawing Florida's legislative and congressional districts," said Hughes of Scott's request withdrawal.^[1]

In reaction to the governor's actions, supporters of the measures said the act was "shameful."^[3]

Amendment 6 is currently tied up in a legal battle. Opponents argue that the measure is unconstitutional. Most recently the [Florida House of Representatives joined the challenge to oppose the measure](#).

Both Amendment 5 and 6 were approved by voters on [November 2, 2010](#) by an estimated 63%.

See also

- a [Florida Legislative District Boundaries, Amendment 5 \(2010\)](#)
- a [Florida Congressional District Boundaries, Amendment 6 \(2010\)](#)

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Redistricting website: Florida's congressional districts rank among the nation's least compact

<http://floridaindependent.com/20382/redistricting-website-some-florida-congressional-districts-rank-amongst-the-nations-least-compact>

March 7, 2011

The Florida House of Representatives has launched its public [redistricting website](#), and lawmakers are getting to work drawing congressional boundaries that comply ([lawsuits](#) notwithstanding) with two new constitutional amendments intended to require geographically compact districts that don't favor or disfavor political parties, racial groups or incumbents. <#>

Some legislative leaders — [including Senate President Mike Haridopolos](#) — have contended that the amendments create a difficult standard to meet: Just what is a “Fair District”? <#>

One measure of a district's fairness is its compactness, and the software firm Azavea has a [website](#) that measures it by four commonly used standards. <#>

Two of the measures test how far a district is spread from its center: Is it drawn as tightly as possible, or does it wind its way from Jacksonville to Orlando? The other two test the smoothness of a district's boundaries: Is it a neat square, or a contorted blob with amoeba-like appendages jutting out to grab convenient blocks of voters? <#>

The site offers comparisons of individual districts and states as a whole. Low scores may indicate gerrymandering. Of the 43 states with multiple congressional representatives, Florida ranks third in the test of districts' spread, and 10th and seventh on the two scales measuring smoothness. <#>

Some of Florida's lowest-scoring districts include the [22nd](#), currently represented by Allen West, R-Fort Lauderdale. A jagged “swing” district carved along the South Florida coast, it ranks among the five lowest scores. <#>

Florida's [3rd district](#), represented by Corrine Brown, D-Jacksonville, which snakes from Orlando to Jacksonville and touches Gainesville along the way, ranks eighth by one measure of its spread, and just outside the top 10 on the other three measures. <#>

The [18th district](#), represented by Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, R-Miami, scores poorly by one of the measures, but geography probably plays a role: Her district includes the Florida Keys, which stretch its boundaries away from the center of an otherwise compact district. <#>

Azavea points out on the site's [FAQ](#) that compactness is not a perfect measure of fairness. Drawing perfectly compact districts could benefit the majority party or exclude minorities from representation (a key contention in Brown's lawsuit challenging the Fair Districts amendments): <#>

A number of scholars have suggested that compactness measures are best used not as absolute standards against which a single district's shape is judged, but rather as a way to assess the relative merits of various proposed plans. Above all, compactness is most meaningful within the framework of an institutional redistricting process. <#>

<#>

Haridopolos on redistricting: 'Inherent contradictions' in 'Fair Districts' amendments

<http://floridaindependent.com/20239/mike-haridopolos-on-redistricting-inherent-contradictions-in-fair-districts-amendments>

January 27, 2011

Senate President Mike Haridopolos, R-Merritt Island, said Wednesday that while he has so far declined follow House Speaker Dean Cannon in his decision to [join the lawsuit](#) challenging Florida's two popular anti-gerrymandering amendments, he felt the case should be heard before they are submitted to the U.S. Department of Justice for approval. <#>

Gov. Rick Scott [withdrew the amendments](#) from review by the justice department days after taking office. Haridopolos said there will be plenty of time for federal review once the lawsuit is decided. <#>

He promised "the most open, transparent reapportionment process ever," but also said, as he has in the past, that the amendments contained "inherent contradictions" that will lead to "one lawsuit after another." <#>

"How do you favor nor disfavor an incumbent?" he asked reporters. "You all help me sift through that. Maybe we'll take some classes in philosophy at FSU together, I don't know." <#>

Check out a clip of Haridopolos' comments: <#>

[Mike Haridopolos on Redistricting 1-26-11](#) from [Travis Pillow](#) on [Vimeo](#). <#>

Have Florida Leaders Lost Sight of Who They Serve?

http://www.wctv.com/news/headlines/Have_Florida_Leaders_Lost_Sight_of_Who_They_Serve_114735064.html?ref=064

March 7, 2011

TALLAHASSEE, FL -

Not two months ago, in the November election, with a broad turnout of roughly 50% of Florida's electorate, the people in overwhelming numbers called for setting rules for how political districts are drawn.

This week newly elected Governor Scott instructed his Secretary of State to halt, and actually recall the first steps to put the voter's mandate into action.

Voters should be angry. Very angry.

"Governor Scott sent a clear message to voters in Florida with this action - that he knows better than voters, and is in no rush to heed their mandate," says state League president Deirdre Macnab, adding: "The League calls on Florida leadership to follow the will of the voters and not their own self interest in protecting their reelection."

A clear pattern by leaders is suggesting they are putting their own interests in getting reelected before the vote of the electorate. Take a look at the pattern:

Secretary Kurt Browning, the spokesman for the opposition efforts, which fought passage of amendments 5 and 6, is now in charge of its implementation. This week he sent a letter to the Department of Justice recalling the start of the formal review process.

House Speaker Dean Cannon has resisted appointing members to the House Redistricting Committee, and earlier this month opted to join the lawsuit contesting the amendment that deals with Congressional Redistricting.

The irony of these actions in contrast to Senator Don Gaetz's (chair of Senate Reapportionment Committee) quote "The people have spoken," shows the truth of the phrase: "actions speak louder than words."

The League notes that this combination of events presents a clear movement by leadership to shut down the majority voice of the people in their call for clear rules in our Constitution.

The Florida League along with our 30 local League of Women Voters chapters across the state will continue to monitor closely the process over the next several months as we continue our call for timely and open progress on implementing the people's voice.

Latest Comments

Posted by: Pete Zahut on Jan 28, 2011 at 08:36 AM

"WE" told you!! Scott is a criminal, but you idiots voted for him. Anybody that stupid deserves him, but those of us who saw through this criminal SOB should not have to pay for it! RECALL!! RECALL!!!

Posted by: lady please on Jan 27, 2011 at 07:44 PM

I attended the inaugural breakfast and the keynote speaker said " people get the government they deserve" AMEN BROTHER...AMEN!

Posted by: Tony Location: Tallahassee *on Jan 27, 2011 at 06:48 PM*

We have an option here. We can do what California did years ago. RECALL Governor Scott.

Scott tables Fair Districting amendments; Dems push governor for records

<http://w.atcdog.flatoday.net/2011/01/scott-tables-fair-districting.html>

March 7, 2011



Last November, Florida voters passed two amendments to the state constitution that require the Legislature to draw legislative and congressional districts that are contiguous, compact, that use existing city and county boundaries where possible and that are not designed to favor any particular political party.

The purpose of the amendments was to eliminate the sometimes wildly contorted districts that Floridians have seen over the years. Both Republicans and Democrats have benefited from the free-form districts created over the years.

Deciding they had enough, Florida voters passed the amendments with 63 percent of the vote, despite heavy negative campaigning by those who stood to lose some political power if they passed, notably Senate President Mike Haridopolos, R-Merritt Island.

Now newly elected Gov. Rick Scott has taken a step to at least delay implementation of the amendments. Since the changes have the potential to effect minority voting rights, they require "pre-clearance" by the U.S. Department of Justice. Then Gov. Charlie Crist applied for the pre-clearances in December.

But now Scott has withdrawn that request. While the request didn't cite a reason for the withdrawal, a spokesman for the governor said it was part of Scott's efforts to review state rules and regulations.

The Democrats have responded by filing a [public records request](#) with the governor's office for all e-mails, memos, correspondence and other documents having to do with the withdrawal.

The Legislature won't begin to tackle redistricting until later this year, so it is entirely possible that the governor will resubmit the request and it will be approved in time. Still, should the governor take any steps that appear to be counter to will of nearly two-thirds of the state's voters? What do you think?

Cannon: No plan to challenge 2nd remapping measure - Florida Wires

<http://www.miamiherald.com/2011/01/29/2040510/cannon-no-plan-to-challenge-2nd.html>

January 31, 2011

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. -- House Speaker Dean Cannon says he has no plans to challenge the second of two new state constitutional amendments on redistricting - at least not yet.

The Winter Park Republican on Friday said he's waiting to hear from the House's legal team before making any decision on the citizen initiative.

The Fair Districts amendment prohibits gerrymandering legislative districts to favor incumbents or a particular political party.

The House earlier this week asked to join a lawsuit challenging a similar amendment on congressional redistricting. The suit was filed by U.S. Reps. Corrine Brown, D-Jacksonville, and Mario Diaz-Balart, R-Miami.

Cannon said it's important to determine if that amendment conflicts with federal law.

More New Resources in the Florida Redistricting Saga

<http://w.arnerkirby.blogs.com/spencerian/2011/01/update-more-new-resources-in-the-florida-redistricting-saga.html>

March 7, 2011

Last Sunday [I linked to the new Florida redistricting site](#) from Peter Schorsch called [Inside the Lines](#) (don't forget to check it out if you haven't already). In my commentary, I noted that the site from the Florida House Redistricting Committee was, um.... "far less impressive."

Late that night I got an email message from House Redistricting Committee Staff Director J. Alex Kelly giving me a sneak peek of their new site. After I got over the shock of a guy as important as him finding and reading this blog, I immediately felt guilty. He was gracious, understanding, and really pretty cool for a guy whose work had just been dinged by a minor-league blogger like me (I'm sure the phrase "far less impressive" was bandied about the committee offices plenty this past week).

Well, here's the new [Florida Redistricting site](#). And here is the very, very impressive [MyDistrict Builder](#).

I also encourage you to download their [public participation PDF](#) and distribute it as appropriate.

This is good stuff. I think Peter will agree with me, these resources will work hand-in-hand with [Inside the Lines](#) nicely.

As I said in that post, I think redistricting will be some of the biggest news out of Florida -- if not *the* big news. I also made it pretty clear in that first paragraph that I pretty much have no clue what I'm talking about when it comes to redistricting. The site and the builder from the Redistricting Committee will go a long way in helping me understand it.

Thanks to Mr. Kelly and his team for putting up with smug bloggers like me -- and more important, for providing Floridians with such a great resource.

Democrats criticize Scott over redistricting move

<http://www.2.tbo.com/content/2011/jan/30/democrats-criticize-scott-for-halting-request-for-new-s-politics/>

March 7, 2011

By [WILLIAM MARCH](#) | The Tampa Tribune

Published: January 30, 2011

TAMPA - Political opponents are accusing Gov. Rick Scott of a political ploy to delay implementing two constitutional amendments intended to limit gerrymandering of congressional and state legislative districts.

Scott has given varying reasons for his unusual, unpublicized action in shortstopping a routine request for preliminary federal approval of the amendments, which were approved by voters Nov. 2.

But those reasons, his critics say, don't explain the situation.

At the same time, the state House of Representatives, led by Speaker Dean Cannon, R-Winter Park, is seeking to join a lawsuit by two Congress members against the state of Florida to overturn the amendments.

Critics have said Cannon, in effect, is spending taxpayer money to reverse a decision by the voters. But Cannon called that "a mischaracterization," and said it's necessary for the Legislature "to find out what the rules are in advance" before undertaking redistricting.

He said his action and Scott's "were made independently of each other."

Over time, it's expected the amendments could weaken the large GOP majorities in the state Legislature and congressional delegation. Republicans strongly opposed them and Democrats backed them.

Scott's stated reasons for the withdrawal, including a lack of Census data, "make no sense. It was obviously done for political reasons," said Dan Gelber, unsuccessful Democratic candidate for attorney general last year and now attorney for FairDistrictsFlorida, which campaigned for the amendments.

Scott confirmed last week that just after taking office, he withdrew the state's request to the U.S. Justice Department for "pre-clearance" of Amendments 5 and 6. Both passed Nov. 2 by 63 percent margins.

One amendment applies to congressional districts and one to state legislative districts, all drawn by the state Legislature after each Census. Former Gov. Charlie Crist had filed the pre-clearance application after the election.

Scott's withdrawal wasn't announced until after news reports revealed it last week.

Under the Voting Rights of 1965, any change in Florida's statewide voting procedures, including the amendments, is subject to legal challenge if it weakens the voting power of racial minorities.

Pre-clearance is an advance opinion by the Justice Department that the changes conform to the Voting Rights Act.

Scott spokesman Brian Hughes said early last week the withdrawal was "consistent with Governor Scott's effort to assess the rules, regulations and contracts of the previous administration."

Scott gave a slightly different explanation on the amendments to reporters in Lakeland Wednesday.

He said the application "was premature. We didn't have enough information ... We're going to get all the information we need, the Census data and things like that and then we'll do the right thing."

He didn't explain why Census data or any other data were necessary to ask the Department of Justice for approval of amendment language already passed by voters. A request to his press office for clarification didn't produce a response by late last week.

Gelber said the pre-clearance request "has nothing to do with Census data. ... The purpose is to simply look at whether a change affects minority voting power."

Census data are crucial in drawing the districts, to be done over the next year for use in the November 2012 election. The state will have to seek another pre-clearance for the district plan then, said Gelber.

Democrats blasted Scott over the move.

"For the governor to shun the will of the majority is unconscionable," said state Senate minority leader Nan Rich, noting he got 48 percent of the vote, much less than the amendments.

The Protect Your Vote committee, which campaigned against the amendments, was heavily funded by the state Republican Party. FairDistrictsFlorida included Democratic and Republican leaders, but was heavily funded by Democratic-leaning donors.

Secretary of State Kurt Browning, appointed by Scott, whose department oversees Florida elections, chaired Protect Your Vote. Scott reportedly has said he didn't know that.

Browning also held his post under Crist, but left in April.

Spokesman Trey Stapleton said Browning didn't take office until after Scott withdrew the pre-clearance application and couldn't comment on it.

Hughes, Scott's spokesman, contended the application withdrawal won't interfere with the process of drawing the districts because the state doesn't yet have all the data needed to draw them.

Gelber, however, said it might, noting that legislative redistricting committees are already meeting and taking testimony.

But Senate redistricting committee Chairman Don Gaetz said Friday the issue won't affect his committee's work.

"We're proceeding under the sure knowledge that Amendments 5 and 6 have been approved by the voters and are part of the state constitution," he said.

The lawsuit was filed in federal court by two Congress members, Democrat Corinne Brown of Jacksonville and Republican Mario Diaz-Balart of Miami, both of whom hold districts drawn to provide racial minority candidates with favorable districts. It seeks to block Amendment 6, which applies to Congressional seats.

The state House, at Cannon's direction, moved to join it two weeks ago.

Howard Simon of the American Civil Liberties Union of Florida, which joined the lawsuit on behalf of the amendments, called its arguments "cockamamie," saying many other states have similar constitutional provisions or laws.

But Cannon said he considers the situation analogous to the legal challenge of Florida's term limits amendments, passed in 1992, which were upheld in court for the Legislature but not for Congress.

He said the Legislature needed "to be at the table as a party" in a lawsuit over its powers, and

clarify the rules so its redistricting work wouldn't be wasted or undone.

Simon said Scott's failure to announce the withdrawal "makes it sound like he was trying to hide this from the people of Florida."

"We're dealing with pols who have done and will do anything to hold onto power, even if that means trying to undermine the clear will of the voters," he said.

The real reason for the withdrawal, Simon charged, is "Delay."

The practical effect of that delay isn't clear. Gelber said federal law requires the state to file a pre-clearance application "as soon as you can," but has no specific time limit.

Simon said proponents will consider suing to force a pre-clearance decision if the application isn't re-filed.

"The last thing we need is a flurry of last-minute litigation and a lot of chaos when these lines are drawn next year," he said. "That doesn't serve anybody's interest."

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REDISTRICTING 2.0: FLA. HOUSE LAUNCHES REDISTRICTING WEB SITE

Written by Joel Addington
Monday, 31 January 2011 12:59

The Florida House of Representatives launched its new redistricting web site January 31 at <http://www.floridaredistricting.org/>.

The site offers information about an online tool – MyDistrictBuilder – with which Floridians will be able offer suggestions about new district boundaries. The site also includes maps of current districts and info about redistricting in general.

The tool is scheduled for public testing in March.

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REPORTER'S NOTEBOOK

- **Blog from Press reporter Joel Addington** (40 Articles)

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EDITORIAL: Demand fair legislative districts

http://www.nwitimes.com/news/opinion/editorial/article_4105eb42-5e8c-5306-b525-be22f47a2dee.html

March 7, 2011

The mapmakers in the Indiana General Assembly had a mischievous bent when they drew the 4th Congressional District 10 years ago.

From north of Monticello to south of Mitchell, the district stretches 170 miles, snaking through farmland, small cities, college towns and the western edges of the state's largest city. The district is heavily Republican, almost ensuring the GOP an Election Day victory every two years. But the peculiar shape of the district also has helped Democrats over the past decade because it pulled Republican voters out of the 8th and 9th Congressional Districts.

A key question lawmakers ignored 10 years ago, however, was whether a single member of Congress could best represent the citizens of such a far-flung and diverse district.

Such is the nature of gerrymandering. One or both major parties may win when districts are drawn for purely political purposes. But it's the voters who almost always lose.

Although sometimes public officials, as well as voters, lose. State Rep. Ed Soliday, R-Valparaiso, was forced to move from one home in his neighborhood to another — in the same neighborhood — to resolve a dispute about where the 4th District boundaries lie? By what logic would a district boundary have sliced through a neighborhood instead of going around it?

With the close of last year's U.S. Census, state legislators again are in the mapmaking business. By the end of this year's session in April, they will be responsible for redrawing nine congressional districts, 50 state Senate maps and 100 Indiana House districts. The political calculations, and the pressures, in reconfiguring those maps will be intense as the party in control of the process, this time around Republicans, chooses whether to capitalize on its power at the expense of Hoosiers' best interests.

Today, 16 Indiana newspapers, led by The Indianapolis Star's Editorial Board, are launching a campaign to demand that lawmakers create district maps that are as compact as possible, keep communities of common interests together and promote competition where possible.

Why is the mapmaking process so important? When districts are designed in ways that protect incumbents, talented newcomers are discouraged from even attempting to enter politics. The lack of competition also discourages voters from turning out on Election Day and fosters deeper cynicism toward government and elected leaders.

Incumbents shielded from strong political challengers also are more likely to bow to special interests rather than fully respond to constituents' needs.

In short, the strength of our representative democracy is deeply undermined when districts are distorted for political purposes.

By its nature, redistricting involves a complex set of choices: Which communities should be grouped together so that their common interests are best represented? How should racial and ethnic diversity be factored in to ensure that minority populations are represented fairly?

The job, however, has become more manageable in recent years with the development of computerized mapmaking and the available expertise of political scientists and demographers. The challenge for Indiana legislators isn't whether they can create fair-minded maps. It's whether they will do so.

Former Indiana Secretary of State Todd Rokita, a Munster native, proposed his Rethinking Redistricting initiative to remove politics, as much as possible, from the process, but that effort

hasn't taken root. It should be the starting point for discussion of how to draw new legislative districts this year and in decades to come.

Gov. Mitch Daniels and House Speaker Brian Bosma have indicated they will strive to avoid the political excesses of the past. Hoosiers need to hold them and their colleagues in the Statehouse accountable to that commitment.

The drive to stop gerrymandering in Indiana this year isn't merely an exercise in promoting good government. Every taxpayer, every resident of the state, has a vital interest in demanding that fair lines on a map lead to fair and competitive elections. !~ The Indianapolis Star and The Times of Northwest Indiana

RedState.com : Conservative Blog and News

(Update) Florida Redistricting Kicks Off New Website

Posted by [BigGator5 \(Profile\)](#)

Monday, January 31st at 10:00AM EST

No Comments

Recommenders: [Kenny Solomon](#), [tomtflorida](#), [RoguePolitics](#)

I've been on the look-out for the website that will kick off Florida's Redistricting efforts. About once a week, I would do a search for Florida Redistricting and kept getting the old 2002 website. The past site, was to say the least, not exciting.

Then, being bored because of the Pro-Bowl blowout, I struck gold: [Florida Redistricting](#)

I'm impressed. Slick new website with everything you want on it: Twitter, Facebook, a YouTube Channel...

And oh, a sweet new program in which you can build your own district. They call this program **MyDistrictBuilder***. It's not up yet, but they have this sweet [video showing you how it will work](#). It not out yet and I will keep you updated when it does.

They do list a set of goals for this site and redistricting:

- By March 2011, the House will begin open public testing of MyDistrictBuilder.
- By April 2011, the House will receive all the Census 2010 data from the U.S. Census Bureau. This data is necessary to complete MyDistrictBuilder.
- By July 2011, the House will launch MyDistrictBuilder for the Public and Legislators to submit redistricting plans.
- Summer to Fall 2011, the Florida Legislature will hold public meetings throughout Florida to take testimony on redistricting.

The Shark-Tank breaks down the drama:

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.

Of course, we can no longer just draw whatever we want. [Amendment 5](#) and [Amendment 6](#) passed. This exposes redistricting to court approval. It will also make it an interesting two years in Tallahassee. Florida Speaker Dean Cannon has joined US Reps Corrine Brown (D) and Mario Diaz-Balart (R) in a lawsuit to [overturn the amendments](#). State Senate President Mike Haridopolos, like any good politician, [is hedging his bets](#) for right now.

UPDATE: You can check out [MyDistrictBuilder here](#). I have a lot to do today, so I will not be able to check it out myself.

[[Cross-Posted On Practical State.com](#)]



*I don't know why, but Florida has this branding going on. MyFlorida, MyFloridaHouse, MyFloridaDMV-

drops his coffee

Oh crap, I'm having flashbacks! The lines! The lines! Mommy, the lines!

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Category: [Florida](#), [Redistricting](#)

Comments

No comments yet.

Inside the Lines: Rep. Will Weatherford announces launch of 2012 redistricting website

<http://saintpetersblog.com/2011/01/31/inside-the-lines-rep-will-weatherford-announces-launch-of-2012-redistricting-website/>

January 31, 2011



[Via Inside the Lines](#): State Representative Will Weatherford (R-Wesley Chapel), Chairman of the House Redistricting Committee, announced the re-launch of FloridaRedistricting.org (www.floridaredistricting.org). The re-launch of this site is part of a comprehensive effort to involve the public in the redistricting process that began with the 2010 MyFloridaCensus initiative and will continue through the 2012 redistricting process.

FloridaRedistricting.org will serve as the House's hub for online information and communications regarding House redistricting activities throughout the process.

"In the coming months, FloridaRedistricting.org will serve to help educate the public on redistricting, provide a portal to MyDistrictBuilder, and ultimately enable Floridians to start the conversation on redistricting," said Representative Weatherford. "Most importantly, the new FloridaRedistricting.org is another step towards implementing the most open and accessible redistricting process in the country."

Floridaredistricting.org will provide Floridians with legislative and legal resources on redistricting and serve as a one-stop connection to all of the House's redistricting websites and social media, and eventually a portal to redistricting plans and testimony provided by other Floridians.

"The Legislature is required by law to put the redistricting puzzle together," continued Representative Weatherford. "However, through FloridaRedistricting.Org, MyDistrictBuilder, our social media and other outreach efforts, we can make this upcoming redistricting a two-way conversation with Floridians. Redistricting ultimately reflects the portrait of Florida's many diverse communities, and we're going to give them a chance to help paint that portrait."

The new FloridaRedistricting.Org will also contain a broad array of additional information and educational materials on the redistricting process. Visitors to the site will be able to access historical redistricting documents, download informational brochures and presentations, and follow the timeline for public meetings.

Previously, FloridaRedistricting.org served as the House's website for the 2002 redistricting of Florida's state legislative and congressional districts. The content from the former FloridaRedistricting.org will still be available via either the new page or directly at <http://www.floridaredistricting.org/archive/>.

The comprehensive effort to involve the public in redistricting, will take another step forward when the Florida House officially launches MyDistrictBuilder in July 2011. MyDistrictBuilder is an online application that allows Floridians to build and submit district plans to the House's redistricting committee for consideration.

House Launches Redistricting Website | Sunshine State News

<http://www.sunshinestatenews.com/blog/house-launches-redistricting-website>

March 7, 2011

Rep. Will Weatherford, R-Wesley Chapel, the incoming House speaker who is currently chairing the House Redistricting Committee, unveiled a new [website](#) designed to include the public in the cumbersome, chaotic and often confusing process of drawing up new seats at the legislative and congressional levels.

“In the coming months, FloridaRedistricting.org will serve to help educate the public on redistricting, provide a portal to MyDistrictBuilder, and ultimately enable Floridians to start the conversation on redistricting,” said Weatherford on Monday. “Most importantly, the new FloridaRedistricting.org is another step toward implementing the most open and accessible redistricting process in the country.

“The Legislature is required by law to put the redistricting puzzle together,” added Weatherford. “However, through FloridaRedistricting.Org, MyDistrictBuilder, our social media and other outreach efforts, we can make this upcoming redistricting a two-way conversation with Floridians. Redistricting ultimately reflects the portrait of Florida’s many diverse communities, and we’re going to give them a chance to help paint that portrait.”

[Sign up for news alerts from Sunshine State News](#)

Author: Thank Illegal Aliens for Florida's New Congressional Seats

<http://www.sunshinestatenews.com/blog/author-thank-illegal-aliens-floridas-new-congressional-seats>

March 7, 2011

The author of a new book -- "Vote Thieves: Illegal Immigration, Redistricting, and Presidential Elections" -- suggests that Florida's two new congressional seats are due, at least in part, to illegal immigrants.

Wait. What?

"There is a paradox to redistricting that is not discussed," says Orlando Rodriguez. "Immigrant destination states, such as Florida, may gain additional congressional representation because of their population of undocumented residents."

Indeed, the U.S. Census makes no effort to distinguish between legal and illegal residents -- and congressional seats are predicated on Census numbers.

Since no one knows how many of Florida's 27 congressional representatives (per the 2010 Census) were awarded because of the state's population of undocumented residents, Rodriguez recommends that apportionment be based on the total population to voters -- not "residents."

"Might this provide an impetus for true immigration reform if states such as Florida, Texas and California were to lose congressional representation because illegal immigrants are excluded from apportionment?" Rodriguez asks.

Good question.

So is another reader query from a reader who asked "Why don't we use E-Verify to check the voter-registration rolls?"

You can find more information on Rodriguez's book [here](#).

[Sign up for Sunshine State News alerts.](#)

Capital Soup » Blog Archive » Florida House Continues Comprehensive Effort to Involve Public in Redistricting

<http://capitalsoup.com/2011/01/31/florida-house-continues-comprehensive-effort-to-involve-public-in-redistricting/>

January 31, 2011

Representative Weatherford Announces Launch of 2012 Redistricting Website

Tallahassee, Fla. - State Representative Will Weatherford (R-Wesley Chapel), Chairman of the House Redistricting Committee, announced the re-launch of FloridaRedistricting.org (www.floridaredistricting.org). The re-launch of this site is part of a comprehensive effort to involve the public in the redistricting process that began with the 2010 MyFloridaCensus initiative and will continue through the 2012 redistricting process.

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#

Resources:

<http://www.floridaredistricting.org>

<http://www.floridaredistricting.org/archive/>

[January 20, 2011 – MyDistrictBuilder Presentation – Florida media](#)

[MyDistrictBuilder – *alpha version*](#)

[Microsoft Azure Customer Solution Study](#)

[Brookings – Injecting Transparency Into Redistricting \(Video\)](#)

Contact:

Lyndsey Cruley, (850) 487-8148

The Hoosierpundit: Redistricting in Florida

<http://hoosierpundit.blogspot.com/2011/01/redistricting-in-florida.html>

March 7, 2011

Talk about [rigging the game](#):

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.

Whenever anyone bemoans the maps Republicans are about to draw in Indiana, just look at how they draw the maps in Florida.

Ignoring the voters' wishes | amendments, knew, voters - EDITORIAL

<http://www.thedestinlog.com/opinion/amendments-37172-nwfdn-knew-voters.html>

March 7, 2011

We knew some politicians were against the redistricting amendments that Florida voters approved in November. We knew state Sen. Don Gaetz, R-Niceville, contributed money toward a lawsuit to fight the amendments before the election. But until last week we didn't know how desperate certain state officials STILL are to have the amendments blocked, broken and buried.

What we are witnessing is, as the League of Women Voters of Florida put it, "a clear movement by leadership to shut down the majority voice of the people."

That majority voice supported Amendments 5 and 6 on the Nov. 2 ballot. Under Amendment 5, the Florida Constitution would be changed to require that legislative districts be roughly equal in population, follow existing political or geographic boundaries wherever possible, and not favor any incumbent or party. Amendment 6 would do the same for congressional districts.

More than 60 percent of voters endorsed those reforms. But a lot of politicians didn't. Republicans, especially, griped that the Fair Districts amendments wouldn't be fair to the GOP.

This is what happened last week:

↳ It was revealed that Gov. Rick Scott had quietly pulled back a request for federal approval of the amendments. (The Justice Department must review changes in election laws to ensure they're not discriminatory.) A Scott spokesman said the request will be resubmitted. Sometime.

↳ The Florida House leadership asked to join a lawsuit that seeks to overturn Amendment 6, the one on congressional redistricting. The suit was filed by U.S. Reps. Corrine Brown, D-Jacksonville, and Mario Diaz-Balart, R-Miami.

The lawsuit maneuvering gives the opposition to Fair Districts a bipartisan flavor, but that doesn't make it any easier to swallow.

Politicians who panic at the prospect of losing their power bases to redistricting, and who want to use gerrymandered districts to hand-pick the voters who are supposed to pick THEM, are all too eager to ignore the wishes of Florida's electorate. And, worse, to use taxpayers' money fighting those wishes.

Shameful.

Florida: Redistricting Plan Moves to the Senate

By [Joshua Miller](#) Posted at 4:03 p.m. on Feb. 3

The GOP-controlled Florida state House passed a Congressional redistricting map today, moving the Republican-friendly lines one step closer to becoming law.

The map passed by a [margin of 80 to 37](#). The lines are identical to the version passed out of the House Redistricting Committee that solidifies the [substantial GOP advantage](#) in the delegation. The map can be seen [here](#) and is expected to pass the state Senate and be signed into law by Gov. Rick Scott (R) soon.

The map that is likely to become law caused a [game of musical chairs](#) this week, as Members began to decide in which district they would run.

Democrats, who are likely to pick up only a few seats under the new map, are certain to sue over the lines. They believe it violates a 2010 state constitutional amendment, enacted by popular vote and shorthanded as Fair Districts, that prohibits Congressional lines from being drawn with “the intent to favor or disfavor a political party or an incumbent.”

“[T]he maps passed today by the Florida House are unconstitutional, pure and simple,” Florida Democratic Party Executive Director Scott Arceneaux said in a statement. “They represent just the type of partisan gerrymandering and incumbent protection voters rejected in 2010. We have no doubt that the Florida courts will ultimately step in to protect the constitutional rights of every Floridian and throw out these maps.”

House votes on Florida redistricting plans

By [Trevor Pettiford](#), Reporter
Last Updated: Friday, February 3, 2012

MORE POLITICS

TALLAHASSEE --

Florida legislative and congressional redistricting plans have passed the House at a vote of 80-37.

The bills will now return to the Senate for final action. Democrats and other critics contend the maps violate a pair of new state constitutional amendments on redistricting.

Republicans deny those claims, insisting the maps comply not only with the amendments but with the federal Voting Rights Act.

- [Previous stories on Florida redistricting](#)

"I believe the legislature is poised to use the pretext of minority protection to advance an agenda that seeks to preserve incumbency and pack minority seats in order to benefit a particular party," said Sen. Arthenia Joyner, D-Tampa.

The Fair Districts amendments prohibit lawmakers from intentionally drawing districts that favor incumbents and political parties. They also protect minority voting rights and require lines to follow geographic and political boundaries whenever feasible.

"The expedient thing to do, the easy thing to do, would have probably been to ignore what the law says and just figure out a way to draw a map that makes everybody in here happy," said Rep. Will Weatherford, R-Wesley Chapel. "That would have been easy to do. Nobody would have complained. We have had a lot of tough conversations with people in this room - both parties. But at the end of the day, this decision is bigger than us."

The congressional map will go to Gov. Rick Scott once it's passed. The legislative plan would go to the Florida Supreme Court for review.

Information from the Associated Press was used in this report.

Amendment backers sue Gov. Scott, demanding he send redistricting to feds

<http://miamiherald.typepad.com/nakedpolitics/2011/02/amendment-backers-sue-gov-scott-demanding-he-send-redistricting-to-feds.html>

February 03, 2011

The war over Florida's political maps returned to court Monday as a group of Monroe County voters, joined by three advocacy organizations, sued Gov. Rick Scott in Miami Thursday demanding that the governor follow through with the federal requirement to have a justice department review of the the new redistricting language approved by voters in November.

Former Gov. Charlie Crist quietly sought pre-clearance of the new amendment language at the request of the amendment backers on Dec. 10. Gov. Rick Scott quietly withdrew the request on Jan. 4, just two days into office at the request of legislative leaders, who are amendment opponents.

Now the five Monroe County voters who supported Amendments 5 and 6 to the Florida Constitution are asking a Miami District Court judge to empanel a three-judge panel to order the governor to act. The lawsuit was filed on their behalf by Fair Districts Now, the political committee formed to pass the amendments.

"It's time to stop stonewalling. Governor Scott and Secretary Browning should not be abusing their power to frustrate the will of the 63% who voted for these reforms. The new standards must be sent to the Justice Department promptly to guarantee their implementation," said Dan Gelber, Counsel for FairDistricts Now and a former state senator.

The lawsuit argues that federal law requires the state to submit any voting changes that affect voting rights act counties to the justice department "as soon as possible after the changes become final." When the State Canvassing Board certified the election on Nov. 16, the changes became final, they argue.

They also note that Kurt Browning, Scott's appointee to head the secreatery of state's office which oversees state elections laws, has an inherent conflict. Browning served as chairman of the "Protect Your Vote" effort, a political committee formed to defeat the amendments.

Here's the lawsuit: [Download FDN Press Release & Complaint](#)

Fair districts put on hold

<http://www.pelicanpressonline.com/localnews/115213794.html>

March 7, 2011

By Rick Barry | Feb. 3, 2011 |

Darryl Rouson, a Democratic Florida House member, lives in south St. Petersburg, but he represents Latino farm workers in parts of Ruskin in Hillsborough County, the top of an inkblot of a district comprising mostly black, largely Democratic areas of Palmetto, east Bradenton and Samoset in Manatee County, along with Sarasota's Newtown - all connected to his Pinellas County hometown by the slender four-lane thread of the Sunshine Skyway Bridge.

Current state senate districts have about 400,000 residents each. Nearly a million people live in Pinellas, so it could easily be represented by two senators, one north, one south. But while that might serve constituents well, political ends would not be met.

Democrat Corrine Brown lives in Jacksonville and represents Orlando; Republican John Mica lives in Winter Park and also represents St. Augustine.

Local state Sen. Mike Bennett - now Florida Senate president pro tem - represents most of Manatee County, a dollop of northern Sarasota County, a soupcon of western DeSoto County, a chunk of central Charlotte County and sections of northwestern and north-central Lee County and Fort Myers. It's an amorphous, 100-mile-long, barely contiguous streak of west Florida whose residents have only their voting patterns in common.

Democrats and Republicans alike, when in power, draw their districts with one thing in mind: safe, sure re-election. Thanks to computers, it's easy to eliminate likely opposition. In some 400 Florida House and Senate contests over the past six years, just three incumbents have been defeated.

But when they won the chance for the first time ever, Floridians cast votes overwhelmingly to end the practice of "gerrymandering," the result of letting the politicians choose their voters rather than the other way around. The voters in 2010 opted instead for sensible districts based on geography - county and city borders, for example - and not on party registration, voting patterns and the protection of incumbents' jobs. Amendments 5 and 6 won nearly 2-to-1 in Sarasota County, 63 percent statewide. Very few of these elected officials ever got that kind of mandate. (Amendment 6 redraws fair congressional districts.)

Now the amendments are part of the state constitution, the law of Florida.

So what are the incumbents doing? Squaring off all the legislative districts so each race will be a fair fight based on abilities and strong stands on issues? Of course not. Why, the legislature's now-Republican leadership has actually hired three really expensive law firms - from New York, Coral Gables and Orlando - to fight the voters' mandate, much as our own local elections supervisor and county commission sued us over our fair elections-audit mandates when we changed the county charter. The legislature will fight their constituents tooth and nail, too, and pay those lawyers top dollar.

The other side, Fair Districts Now, which sponsored the amendments, must raise more funds to pay its own lawyers to take on the legislative leadership.

"We're preparing to take legal action," said Florida League of Women Voters President Deirdre McNab. "Those in office will do everything they can to continue drawing their own district lines, without rules. And they're spending taxpayer dollars in the fight - and we can't afford it."

The League, the NAACP, AARP, The Florida League of Cities, Florida Association of Counties, School Boards Association and nearly 100 other organizations backed the two amendments, 1.7 million Floridians signed petitions to put them on the ballot, and more than 3 million voted for them.

local legislator's view

Nancy Detert, state senator for much of Sarasota County, and a Republican, is a bit frustrated by the state house's actions against the voters' mandate, which so far the senate has not joined. "I really believe we elected representatives need to listen to the will of the voters - and not just when they elect you, but when a vote goes against you, too.

"It's basic ... Legislators need to be responsive to the people in their district."

Detert, who serves on the committees that will ultimately redraw the districts based on the 2010 census, remembers when she was in the house the last time districts were drawn. The leadership gave her the software and sent her to computer classes; she got to draw up her very own, custom-crafted district (70).

"And it looks as much like a square as we could," she said with some pride: no little tails reaching far afield; no donut holes; no avoiding urban areas.

Bennett and state Reps. Doug Holder and Ray Pilon did not respond to requests for comment by the Pelican Press' deadline.

Starting with Scott

On the third day of his term, Gov. Rick Scott quietly withdrew former Gov. Charlie Crist's routine request for U.S. Justice Department review of the apportionment process, action required by the Voter Rights Act when districting rules are changed. The request is necessary to get the process moving following the amendment's passage.

"We found out last Monday," said Pamela Goodman, the League board member who's led the charge for Fair Districts Now. "[Attorney] Dan Gelber was checking on the review's progress and found out that Florida's approval application had been pulled, which was done at the request of the office of Secretary of State Kurt Browning, who led the opposition to Fair Districts last fall.

"It's another delaying tactic," Goodman said. "And we expect many, many more. There might be many lawsuits filed before this is over, but this is the law of state now, and it will survive."

McNab was incensed. "Gov. Scott sent a clear message to voters in Florida with this action -- that he knows better than they do what's good for them, and there's no rush to heed their mandate."

Gelber wrote Browning demanding he "immediately resubmit the application as it was originally filed Dec. 10." As of this week, it had not been.

Oh, that Rouson District, 55, which carved out all those Democratic voters? That one was carved out, not by a Democrat, but by former Sarasota State Rep. Donna Clark, recalled Detert. The heavily minority, largely Democratic district is still served by a black Democratic state representative in the form of Rouson.

But it also walled away the vast majority of likely Democratic voters from Clark's district, 69, now Pilon's, and eliminated potential dissension from that district, and a half-dozen securely Republican districts surrounding it. So it's not just about which voters are included, but which ones are excluded, too.

Local League of Women Voters President Ann Hardy said she is stunned at the governor's and the Florida House leadership's willingness to so blatantly oppose the will of more than 3 million Florida voters. "This will be enacted. It's inevitable. So, I'm just amazed that, politically, they would do something like this, to blatantly try to thwart something the voters so overwhelmingly support.

"Really, I don't get the rationale. I'm just amazed."

Fresh Squeezed Politics: Redistricting amendment backers sue to force Scott to seek pre-clearance

<http://www.tboblogs.com/index.php/news/story/redistricting-amendment-backers-sue-to-force-scott-to-seek-pre-clearance/>

February 03, 2011

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Posted Feb 3, 2011 by William March

Updated Feb 3, 2011 at 12:12 PM

Backers of the anti-gerrymandering constitutional amendments passed by Florida voters in November have filed a federal lawsuit seeking to force Gov. Rick Scott to submit the amendments for federal approval.

Shortly after taking office as governor, Scott quietly withdrew the states application to the U.S. Department of Justice for preliminary approval of the amendments, called pre-clearance. Thats an opinion by the Justice Department that the amendments conform to the Voting Rights Act, which governs changes in Florida elections procedures.

Former state Sen. Dan Gelber, attorney for the amendment backers, said the Voting Rights Act requires that election changes be submitted for approval as soon as possible after they become final.

The amendments became final, the lawsuit says, on Nov. 16, the day the elections results were certified. Former Gov. Charlie Crist filed the application for pre-clearance shortly before that. The amendments are now Sections 20 and 21 of Article III of the Florida Constitution.

The plaintiffs in the lawsuit, filed in federal court in Miami, include the state NAACP, the League of Women Voters, an Hispanic political action group named Democracia and five individuals from Monroe County. The suit names Scott and Secretary of State Kurt Browning as defendants.

These state officials need to abide by their oaths, Gelber said. They promised they would fulfill these kinds of duties, and they're stalling.

Scott has said the application for Justice Department was premature and that he wanted more U.S. Census data before filing it. He hasn't made clear what kind of data or why it was needed to apply for the pre-clearance.

Backers of the amendment say Census data isn't needed to seek a pre-clearance judgment that the wording of the amendments doesn't violate the Voting Rights Act.

Over the next year, the state Legislature will draw new district boundaries for its own members and state Congress members. It's expected that the amendments would limit the ability of the Republican majority in the Legislature to draw districts benefitting Republicans.

Florida governor sued for barring redistricting amendments

http://ballotpedia.org/w iki/index.php/Florida_governor_sued_for_barring_redistricting_amendments

March 7, 2011

From Ballotpedia

February 4, 2011



TALLAHASSEE, Florida: Legal challenges regarding two redistricting amendments continue to develop. On Thursday, [February 3, 2011](#) supporters of [Florida Legislative District Boundaries, Amendment 5](#) and [Florida Congressional District Boundaries, Amendment 6](#) filed a lawsuit against [Gov. Rick Scott](#).

The lawsuit developed following news that Gov. Scott pulled a request for federal approval of Amendment 5 and Amendment 6. Scott is reported to have acted three days after taking office on [January 4, 2011](#).^[1]

[Former Florida Sen. Dan Gelber](#) and current attorney for Fair Districts Now, supporters of the measures, said, "It's time to stop stonewalling. Governor Scott and Secretary Browning should not be abusing their power to frustrate the will of the 63 percent who voted for these reforms. The new standards must be sent to the Justice Department promptly to guarantee their implementation."^[2]

The paperwork for approval of the measures had been filed [December 10, 2010](#) by [former Gov. Charlie Crist](#). According to the federal Voting Rights Act, the state of Florida is required to receive "pre-clearance" of changes to its election laws that affect minority rights.^[1]

In response to the lawsuit Brian Hughes, the governor's spokesperson, said that the governor's actions have not delayed redistricting in the state. Additionally, Hughes noted that the [Florida State Legislature](#) is currently months away from working on state redistricting and the governor is using the time to "have thoughtful consideration of the policy."^[3]

See also

a [Florida Legislative District Boundaries, Amendment 5 \(2010\)](#)
a [Florida Congressional District Boundaries, Amendment 6 \(2010\)](#)

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References



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Rod Smith optimistic about Democratic Party's chances for 2012

<http://www.gainesville.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20110204/ARTICLES/110209676/-1/entertainment&Title=Rod-Smith-optimistic-about-Democratic-Party-s-chances-for-2012&template=printart>

March 7, 2011

Published: Friday, February 4, 2011 at 7:07 p.m.

For someone who lost and saw his party get creamed in the last election, Rod Smith sounded optimistic Friday about the Democratic Party's prospects in 2012.

Smith, a former Democratic candidate for lieutenant governor and new state party chairman, said newly passed amendments on redistricting and an economic recovery bode well for Democrats. President Barack Obama's re-election campaign will focus on Florida, and the state will play a key role in the election, he said.

"I believe the road to Pennsylvania Avenue starts somewhere between I-75 and I-95 in Florida, and will for many years to come," he said.

Smith, a Gainesville attorney and former state senator for the area, spoke Friday at the University of Florida Political Campaigning Program's biennial post-election conference. The event included political consultants, pollsters, academics and reporters discussing the 2010 election and the outlook for 2012.

Pollster David Hill painted a much different picture than Smith. The county could see persistently high unemployment, soaring energy costs and state governments with huge deficits that put them on the brink of bankruptcy over the next two years, he said.

"I do think that the bill collector is coming and that the economy is going to get worse," he said.

Republicans would fare better than Democrats in such an environment, he said. He predicted immigration and government employee pensions would become major issues as a public struggling economically looks negatively at groups that it perceives as benefiting from the government.

"Resentment is one of the most powerful forces in politics," he said.

Several speakers pointed to redistricting as a major issue in state races. Florida voters passed two state constitutional amendments last fall that aim to take politics out of the process in which legislative districts are drawn. Now Republicans in the Statehouse are fighting to prevent the measures from being implemented.

Smith said Republicans will have a hard time blocking amendments passed by more than 60 percent of voters. In the end, he said, there likely will be new districts in which incumbent lawmakers are pitted against each other in the same district.

"It does make Thanksgiving dinner among the incumbents less comfortable," he said.

Speakers differed in their predictions for the next election but agreed that the economy would be the major factor in determining Obama's prospects. Political consultant David Beattie said opinion about the president also affects state races, as the past few election cycles have shown that Tip O'Neil's famous adage that "All politics is local" is no longer accurate.

"I don't think that's true anymore ... We have more of a national agenda that's driven by the Internet and cable news," he said.

He cited Democrats linking their opponents to George W. Bush in 2006 and 2008, followed by

Republicans doing the same in 2010 with Obama and former Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi. Both strategies proved successful in an environment in which people continue to have a dim view of Washington, he said.

"The images of the party in power tend to be negative," he said.

Susan MacManus, a political science professor at the University of South Florida, said the last election showed that Sarah Palin and the tea party movement are underestimated. The movement was dismissed nationally by many commentators as being extremists, she said, but was a diverse collection of groups in Florida who cared about the deficit and how it affected their families.

"There was this caricature nationally that didn't add up with the tea party in Florida," she said.

Contact Nathan Crabbe at 338-3176 or nathan.crabbe@gvillesun.com.

Stop fighting Florida's redistricting amendment

<http://www2.highlandstoday.com/content/2011/feb/04/stop-fighting-floridas-redistricting-amendment/>

March 7, 2011

Highlands Today

Published: February 4, 2011

The phrase "will of the people" gets thrown around a lot these days. Every politician says this is what the people want, or that is what they don't want. That's why it's so ludicrous when they try to stop something that's obviously what the people want, considering they just voted in a large majority to make it a part of the constitution. That's what happening with Republicans and the recently passed amendment to make congressional and legislative district redistricting fair and equitable.

It's telling that almost all of the Republicans who were just elected — or re-elected — to seats in the Florida Legislature and other posts are fighting so hard against a Florida constitutional amendment that only requires that legislative and congressional districts be drawn using common sense lines, and not so they benefit one party over the other.

This drives these politicians crazy. They want to draw these districts so it favors them. That means taking some Democratic voters into their district but making sure there's a majority of Republicans, no matter how ridiculous the district lines are drawn.

To do this, the lines sometimes stretch way out one way to grab a few voters here, stretch another way to grab more there and so on. We all have seen these districts and wondered how in the world they were drawn. Both parties, when in the majority, attempt to tilt the balance.

The worst part of this is that people living in a particular area are not being represented as such in these unfairly drawn districts. It's a blatant disregard for what our representative form of government is supposed to be and just a power grab.

Florida voters made it clear they don't want favoritism to be show when it comes to redistricting. They want common sense districts drawn and for no party to get an advantage in the process.

Voters need to call their legislators and members of Congress and tell them to knock it off. If they can't win re-election fair and square, then find another profession. We don't need cheaters anymore. We've seen these kinds of leaders just about bankrupt our state and nation.

Scott's Hold on Redistricting: Put People Before Politics

<http://www.theledger.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20110204/EDIT01/110209898/1036/edit&Title=Scott-s-Hold-on-Redistricting-Put-People-Before-Politics&template=printart>

March 7, 2011

Published: Friday, February 4, 2011 at 3:49 a.m.

In an amazing display of contempt toward we, the people, our elected officials in Tallahassee are doing everything in their power to thwart the public will, not to mention the Florida Constitution.

In November, 63 percent of Floridians approved two state constitutional amendments Amendment 5 and Amendment 6 intended to stop state legislators from rigging congressional and legislative districts to suit their own personal ambitions, and keep their political party in power. The idea was to take the power to draw legislative and congressional district lines out of the hands of incumbent politicians and put it in the hands of a less-self-serving, more objective group.

The people loved the notion of doing away with blatant gerrymandering, but the politicians who depend on the redistricting process to solidify their hold on their seats for term after term hated it.

Three days after taking office on Jan. 4, Gov. Rick Scott quietly withdraw the amendments from a required U.S. Justice Department review. That move brought action on the amendments to a halt.

Previously, Reps. Mario Diaz-Balart, R-Miami, and Corrine Brown, D-Jacksonville, had filed a federal lawsuit to overthrow the amendments. They contend the amendments violate laws on voting rights laws.

POWER TO THE POLITICIANS

In other words, the political power structure in Tallahassee not to mention the Florida power structure in Washington that depends on gerrymandering to hang on to political power couldn't care less about the fair-districting mandate handed them by Florida voters. Their contempt for the will of the people is palpable and inexcusable.

Given the open hostility displayed by our elected officials toward these citizen-initiated constitutional amendments, it now falls to the courts to ensure that these mandates are followed.

"We will do whatever it takes to see to it that the new standards are implemented," vows Pamela Goodman, president of FairDistricts Now.

The politics holding up institution of the amendments are an outrage. Floridians are used to their legislators thumbing their noses at them from the ivory-colored tower called the Florida Capitol. But this exceeds even the normal disregard for the people too often exhibited by the Legislature and, already, by this new governor. This is a shameless power grab.

Make no mistake, there isn't a ghost of a chance that our Legislature is going to produce a fair reapportionment plan until it is forced to do so by court order. That's why Amendments 5 and 6 passed in the first place, because the people know all too well how our politicians work and whose interests they are ultimately concerned about.

There is a third branch of government. It may be in court where the other two branches get their marching orders and the people finally get their votes enforced.

The Redistricting Amendments in Florida Might Not Make a Difference

<http://www.dailykos.com/story/2011/2/7/940556/-The-Redistricting-Amendments-in-Florida-Might-Not-Make-a-Difference>

March 7, 2011

According to this [article in the Orlando Sentinel](#), the amendment would likely not boost the Democrats any higher than now, and especially not to majority status.

How is that, you ask? How can a state with a Democratic registration advantage have so many Republicans in Tallahassee? How can a state like that only have 6 Democrats of 25 seats? It's obviously devious and brilliant gerrymandering. But no. It's actually simple.

Earlier this month, researchers from Stanford University and the University of Michigan presented a yearlong study of where Florida voters live that ran thousands of complex simulations of elections in computer-drawn contiguous and compact districts.

Their models found that even using maps drawn by nonpolitical algorithms, Republicans would still win 59 percent of all the districts.

That's basically because more Democratic voters live in concentrated clusters in urban cores, while Republican voters are spread out along the suburban and exurban landscape, they concluded.

"Their [Democrats'] larger problem is with the extreme concentration of support in cities, and the constitutional reforms will ... not help them there," said Jonathan Rodden, a political scientist at Stanford who presented the research with University of Michigan professor Jowei Chen at the American Political Science Association annual conference in Washington, D.C..

"In order to achieve a 'fair' translation of votes to seats, the Democrats would need to draw very non-compact wedge-shaped districts starting in downtown Miami and reaching out into the suburbs," Rodden said.

So basically, fair districts would give Republicans 59% of the legislative districts...which is basically what they had throughout the last decade. In a better year for Democrats, some of those seats in the GOP's current supermajority are likely to go back to the Democrats, bringing the Democrats back to the slightly larger minority status.

There are two things Florida Democrats can do: try to move Democratic voters to be dispersed among the state, or accept that basic geography keeps them from state majority status.

This didn't use to be a problem. Until the 1990s, The Florida Legislature was solidly Democratic because of Dixiecrats in North Florida. Since rural areas were sending Democrats to Tallahassee, the population dispersion was favorable to Democrats.

But those days have passed. The Florida Legislature fell to the GOP in 1994, and with the voter approval of term limits in 1992, the rest of the entrenched Democrats were gone by the end of the decade. So although Florida Democrats had a good ride, it's now harder than ever.

Here's another [user-created map](#) from Swing State Project. It shows that the amendments will change the look of the districts, but not change the basic partisanship of any, and even possibly remove Corrine Brown from the delegation.

The only Republican truly made vulnerable by this amendment is Allen West...but he was always

vulnerable, regardless of district composition. The only way he wouldn't be is if they performed a gerrymander so egregious that it would suck GOP voters from other districts, and despite what the Tea Party likes about him, they likely wouldn't go that far to save a freshman. And his district is D+1, meaning any Republican in that district is vulnerable in a Dem wave year.

If anything, this could be bad news for Democrats. If by some off-chance the Democrats take the Florida Legislature some time in the future, they won't be able to gerrymander to their heart's content, because of this amendment. Democrats could certainly make inroads in the state with intense gerrymandering, while the GOP doesn't even have to.

I'm obviously not saying I didn't want this to pass. I said earlier that I did. But if you look at it, these amendments could possibly hold back Democrats more than Republicans. I know that on this site, we say we all want fair districts, but what we all really want are districts that are more fair to Democrats. And that won't happen in Florida. Because in Florida, "fair" means GOP-dominated.

So in short, don't believe that these amendments will send Democrats into a possible majority status in Florida. Maybe some day, when demographics change, but not right now.

Published: Monday, February 7, 2011 at 4:51 a.m.

On Election Day last November, Florida voters approved constitutional amendments that would mandate that when new congressional and legislative districts are redrawn, they will be drawn along natural boundaries, as opposed to gerrymandering. That is districts made to look like jig-saw puzzle pieces, so that incumbents are assured of re-election.

Now, the Florida House of Representatives has joined a lawsuit, filed by two members of the U.S. House the day after Election Day, to strike down these new amendments in the courts.

Let me ask what I'm sure is a foolish question. At whose expense are these lawsuits being brought? It seems to me that if these lawmakers wish to challenge these amendments, they should do so at their own expense and not the taxpayers of Florida.

Further, if they are so dissatisfied with the terms of their employment, maybe they should resign and find a new line of work.

To add insult to injury, Florida's new Gov. Rick Scott, just two days after his inauguration, withdrew a request that the U.S. Department of Justice review Amendments 5 and 6, a requirement for election-law changes. This will further delay enactment and enforcement of these amendments.

Because Gov. Scott was elected by just 48 percent of the Florida voters, something he refers to as a mandate, and these amendments were approved by 63 percent of Florida voters, perhaps we should withdraw or put a hold on him.

RON MARTIN

Lakeland

Letter to Florida Governor regarding Voter Redistricting

<http://letterstogovernment.blogspot.com/2011/02/letter-to-florida-governor-regarding.html>

March 7, 2011

The Honorable Rick Scott

Office of the Governor

The Capitol

Tallahassee, FL 32399-0001

2/7/2011

Governor Scott

In November 2010, the citizens of Florida went to the polls and voted in a new Governor and several amendments. Two of these amendments covered redistricting. The redistricting amendments passed with greater than 60% of the votes

Per published reports shown at the State of Florida web site, Mr. Scott, has decided that all regulations that cost money to implement would be shelved. He asked the departments that would be affected with the new amendments what would happen if they were implemented. They all said the amendments "may" or "might" have some costs and those costs were indeterminate. But at the same time Governor Scott also decided that Florida must effect a requirement that all employers must screen for illegal immigrants when posting for a job. The same proposal of identifying illegal immigrants has proven to have additional costs based on Arizona's legal troubles by employers bringing suit over the same issue.

Here is the problem. How can the Governor stall execution of a voters demand for redistricting that "may" cost money, and allow a check for immigrant status that clearly will cost money?

Holding government physically accountable cannot supersede the will of the voters. Governor Scott may be within his rights. It may be legal. However, in light of what is happening in the Mideast with Tunisia and Egypt, I think our Governor needs to listen to the voters. To do otherwise places him on the same plane as Egypt's President, Hosni Mubarak and Tunisia's President Zine El Abidine Ben Ali, a dictator that does not hear the voters.

This letter has a long list of 'carbon' copies. I am hoping the elected officials contact the Governor and persuade him to follow the dictates of the voters and the newspapers publish this letter and citizens of Florida can see that our new Governor is playing fast and loose with our votes.

George A. Edwards

cc: The President of the United States, The Honorable Bill Nelson, The Honorable Marco Rubio, The Honorable Mario Diaz-Balart, Jose Felix Diaz, The Miami Herald, Sun Sentinel, Florida Times Union, The Palm Beach Post, Tampa Tribune, Orlando Sentinel, The Florida Democrat, The News-Journal

Bringing Tallahassee into line | reform, amendments, criticized - EDITORIAL - Northwest Florida Daily News

<http://www.nwfdailynews.com/opinion/reform-37353-amendments-criticized.html>

March 7, 2011

We criticized state lawmakers and Gov. Rick Scott last week for their reluctance to implement Amendments 5 and 6, the redistricting reform measures that Florida voters approved back in November. The amendments will refine the way legislative and congressional district lines are drawn by outlawing gerrymandering to favor political parties or incumbents.

Naturally, a lot of politicians yelped at the very idea. Some are still yelping.

Their resistance to reform isn't winning many friends. Our current online poll asks whether lawmakers should continue to fight the Fair Districts amendments. As of Monday morning, 83 percent of respondents were saying no.

No, presumably, to Gov. Scott's withdrawal of Amendments 5 and 6 from federal review. No to the House leadership's endorsement of a lawsuit to block Amendment 6. No to Tallahassee thumbing its nose at voters.

Laggard lawmakers could learn a few things from Sen. Don Gaetz, R-Niceville. He, too, fought Amendments 5 and 6 before the election. But now he's chairman of the Senate Reapportionment Committee and he's supposed to make the new rules work.

In a Nov. 28 guest column, Sen. Gaetz referred to his earlier opposition and to the continuing legal challenges: "There's a huge difference between supporting a cause you believe in before the matter is decided ... 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."

Sen. Gaetz pledged that his 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."

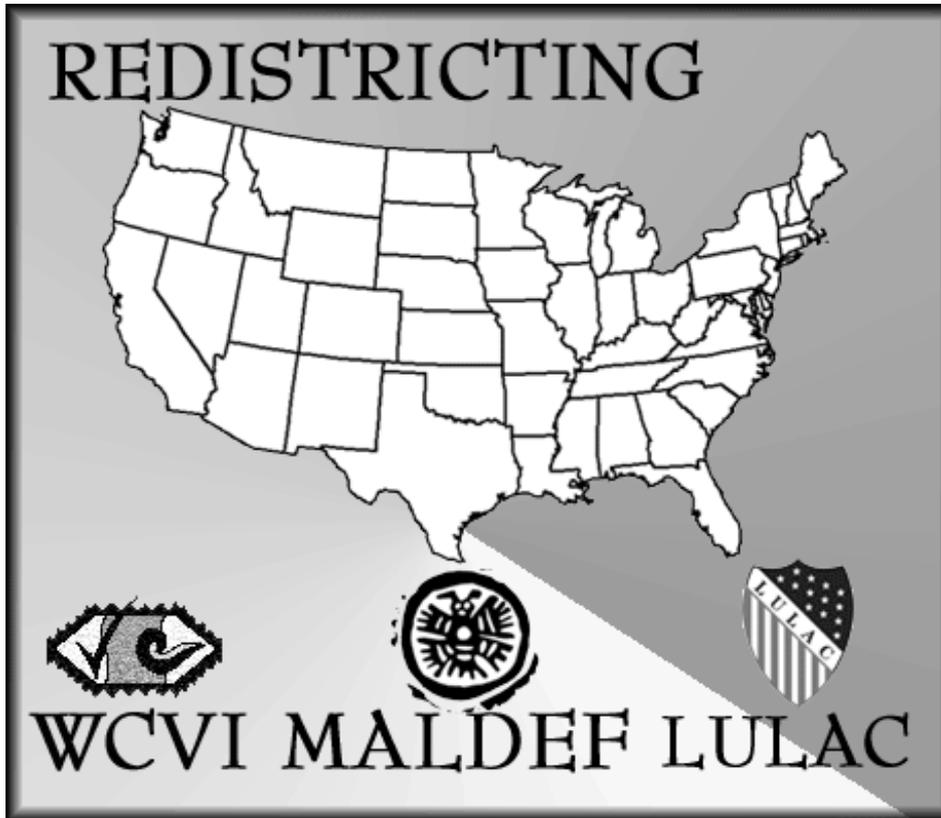
Sen. Gaetz still doesn't like Amendments 5 and 6, but he's not trying to trash them. Gov. Scott and the other foot-draggers in Tallahassee ought to join him in respecting the will of the people.

Asst Attorney Gen. Thomas Perez Speaking to Latino Elected Officials on Redistricting

[http://www.hispanicallyspeakingnews.com/notitas-de-noticias/details/asst-attorney-gen.-thomas-perez-speaking-to-latino-elected-officials-o/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+HSN-Global-Feed+\(HSN+Global+RSS+Feed\)#When:23:39:11Z](http://www.hispanicallyspeakingnews.com/notitas-de-noticias/details/asst-attorney-gen.-thomas-perez-speaking-to-latino-elected-officials-o/?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+HSN-Global-Feed+(HSN+Global+RSS+Feed)#When:23:39:11Z)

February 08, 2011

Published at 5:39 pm, February 8, 2011



The following are comments made today by Assistant Attorney General Tomas Perez at a luncheon hosted by the National Association of Latino Elected Official on redistricting. Mr. Perez' comments are a good gauge as to where the Obama administration stands on legally protecting redistricting efforts made in light of the most recent Census.

"Last week, the Census Bureau began releasing the data to be used in redistricting, which means the official

beginning of the redistricting cycle has arrived. The results of the 2010 Census show an increase of more than 27 million people a large proportion of whom are Latino."

"The Civil Rights Division's interest is simple: that the redistricting does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, or membership in a protected language minority group. In short, substantially unequal districts or vote dilution cannot be justified."

"We review redistricting plans and other voting changes for a determination of whether they have the purpose or will have the effect of denying or abridging the right to vote on account of race, color or language minority status."

"Section 203 of the Voting Rights Act provides that, in areas of our country determined by the Census Bureau to have significant numbers or percentages of language minority voters, a person who is a member of a language minority group can receive election language assistance in the language of their choice ."

"I believe that together we can ensure that the coming round of redistricting will produce plans that provide the full measure of fairness to

racial and language minorities required by the Constitution and the Voting Rights Act.”

Florida to be ground zero in 2012

<http://thehill.com/opinion/columnists/david-hill/142887-florida-to-be-ground-zero-in-2012>

March 7, 2011

Last Friday, I had the privilege of participating in the biennial elections conference convened by the Graduate Program in Political Campaigning of the Department of Political Science at the University of Florida.

This symposium, titled “The Election Landscape 2010-2012: Reflections and Projections,” smartly combines the perspectives of working consultants, academics and journalists. While some of the perspectives offered by presenters were national, the most interesting and forwarding-looking predictions made clear that Florida will be ground zero in the 2012 presidential competition.

Looking back, Democratic pollster David Beattie refuted the traditional notion that “all politics is local,” presenting evidence that the 2010 elections were nationalized, providing the Republicans some unexpected wins at the state legislative level. His analysis suggested that 2010 was an even bigger bonanza for the GOP than the banner year of 1994. In Florida, Beattie focused on Democratic failures to get older white Democrats to the polls.

Several progressive ballot measures approved statewide garnered more votes than did top-of-the-ticket Republicans, reported Damien Filer, a consultant to Democrat and liberal measures. This might have been the only good news from Florida for his side in 2010. Democrat pollster Jim Kitchens followed Filer by clarifying his controversial post-election blog posting (now deleted, he said) that “America is dead,” contending that we’re simply ungovernable, with no party able to move forward after a gridlocked outcome. He blames “the non-compromising base” of each party for the mess.

University of South Florida Professor Susan MacManus, the state’s leading political pundit, refuted the notion that the Tea Party is a monolithic force. She also presented some very interesting exit poll results that contrasted views of the supporters of the two gubernatorial candidates. Backers of Republican winner Jim Scott said the economy is in a long-term decline. Those who voted for Democrat Alex Sink were less pessimistic, choosing to describe the economy as in a “normal downturn.” (Her pollster, Beattie, was candid enough to admit that some voters didn’t realize that his client was a “she,” because there wasn’t enough money available to advertise her broadly enough while fending off Republican attacks from millionaire businessman Scott.)

Republican Michael Luethy presented provocative predictions for battleground states in 2012, based on his analysis of legislative election results from 2010. He’s looking for North Carolina to be an especially critical state. Republicans there may unexpectedly have their hands full.

Rod Smith, the former state legislator and newly elected chairman of the Democratic Party, was positively ebullient after recent secret meetings with Obama insiders in Washington. He believes that Obama strategists concur with his notion that the road to the White House begins somewhere between I-75 and I-95, in central Florida. Smith also has to get Sen. Bill Nelson (D-Fla.) reelected and seemed focused, along with Obama’s team, on the “blocking and tackling” of voter registration and higher turnout, especially from Hispanics, to achieve his political goals.

Dave Wolfson, a GOP consultant, had much to complain about, despite the good year for Republicans. He worried aloud that we don’t do social media very well. And he complained loudly that key Republicans failed to defeat Amendments 5 and 6, which will take redistricting away from a Republican-controlled Legislature. This will result in lost congressional and legislative seats, he worries, when two (or even three) Republicans are paired in redrawn districts. He also worried aloud that a spirited, late GOP primary in 2012 to run against Nelson could leave the GOP survivor penniless and bruised, vulnerable in November.

Perhaps the most interesting subtext of the day was the bipartisan notion that foreign affairs and

national security concerns might work to protect President Obama from voter scrutiny for his bungling of the economic recovery.

David Hill is a pollster that has worked for Republican candidates and causes since 1984.

The Battle Over Redistricting—Will Latinos Be Represented?

<http://new.americamedia.org/2011/02/the-battle-over-redistricting---w-illatinos-be-represented.php>

March 7, 2011

Feb 09, 2011 WASHINGTON, D.C.—It's an impending battle: the process of redistricting throughout the country, where Hispanic political interests are at stake. The eye of the hurricane will most likely be in states with high Latino populations like Texas, Nevada and California.

A fierce battle will be waged which in the past has ended in the courts.

The first step in the battle is the release of the 2010 census results, delivering a new estimate of how the population is distributed across the country. So far, the Census Bureau has released information for the states of Louisiana, Mississippi, New Jersey and Virginia. This week it will release data for Arkansas, Iowa, Indiana, Maryland and Vermont. The bureau will be releasing the rest of the data gradually until April.

According to preliminary data, agency director Robert Groves said racial and ethnic minorities have been responsible for about 85 percent of the population growth during the last decade.

“The increase in the Hispanic community is one of the stories that will be written in the context of this census. We should see a big difference between 2000 and 2010.”

The issue now, however, is whether this growth will be reflected fairly in the restructuring of electoral districts. This means that in areas with a higher concentration of Latinos, the weight of the Hispanic vote must be proportional.

Local leaders use census data to draw up electoral jurisdictions. The problem is that, in this process, various interest groups use redistricting to benefit certain political parties or ethnic groups.

As a result, during the last round of redistricting, the cases of electoral districts in 41 states ended up in court.

“This is part of the process and the reason why the same thing will probably happen now: No one is going to let it go, not Republicans, not Democrats, not us Latinos. We will not leave,” Arturo Vargas, executive director of the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO) told *La Opinión*.

Meetings between community leaders have already begun. Last Saturday a meeting was held in New York that brought together about 100 leaders from such states as Connecticut, New Jersey, California and Rhode Island. NALEO held a conference Tuesday on redistricting in Washington, D.C., with representatives from 18 states.

A key weapon in the battle is the Voting Rights Act of 1965, created to prevent minorities from losing out in the redistricting process and requiring in some cases that states get federal approval to redraw electoral district lines. This is the first time a Democratic administration will be overseeing the redistricting process since the law was enacted.

“We are committed to working to make this happen in the fairest way possible,” said Thomas Perez, assistant attorney general for the Justice Department’s civil rights division.

The biggest battles for Hispanic interests are expected to take place in the areas where new Congressional seats will be added: Texas, which will add four seats, Florida with two, Arizona, Georgia, Nevada, South Carolina, Utah and Washington with one.

Other areas that will see major changes are the states that are losing seats: Ohio, New York, Illinois,

Iowa, Louisiana, Massachusetts, Michigan, Missouri, New Jersey and Pennsylvania.

California will keep its 53 seats at in the House of Representatives. But according to Vargas, with the loss of Democratic Rep. Jane Harman, the redistricting process could change.

"All of the Latino districts in California are going to grow. It was thought that they would be extended eastward, entering the San Bernardino area, which would make those districts more conservative," he said.

"But if the person who replaces Harman doesn't have as much political leverage, it's possible to move African-American districts to the west and better accommodate the Hispanic congressional districts to keep them where they are."

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Iowa's politics-free redistricting faces test

<http://www.google.com/hostednews/ap/article/ALeqM5gxeop2SWiXhtqE5pQzcmCzRjIQ?docId=7dfc15f200964702ab0ebce9ecd33945>

March 7, 2011

Iowa's politics-free redistricting faces test

(AP) – Feb 10, 2011

DES MOINES, Iowa (AP) — Iowa residents figure they're immune from the bare-knuckles, once-a-decade redistricting fights of other states, where incumbents use the process to solidify their re-election chances while parties scramble for any advantage.

But in this rural Midwestern state, politically relevant on the national level mostly for hosting the first caucuses of each presidential election, redistricting is less about politics and more about nonpartisan fairness.

That could be about to change.

For the first time in two decades, Iowa is losing a seat in Congress because population growth has been heavier elsewhere. That, combined with what some experts say is a national trend toward transparency, could present the biggest challenge yet to a redistricting system enacted in 1980 that allows three nonpartisan staffers to draw the lines.

"That's going to be a more potentially controversial decision, getting rid of one seat and moving other seats around to swallow up territory that is lost," said Bruce Cain, a political science professor at the University of California-Berkeley. "It's going to be a more severe test of the system than if Iowa was adding a seat or staying the same."

While the state lost a U.S. House seat once before with its current nonpartisan system in place, Cain said the political climate was less contentious in 1991 when the Legislature accepted the first congressional map presented by the panel of an attorney and two geographers.

Although Iowa is the only state where a completely nonpartisan panel redraws the lines, others have tried their own variation of taking the process out of the hands of state lawmakers. These panels still include political appointees but aim to make sure one party doesn't have complete control.

In California, voters approved a 2008 initiative removing the process from the Legislature after previous gerrymandering of political boundaries left the state with oddly shaped districts and little turnover between the parties. For the first time this year, a 14-member citizens panel with representatives from all parties — even the smaller ones — will handle the task of drawing congressional boundaries.

Arizona enters its second round of redistricting using a five-member commission made up of four citizens appointed by legislative leaders from both parties. Those four then choose the fifth member. In the past, the panel has included two Republicans, two Democrats and one independent.

And while the Legislature still has control of the process in Florida, voters there approved two constitutional amendments last November prohibiting the drawing of districts to favor incumbents or one party. Even with those new rules, there is much room for interpretation — and court challenges.

Other states have considered changing the redistricting system without much success.

In Indiana, Todd Rokita — now a member of Congress — was an outspoken advocate of banning political data or voting patterns during the map-drawing process when he was that state's secretary of state. During a 2009 speech to the Indianapolis Rotary Club, he called the state "the wild west of redistricting," complaining that the only rule governing the process is that districts have to be

"contiguous" — and there's little clarification about what that means.

But Rokita's proposal got little traction in the Legislature, and now he represents a congressional district that resembles a disjointed array of Lego blocks, spanning from the state's northwest corner to south central Indiana. His office declined to make the congressman available for an interview but released a brief statement saying his position on redistricting hasn't changed.

According to the National Council of State Legislatures, 37 states rely on their legislatures for drawing maps while 13 use some sort of separate commission. Of those, Iowa's is the most detached from politics, said Morgan Cullen, an NCSL policy analyst.

"It's completely unique to Iowa and a lot of other people look to it as a model," Cullen said.

Three of Iowa's five congressional districts are currently represented by Democrats, so if they lose a seat they also would lose their majority in the state delegation. This week, the Census is releasing local population numbers for the state to begin the process.

Sam Roecker, spokesman for the Iowa Democratic Party, said it's too early to speculate on which seat will be eliminated.

"We just have to wait and see what the map is and take it from there," Roecker said.

House Speaker Kraig Paulsen, R-Hiawatha, said Iowa's process doesn't allow the process to become "consumed" by partisan politics.

"If the objective is to create a wholly partisan model where one party controls it than this system is not designed to support that," Paulsen said.

Even in Iowa, the final maps must ultimately be approved by the Legislature once the panel's work is finished, but little political posturing has occurred over the past three decades. Cain, the Berkeley professor, said the process isn't "completely antiseptic," but it's close.

It wouldn't work most places, he said, because Iowa "lacks the kind of racial, economic, ethnic and regional diversity" of larger states on the coasts or in the South.

"If you tried to impose something like that in California, the various interest groups would go ballistic because they don't trust bureaucrats to do this," Cain said.

Iowa's system was enacted after the state Supreme Court rejected maps drawn by lawmakers in 1970.

Ed Cook, the attorney who will be involved in redrawing the map, said Iowa's method "provides for a fairly efficient way of resolving redistricting." He said the agency expects to submit its initial proposal to the Legislature by April 1 and that it will not discuss possible scenarios before then.

Senate Majority Leader Mike Gronstal, D-Council Bluffs, said the fairness in Iowa's system is evident by turnover at the Statehouse in elections following redistricting.

"The deck is not stacked by the way people draw the boundaries," he said.

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Florida governor turns Voting Rights Act rule on its head

<http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/nation/la-na-florida-voting-20110210,0,4199031.story>

March 7, 2011

Reporting from Washington —

Since the 1960s, state and local officials in the South have been required by law to seek advance approval from the [Justice Department](#) in Washington before making changes in their election rules, a legacy of the era when blacks were denied the right to vote.

But in an unusual twist, new Florida Gov. [Rick Scott](#), a Republican, is using the pre-clearance requirement in the Voting Rights Act to stall enforcement of a voter-approved initiative that bars partisan gerrymandering.

Longtime champions of voting rights are crying foul.

"This is a bizarre situation. It turns the law on its head" because it uses a reform law to block a reform measure, said Laughlin McDonald, director of the [ACLU's](#) Voting Rights Project in Atlanta.

The pre-clearance rule was adopted by Congress in 1965 as a temporary measure, but it has been continued ever since. It has been credited with ending schemes that kept blacks from voting or deprived them of political power. For example, some cities chose to switch away from districts and to citywide elections for city council whenever blacks had a majority to win a district seat.

The rule continues to rankle Southern officials, particularly when they are called upon to redraw their election districts with new census data. Two years ago, however, the Supreme Court stopped just short of striking down the rule as hopelessly outdated.

"Things have changed in the South," said Chief Justice [John G. Roberts Jr.](#) He noted that a higher percentage of blacks were registered to vote in some Southern states that are covered by the law than in some Northern and Western states that are not.

The Florida situation also shows that a well-intentioned rule can have unintended consequences.

In November, 63% of Florida's voters approved an amendment to the state constitution that forbids lawmakers from drawing electoral districts to favor their party or to protect incumbents. The measure was opposed by prominent state politicians. Since [Republicans](#) have a majority in both houses of the state Legislature and control the governor's office, they could draw electoral districts to give the GOP an edge for the next decade in Tallahassee and in the state delegation to the [U.S. House of Representatives](#).

In December, outgoing [Gov. Charlie Crist](#) sent the required pre-clearance request to Washington. But last month, shortly after taking office, Scott quietly withdrew the request. He later told reporters he wanted more time to consider the issue.

The Justice Department says the Voting Rights Act "freezes election practices and procedures" in much of the South until they are reviewed and approved in Washington. "That means that voting changes in the covered jurisdictions may not be used until that review has been obtained," it advises. Well over 99% of the changes are quickly approved.

On Tuesday, the department gave its expected approval to California's switch to an independent commission to redraw its election districts. California comes under the federal pre-clearance rule because four of its counties — Monterey, Merced, Kings and Yuba — had less than half of their residents registered to vote in the early 1970s.

Unlike California, Florida cannot move ahead to implement its nonpartisan redistricting rules until a top state official asks for and receives permission from Washington.

Last week, the League of Women Voters, the Florida chapter of the National Assn. for the Advancement of Colored People and the American Civil Liberties Union sued Scott in federal court in Florida, seeking an order that would require the governor to submit the pre-clearance to Washington.

"It's time to stop the stonewalling," said [Dan Gelber](#), counsel for Fair Districts Now, the group that sponsored the ballot measure.

"This is extraordinary. I've never seen anything like it," said Richard Pildes, a [New York University](#) law school expert on election law. "The governor is essentially using a federal law obligation that binds the states to attempt to avoid enforcing a state law that he apparently would prefer the state had not adopted."

This year, in Florida and in other states, legislative committees and independent commissions are redrawing electoral maps based on data from the [2010 census](#). But until the legal dispute is settled in Florida, it is unclear whether its lawmakers must abide by the anti-gerrymandering rules that were added to the state's constitution.

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You're spending \$300 an hour to overturn your own vote -- OrlandoSentinel.com

<http://www.orlandosentinel.com/news/columnists/os-scott-maxwell-your-money-vote-021120110210,0,6886823,print.column> March 7, 2011

orlandosentinel.com/news/columnists/os-scott-maxwell-your-money-vote-021120110210,0,4098738.column

By now, you probably know that some of your elected officials are fighting to overturn your vote for Fair Districts.

But did you know they're spending your money to do so?

Yes indeed to the tune of \$300-an-hour legal bills.

How much total? Well, that's what I wanted to know.

Getting answers, however, wasn't easy.

I started with the office of House Speaker **Dean Cannon** the guy leading the legislative fight to overturn your vote.

Cannon and the state House joined the lawsuit that had already been filed by U.S. Reps **Corrine Brown**, D-Orlando, and **Mario Diaz-Balart**, R-Miami.

All of these political plaintiffs argue that Floridians had no right to call for compact, sensibly drawn congressional districts that aren't based upon party affiliation.

Such a thing, after all, might wreck the current system where politicians get to draw snake-like districts, tailor-made for themselves and their friends.

It didn't matter to them that an overwhelming majority of Floridians 63 percent passed the constitutional amendment. The politicians think you got it wrong and their authority has been trumped.

So they're asking the courts to throw out your vote on Amendment 6, the one that deals with congressional districts. (No one has yet challenged Amendment 5, the other one that deals with state legislative districts.)

Legal battles cost money. So I asked Cannon's office: How much?

The response: They were unsure.

Um pardon? I must've misunderstood. Because it sounded like you said you weren't sure how much of *my* money you're spending to overturn *my* vote.

That can't be right, can it?

Turns out, it was.

Cannon spokeswoman **Katie Betta** said the House hired a gaggle of attorneys to handle all of the redistricting issues including basic ones that have nothing to do with legal challenges.

Said Betta: "We do not have a breakdown of fees for the Amendment 6 case."

How convenient.

It also struck me as unusual. Cannon used to work for GrayRobinson. I simply can't imagine big-league lawyers being unable to figure out how much money they were spending on which parts of their legal affairs.

Hmm, maybe these guys are right: Government *does* lack accountability! (When they're the ones running it, anyway.)

OK, I figured, if you can't give me the specific legal bills I want, I guess I should ask for them all.

Betta dutifully responded with 47 pages of invoices. (On a personal note, I should say that Betta was very helpful and forthcoming throughout the process. If I asked for a public document, she delivered in timely fashion.)

The invoices showed that a lot of the money more than \$90,000 worth went to the South Florida firm of lawyer, **Miguel De Grandy**, who charged taxpayers \$300 an hour.

Another firm, Latham & Watkins, collected another \$30,000 or so.

But the largest chunk of taxpayer dollars more than \$600,000 went to Cannon's old firm, GrayRobinson.

I don't find the choice of law firms particularly suspect. GrayRobinson was hired before Cannon started as speaker. And Betta said that the Legislature had used lawyers at GrayRobinson for redistricting matters in decades past.

But you can bet your invoice that I still have questions and concerns about the billing in general.

I'm betting most of you do, too.

We now know taxpayers have shelled out more than \$700,000 for legal work on redistricting.

But we don't know specifically how much of that was spent trying to overturn the public's vote, how much was spent trying to fight Fair Districts before the election and how much will be spent in the future.

That's unacceptable.

Taxpayers deserve detailed information about how every one of their dollars is spent.

And *any* amount of public money spent trying to thwart the public's will is too much.

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Minorities stand to gain in redistricting

http://www.redlandsdailyfacts.com/news/ci_17357068

March 7, 2011

Minorities accounted for roughly 85 percent of the nation's population growth over the past decade - one of the largest shares ever.

With Latinos representing more than half the growth share of the voting-age population in California, they should wind up with more clout in the state's future electoral districts.

"This is not a surprise because California is a very diverse state," said Peter Yao, a redistricting commissioner from Claremont.

The findings, based on fresh government survey data, offer a glimpse into 2010 census results that are being released on a state-by-state basis beginning this month.

The new census data will be used in the often contentious process of redrawing political districts based on population and racial makeup.

"There are going to be a lot of additional Hispanic officials elected when redistricting is done," said E. Mark Braden, a former chief counsel to the Republican National Committee who now advises state governments on redistricting. "But folks in power don't give up control that easily - there will be tension between the ins and the outs."

By law, California's population data will be released by April 1.

"In general, population growth is happening in one part of the state," Yao said.

"The Inland Empire will require greater representation, because it's growing faster."

Each electoral district will be larger, pushing the district lines farther and farther east,

Advertisement

he said.

But it's a long way from numbers to districts, warns Douglas Johnson, a fellow at the Rose Institute in Claremont. "When incumbents control the lines they can protect themselves and block the representation for emerging populations such as Latinos or Asians.

"Hopefully, the new redistricting commission will take a different approach and provide representation to the growing communities, but you never know. The most populated districts in the state and the most severely gerrymandered are in the Inland Empire. It means we will see huge changes, but we don't know where the new lines will end up."

Four of the eight states gaining House seats owe roughly half or more of their population gains over the last decade to Latinos. They include Texas, which picks up four seats; Florida, which will add two seats; and Arizona and Nevada, picking up one seat apiece.

In Georgia and Washington state, which also gain one seat each, Latinos combined with other minority groups accounted for a majority of their growth since 2000.

Among states losing House seats, Louisiana and New Jersey each would have posted a net population loss, and Michigan would have sustained bigger declines, if it hadn't been for Latino growth. Latinos also made up roughly 60 percent or more of the growth in New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Illinois, Iowa and Massachusetts - which each lose a seat - raising questions as to whether

remaining districts in those states will accommodate emerging Latino voting blocs.

"The growth of the Hispanic community is one of the stories that will be written from the 2010 census," Census director Robert Groves said Wednesday, previewing major demographic trends, including the movement of many minorities from city to suburb. "We should see a big difference from 2000 to 2010."

Thomas Saenz, president and general counsel of the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund, which successfully challenged the redrawing of a majority Latino Texas district that weakened the Latino vote after the 2000 census, said his group was expecting to see "a minimum of nine additional Latino-majority House seats" based on 2010 results, if states comply with federal law.

The 1965 Voting Rights Act protects the interests of substantial minority voting blocs, in some cases requiring states to get federal approval of state redistricting plans. The law does not ensure that minorities are elected to office, but that votes of minorities are not overly weakened in a way that keeps them from electing the candidates they prefer.

Yao said the state's first Citizens Redistricting Commission, charged with redrawing the state's Senate, Assembly, Board of Equalization and congressional districts, will start with a clean slate.

"We will not try to modify what we have so far," he said.

"The first draft will be available around June," Yao said.

The state will not gain a congressional seat but a new state Assembly seat representing the Inland Empire is likely, he said.

Based on population growth, MALDEF has suggested that several new Latino districts are warranted in places such as Texas, Florida, California and New York.

"We'll be monitoring everywhere," Saenz said.

The preliminary demographic numbers are based on the Census Bureau's Current Population Survey as of March 2010, as well as comparisons of the 2000 census with 2009 demographic estimates and the 2009 American Community Survey, which samples 3 million U.S. households.

According to those figures, minorities represented between 81 percent and 89 percent of the U.S. population growth since 2000, higher than the official 80 percent share in 2000.

The minority growth share in 2010 is the largest in recent memory, with only the influx of European minority immigrants such as Italians, Poles and Jews in the late 1800s possibly rivaling it in scope, said William H. Frey, a demographer at Brookings Institution who analyzed the census data.

"Political strategists and advocates, especially in growing states, cannot afford to ignore this surging political wave," Frey said.

Staff Writer Mediha Fejzagic DiMartino and The Associated Press contributed to this report.

NationalJournal.com - Incumbents, Beware - Friday, February 11, 2011

<http://www.nationaljournal.com/columns/cook-report/incumbents-beware-are-redistricting-looms-20110211>

March 7, 2011

For the past two years, virtually every House candidate who has come to the offices of The Cook Political Report for an interview has cited his or her desire to “shake things up” in Washington. Whether Democrat or Republican, they seemed united in the conviction that they could make a difference in Congress.

Three consecutive “wave” elections—favoring Democrats in 2006 and 2008, and Republicans in 2010—have generated a lot of change. Indeed, 131 of the 435 current House members, 30 percent of the body, were not there four years ago. Even if 2012 isn’t a wave election, turnover could again be very high. Why? One word: redistricting.

The redistricting process that will take place this year and next could be far more tumultuous than we have seen in the past, less because of industrial-strength gerrymandering and more because the process may be very different in a number of key states.

This redistricting may be less respectful of incumbents’ party affiliations. New legal restrictions in some states effectively prohibit partisan and political considerations in mapmaking, and that will minimize gerrymandering. But demographic changes in many states could force sitting members into new districts that have constituents who are very different from those they have represented before.

In 2002, blatant gerrymandering and incumbent protection were the rule in most large states. In California, Democrats passed a plan that created 33 safe Democratic seats and 20 safe Republican seats. In the next five cycles, only one out of 265 House elections in California resulted in a seat changing parties. In Georgia, Democrats drew a map so convoluted it could have been mistaken for a Jackson Pollock painting. And Texas Republicans’ infamous mid-decade remap of 2004 came to define then-House Majority Leader Tom DeLay’s brand of hard-nosed partisanship.

Fast-forward to the present. In California and Florida last year, voters passed ballot amendments that forbid mapmakers from favoring parties or incumbents or from taking an incumbent’s residence into account. If adhered to, these rules would radically alter existing congressional boundaries with which incumbents on both sides have grown very comfortable. This obviously terrifies sitting members who have had the luxury of picking and choosing their voters—rather than voters picking their elected officials.

In the Golden State, ballot amendments championed by former GOP Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger have established a 14-member Citizens Redistricting Commission to redraw California’s legislative and congressional boundaries. A friend showed me a flow chart plotting out the panel’s selection and deliberation process, and it looked a lot like the diagrams that Republicans used to deride Hillary Rodham Clinton’s health care proposals back in 1994. To pass a new plan, at least nine of the 14 commission members, including three Democrats, three Republicans, and three independents, must vote in favor.

If the outcome is more-compact districts in California, that will surely result in more competitive elections and likely a healthy turnover. The most vulnerable members will be those who have benefited from heavily gerrymandered districts. Incumbents most at risk could be several Republicans in general elections and Democrats in primaries.

Veteran Republicans Ken Calvert, David Dreier, and Dan Lungren represent districts neighboring more-Democratic territory that could become problematic. Democrats Howard Berman, Sam Farr, Bob Filner, Laura Richardson, and Brad Sherman have gotten away with excluding just enough Hispanics from their districts to avoid a serious primary challenge. The new districts could become

much more hospitable to Latino candidates.

In Florida, where Democrats hold just six of the state's 25 congressional districts, their exposure is somewhat limited. Republican legislators still hold the authority to draw the new 27-seat map, but the Fair Districts Florida ballot amendments passed in 2010 may limit their ability to split counties and otherwise engage in egregious gerrymandering. Still, Democratic Rep. Corrine Brown, whose district snakes from Jacksonville to Gainesville to Orlando, and odd-bedfellow Republican Rep. Mario Diaz-Balart are filing suit to block Fair Districts in federal court.

Democrats know that a "fair" map in Florida would grant them up to 10 safe districts and as many as 13 more in which they could compete. But they also know that the outcome is contingent upon dismantling Brown's substantially African-American 3rd District and replacing it with one Democratic seat in Jacksonville and two Democratic seats in Orlando. Republicans, whose goal is to protect all 19 of their members and add two new ones, will obviously refuse to draw such a map even if they fail to block Fair Districts. But Democrats believe that the courts will overturn a GOP map if it doesn't do a good job of adhering to the Fair Districts criteria.

Democrats in California suspect that their state's commission will never be able to agree on a plan and that a judge will draw California's new map in the middle of the night. Republicans in Florida insist they can overturn their state's new rules in court. Obviously, there are a lot of questions and few answers, but don't expect this decade's redistricting to be nearly as predictable as past ones.

David Wasserman contributed

This article appeared in the Saturday, February 12, 2011 edition of National Journal.

In Redistricting Debate, What Role Should Citizenship Play?

<http://newamericamedia.org/2011/02/in-redistricting-debate-what-role-should-citizenship-play.php>

February 11, 2011

Feb 11, 2011 After factoring in voting age and citizenship status, in 2009 only 41 percent of the Latino population in the United States was eligible to vote in federal elections, compared to 74 percent of non-Latinos. This is one of the major findings of statistics released last Friday by the Census Bureau at the request of the Justice Department, based in the estimates from the 2005-9 American Community Survey (ACS).

These figures on the citizen voting age population (C-VAP for short) will be a factor to be considered in political redistricting discussions throughout the country. They represent a new element in the redistricting process because this is the first time that citizenship information has been released prior to the release of the decennial Census redistricting data. Because the use of citizenship status is an unsettled redistricting and voting rights issue with the courts, it is anticipated that the use of the ACS data for this purpose may be subject to legal challenges.

The percentages of the voting age population that were U.S. citizens was lowest among Latinos (62 percent) than the other major racial-ethnic groups. This compares to 96 percent for non-Latinos, ranging from a low of 66 percent for Asians, 84 percent for Pacific Islanders, 95 percent for Blacks, 98 percent for Whites and 99 percent for American Indians.

After taking age and citizenship into account based on the findings of the 2005-9 ACS, compared to the 41 percent of Latinos who remained eligible to vote, 74 percent of non-Latinos were. This does not take into account other factors like socioeconomic status, language barriers, incarceration rates, language barriers and others that disproportionately depress Latino voter participation rates. The citizenship variable also does not reflect future naturalization rates or the likely higher undercount rate of non-citizens.

The impact of citizenship and age on the eligibility of voters varied widely between the major racial-ethnic groups. While 77 percent of whites and 68 percent of blacks remained eligible voters after taking into account these two factors, only 41 percent of Latinos, 51 percent of Asians, and 62 percent of Pacific Islanders remained eligible voters.

The impact of these factors on Latino representation in the electorate is considerable. Although making up an estimated 15 percent of the U.S. population in 2009, the Latino share of the voting age population drops to 13 percent of the total population that is 18 years and older. When citizenship status is introduced, the Latino share of eligible voters drops much further to only 9 percent.

When looking at the effect of age and citizenship status on Latino voter eligibility, there is also much variation between the states and territories. The states with the lowest Latino voter eligibility were Georgia and North Carolina (where only 35 percent were eligible), South Carolina (40 percent), Arkansas (45 percent), Maryland and the District of Columbia (47 percent each), and Oregon (48 percent). Those with the highest rate of Latino voter eligibility were Puerto Rico (97 percent), Montana (94 percent), Hawaii (93 percent) and Alaska (83 percent).

The same is the case with cities and other places. Among the 25 places with the largest Latino populations, Latino voter eligibility ranged from 39 to 96 percent. Among these 25 places, those with the lowest Latino eligibility rates were Santa Ana, CA (39 percent) and Dallas, TX (41 percent). Those with the highest Latino eligibility rates were: Bayamon, Puerto Rico (97 percent), San Juan, Puerto Rico (90 percent), San Antonio, TX (84 percent) and Albuquerque, NM (84 percent).

This article was shortened from its original length.

Rate this story:



Florida morning: Could Democratic wave leave Corrine Brown behind and Jeb! for veep?

<http://jacksonville.com/opinion/blog/457554/abel-harding/2011-02-12/florida-morning-could-democratic-wave-leave-corrine>

March 7, 2011

By Abel Harding (@abelharding, abel.harding@jacksonville.com)

COULD A DEMOCRATIC WAVE LEAVE CORRINE BROWN BEHIND? - Charlie Cook, the legendary D.C. political guru, says Democrats are poised for a Florida surge, thanks to the redistricting amendments approved by voters last year. One long-time First Coast lawmaker could very well be a victim of the new maps. Cook: "Democrats know that a 'fair' map in Florida would grant them up to 10 safe districts and as many as 13 more in which they could compete. But they also know that the outcome is contingent upon dismantling Brown's substantially African-American 3rd District and replacing it with one Democratic seat in Jacksonville and two Democratic seats in Orlando. Republicans, whose goal is to protect all 19 of their members and add two new ones, will obviously refuse to draw such a map even if they fail to block Fair Districts. But Democrats believe that the courts will overturn a GOP map if it doesn't do a good job of adhering to the Fair Districts criteria." <http://bit.ly/hmd0XY>

Good morning and welcome to Florida morning, your daily digest of political news from around the Sunshine State. The days are quickly passing before Tallahassee is invaded by lawmaker and tort reform looks as if it might provide a rare occasion for agreement between the legislative and executive branch, state parks get some love from the governor and the Jeb! chatter refuses to die down.

PUBLIX, FORD WISH LIST MIGHT GIVE GUV EASY WIN - Money issues aside, tort reform seems to be an area of agreement between the Republican Legislature and Gov. Rick Scott. Aaron Deslatte: "Records released after a public records request show Scott's tort-reform task force leaned on Publix vice president for risk management Marc Salm to vet the wish lists of lobbying groups, insurance companies and businesses like Walgreens interested in lowering their personal-injury lawsuit losses. One of Salm's requests – requiring that doctors provide evidence of an injury when they treat employees through the worker-compensation system – was included in the task force's final report. Salm wrote the request was 'from Publix and myself on behalf of 'payers' (insurance carriers and employers) in the Workers Compensation System,' and that the evidence-based medical treatment system would 'reduce what is identified as one of the most frequent problems with the WC system – unnecessary treatment by physicians for financial gain.'" Orlando Sentinel: <http://bit.ly/edYU7L>

SOLD! - "The state sold two planes at cut-rate prices Friday, but Gov. Rick Scott said taxpayers got a good deal by avoiding the cost of keeping them flying. The 2003 Cessna Citation Bravo, which the state acquired new for \$5.3 million, was sold to an oilfield services company for \$1.9 million. The King Air 350, a twin-prop 2000 model, drew a top bid of \$1.77 million from a used-plane dealer. In 2008, the Office of Program Policy and Government Accountability had estimated the jet's value at \$4.7 million and put the King Air's market worth at \$3.6 million. But when Scott put them on the auction block Jan. 4, laying off 11 employees at the state motor pool, the state found a soft market for used executive aircraft." More from Bill Cotterell, the dean of Tallahassee reporters, here: <http://bit.ly/gwGO5p>

THE JEB! CHATTER - "The Jeb Bush chatter says as much about the seemingly anemic Republican presidential field slowly taking shape for 2012 as it does about the former Florida governor's stature in the GOP," writes the St. Pete Times' Adam Smith. "Will Jeb Bush run for president in 2012? No. Vice president? Stranger things have happened." <http://bit.ly/gjVz5x>

STATE PARKS STAY OPEN - "We've got great parks, and we've got to make sure we preserve them and take care of them," Scott told reporters after visiting the headquarters of the Department of Environmental Protection, the state agency tasked with oversight of state parks. Associated

Press: <http://bit.ly/dWZQI3>

SCOTT TRANSITION MEMBER MAKES DOT CUT - The list of three finalists that made the cut to head Florida's Department of Transportation includes Thomas Conrecode, a member of Scott's transition team. Gordon Goodin and Ananth Prasad round out the names submitted to the governor. <http://bit.ly/flAH7N>

SENATORS GET SCOLDED - Lawmakers violated "both the spirit of open government and Senate rules" when three of them discussed the state budget at a private dinner with Scott. Naked Politics: <http://bit.ly/dWJZx9>

BUDGET - House Speaker Dean Cannon cool on a corporate tax cut, but appears open to property tax cuts. Tampa Tribune: <http://bit.ly/hHx1JQ> But the speaker is "perplexed" by the governor's proposal. "I think, again, a lot of people including me, as you see the proposal and you roll it out in Eustis, it was a weird — no one knew quite what to make of it in many respects," Cannon said. St. Pete Times: <http://bit.ly/hPMvzB> Another Eustis opinion: It was a must, writes Steve Bosquet. <http://bit.ly/fzr0Vz> Education budget in trouble in Senate. <http://bit.ly/dQjpwH> Dentistry, optometry and mental health services likely on the chopping block. <http://bloom.bg/gMmXDw> Florida Association of Counties executive director Christopher L. Holley is critical of a "quirk" in Scott's plan for pensions, writes the Florida Times-Union's Steve Patterson and Timothy J. Gibbons. "Lots of county employees are members of the state pension system, and Scott's plan to make employees pay part of their own retirement would save counties money. But Holley said the counties will lose that money because Scott plans to take back cash the state normally splits with local governments. 'He doesn't even allow the counties to keep the savings. ... He's siphoned off \$340 million in revenue-sharing dollars,' he said." <http://bit.ly/hSBcl>

ON TO CUBA? - <http://bit.ly/efpFlx>

TAMPA MAYOR - Bob Buckhorn snags the recommendation of the St. Pete Times. <http://bit.ly/fzXkoz>

NO COMMENT FOR YOU! - If it's not on the agenda, the Williston City Council doesn't want to hear about it. A real-world example of how a court ruling can reverberate throughout Florida. "At Williston City Council meetings, general public comment has fallen victim to election-cycle politics. As of the Tuesday meeting, Council President Marc Nussel has removed "public participation" — the time set aside for residents to address any city government issue they choose — from city meetings... Under a 2010 court ruling, it is also not something officials have to allow at public meetings — a situation some legislators seek to change in the upcoming session. In Williston, Nussel said his decision to do away with public participation, at least until after Election Day on March 1, was rooted in the belief that two candidates for City Council... were using public comment to advance their campaigns." Gainesville Sun: <http://bit.ly/gISG7D>

CONGRATS ARE IN ORDER - South Florida Blogger Javier Manjarres scores CPAC Blogger of the Year honors. <http://bit.ly/i153yn>

QUOTE OF THE DAY - "Now, I don't advocate cohabitation, I will kill either of my kids if they try that. I also don't advocate adultery, my wife would kill me if I advocated for that... But it still shouldn't be a law." - State Rep. Ritch Workman, advocating for a repeal of "arcane" state laws. <http://bit.ly/g4UpHo>

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Congressional Redistricting: Where They Draw the Lines

<http://politics.blogs.foxnews.com/2011/02/13/congressional-redistricting-where-they-draw-lines>

March 7, 2011

The call to Rep. [Dennis Kucinich](#) (D-OH) was innocuous enough. Last Thursday, C-SPAN hosted Kucinich as a guest on its morning program, Washington Journal. And the first caller to Kucinich was a Republican from Ohio, identified only as "Jim."

"How many representatives do we have in Ohio?" Jim asked of Kucinich.

The Congressman responded that the Buckeye state has 18 House members.

"Do they have offices in Ohio AND Washington?" queried Jim.

Kucinich said yes, noting that all lawmakers have quarters at the Capitol and at least one office back home. For instance, Kucinich has offices in the Cleveland suburbs of Parma and Lakewood.

"It seems like there a lot of offices," Jim replied. "We have a Congress. The Senate. We have a governor and stuff. Why do we need so many?"

Well, Jim won't have to worry much longer about why Ohio has "so many" Congressional offices. In the coming year, Ohio joins New York as one of two states on schedule to lose two House seats as a result of the 2010 census.

There's an old saw adage in professional and collegiate sports: it's bad enough you have to play the other team. But it's quite another to have to take on the officials, too.

Such will be the case over the next few years as Democrats try to win back control of the House of Representatives. It will be hard enough to beat the Republicans. But the Democrats also have to take on the officials as well.

And in many respects, the referees are Republicans because they control the redistricting process in many key states.

The decennial census dictates that the country jostle all 435 Congressional districts to better reflect the distribution of the American population. Where Americans live changes each decade. Some states and regions swell with people. Others stagnate. And a few begin to winnow on the vine.

In many cases, it's a problem of keeping up with the Joneses. In this case, the Joneses are Texas and Florida. Due to population surges, Texas earned a whopping four new House seats. Florida will add two.

Meantime, Ohio and New York remain populous places. But they didn't enjoy the population spikes that Texas and Florida did. Or even Utah and Washington, which both scored an additional Congressional seat. And other states like Iowa will shed a Congressional seat as well.

Texas and Florida don't just get to tack on seats. Think of the House of Representatives as a big pie that can't get any larger. It's set by statute at 435 pieces. The census decides which states get additional slices of pie. And Ohio and New York are now on a Congressional version of Jenny Craig and will lose two pie pieces. And then it's up to the states to carve up their own districts to reflect the new distribution.

And that's where Republicans will wield the knife.

So Ohio has to condense the 18 Congressional districts established after the 2000 census into 16. New York's apportionment diet dissolves its 29 districts into 27.

Some states appoint a commission to draw the new lines. Others leave it up to their legislature. Regardless, Democrats will draw the lines to favor Democrats and Republicans will endeavor to benefit Republicans.

Let's study New York for starters, even though this is an area where Democrats could make some inroads against the GOP.

New York voters dispatched six Republican freshmen to the House last year. That puts freshman Reps. Tom Reed (R-NY), Ann Marie Buerkle (R-NY), Nan Hayworth (R-NY), Richard Hanna (R-NY), Michael Grimm (R-NY) and Chris Gibson (R-NY) at risk right off the bat. Democrats could redraw the lines in such a way that blends together the districts now held by some of these freshmen, forcing them to run against one another in primaries while protecting their own lawmakers. The scandal that erupted last week involving former Rep. Chris Lee (R-NY) could also put his now-vacant district on the table.

Democrats usually win out in New York. But it's anybody's guess how an independent commission there could draw the lines.

But Ohio is a different enterprise as the GOP controls the redistricting process.

For instance, Republicans dominated the redistricting process in the Buckeye State in 2000. Ohio has three major metropolitan areas: Cleveland, Columbus and Cincinnati. There are strong urban, Democratic influences in all three of those cities. But only Cleveland has bona fide Democratic districts. And since much of Ohio's population loss came in northeast Ohio, look for at least one of those seats to be yanked out from underneath the Democrats.

Meantime, neither Columbus nor Cincinnati featured districts that made it easy for Democrats to win election to the House. For instance, redistricting mavens chopped Columbus and its suburbs into three districts that stretched from the city's urban core to rural cornfields, full of GOP voters. The redistricting process yielded a similar result in Cincinnati, splitting the city in half. One district on east side of Cincinnati sprawls deep into rural, Republican turf along the Ohio River. And the Democratic vote is diluted in both districts.

Of course, were Democrats in charge, it's likely they would have drafted districts that produced Democratic representatives in both Columbus and Cincinnati and eliminated Republican advantages. And just for larks, Democrats would certainly go after House Speaker John Boehner (R-OH). Boehner usually cruises to re-election. Democrats would have enjoyed nothing more than watching the Speaker of the House sweat.

In the 2010 midterm elections, Republicans defeated five incumbent Democrats in Ohio alone. The downside is that Republicans may make some of those freshman GOPers run against one another. On the other hand, Republicans could try to make Ohio Democrats an [endangered species](#) in the House of Representatives. They may blend together the districts of Reps. Bob Latta (R-OH) and Marcy Kaptur (D-OH) in northwest Ohio. Or, they could devise a scheme that throws together Reps. Dennis Kucinich (D-OH), Marcia Fudge (D-OH) and Betty Sutton (D-OH) in the Cleveland area. That's a risky strategy as the Congressional Black Caucus would be sure to raise hackles about the GOP and Boehner if they eliminate the only black-majority district in the state, now held by Fudge.

Another interesting case study is Iowa. The Hawkeye State currently has five House districts. Democrats hold three seats and Republicans possess the other two. But after the 2010 Census, Iowa has to wean itself to four seats.

The only metropolitan region in Iowa is Des Moines, currently represented by Rep. Leonard Boswell (D-IA). Iowa was one of the few places where vulnerable Democrats held their ground against the GOP wave last year. But redistricting could alter that, especially if the GOP decides to eliminate Boswell's district in Des Moines. That would again dilute Democratic votes in an urban area akin to what happened in Columbus and Cincinnati.

Any way you look at it, Democrats face a rough road because so many states that gain seats are Republican bastions. Georgia and South Carolina both add seats. Meantime Massachusetts drops a seat.

It's hard to predict which direction the political winds will blow next year. President Obama is expected to face an uphill climb for re-election. But the sheer number of potential Democratic seats that are shaved away by the Census certainly increases the degree of difficulty for Democrats as they try to reclaim the House in 2012.

Compact districts in Florida could lead to gains

http://www.tampabay.com/newspolitics/compact-districts-in-florida-could-lead-to-gains/1151355

March 7, 2011

[Adam C. Smith](#), Times Political Editor
In Print: Sunday, February 13, 2011

An overwhelming 63 percent of Florida voters in November voted for a "Fair Districts" initiative aimed at curbing partisan gerrymandering of congressional and legislative political districts.

A legal challenge is pending, and Gov. **Rick Scott** is aggressively working to avoid implementing the measure. So what would be the practical effect of requiring compact districts that don't favor incumbents? Certainly no Democratic tidal wave, but some likely gains.

State Democratic chairman **Rod Smith** estimates that there are currently four state Senate seats where both Democrats and Republicans have a shot at winning and fewer than 25 competitive state House districts. Those numbers would double with the new system, Smith estimates.

Political analyst **Charlie Cooke** looked at the congressional districts in the *National Journal* and concluded that Democrats, who now hold just six of Florida's 25 districts, could wind up with as many as 10 to 13 safe seats out of 27. That would require dismantling the snakelike district that runs from Jacksonville to Orlando and represented by Democrat **Corrine Brown**, making one Jacksonville-area district Democratic and adding two Democratic districts in the Orlando area.

Lots of friends

Yes, there are solid reasons for **George LeMieux**, **Connie Mack**, **Adam Hasner**, **Nick Loeb** and company to be very afraid of **Mike Haridopolos'** Senate campaign. During a single event at Orlando's airport earlier this month, the Florida Senate president raised about \$1 million. Legislative leadership clearly has its advantages, as lobbyists flew in with \$10,000 in checks.

"When you have the relationships that I built up over the last 11 years, I don't have to spend hours on the phone convincing people who I am. I've got a lot of friends," said the Merritt Island Republican.

Primary change?

Sorry, Republican National Committee chairman **Reince Preibus**. It looks more and more like Florida Republicans will ignore your insistence that Florida move its 2012 presidential primary to March or later.

Gov. Scott says he wants to comply with the rules and not be penalized by losing delegates, but Senate President Mike Haridopolos and House Speaker **Dean Cannon** are intent on Florida maintaining its major role in picking a nominee. The primary could shift from January to February, but March looks unlikely.

"I am very reluctant to move it. I think Florida as the soon-to-be third-most populous state in the

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country belongs at the front end of that national dialogue," Cannon said last week.

Rubio brings in well-known strategist

U.S. Sen. **Marco Rubio** has hired a well-known political strategist in South Carolina as his deputy chief of staff. **Terry Sullivan** helped engineer then-Rep. **Jim DeMint's** successful campaign for the Senate and he ran **Mitt Romney's** presidential campaign in South Carolina in 2008.

Sullivan's role underscores Rubio's star power. Part of his job will be to strategically help handle the volume of media, speaking and endorsement requests as well as to work on Rubio's message.

Alex Leary contributed to this week's Buzz. Adam Smith can be reached at asmith@sptimes.com.

Winner

of the week

Al Cardenas. The former Florida GOP chairman was elected chairman of the American Conservative Union, succeeding **David Keene**, who had held the post since in 1984. At the group's Conservative Political Action Conference this weekend, Cardenas even received an enthusiastic video introduction from a longtime friend, Sen. Marco Rubio, despite having endorsed **Charlie Crist** for the Senate.

Loser

of the week

Florida's teachers unions. With so few allies in power left in Tallahassee, ending teacher tenure and enacting merit pay looks inevitable this year in the Legislature. And get this number from a newly released Florida Chamber of Commerce poll by Cherry Communications: More than 68 percent of registered voters including 58 percent of Democrats believe "teacher unions are looking out mainly for themselves and their union members instead of the best interest of our children's education."

[Last modified: Feb 12, 2011 07:00 PM]



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Florida officials should not defy the will of the voters on redistricting

AN EDITORIAL OPINION OF THE NORTHWEST FLORIDA DAILY NEWS (Fort Walton Beach, Fla.)

We criticized Florida lawmakers and Gov. Rick Scott for their reluctance to implement Amendments 5 and 6, the redistricting reform measures that Florida voters approved back in November. The amendments will refine the way legislative and congressional district lines are drawn by outlawing gerrymandering to favor political parties or incumbents.

Naturally, a lot of politicians yelped at the very idea. Some are still yelping.

Their resistance to reform isnt winning many friends. Our online poll asks whether lawmakers should continue to fight the Fair Districts amendments: 83 percent of respondents say no.

No, presumably, to Scotts withdrawal of Amendments 5 and 6 from federal review. No to the House leaderships endorsement of a lawsuit to block Amendment 6. No to Tallahassee thumbing its nose at voters.

Laggard lawmakers could learn a few things from Sen. Don Gaetz, R-Niceville. He, too, fought Amendments 5 and 6 before the election. But now hes chairman of the Senate Reapportionment Committee and hes supposed to make the new rules work.

In a Nov. 28 guest column, Gaetz referred to his earlier opposition and to the continuing legal challenges: Theres a huge difference between supporting a cause you believe in before the matter is decided and funding a lawsuit to overturn a constitutional provision youre 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.

Gaetz pledged that his 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.

Gaetz still doesnt like Amendments 5 and 6, but hes not trying to trash them. Scott and the other foot-draggers in Tallahassee ought to join him in respecting the will of the people.

Dogs and cats cannot vote, but their owners can

AN EDITORIAL OPINION OF THE CLARION-LEDGER (Jackson)

Mississippi legislators spend a lot of time listening and taking care of the needs of numerous powerful interest groups represented by well-paid lobbyists.

There is an interest group that doesnt hire lobbyists whose members cant even speak, but has needs that need to be taken care of this session.

Lawyers Set To Make Millions Off Reapportionment : BrowardBeat.com

<http://www.browardbeat.com/10106/>

February 14, 2011

BY BUDDY NEVINS

Three Democrats are already running for the Florida House seat now held by state Rep. **Franklin Sands** of Weston.

Only one problem: Candidates **Louis Reinstein**, **Richard Stark** and **Dan Stermer** have no idea what House District 98 will look like in 2012.

They may not know for certain until days before the filing begins June 18, 2012, according to a timetable released by the state Senate.

Lawsuits and mandated legal reviews are the reason for the delay. All this legal rigmarole is economic stimulus for the state's big and plugged-in law firms.

For instance, the Gray-Robinson firm's **Jason Unger**, a former Fort Lauderdale Republican activist and long-time Bush family supporter, represents the Florida House on reapportionment. His wife, former Browardite **Karen Unger**, was **Jeb Bush's** campaign manager and is a well-known GOP operative.

Republican heavyweights Tripp Scott of Fort Lauderdale handle reapportionment for the state Senate.

How much money is at stake for lawyers? Millions!

That's what it will take to make sure the new districts are legal. Most of the lawyers' fees will be paid by the public in one way or another.

Ka-ching, ka-ching!

Until all that court maneuvering is over, nothing is certain. Candidates still have to campaign if they have any hope of winning, even though eventually they may not have a district to run in.

Stermer said he will not move if his Weston house is carved out of District 98 during reapportionment. Or if the seat is redrawn to be more favorable to a Republican candidate.

A former Weston commissioner, Stermer has the same dilemma as **Scott Brook** who is campaigning for state Rep. **Ari Porth's** northwest Broward seat. Brook has no idea whether District 96 will be made less hospitable to Democrats.

Porth and Sands are termed out.

THE TIMETABLE

The start of the regular 60-day session next year is being moved up two months to January to accommodate the various legal barriers reapportionment must jump over before being approved.

The plan must be okayed by the Florida Supreme Court *and* the U. S. Justice

Department.

Worst case scenario: The plan gets final approval on the Friday before filing begins Monday June 18, 2012.

Add to this legal marathon a swarm of law suits that are sure to contest the new lines. In 2002, the courts were still tweaking the district boundaries in August, days before the primary.

The new amendments to the Florida Constitution approved by voters last November complicate matters. They mandate the way reapportionment takes place. The amendments are already in court.

One lawyer involved told me that the language of the amendments violate previous federal court rulings governing fair redistricting.

The federal courts also will look unfavorably upon any plan that appears to offer less opportunity for minorities to be elected.

Politically, it is getting harder to draw solid Republican or Democratic districts that will last for a decade. That's because of the growing clout of independent voters.

Republican U. S. Rep. **Allen West** won overwhelmingly last year in a district that was slightly Democratic and previously held by a Democrat. In the 1990s, the Republicans took over the Legislature despite the fact that Democrats held power when the districts were drawn.

The independent vote factor is just one more obstacle for legislators drawing new districts next year.

But guys like Stermer can't put off running until the district lines are chiseled in stone.

"I can't wait until then," said Stermer, who has started to raise money necessary for the campaign.

No candidate can wait.

XXXX

Below is the Florida Senate's initial timetable for redistricting state House, Senate and congressional seats. Click to enlarge.



Check out the NCSL's redistricting handbook

<http://insidethelinesfla.com/legislative/check-out-the-ncsls-redistricting-handbook>

February 14, 2011



This week, House Redistricting Committee staff hand delivered copies of the National Conference of State Legislatures' [Redistricting Law 2010](#) to all members of the Florida House of Representatives. This handbook provides a comprehensive summary of the legal framework that governs the redistricting process. If you want a printed copy of [Redistricting Law 2010](#), you can order by [clicking here](#).

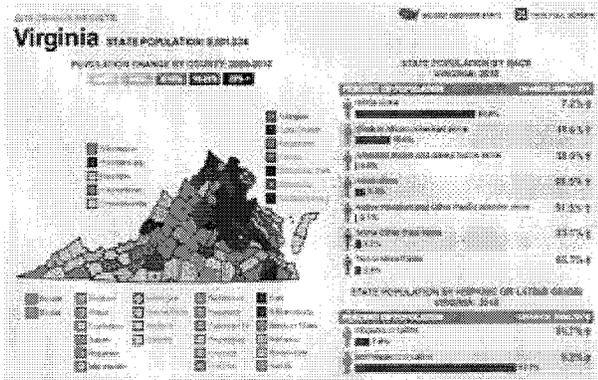
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February 15, 2011

Drawing the Lines

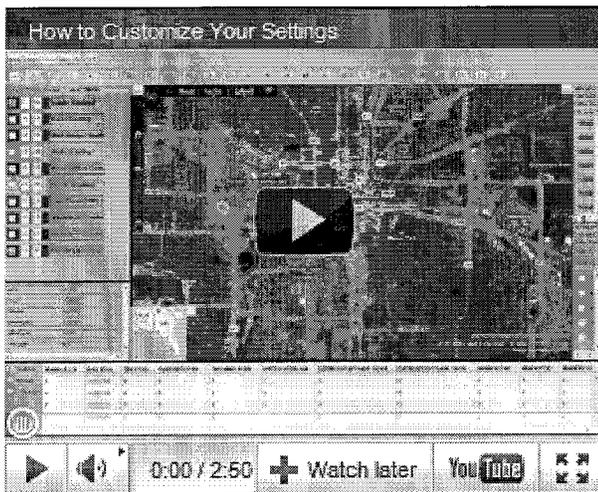
The Census Bureau has begun to roll out redistricting data. So far, 2010 Census results have been released for 11 states, including Illinois, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, New Jersey and Virginia.



With the release of the P.L. 94-171 redistricting data -- race, Hispanic or Latino origin, voting age population and housing occupancy status -- the political games will begin.

Yes, data of any kind can make one's eyes glaze over. But get over it. For the first time, we the people can get into the game and draw our own lines. We now have access to free web-based mapping tools to draw congressional and state legislative boundaries.

In Florida, for instance, the public will be able to build their own plans and submit them to the state legislature.



A popular public mapping tool, DistrictBuilder, was developed by George Mason University and Azavea, a Philadelphia-based software firm that specializes in geographic data analysis.

Advocacy groups can use social media to educate the public about why they should care about redistricting, foster participation in the process, and promote transparency.

The upcoming public hearings will provide opportunities to compare citizen-generated plans with the legislature's proposed map. The public will be empowered to question whether the legislature's plan is intended to draw communities of interest or protect incumbents.

For more info, check out [Redistricting the Nation](#).

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House Incumbents, Beware (2/15/11) -- GovExec.com

http://www.govexec.com/story_page.cfm?filepath=/dailyfed/0211/021511op.htm

March 7, 2011

For the past two years, virtually every House candidate who has come to the offices of *The Cook Political Report* for an interview has cited his or her desire to "shake things up" in Washington. Whether Democrat or Republican, they seemed united in the conviction that they could make a difference in Congress.

Three consecutive "wave" elections - favoring Democrats in 2006 and 2008, and Republicans in 2010 - have generated a lot of change. Indeed, 131 of the 435 current House members, 30 percent of the body, were not there four years ago. Even if 2012 isn't a wave election, turnover could again be very high. Why? One word: redistricting.

The redistricting process that will take place this year and next could be far more tumultuous than we have seen in the past, less because of industrial-strength gerrymandering and more because the process may be very different in a number of key states.

This redistricting may be less respectful of incumbents' party affiliations. New legal restrictions in some states effectively prohibit partisan and political considerations in mapmaking, and that will minimize gerrymandering. But demographic changes in many states could force sitting members into new districts that have constituents who are very different from those they have represented before.

In 2002, blatant gerrymandering and incumbent protection were the rule in most large states. In California, Democrats passed a plan that created 33 safe Democratic seats and 20 safe Republican seats. In the next five cycles, only one out of 265 House elections in California resulted in a seat changing parties. In Georgia, Democrats drew a map so convoluted it could have been mistaken for a Jackson Pollock painting. And Texas Republicans' infamous mid-decade remap of 2004 came to define then-House Majority Leader Tom DeLay's brand of hard-nosed partisanship.

Fast-forward to the present. In California and Florida last year, voters passed ballot amendments that forbid mapmakers from favoring parties or incumbents or from taking an incumbent's residence into account. If adhered to, these rules would radically alter existing congressional boundaries with which incumbents on both sides have grown very comfortable. This obviously terrifies sitting members who have had the luxury of picking and choosing their voters - rather than voters picking their elected officials.

In the Golden State, ballot amendments championed by former GOP Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger have established a 14-member Citizens Redistricting Commission to redraw California's legislative and congressional boundaries. A friend showed me a flow chart plotting out the panel's selection and deliberation process, and it looked a lot like the diagrams that Republicans used to deride Hillary Rodham Clinton's health care proposals back in 1994. To pass a new plan, at least nine of the 14 commission members, including three Democrats, three Republicans, and three independents, must vote in favor.

If the outcome is more-compact districts in California, that will surely result in more competitive elections and likely a healthy turnover. The most vulnerable members will be those who have benefited from heavily gerrymandered districts. Incumbents most at risk could be several Republicans in general elections and Democrats in primaries.

Veteran Republicans Ken Calvert, David Dreier, and Dan Lungren represent districts neighboring more-Democratic territory that could become problematic. Democrats Howard Berman, Sam Farr, Bob Filner, Laura Richardson, and Brad Sherman have gotten away with excluding just enough Hispanics from their districts to avoid a serious primary challenge. The new districts could become much more hospitable to Latino candidates.

In Florida, where Democrats hold just six of the state's 25 congressional districts, their exposure is somewhat limited. Republican legislators still hold the authority to draw the new 27-seat map, but the Fair Districts Florida ballot amendments passed in 2010 may limit their ability to split counties and otherwise engage in egregious gerrymandering. Still, Democratic Rep. Corrine Brown, whose district snakes from Jacksonville to Gainesville to Orlando, and odd-bedfellow Republican Rep. Mario Diaz-Balart are filing suit to block Fair Districts in federal court.

Democrats know that a "fair" map in Florida would grant them up to 10 safe districts and as many as 13 more in which they could compete. But they also know that the outcome is contingent upon dismantling Brown's substantially African-American 3rd District and replacing it with one Democratic seat in Jacksonville and two Democratic seats in Orlando. Republicans, whose goal is to protect all 19 of their members and add two new ones, will obviously refuse to draw such a map even if they fail to block Fair Districts. But Democrats believe that the courts will overturn a GOP map if it doesn't do a good job of adhering to the Fair Districts criteria.

Democrats in California suspect that their state's commission will never be able to agree on a plan and that a judge will draw California's new map in the middle of the night. Republicans in Florida insist they can overturn their state's new rules in court. Obviously, there are a lot of questions and few answers, but don't expect this decade's redistricting to be nearly as predictable as past ones.

David Wasserman contributed to this report.

Cook: 'Fair Districts' amendments make Florida more competitive for Democrats

<http://insidethelinesfla.com/parties/cook-%e2%80%98fair-districts-%e2%80%99-amendments-make-florida-more-competitive-for-democrats>

February 15, 2011



Political analyst Charlie Cook surveys redistricting across the country, and [sees large potential gains for Democrats in Florida's congressional delegation](#) with the implementation of the "Fair Districts" amendments:

In Florida, where Democrats hold just six of the state's 25 congressional districts, their exposure is somewhat limited. Republican legislators still hold the authority to draw the new 27-seat map, but the Fair Districts Florida ballot amendments passed in 2010 may limit their ability to split counties and otherwise engage in egregious gerrymandering. Still, Democratic Rep. Corrine Brown, whose district snakes from Jacksonville to Gainesville to Orlando, and odd-bedfellow Republican Rep. Mario Diaz-Balart are filing suit to block Fair Districts in federal court. #Democrats know that a "fair" map in Florida would grant them up to 10 safe districts and as many as 13 more in which they could compete. But they also know that the outcome is contingent upon dismantling Brown's substantially African-American 3rd District and replacing it with one Democratic seat in Jacksonville and two Democratic seats in Orlando. Republicans, whose goal is to protect all 19 of their members and add two new ones, will obviously refuse to draw such a map even if they fail to block Fair Districts. But Democrats believe that the courts will overturn a GOP map if it doesn't do a good job of adhering to the Fair Districts criteria.

Continue reading this story from the Florida Independent [here](#).

Category: [Democrats vs. GOP](#)

Redistricting and minority business opportunities will be focus

By Staff Writer

Originally posted 2/16/2011

Three former NAACP branch presidents have come together to address two critical issues facing the Black community. Former presidents Bill McCormick, Carlton Moore and Roosevelt Walters announced they will be forming a coalition to monitor and address the impacts of redistricting on the Black community following the 2010 Census. Each year, after the census, political districts are redrawn to account for shifts and changes in population and demographics. New districts for Congress, state and county officials will be drawn. It is a highly political undertaking that can be as contentious as it is powerful but its importance cannot be overstated. Newly drawn districts will determine who our elected representatives will be. How the lines are drawn will affect opportunities for candidates to be elected who can best represent our interests. We have to ensure we have fair representation at all three levels of government.

This effort comes none too soon. Despite the passage of two Constitutional amendments to ensure that district lines are drawn fairly with disregard for political parties, Florida Governor Rick Scott is stalling the implementation of these amendments. Thus, the Legislature and Governor may be in total control of the process.

We had all been approached to become involved with the redistricting effort, stated Roosevelt Walters. We had been at the helm of the branch during previous redistricting efforts and as veterans; I guess it was felt we still had something to offer.

Redistricting is neither easy nor pleasant. Friends become enemies and enemies become allies. You often wonder why anyone would want to be involved but in the end, it is clearly worthwhile because it is as American as voting. Our community is fortunate to have the experience these presidents have and the additional support to ensure that the interests of our community are addressed fairly and legally.

In addition to tackling redistricting, the group intends to be watchful and responsive to minority and small business interests. Said McCormick, We are seeing fewer and fewer opportunities for Black businesses. While the economy has taken its toll on many businesses, programs and initiatives to ensure that Black business men and women have fair opportunities to compete continue to dwindle and our community is not addressing the problem to the extent we can and should.

Many have seen a void in Black leadership that has been a concern in recent years. While there may be more Black elected officials, there appears to be a lack of coordination and uniting of forces. Moore commented, As the only former elected official in the group right now, I know too well what can be done in public office. Its not always easy doing the right thing. But even so, there are limitations on what elected officials can do. It often takes the grassroots support of private citizens to do our part to get the job done. That is what we intend to do with our new group. We are excited as well as challenged by the opportunities.

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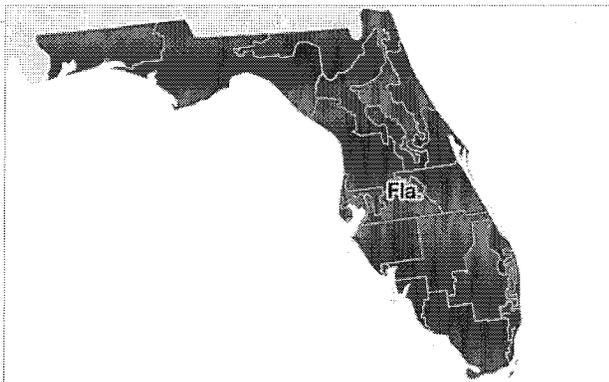
 

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This is the 11th in an occasional series that focuses on the decennial redistricting process in key states. We call it "Mapping the Future". The series aims to look forward to how the maps in these states could be drawn and what the best and worst outcomes for each party might be. Today we take on Florida. (And make sure to check out the first nine installments: [Texas](#), [Indiana](#), [Georgia](#), [Illinois](#), [Massachusetts](#), [Ohio](#), [California](#), [Nevada](#), [Virginia](#) and [Pennsylvania](#))

House Democrats have been talking since Nov. 3 about playing offense in 2012, and if they do, Florida could be leading the way.

Rep. **Steve Israel** (D-N.Y.), the chairman of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee, said Wednesday that Florida is set to play a key role in a Democratic comeback.

"The only way that they could conceivably add more Republicans to Florida without violating Florida's own fair redistricting standards would be to redistrict into Bermuda and the Cayman Islands," Israel joked. "Florida Republicans have a problem."

All Israel needs is a little cooperation from a few judges.

Redistricting is a process intricately intertwined with the legal world, and nowhere is that more clear than in the Sunshine State.

The state's voters in November passed two constitutional amendments that aim to restrict the amount of "creativity" -- ahem -- that legislators can use during the drawing of new districts. It said the new districts must not "favor or disfavor an incumbent or political party," must be "compact" and must make use of existing "geographical boundaries."

Because Republicans control the entire redistricting process in Florida, the effects could have a real impact on whether the GOP can keep its stranglehold on the state's congressional delegation. Adding to the uncertainty is the fact that Florida will gain two more congressional districts after reapportionment, meaning it will have a whopping 27 members of Congress.

But there is still much to be determined about how potent those amendments are and whether they will stand up in court.

If judges side with Republicans, the GOP will likely keep an overwhelming advantage in the state's congressional delegation, which currently contains 19 Republicans and just six Democrats (in a *swing* state, mind you).

If judges side with Democrats, experts say we could see anything from a few endangered Republicans to a huge overhaul of the state's congressional delegation, in which Democrats pick up as many as four, five or six seats.

"It's a 50-50 state," said Democratic redistricting guru Tom Bonier. "That would suggest that if you were to draw a fair map, you would have a 50-50 distribution of seats."

But just how "fair" the map will be is very much an open question.

Republicans think the terms of the amendments are too generic to cause much trouble, and they also think that the amendments violate the Voting Rights Act by preventing the state from drawing distant communities of African-American voters into one district.

"What they want sounds great on paper, but you cannot legally execute

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it," said GOP consultant Rick Wilson.

What *has* resulted is an early round of legal battles.

The amendments' supporters are suing Gov. **Rick Scott** (R) after the governor pulled a request for pre-clearance from the Justice Department. Parts of Florida are protected by the Voting Rights Act, and the Justice Department needs to make sure any changes comply with the act's requirement that minority districts be protected.

The amendments' supporters have accused Scott of stalling. His office didn't respond to a request for comment.

In addition to that situation, a separate legal case has created an unusual alliance between the GOP and Democratic Rep. **Corrine Brown**.

Brown's district is at the center of the controversy. As one of three African-American Democrats with a majority-black district, she could see her district dismantled if Democrats and supporters of the amendment -- a group called Fair Districts Florida led the charge -- have their way.

The reason is that the district, as it's drawn, is so oddly shaped that Brown and Republicans say it may not be possible to keep it intact under the new rules. It snakes from Jacksonville in the north, west to Gainesville and south all the way to Orlando, gluing together a patchwork of black communities that give it just enough African Americans to qualify as a majority-black district.

Dismantling Brown's district would have the side effect, of course, of allowing Democrats to "unpack" the district, taking its many Democratic voters and spreading them around nearby districts, creating three or four Democratic-leaning districts where there is currently just one solidly Democratic district.

That would be good news for Democrats in the state but bad news for Brown.

For her part, Brown said she's not worried that her party's interests may be at odds with her own. But she said the long-term effect of the law could be damning to African-American lawmakers if it undercuts the Voting Rights Act.

"If this passes in Florida, it will go on to the other Southern states," she said. "I think this is a big, big deal."

There's also the possibility that Brown's lawsuit is moot, because it may not be possible to draw a black-majority district with the new Census data (which has yet to arrive for Florida). If a black-majority district cannot be drawn, then the protections of the Voting Rights Act might no longer apply, and the district can be significantly redrawn under the new redistricting rules.

Either way, it's a potentially bad situation for the Republicans, who have basically maximized the number of districts they can hold in Florida and hope to win the two new districts.

If Brown's district is dismantled, freshman Rep. **Dan Webster** would likely have a Democratic-leaning district after taking on more Orlando Democrats, and at least one more solid Democratic district would be created -- possibly one of two new districts the state will get through reapportionment. Rep. **John Mica** (R-Fla.) could also have a tougher district, according to an analysis by the Cook Political Report.

The other main area of contention in the state is Rep. **Alcee Hastings'** (D) black-majority district in South Florida. Because the district isn't quite so oddly shaped as Brown's and is more solidly majority-black, it seems likely that it will keep most of its voters.

In between Hastings' South Florida district and Brown's district, there are several other areas where Democrats could make gains -- depending on how the legal proceedings turn out.

One is Rep. **Allen West's** (R-Fla.) district, which currently ties together the most Republican parts of the West Palm Beach and Fort Lauderdale areas. The district is so oddly drawn that it would likely have to be overhauled under the new rules and, in the process, pick up a bunch of Democratic voters.

Another is Rep. **Bill Young's** (R-Fla.) district. The Democratic-leaning city of St. Petersburg is currently cut out of his district. Making things more compact may return the city to Young's district.

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"Worst Week in Washington" winner: Darrell Issa

Sometimes picking the person who had the "Worst Week in Washington" is hard. And then sometimes it's Darrell Issa. The California Republican Congressman made waves early in the 112th Congress with his plans to serve as the investigator-in-chief of the Obama Administration...

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Both West's and Young's districts both went for **President Obama** in 2010 and could flip back even as they stand now (though Young's is more likely to flip after the popular 80-year old congressman retires). But both are about as Republican as they can be right now and will likely get tougher if altered.

So what about the two new districts?

One of them is expected to be a Republican-leaning district in South Florida -- likely in the Fort Myers/Naples area -- while the other is likely to be somewhere in between Orlando and the Tampa/St. Petersburg area.

Both could be Republican, as all the overpopulated districts in those areas are currently held by GOP members. But if Democrats are able to dismantle Brown's district, Republicans may want to create one of the two new districts nearby to soak up much of Brown's territory and help shore up some nearby GOP incumbents.

Republicans are still likely to come out of redistricting with more winnable districts than Democrats. But it's almost impossible for Democrats to have a worse map for the next decade than the one they have been dealing with for the past 10 years. And that's good news for a national Democratic party whose redistricting advantages are few and far between.

By Aaron Blake | February 17, 2011; 12:12 PM ET
Categories: [Mapping the Future](#), [Redistricting](#)

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Christopher Honey

Fair redistricting in Florida and how it could help Democrats -
Friday, February 18, 2011, 2:52:33 PM - [Flag](#) - [Reply](#) [via Twitter](#)



rhagaman

Fair redistricting makes great sense. However Democrats controlled redistricting for many years. Therefore, changes in the law should come when they regain control.

Cuomo Redistricting Bill Reduces Lawmakers' Role

http://www.nytimes.com/2011/02/18/nyregion/18redistrict.html?_r=1&partner=rss&emc=rss

March 7, 2011

ALBANY — Gov. [Andrew M. Cuomo](#) introduced legislation on Thursday to create an independent commission to redraw the boundaries for Congressional and state legislative districts, promising to end the longstanding Albany practice of protecting incumbent lawmakers through creatively drawn districts.

Mr. Cuomo's bill, which follows through on a campaign promise, would put redistricting in the hands of a bipartisan panel that he said would be free of close ties to the Legislature or other conflicts of interest.

"We need to reform the system," Mr. Cuomo said in a statement. "This bill ensures greater independence, transparency and a commitment to fair representation and equality."

The move by Mr. Cuomo, a Democrat, drew immediate praise from government watchdog groups and from [Edward I. Koch](#), the former New York City mayor, who led a high-profile campaign last year to press lawmakers and candidates into pledging their [support for independent redistricting](#).

It also increases pressure on Republicans in the State Senate, who for decades have relied in part on gerrymandering to preserve their majority in the face of Democrats' large registration advantage in New York. All 32 Senate Republicans signed Mr. Koch's pledge last summer, but since winning back the chamber in November, they have been vague about when they will take up a redistricting bill.

The Senate Republican leader, [Dean G. Skelos](#), reacted noncommittally to Mr. Cuomo's bill, saying on Thursday that Republicans were focusing their attention on the governor's budget.

"The issue of redistricting reform is an important one, and I have said repeatedly that we will act on reform legislation," Mr. Skelos said in a statement. "A number of proposals have been advanced, and we have to take a close look at what makes the most sense to ensure a fair, open and truly nonpartisan process."

Mr. Koch, who had set a deadline of March 1 for lawmakers to follow through on their pledges, urged legislators to "move quickly" in passing the governor's bill.

"This legislation would replace the current 'incumbent protection program' and partisan gerrymandering with a system based on independence, sound criteria and greater citizen involvement," Mr. Koch said in a statement.

The Senate Democratic leader, [John L. Sampson](#), said he hoped the Senate would immediately pass Mr. Cuomo's bill when legislators returned to Albany on Feb. 28. A spokeswoman for the Assembly speaker, [Sheldon Silver](#), said he was reviewing the bill and remained committed to redistricting reform. Gerrymandering has helped Democrats in the Assembly, where they hold two-thirds of the seats.

The state undertakes redistricting every decade based on the results of the census. The final 2010 census count for New York has yet to be released, but lawmakers were told late last year that the state would lose [two Congressional seats](#).

By current practice, the Legislature sets the district boundaries, with each house drawing lines to protect its members and the final product almost invariably challenged in court.

The governor's proposal would put redistricting in the hands of a bipartisan commission whose members are at least four years removed from serving in Congress or the Legislature; working as a staff member in Congress, the Legislature or the governor's office; or serving as a political party

official or a registered lobbyist.

The Legislature and the governor's office would first appoint a bipartisan nominations committee to come up with a pool of candidates for the commission. Legislative leaders would then select the commission from that pool.

Mr. Cuomo's bill would set a series of rules that the commission would need to follow in its work, which would ultimately require the Legislature's approval — though lawmakers' ability to amend the plans would be limited. Among the rules: the population of each district in the Senate or the Assembly would have to fall within 1 percent of the average population of the districts in that house. When redistricting was last undertaken, the deviation in some districts' population was as much as 5 percent.

Experts have predicted that any mathematically rigorous redistricting process would result in significant gains in the Senate for Democrats, who are stronger downstate, because upstate New York's share of the state's population has been on the decline.

Mr. Cuomo's proposal hews closely to legislation introduced last month by two Democrats, State Senator Michael N. Gianaris of Queens and Assemblyman Hakeem S. Jeffries of Brooklyn. Mr. Koch had planned to use that bill as his benchmark in determining whether lawmakers followed through on their pledge.

As of Thursday, no Senate Republicans had signed on to Mr. Gianaris's bill as a co-sponsor.

Nicholas Confessore contributed reporting.

Redistricting process in Florida more complicated than just moving boundaries

<http://jacksonville.com/news/florida/2011-02-21/story/redistricting-process-florida-more-complicated-just-moving-boundaries> March 7, 2011

TALLAHASSEE - Even as some lawmakers begin to start work on the once-a-decade chore of redrawing the state's political boundaries, the politically contentious redistricting process is surrounded by more questions than usual.

This year's process is supposed to be the first to follow state constitutional Amendments 5 and 6, measures aimed at ending political gerrymandering that supporters said has produced a Legislature out of touch with Florida's political leanings. The initiatives were approved with 63 percent of the vote.

But Amendment 6 - which governs the drawing of congressional districts - has already been challenged in court by U.S. Reps. Corrine Brown, a Democrat from a Jacksonville-area district, and Mario Diaz-Balart, a Republican from a Miami district.

Meanwhile, Gov. Rock Scott has withdrawn the state's application for federal approval of the amendments - required by the Voting Rights Act because of Florida's history of racial discrimination - in a move that drew another lawsuit from supporters of the amendments.

The questions have prompted the Florida House, which is looking to join Brown and Diaz-Balart's lawsuit, to largely shut down the process. The chamber has created a redistricting website, but House Speaker Dean Cannon, R-Winter Park, has only named the committee's chairman. In a memo sent to lawmakers when he appointed other committees, Cannon said the delay was prompted in part by a need to continue "analyzing the recently enacted constitutional amendments."

Meanwhile, the Senate has begrudgingly moved ahead. Senate President Mike Haridopolos, a Merritt Island Republican who joined Cannon in a vocal campaign against the amendments, said the chamber essentially has no choice but to assume the amendments will stand.

"We have to conclude that," he said. "The voters spoke; we want to respect the voters."

But Haridopolos said he anticipates a new level of upheaval surrounding Florida's redistricting process, given the new standards, which are meant to prevent lawmakers from crafting lines based on wholly political considerations.

"I think it's going to be the full employment act for lawyers, because not just one, not just two, but three or four sides are going to be suing in this thing. ... I will support the Constitution, but as we've already seen, there are multiple lawsuits already filed on both sides," he said.

Haridopolos also said some estimates of the cost of defending the new maps, which generally costs from \$2 million to \$3 million a year, surpass \$10 million.

"You think reapportionment is chaotic - this is going to add a whole new element to it," he said.

Supporters of the amendments contend that lawmakers are trying to make the amendments sound more complicated than they actually are, and that at least some of the standards are in use in several states across the nation. Ellen Freiden, who chaired the campaign to pass the amendments, said there was no reason for lawmakers to ignore the standards now, even with the lawsuit and Scott's maneuver.

"They are law," she said. "They are in the Florida Constitution."

But Freiden's group and other supporters have their own complaint, largely based on Scott's

decision to withdraw the state's attempt to get the amendments cleared by the Justice Department. Without clearance, any move to implement either of the amendments could be challenged in court under the Voting Rights Act, making it dicey for lawmakers to follow the standards before getting the final sign-off from Washington.

Scott's administration has argued that he withdrew the amendments as part of an effort to review new regulations, and there is no rush on getting them approved.

"Census data has not been transmitted to the state yet and the Legislature will not undertake redistricting for months, so this withdrawal in no way impedes the process of redrawing Florida's legislative and congressional districts," spokesman Brian Hughes said in an e-mail after the withdrawal was revealed.

But Dan Gelber, a former state senator who now serves as counsel for FairDistricts Now, said the move was a delaying tactic.

"It's a very perverse manipulation of the Voting Rights Act," Gelber said, noting the healthy margin the amendments received in the November elections. "It's really not fair to prevent it from being implemented for no good reason."

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★ Redistricting in Florida - Ballotpedia

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House

House Speaker Dean Cannon, while announcing committee appointments in early December, stated he would be delaying appointments to the redistricting commission until 2011 while staff analyze the impact of Amendments 5 & 6.

In a memo Cannon said, "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."^[6]

Citizen involvement

The House has launched the [website Florida Redistricting](#), which contains information on the process, as well as legislative and legal resources. As of February 2, a [test version](#) of the My District Builder program is online. It will allow the public to redraw district lines with the same tools legislators will use in an attempt to engage citizens as much as possible in the process. A [video](#) on how to use the [website](#) is available on YouTube. The Senate is planning to launch a test version of its program soon. J. Alex Kelly, staff director of the Florida House Redistricting Committee, explained, "If we can get an abundance of feedback, almost to the point we're overwhelmed, we've succeeded."^[7]

Legislation

Rep. [Matt Gaetz](#) (R) introduced a bill in January 2011 to remove a variety of exemptions on records of the legislative branch. This includes drafts of redistricting proposals which, under current law, are not required to be made public until they are introduced as bills.^[8] His father, Sen. [Don Gaetz](#) (R), serves as Chair of the [Senate committee on redistricting](#).

Gerrymandering

Florida's 23rd Congressional district was featured in a *Slate* publication titled, "The Most Gerrymandered Congressional Districts." There were 20 districts featured from across the country.^[9]

Timeline

Legislators will be taking public testimony regarding redistricting in summer 2011, and in the fall will begin holding committee meetings. The 2012 legislative session will start earlier than normal in order to finish redistricting so that candidates have time to qualify for spring primary races.^[10]

Sen. [Don Gaetz](#) (R), Chair of the [Senate committee on redistricting](#), said that there will be at least 20 public hearings and create a [website](#) that will allow citizens access to the same data used for redistricting.^[11] In mid-January the Florida House unveiled the "My District Builder" software which will be used to redraw districts and announced it would be available to the public, inviting them to join in the process.^[12]

Florida's redistricting timeline.^[13]

Welcome to Q&A for cartographers, geographers and GIS professionals — check out the [FAQ!](#)

What tools for regionalization/redistricting can you recommend?

I am looking for tools for regionalization / districting in GIS.

So far I have been able to identify

- Districting ArcGIS extension (now also online)
- REDCAP (currently limited to 50k input polygons)
- iRedistrict (not yet released)
- R method

Is there anything else available out there? Especially something that will have no problems in dealing with quite large dataset [~ 1.3 million polygons]?

clustering

regionalization

redistricting

edited Feb 23 at 18:22

asked Nov 4 '10 at 12:48



radek

1,619 4 19

71% accept rate

3 Answers

Follow-up with some other non-commercial web apps people have been developing:

- Florida is rolling their own MyDistrictBuilder web ap: <http://www.floridaredistricting.org/> (app may be at <http://floridaredistricting.cloudapp.net/MyDistrictBuilder.aspx>, website claims they'll have public testing in March)
- Profs. Altman and McDonald are developing the open-source DistrictBuilder: <http://www.publicmapping.org/> (demo at <https://demo.publicmapping.org/>)
- Something else from the Fuzzy Tolerance blog: <http://fuzzytolerance.info/code/lightweight-redistricting-with-openlayers-part-ii/> (demo here: <http://maps.co.mecklenburg.nc.us/redistricting/>)

answered Feb 23 at 14:44



neuhausr

391 4

There's also Maptitude for Redistricting: <http://www.caliper.com/mtredist.htm>

answered Nov 10 '10 at 15:05



neuhausr

391 4

Thanks. Havent seen this one. Have you had a chance to actually do some work with it? — radek Nov 10 '10 at 16:04

I have used some Q&A for cartographers, geographers and GIS professionals check out the FAQ!
use it again in 2010. I think they found the Disaggregation/Aggregation tool for election results esp. useful. - neuhausr

Nov 10 '10 at 17:01

Just stumbled upon this blog post. Seems like Python's PySAL library can handle regionalization as well.

answered Dec 1 '10 at 11:19



radek

1,619 4 19

question feed

Abusing the Voting Rights Act - Hans A. von Spakovsky

<http://www.nationalreview.com/articles/260303/abusing-voting-rights-act-hans-von-spakovsky>

March 7, 2011

The redistricting process for congressional and state-legislative seats will soon begin in earnest. All redistricting plans must meet the “one person, one vote” equal-protection standard established by the Supreme Court, which means that districts are supposed to be as even in population as possible.

But redistricting also must comply with the Voting Rights Act, and the Justice Department’s Civil Rights Division just released its new “Guidance Concerning Redistricting Under Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act.” This guidance, which affects redistricting in all or parts of 16 states, is almost guaranteed to cause problems for Republicans.

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When the Voting Rights Act was enacted in 1965, Section 5 was supposed to be a temporary, emergency provision. It prohibits certain jurisdictions from implementing any change in their voting laws unless those changes are pre-cleared by the Justice Department or approved by a three-judge panel in federal court in Washington. This 45-year-old “emergency” provision has been renewed four separate times, most recently in 2006. That renewal gave the section 25 years of new life, despite a complete lack of evidence that the type of systematic discrimination that led to its initial passage still exists. Indeed, Congress even changed the Section 5 legal standard to make it easier for the Justice Department to cause mischief.

And as we see in the new guidance memo, DOJ seems intent on doing just that. Jurisdictions covered under Section 5 — all of Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, South Carolina, Texas, and Virginia, and parts of California, Florida, Michigan, New Hampshire, New York, North Carolina, and South Dakota — now have the burden of proving that their redistricting plans were adopted “free of any discriminatory purpose” and will not have any “discriminatory effect.”

Historically in U.S. jurisprudence, the government has the burden of proving guilt. But Section 5 has always had a different requirement: The states have to prove they are innocent. This poses problems when combined with a standard as vague and nebulous as “discriminatory purpose.” Let’s assume a Section 5 jurisdiction submits a new redistricting plan. Even in the absence of any evidence that the plan would have a discriminatory effect or would in any way inhibit the ability of minority voters to elect their candidates of choice, DOJ could deny pre-clearance if it found “direct or circumstantial evidence” of a “discriminatory purpose.”

This new standard seems designed to make it easier for Justice attorneys to label covered jurisdictions as racist. That is a dangerous thing. During my service as a career attorney in the Civil Rights Division, I found that nearly all the lawyers and staff involved in Section 5 determinations see nefarious racial agendas — i.e., discriminatory purpose — lurking at every corner.

Recent testimony before the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights by DOJ whistleblowers Christian Adams and Christopher Coates confirms that attitude still prevails. The new redistricting standards will let the misguided careerists at Justice impose their worldview on Section 5 jurisdictions with little or no proof of actual discrimination.

The guidance also provides a heckler’s veto to any minority state legislator unsatisfied with a new redistricting map; such a legislator can now simply cry “racism,” thereby causing the map to suffer from a fatal Section 5 “discriminatory purpose” defect. Today, lone cries of racism are often

(although not always, of course) totally baseless. But one can count on the ideologues in the Voting Section to accept every cry as legitimate.

College Contest In Va. Could Help Demystify Redistricting - News

http://www.amu.org/news/11/02/23/college_contest_in_va_could_help_demystify_redistricting.php

March 7, 2011

February 23, 2011 - The release of new census data has set the politically-charged and often arcane task of redistricting in motion in states and localities across the country.



Web-based software is allowing college students at GMU and other citizens to try their hand at redrawing political boundaries for the first time. Courtesy of: Jonathan Wilson [View more images from this gallery.](#)

In Virginia, developing technology suggests we could be on the verge of a new era of public involvement in what has long been a mysterious process.

The 15 students in a campus computer lab at George Mason University, clicking and dragging their versions of a redrawn Virginia political map, are focused on something that could have just as much political significance as

any upcoming election.

That's certainly the way associate professor of government Michael McDonald sees it.

He helped design the software that allows these students to experiment with redistricting.

He's also coordinating a statewide contest to reward the best redistricting maps drawn by college students from 13 schools.

"This is just one of the disconnects that we have," McDonald says. "People become fascinated about campaigns and candidates, but this process, which is really going to set the table on who's going to win and lose elections over the next decade -- nobody really pays attention to that."

McDonald says it's not necessarily that the public hasn't been interested.

Redistricting requires a lot of data and a lot of calculations and up until now, it's been too expensive and technical for many people outside of the government and major political parties to get involved.

But advances in web-based software are changing that.

Gabriel Hudson -- a doctoral candidate helping to guide the George Mason students -- says he doesn't even know which students are Republicans and which are Democrats here.

"I think the maps that the students come up with -- will be more fair and more representative, just because of the spirit of the competition," Hudson says.

Emma Leahy is a freshman. She points to a voting block colored dark gray on the screen, indicating a neighborhood that's largely African-American.

"And we would not want to draw a large line through there -- that would not be good," she says. "We want to preserve communities."

That's just one criterion for grading the students' maps -- judges will also look how compact each new district is, how politically fair and competitive they are, and whether the maps adhere to federal voting laws.

Leahy says at this point she's still experimenting -- working her way toward the areas that will take the most work.

"Northern Virginia is gonna be really hard," she says.

That's because Northern Virginia has seen major population growth in the past ten years.

McDonald says most of the growth has come past the suburbs of Fairfax and Arlington, and into the "ex-urbs" of Prince William and Loudoun Counties.

"Those area's have grown tremendously -- in fact so much so that you're probably looking at a state senate district created out in that direction," he says.

McDonald says that will make things a little more fair for Northern Virginia.

He says it hasn't had as much influence over taxing and spending decisions in Richmond as it deserves.

But McDonald also says states across the country have a long way to go to make redistricting truly fair.

He says only Florida and California have passed laws addressing redistricting fairness in the past ten years.

"If you wanna say that we're moving toward less politics in terms of redistricting, we are moving in that direction," he says. "But it's pretty much baby steps at this point."

McDonald is hoping that what's happening in this classroom will also make a difference.

He says the maps produced by the students will offer a point of comparison for the final map produced by legislators.

And soon anyone with the time and interest will be able to do what these students are doing.

McDonald and his colleagues are working to make their software available free online for anyone across the state, and the country, to try redrawing political lines.

Updated: Feb. 23, 2011 a 5:24 pm

Black and Hispanic Dems to sue over redistricting lawsuit.

<http://miamiherald.typepad.com/nakedpolitics/2011/02/black-and-hispanic-dems-to-sue-over-redistricting-law-suit.html>

March 7, 2011

As if the once-a-decade process of redistricting wasn't complicated enough, there's a new wrinkle: At least five black and Hispanic Democrats from Tampa Bay and South Florida are filing a court motion soon to ensure that the voter-approved "Fair Districts" amendment becomes law.

The constitutional amendment concerning standards for drawing congressional districts was approved by 63 percent of voters on Election Day. But less than 24 hours later, U.S. Reps. Mario Diaz Balart, R-Miami, and Corrine Brown, D-Jacksonville, sued to block the law. They said the new redistricting standards would hurt minority representation.

Then, House Speaker Dean Cannon, who unsuccessfully tried to scuttle the redistricting amendments in the courts and at the ballot box, [intervened on behalf of Diaz Balart and Brown](#). Cannon's court action says the redistricting standards (designed to prevent political gerrymandering) violated the U.S. Constitution.

Cannon's motion officially made the House against the amendments. But now the House will be divided against thanks to the intervention of four Democratic representatives Perry Thurston, Joe Gibbons, Luis Garcia and Janet Cruz. Sen. Arthenia Joyner of Tampa might intervene as well. So far, the Senate has stayed out of the fray.

"We are filing as members of the Legislature to make sure the districts are drawn fairly," said Gibbons. "We had 63 percent of voters approve this and the law should be followed."

Said Democratic Party spokesman Eric Jotkoff: "As Chairman Rod Smith announced on the day he was elected to lead the Florida Democratic party, we will be seeking to intervene in the lawsuit to protect the rights of the voters of Florida and what 63 percent of people approved last fall, which were the fundamental standards of fairness."

-- Janet Zink

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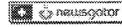
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FEBRUARY 24, 2011

Hispanic and Black Dems to sue over redistricting lawsuit.

As if the once-a-decade process of redistricting wasn't complicated enough, there's a new wrinkle: At least five black and Hispanic Democrats from Tampa Bay and South Florida are filing a court motion soon to ensure that the voter-approved "Fair Districts" amendment becomes law.

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-- Janet Zink

Posted by Marc Caputo at 12:55:51 pm on February 24, 2011 in

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March 7, 2011

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The new rules require that a district's boundaries be continuously connected and as close to a square or circle as possible. Districts must be 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 and say districts should not be drawn to deny minorities the chance to elect representatives of their choice.

Voters approved the pair of amendments, one for state legislative districts and the other for federal congressional districts, by 62 percent of the vote. Florida lawmakers won't start the redistricting process until next year. A trial on the lawsuits could start this spring.

At stake is how Florida's congressional and legislative districts will be drawn. The Sunshine State was one of the few states to gain extra congressional districts, an additional two, bringing the state's total number of districts after next year to 27.

The legal fights have taken some turns that are as twisted as some of Florida's most awkwardly drawn districts.

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(Page 2 of 2)

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About a month later, members of the American Civil Liberties Union of Florida asked to join the case as defendants, claiming their interests weren't represented by the parties involved in the

lawsuit. They were soon joined by members of the Florida State Conference of NAACP branches and Democracia Ahora, a Hispanic advocacy group. All the groups had worked toward the amendments' approval.

In their court papers, members of the NAACP and Democracia Ahora called the plaintiffs "entrenched incumbent members of Congress" who wanted to take away the new protections against political gerrymandering. The two civil rights groups said the amendments offered extra protections for minority voters that previously was missing from the state constitution. The NAACP and Democracia Ahora also argued that their rights on this matter wouldn't be represented by newly elected Republican Gov. Rick Scott, nor his secretary of state, Kurt Browning.

Browning was a public leader opposing the amendments, and three days after Scott took office in January, the state quietly withdrew a request for federal approval, or "preclearance," that is required under the Voting Rights Act. The request was filed in December before then-Gov. Charlie Crist left office. The "preclearance" process vets any changes that could dilute the voting power of minorities.

Both the plaintiffs in the lawsuit, Brown and Diaz-Balart, and now the defendants, Scott and Browning, oppose the redistricting amendments, the civil rights groups said, "creating a perfect storm of troubling circumstances requiring intervention."

The withdrawal of the request for approval from the U.S. Department of Justice "appeared calculated to delay and possibly thwart implementations of the amendments," the civil rights groups said.

So the civil rights groups, along with the League of Women Voters and five voters from Monroe County in the Florida Keys, filed another lawsuit, this one against Scott and Browning. They said that since Monroe County is one of five Florida counties subject to preclearance for any changes to voting practices the amendments needed to be vetted by the U.S. Department of Justice. They said the absence of a preclearance process will deprive them of their rights under the Voting Rights Act.

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Lawsuits challenge Fla. redistricting changes - Florida Wires

<http://www.miamiherald.com/2011/02/25/2084691/lawsuits-challenge-fla-redistricting.html>

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Lawsuits challenge Fla. redistricting changes

<http://www.palmbeachpost.com/news/state/lawsuits-challenge-fla-redistricting-changes-1280472.html>

March 7, 2011

By MIKE SCHNEIDER

The Associated Press

Updated: 5:04 a.m. Friday, Feb. 25, 2011

Posted: 3:04 a.m. Friday, Feb. 25, 2011

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By Cynthia Barnett - 3/1/2011

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Predictably, the GOP, now dominant in both the state House and Senate, will attempt to structure the congressional and legislative districts to preserve as many safe seats for Republicans as it can. This year, because so much of Florida's population growth over the decade was Hispanic, leaders from the Hispanic community will try to land better representation in Washington and Tallahassee, particularly along the Interstate 4 corridor. Meanwhile, counties in southwest Florida already are speculating that they'll snag additional representation because of higher-than-average population growth over the past decade. "The interest groups will be out en masse, political interest groups and local groups that don't want to see their cities and counties divided," says Marian Johnson, senior vice president of political strategy at the Florida Chamber of Commerce. "And then you'll still have one little county drawn 70 different ways for 70 different reasons."

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Reconciling the fair districts amendments' geographic goals with their social and political goals presents a challenge that some view as impossible. "You have the confounding intersect of race and party," says Susan MacManus, distinguished professor of political science at the University of South Florida. "It's practically a formula for lawsuits."

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Hispanic district in Miami, made common cause and filed a lawsuit challenging the amendments' constitutionality.

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Florida's elections supervisors have been working for several years on a precinct project focused on goals such as keeping subdivisions together and keeping neighbors on the same street voting together. That and other new, highly local data such as Bing maps enable the line drawers to create district maps accurate literally to the household level. The technology should "dramatically reduce the number of times that a community is split," says J. Alex Kelly, staff director of Florida's House Redistricting Committee.

In addition, everybody can play: For the first time, Floridians will be able to use web-based software to propose their own boundaries and submit them for consideration. Citizens could use the state's redistricting technology in 2002, but it was clunky, and they had to redraw the entire peninsula for their plan to be considered. This time around, local groups will be able to propose changes for their own region, counties or neighborhoods. (To try it, click on <http://floridaredistricting.cloudapp.net>.)

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Final boundaries have been subject to lawsuits each cycle for the past 30 years, and this year will be no exception particularly with the fair districts amendments in play. In addition to the predictable legal battle, districts involving five counties Hillsborough, Collier, Hardee, Hendry and Monroe also will have to earn special approval from the U.S. Justice Department to ensure compliance with the Voting Rights Act.

Most people assume Florida's so-called pre-clearance counties have roots in historically disenfranchised African-American voters, as they do in the rest of the South. But Florida's scrutiny under the Voting Rights Act is about compliance for Hispanics, the state's largest minority group. Hillsborough County, for example, "has a Hispanic population so dispersed that the crafting of minority-majority districts for the population in the county is impossible at present," say civil rights scholars Charles Bullock and Ronald Gaddie in their 2009 book "The Triumph of Voting Rights in the South."

" width="11" height="13" /> Uncertainty over the boundaries is likely to favor incumbents.

With final rulings on the newly drawn districts' constitutionality not expected until shortly before the June 2012 qualifying deadline, some potential candidates may not know their district's boundaries in time to decide whether to mount a campaign.

" width="11" height="13" /> Voices of Experience

"The technology has gotten so finely tuned that it is absolutely possible to draw fair districts, but so finely tuned that legislators also have the tools to do things they're not supposed to do. Every time a plan is drawn, the incumbent runs through a geographically microscopic political performance of the district. Somebody's going to have to look these incumbents in the eye and say, 'This is not about you, and it's not for you. We have standards that need to be followed.' "

*St. Petersburg attorney **Peter Wallace**, a former Democratic House Speaker who was chairman of the House reapportionment committee in 1992*

"You really have to take a macro, regional look at things. It's not your district. It's not what happens in your county. It's got to be a much bigger-picture approach. When you take away and add to your county, you affect every other county in Florida. Yes, it's partisan; yes, it's political. But you've got to try to get beyond that and keep the voters in mind and do what's right."

*Hillsborough County Commissioner **Sandra Murman**, Republican former state representative who was vice chair of congressional redistricting in 2002*

DRAWING THE LINES: KEY PLAYERS

Don Gaetz

Senate Redistricting Committee
chairman

Will Weatherford

House Redistricting Committee
chairman

John Guthrie

Senate Reapportionment Committee
staff director

J. Alex Kelly

House Redistricting staff director

Don Gaetz

" width="11" height="13" /> BY THE NUMBERS

18,801,310 Florida's population, according to the 2010 U.S. Census. The state is edging closer to being the third largest state in the country, trailing New York by fewer than 1 million residents.

27 New number of Florida congressional districts, up from 25. Both Florida and New York will have 27 representatives in Congress and both will have 29 Electoral College votes, increasing Florida's importance in presidential elections through 2020.

696,345 Number of people in each congressional district. The federal courts have interpreted the one-man, one-vote provisions of the Voting Rights Act so strictly that Florida lawmakers must create each district with almost precisely that number of people each district is supposed to have no more than one person over or under that population.

470,033 and 156,678 Florida's state Senate and House districts must be redrawn with a respective 470,033 and 156,678 total population in each. The state has a bit more leeway than one over or under but must try to get as close as possible to avoid legal challenges. The last time around, the House districts came within 2.5% of the total and the Senate districts within 0.5%.

" width="11" height="13" /> Timeline: Redistricting 2012

MARCH 2011

Florida releases beta versions of its new, web-based redistricting software, MyDistrictBuilder, to give lawmakers and citizens time to test and learn the program.

JUNE 2011

Florida releases final version of redistricting web application.

JULY - OCTOBER 2011

State House and Senate redistricting committees hold public meetings around Florida to gather citizen testimony.

JANUARY 2012

The legislative session will begin early to accommodate the redistricting process. Ideally, the session and redistricting will wrap up March 9, 2012.

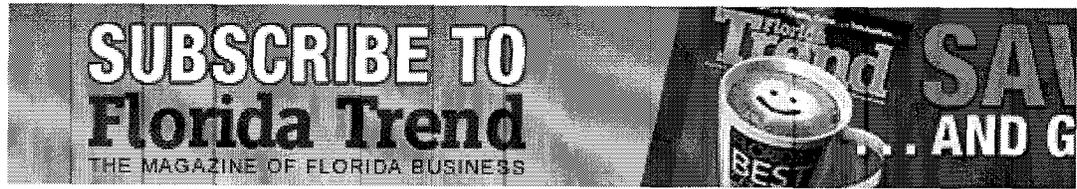
MARCH - JUNE 2012

The Florida Supreme Court and U.S. Department of Justice review Florida's redistricting plans for compliance.

JUNE 18 - 22, 2012

Qualifying week for state and federal elections in Florida.

Redistricting is the redrawing of Florida's political boundary lines, every 10 years, to reflect changes in population. Those districts tell the stories of their communities. The Florida House is inviting Floridians to start the redistricting conversation. To enable that conversation, www.floridaredistricting.org serves as a hub of public participation opportunities, including access to MyDistrictBuilder™, the online tool for both Floridians and their legislators to suggest new district boundary lines. This summer's public meeting schedule for redistricting now includes 26 meetings throughout Florida. The meeting calendar is available on the [Florida Redistricting](http://www.floridaredistricting.org) website.



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[Illustration: Roger Chouinard]

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Ballot Box

For the second straight month, consumer confidence among Floridians has risen. How do you feel about the state of the economy?

- It's clearly getting better all around.
- It's getting better in general, but my situation hasn't improved.
- It's still shaky.
- I don't buy it. Everything I see is still pointing down.

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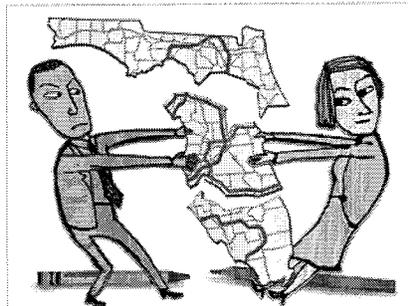
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Final boundaries have been subject to lawsuits each cycle for the past 30 years, and this year will be no exception — particularly with the fair districts amendments in play. In addition to the predictable legal battle, districts involving five counties — Hillsborough, Collier, Hardee, Hendry and Monroe — also will have to earn special approval from the U.S. Justice Department to ensure compliance with the Voting Rights Act.



[Illustration: Roger Chouinard]

Most people assume Florida's so-called pre-clearance counties have roots in historically disenfranchised African-American voters, as they do in the rest of the South. But Florida's scrutiny under the Voting Rights Act is about compliance for Hispanics, the state's largest minority group. Hillsborough County, for example, "has a Hispanic population so dispersed that the crafting of minority-majority districts for the population in the county is impossible at present," say civil rights scholars Charles Bullock and Ronald Gaddie in their 2009 book "The Triumph of Voting Rights in the South."

Uncertainty over the boundaries is likely to favor incumbents.

With final rulings on the newly drawn districts' constitutionality not expected until shortly before the June 2012 qualifying deadline, some potential candidates may not know their district's boundaries in time to decide whether to mount a campaign.

Voices of Experience



Peter Wallace

"The technology has gotten so finely tuned that it is absolutely possible to draw fair districts, but so finely tuned that legislators also have the tools to do things they're not supposed to do. Every time a plan is drawn, the incumbent runs through a geographically microscopic political performance of the district. Somebody's going to have to look these incumbents in the eye and say, 'This is not about you, and it's not for you. We have standards that need to be followed.'"

— St. Petersburg attorney **Peter Wallace**, a former Democratic House Speaker who was chairman of the House reapportionment committee in 1992

"You really have to take a macro, regional look at things. It's not your district. It's not what happens in your county. It's got to be a much bigger-picture approach. When you take away and add to your county, you affect every other county in Florida. Yes, it's partisan; yes, it's political. But you've got to try to get beyond that and keep the voters in mind and do

what's right."

— Hillsborough County Commissioner **Sandra Murman**, Republican former state representative who was vice chair of congressional redistricting in 2002

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DRAWING THE LINES: KEY PLAYERS

Don Gaetz —
Senate Redistricting Committee chairman

Will Weatherford —
House Redistricting Committee chairman

John Guthrie —
Senate Reapportionment Committee staff director

J. Alex Kelly —
House Redistricting staff director



Don Gaetz

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Published 3/1/2011 in Florida Trend

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Redistricting: Free-for-All in Florida

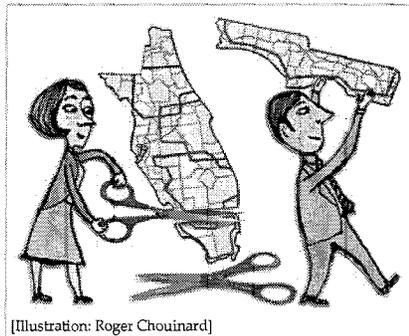
Here's what to expect during the 2012 Legislative redistricting process.

by Cynthia Barnett

BY THE NUMBERS

18,801,310 — Florida's population, according to the 2010 U.S. Census. The state is edging closer to being the third largest state in the country, trailing New York by fewer than 1 million residents.

27 — New number of Florida congressional districts, up from 25. Both Florida and New York will have 27 representatives in Congress — and both will have 29 Electoral College votes, increasing Florida's importance in presidential elections through 2020.



[Illustration: Roger Chouinard]

696,345 — Number of people in each congressional district. The federal courts have interpreted the one-man, one-vote provisions of the Voting Rights Act so strictly that Florida lawmakers must create each district with almost precisely that number of people — each district is supposed to have no more than one person over or under that population.

470,033 And 156,678 — Florida's state Senate and House districts must be redrawn with a respective 470,033 and 156,678 total

population in each. The state has a bit more leeway than one over or under but must try to get as close as possible to avoid legal challenges. The last time around, the House districts came within 2.5% of the total and the Senate districts within 0.5%.

Timeline: Redistricting 2012

MARCH 2011

Florida releases beta versions of its new, web-based redistricting software, MyDistrictBuilder, to give lawmakers and citizens time to test and learn the program.

JUNE 2011

Florida releases final version of redistricting web application.

JULY - OCTOBER 2011

State House and Senate redistricting committees hold public meetings around Florida to gather citizen testimony.

JANUARY 2012

The legislative session will begin early to accommodate the redistricting process. Ideally, the session and redistricting will wrap up March 9, 2012.

MARCH - JUNE 2012

The Florida Supreme Court and U.S. Department of Justice review Florida's redistricting plans for compliance.

JUNE 18 - 22, 2012

Qualifying week for state and federal elections in Florida.

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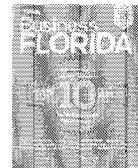
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Florida redistricting Amendments 5 & 6: Florida fair district Amendment 5 & 6

<http://www.orlandosentinel.com/news/opinion/os-ed-fair-districts-myw-ord-030211-20110301,0,6997182.story>

March 7, 2011

Why do we bemoan shortfalls in state revenue when the Legislature could re-examine the more than 244 sales-tax exemptions and subsidies on the books? Two examples: tax breaks for bottled water and charter fishing boats.

A case-by-case review could yield \$200 million in similar tax exemptions identified for elimination. Extending the sales and use tax to selected services that are currently excluded, such as beauty/barber shops and courier services, could raise close to \$1 billion. Courageous step No. 1: Put these on the table.

Florida ranks as one of the lowest states in the nation (46th) in utilizing its existing tax capacity. With \$3.5 billion budget shortfalls becoming the norm, we must realize a higher revenue capture-rate. With lessons learned from past economic downturns and loss of tourism dollars, shouldn't we be creating a broad-based revenue foundation for the fourth-largest state in the country, 20th-largest economy in the world? When do we start?

How well do we know our elected officials? Not well? Maybe this is why.

Why does the Legislature follow its own set of sunshine rules while the rest of Florida's state government follows another set? Leading by example, shouldn't one size fit all? Right now, Senate and House members can caucus in private, line up votes, talk strategy ... Wait a minute: Isn't that why Florida's sunshine laws were put in place, so citizens could keep our elected officials honest?

Redistricting 2011-12 is our single, most-important task ahead. So how are we doing?

Last fall more than 3.1 million Florida citizens voted yes on redistricting amendments 5 and 6.

These Fair Districts amendments to the Florida Constitution passed by 63 percent.

How can our elected officials be allowed to spend our taxpayer dollars fighting implementation of Fair Districts, already approved by the voters and now a part of the state's constitution? How much has the Florida House of Representatives spent on this effort so far? We should know.

How can a secretary of state, our state's highest elections official, be counted on to implement a fair and equitable redistricting process if he led the campaign against passage of amendments 5 and 6? What's wrong with this picture?

How can citizens trust their government to follow through on the will of the voters, when the week before the session the House has yet to appoint its members to the Redistricting Committee, one of the most important bodies to sit this session? How do we as citizens offer input to a committee that has yet to be determined? The clock is ticking.

Charley Williams is president of the League of Women Voters of Orange County.

Federal Correctional Complex Coleman houses more than 7,300 inmates, about 10 percent of Sumter County's population, on Thursday, Feb. 17, 2011.

published: Wednesday, March 02, 2011

Prisoners count

COLEMAN

BRAD BUCK | Staff Writer

bradbuck@dailycommercial.com

Nearly one in 10 people counted as Sumter County residents lives behind bars.

Most of those behind bars "live" at the federal correctional complex in Coleman. That's more than 7,300 inmates in a county with about 80,000, according to the 2009 Census.

The rest are housed at a state prison and the county jail, both in Bushnell.

These prisoners don't vote.

But they count in the U.S. Census toward the county's population.

That means they play a part in determining where political district boundaries are drawn.

Currently, the Coleman prison is included in the districts of U.S. Rep. Rich Nugent, R-Brooksville; state Sen. Alan Hays, R-Umatilla, state Rep. Marlene O'Toole, R-The Villages and Sumter County Commissioner Randy Mask.

Hays says as long as the Census count remains consistent, political redistricting will be fair.

"You've gotta count these people," he said of state and federal prisoners. "You count people where they are on that day (that the Census takers come to an area)."

For those who question whether a prisoner should count toward an area's population, Hays says, "Give me an alternative. My thing is, be consistent across the country."

Even though they're in his district, Mask doesn't see himself "representing" the inmates at the federal prison.

"I don't know that I represent them," Mask said last week. "No one's called me about a pothole."

Like Hays, Mask sees no problem with counting prisoners as permanent county residents.

"We've always done it that way," he said.

Legislators will talk in next year's session about whether prisoners will be factored into revised boundaries for legislative and congressional districts. For this year, legislators are tied up with the state's budget to discuss political district boundaries. Sumter, Lake and all other Florida counties will adjust district boundaries for county commissioners after the 2010 Census to comply with

federal and state law.

Sumter County Administrator Bradley Arnold said growth in The Villages -- not the inmate population at the federal prison in Coleman -- will change district lines the most.

Stacy Gimbel Vidal, a spokeswoman for the Census, said the Census Bureau counts people according to a residence rule that states that people should be counted at their "usual residence."

The Census has followed the concept of "usual residence" since the first census in 1790. "Usual residence" is defined as the place where a person lives and sleeps most of the time, Vidal said.

According to this concept, prisoners in correctional facilities -- including prisons, jails, detention centers and college campuses etc. -- are counted for the Census.

"It's important to note that each state has its own rules regarding legislative redistricting," Vidal said.

Some states, for example, decide to move (or remove) the numbers of college students or prisoners from where they currently live or are incarcerated to another location.

The term "usual residence" is used because there is no generally agreed-upon definition of the concept of "permanent home of record," according to a February 2006 report from the Federal Bureau of Prisons.

It concludes that trying to count prisoners at their "permanent home of record" would cost too much. It also would be at least slightly inaccurate because prison records nationwide as to the inmates' "home" are often unreliable.

Redistricting effort moving ahead - Pelican Press

<http://www.pelicanpressonline.com/localnews/117244528.html>

March 7, 2011

By Rick Barry | March 2, 2011 |

The headlines all go to the obstructionists - the governor pulling the state's required federal request for "preclearance" from the Federal Election Commission to allow work on new districts to proceed, and two entrenched U.S. representatives, a black Democrat and an Hispanic Republican, have filed a lawsuit, saying that if their gerrymandered minority districts are squared off, their minority electorate's influence will be diluted.

Yet, Florida voters this fall overwhelmingly approved two constitutional amendments to redraw the 180 state legislative and 27 U.S. House districts to end gerrymandering, the splitting of counties and cities into many fragments so legislators, who draw the districts every 10 years after each census, may select the district demographics that best ensure their re-election. The State Conference of NAACP chapters and a leading Hispanic organization, Democracia Ahora (Democracy Now), along with the nonpartisan League of Women Voters, are supporting the voters.

Now the League and five Florida Keys residents, whose district is badly gerrymandered to accommodate an Hispanic representative in Miami, have sued to force Gov. Rick Scott to resubmit the preclearance documents filed by his predecessor, Charlie Crist, so that process may move forward and correct the inequity. The Keys district is specifically subject to federal review.

The good news is that the practical process of redistricting - redrawing district boundaries to form regular geometric shapes and respect county borders where possible, as prescribed by the new amendments, 5 and 6 - is moving forward anyway under the redistricting chairman, State Rep. Will Weatherford, R-Wesley Chapel.

Florida is one of very few states to increase its congressional representation, from 25 to 27.

Included in Weatherford's plans, according to legislative press spokeswoman Lindsey Cruley, are unprecedented online opportunities for public participation in the process: a series of draw-your-own-district maps, following population and geometric amendment guidelines.

Some of the websites are already up, but several are incomplete; others are coming.

"Beginning in July, the House's MyDistrictBuilder site will become the web portal both legislators and the public will be using to propose new districts," Weatherford said. "The legislature will also host public meetings throughout the state to take citizen testimony on the needs of Florida's many diverse communities."

If you are interested in participating, here is Weatherford's preliminary digital timeline:

- 1. E-mail mydistrictbuilding@myfloridahouse.gov and request redistricting updates.
- 2. Bookmark www.floridaredistricting.org for redistricting news and resources. FloridaRedistricting.Org will be the hub for public testimony, including redistricting plans.
- 3. Get really involved in the conversation by following MyDistrictBuilder on Facebook and @FLRedistricting (MyDistrictBuilder) on Twitter.
- 4. Test out MyDistrictBuilder in an early form at <http://floridaredistricting.cloudapp.net/MyDistrictBuilder.aspx>.
- 5. Get your community ready to participate in the process by including relevant information from the state websites on community sites; forming a team of district map drawers to collaborate in the

process; and encouraging committee leaders to participate in the legislature's public meetings.

Cruley said more than 30 meetings will be held throughout the state this summer, and public input will be carefully considered. As far as the mechanical-public input portions of the process go, there has been no interference thus far from opponents of the two amendments, "so far as I've heard," Cruley said.

But the process is young.

Florida Policymakers Call Foul on Fair Districts Push

<http://politic365.com/2011/03/02/florida-policy-makers-call-foul-on-fair-districts-push/>

March 7, 2011

Posted by Politic365 Staff in [State & Local](#) 5 days ago

What is commonly regarded as one of the most intensely fought battles in American politics is now well underway and already stirring up controversy. Every 10 years, following the release of the newest Census data, the redistricting issue resurfaces and predictably manages to get policymakers in a tizzy. The latest uproar is taking place in Florida, where two voter approved “Fair Districts” amendments are being challenged. U.S. Representatives Mario Diaz-Balart (R-FL) and Corrine Brown (D-FL) have filed a [lawsuit](#) blocking passage of the new law, which seeks to amend the state constitution by establishing stricter [guidelines](#) for the Legislature to follow in the redistricting process.

Although Florida voters approved Fair Districts Amendments 5 and 6 by a 63 percent margin back in November, Florida House Speaker Dean Cannon has joined Representatives Diaz-Balart and Brown in their lawsuit and claim that the new redistricting standards violate the U.S. Constitution. More recently, four Florida State Representatives – Democrats Perry Thurston, Joe Gibbons, Luis Garcia, and Janet Cruz – have decided to file a lawsuit to ensure that the Fair Districts amendments do in fact become law; thus dividing the Florida State House on this issue.

Most controversial seems to be the [measure](#) stating that legislative and congressional districts cannot be drawn to “favor or disfavor an incumbent or political party...” In other words, the Fair Districts amendments would outlaw political gerrymandering in the state of Florida. Legislators would no longer be permitted to draw the lines of legislative districts to enhance the power of a political party – a practice that many argue is unfair and leads to partisan power grabs within the legislative body. While cases on political gerrymandering have been brought to the Supreme Court, the Court has not declared this process unconstitutional. In a most recent case, [League of United Latin American Citizens v. Perry](#), the Court ruled that political gerrymandering presents a legal issue under the U.S. Constitution; however, the Court failed to identify or define what would constitute a legal standard – inevitably leaving the door wide open for future lawsuits on this controversial issue. And the state of Florida may very well be next in line.

While political gerrymandering is legal, the Supreme Court has had difficulty in determining its constitutionality. So the question begs – are we choosing our representatives, or are they choosing who gets to vote for them? When lines are redrawn to secure the political careers of politicians, the best interests of communities are not considered and the intended purpose of the redistricting process – to ensure proper representation for the changing demographics and shifting needs of state districts and to better enable communities to engage in the political process – is lost. Considering that new Census data shows significant population increases within minority communities, particularly for Hispanics, we cannot afford to get this wrong.

While Florida voters have spoken and are not interested in allowing partisan politics to play a role in its state’s redistricting process, so long as the very legislators seeking reelection continue to have a hand in mapping out the very districts they represent, a tug-of-war will inevitably continue to exist. This may just be a case where voters will need to step up to the plate to protect the interests of their communities and ensure that their voices are not diluted.

Fighting voter-passed amendments reveals a lot

<http://www2.highlandstoday.com/content/2011/mar/06/fighting-voter-passed-amendments-reveals-a-lot/>

March 7, 2011

Published: March 6, 2011

Plenty of legitimate issues can be debated on the basis of right or wrong. And some issues are just indefensible. But that doesn't stop some folks from fighting against common-sense laws. All it really does is make most people wonder what it is they are trying to hide.

In this instance it's the people who are desperately fighting Florida's "Patients Right to Know" law that 80 percent of voters supported on the 2004 ballot. It was also called Amendment 7.

Basically the amendment gives patients, and their attorneys, access to documents regarding their surgery, care and actions taken against doctors. Hospitals want to keep this information private. They say they do peer reviews on doctors.

We're sure there are some gray areas, but the bottom line for people is that patients should have the right to know everything about their care, information about their doctors and anything else that pertains to their health care. Hospitals and health care companies look ridiculous fighting something that so many citizens believe is important and fair.

There is not a good argument against this. As any reasonable person understands, the best thing to do when questioning if something is right or wrong is to try to defend opposition to it. If it's obvious you're only trying to protect your bacon, and not do what's fundamentally right, then forget it. Follow the will of the 80 percent of voters.

It's kind of the same situation with the politicians who hate the recently passed redistricting laws in Florida. The laws require that legislative and congressional districts be drawn logically and in a way that doesn't benefit any particular political party. The party that would benefit from being able to draw the districts is going crazy trying to get the people's will tossed out in court.

You can guarantee that they would feel completely different if they were not in power and the other party had the ability to draw those boundaries. It's where greed and personal interests stand in the way of common sense.

It's telling when a particular side fights issues like these. It reveals their motivations and what they want to hide. It's an ugly sight.

It isn't pretty | isn't, panama, pretty - Redistricting - The News Herald

<http://www.newsherald.com/articles/isn-91536-panama-pretty.html>

March 7, 2011

PANAMA CITY — Bay County Supervisor of Elections Mark Andersen has gone through political redistricting once before, having served as supervisor of elections when lines were redrawn after the 2000 Census.

It's mandated by the U.S. Constitution that states redraw federal and state legislative districts once a decade, and Andersen and other state and local officials have already started working on a redistricting process that will run through 2012.

With the release of 2010 U.S. census data coming in April, Andersen said county entities and residents will need to be flexible and ready for possible changes in what their political boundaries look like and who their representatives are. For one thing, he said, the redistricting process will mean a number of public meetings and a need for public input on political boundaries.

"When all of this comes together, there will be many, many little changes that will affect everyone," Andersen said.

The number of Bay County precincts — there are currently 54 — could change, Andersen said, citing one example.

There will be boundary changes locally for county commission seats and school board districts, Andersen said, as well as legislative districts. He's already had discussions with Bay County Commission and Bay District School Board officials on the redistricting process and what it could mean for their districts.

Bay District School Board member Steve Moss represents District 5, which includes Panama City Beach, Resota Beach, Southport and West Bay. Moss said the Bay County Commission district boundaries match up with the school district's, with his district mirroring that of Commissioner Mike Thomas. His district, due to the population growth on the beach, has roughly 9,000 more people than the next-most populated school board district, Moss said.

"That might be one of the districts that might see some tweaking in the land area," Moss said of District 5.

Gaetz has key role

Sen. Don Gaetz, R-Niceville, is the Florida Senate chairman of the Reapportionment Committee, which will be dealing with redistricting issues on a statewide level. Rep. Will Weatherford, R-Wesley Chapel and the Speaker designate in the Florida House, is chairman of the House's committee.

Gaetz said his committee has met three times prior to the session to acquaint members and senators with the redistricting timetable, schedule and process.

The Niceville senator said his committee expects to receive block-by-block census data from the U.S. Census Bureau in April.

Through public meetings and the use of new interactive software, every citizen in the state will have an opportunity to redraw political boundaries and weigh in on the redistricting process, Gaetz said.

"We'll have 19 million auditors of the reapportionment process," Gaetz said.

Under a reapportionment timeline set up on the Florida Senate's website, "district builder" software with 2010 census data would be available online in June.

Statewide public hearings on redistricting will start in July and extend into November, with interim legislative committee meetings beginning in September and running through December.

Gaetz said there will be 20 meetings statewide, with probably at least two in Northwest Florida, which will allow citizens to bring their individual redistricting plans

Rep. Jimmy Patronis, R-Panama City, spoke about the possible impacts of redistricting at a January pre-legislative forum at Gulf Coast Community College. Patronis said he brought up the topic because of local discussion about Panama City political districts.

In December 2010, Panama City commissioners voted to move forward with plans to realign city commission district boundaries, but not until after the 2011 election. The city is required to have equal-population distribution among the four wards, but numbers provided by the city show the population distribution is unbalanced — and has been for at least 10 years.

Based on numbers from the 2000 Census, Ward 1 has the lowest proportion of the city's population, 21.25 percent, and Ward 3 has the highest proportion, 31.9 percent.

Redistricting will require more than just ensuring an equal portion of residents in each ward. A 1985 settlement of a federal lawsuit filed by residents who were concerned an African-American had never been elected to the city commission resulted in the city setting up the ward system. Previously, all commissioners were elected at-large.

Ward 2 was established to have a majority of black voters, and that majority must remain after redistricting.

From Patronis to Coley

Every single House and Senate district in the state will be redrawn, Patronis said.

Patronis said his House district, previously represented by former House Speaker Allan Bense, used to be entirely within Bay County before being redrawn after the 2000 Census.

Now Patronis' district includes some, but not all of Bay County, all of Gulf County and part of Franklin County.

The Panama City representative said he expects there to be changes again with this redrawing.

"People who voted for me this cycle may be voting for Marti Coley next time," Patronis said.

Moss said he lives off Back Beach Road, and he noted that Coley, R-Marianna, is his state representative in the Florida House.

Patronis, Gaetz and Andersen said they also are watching the impacts that Amendments 5 and 6, and the courts, have on the redistricting process.

According to the nonpartisan Collins Center for Public Policy, Amendments 5 and 6 would require that legislative and congressional districts not be drawn to favor one political party over another or deny minorities equal opportunity to participate in the political process, with districts being contiguous and as equal in population as possible.

Gaetz said he couldn't think of anywhere in Florida where a new boundary line could be drawn that wouldn't come into conflict with those amendments' requirements.

"My suspicion is that this time around, there will be more than the usual number of lawsuits," Gaetz said, adding that he expects redistricting will end up in state and federal court.

Andersen said the biggest fear factor is that everyone wants to go to court to influence the redistricting process.

“How can you file a lawsuit when there’s not even a single district created yet?” Andersen asked.

With redistricting on its plate, the Florida Legislature will go into its 2012 session a couple of months earlier than normal. That legislative session will start in January 2012, with pre-session committee meetings also moved up.

Bense said the Legislature’s reapportionment bill probably would be one of the last passed in the 2012 session.

Gaetz said that if, after months of public input, the Legislature votes in favor of a redistricting plan, it automatically goes to the Florida Supreme Court for review.

Bense said there was a strong chance, due to the wording of those amendments and the lawsuits they may invite, that the Florida Supreme Court ultimately will end up drawing the majority of the House and Senate districts.

The former House speaker said that would be in stark contrast to 2002, when Bense could recall only one or two districts that met with court disapproval. He stressed he thought it would be wrong for the courts to take over a role specifically set aside for the Legislature.

The reapportionment process brings the best and worst in legislators, he said, with some heated fights over redistricting occurring in the 2002 session.

“It isn’t pretty,” Bense said.

Editorial: Stop games on redistricting | Pensacola News Journal | pnj.com

<http://www.pnj.com/article/20110306/OPINION/103060306/Editorial-Stop-games-redistricting?odyssey=mod%7Cnewswell%7Ctext%7CFRONTPAGE%7Cp>

March 7, 2011

Whatever critics have been able to say about Florida Gov. Rick Scott, it's been hard to slam him for playing "politics as usual."

Except when it comes to redistricting.

Unfortunately Scott, who blew into Tallahassee promising a fresh breeze to clear the air in Tallahassee, has reacted to voters' mandate to clean up how the state draws political districts with all the enthusiasm of a non-smoker choking on a fat Cuban stogie.

It's all too reminiscent of how Republicans and Democrats have always reacted to efforts to limit their ability to game the system. They do that by drawing political districts that protect incumbents and the power of whichever political party controls the redistricting process.

The two constitutional amendments creating a cleaner, more fair, politically neutral redistricting system were approved by an overwhelming 63 percent of voters in November (while Scott barely won the governor's seat with 49 percent of the vote, barely more than 1 percent more than Alex Sink).

Both Scott and most Republicans in the Legislature opposed them, and Scott has been trying every procedural trick in the book to keep from doing what the voters clearly want while Republicans lead a lawsuit seeking to overturn the amendments. Delaying action on the process was one of his first acts as governor.

Frankly, it's all too reminiscent of the Legislature's response to the class size amendment for schools. Legislators have refused to provide sufficient funds to hire enough teachers to meet the mandate, forcing districts to divert money from dwindling budgets. This despite the fact voters in November rebuffed the Legislature's attempt to modify the class size amendment.

Escambia County school Supt. Malcolm Thomas said meeting class size requirements is costing the district \$4 million this year, but the Legislature allocated only \$900,000 to cover it.

Voters in Escambia and Santa Rosa counties have a lot to gain from a politically neutral (or at least, more neutral) redistricting system.

Following the new requirements, which call for districts that are compact and respect local geographical and political boundaries, should result in restoring a state Senate seat centered on Escambia and Santa Rosa counties. Today both counties are dissected and represented by two senators from Okaloosa County in districts that extend much farther east.

Scott came into office claiming he wanted to represent the people. Well, their overwhelming approval of amendments 5 and 6 is a clear signal of what they want.

Florida nets two more congressional seats from census

http://www.alligator.org/news/local/article_60a2592a-188e-11e0-a2ca-001cc4c002e0.html

March 7, 2011

Florida will gain two more congressional seats after the latest census data showed an increase in population, giving it even more influence as a swing state in presidential elections.

Set to jump up to 27 electoral votes, the Sunshine State will be tied with New York, which will lose two seats. California will stay the biggest with 53 seats, and Texas will increase to 36.

“Florida’s clout among our country’s 49 other states continues to rise,” said State Senate President Mike Haridopolos in a statement on the census. “Our state will be tied for the third largest congressional delegation in the country with 27 members of Congress.”

However, these changes in the legislature will most likely have little effect on North Central Florida. Experts say new congressional districts will most likely be drawn in Central and South Florida, which had faster population growth rates over the last decade.

The House Office of Reapportionment has created MyFloridaCensus at www.myfloridacensus.gov to allow the public to propose district changes.

UF political science professor Leslie Thiele believes the website is good for public input but hopes that information collected will be handled responsibly.

“Any system for getting that input can be manipulated,” said Thiele.

Districts are estimated to be drawn in about a year and a half, but Florida will gain two congressional seats for the 2012 general election.

Posted in [Local](#) on *Wednesday, January 5, 2011 12:39 am*. Updated: 1:20 am. [Frontnews](#)

AMERICAblog News: Floridas new Governor blocking redistricting reforms approved by voters

<http://www.americablog.com/2011/01/floridas-new-governor-blocking.html>

March 7, 2011

Florida's new Governor, Rick Scott, didn't follow the law when [he ran an insurance company](#). Why would anyone expect him to comport with a silly constitutional amendment passed by the voters of his state. Rick Scott does what [Rick Scott wants](#):

Two voter-approved constitutional amendments requiring the Legislature to draw political districts along nonpartisan standards could be jeopardized by one of Gov. Rick Scott's first acts.

Three days after Scott took office, the state quietly withdrew its request that the U.S. Justice Department approve Amendments 5 and 6 as required under the Voting Rights Act of 1965, effectively stalling their implementation just as a Republican-led lawsuit challenges their constitutionality.

At the time, Scott was recruiting as his top elections adviser Kurt Browning, who actively campaigned against the two ballot measures last year while not working for the state. Browning's spokesman said he had no role in the decision.

At least someone in Florida is paying attention:

"More than 3.1 million Floridians voted for these reforms in November, and your actions seem calculated to obstruct their implementation," said former state Sen. Dan Gelber, the Democratic candidate for attorney general in November and counsel to Fair Districts Now. "Further, Floridians have a right to know why their secretary of state and their governor are engaging in a course of conduct so clearly intended to frustrate their will as expressed at the polls."

Seems like Rick Scott is just being Rick Scott. He can't be bothered with annoying laws and constitutional amendments.

Five States to Watch as Census Is Released

<http://www.aolnews.com/2011/02/04/redistricting-battles-five-states-to-watch-as-census-is-released/>

March 7, 2011

So the battle begins.

Neighborhood population data from the 2010 census were delivered this week to state leaders in the four states with the tightest deadlines for drawing new district boundaries, and were released publicly Thursday night. Virginia, New Jersey, Louisiana and Mississippi all have statewide elections scheduled in November.

Next week, the U.S. Census Bureau plans to release neighborhood data for Arkansas, Indiana, Iowa, Maryland and Vermont. Census data must be released for all 50 states by April 1 under federal law.

Here's a look at five states where the battle to redraw boundaries may prove most contentious.

All five states must comply with the [1965 Voting Rights Act](#), which requires district maps to receive U.S. Justice Department approval to ensure that the political power of minority votes is not diluted:

Virginia: For the first time since the Civil War, the Legislature is split, with the Democrats in control of the Senate and Republicans in charge of the House. That alone may be enough to stall the negotiations when lawmakers meet in April in a special legislative session to do the task.

Several other obstacles also complicate the chore. Rapid growth in northern Virginia over the past decade tips the political balance in favor of that part of the state, which is more liberal than the rural communities in the southern and western parts. Meanwhile, Republicans may try to stall. They want to regain control of the Senate in the fall elections, and because congressional districts do not have to be redrawn until 2012, they may try to delay until then.

California: The Golden State is one of the few in which Democrats still control both the Legislature and the governor's office. Ordinarily, that'd be a sure recipe for fortifying their power with the once every decade reapportionment. But the California Assembly is no longer in charge of redrawing the maps.

This year, for the first time, a new [Citizens Redistricting Commission](#) -- the first in the nation -- is redrawing the district lines, and it's anyone's guess how they will turn out. The 14-member commission must follow strict criteria that make it difficult to draw the kind of districts that were created in the backrooms of the state capital, said Gerry Hebert, executive director of the [Campaign Legal Center](#), a Washington-based nonprofit devoted to campaign finance reform. "For example, you can't protect incumbents," he noted.

New York: It's far easier to agree on a [new electoral map](#) that adds new seats instead of subtracting them -- and New York loses two seats in Congress. Five of New York's 29 congressional districts are protected by the Voting Rights Act, all of them in New York City. That always complicates efforts when it's time to shrink the numbers. Then, as in Virginia, the Legislature is split: Republicans control the Senate, and Democrats control the House and governor's office. Unless there's a compromise, the plan is likely headed for court.

Texas: Democrats don't have enough members left in the Legislature to [run off to Oklahoma](#) in order to prevent a vote on new district lines, as they did -- for a few days -- when the Republican-controlled Legislature redrew the map in 2003. But there's no reason to think the effort this time around will move ahead less contentiously. Most of the population growth that earned Texas four new seats in Congress is among Latinos and African-Americans, many of whom relocated to Houston from Louisiana after Hurricane Katrina.

Florida: The redistricting battle was already in court before the numbers were released. The war is

over a new amendment to the state constitution that changes the way district boundaries can be drawn. It passed last fall with 63 percent of the vote. But it was immediately challenged in federal court by [U.S. Reps. Corrine Brown, a Democrat, and Mario Diaz-Balart](#), who claimed the new standards could [threaten districts](#) where blacks and/or Hispanics hold majorities. The Florida statehouse soon joined the litigation.

On Wednesday, supporters of the amendment sued Republican Gov. Rich Scott to force him to move ahead and get Justice Department approval needed to make the changes. (Florida, remember, must comply with the Voting Rights Act.)

Sponsored Links

Although Florida's population is evenly divided between Republicans and Democrats, and President Barack Obama carried the state in 2008, Republicans have controlled the statehouse and the governor's office since the 2000 census. Democrats long complained about the GOP's gerrymandered district lines that ensured that two-thirds of the congressional and legislative seats would stay in Republican hands. That helped spawn a [citizens group](#) that collected enough signatures to place the measure on the ballot.

The new amendment prohibits drawing district lines to favor one incumbent over another, or one political party over another. Legislative and congressional districts are required to be compact, equal in population and created by using existing city, county or other geographical boundaries.

Ballot Access News » Blog Archive » Florida League of Women Voters and Others File Lawsuit to Force Florida Governor to Send Redistricting Measure to U.S. Justice Department

<http://www.ballot-access.org/2011/02/04/florida-league-of-women-voters-and-others-file-law-suit-to-force-florida-governor-to-send-redistricting-measure-to-u-s-justice-department/>

March 7, 2011

On November 2, 2010, Florida voters passed a constitutional initiative, requiring that redistricting of U.S. House and state legislative seats be done by the legislature in a manner that outlaws partisan advantage to any party. Outgoing Governor Charlie Crist forwarded the text of the measure to the Voting Rights Section of the U.S. Justice Department, because Florida is covered by section 5 of the Voting Rights Act, and can't change its election laws without approval from the federal government.

However, after incoming Governor Rick Scott took office, he withdrew the filing. On February 3, three several civic organizations and five voters filed a lawsuit in U.S. District Court, to force Governor Scott to forward the measure to the Justice Department. The case is League of Women Voters, et al v Scott, 4:2011-cv-10006. The case is in the federal court in Key West, because the voter-plaintiffs live there. Thanks to Rick Hasen for news of this lawsuit. [Here](#) is the complaint.

Ballotnews | Tag Archive | Dean Cannon

<http://ballotnews.org/tag/dean-cannon/>

March 7, 2011

TALLAHASSEE, Florida: Challenges against voter-approved [Amendment 6](#) continue to develop. On Monday, [January 24, 2011](#), the [Florida House of Representatives](#) formally filed to join the challenge against the redistricting measure.

Approved by 63% of voters on [November 2, 2010](#), the measure called for amending the practice of drawing congressional district boundaries in such ways that they establish “fairness,” are “as equal in population as feasible” and use “city, county and geographical boundaries.” A day following the general election, [Rep. Mario Diaz-Balart](#) and [Rep. Corrine Brown](#) filed *Brown v State of Florida*. The lawmakers argue that the measure is unconstitutional.

According to House spokesperson Katie Betta, “The U.S. Constitution delegates authority to the state legislatures to draw congressional districts. The House believes its constitutional authority has been impeded by Amendment 6.” ^[1] ^[2] According to reports, the [Senate](#) has not made efforts to join the suit. ^[2]

Prior to the 2010 elections, the legislature approved an [additional redistricting measure](#) but it was removed from the ballot prior to the [2010 elections](#) by court order. The state’s high court ruled in [late August](#) that the measure was misleading because it did not highlight to voters the effect on the state’s district requirements and because it would undermine the state’s current requirement that districts be “contiguous.”

Amendment 6 also [faced legal challenges in 2010](#) by Representatives Brown and Diaz-Balart but in late August case was dismissed by the [state’s high court](#).

In response to the [January 24](#) developments, [Rep. Perry Thurston](#) called the [House’s](#) actions a waste of taxpayers’ money to try to “thwart the will of the people.” Others called the efforts, an attempt by [Republicans](#) to save their own jobs. ^[3]

The state of Florida gained two seats from the reapportionment after the 2010 census. The state population increased by 2.8 million residents, or 17.6 percent. ^[4] The state will now have 27 members in the U.S. House. The [Florida State Legislature](#) is responsible for drawing those districts’ boundaries. However, [House Speaker Dean Cannon](#) announced in [December 2010](#) that committee appointments to the redistricting commission would be delayed until 2011 while staff analyze the impact of Amendments [5](#) & [6](#). ^[5]

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Even as full census data has yet to be released, already 4 states have lawsuits | Ballotnews

http://ballotnews.org/2011/01/28/1544/

March 7, 2011

By Geoff Pallay

435 U.S. House districts, 7,384 state legislative seats, 50 states, one stop. Once each decade, the 50 states embark on the process of redistricting — where Congressional and legislative seats, along with a host of special districts, get new boundaries. In each round of redistricting, [some states gain seats](#) in Congress and others lose. The redistricting process varies in each state and is often a political minefield.



Ballotpedia's '[Redistricting Roundup](#)' will cover news, legislative issues, court battles, trends and the final maps as America implements the legislative changes mandated by the 2010 Census. This publication — compiled by [Ballotpedia](#) reporters — will be released weekly on Friday afternoons.

U.S. House of Representatives

Two Representatives in Congress have introduced legislation that would impact [redistricting](#) at the state-level. Heath Shuler (D-N.C.) and Jim Cooper (D-TN) each plan to put a bill on the floor of the House. Shuler's bill would require each state to put redistricting in the hands of a five-member commission, in much the same structure as [Arizona](#). Cooper's bill would require each state to create a website to solicit input on the redistricting process. Maps would be required to be posted 10 days before a vote on their adoption, according to Cooper's bill. Shuler's bill would take effect in 2020, while Cooper's would be enforced immediately.

Lawsuits

Lawsuits pertaining to redistricting have been filed in 4 states — [Arizona](#), [Florida](#), [Minnesota](#) and [Oklahoma](#).

Redistricting Facts			
Total Lawsuits filed	Next state deadline?	States with Maps submitted	States that have completed redistricting
4 (Arizona , Florida , Minnesota , Oklahoma)	New Jersey , February 1, 2011 or 1 month after census data arrives	0	0

State news

Arizona

Arizona is one of 11 states that uses a redistricting committee to redraw its maps. The committee is made up of 5 members — 4 of which are appointed by the legislative majority and minority leaders. The leadership chooses from a nominee list, which is provided by the Commission on Appellate

Court Appointments. The fifth and final member is an independent, chosen by the first four appointees. The fifth member will also serve as the chair.

A lawsuit was filed by [House Speaker Kirk Adams](#) (R) and [Senate President Russell Pearce](#) (R) over the composition of the nominee list for the redistricting committee. They requested that two Republican nominees and one independent nominee be removed from the list. Adams and Pearce argued that the three candidates did not qualify because they were “public officials” from other civic services. The [Arizona Supreme Court](#) on Jan. 18 ruled that two Republican candidates would need to be replaced from the initial list. Additionally, the Court held that the independent — Paul Bender — would remain on the final list of 25 candidates. The two names added to replace Mark Schnepf and Steve Sossaman are Crystal Russell and Richard Stertz.

California

One of the 14 members of the [California Citizens Redistricting Commission](#) resigned, citing time constraints.

Elaine Kuo will be replaced by another [Democrat](#), chosen from a list of previous applicants to the [California redistricting](#) process. Additionally, the commission hired an executive director, Daniel Claypool.

Redistricting Types by State		
Legislative	Commission	Hybrid
11	11	28

Florida

Last fall, voters approved [Amendment 5](#) and [Amendment 6](#), which require the legislature to draw “fair” congressional and state legislative districts in [Florida](#). The [Florida House of Representatives](#) joined a lawsuit against the amendments that claim the measures violate the [Voting Rights Act](#). Additionally, Governor [Rick Scott](#) (R) pulled the request for federal approval of the amendments.

Illinois

Earlier this month, the [Illinois House of Representatives](#) approved [Senate Bill 3976](#). The bill would require at least four public hearings for [redistricting](#) and add language involving how districts can be drawn. If signed into law, there could be three different new types of districts: crossover, coalition, and influence. A crossover district is where the district has a minority that has a big enough population to convince the majority population to cross over and vote for their candidate. A coalition district is where more than one minority group can form together a coalition to get their candidate elected. An influence district is a district where a minority group can make enough of an influence to affect the outcome of an election despite the fact that their candidate may not win. The bill has not been signed yet by Gov. Pat [Quinn](#).

Massachusetts

In January 2011, [Republican](#) senators introduced legislation that would create an independent [redistricting](#) commission. The bill was rejected by a 34-5 vote. The measure was introduced by Republicans and received a large partisan vote (1 Democratic Senator voted in favor of the legislation). The bill would have established a seven-member commission which would be responsible for drawing the maps. Those maps would then be approved or voted down by the [Massachusetts State Legislature](#). The independent commission was supported by Governor [Deval Patrick](#) (D), former Governor [Mitt Romney](#) (R), current [Massachusetts Secretary of State William Galvin](#), the [League of Women Voters](#) and Common Cause.

New York

Legislators in the [New York State Senate](#) introduced a bill to establish an independent redistricting commission. Prior to the [2010 elections](#), many legislative candidates signed a pledge — circulated by former New York City mayor Ed Koch — to support creation of a non-partisan redistricting commission. Senator [Chuck Schumer](#) (D) has come out against the plan. Governor [Andrew Cuomo](#) (D) says he will not sign a redistricting plan that is too heavily partisan.

Pennsylvania

As a result of the census recount, [Pennsylvania](#) is losing two Congressional districts in the redistricting process. Early signs are that the two seats will be carved out of the southwestern portion of the state. That region currently includes the 12th and 18th Districts, two of America's most heavily gerrymandered seats.

Texas

Texas is among the states that must submit their redistricting plans to the federal government for approval under the auspices of the [Voting Rights Act](#). The standard route for obtaining federal approval is for states to submit their plans to the Voting Rights Division of the Department of Justice; this is the route Texas has taken in the past. But Republican Senator Jeff Wentworth noted that Texas will probably not submit their redistricting plans to the Justice Department for preclearance this year, citing the partisanship of the Obama administration's DOJ as reason. Instead, Texas may use the alternate method of going directly to the courts and having their redistricting plans reviewed by a three-judge federal court in DC.

Virginia

[Virginia](#) is one of 4 states to hold [legislative elections](#) in 2011. The [Virginia House of Delegates](#) approved legislation on January 19, 2011, to change the state's primary election date from June 14 to August 23, 2011, in anticipation of [redistricting](#). The bill is pending a floor vote in the [State Senate](#). [The Senate Committee on Privileges and Elections](#) favorably reported the legislation by an unanimous 15-0 vote on January 25, 2011.

Washington

[Washington](#) is one of 11 states that uses a commission primarily to re-draw its districts. The commission is made up of five members, four of which have already been appointed. All four members are from the Western part of Washington, which has left Eastern representatives feeling disenfranchised. The deadline for the fifth member to be appointed is not until May 2011. Recent media coverage and editorials have decried the lack of an Eastern Washington voice on the commission. The fifth member is appointed by the existing four commissioners. Thus far, there has been little speculation as to who the fifth member might be.

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'Florida has to be competitive'

<http://www.baynews9.com/article/news/2011/january/200915/Gov-Scott-pulls-back-redistricting-amendments?cid=rss>

March 7, 2011

LAKELAND --

Redistricting amendments

A spokesman for Gov. Scott has confirmed he quietly pulled back a request for federal approval of two new redistricting amendments to the Florida Constitution.

Brian Huges on Tuesday said the new Republican governor acted just days after taking office Jan. 4 as part of his freeze on new state rules pending review by the new administration.

The Justice Department must approve election law changes to ensure they are not discriminatory.

Supporters of the Fair Districts amendments, which voters adopted in November, cried foul. Florida Democratic Party Chairman Rod Smith said the withdrawal was "shameful."

Huges, though, said there will be plenty of time to get the amendments approved before redistricting is completed next year.

Gov. Scott still quiet on high-speed rail

Information from the Associated Press was used in this article.

Lawsuits challenge Florida redistricting changes | news-press.com | The News-Press

<http://beta.news-press.com/article/20110225/NEWS0107/110225004/1075/COLUMNISTS02/https>

March 7, 2011

1:10 A.M. — ORLANDO After a hard-fought political campaign, voters approved two measures last fall that would change how Florida's congressional and legislative districts are drawn every decade.

Now, the real brawling is starting in the courts.

Two lawsuits filed in the wake of last November's election could determine the fate of the two amendments to Florida's Constitution, which supporters say will help end gerrymandering, the process of tailoring districts to favor a particular party, incumbent or demographic group. Opponents claim the amendments will dilute the voting power of minorities.

The new rules require that a district's boundaries be continuously connected and as close to a square or circle as possible. Districts must be 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 and say districts should not be drawn to deny minorities the chance to elect representatives of their choice.

Voters approved the pair of amendments, one for state legislative districts and the other for federal congressional districts, by 62 percent of the vote. Florida lawmakers won't start the redistricting process until next year. A trial on the lawsuits could start this spring.

At stake is how Florida's congressional and legislative districts will be drawn. The Sunshine State was one of the few states to gain extra congressional districts, an additional two, bringing the state's total number of districts after next year to 27.

The legal fights have taken some turns that are as twisted as some of Florida's most awkwardly drawn districts.

The day after voters approved the changes, two U.S. representatives from opposite sides of the aisle challenged the constitutionality of the amendment dealing with congressional districts. U.S. Reps. Corrine Brown, a Democrat, and Mario Diaz-Balart, a Republican, asked a federal judge in South Florida to stop its enforcement, claiming it violates a section of the 1965 Voting Rights Act. That section prohibits any dilution to the ability of racial minorities to elect their preferred candidates.

Brown's district, stretching from Jacksonville to Orlando, has a voting-age population that is almost half black. Diaz-Balart's South Florida district has a voting-age population that is more than half Hispanic.

About a month later, members of the American Civil Liberties Union of Florida asked to join the case as defendants, claiming their interests weren't represented by the parties involved in the lawsuit. They were soon joined by members of the Florida State Conference of NAACP branches and Democracia Ahora, a Hispanic advocacy group. All the groups had worked toward the amendments' approval.

Five Democratic legislators join Fair Districts lawsuit – Central Florida Political Pulse – Orlando Sentinel

http://blogs.orlandosentinel.com/new_s_politics/2011/03/five-democratic-legislators-join-fair-districts-law-suit.html

March 7, 2011

The federal judge in Miami who's hearing a lawsuit over implementation of the Fair Districts amendments can expect a crowded courtroom, as the Florida Democratic Party and five Democratic state legislators become the latest group seeking to intervene in the suit seeking to compel implementation of the redistricting amendments.

You'll recall that U.S. Reps. **Mario Diaz-Balart**, R-Miami, and **Corrine Brown**, D-Jacksonville, filed the lawsuit earlier this year, asserting that the amendments' new restrictions on how the Legislature draws congressional and legislative districts will make it impossible to create districts where minorities can win an election. Then House Speaker **Dean Cannon**, R-Winter Park, asked to intervene on behalf of the Florida House.

Today, the Democrats announced that five legislators — Sen. **Arthenia Joyner** of Tampa (who yesterday sued Gov. **Rick Scott** over high-speed rail); and Reps. **Janet Cruz** of Tampa, Rep. **Luis Garcia** of Miami, Rep. **Joe Gibbons** of Hallandale and Rep. **Perry Thurston** of Fort Lauderdale — has asked to intervene.

"Florida Democrats will not sit back and allow the will of nearly 63% of Floridians to be frustrated or delayed by those who simply seek to deny Floridians fair elections in fair districts," said party Chairman Rod Smith.

The legislators will be represented by the law firm of Boies, Schiller & Flexner; senior partner **David Boies** is the attorney who represented Vice President Al Gore in the protracted legal battle over the 2000 presidential election.

The Florida Democratic Party has also appointed **Joseph W. Hatchett**, former Florida Supreme Court Justice and later United States Court of Appeals Judge, as its special counsel for redistricting. Hatchett is with the Akerman Senterfitt law firm where he serves as Co-Chair of Akerman's Appellate practice.

Virginia's Hispanics Garner Voting Clout as Numbers Increase, Census Shows

<http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2011-02-04/virginia-s-hispanics-gain-clout-as-numbers-rise-census-shows.html>

March 7, 2011

By Timothy R. Homan and Catherine Dodge - Feb 4, 2011 12:00 AM ET

Arnoldo Borja, a community organizer of Virginia Justice Center, talks to Latino day laborers who stand along Little River Turnpike waiting for construction and landscaping jobs. Photographer: Alex Wong/Getty Images

The Hispanic population in Virginia surged in urban areas in the last 10 years, potentially transforming key voting districts in the swing state, a shift detailed in [2010 U.S. Census](#) numbers released yesterday.

The number of Hispanics increased 91.7 percent from a decade ago, with most of the growth in the suburbs outside [Washington](#), as well as in Richmond and the Norfolk-Virginia Beach metropolitan area, Census Bureau figures show. The changing demographics, which helped Barack Obama win the state in the 2008 presidential election, underscore how communities across the country are becoming increasingly diverse.

Hispanics are the fastest growing part of the American electorate, and not just in states such as [Florida](#), [New York](#) and [Texas](#), said Fernand Amandi, a Miami-based political consultant and pollster.

“Almost every state in the union is now being impacted by the Hispanic vote,” Amandi said.

That’s likely to benefit Democrats. Hispanic voters have picked Democrats over Republicans by a ratio of about 2-to-1 in the past three national elections. [Virginia](#)’s 631,825 Hispanics make up 7.9 percent of the state’s population of 8 million, up from 4.7 percent in 2000.

The census data provide the first detailed look at changes in state population demographics since 2000. Virginia, Louisiana, [New Jersey](#) and Mississippi are the first to receive census figures because their election cycles are among the earliest in the U.S.

Mirror of U.S.

The rise in the foreign-born population in Virginia’s urban areas mirrors trends in other parts of the U.S., said [Lisa Ann Sturtevant](#), an assistant professor at George Mason University in Arlington, Virginia, who specializes in demographics.

New immigrants are going to places they hadn’t gone before, such as Northern Virginia, Salt Lake City and [Charlotte](#), [North Carolina](#), Sturtevant said. And “Hispanics tend to be more Democratic,” she said.

Still, Hispanics, who come from various countries in Central and [South America](#), aren’t a “monolithic, well-organized” group of voters with deep-seated loyalties to any one party, unlike black voters, said [Nathan Gonzales](#), political editor of the nonpartisan [Rothenberg Political Report](#).

“They are closer to independents and being swayed by how people in office are doing their jobs and how it affects them,” Gonzales said.

Leaning Toward Democrats

The Hispanics settling in Northern Virginia are mostly from Central American countries like El Salvador and [Guatemala](#), followed by [Mexico](#), according to Sturtevant.

Republican rhetoric and opposition to immigration policies are among the issues that have pushed Latinos to vote for Democrats. In November's congressional elections, House Democrats won 60 percent of the Hispanic vote, compared with 38 percent for Republicans, while Latino voters were crucial to Senate Democrats in the 2010 elections, helping to give the party victories in California, Nevada and [Colorado](#).

Sturtevant said she expects to see a drop-off in the rate of Hispanic population growth from the mid-2000s because of stricter immigration policies and fewer construction jobs.

"When the [unemployment rate](#) in the U.S. goes up, immigration goes down," Sturtevant said.

The jobless rate in Virginia climbed to 6.7 percent at the end of last year from 2.5 percent in January 2000, according to the Department of Labor.

Diminishing White Population

The state's overall population grew 13 percent during the past decade, compared with 9.7 percent for the U.S., according to government data released Dec. 22. The white population grew 7.2 percent, and now accounts for 68.6 percent of the state, down from 72.3 percent in 2000. The black population rose 11.6 percent, and they now make up 19.4 percent of Virginians, little changed from a decade ago.

The number of Asians grew 68.5 percent from 2000, and they now make up 5.5 percent of the population, compared with 3.3 percent in 2000, a trend that may also have political implications.

"The older, first-generation East Asians tend to be much more Republican leaning," largely because they are pro-business, said Mark Rozell, a professor of public policy at [George Mason University](#). "But their children and grandchildren are tilting heavily to the [Democratic Party](#)."

Drawing New Lines

Virginia must draw new district lines and pass a redistricting plan, with Democrats controlling the state Senate and Republicans the House, before August elections. Republican Governor Robert McDonnell appointed a bipartisan panel to oversee the process.

[Dustin Cable](#), a policy associate at the Demographics and Workforce Group at the University of Virginia's [Weldon Cooper Center for Public Service](#), said the Hispanic growth adds another dimension to a national trend.

"It's the classic urban-rural divide that's been growing in the country, not only in terms of population, but in terms of diversity," Cable said.

Census Bureau Director [Robert Groves](#) called it "the suburbanization of the Hispanic population," on a Feb. 2 conference call with reporters.

'National Importance'

Amandi, vice president of the Miami-based Bendixen & Amandi polling firm, said Hispanic voters would be wooed across the country.

"What used to be a regional and concentrated vote is now becoming a vote of national importance," he said. "That's part of the reason you see the Republicans now mounting an offense again to try to go after that vote."

Hispanics and other residents are being drawn to a Washington metropolitan area that's the wealthiest and best-educated region of the past five years, according to census estimates for 2005 through 2009. The only three communities with median household incomes higher than \$100,000 are in suburban counties in Virginia. [Maryland](#), which also borders the nation's capital, saw income

levels in Howard County grow at the eighth- fastest pace in the U.S. since 2000.

The defense-contracting industry boosted wealth in Northern Virginia and the Maryland counties near Washington.

The Washington suburbs are home to government contractors such as Bethesda, Maryland-based [Lockheed Martin Corp.](#), the world's largest defense company, and [General Dynamics Corp.](#), the Falls Church, Virginia-based maker of Abrams tanks and Gulfstream business jets.

The median household income in Arlington County jumped \$12,705 between 2000 and 2009, the biggest increase in the U.S., according to the Census Bureau. Two other Virginia suburbs -- Loudoun County and Alexandria City -- rounded out the top four municipalities nationwide with income gains.

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Thoughts ... on redistricting politics, ballfields - Our Take

<http://www.bradenton.com/2011/01/29/2913382/thoughts-on-redistricting-politics.html>

March 7, 2011

Republicans fought the Fair Districts amendments tooth and nail leading up to the election, with the GOP-controlled Legislature going so far as to place a counter amendment on the ballot. But the Florida Supreme Court tossed that out.

While the state Republican Party spent more than \$2 million in the campaign against the measures, voters approved Amendments 5 and 6, geared toward the redrawing of legislative and congressional districts under nonpartisan standards. That should end political gerrymandering, at least voters thought.

Undeterred, this week the state House of Representatives joined a lawsuit against the reapportionment amendments filed by two South Florida congressmen.

So basically, taxpayers will be paying to sue the better than 60 percent of voters who approved the two amendments.

This highly charged partisan battle features another twist.

Mere days after taking office, Gov. Rick Scott withdrew Floridas request for U.S. Justice Department approval of the amendments as required by the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which protects voting standards for racial and ethnic minorities.

Outgoing Gov. Charlie Crist had submitted that request.

A Scott spokesman linked the withdrawal to the governors plan to evaluate all state regulations and rules, even though the two constitutional amendments represent the will of the people -- more than 3 million ballots of approval on each one.

Even one of the governors fellow Republicans objected this week. Sen. Mike Fasano of New Port Richey -- who like Scott opposed the amendments -- hand-delivered a letter to Scotts office urging the governor to press forward with the federal review.

While the Legislature appears bent on thwarting voters desires for fair and competitive districts, the governors action looks like a delaying tactic at best.

Will of the people be hanged. Party and partisan politics first.

Field of screams

Poor Palmetto ballplayers, caught in a web of political dithering and delay over the construction of Little League baseball fields near Blackstone Park.

Broken promises abound since the youth league willingly gave up the old fields to make way for the new elementary school.

The Palmetto City Commission, Manatee County Commission and School Board just cant cross the finish line on this project.

This week, the city commission balked at ponying up money to pay a grant-writing consultant to continue pursuing subsidies, with a Feb. 15 deadline looming on one \$200,000 grant. The commission pushed back discussion on the consultants contract to Feb. 7, apparently forfeiting any chance at securing the \$200,000 since there will be little time to write an application. This comes after the consultant sat poised to seek grants for 11 months, awaiting but never receiving the green light from the indecisive commission.

We have to wonder about the city's eagerness to complete the project and fulfill its commitment to the ballplayers.

Capital Soup » Blog Archive » Florida House Continues Comprehensive Effort to Involve Public in Redistricting

<http://capitalsoup.com/2011/01/31/florida-house-continues-comprehensive-effort-to-involve-public-in-redistricting/>

March 7, 2011

Representative Weatherford Announces Launch of 2012 Redistricting Website

Tallahassee, Fla. – State Representative Will Weatherford (R-Wesley Chapel), Chairman of the House Redistricting Committee, announced the re-launch of FloridaRedistricting.org (www.floridaredistricting.org). The re-launch of this site is part of a comprehensive effort to involve the public in the redistricting process that began with the 2010 MyFloridaCensus initiative and will continue through the 2012 redistricting process.

FloridaRedistricting.org will serve as the House’s hub for online information and communications regarding House redistricting activities throughout the process.

“In the coming months, FloridaRedistricting.org will serve to help educate the public on redistricting, provide a portal to MyDistrictBuilder, and ultimately enable Floridians to start the conversation on redistricting,” said Representative Weatherford. “Most importantly, the new FloridaRedistricting.org is another step towards implementing the most open and accessible redistricting process in the country.”

Floridaredistricting.org will provide Floridians with legislative and legal resources on redistricting and serve as a one-stop connection to all of the House’s redistricting websites and social media, and eventually a portal to redistricting plans and testimony provided by other Floridians.

“The Legislature is required by law to put the redistricting puzzle together,” continued Representative Weatherford. “However, through FloridaRedistricting.Org, MyDistrictBuilder, our social media and other outreach efforts, we can make this upcoming redistricting a two-way conversation with Floridians. Redistricting ultimately reflects the portrait of Florida’s many diverse communities, and we’re going to give them a chance to help paint that portrait.”

The new FloridaRedistricting.Org will also contain a broad array of additional information and educational materials on the redistricting process. Visitors to the site will be able to access historical redistricting documents, download informational brochures and presentations, and follow the timeline for public meetings.

Previously, FloridaRedistricting.org served as the House’s website for the 2002 redistricting of Florida’s state legislative and congressional districts. The content from the former FloridaRedistricting.org will still be available via either the new page or directly at <http://www.floridaredistricting.org/archive/>.

The comprehensive effort to involve the public in redistricting, will take another step forward when the Florida House officially launches MyDistrictBuilder in July 2011. MyDistrictBuilder is an online application that allows Floridians to build and submit district plans to the House’s redistricting committee for consideration.

#

Resources:

<http://www.floridaredistricting.org>

<http://www.floridaredistricting.org/archive/>

[January 20, 2011 – MyDistrictBuilder Presentation – Florida media](#)

[MyDistrictBuilder – *alpha version*](#)

[Microsoft Azure Customer Solution Study](#)

[Brookings – Injecting Transparency Into Redistricting \(Video\)](#)

Contact:

Lyndsey Cruley, (850) 487-8148

Capital Soup » Blog Archive » “Inside the Lines” Website Debuts to Track Florida’s Redistricting Process

<http://capitalsoup.com/2011/01/23/%E2%80%9Cinside-the-lines%E2%80%9D-website-debuts-to-track-florida%E2%80%99s-redistricting-process/>

March 7, 2011

ST. PETERSBURG – “Inside the Lines”, a hyper-focused website dedicated to tracking Florida’s historically contentious redistricting process, goes live today at InsideTheLinesFLA.com.

“Inside the Lines” offers the latest news, commentary and information on Florida’s reapportionment process, which is in the initial stage of a two-year process, culminating in the redrawing of the state’s Congressional and Legislative district boundaries.

The content for “Inside the Lines” will be provided by Peter Schorsch, executive editor of two of Florida’s most-trafficked and influential political websites, SaintPetersblog.com and BattlegroundTampaBay.com.

“I will bring the same insight and new media perspective to the redistricting process that my blogs have brought to Florida’s political arena,” said Schorsch, who was one of the first bloggers in the state to receive Capitol Press credentials.

Utilizing the latest in content management and social networking technology, “Inside the Lines” features a genesis-level, WordPress content management system and is search-engine optimized. Along with the website, the following Twitter account has been created to provide additional content: @insidethelines1.

“Inside the Lines” is being underwritten by Three Bridges Advisors (TBA), a boutique government affairs firm that represents clients in Washington, DC and Tallahassee. Schorsch describes the relationship as one that provided a significant initial investment in the development and operation of the website. TBA will not contribute to the site’s editorial content.

“Reapportionment will be one of the biggest political stories in Florida over the next 18 months. We believe “Inside the Lines” will provide the perfect new media platform for timely reporting breaking news and insights while also demonstrating new methods of underwriting delivery of issue-specific news content,” said David Jolly, President of TBA.

###

Extensive Enterprises owns and operates SaintPetersblog.com, Battleground Tampa Bay, and Inside the Lines, websites combining first-rate original content with news and information aggregated from many of Florida’s media outlets and social networks — all of it search engine optimized. The mission of Extensive Enterprises is to provide the kind of in-depth analysis and on-the-ground coverage of the state, region, congressional, legislative and local political arenas which were once the hallmark of the so-called traditional media. SaintPetersblog.com was recently named 2010 Florida Netroots Winner for Best Local Blog, Best Ongoing Series, Best Use of Twitter, and Best Social Media. The blog was also named 2010 Creative Loafing “Best of the Bay” Winner.

Three Bridges Advisors Inc., is a boutique government affairs and advocacy firm representing clients before the United States Congress and the Executive Branch, with additional qualifications in State of Florida government relations. Led by experienced industry professionals, Three Bridges Advisors offers its clients the opportunity to work with specialists in a personal and attentive manner to quickly create and implement effective federal market strategies. Visit www.threebridgesadvisors.com for more information about the firm.

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Rick Scott tells 3.1 mill Floridians to SUCK IT!! // Current

http://current.com/news/92942595_rick-scott-tells-3-1-mill-floridians-to-suck-it.htm

March 7, 2011

"Two voter-approved constitutional amendments requiring the Legislature to draw political districts along nonpartisan standards could be jeopardized by one of Gov. Rick Scott's first acts. Voters strongly endorsed both measures, each receiving more than 3 million votes, while Scott and the Republican-controlled Legislature opposed them. "More than 3.1 million Floridians voted for these reforms in November, and your actions seem calculated to obstruct their implementation," said former state Sen. Dan Gelber, the Democratic candidate for attorney general in November and counsel to Fair Districts Now. "Further, Floridians have a right to know why their secretary of state and their governor are engaging in a course of conduct so clearly intended to frustrate their will as expressed at the polls." The amendments are already the target of a federal lawsuit filed by U.S. Reps. Mario Diaz-Balart, R-Miami, and Corrine Brown, D-Jacksonville, who contend the changes violate the voting rights laws. You remember Rick Scott? NYT-"Once lauded for building Columbia/HCA into the largest health care company in the world, Mr. Scott was ousted by his own board of directors in 1997 amid the nation's biggest health care fraud scandal. The company's guilty plea and payment of \$1.7 billion to settle charges including the overbilling of state and federal health programs was taken as a repudiation of Mr. Scott's relentless bottom-line approach."

<http://www.tampabay.com/news/politics/gubernatorial/gov-rick-scott-stalls-new-vo...>

And if you are lucky enough to not know Corrine Brown...Check out her district map...it looks like a crazy snake trying to hump a rorschach test..

insane...<http://www.govtrack.us/congress/findyourreps.xpd?state=FL&district=3>

Bill would make redistricting proposals public records

<http://floridaindependent.com/20485/bill-would-make-redistricting-proposals-public-records>

March 7, 2011

Florida lawmakers overseeing redistricting have promised an open, transparent process, planning to hold at least [20 public hearings](#) around the state and sharing [new software](#) that allows the public to explore different proposals for drawing district lines. A new law could help make those promises a reality. <#>

But under [existing law](#), drafts of redistricting plans are exempt from public records laws. They aren't required to be made public until they have been introduced as bills. <#>

A [bill](#) introduced last week by state Rep. Matt Gaetz, R-Destin, would change that, lifting a variety of exemptions on records controlled by the state's legislative branch, including drafts of redistricting proposals. <#>

His father, Don Gaetz, R-Niceville, is overseeing redistricting in the Senate. <#>

ACLU moves 'to intervene' to defend Amendment 6

<http://floridaindependent.com/18500/aclu-moves-to-intervene-to-defend-amendment-6>

March 7, 2011

The ACLU of Florida [has filed](#) a motion “to intervene as defendants” in the lawsuit challenging the constitutionality of [Amendment 6](#) — one of two so-called “[Fair Districts](#)” amendments that limit the Florida legislature’s ability to draw district lines to protect incumbents and guarantee one-party dominance. <#>

Reps. Corrine Brown, D-Jacksonville, and Mario Diaz-Balart, R-Miami, [filed](#) the challenge to Amendment 6 the day after it passed a statewide referendum with 63 percent support. As I reported last month: <#>

Both Brown and Diaz-Balart are minorities who represent districts where the majority of citizens are minorities. Brown’s constituency is [50 percent African-American](#). Diaz-Balart (who jumped districts this year to [take the place](#) of his retiring brother) will soon represent a district that is [70 percent Latino](#). <#>

Their districts, which group together minority voices at the expense of geographic logic, are indicative of the problems with the current system that Amendments 5 and 6 were created to correct. (Amendment 5 deals with state legislative districts; 6 with congressional lines.) <#>

With its action, the ACLU seeks to join the state of Florida in defending the constitutionality of Amendment 6, which the organization worked to help pass. <#>

“We were intimately involved in the process,” says Randall C. Marshall, who is representing the ACLU in court. “With the amendments having successfully passed, we have a continuing interest that they are fully implemented.” <#>

If the judge in the case grants the ACLU’s motion, Marshall says his group will “offer a full and independent analysis” of the issues that arise in the case, and that the ACLU “would not be limited to waiting and seeing” how the office of incoming Attorney General Pam Bondi — which will represent the state — responds in court. <#>

In a July interview with the *St. Petersburg Times* editorial board, Bondi [said](#) she planned to vote against Amendments 5 and 6: <#>

[Bondi] said she would vote against two proposed constitutional amendments on the November ballot that would change the way electoral district boundaries are drawn, saying she had heard there could be “unintended consequences” for minority voters. <#>

“I can’t tell you what they are, but I have heard from multiple sources that there could be some unintended consequences. ... So right now I would vote no on (amendments) 5 and 6,” she said. “I was just told that within the last few days.” <#>

While the ACLU’s motion says it seeks to intervene in the case because its “interests are not adequately represented by existing parties,” Marshall says that’s not a criticism of Bondi — whose office is expected to file its thoughts on the lawsuit by Jan. 11. <#>

“I’m not trying to disparage the attorney general,” Marshall says, “because a good attorney general can oppose something as a candidate and support the constitutionality of a statute. So it’s not a matter of saying that because the attorney general-elect opposed the amendments, she won’t, or her office won’t, defend their constitutionality.” The ACLU’s action is merely the result of its “interest in the amendments.” <#>

Marshall expects the judge in the case to rule on the ACLU's motion soon, but there is no deadline. "We certainly think that it will be ruled on before much of the litigation happens," Marshall says. <#>

Read the ACLU motion in full here: <#>

[Motion for Leave to Intervene as Defendants #](#)

As Scott's stance makes national news, Florida lawmakers wrestle with redistricting

<http://floridaindependent.com/21456/as-rick-scotts-stance-makes-national-news-florida-lawmakers-wrestle-with-redistricting> March 7, 2011

Gov. Rick Scott's [attempt to halt implementation](#) of "Fair Districts" Amendments 5 and 6 has now gotten national attention, from [the Los Angeles Times](#): #

"This is extraordinary. I've never seen anything like it," said Richard Pildes, a [New York University](#) law school expert on election law. "The governor is essentially using a federal law obligation that binds the states to attempt to avoid enforcing a state law that he apparently would prefer the state had not adopted." #

This year, in Florida and in other states, legislative committees and independent commissions are redrawing electoral maps based on data from the [2010 census](#). But until the legal dispute is settled in Florida, it is unclear whether its lawmakers must abide by the anti-gerrymandering rules that were added to the state's constitution. #

While the state House has signed on to the federal lawsuit challenging the amendments [at unknown taxpayer expense](#), Don Gaetz, R-Niceville, who is overseeing redistricting in the Senate, has said he intends to abide by the will of the voters who approved the amendments, at least until a court tells him otherwise. #

On Monday, he led the redistricting panel in another exercise intended to show how difficult that will be. #

He and Sen. Greg Evers, R-Crestview, both live in Okaloosa County, he said. Drawing a district that conformed to the amendments' requirements that districts be drawn as compact as possible, in a way that follows existing political and geographic boundaries where possible, could place them both in the same district, which could violate another requirement — that districts not be drawn to favor nor disfavor any incumbent. #

I'm not sure which data the panel was using, but the Census Bureau's 5-year American Community Survey data puts Florida's population at about 18.5 million (it's apparently a little higher than that now). That would give each Florida senator a district with a population of about 463,000. Starting at the Alabama border, Escambia has a population of about 300,000, and neighboring Santa Rosa County has a population of about 151,000. #

Would adding an appendage that reached out to grab either senator's home in Okaloosa, the third county over, violate the Fair Districts' [compactness requirements](#)? This is the sort of question his panel will be wrestling with, Gaetz said. #

For what it's worth, Florida may currently have the least-compact state Senate districts in the nation. Here's a look at [one of the worst offenders](#). #

Cook: 'Fair Districts' amendments make Florida more competitive for Democrats

<http://floridaindependent.com/21600/charlie-cook-fair-districts-amendments-make-florida-more-competitive-for-democrats>

March 7, 2011

Veteran political analyst Charlie Cook surveys redistricting across the country, and [sees large potential gains for Democrats in Florida's congressional delegation](#) with the implementation of the "Fair Districts" amendments: <#>

In Florida, where Democrats hold just six of the state's 25 congressional districts, their exposure is somewhat limited. Republican legislators still hold the authority to draw the new 27-seat map, but the Fair Districts Florida ballot amendments passed in 2010 may limit their ability to split counties and otherwise engage in egregious gerrymandering. Still, Democratic Rep. Corrine Brown, whose district snakes from Jacksonville to Gainesville to Orlando, and odd-bedfellow Republican Rep. Mario Diaz-Balart are filing suit to block Fair Districts in federal court. <#>

Democrats know that a "fair" map in Florida would grant them up to 10 safe districts and as many as 13 more in which they could compete. But they also know that the outcome is contingent upon dismantling Brown's substantially African-American 3rd District and replacing it with one Democratic seat in Jacksonville and two Democratic seats in Orlando. Republicans, whose goal is to protect all 19 of their members and add two new ones, will obviously refuse to draw such a map even if they fail to block Fair Districts. But Democrats believe that the courts will overturn a GOP map if it doesn't do a good job of adhering to the Fair Districts criteria. [Emphasis added.] <#>

Right now, Democrats hold just six out of Florida's 25 seats, despite the state having more registered Democratic than Republican voters. Two seats will be added under reapportionment, bringing the total to 27. <#>

The new state party chairman also expects big potential gains in both chambers of the state house, [the St. Petersburg Times adds: #](#)

State Democratic chairman Rod Smith estimates that there are currently four state Senate seats where both Democrats and Republicans have a shot at winning and fewer than 25 competitive state House districts. Those numbers would double with the new system, Smith estimates. <#>

Smith has said one of his priorities as chairman will be to defend Amendments 5 and 6, [arguing that Florida is one of the most "malapportioned" states in the country. #](#)

Democrats blast GOP leaders for intervention in suit targeting 'Fair Districts'

<http://floridaindependent.com/20019/democrats-blast-gop-leaders-for-intervention-in-anti-fair-districts-suit>

March 7, 2011

Florida Democrats are sharply criticizing Republican state House leaders after a report by The Florida Independent this morning [revealed](#) that the House is moving to assist in a lawsuit seeking the removal of one of the state's two popular anti-gerrymandering amendments. <#>

"Today, Speaker Dean Cannon and House Republicans went on the record opposing fairness as they seek to overturn the will of the people, who enshrined in Florida's Constitution standards of fairness for the redistricting process," said Florida Democratic Party chairman Rod Smith via press release, adding: <#>

With over one million Floridians unable to find jobs during these tough economic times, it is especially disappointing that the Republicans are more interested in protecting their backroom dealings rather than focusing on putting Floridians back to work. Clearly the Republicans are more concerned about saving their jobs rather than creating jobs for Floridians. <#>

By using taxpayer money to intervene in the lawsuits against the Fair Districts constitutional amendments, Cannon and the House GOP are not only reminding Floridians that they are simply self-interested politicians who will do anything to hold onto power, but their action represent exactly what the people of Florida rejected when nearly 63% of voters supported the Fair District amendments last fall. <#>

"If the Republicans are afraid to run in fair districts, then shame on them," Smith said. <#>

State Rep. Perry E. Thurston, Jr., D-Plantation, was also outspoken on the issue, saying via press release: <#>

With the passage of the Fair Districts amendments last November, Florida voters sent a clear message that they will no longer tolerate excessive partisan politics in the redistricting process. Florida voters want fair and competitive elections, which can only be drawn if the Legislature adheres to the merits of voter-approved Fair Districts' Amendments 5 and 6. <#>

I am deeply concerned that leaders of the Florida House of Representatives have decided to waste taxpayers' dollars attempting to thwart the will of the people through an ill-intended legal challenge that would only delay opportunities to end the era of gerrymandering that has left many Floridians without a sufficient voice in their government. <#>

<#>

Florida House moves to join lawsuit challenging ‘Fair Districts’ amendment

<http://floridaindependent.com/19940/florida-house-moves-to-join-law-suit-challenging-fair-districts-amendment>

March 7, 2011

Citing its “considerable interest in establishing the unconstitutionality” of [Amendment 6](#) — one of two so-called “[Fair Districts](#)” amendments that limit the state legislature’s ability to draw district lines to protect incumbents and ensure one-party control — the Florida House of Representatives has asked a court to allow it to intervene in a lawsuit seeking to have the amendment thrown out. <#>

The lawsuit was filed by U.S. Reps. Corrine Brown, D-Jacksonville, and Mario Diaz-Balart, R-Miami, [the day after](#) Amendments 5 and 6 passed in a statewide vote with more than 60 percent support. According to documents filed by Brown and Diaz-Balart, they consider challenging the constitutionality of Amendment 6 one of their “[official duties](#)” in Congress. <#>

Since that initial filing, the ACLU of Florida has moved to intervene in the case, hoping to help defend the amendment it says it was “[intimately involved](#)” in creating, and Attorney General Pam Bondi — who is tasked with defending the amendment after opposing it on the campaign trail — [has asked](#) the court to dismiss the case, citing a lack of jurisdiction. <#>

In moving to join the suit to defeat Amendment 6, lawyers for the Florida House of Representatives write: <#>

The House has **a considerable interest in establishing the unconstitutionality of the Amendment**. If this case proceeds without its involvement, that interest might be substantially impeded or impaired. The precedential effect of an adverse ruling could impair the House’s interests in future litigation, including litigation regarding the validity of any forthcoming redistricting plan. [Emphasis added.] <#>

And: <#>

Because the House’s and Plaintiffs’ interests may not be sufficiently aligned, Plaintiffs’ prosecution of this case may not adequately protect the Legislature. The House does not doubt Plaintiffs’ ability to faithfully and diligently pursue this action, but Plaintiffs’ interests are considerably narrower than the Legislature’s. <#>

It’s no surprise that the state legislature, which is charged with drawing up new congressional district lines before next year’s elections, has an “interest” in the case. Two state senators [have steered funds](#) to Brown and Diaz-Balart’s legal expense funds, helping bankroll the challenge to Amendment 6. <#>

The Florida House of Representatives’ motion: <#>

[Florida House of Representatives’ Unopposed Motion to Intervene as Plaintiff #](#)

What We Can Learn From the Census About Redistricting

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/ray-suarez/census-results-redistrict_b_827123.html

March 7, 2011

Just as the US Constitution required and Congress paid for the Bureau of the Census headed out into the country to do the hard and seemingly impossible work of counting everyone living in the country during 2010. That elusive number is a constantly moving target: People move in. They move out. They die, and start lives as newborn citizens in the great American enterprise.

The work of the [Census Bureau](#) keeps scholars, reporters, and economists in work for years. Before too long, it's time to start another count. Raul Cisneros of the Bureau said on this week's [Destination Casa Blanca](#) that work was already under way for 2020, even as the brand spanking new numbers make their way out to the public.

During this week's program we talked about the remarkable number of self-identified Latinos, some 45 million, and speculated about what it means right at this moment, and what it's going to mean for America going forward.

A representative of the Bureau, Raul Cisneros, said the response to the mailed survey was good, and the new ways the Census asked about race and ethnicity was still being tabulated. Work on the 2020 Census, Cisneros said, has already begun. The bureau is a creature of the executive branch, with oversight from the Congress, which holds its purse strings. At the last minute, Congressional Republicans tried to add lines of inquiry regarding citizenship and legal status in the country, but those efforts were defeated by the insistence, in the plain language of the US Constitution that every person is to be counted. Period. And that, Cisneros said, is what the bureau tried to do, and believes it succeeded in doing.

However, the attempts to fiddle with the census exposed some of the fault lines in the national debate over what to do about the millions of people who have come to live in the country without following the laws governing immigration. Should they be counted? One of the most consequential tasks for which the census data is a tool is doling out congressional seats to the states. Does it make sense to count people who aren't even supposed to be here for the purpose of apportionment? At this tense moment in the life of the nation, with soaring foreclosures and persistently high unemployment, the act of counting everyone within our borders ends up implicating other national debates that involve wealth and poverty, race, class, and nationality.

This year's census data was used to determine that Texas will have four more members of the House of Representatives in the next congress. Most of that additional population was added to Texas' total by the tremendous growth in Latino numbers. Illinois is losing a seat, as is New York. In both cases the losses would have been much more substantial if not for the large and growing number of Latinos. California held on to its seats for largely the same reason -- budget problems, economic distress, challenges to the Golden State's quality of life has seen non-Hispanic whites moving to next-door Arizona, Oregon on the northern border and nearby Washington.

Here's where it gets tricky: In the recent mid-term elections, Texans sent a huge delegation of Republicans to Washington, and gave the GOP bullet-proof majorities in both chambers of the state legislature. Oh yeah, and the legislature oversees the remapping not only of its own seats, but US House seats as well. How many of those new Texas seats will be drawn in ways that give large areas of Latino settlement a chance to elect a representative of their choice to Congress? Texas still must watch out for the provisions of the 1965 Voting Rights Act; it would be asking for legal challenges if none of the four new seats were composed in a way that would give Latino politicians a shot. But even in Texas, a majority of Latinos give their votes to Democrats. But oh yeah... the legislature is even more Republican than it used to be. What's your best guess? Two seats? Three seats? None?

When I was covering a redistricting battle in Chicago one influential alderman, a white guy with a

huge army of Puerto Rican ward workers, said he was ready to stop all the games around redistricting, create 50 city council seats for Chicago's roughly three million people, and simply press a grid down on the map of the city to form more or less equal districts of some 60 thousand people. No reaching out a finger of land to "capture" a white, or black, or Latin neighborhood. Just, as he said, "let the chips fall where they may."

Part of the underlying assumption in the Voting Rights Act and in modern map-making is that white voters simply won't elect black and brown candidates even of their own party. The examples are legion... but the counter-examples are growing in number as well: Puerto Rico-born Raul Labrador now holds a US House seat from Idaho. Black Iraq War veteran Allen West now holds a South Florida house seat. West was sent to Washington from a district with a relatively small number of black residents. Both Labrador and West are Republicans.

Rep. Luis Gutierrez of Illinois is now a congressional veteran after a new Latino-friendly seat was carved out of two huge barrios, a largely Puerto Rican neighborhood on the North Side, and a largely Mexican one on the South Side. In between sits one of the largest groupings of black neighborhoods in America, the West Side, which starts just outside the famed Loop and runs to the city line. In order to make that seat, Illinois 4, mapmakers used the roadbed of an expressway, public parks, and other uninhabited pieces of land to stitch north and south together, since the law requires districts be "contiguous."

Is Luis Gutierrez a Puerto Rican congressman? Sure. Proudly, unapologetically so. Does he need a district created so he can win, and does a district have to have an overwhelming majority of Latino voters in order to remain a "safe" seat for him? Here's where it gets more complicated. Gutierrez has now been a member of congress for 18 years. He's one of the recognized experts on immigration law on the Hill. But he's also someone with deep expertise on housing and banking, issues that must surely resonate beyond the Mexican and Puerto Rican neighborhoods that make up a lot of his district. Will only black Floridians vote for Rep. Alcee Hastings? Will only Latino Brooklynites vote for Rep. Nydia Velasquez? Can the strictures of the Voting Rights Act be safely loosened? I welcome your comments at the Destination Casa Blanca website, www.hitn.tv/dcb and at The Huffington Post. See you next week.

[Click here for more videos](#)

Follow Ray Suarez on Twitter: www.twitter.com/DestinationCB

Dem legislators seek to intervene in redistricting challenge

<http://miamiherald.typepad.com/nakedpolitics/2011/03/dem-legislators-seek-to-intervene-in-redistricting-challenge.html>

March 7, 2011

Continuing the slew of lawsuits against redistricting, five Democratic lawmakers on Wednesday petitioned to intervene in support of the redistricting amendments now under challenge in federal district court by Congresswoman **Corrine Brown** and Congressman **Mario Diaz Balart**.

Seeking to intervene in the Fair Districts case are Sen. **Arthenia Joyner** and Rep. **Janet Cruz** of Tampa, Rep. **Luis Garcia** of Miami, Rep. **Joe Gibbons**, and Rep. **Perry Thurston** of Broward. The legislators will be assisted by some high voltage fire power: the law firm of **Boies, Schiller & Flexner**. (David Boies' high profile clients have included Al Gore in the Florida recount.)

The Dems already have some heavy hitters on their case [announcing](#) that they've hired: **Joseph W. Hatchett**, former Florida Supreme Court Justice and later United States Court of Appeals Judge, as Special Counsel for Redistricting. Hatchett was on the bench during the redistricting fight that played in his courtroom in 1992. He is now with the Akerman Senterfitt law firm where he serves as co-chair of Akerman's Appellate practice.

MIAMI - Today, the Florida NAACP, Florida League of Women Voters, Democracia Ahora, and several individual voters in Monroe County filed suit to require Governor Rick Scott and Secretary of State Kurt Browning to stop using the Voting Rights Act to advance their own political agenda. The suit asks the court to order Scott and Browning to re-submit the FairDistricts amendments to the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) for approval. Without that approval, the new redistricting reforms cannot legally be implemented. The complaint is attached.

Two days after Governor Scott appointed Browning as Secretary of State, Brownings office withdrew Former Governor Crist's earlier request for DOJ pre-clearance. Pre-clearance must be obtained before the new redistricting standards can be implemented. The law requires that preclearance be obtained as soon as possible after the new standards became final in mid-December, 2010. The DOJ review would have been completed by early this month had the new administration not stopped its progress. Legislative action on redistricting is already underway.

Before being re-appointed Secretary of State, Browning headed up Protect Your Vote, the committee that raised millions of dollars from special interests and politicians to oppose the passage of the FairDistricts amendments. He was the public spokesperson against the reforms.

Those bringing this suit fought hard for the passage of the reforms which are intended to remove political favoritism and self-dealing from the redistricting process. That process has already begun and will conclude in just over a year. Delay in DOJ approval will delay application of the new standards apparently what the administration wants.

Its time to stop stonewalling. Governor Scott and Secretary Browning should not be abusing their power to frustrate the will of the 63% who voted for these reforms. The new standards must be sent to the Justice Department promptly to guarantee their implementation, said Dan Gelber, Counsel for FairDistricts Now.

It is a shame to see the Governor and the Secretary of State purposefully disregard their constitutional duty to follow the law. Clearly they are trying to stop the impact of these much needed reforms. said FairDistricts Now Board member Leon Russell, who also serves as a Vice Chairman of the National Board of Directors of the NAACP. It is important that these amendments are pre-cleared so that this redistricting process is carried out according to the standards that the people of Florida have established.

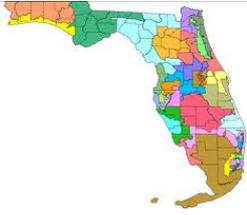
Preclearance is an important and essential step in the process to ensure we have fairly drawn districts, said Pamela Goodman, President of FairDistricts Now and Redistricting Chair of the Florida League of Womens Voters. We will not be deterred.

Florida's Redistricting Begins to Take Shape, Litigation Looms

<http://shark-tank.net/2011/01/30/10533/>

March 7, 2011

by Javier Manjarres



There has been much speculation amongst potential political candidates throughout Florida- much of it ill-informed- as to where the Congressional and State Legislative redistricting lines will be drawn later this year. With Amendments 5 & 6 being voted into law in Florida last year, it's a safe bet that whatever redistricting lines are drawn up, they will eventually be challenged in the courts by groups like Fair Districts Florida, prolonging the finalization of the redistricting process.

In an earlier post, [The Jockeying for 2012 is Underway...](#), I detailed what could, and most likely happen when the redistricting lines are finally drawn up:

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.

Speaker Dean Cannon has joined members of Congress Corrine Brown (D) and Mario Diaz-Balart (R) in a lawsuit against the state to [overturn the amendments](#). This announcement by Cannon comes on the heels of Governor Rick Scott's decision to delay the implementation of the amendments voted into law last year. [State Senate President Mike Haridopolos is not backing Cannon's lawsuit](#) at the present time, but he has also expressed the same fears that other legislators have had about these Amendments since their inception.

Unfortunately, a majority of Floridians were fooled by the cleverly sounding verbiage within the amendments last November. To this day, "Fair" Districts Florida has never offered a definitive example as to what exactly a fairly drawn district would look like, as it only talks in the vaguest notions of how "fairness" – as they define the term- comes into play when drawing districts.

The redistricting debate is expanding with online tools | Census 2010

<http://www.star-telegram.com/2011/02/19/2862406/the-redistricting-debate-is-expanding.html>

March 7, 2011

By Aman Batheja

abatheja@star-telegram.com

This isn't your grandma's redistricting.

The politically polarizing, once-in-a-decade process started in earnest this week, and it's likely to look different from previous rounds. In statehouses across the country, staffers will input census data into digital mapping programs. Political groups and motivated citizens will propose their own maps using online tools and spread them via Facebook and Twitter. And in some states, as lawmakers debate how districts should be drawn, proposed tweaks will be instantly available to the public via state websites.

It will be the most connected, technologically advanced round of redistricting ever.

"This is new. We didn't have something like this 10 years ago," said Clare Dyer, redistricting manager for the Texas Legislative Council.

The tools may be new, but the reinvention of the process has become routine. Every 10 years, the country redraws its political boundaries, and each time the process is dramatically changed by the latest advances in digital data crunching. No other political process is so tied to the machinery of the moment and usually takes place only once a decade. In that way, each redistricting round has become a kind of snapshot of the technology of the time.

Last year, the U.S. census calculated how the country's population had changed since 2000 and reshuffled the country's congressional seats accordingly.

Buoyed by 20.6 percent growth, Texas is gaining four congressional seats, with at least one likely to be drawn in North Texas.

Now comes redistricting, in which lawmakers divvy up each state by its new number of seats. The goal is to create compact districts that avoid splitting up communities. Data on the racial, economic and political backgrounds of residents will play a role, as will basic geography.

In the coming months, hundreds, if not thousands, of different maps will be proposed in each state.

Simpler times

Before the 1960s, the process typically involved men sealed away in rooms, paper maps covering walls and floors. In some cases, pins and pieces of string were used to outline proposed districts. Districts were often easier to describe.

"It was a simpler time, so you could do things on an adding machine," said Kimball Brace, president of Election Data Services, a redistricting consulting firm.

By 1964, scientists were predicting that automated redistricting would soon take the politics out of the process. Firms drew publicity by releasing computer-generated maps that they said were unbiased. Critics said the machines could be programmed to favor one party.

A series of lawsuits in the 1970s upended the process. Now states had to consider minority representation when drawing boundaries.

"The math became a lot more tricky," said Debbie Irvine, a veteran of Texas redistricting for more than 30 years as part of the Texas Legislative Council and now its executive director.

By the 1981 round, most states had started using computers to some extent. The machines stored data on "computer tape" and often needed hours to process information. Much was still done on paper. In Texas, lawmakers didn't touch the computers, Irvine said.

"They'd give us a paper map with the district colored in or the boundary drawn around them and we would enter that data into the computer system," Irvine said. "It was kind of a cumbersome process but way easier than trying to do it all with adding machines."

Computing power

Huge advances in personal computing over the next decade led to a major shift in redistricting in 1991. Texas and other states bought geographic information system software that let them draw districts directly on computers.

Lawmakers in Austin made appointments to sit with Legislative Council staffers at one of eight computer workstations and describe how they wanted districts to look, Irvine said. To keep up with demand, workstations operated 24 hours a day, she said.

The U.S. Census Bureau also published the first digital street map of the entire country and released it on CD-ROM. That made it much easier for third-party groups to produce their own maps, broadening the redistricting debate. Irvine said her office worked with 3,000 Texas maps that round, compared with about 300 a decade earlier.

By 2001, much of the process had moved to personal computers and websites. Looking up how a neighborhood would be reapportioned under different proposals became much easier for those with Internet access.

Do-it-yourself tools

This year, technology will draw more eyes to redistricting than ever. Online tools from different groups will allow anyone to try redistricting the country. While some states plan their own do-it-yourself map programs, tight budgets are prompting many to opt for less interactive tools, Brace said.

"While in theory we'd have capability to see that, in these economic times, we still might not see it," Brace said.

Florida and Idaho plan to host online tools to allow lawmakers and the public to propose maps.

The Texas Legislative Council expects to update the redistricting software on lawmakers' computers by Feb. 25, spokeswoman Anna Abraham said. The software will also be installed on public workstations at the Capitol so Texans can submit their own maps. The state doesn't plan to make the software available online.

As proposals are pored over, critics are sure to complain that maps are being designed to protect incumbents or disenfranchise communities. If history is a guide, the technology will be blamed for making gerrymandering easier. Those with multiple redistricting rounds under their belts insist that the effects of the latest technology will always cut both ways.

"It's just easier for them to deal with redistricting, period," Irvine said. "I guess it's easier to gerrymander, but it's also easier to not gerrymander."

Aman Batheja, 817-390-7695

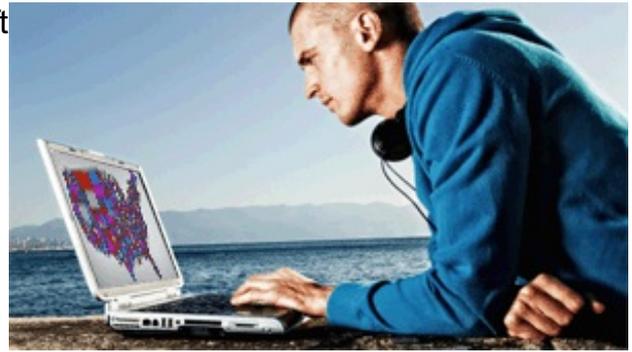
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The rise of do-it-yourself redistricting

<http://www.stateline.org/live/details/story?contentId=547258>

March 7, 2011

Dave Bradlee was a software developer for Microsoft for 20 years. He also has a fanatical interest in politics and maps. Not long ago, with the states' once-a-decade task of re-drawing political district lines approaching, there was a question that Bradlee couldn't get out of his head: "Wouldn't it be cool if people could actually draw districts themselves?" On his own time, he built an online mapping tool he calls "[Dave's Redistricting App](#)." It's free and anyone can use it. You choose a state, decide how many districts to slice it into, and then click away, coloring the map into lots of tiny pieces. As you draw your own Congressional or state legislative districts, the app spits out Census data on each one's population and racial composition. With a little persistence, anyone can produce his own redistricting plan.



istock/endgerrymandering.com

Bradlee quickly discovered he wasn't alone in his passions. Since the app went live in 2009, hundreds of people have used it to draw political maps — the site is now live for every state but Alaska. Some of the user-created maps were jokes: One person striped the state of New York with districts that all stretched from Buffalo to the Big Apple. But Bradlee says most of the maps created with his app represent serious efforts by well-intentioned citizens to engage in the redistricting process in ways they've never been able to before.

As states begin redistricting in the next few months, Web tools like Bradlee's will provide a new way for the public to try and influence the outcome. Ten years ago, during the last round of redistricting, the Internet was still relatively new. Google Maps didn't exist, let alone all the interactive and social tools that are so ubiquitous online today, such as YouTube and Facebook.

This time, it will be different. In addition to Bradlee's app, there are a number of other efforts underway to give citizens more mapping power. Some of them are officially sanctioned, such as a pair of online redistricting apps being developed by the Florida Legislature and another in Idaho. Others are coming from outside government, including one that promises to give citizens every bit as much data-drilling power as the systems state legislators and redistricting commissions will use.

Already, reform-minded groups are planning on using these tools to create a shadow redistricting process, intended to provide alternatives to the political gerrymanders that partisan legislatures often produce. In Indiana, for example, Common Cause, the League of Women Voters and AARP have come together to sponsor a citizen redistricting commission. The commission, led by two former legislators — one Democrat and one Republican — will conduct hearings around the state and then formulate its own redistricting plan. If the Indiana Legislature draws maps that promote the interest of the majority Republicans, or that protect incumbents, the citizen commission will be ready to go to the public and the media with its alternative.

"The purpose of the commission," says Julia Vaughn, policy director for the state chapter of Common Cause, "is to bird-dog the Indiana General Assembly." Maps drawn through a shadow redistricting process not only could be used or adapted by legislators themselves, but also could be considered by judges in states where the official maps ultimately wind up in court.

With the new technology, there's no question that there's more potential than ever for citizens to have a say in a process historically controlled by partisan and self-interested lawmakers. The question is whether the power of do-it-yourself redistricting will actually lead to maps that look any different than those from past decades.

Redistricting for the masses

Each new round of redistricting, it seems, ushers in a new technological leap. Kimball Brace, president of Election Data Services, a redistricting consulting firm, remembers how in 1981 in Illinois, paper maps were tacked to the wall in the House Speaker's office, which had a conveniently high ceiling. "We could put the entire city of Chicago on one wall," Brace says. The line drawers would spend all day drawing their map, then it would take a mainframe computer all night to analyze the demographics of what they had created.

By 1991, lawmakers had personal computers at their disposal. By 2001, those computers and the software on them were dramatically more powerful. Insiders could fiddle with new district lines relentlessly, allowing them to ponder thousands of possibilities that previously would have taken too much time to consider. As the technology progressed, some states set up computers in libraries or state offices where anyone could come and use the same software legislators were using. But relatively few people were willing to travel for miles and then sit down for hours to do it.

Idaho and Florida want to change that. Idaho has purchased an online redistricting tool from Caliper, one of the two best-established vendors of redistricting software. The Web tool will allow the public to draw maps from anywhere with a broadband connection. "We're hoping to let citizens have input and make sure the people making the decisions have been able to hear from them in a meaningful kind of way," says Kristin Ford, Idaho's legislative librarian and redistricting liaison.

In Idaho, the state's Redistricting Commission will be using a more powerful PC-based version of the software. The public version for use online runs slower and is scaled down. Florida, by contrast, is designing a system where the public can use the exact same tool to redraw lines that legislators themselves are using. In fact, Florida is designing two of these tools.

That's because a couple of years ago, the Florida House and Senate launched separate redistricting projects. There are some technical differences between the endeavors — for example, the House is using a Microsoft product while the Senate is using open-source software. But the goal is the same with both projects: to design online redistricting tools for use by lawmakers and the public alike. The Florida House already has a [test version](#) online. The Senate plans to introduce its beta-test version next week.

The expectation is that some people or interest groups will attempt to draw full Congressional or state legislative maps for all of Florida. But there are more granular uses as well. For example, citizens might use the tool to present lawmakers with maps of neighborhoods that should be kept intact within certain districts. "If we can get an abundance of feedback, almost to the point we're overwhelmed, we've succeeded," says J. Alex Kelly, staff director of the Florida House Redistricting Committee.

iRedistricting resistance

At the state level, the efforts in Idaho and Florida are exceptions, not the rule. Most states are making no further plans to engage the public in 2011 than they did a decade ago.

One reason why is money. Mark Stratton, who works on redistricting for Indiana's Legislative Services Agency, says that when he was talking with vendors about online redistricting last year, they told him it would cost the state \$125,000 to \$150,000. But Indiana's entire redistricting budget — for hardware, software and staff — is only \$250,000. While prices have dropped some since then, Stratton says a big effort at online outreach simply wasn't practical financially.

States have other concerns. Who should provide technical support to citizens who have trouble with these fairly sophisticated applications? How should publicly submitted plans be catalogued and presented to legislators? And will enough of those plans be valid to make the exercise worth it? Redistricting, after all, is a not just a political process but also a very technical one, requiring map makers to consider everything from a district's compactness to the Supreme Court's latest

interpretation of the Voting Rights Act.

Fred Hejazi thinks states are reluctant to engage the public more because the officials in charge of redistricting don't want to give up control. Hejazi is the CEO of Citygate GIS, the other well-established vendor of redistricting software. His company developed the first prototype for online redistricting. But Hejazi says most state officials involved in redistricting only want to buy PC software, not online versions that would make it easier for the masses to get involved.

“In most states, a redistricting plan is handled the same way as a regular bill, a bill that goes through the legislature,” Hejazi says. “By making this a public process, you’re essentially bypassing the reason there’s a legislative body. We don’t have a direct democracy. We have a representative democracy.”

Citizen maps in court

Ultimately, it may not matter that the states themselves are reluctant to give up control over redistricting. That’s because there are people like Dave Bradlee who have made it their mission to give the public tools to make the process more collaborative. Bradlee sees his app as much more than a toy for political and geographic junkies like himself. “This is a tool that helps inform citizens to see what the process is like,” he says. “Ultimately, influencing the people who control the process is a goal.”

Michael McDonald and Micah Altman share that goal. The two scholars at the Brookings Institution in Washington, D.C., are leading an effort known as the [Public Mapping Project](#). The online tool they are developing is expected to be more powerful than Bradlee’s app. It will contain sophisticated features like a statistical test of the compactness of the districts a user has created.

Most importantly, the system McDonald and Altman are developing will be capable of spitting out what are known as “block equivalency files.” These files allow a redistricting plan developed in their system to be imported into other redistricting systems states use, such as the ones sold by Caliper or Citygate. In other words, even in a state that has done nothing on its own to embrace do-it-yourself redistricting, a state legislature or redistricting commission could feasibly enact a map drawn using the Public Mapping Project tool.

That may never happen, of course. Still, at least one state is starting to pay attention to the Public Mapping Project. In Virginia, teams of students and professors from more than a dozen colleges are participating in a competition to draw new congressional and legislative lines using the Public Mapping Project tool. Thomas Mann of the Brookings Institution and Norman Ornstein of the American Enterprise Institute will pick the winning maps, which will then be presented to Virginia legislators for their consideration. Ten years ago, without online redistricting, a contest like this one probably would have been prohibitively expensive, requiring dozens of costly software licenses.

Even if citizen plans don't prove popular with legislators, they could find a more receptive audience in court. When state lawmakers fail to draw legal maps, courts have asked scholars such as Columbia University Law Professor Nathaniel Persily to step in to devise a plan. With citizen redistricting taking off this cycle, Persily says that might not be necessary. He has his students drawing district maps using Caliper software and writing legal papers defending them. He doesn't see this as merely an academic exercise. “For states that fail to craft redistricting plans,” Persily says, “there will be ready-made redistricting.”

If past decades are any guide, court is exactly where many states’ redistricting plans will end up. It’s not a stretch that a court could throw out the map drawn by a legislature if, say, a citizen-drawn map did a better job dividing population evenly between districts or abiding by a state compactness standard. “A court should be able to review anything presented to it as long as it’s verifiable,” says Jeffrey M. Wice, a Democratic redistricting attorney. “Courts always look at other plans.”

See Related Stories:

State Capitol briefs: Jan. 29, 2011

<http://staugustine.com/news/local-news/2011-01-28/state-capitol-briefs-jan-29-2011>

March 7, 2011

Health care ruling anticipated Monday

Federal Judge Roger Vinson could rule as early as Monday on a lawsuit filed by Florida and 25 other states challenging the federal health care act approved by Congress last year.

Florida Attorney General Pam Bondi and others are scheduling interviews in anticipation that the federal judge for the northern district of Florida will rule on whether the sweeping health care reform act oversteps federal authority by, among other things, requiring citizens to carry health insurance or pay penalties.

Vinson, who is based in Pensacola, heard arguments in December in the case filed by former Florida Attorney General Bill McCollum in March. Plaintiffs in the case also argue that the measure unduly expands Medicaid, a joint state/federal program that will see its ranks dramatically increase under the plan.

House speaker defends redistricting lawsuit

House and Senate leaders have steadily campaigned against a pair of redistricting amendments that eventually were approved overwhelmingly by voters in November.

But House Speaker Dean Cannon said Friday that the House's move to join a lawsuit filed by a pair of Congress members looking to overturn one of the measures is merely part of the chamber's "due diligence," as it prepares for line-drawing next year.

"Now that it is post-election, we want to know what our obligations and duties are as the legislative branch," Cannon said.

Cannon downplayed prospects of the House arguing that the voter-approved measure is unconstitutional - but didn't rule out such action. Instead, he said, it was important for the Legislature to be part of the case, "so we know what the rules of the road are."

Amendments 5 and 6, approved by voters last fall, are intended to force lawmakers to draw compact legislative and congressional districts without favoring incumbents or political parties. U.S. Reps. Corrine Brown, a Jacksonville Democrat, and Mario Diaz-Balart, a Miami Republican, filed a lawsuit seeking to overturn Amendment 6, arguing that the congressional standard violates federal election laws requiring equal access for minority candidates.

What others say: Amendments 5 and 6

<http://staugustine.com/opinions/2011-02-12/what-others-say-amendments-5-and-6>

March 7, 2011

Northwest Florida Daily News, Fort Walton Beach, on reluctance to implement Amendments 5 and 6:

We criticized state lawmakers and Gov. Rick Scott for their reluctance to implement Amendments 5 and 6, the redistricting reform measures that Florida voters approved back in November. The amendments will refine the way legislative and congressional district lines are drawn by outlawing gerrymandering to favor political parties or incumbents.

Naturally, a lot of politicians yelped at the very idea. Some are still yelping.

Their resistance to reform isn't winning many friends. Our online poll asks whether lawmakers should continue to fight the Fair Districts amendments. As of the morning of Feb. 7, 83 percent of respondents were saying no.

No, presumably, to Scott's withdrawal of Amendments 5 and 6 from federal review. No to the House leadership's endorsement of a lawsuit to block Amendment 6. No to Tallahassee thumbing its nose at voters.

Laggard lawmakers could learn a few things from Sen. Don Gaetz, R-Niceville. He, too, fought Amendments 5 and 6 before the election. But now he's chairman of the Senate Reapportionment Committee and he's supposed to make the new rules work.

In a Nov. 28 guest column, Gaetz referred to his earlier opposition and to the continuing legal challenges: "There's a huge difference between supporting a cause you believe in before the matter is decided 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."

Gaetz pledged that his 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."

Gaetz still doesn't like Amendments 5 and 6, but he's not trying to trash them. Scott and the other foot-draggers in Tallahassee ought to join him in respecting the will of the people.

Our view: Redistricting amendments: The people have spoken

<http://staugustine.com/opinions/2011-02-09/our-view-redistricting-amendments-people-have-spoken>

March 7, 2011

When Florida voters in November passed two constitutional amendments on redistricting congressional and legislative seats, they voted for fairness in representation, not protection for incumbents and political parties.

More than 3.1 million voters -- nearly 63 percent statewide -- said "yes" to Amendments 5 & 6 last November. They require the Legislature to draw as equally as possible in population, new districts that follow political or geographic boundaries but do not favor an incumbent or a political party. Amendment 5 affects state Legislature districts. Amendment 6 covers Congressional ones.

They were adopted by the people on the same day as the elections of Scott and other new and incumbent leaders from Washington to Tallahassee to St. Johns County.

So far, the new amendments have not been "precleared" by the federal Department of Justice in accordance with the 1965 Voting Rights Act. This act ensures that voters' rights are not violated. The amendments should be moving forward in that process but Gov. Rick Scott directed the Florida Department of State to withdraw them from federal review in January. They had been filed for pre-clearance in December by then-Gov. Charlie Crist.

Scott said, in published reports statewide, "We want to make sure that with regard to redistricting, it's fair, it's the right way of doing it."

Well, isn't that what the voters said? If not, they would have rejected the initiatives just as they rejected revising the class size amendment and the Hometown Democracy amendment.

Now Scott has been sued in federal court by supporters of the amendments for delaying their pre-clearance.

In March the new Census population figures will be out and the redrawing of district lines is supposed to begin. In fact, the public can submit their own proposals. The redistricting process can go forward with or without preclearance but a lawsuit could be filed on the grounds of compliance with the Voting Rights Act. Florida doesn't need any more brouhahas over elections.

Two members of Congress also are challenging the new amendments because they say they will negatively affect minority representation. U.S. Rep. Corinne Brown, D-Jacksonville, and U.S. Rep. Mario Diaz-Balart, R-Miami, filed a lawsuit in federal court the day after the elections challenging the redistricting. They both are in specially drawn districts. The Florida House has since joined that suit. Brown and Balart lost a challenge in May to block the amendments from appearing on the ballot.

We aren't na

The voters have spoken. They exercised their right of determination and they determined that the process needed to change. The courts need to uphold the will of the people. Otherwise, the people's votes have failed.

Technology Gives Citizens a Say in Redistricting

<http://www.usnews.com/news/articles/2011/03/09/technology-gives-citizens-a-say-in-redistricting>

March 10, 2011

This week, the Census Bureau sent redistricting data to California, making it 27 states which have received their 2010 census data, detailed demographic portraits of their populations. States use this statistical trove, including racial and voting age data, to redraw congressional and state legislative districts.

Redistricting has been the esoteric province of partisan operatives seemingly since the early 19th century when Massachusetts Gov. Elbridge Gerry signed a law creating districts so contorted that opponents said one resembled a salamander or "Gerrymander." But technological advances are giving ordinary citizens a greater voice in this decennial process. [\[See who donates the most to your member of Congress.\]](#)

It is increasingly easy, for example, for constituents to obtain the census and state electoral data used in redrawing the maps. In 2000, 26 states made data publicly available, up from 22 in 1990, and the number of states accepting public map submissions also grew to 31 from 24 in 1990. It is too early to tell how many more states will follow suit this year. But now, numerous outside groups have access to the data and are able to disseminate it independently. In addition, the advent and easy accessibility of digital data and mapping software have helped simplify the art of drawing districts.

"Citizens can definitely be more active in the redistricting process than ever before," says J. Gerald Hebert, [executive](#) director of the Campaign Legal Center, a nonpartisan organization which works on campaign finance and elections. Florida, for example, is launching a website allowing citizens to submit redistricting plans. Many other states also have sites providing detailed information, including proposed maps. Some organizations outside of [government](#) have also created online mapping tools. In Iowa, for example, the *Des Moines Register* website allows users to draw their own maps. And the Public Mapping Project, a nonpartisan good governance group, provides mapping tools to other organizations around the country and may partner with some states. Such efforts, Hebert says, can help citizens to engage in the political process, such as in public redistricting hearings. [\[Check out a roundup of this month's best political cartoons.\]](#)

Reform advocates say technology is democratizing a process that has often led to partisan gerrymandering and incumbent protection. "Every 10 years, [our representatives] get to vote for us," says Micah Altman, a senior fellow at the Brookings Institution and a principal [investigator](#) on the Public Mapping Project. "On the margins, this can have a significant effect on a number of seats and on policy."

Still, it is debatable whether citizens' power in redrawing districts has advanced proportionally with technology. Aside from computer access, a citizen hoping to influence redistricting may need significant knowledge and clout. "It's far more complicated than people realize," says Tim Storey, senior fellow at the National [Conference](#) of State Legislatures, a bipartisan organization supporting state lawmakers. "A lot of these [citizen-drawn] plans . . . flat-out on their face are not compliant with the law." Indeed, individual state redistricting laws can be difficult. For example, 16 states covered or partially covered by the Voting Rights Act must get federal certification that their plans will not adversely affect minority voting communities. Some states also require geographically "compact" districts. "Legislators drawing these maps have spent months, years trying to understand the process," adds Storey. [\[See a slide show of the top cities to find a job.\]](#)

According to Steven Schier, professor of political science at Carleton College in Minnesota, knowledge does not necessarily equal power. Instead, he says, being in the right political network is also key. "Then, with technical analysis, you can perhaps have an impact," he says.

But Altman says that citizens can effectively voice their concerns on a community level, "saying to

legislators, 'Here's my neighborhood. Please don't split it up.'" In short, the wide availability of data can help communities with common interests ensure that their voices are heard as one, at least for 10 more years.

Census Bureau to Release Local 2010 Census Data for Alaska, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky,... -- WASHINGTON, March 10, 2011 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ --

<http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/census-bureau-to-release-local-2010-census-data-for-alaska-florida-georgia-kentucky-minnesota-montana-new-mexico-north-dakota-and-tennessee-117756728.html>

March 15, 2011

⌂ This news release has wide tables
↗ Click to view full screen

WASHINGTON, March 10, 2011 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ --
The following is being issued by the U.S. Census Bureau:

(Logo:

<http://photos.prnewswire.com/prnh/20090226/CENSUSLOGO>)

What: Next week, the U.S. Census Bureau anticipates releasing local-level 2010 Census population counts for Alaska, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Minnesota, Montana, New Mexico, North Dakota and Tennessee. For each state, the Census Bureau will provide summaries of population totals, as well as data on race, Hispanic origin and voting age. These data will be presented for multiple geographies within the state, such as census blocks, tracts, voting districts, cities, counties and school districts.

According to Public Law 94-171, the Census Bureau must provide redistricting data to the 50 states no later than April 1 of the year following the census. As a result, the Census Bureau is delivering the data state-by-state on a flow basis in February and March. All states will receive their data by April 1, 2011.

When: Each state's geographic products and redistricting data are first delivered to the state's leadership, such as the governor and majority and minority leaders in the state legislative body. Upon confirmation of delivery to the state leadership, we will release a news release with five custom tables of data. At that time, we will release the full data set to our FTP download site. Within 24 hours, the full set of five detailed tables will also be available to the public online at <http://factfinder2.census.gov>.

For more information on the Census Bureau's Redistricting Data Program, visit <http://www.census.gov/rdo>.

Online Press Kit:

For more information about the Census Bureau, please visit <http://2010.census.gov/news/press-kits/redistricting.html> and follow us on Twitter, Facebook, Flickr and YouTube (/uscensusbureau).

SOURCE U.S. Census Bureau

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March 15, 2011

By GARY PINNELL

Highlands Today

Published: March 14, 2011

SEBRING - This week, the U.S. Census Bureau will release its official numbers for Florida, and Highlands County may finally find out whether it's achieved the 100,000 population milestone.

The local, state and federal governments use the numbers in thousands of ways. Florida legislators, for instance, are chomping at the bit to redraw political boundaries.

Although they may not change much, the political boundaries that include Highlands County – state senate District 17, state representative District 66, state representative District 77, and congressional District 16 – are bound to be reshaped because the county had 87,336 people in the 2000 census. By contrast, Hardee County grew by only 2,500, and Glades added just 400, comparing 2000 official numbers to 2009 estimates.

Worker exodus

Before the Great Recession, Highlands County added population every year. Two years ago, the county teetered over 100,000.

At the same time, Florida's estimated population rose from 18.59 million to 18.77 million.

Last year, Highlands' population dropped to 99,713. In October, it was down to 99,215, according to the University of Florida's Bureau of Economic and Business research.

The school district peaked in 2006-07 with 12,364 students, but in 2010, Highlands County schools welcomed back about 136 fewer students than in 2009, the third year in a row that the district's enrollment dropped.

Exactly where those people went is a bit of a mystery, however.

"It's a reflection of the economy," Superintendent of Schools Wally Cox said in October. "We have a number of people who are seeking work and have had to leave our area and have taken their children with them."

Steve Fruit, an agent with RE/MAX Realty Plus II in Lake Placid, agreed. "When the census comes out, I wouldn't be surprised to find out we're down 5,000 to 10,000 people. You have no idea how many construction workers had to leave this area because they couldn't find work."

Roger Hood, president and CEO of Heartland Workforce, disagreed. "I've asked the staff about this, and we've come up with nothing to substantiate that we're losing a lot of people."

Over or under

Commissioner Jack Richie has no prediction on whether Highlands County will top the 100,000 mark: "It's hard to say, but I hope we'll be under."

Smaller counties get a few breaks from the state and federal governments that aren't available to counties over 100,000.

"It makes us eligible for different grants," Richie said. "If we're over 100,000, we won't get some

funds. There's more competition. It puts us in a whole different position."

Small counties also aren't required to meet some guidelines. For instance, Florida counties with more than 100,000 in population are required by HB 7243 to recycle 40 percent of what goes to the landfill. By 2015, 50 percent must be recycled, 60 percent by 2017, 70 by 2018, and 75 percent 2019.

National data

Since census data began to be released in February, a portrait of America has taken shape. One by one, each state received local 2010 Census data on race, Hispanic origin, voting age population and housing units. The week of March 14, data will be released for Alaska, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Minnesota, Montana, New Mexico, North Dakota and Tennessee.

As 2010 redistricting files are issued, the Census Bureau is also releasing interactive state maps showing county-level population change from 1960 to 2010, as well as state-level data on race and Hispanic or Latino origin for 2010.

Other data

Dynamics of Economic Well-Being 2004-2006: The duration of poverty spells and the frequency of transitions into and out of poverty, episodic and chronic poverty, length of poverty, exits from poverty and characteristics of the affected population.

Fertility of American Women 2010: Fertility patterns of American women by age, race, ethnicity, education, marital status, income and nativity.

Survey of Business Owners: Privately owned firms, sales and receipts, the number of paid employees and annual payroll of American Indian and Alaska Native businesses. Data don't include tribally-owned businesses. Profiles of American Indian- and Alaska Native-owned businesses.

Business Dynamics: The difference between job creation and destruction in the U.S. between March 2008 and March 2009. Annual statistics from 1976 to 2009 by firm age and size.

State and Local Government Employee Retirement Systems 2009: Financial activity of the nation's state and local public employee retirement systems, including cash and security investment holdings, receipts and payments.

State Government Tax Collections 2010: Annual summary of taxes collected by state for property tax, sales and gross receipts taxes, license taxes, income taxes and others. Details on collections by type of tax imposed and collected by state governments.

Economic Indicators: Monthly, quarterly and yearly updates on key measures of the nation's economic condition, including monthly wholesale trade: sales and inventories, U.S. international trade in goods and services and advance monthly sales for retail and food services.

Highlands Today reporter Gary Pinnell can be reached at gpinnell@highlandstoday.com or 863-386-5828.

House and Senate Redistricting Chairs announce census details for Florida

<http://saintpetersblog.com/2011/03/17/house-and-senate-redistricting-chairs-announce-census-details-for-florida/>

March 17, 2011



Representative Will Weatherford (R-Wesley Chapel), Chair of the House Redistricting Committee, and Senator Don Gaetz (R-Niceville), Chair of the Senate Committee on Reapportionment, today announced receipt of detailed 2010 Census population counts for Florida. The tables attached to this release show 2010 population and deviation figures for each senatorial, state representative, and congressional district in the state. The attached maps show where overpopulated and underpopulated districts lie in relation to one another.

The detailed 2010 population counts for Florida are also accessible using the U.S. Census Bureau's American FactFinder web application (see, <http://factfinder2.census.gov/main.html>). The complete data set delivered to the Florida Legislature will be available online at http://www2.census.gov/census_2010/01-Redistricting_File-PL_94-171/Florida/.

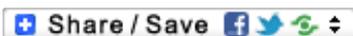
By early summer, the Senate and House both will have web-based district building applications, with 2010 Census data, for Floridians and their legislators to participate in and follow the redistricting process.

"In Florida, citizens will get full and easy access to the same programs, data, and plans that legislators and professional staff themselves will use," said Senator Gaetz. "My direction from President Mike Haridopolos is to engage in the most transparent, open, and interactive redistricting process in America."

"Our goal in redistricting is to let the public start the conversation," said Representative Weatherford. "Paramount to achieving that goal is always sharing information like the 2010 Census results with the public, so that Floridians can benefit from the same tools and information available to the legislature."

The Florida Legislature convenes January 10, 2012 to enact new senatorial, state representative, and congressional districts based on the 2010 Census. Throughout the process, there will be many opportunities for citizen participation.

More information about preparations for redistricting is available on the House and Senate websites:



Central Florida likely to benefit from redistricting | The Asbury Park Press | APP.com

<http://www.app.com/article/A9/20110318/NEWS01/103180312/0/SPORTS>

March 21, 2011

Let the drawing games begin.

The U.S. Census Bureau released detailed population figures Thursday, giving the Republicans who rule the Legislature the data they need to start mapping congressional and legislative districts.

It was already known that Florida's population growth justified increasing its 25-member congressional delegation to 27. The big question is where those seats will be added.

Central Florida, where population generally grew the most, will be the likely beneficiary.

Democratic strategist Steve Schale, said the numbers did not surprise most observers.

"It looks like Central Florida is going to get one of the congressional seats, which will probably be somewhere between Tampa and Orlando," he said. "The other big winner is Southwest Florida. They could get the other congressional seat. They will definitely get a new (state) House seat and a pick up a new (state) Senate seat."

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The same is true for 16 of the 40 seats in the state Senate, where the new ideal size for a district swells to 470,033. More than half of the 120 state House districts deviate by double-digit percentages from the new ideal district size of 156,678.

The state House districts on the Space Coast are likely to undergo significant change.

- The District 31 seat held by Republican John Tobia of Melbourne is 18,463 residents, or 11.8 percent, below the new standard.
- The District 30 seat held by Ritch Workman of Melbourne is 23,916 residents, or 15 percent, above the mark.
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Senate reapportionment Chief Don Gaetz, R-Niceville, vowed to have the most open process in history.

"In Florida, citizens will get full and easy access to the same programs, data, and plans that legislators and professional staff themselves will use," Gaetz said.

The committees will have hearings across the state this summer. The Legislature convenes in January next year to begin debating the new districts.

Let the political redistricting battles begin – Central Florida Political Pulse – Orlando Sentinel

http://blogs.orlandosentinel.com/new_s_politics/2011/03/let-the-redistricting-battles-begin.html

March 21, 2011

TALLAHASSEE — Florida's population gains over the last decade will raise the already heightened stakes for re-drawing the state's political maps later this year.

For starters, Central Florida is going to land a new congressional seat. New [Census data released Thursday](#) shows the region of Orange, Osceola, Seminole, Lake and Volusia counties gained 541,000 residents from 2000 to 2010, fueled largely by Orange County's nearly 250,000 population increase. Orange gained more people than any county in the state and was the fastest-growing among Florida's largest counties, with a 28 percent growth rate.

But the fight over where to plop a new congressional seat down is just one of hundreds of political turf wars that [can now be waged block-by-block](#) over the next 12 months.

When lawmakers charged with overseeing the once-a-decade redistricting process get to work, they'll start their geography homework under the new framework of the two "Fair Districts" constitutional amendments passed by 63 percent of voters last fall. Those amendments, pushed largely by Democrats, lawyers and other left-leaning groups, spell out that the Legislature must draw its congressional and legislative maps more compactly within existing city and county lines, and without the intent of helping to keep one party or politician in power.

The ruling GOP has railed against the amendments and helped finance attempts to keep them from passing — and once they did, fighting them in court. House Speaker **Dean Cannon**, R-Winter Park, and two congressional members continue the fight today.

It's going to be dicey to see how this all works out. Sen. **Don Gaetz**, R-Niceville, and Rep. **Will Weatherford**, R-Wesley Chapel, are the legislators tasked with overseeing redistricting, and are planning to have dozens of hearings around the state this summer.

But the politicians are also next in line to be Senate president and House speaker, and have an obvious self-interest in preserving the GOP super-majorities in both chambers. Democrats, conversely, have described the Fair Districts amendments as their best shot at chipping away at those GOP majorities in both chambers.

The reality: the current maps are gerrymandered modern-art masterpieces that have allowed both greater numbers of minorities to get elected — U.S. Rep. **Corrine Brown's** district is one long tendril from downtown Jacksonville to the edge of Orlando — and created a vast number of suburban districts with just enough Republicans to ensure GOP control of the Legislature.

Another wild card in the coming weeks and months: Gov. **Rick Scott**.

The governor has the power to veto the new congressional lines that get drawn, although the Florida Supreme Court will have the final say over the legislative redistricting plan. If lawmakers are unable to agree on maps in a January-through-March regular session in 2012 — and subsequent special session — the high court will draw maps for them. Critics of Fair Districts say the new mandates guarantee more protracted court fights will break out because there will be more causes to sue.

In fact, Scott has already been sued over redistricting. The new chief executive quietly delayed the federal approval process for the Fair Districts amendments three days after taking office in January, arguing the census data wasn't yet available. Fair Districts backers and former state Sen. **Dan Gelber** sued in federal court to try and force his hand.

Scott's office has shifted its explanation to say that it now doesn't need to submit the amendments

for “pre-clearance” by the U.S. Justice Department because the actual work on redistricting hasn’t started yet.

But if you buy that line, you haven’t been keeping up with the technology behind the redistricting process. Within a few hours of the Census data delivery to Florida on Thursday, the Legislature’s redistricting gurus had [cranked out GIS work-product](#) showing how each and every congressional, House and Senate district in Florida had shifted by population since 2000. Basically, that identifies which ones will need to be dramatically re-worked.

For all practical purposes, Florida’s redistricting process has already begun. It’s going to get bumpy.

Is Scott backing down on Fair Districts? – Central Florida Political Pulse – Orlando Sentinel

http://blogs.orlandosentinel.com/news_politics/2011/03/is-scott-backing-down-on-fair-districts.html

March 21, 2011

TALLAHASSEE — Three days after taking office, Gov. **Rick Scott** quietly put the brakes on the approval process for the two Fair Districts redistricting constitutional amendments passed by 63 percent of voters last fall.

Scott said after he withdrew the amendments from federal approval that he was simply waiting until 2010 U.S. Census data were released and the redistricting process could start.

But Fair Districts backers filed a lawsuit last month in federal court in Miami, alleging the governor was improperly obstructing the U.S. Justice Department's required review of the election changes, a process called "pre-clearance."

And this week, the governor's lawyers hinted they may be backing down. Scott's office was required to respond to the suit by March 16, and this week requested a delay until April 1.

"Defendants respectfully request an extension ... because Defendants believe in good faith that this matter may be resolved in that time, obviating the need for any exercise of this Court's jurisdiction," wrote Scott general counsel **Charles Trippe Jr.**

Fair Districts backers say that likely means the governor plans to submit the amendments.

"We expect the governor will eventually relent and submit the amendments for review," said Fair Districts general counsel **Dan Gelber**, a former Democratic legislator from Miami Beach.

Those amendments, pushed largely by trial lawyers and other left-leaning groups, spell out that the Legislature must draw its congressional and legislative maps more compactly within existing city and county lines, and without the intent of helping to keep one party or politician in power.

Republicans who control the Legislature have fought the amendments, and two of Florida's congressional delegation – U.S. Reps. **Corrine Brown**, D-Jacksonville, and **Mario Diaz-Balart**, R-Miami – have filed a federal lawsuit that argues the amendments would make it harder to elect minorities to Congress and the Legislature. That lawsuit is still playing out, and House Speaker **Dean Cannon**, R-Winter Park, has lawyered up to support it.

[Read more here.](#)

Puerto Ricans in Central Florida's Tourism Hub Are Driving Hispanic Growth

<http://www.bloomberg.com/news/2011-03-18/puerto-ricans-in-florida-s-tourism-hub-drive-hispanic-growth.html>

March 21, 2011



Anmary Hidalgo, the proprietor of Caribe Bakery and Restaurant in Orlando, Florida. Photographer: Simone Baribeau/Bloomberg

Anmary Hidalgo, the proprietor of Caribe Bakery and Restaurant in Orlando, Florida. Photographer: Simone Baribeau/Bloomberg

Roberto Torres-Aguilar moved to central [Florida](#) to practice cardiology after payments for his patients in Puerto Rico, where unemployment hovers around 16 percent, became increasingly delinquent.

"It was becoming a nightmare to practice medicine in Puerto Rico," said Torres-Aguilar, 56, who now lives in Orlando, about 230 miles (370 kilometers) [north of Miami](#).

Puerto Ricans like Torres-Aguilar, free to move because they're U.S. citizens, have displaced Cubans driving Florida's Hispanic growth, especially in the state's center. They make up almost half the Hispanic population of three counties surrounding Orlando: Orange, Polk and Osceola, according to the 2009 American Community Survey of the U.S. Census Bureau.

Florida has the second-largest number of Puerto Ricans after [New York](#), propelled by a decade of economic stagnation at home and recruiting by state employers such as [Walt Disney Co. \(DIS\)](#), whose Magic Kingdom near Orlando is the world's most-visited [amusement park](#).

"In New York, they're called 'Nuyo-Ricans,'" said Emilio Perez, chairman of the Central Florida Redistricting Council Inc. in Orlando, newly formed to seek increased Hispanic political representation. "Here, we're Mickey-Ricans," he said, referring to Disney's most famous character, [Mickey Mouse](#).

Hispanics in the three central counties more than doubled in the decade to 536,922, or about 26.6 percent of the 2,016,736 total population, 2010 Census data released yesterday show. That outpaced the 25.7 percent Hispanic growth to 1,623,859 in Miami-Dade County to the south, which attracted Cubans since [Fidel Castro](#) came to power in 1959.

Statewide Growth

Florida Puerto Ricans, moving from the island and other mainland enclaves, grew 50.7 percent statewide from 2000 to 2009 to 726,637, or 4.5 percent of the total, the census community data show, while Cubans rose 30.7 percent to 1,088,747, or 5.9 percent.

The [tourism industry](#) encouraged the growth with employment incentives in [Puerto Rico](#), where both English and [Spanish](#) are official languages. Disney offered free airfare and as much as \$1,500 for relocation, the Orlando Sentinel [reported in 1999](#). Andrea Finger, a Disney spokeswoman, wouldn't provide details.

Job offers also came from the [Orange County Public Schools](#), which in 2006 hired 60 teachers in

Puerto Rico, said Shari Bobinski, a spokeswoman. The state attracted health-care workers with a 2002 [law](#) allowing experienced Puerto Rican nurses to skip the U.S. licensing exam.

Easy Sell

It was an easy sell: Puerto Rico's unemployment rate averaged 6 percentage points above the U.S. national average in the last decade, a period when its economy [didn't grow](#). The commonwealth, a self-governing U.S. territory, shed 2.2 percent of its population in the [10 years](#). [Michigan](#), the only state to lose people in the period, shrunk less, at 0.6 percent, according to the census.

To serve central Florida, Puerto Rico-based businesses including [Popular Inc. \(BPOP\)](#)'s Banco Popular, [Ana G. Mendez University](#) and insurance company Cooperative de [Seguros Múltiples de Puerto Rico](#) opened around Orlando. [El Nuevo Día](#), Puerto Rico's largest newspaper, published a local edition from 2003 to 2008.

"It feels good to be out of your country and at the same time be able to provide services to people from your country," said Torres-Aguilar, the cardiologist.

He moved from Caguas, 20 miles south of [San Juan](#), to Miami in 2009. After becoming licensed to practice in the state, he moved to central Florida in June with his wife and their son. While his pay has been "basically the same" as in Puerto Rico, he has the potential to earn more in Florida, Torres-Aguilar said.

17.6 Percent Growth

Florida's 17.6 percent [population growth](#) from 2000 to 2010 to 18,801,310 was almost twice the national rate of 9.7 percent. Hispanic residents grew 57.4 percent to 4,223,806, or 22.5 percent of the total from 16.8 percent, the U.S. Census Bureau said yesterday.

Non-Hispanic whites rose 4.1 percent to 10,884,722, or 57.9 percent of the total, down from 65.4 percent as other groups grew faster since 2000. Non-Hispanic blacks rose 25.9 percent to 2,851,100, or 15.2 percent from 14.2 percent, and non-Hispanic Asians grew 70.1 percent to 445,216, accounting for 2.4 percent of the population from 1.6 percent a decade ago, the census data show.

The Puerto Rican gains helped recast the Hispanic voter profile to predominantly Democratic from Cuban-dominated Republican, said Mark Hugo Lopez, associate director of the Washington-based [Pew Hispanic Center](#).

The number of Florida Hispanics registered as Democrats exceeded the number designated as Republicans in 2008, a reverse from 2006, [according to](#) the Florida Secretary of State's office.

Only 12 of the 160 state House and Senate seats are held by Latinos, nine of whom are of Cuban descent. Only one, Darren Soto, a Democrat from [Orlando](#), is Puerto Rican.

Recent Migration

"Our lack of representation has to do with the recentness of a lot of that migration," said Soto, who's seeking a seat on the Senate committee that will redraw Florida's voting areas based on new census figures. "After this go-round, I'm hopeful that we'll have more seats in all phases of government."

The Puerto Rican influx has created some friction over [voting rights](#). Volusia County, home to [Daytona Beach](#) on the east coast, agreed in 2010 to provide ballots in Spanish after a lawsuit filed by four Puerto Rican voters and the county Hispanic association. In Osceola County, where 45.5 percent of the population is Latino, a lawsuit led to commissioners elected by district rather than at large, allowing more-direct representation for Hispanics.

“We are working with the community to make sure they get some equitable representation,” said John Garcia, redistricting manager of [LatinoJustice PRLDEF](#), which participated in the two cases.

The New York-based organization, formerly called the Puerto Rico Legal Defense and Education Fund, will hold a board meeting in central Florida next week to “make a statement of our commitment” to redistricting in the region, Garcia said.

Redrawing Boundaries

The census data released this month will be used to redraw the boundaries for state and Congressional legislative districts to reflect changes in population over the past 10 years. Florida, where the Legislature makes the alterations, will gain two seats in the U.S. House of Representatives.

Florida Hispanics could add as many as 14 state seats and those in central Florida could pick up one of two new congressional posts, said Perez of the Central Florida Redistricting Council.

Cuban state legislators are mindful of the Puerto Rican presence in Florida, as well as the thousands of Columbians, Dominicans and Venezuelans who’ve become residents, said Representative Esteban Bovo, a Cuban-American Republican from Hialeah, a northwest suburb of Miami, and chairman of the Florida Hispanic Legislative Caucus.

“When we legislate here, it would be a little disingenuous for us just to think of how it affects our district,” he said in an interview in Tallahassee. “We are the voice of the Hispanic population.”

Labor Force

The growing Puerto Rican population may help balance the state’s labor force, whose aging members mean fewer working adults for each retiree, said Amy Baker, the Legislature’s [chief economist](#).

The median age of Puerto Ricans in Florida is 30 compared with the population’s overall median age of 39 and 42 for Cubans, according to the 2009 community survey.

“They tend to be younger, tend to have children, tend to be in the labor force,” Baker said in an interview in Tallahassee. “That’ll help keep our workforce going.”

Anmary Hidalgo, 37, is doing that. She left her job in the health department in Aguadilla, in northwest Puerto Rico, in 2000 to help her father open a bakery in Kissimmee. She’s since married, has a two-year-old daughter and opened a business.

“It seems to me like Puerto Rico,” Hidalgo said at her [Caribe Bakery and Restaurant](#) in Orlando. “I don’t think I can move back.”

To contact the reporter on this story: Simone Baribeau in Miami at sbaribeau@bloomberg.net.

To contact the editor responsible for this story: Mark Tannenbaum at mtannen@bloomberg.net.

Central Florida likely to benefit from redistricting | FLORIDA TODAY | floridatoday.com

<http://www.floridatoday.com/article/20110318/NEWS01/103180312/Central-Florida-likely-benefit-from-redistricting?odyssey=mod|newswell|text|News|p>

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Diversity dominates Northeast Florida in new Census data

<http://jacksonville.com/news/metro/2011-03-18/story/diversity-dominates-northeast-florida-new-census-data>

March 21, 2011

Strong suburban growth and rapid diversification in Jacksonville have shaped the region over the past 10 years. And those trends, illustrated by Census figures released Thursday, are certain to shape the future of Northeast Florida.

Duval County grew 11 percent since 2000, a rate that was slower than the state overall. But in the suburban areas that ring Jacksonville, growth surged. In places such as Yulee in Nassau County and the north and west corners of St. Johns County, development and population skyrocketed.

Interact: [Check out population changes in your neighborhood](#)

All over the region, racial and ethnic diversity increased. A steady influx in Hispanic and Asian immigrants led those demographic groups to double or more over the past decade. People who described themselves as Hispanic made up 7.6 percent of the population of Duval County and 7.7 percent in Clay.

Hispanics in Clay County tend to live in clusters, with distinguishable communities in Green Cove Springs, Middleburg, the Heritage Hills area of Orange Park and a concentration of apartment complexes along Wells Road, said Christy Fitzgerald, executive director of The Way Free Medical Clinic in Green Cove Springs.

When the faith-based facility opened in 2006, almost all of its patients were Hispanics because the facility was initially inspired as a way to meet that community's medical challenges. But thanks to word spreading that the clinic serves the poor regardless of race, it's now about 30 percent Hispanic for general medical care and 95 percent for pre-natal services.

She said noticeable numbers of families disappeared after 2008, when the construction market in the county evaporated. She added, however, that Hispanics there tend not to be migrant or seasonal employees.

Whether impoverished or wealthy, Hispanics in Clay routinely report choosing living in the county for the same reason non-Hispanics do: good schools and lower crime rates, Fitzgerald said.

It was a higher quality of life that attracted Orlando Martinez to Clay County, where he moved two years ago.

The native Puerto Rican said he found the housing market in Middleburg more affordable.

"It was less seedy [than Duval County] and it's more in the country, quiet and peaceful," said Martinez, 31.

In Jacksonville, traditionally bifurcated between blacks and whites, the landscape is changing. There are slightly fewer non-Hispanic whites in Duval County. Meanwhile, the 43 percent of its population that belongs to racial and ethnic minorities now includes more than 100,000 Hispanic and Asian residents.

At Christ The King Catholic Church in Arlington, the difference has been evident. The church now ministers to a large population of Vietnamese immigrants, even offering a service in their language. In addition to its long-time white parishioners that moved to Arlington in the 1950s, Christ The King has substantial numbers of Filipino, Haitian and Nigerian members.

Father Thanh T. Nguyen, who has been head pastor at the church since 2001, inaugurated an annual Epiphany mass and dinner where the church celebrates its many different cultures.

God revealed the baby Jesus to the world of nations, he said, so it seemed only appropriate to use the occasion to celebrate the church's diversity. Christ The King has a vicar with an Italian background and an African-American man serves as deacon.

Communication and hospitality make the church vital, Nguyen said. Communication, he said, is key to incorporating the many different cultures and traditions found at the church.

Population changes and racial and ethnic diversification are only some of the issues that will go into the task of determining the state's congressional and legislative seats, one of the most important uses of the data. The process, affected by a 2010 ballot initiative, is already embroiled in lawsuits.

Census figures show shifts in population among Florida's current congressional districts. Data produced by the Florida Senate shows that U.S. Rep. Corrine Brown's district is underpopulated, while stronger growth in areas such as St. Johns, Clay and Flagler have both U.S. Rep. Cliff Stearns and U.S. Rep. John Mica's districts overpopulated by as much as 20 percent.

"That has implications for each of the members because they're going to be looking at very different constituencies when they run for re-election in 2012," said Daniel Smith, political science professor at the University of Florida.

However, the districts were going to look different anyway given the redistricting law that passed in November, Smith said. The measure requires districts be compact and use geographical boundaries. Brown's district currently runs through eight counties from Jacksonville to Orlando.

"She's out 37,000 voters, but it's really difficult to say what's going to happen until we see these [redistricting] maps," Smith said.

Data analysis by USA Today and reporting by Times-Union writer Kate Howard contributed to this report.

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Redistricting lawsuit is delayed

<http://www.keysnet.com/2011/03/19/319961/redistricting-law-suit-is-delayed.html>

March 21, 2011

A federal lawsuit filed on behalf of five Monroe County residents may factor into the state redistricting process, officially triggered by this week's release of new U.S. Census Bureau numbers for Florida.

On Feb. 3, voter-rights groups and five Monroe residents sued Gov. Rick Scott and Secretary of State Kurt Browning. The suit charges that Florida officials are stalling on actions needed to implement state constitutional amendments intended to reduce gerrymandering in creating election districts.

"We are still waiting for the state to answer the complaint," said Dan Gelber, a former state senator who supports Fair District Florida, a group that campaigned for amendments 5 and 6. Both amendments passed by large margins in the November election.

The plaintiffs agreed to the state's request for an extension in filing a response, Gelber said Thursday. A response should be submitted by early April, he said.

The reason for the delay? "I think [state officials] are getting sued a lot," Gelber said.

Lower Keys residents Charles Major Jr., Sarah Fowler, Rosanne Potter, Michael E. Berman and Patricia M. Lenny are the only individuals listed as plaintiffs in the federal lawsuit.

Monroe is one of five Florida counties under special federal elections oversight due to "a long history of racial discrimination," according to the suit, so local residents have standing.

Keys lose 8 percent of their population

<http://www.keysnet.com/2011/03/19/319949/census-keys-lose-8-percent-of.html>

March 21, 2011

Monroe County lost 6,499 residents the past decade, says the U.S. Census Bureau's numbers for 2010. Since 2000, the population living in the Florida Keys dipped to 73,090 people, according to the federal head count released Thursday. That loss of 8.17 percent of the full-time residents was the largest percentage drop in Florida.

How the population numbers may affect government funding could not yet be determined, but there almost surely will be some effect on things like the dollars the Monroe County School District gets per student.

Besides Monroe, the only other Florida county to officially lose population was Pinellas, around St. Petersburg. The Pinellas decline was less than 1 percent, or about 83,000 people.

Statewide, Florida's population grew from 15.9 million to 18.8 million in the past decade.

One of the most immediate impacts to Monroe County will be how the Keys are represented in the Florida Legislature, which will use the new population numbers to redraw legislative districts.

"There is a danger down the road that we could lose the one [Florida] House of Representatives seat that we've always had," said state Rep. Ron Saunders. "There has always been a member from Monroe County."

Saunders, a Key West native, represents District 120, which encompasses all of Monroe County and parts of Miami-Dade County. Most of the voters in the current District 120 live in the Keys.

As it now stands, the 120 House members each represent a district of 132,000 to 134,000 residents. But with the Florida population growing to nearly 19 million, that could require a House district to represent approximately 157,000 people.

"Monroe County not growing exacerbates the situation," Saunders said.

A new District 120 could include more residents in Miami-Dade, possibly outnumbering the Monroe population.

"There are no runoff elections, so the problem could come if somebody from Dade runs when two people from Monroe are running," Saunders said. "There's a threat Monroe could lose the seat. That would be a disaster."

"Monroe County has a lot of unique situations -- look at our environment and the sewers -- so it would be a lot more helpful to have somebody in Tallahassee, Democrat or Republican, who really understands the Keys."

Saunders said a new District 120 could extend into Miami-Dade, or even include parts of Collier County, adjacent to mainland Monroe in Southwest Florida.

"I don't see any way [the legislature] is going to split Monroe into separate districts," he said. "The question is what other parts of Dade would they add."

The Legislature has not yet selected the redistricting committee, so a lot of work remains, he said.

Within Monroe County, Marathon reportedly saw a population drop of 1,958 people -- from 10,255 in 2000 to 8,297 in 2010. Big Pine Key residents reportedly declined by 15.5 percent, from 5,032 to 4,252, over the last 10 years.

Key Largo dropped by 1,453 people -- 11,886 to 10,433 (12.2 percent) -- since 2000. Islamorada was down by 727 people, from 6,846 to 6,119 (10.6 percent).

Key West's city residents went from 25,478 in 2000 to 24,649, a 3.25-percent drop of 829 people.

Duck Key bucked the trend, growing in population by 40 percent to 621 people, up 178 in the decade. While the overall population in the Keys has declined, the Monroe County Supervisor of Elections Office says the number of registered voters is actually up, standing at 50,136. In November 2000, the number was 48,409.

According to the Census, the rest of South Florida continued to grow in population.

Miami-Dade grew 11 percent since 2000, with a current population of 2,496,435. Broward increased to 1,748,066 (up 7.7 percent), and Palm Beach grew by 16.7 percent to 1,320,134 residents. Orange County, around Orlando, jumped 28 percent in the Past decade to a population of 1,145,956.

Florida — and Collier and Lee counties — keep growing, U.S. Census reports » Naples Daily News Mobile

<http://m.naplesnews.com/news/2011/mar/17/still-growing-us-census-releases-more-population-d/>

March 21, 2011

The Sunshine State just keeps on growing — as does its political capital.

On Thursday, the U.S. Census Bureau released more detailed 2010 Census population totals and demographic characteristics for Florida, including racial and ethnic breakdowns by county.

Both Collier and Lee counties were ranked among the top 20 most populous counties in the state. Collier was ranked 17th, up one place from 2000. Lee was ranked eighth, up three spots from 2000.

Collier County had 321,520 residents, a 27.9 percent increase from the 251,377 residents counted in the 2000 Census. In addition, 83,177 of Collier's residents were of Hispanic descent.

The decennial count also showed that Lee County went from 440,888 residents in 2000 to 618,754 in 2010, a 40.3 percent increase. Hispanics in Lee County totaled 113,308.

News of the area's continued growth was not surprising to Lee County Chamber president Armando Nargi.

However, Nargi said Southwest Florida is nowhere near where it could have been had the economy stayed strong.

"We are getting more inquiries and more traffic about relocation to the area," said Nargi. "But we're not the way we were before the recession started 2 ½ years ago."

Although the chamber does not track specific minority business inquiries, Nargi said that he has personally seen the Hispanic population in Southwest Florida continue to grow.

He added that until Southwest Florida has some sort of major industry, the area's population will continue to fluctuate.

"What industry do we have to sustain the population? We're not building like we used to, when everything was revolving around the building," he said. "And tourism is only a limited audience, limited time of the year. What focus of major industry will be here to sustain the livelihoods here?"

Overall, Florida's population gains will garner the state two additional U.S. House seats and more sway on the national political stage. Florida will have 27 House seats.

"The importance of Florida's impact on the national political debate cannot be overstated," said U.S. Rep. Connie Mack, R-Fort Myers.

Florida's population increased by 2.8 million, or 17.6 percent, to 18.8 million between the 2000 and 2010 censuses.

The Florida Legislature is slated to convene on Jan. 10, 2012, to enact new state Senate, state House and congressional districts based on the 2010 Census.

As to where the two new congressional districts will be formed, that will be determined by the Florida Legislature, Florida Gulf Coast University political science professor Peter Bergerson said.

For the most part, politicians in power try to create "safe seats" — a district that a party knows historically will vote in its favor, Bergerson said. Each member of the U.S. House represents, on average, about 710,767 people.

And even though congressmen don't have any official power in redistricting, Bergerson said Thursday the current 25 do have enough political influence to be involved in the process.

On Thursday, Florida legislators said that by early summer both the state Senate and House will have a website with 2010 Census data so Floridians can participate in and follow the redistricting process.

"Our goal in redistricting is to let the public start the conversation," state Rep. Will Weatherford, R-Wesley Chapel, chairman of the House Redistricting Committee, said in a written statement. "Paramount to achieving that goal is always sharing information like the 2010 Census results with the public, so that Floridians can benefit from the same tools and information available to the Legislature."

Florida's growing population has a lot to do with a 60 percent increase in the share of Hispanics living in Florida over the past decade, according to the U.S. Census figures released Thursday.

The figures show the percentage of white residents declined slightly and the proportion of blacks and Asians inched up.

Hispanics now make up 22.5 percent of Florida's 18.8 million residents, up from 16.7 percent of Floridians in 2000, when the state only had 15.9 million residents, the Census data showed.

"Were it not for the Hispanics, whether it has to do with fertility, immigration, in-migration from other states, or some combination of all three, Florida would be in much worse shape demographically," said William Frey, a demographer with the Brookings Institution Metropolitan Policy Program in Washington. "Florida has traditionally been a haven for everybody, especially white northeasterners and Midwesterners."

That isn't so much the case now as it has been in the past. The share of whites moving to Florida last decade was smaller than it was in the previous decade, Frey said.

Non-Hispanic whites now make up 57.8 percent of Florida's population in 2010, down from 66 percent of the population in 2000. Their numbers grew by just under a half-million residents to 10.8 million people, the Census showed.

The non-Hispanic black population grew by more than 586,000 residents, so that they now make up 15.2 percent of the population, up from 14.1 percent of the population in 2000.

Asians now make up 2.3 percent of Florida's residents, or more than 445,000 people, up from 1.6 percent in 2000.

The Associated Press contributed to this report.

Data provided by U.S. Census Bureau. Represents zero or rounds to 0.0. The term 'county' refers to county or equivalent entity. For more information on Substantial Changes to Counties and County Equivalent Entities: 1970-Present, please visit: <http://www.census.gov/geo/www/tiger/ctychng.html>

Indian River's population jumps to 138,028 in 2010 Census count » TCPalm Mobile

<http://m.tcpalm.com/news/2011/mar/17/indian-rivers-population-jumps-to-138028-in-2010/>

March 21, 2011

INDIAN RIVER COUNTY — Sebastian is officially the most populous city in Indian River County, with 21,929 residents in 2010, about 35 percent more people than 10 years ago, according to the U.S. Census, which released its official population numbers for Florida on Thursday.

Meanwhile, Vero Beach saw its population decrease to 15,220 residents from 17,705 a decade ago.

Overall, the number of people living in the county jumped 22 percent from 2000 to 2010, increasing from 112,947 residents to 138,028. During that time, the state's population grew 17.5 percent from about 16 million residents to now more than 18.8 million.

Sebastian City Manager Al Minner said he is not surprised by his city's growth as city officials work to provide a "great" quality of life for residents.

"Who wouldn't want to live in Sebastian?" Minner said. "We have great parks, good roads, extremely affordable housing, a great police force."

Vero Beach Councilman Brian Heady said he can't explain how the city could have lost population unless residents didn't return their census forms. Heady said he is concerned how having 2,485 fewer residents will affect city spending.

"It certainly does demonstrate that there are fewer people to spread the expense of running a city," he said.

While Vero Beach lost population, several areas picked up residents.

The unincorporated area of Winter Beach saw its population jump from 965 in the 2000 Census to 2,067 in 2010. The city of Fellsmere added 1,384 residents, making its population 5,197 compared with 3,813 in 2000.

With that growth, the county is becoming more ethnically diverse than it was in 2000, with Hispanic and Asian groups showing the most increase.

Hispanics account for 11.2 percent of the county population compared to 6.5 percent in the 2000 Census, records show. Meanwhile, the Asian population has almost doubled from 838 in the 2000 Census to more than 1,666, records show.

Blacks now account for 8.9 percent of the county's population compared to 8.2 percent a decade ago. While still the majority racial group, whites account for about 84 percent of the population compared to 87 percent in 2000.

The official tally for the county, along with the municipalities, is used in the annual distribution of billions of federal and state dollars to local governments, in the planning of roads, schools, elderly services and job training centers and for redistricting state legislative and Congressional seats.

Gregory Vaday, economic development coordinator for the Treasure Coast Regional Planning Council, said the more important numbers for the future of the Treasure Coast, primarily those regarding income levels and median house prices, will come out later this year.

"This early-level information is not going to give us the whole snapshot," Vaday said. "What are the large trends in terms of the large population, economy? Will we see a more robust picture emerging or the same? All that matters, because we need to understand what those trends look like so we

can inform our leadership if we need to make a course correction and the only way to do that is to know where you are coming from."

The additional totals will help drive future service plans, from road construction and transit connections to schools and medical facilities, Vaday said.

But, he added, the numbers just released give a good glimpse of what the region can expect.

The latest numbers give a finer count, officially putting the Treasure Coast's population atop the half-million mark. Led by the population explosion in Port St. Lucie during the first half of the decade, the Treasure Coast expanded by 30 percent, going from 432,373 in 2000 to 562,135 in the 2010 count.

Martin County's population rose 14.5 percent, from 126,731 to 146,318. St. Lucie's tally jumped by 44 percent from 192,695 in 2000 to 277,789 on the 2010 Census.

The U.S. Census numbers show Florida gained 2.8 million people over the decade indicates the state will pick up two additional seats in Congress in 2012, giving it more say in the presidential election. Changing congressional districts Without a line being drawn, more than 100,000 voters in the each of the congressional districts now represented by Reps. Bill Posey, R-Rockledge, and Tom Rooney, R-Tequesta, will be under new representation in 2012.

Population growth within the two Treasure Coast districts has surpassed what is expected to be the ideal district population when the district lines are redrawn before the 2012 election.

In 2000, each congressional district in Florida had 639,295 residents. The ideal per district population number for Florida in 2012, even with two additional districts being added, is 696,354.

According to U.S. Census numbers released Thursday, Posey's district, which includes Indian River County, has grown 16.8 percent, to 813,570 residents.

Rooney's district, which crosses the state and includes large parts of Martin and St. Lucie counties, experienced 14.6 percent growth in the past 10 years, putting its population at 797,711.

Meanwhile, the district held by Rep. Alcee Hastings, D-Miramar, lost 12,238 residents, a 1.8 percent drop. As of 2010, the district had 684,107 residents. Hastings' district, includes western areas of Martin and St. Lucie counties, along with part of Fort Pierce.

The U.S. Census numbers released Thursday will be used — under guidelines voters approved through two state constitutional amendments in November — to redraw state legislative and U.S. Congressional lines in Florida.

State legislators will also have to include two new congressional districts into the redrawn lines, upping Florida's delegation from 25 representatives to 27 starting with the 2012 general election.

Just how the lines are redrawn for the congressional and state legislative seats will require months of state House and Senate committee hearings, months of public meetings across the state, further legislative review in 2012, and finally a state Supreme Court review sometime around July 2012, in time for candidates to qualify for state legislative and congressional seats.

FLORIDA REAPPORTIONMENT TIME LINE

Summer 2011: Public hearings, at least 20, throughout Florida on congressional and state legislative reapportionment.

January 2012: Legislative session opened, start moved up from March, to give state lawmakers time to finalize reapportionment plan. Congressional redistricting plans must be approved by governor. Legislative reapportionment does not require governor's approval.

July 2012: State Supreme Court reviews reapportionment plan.

South Florida leading national census trend - South Florida

<http://www.miamiherald.com/2011/03/18/v-fullstory/2122620/south-florida-leading-national.html>

March 21, 2011

As the country's fourth largest state inches towards a racial tipping point where minorities will soon outnumber whites, South Florida is at the forefront of a culture-defining shift towards hyper-diversity, new 2010 U.S. Census figures show.

The out-migration of some 263,000 non-Hispanic whites from South Florida, and the surge in the Hispanic, black and Asian populations contributed to a statewide racial reshuffling that is expected to have implications for the future of the Sunshine State for years to come.

Miami-Dade and Broward counties, responsible for 4.2 million out of 18.8 million state residents played a major role in pushing Florida's proportion of minorities to a historic high of 42 percent, up from 34.6 percent 10 years ago. Those two counties welcomed nearly 700,000 additional minority residents between 2000 and 2010, even as a quarter million whites left for other parts of the state and country.

We've seen in big global cities whether it's New York or Miami an outmigration of whites for a while, said Dr. William Frey, a demographer at the Brookings Institute. But we've also seen that in an economically difficult decade, Florida continued to attract people, especially minorities.

Demographers expect the state's population shift to impact almost every sector of society, from education to politics to the economy. The once-a-decade political redistricting process is already under way, and Florida will soon have two additional representatives in Congress due to its 17.6 percent growth. Half of that growth came from Hispanics, and that community is expected to exert even more political influence across the state in the years ahead.

As the Hispanic population in Florida continues to grow, we must work to ensure that the community is fairly and fully represented in the American political process, said state Rep. Juan Zapata, R-Miami, in a statement released by the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials.

Florida's largest metropolitan area, which includes Miami-Dade and Broward counties, are both firmly now majority-minority status, meaning non-Hispanic whites make up less than half the populations there. Broward county reached that status during the last decade, as blacks, Hispanics and Asians moved there in droves, replacing 180,000 whites who left.

"African-American, Hispanic, white, you name it, we got it," said Miramar resident Phil Patton, 64. "It's a great mix."

As Florida's other major cities flip from white majority status Tampa and Orlando both did last decade some experts say the entire state could become majority-minority within a few years, likely before the next census. That could make Florida the nation's fifth state to see minorities outnumber non-Hispanic whites. Along with states like California and Texas, Florida is part of a national trend in which the United States is becoming more multihued, and minorities are expected to account for more than half of the nation's residents in the next 30 years.

Just 10 years ago, two out of every three Floridians identified themselves as white non-Hispanic. That proportion has fallen to 57.9 percent, and is forecast to shrink further. Looking at the state's under-18 population a good indication of where the trend is headed.

The number of white non-Hispanic children has declined statewide over the past 10 years, the result of an aging and more mobile population of white adults, said Frey. Among young children, whites became a minority during the last decade, analysis of Census data shows.

Florida's growth in minorities is being led by Hispanics, who are beginning to duplicate the majority

status they have in South Florida in places like Orlando and Tampa. Other minority groups grew as well between 2000 and 2010. Heres a breakdown of some of that growth:

Floridas Hispanic population grew 57.4 percent, or by 1.5 million, to reach 4.2 million. As a portion of the total, Hispanics grew from 16.8 percent to 22.5 percent. Some of the largest gains were in Central Florida the number of Hispanic residents in Orange County surged 84 percent to 308,244.

The states black population increased 26 percent during the 2000s, adding nearly 587,000 residents statewide more than any other state in the nation, said Frey. The state received its fair share blacks migrating from major Northern cities towards the lower-cost of living in the South. In South Florida, migration from the South mainly the Caribbean also helped boost the black population.

The population of Asians grew faster than any other group, surging 70 percent across the state to reach a total of 445,216. Asians now make up 2.4 percent of all Floridians, up from 1.6 percent in 2000. In South Florida, the Asian community is concentrated in Broward, where its 56,000 members are concentrated in cities like Pembroke Pines and Miramar. In Weston, the Asian population doubled to about 3,000.

The number of people identifying themselves as some other race jumped from about 29,000 to nearly 50,000, perhaps reflecting an increase in the number of residents originating from outside the United States.

In Florida, the chance that two randomly selected residents would be racially or ethnically different from each other continued to grow from 66.3 percent in 2000 to 74.1 percent in 2010.

The full impact of the states changing racial landscape on cultural relations, education, politics and commerce remain to be seen, but will likely be significant, demographers say.

The diversity is what helps Floridas growth, said Frey. Its certainly going to be its future.

Floridas population growth could spur electoral free-for-all - Florida

<http://www.miamiherald.com/2011/03/17/2120527/floridas-population-growth-could.html>

March 21, 2011

Congressman Jeff Kottkamp? How about Congresswoman Paula Dockery?

It looks like the two Republicans live in the perfect spots to take advantage of two new Congressional seats Florida could gain because of population growth, according to consultants and political maps based on new estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau.

The maps, released Thursday by the Legislature, don't spell out the location of the new districts. But the Legislature will decide that next January when it meets to redraw congressional and legislative districts to ensure that politicians represent equal populations.

The redistricting process is the ultimate political game, with lawmakers slicing and dicing portions of the electorate to gain an edge at the ballot box. Complicating the already complicated process: two new voter-approved constitutional amendments aimed at limiting legislators from favoring incumbents or political parties when they redistrict.

The amendments, in conjunction with a new court ruling over minority voting rights, are sure to make for a tough court fight after the Legislature finishes its redistricting work. Regardless of what the courts decide, the entire 160-member Legislature will be up for re-election in 2012, as will each member of Congress.

All of it adds up to a political free-for-all.

Until you can figure out what that all means, trying to figure out what the districts will look like is like playing fantasy baseball, said Rich Heffley, a Republican political consultant.

In 2012, Florida should have 27 congressional seats two more than the current number with populations of about 696,000. Right now, Republicans hold 19 seats; Democrats 6.

A quick gander of the political maps suggests that Miami-Dade and Pinellas counties are good bets to lose state House seats. Palm Beach County could lose a resident state senator. And the Miami-based congressional district held by Republican Rep. David Rivera could get cut at the Collier County line, making the seat a little less Republican, said Steve Schale, a Democratic consultant.

Rivera's district, which is over-populated by nearly 111,000, borders the Fort Myers-based seat held by Rep. Connie Mack, who's mulling a run for U.S. Senate. His seat is overpopulated by about 162,000.

So it's likely, though not guaranteed, that many of those excess Collier and Lee County residents will form the backbone of a new Southwest Florida-based congressional seat, according to Schale.

The two people who are in the strongest position are Jeff Kottkamp and Paula Dockery, Schale said.

Kottkamp, a former lieutenant governor from Cape Coral, is strongly considering a run. He heavily carried Southwest Florida in his unsuccessful bid for attorney general in 2010.

"This is my home base and I would expect to be very competitive if we decide to do it," Kottkamp said in a January interview. "There are a lot of things that go into these decisions. First of all, we have to wait and see if there's a vacant seat."

Neither he nor Dockery, of Lakeland, could be reached Thursday.

Dockerys state Senate seat is swelling as is the congressional seat, CD-5, that runs through much of her district. That seat, held by U.S. Rep. Richard Nugent, is the most imbalanced in Florida, overpopulated by 233,000 people.

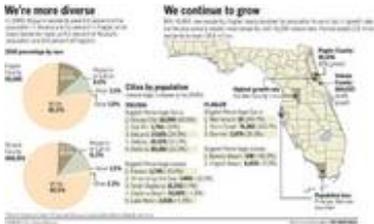
Sen. Mike Fasano, R-New Port Richey, might run for a congressional seat. He stepped down from the Senates redistricting committee because he might run for higher office. He said he'll soon make a decision.

To say yes or no right now would be premature, Fasano said.

Census data shows growth, diversity in Volusia, Flagler counties

<http://www.newsjournalonline.com/news/local/east-volusia/2011/03/18/census-data-shows-growth-diversity-in-volusia-flagler-counties.html>

March 21, 2011



Shoppers crowd the Volusia Mall. After two years of population losses, the latest census figures show gains in Volusia and Flagler counties. (N-J | David Tucker)

If you didn't live here, you'd think these are boom times in Florida and Volusia and Flagler counties.

The U.S. Census Bureau released its official counts for the state Thursday, showing Florida's population at a robust 18.8 million, nearly 3 million more than the 2000 count. Flagler was Florida's fastest-growing county, nearly doubling in population to almost 96,000, and Volusia was up 11.6 percent to more than 494,000.

But, of course, that's only part of the story. Thursday's numbers -- which will be used for redrawing congressional and legislative districts -- are part of the every-10-year-count and don't reflect the slower growth rates or outright population losses that have taken place during the recession.

Still, the last year's numbers showed reason for hope: Flagler's official count of 95,696 was up more than 4,000 from the Census Bureau's 2009 estimates; and after two years of population losses, Volusia also was back in the black at 494,593 -- 151 more people than were counted in the 2009 estimate.

"It's a good sign that we are increasing," Volusia County Chair Frank Bruno said Thursday night. "We've lost, probably, some younger families over the last few years. But I think we've gained back some retirees and others. This shows that we need to plan for growth in the future."

Flagler County Commissioner Milissa Holland was also optimistic after the county's roller-coaster decade.

"I think we've positioned ourselves in a way that we can sustain the growth that we're now seeing," Holland said. "I'm excited about the next decade in Flagler County."

The growth wasn't evenly spread through the area, though. While cities like Palm Coast (population 75,180, up 130 percent), Deltona (85,182, 22 percent) and Port Orange (56,048, 22 percent) were big gainers, there were also population losers.

Daytona Beach (61,005) was down 5 percent. South Daytona (12,252, down 7 percent), Holly Hill (11,659, 4 percent), Daytona Beach Shores (4,247, 1 percent), Lake Helen (2,624, 4 percent) and Pierson (1,736, 33 percent) also experienced population declines.

"Deltona has been very proactive with smart growth and getting things moving in the right direction," said Jennifer Clark of Total Realty in DeLand, vice president of the West Volusia Association of Realtors. "We're starting to see lots of bids when things are priced realistically."

Another trend to emerge from the data: The area is becoming more diverse, with population increases for all non-white demographic groups. In Volusia, the number of Hispanic and Latinos grew to more than 55,000, more than any other minority group, a trend that also held statewide.

The percentage of Hispanic and Latino residents increased in Flagler to 8.6 percent of the population, but Carlos Pinto, a board member of the Hispanic American Club of Palm Coast, said Flagler's high unemployment rate was holding down its Hispanic population.

"A very small number of Hispanics in Flagler are retirees. Most are younger, with families," said Pinto, a real estate broker. "If there are no jobs here, they migrate to Jacksonville, Orlando or someplace else."

Thursday's numbers are part of the state-by-state release of redistricting data required by law to be completed for all states by April 1. Additional population and housing characteristics gleaned from the census surveys conducted last year will be released through the summer.

The numbers mean Florida will be gaining two congressional seats when redistricting is completed by 2012. Boundaries will be changing, too, a process sure to be both political and complicated, despite the passage in November of a pair of constitutional amendments intended to make things fairer.

Stetson University political science professor Wayne Bailey predicted Central Florida would pick up one of the new congressional seats based on population gains, though he didn't think it would be a smooth process.

"The judges are probably cringing, but it does beg for judicial scrutiny," Bailey said.

More information: [2010 Census](#)

Redistricting: Population shifts mean political gains for Central Florida

<http://www.orlandosentinel.com/news/local/os-redistricting-battle-begins-20110318-12,0,7774662.story>

March 21, 2011

TALLAHASSEE — Florida's population gains over the last decade raise the already heightened stakes for re-drawing state political maps later this year.

Central Florida's congressional, House and Senate districts have largely grown too big, while the Panhandle and rural areas are due to lose representatives when lawmakers start re-drawing the maps. In South Florida, the political lines could be shifted toward the peninsula's western — and more politically conservative — coast.

"Orlando will change significantly," said Democratic strategist Steve Schale, who ran President Obama's Florida campaign in 2008.

Census data released Thursday shows the five-county Central Florida region gained 541,000 residents in the past decade, led by nearly 250,000 new residents in Orange. Orange and Lake counties could pick up a state House seat each, as well as a new state Senate district, according to Schale.

Similarly, major growth in the Ft. Myers area could place another congressional seat there, as well as more legislative districts. That in turn could cause losses in Broward and Palm Beach counties.

When lawmakers charged with overseeing the once-a-decade redistricting process get to work, they'll start their geography homework under the new framework of the two "Fair Districts" constitutional amendments passed by 63 percent of voters last fall.

Those amendments, pushed largely by Democrats, lawyers and other left-leaning groups, spell out that the Legislature must draw its congressional and legislative maps more compactly within existing city and county lines, and without the intent of helping to keep one party or politician in power.

The ruling [GOP](#) has railed against the amendments and helped finance attempts to keep them from passing -- and once they did, fighting them in court. House Speaker Dean Cannon, R-[Winter Park](#), and two congressional members continue the fight today.

Sen. [Don Gaetz](#), R-Niceville, and Rep. Will Weatherford, R-Wesley Chapel, are the legislators tasked with overseeing redistricting, and are planning to have dozens of hearings around the state this summer.

But those legislators are also next in line to be Senate president and House speaker, and have an obvious self-interest in preserving the GOP super-majorities in both chambers. Democrats, conversely, have described the Fair Districts amendments as their best shot at chipping away at those GOP majorities in both chambers.

Redistricting-reform groups such as the League of Women Voters and [NAACP](#) have argued that by creating U.S. [Rep. Corrine Brown's](#) district -- one long tendril from downtown [Jacksonville](#) to the edge of Orlando -- as well as two South Florida seats held by African-Americans, GOP lawmakers were able to create surrounding, predominantly white or Hispanic districts dominated by Republicans.

But Brown's district, drawn in the 1990s, lost 5.4 percent of its population over the last decade and may be impossible to re-draw.

She and U.S. Rep. [Mario Diaz-Balart](#), R-Miami, have sued in federal court arguing the new rules will

make it harder to draw congressional seats that elect minorities.

Florida is required under the Voting Rights Act to draw some districts that can elect minorities, but the amendments aim to prevent favoring or disfavoring incumbents or political parties. Therefore, a district drawn to elect blacks will almost certainly disfavor Republicans, critics argue.

"I would argue it's designed chaos," said Rich Heffley, a Republican strategist who has worked for the state party during the last two rounds of redistricting. "There's no such thing in redistricting as a neutral line."

Then there's the simple geography. Brown's district allows the creation of others that hug the eastern coast. Getting rid of it would create "a ripple effect to the rest of the state," Heffley said.

"We've seen already that incumbents are not happy and seem to be doing everything they can to thwart the will of the people," said former state Sen. [Dan Gelber](#), a [Miami Beach](#) Democrat now serving as general counsel for Fair Districts.

"Districts are traditionally drawn by incumbents and for incumbents but that tradition is going to have to change in this cycle."

Another wild card: Gov. [Rick Scott](#).

The governor has the power to veto the new congressional lines that get drawn, although the Florida Supreme Court will have the final say over the legislative plan.

If lawmakers are unable to agree on maps in a January-through-March regular session in 2012 -- and subsequent special session -- the high court will draw maps for them. Critics of Fair Districts say the new mandates guarantee more protracted court fights will break out because there will be more causes to sue.

Scott has already been sued by Gelber for withdrawing the state's request for federal approval of the Fair Districts amendments. But the governor's lawyers filed a brief this week asking for a 16-day delay in the legal challenge, writing they "believe in good faith that this matter may be resolved" within the next two weeks.

Fair Districts backers say that likely means the governor plans to submit the amendments.

"We expect the governor will eventually relent and submit the amendments for review," Gelber said.

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Florida faces fine lines of redistricting

<http://www.palmbeachpost.com/news/state/florida-faces-fine-lines-of-redistricting-1335907.html>

March 21, 2011

By [George Bennett](#)

Palm Beach Post Staff Writer

Posted: 11:25 p.m. Sunday, March 20, 2011

Big changes are coming to Florida's political maps after a decade of population shifts.

The upcoming round of redistricting promises to be particularly tumultuous when two new anti-gerrymandering laws are factored in with the political realities of partisan rivalry, incumbent self-preservation instincts and court challenges.

The once-in-a-decade redistricting process began in earnest Thursday when the U.S. Census Bureau released detailed figures on population within the state. State legislators must use the numbers to draw new boundaries for congressional districts, and for their own seats, before the 2012 elections.

Palm Beach County grew by 16.7 percent between 2000 and 2010, roughly on par with Florida's 17.6 percent growth. Its population in both censuses was about 7 percent of the state's total. Theoretically, at least, the county should retain the same level of representation in Washington and Tallahassee.

"Certainly the position of the county is that we don't want to lose any of the representation that we now have," said Todd Bonlarron, the Palm Beach County government's lobbyist.

Four congressional districts include portions of Palm Beach County. Eleven state House seats and five state Senate seats also include at least some Palm Beach County residents.

Florida will add two congressional seats in 2012, increasing the state's U.S. House delegation to 27.

The new census figures suggest Southwest Florida and the area west of Orlando are prime candidates to get the new U.S. House seats.

Florida also added two congressional seats after the 2000 Census. The Republican-controlled legislature at the time designed districts that favored then-House Speaker Tom Feeney in the Orlando area and then-House Redistricting Chairman Mario Diaz-Balart in Miami. Both Republicans were elected to Congress in 2002.

This time around, Republicans hold an even tighter grip on the legislature, but Florida voters have prescribed different rules for the process. Two constitutional amendments approved in November bar lawmakers from drawing districts "to favor or disfavor an incumbent or political party."

The "Fair Districts" amendments — identically worded except that one deals with state legislative seats and the other with congressional redistricting — also require that districts be compact and contiguous. They cannot deny minorities "the equal opportunity to participate in the political process and elect representatives of their choice."

Those goals can come into conflict. Legislators have often disregarded compactness and drawn unusually shaped districts to favor the election of minority candidates. The U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that race can be a factor in drawing districts, but not the predominant consideration.

Two minority members of Florida's congressional delegation — U.S. Reps. Corrine Brown, D-

Jacksonville, who is black, and Diaz-Balart, who is Hispanic — filed a lawsuit to challenge the amendment that deals with congressional redistricting. They contend it will threaten federally guaranteed opportunities to elect minority candidates.

But Keesha Gaskins, general counsel for the Brennan Center for Justice at New York University, noted that the amendment says: “Unless otherwise required, districts must be compact.”

Since there are several requirements in the amendment, and since the language about minorities comes before the language about compactness, Gaskins said lawmakers can give minority access a higher priority.

“You can’t prioritize everything to the same degree. Something’s got to come first,” Gaskins said.

Passage of the amendments in November was generally cheered by Florida Democrats, who say the GOP-controlled redistricting of 2002 gave unfair advantages to many Republican candidates for Congress and the state legislature.

There are 4.6 million registered Democrats in Florida and 4 million Republicans, as well as 2.4 million registered with other parties or as independents. But the GOP holds a 19-6 advantage in congressional seats, an 81-39 edge in the state House, and a 28-12 edge in the state Senate.

“Florida has had some of the most partisan gerrymandered and malapportioned districts that don’t reflect the diversity of the state,” Florida Democratic Party spokesman Eric Jotkoff said.

Senate Reapportionment Chairman Don Gaetz, R-Niceville, said favorable boundaries aren’t the reason for his party’s success. Some Senate districts that were carried by Democrat Barack Obama in 2008 also elected Republican senators, Gaetz said.

“Apparently, the Republicans may have had better campaigns or better candidates or were able to communicate their message better,” Gaetz said.

Gaetz opposed the redistricting amendments last year, saying some of the provisions appear to be in conflict with each other. But now that voters have approved them, Gaetz said, “My obligation is to follow the law.”

Florida Growth Linked to Hispanic Population Increase -- WASHINGTON, March 18, 2011 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ -

<http://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/florida-growth-linked-to-hispanic-population-increase-118262284.html>

March 21, 2011

✖ This news release has wide tables
🖨 Click to view full screen

NALEO Educational Fund Analysis of 2010 Census Data Shows Hispanics as Second-Largest Florida Population

WASHINGTON, March 18, 2011 /PRNewswire-USNewswire/ --

Hispanics were pivotal to the population growth in **Florida** in the last decade, comprising more than half (55%) of the overall increase in residents since 2000, according to a National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO) Educational Fund [analysis](#) of newly released Census 2010 data.

Between 2000 and 2010, while the state's overall population grew 18% from 16 million to 18.8 million, the Hispanic population grew from 2.7 million to 4.2 million, an increase of 57%.

"The fact that Hispanics account for more than half of the state's growth over the last decade is very telling and it shows that we took very seriously being counted in the 2010 Census," said NALEO Educational Fund Board Member State Senator Anitere Flores. "We are and will continue to be full participants in the American political process."

Florida gained two additional congressional seats as a result of its population growth. Latinos now represent 22% of the state's residents and are the second-largest population group.

"As the Hispanic population in Florida continues to grow, we must work to ensure that the community is fairly and fully represented in the American political process," said NALEO Educational Fund Chairman and former State Representative Juan Zapata. "With this year's redistricting process, it is an opportunity for our community to elect the leaders of their choice."

The Census 2010 data also reveal that 26% of all Floridians under 18 are Latino, and that the Latino population in the state is younger than the non-Latino population.

"Young Hispanics are part of our future economic well-being," said NALEO Board Member State Representative Ana Rivas Logan. "We must make sure our state's policies advance the economic and civic progress of Hispanics so that we can help to ensure the future prosperity and well-being of everyone in our state."

Figures show significant Hispanic populations in many of Florida's largest cities, including Miami (70%), Orlando (25%) and Tampa (23%). Additionally, almost 80% of Florida Hispanics live in the state's ten largest counties, with 38% residing in Miami-Dade and 10% living in neighboring Broward.

"The growth in the Latino population in Florida shows that we are an integral part of everyday life in Florida – in business, employment and education," said NALEO Board Member and Aventura (FL) City Commissioner Luz Urbabaz Weinberg. "Hispanics are Florida's future."

(Click [here](#) to view the NALEO Educational Fund 2010 Florida Census Profile)

About NALEO Educational Fund

The NALEO Educational Fund is the nation's leading non-partisan, non-profit organization that facilitates the full participation of Latinos in the American political process, from citizenship to public service.

SOURCE NALEO Educational Fund

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<http://www.naleo.org>

Census Data Blur Political Lines in Florida

<http://www.sunshinestatenews.com/story/census-data-blur-political-lines-florida>

March 21, 2011

Redistricting fights more likely along geographical, not party lines

Florida's population statistics from the 2010 U.S. Census were released late in the week, providing a clear picture of how complicated the redistricting process will be, and inserting greater intrigue into the 2012 campaign season.

There were 18.8 million residents in Florida as of April 2010, 2.8 million more than in 2000, the date of the last census.

Much of the population growth occurred in Central Florida, along the "I-4 corridor" which stretches from Tampa through Orlando and over to Daytona Beach and the Space Coast, and in Southwest Florida.

Florida's population growth means it will add two congressional districts, adding to its already considerable political clout. Republican leaders in the Legislature are hoping to flaunt this by holding Florida's presidential primary in late January 2012, against national Republican Party rules.

"Florida doesn't grow neatly, it never has," said veteran Florida political observer Ed Moore, Ph.D., CEO of the Independent Colleges and Universities of Florida.

The Legislature, which is tasked with redrawing the congressional and legislative districts, won't be adding any seats but will be affected nonetheless, as several districts have grown considerably while others experienced weak growth. The state's haphazard growth means district boundaries must change significantly to accommodate an even distribution of constituents in each district.

For the Florida Senate, that means each of its 40 members should have 470,033 citizens in their districts. Senate District 20, which encompasses most of Lake County and parts of Sumter, Marion, Volusia and Seminole counties, and is currently represented by Sen. Alan Hays, R-Umatilla, is the most out of sync with the ideal number, with 576,207 people in the district.

Senate District 13, which covers half of Pinellas County and is represented by Sen. Dennis Jones, R-Seminole, will need to be enlarged after experiencing a population decrease. It holds 394,766 people, 4,797 less than in 2000.

Sen. Don Gaetz, R-Niceville, who chairs the Senate Reapportionment Committee, has promised a fair and open process, with several public hearings throughout the state this summer, ahead of the 2012 legislative session, which begins early in January to incorporate the redistricting process.

"My instruction from (Senate) President Mike Haridopolos is to engage in the most transparent, open, and interactive redistricting process in America," Gaetz said.

While the Senate Reapportionment Committee has already held meetings in preparation of the 2010 Census data being released, the House Reapportionment Committee has yet to announce its members.

The committee's chairman, Rep. Will Weatherford, R-Wesley Chapel, said early Thursday that committee members will be announced soon, but did not specify when, saying only that the committee will hold meetings before the end of the 2011 legislative session.

"The plan is to have a committee formed very shortly," Weatherford said.

Weatherford's House District 61 also happens to be an area that will be greatly affected by the redistricting process. The Western Central Florida district has 242,396 people in its boundaries,

nearly 55 percent more than the target for even distribution. Only Rep. Stephen Precourt, R-Orlando, in House District 41 has more people in his district.

Despite the weakened position of Democrats in the Legislature with a superminority in both chambers, party leaders say they expect to have a large influence on the redistricting process.

Rep. Perry Thurston, D-Plantation, who was recently elected as the next Democratic Party leader in the House after the 2012 elections, is leading his party's negotiations over membership on the House Reapportionment Committee. He wants an even number of Democrats to Republicans on the committee, even though the GOP outnumbers the Democrats 81 to 39 in the House.

"I think for something as important as redistricting, we should keep the numbers as close to even as we can. I feel if they have eight, we should have eight," Thurston said.

Thurston's district is also likely to be altered in the redistricting process. His House District 93 is 23,491 residents short of the ideal number of 156,678 citizens per house district.

The political fights over redistricting, however, aren't likely to fall along traditional party lines. Republicans already have supermajorities in both houses, and will be hard-pressed to find a set of boundaries that will enable them to increase their lead.

Instead, the bickering will be conducted along geographical lines, as politicians in Southwest and Central Florida with newfound clout in the form of a surplus of citizens will squabble over lines with their counterparts in South Florida, where growth rates over the last decade were more stagnant.

Florida's awkward geographic boundaries combine with its uneven growth to frustrate lawmakers looking to abide by Amendments 5 and 6, voted into the state Constitution in 2010, which stipulate that districts must be contiguous, compact, and not be drawn to "favor or disfavor" incumbents or racial or language minorities.

"Florida is not a compact and neatly designed state geographically. We're not designed that way. It exacerbates the current situation," Moore said of the amendments.

Still, legislators are confident they can match the ideal of the amendments in the law with the demographic realities of the state.

"Whether it makes it more complicated or not, it's the law and we're going to follow it," Weatherford said.

Reach Gray Rohrer at groher@sunshinestatenews.com or at (850) 727-0859.

U.S. Census Bureau Delivers Florida's 2010 Census Population Totals, Including First Look at Race and Hispanic Origin Data for Legislative Redistricting

http://www.census.gov/newroom/releases/archives/2010_census/cb11-cn95.html

March 25, 2011

The U.S. Census Bureau today released more detailed 2010 Census population totals and demographic characteristics to the governor and leadership of the state legislature in Florida. These data provide the first look at population counts for small areas and race, Hispanic origin, voting age and housing unit data released from the 2010 Census.

The official 2010 Census Redistricting Data Summary File can be used to redraw federal, state and local legislative districts under Public Law 94-171. The census data are used by state officials to realign congressional and state legislative districts in their states, taking into account population shifts since the 2000 Census.

Data for Florida show that the five most populous incorporated places and their 2010 Census counts are Jacksonville, 821,784; Miami, 399,457; Tampa, 335,709; St. Petersburg, 244,769; and Orlando, 238,300. Jacksonville grew by 11.7 percent since the 2000 Census. Miami grew by 10.2 percent, Tampa grew by 10.6 percent, St. Petersburg decreased by 1.4 percent, and Orlando grew by 28.2 percent.

The largest county is Miami-Dade, with a population of 2,496,435. Its population grew by 10.8 percent since 2000. The other counties in the top five include Broward, with a population of 1,748,066 (increase of 7.7 percent); Palm Beach, 1,320,134 (increase of 16.7 percent); Hillsborough, 1,229,226 (increase of 23.1 percent); and Orange, 1,145,956 (increase of 27.8 percent).

The redistricting file consists of five detailed tables: the first shows the population by race, including six single race groups and 57 multiple race groups (63 total race categories); the second shows the Hispanic or Latino population as well as the non-Hispanic or Latino population cross-tabulated by the 63 race categories. These tabulations are repeated in the third and fourth tables for the population 18 years and over and are for the resident population of the United States. The fifth table provides counts of housing units and their occupancy status.

These five detailed tables are available to the public online via FTP download at http://www2.census.gov/census_2010/01-Redistricting_File--PL_94-171/ and will be available within 24 hours at <http://factfinder2.census.gov>. (Access 2003 or Access 2007 shells or SAS scripts are provided to assist with importing and accessing the summary file data from the FTP site. These shells and scripts can be found at http://www.census.gov/rdo/tech_tips. This Web page also contains special instructions for linking data downloaded from FactFinder and/or the FTP site with the Census Bureau's geographic products.)

By April 1, all 50 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico will receive these data for the following areas: state, congressional districts (for 111th Congress), counties, minor civil divisions, state legislative districts, places, school districts, census tracts, block groups and blocks, and if applicable, American Indian and Alaska Native areas and Hawaiian home lands. In addition, data are available for the 46 states that voluntarily provided voting districts to the Census Bureau's Redistricting Data Program. Unique geographies for the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico are also available.

Race and Hispanic Origin Data

The Census Bureau collects race and Hispanic origin information following the U.S. Office of Management and Budget's (OMB) standards for collecting and tabulating data on race and

ethnicity. In October 1997, the OMB issued the current standards, which identify five race groups: white, black or African-American, American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander. The Census Bureau also utilized a sixth category -- "some other race." Respondents who reported only one race are shown in these six groups.

Individuals were first presented with the option to self-identify with more than one race in the 2000 Census, and this continued in the 2010 Census. People who identify with more than one race may choose to provide multiple races in response to the race question. The 2010 Census results provide new data on the size and makeup of the nation's multiracial population.

Respondents who reported more than one of the six race groups are included in the "two or more races" population. There are 57 possible combinations of the six race groups.

The Census Bureau included the "some other race" category for responses that could not be classified in any of the other race categories on the questionnaire. In the 2000 Census, the vast majority of people who reported only as "some other race" were of Hispanic or Latino origin. Data on Hispanics or Latinos, who may be of any race, were obtained from a separate question on ethnicity.

How to Find Assistance

Additional information about the redistricting data program, including news releases for other states, can be found online at <http://2010.census.gov/news/press-kits/redistricting.html>. More information on the redistricting data program is also available at <http://www.census.gov/rdo/data>.

For further information about Florida's 2010 Census redistricting data, contact:

Description of Five Custom Tables

In addition to the full set of detailed tables to be available on FactFinder within 24 hours, five custom tables are also attached to this news release. The first (Table 1) shows the most populous counties and incorporated places in 2010, their change since the 2000 Census and their population rank for both decades.

Table 2 shows data for all ages and for those 18 and older for the Hispanic or Latino population, as well as for people who reported one race and those who reported two or more races. This table also shows the numeric and percent change in the population by race and Hispanic origin between 2000 and 2010.

Table 3 is similar to Table 2. However, it shows data for the six "race alone or in combination" categories. The concept "race alone or in combination" includes people who reported only a single race (e.g., Asian) and people who reported that race in combination with one or more of the other major race groups (i.e., white, black or African-American, American Indian and Alaska Native, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander, and some other race).

The concept "race alone or in combination," represents the maximum number of people who reported as that major race group, either alone or in combination with another race(s). The sum of the six individual "race alone or in combination" categories may add to more than the total population because people who reported more than one race were tallied in each race category.

For people who reported two or more races, Table 4 shows the population in each of the 15 combinations of two races (for example, the number of people who reported being both white *and* black or African-American).

Table 5 shows the population in the major race categories and of Hispanic or Latino origin for Florida's most populous counties and incorporated places.

Description of Two Custom Maps

The attached custom maps show the total population by county for Florida and the percent change in the population by county.

-X-

State Sen. Lizbeth Benacquisto now lists Fort Myers as her residence | The News-Press | news-press.com

<http://www.news-press.com/article/20110325/NEWS01/110325037/State-Sen-Lizbeth-Benacquisto-now-lists-Fort-Myers-her-residence?odyssey=tab%7Ctopnews%7Ctext%7CHome>

March 26, 2011

Southwest Floridas newest state senator, Republican Lizbeth Benacquisto, elected last November as a resident of Wellington on Floridas east coast, now lists her residency as Fort Myers.

Like all other senators, Benacquisto will be up for re-election next year after redistricting, and already faces opposition for the District 27 seat from state Rep. Trudi Williams, R-south Lee County, who cant run again for her House seat after next year because of term limits.

The residency issue could be a key factor in the contest---as will potential boundary changes for the sprawling district that now stretches east-west from Lee County into Palm Beach County.

Lee County voters have long complained about its current division that carves the county into three Senate districts, none a majority portion of any district. The end result has been that senators representing Lee County dont live in Lee, and wouldnt look to Lee for a majority of their votes.

Several political leaders vowed to change that in redistricting, and get at least one Senate district---27 most often cited as an example---with a Lee County majority, or at least keeps Lee more intact.

In District 27, most voters live in the eastern part of the district, where Benacquisto served as a Wellington city council member from 20002-2010.

But that could change after redistricting, and Benacquisto could then campaign as a Lee Countys senator. Recent press releases from her office use R-Ft. Myers as her designation, and shes also changed her voter registration to a south Lee County address.

Benacquistos staff confirmed that Lee County is now her residence, but no one responded to questions about where her children attend school.

Williams, whos hoping for a Senate seat thats predominantly Lee County, said while Benacquisto may be able to run as a Lee County senator, Williams has 43 years of business and political involvement in the area, and she believes voters will recognize that. Who knows how the lines will turn out? Williams said. I live in District 27, and Ill run for the district I live in.

But some Senate leaders are already supporting Benacquisto, and the state Republican party spent thousands of dollars on her election in November.

Its unlikely they would leave her, or any incumbent GOP senator, without a solid Republican majority.

Although some suggest drawing an east coast district for Benacquisto and having a west coast district for a west coast candidate, its doubtful there are enough Republican voters in that east coast area to build a new safe GOP district.

Read all of Betty Parker's column in Saturday's The News-Press.

Roles reversed in 2011 redistricting

By Charles S. Bullock III and Ronald Keith Gaddie

January 30, 2011 —

The partisan composition of legislative districts served as one of the forces that enabled Democrats to extend their dominance of the South. Until 2000, Democratic legislatures carried out the decennial redistricting across the region with only occasional interference from Republican governors. As majority parties have done for generations, Democrats designed districts to their advantage. Republicans often had to compete in districts stacked against them which added to the usual challenge of dislodging an incumbent.

For the first time, following the 2000 census Republicans had majorities in both legislative chambers and a Republican governor in a Southern state. The elections gave the GOP control over the redistricting process in Florida and Virginia. Especially in the Sunshine State, Republicans enhanced their congressional holdings, winning the two new seats accorded the state and displacing a five-term Democratic congresswoman.

Democrats who had the upper hand in most of the rest of the region took care of themselves with extraordinary shapes in Georgia and Tennessee. In Texas where the parties shared control, judges drew the congressional map while a GOP-dominated commission designed the state legislative districts after the divided legislature deadlocked.

In 2011, the relative dominance of the parties has reversed from a decade earlier. Republicans will draw the maps for the upcoming decade in Alabama, Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Texas. Democrats have complete control over the process in Arkansas. Each party can check the other in Louisiana, Mississippi and Virginia.

The opportunity to draw new maps may prove most helpful to Republicans in some state legislatures. Republicans gained majorities in the Alabama, North Carolina, and Tennessee legislatures with maps drawn by Democrats. The new districts designed by Republicans may position the GOP to dominate these legislatures for the next decade.

While Republicans have unprecedented opportunities, they face limits on what more they can achieve in some states, especially in terms of congressional delegations. For example, after turning out four Democratic incumbents in 2010, Republicans hold 19 of Florida's 25 House seats. Winning 76% of the congressional seats in a state that has been up for grabs in presidential contests for almost a generation is a remarkable feat. In Texas, where three Democratic incumbents lost in 2010, Republicans now hold 23 of 32 seats. The Lone Star State is the big winner of the latest reapportionment as it gains four seats. Since Latino growth largely accounts for the state's dramatic population increase, some of the new districts will likely be heavily Hispanic and tilt toward the Democrats.

Rather than trying to expand the number of congressional Republicans from the South, GOP mapmakers may focus on making recent gains more secure. The temptation to pad the number of Republican seats is there – the GOP has complete control of the process in every Southern state gaining US House seats. But the GOP gains in 2010 will likely encourage securing gains, rather than seeking to add to them. The 2010 elections saw Republicans replace Democrats in 22 districts while losing only the heavily African-American New Orleans district. Some of these recent gains came in transformed districts where the bulk of the electorate had become Republican but

continued to vote for the conservative Democratic incumbent. But other gains came in districts that remain competitive. In early handicapping of the 2012 elections, Larry Sabato identifies five of the GOP gains as marginal. Republicans in Georgia, Florida, Texas and Virginia will likely give top priority to adding GOP voters to make some of the seats gained in 2010.

In shifting Democratic and Republican voters across district lines, Republican lawmakers may find they have allies in the US Department of Justice. Every state from the old Confederacy except for Arkansas and Tennessee must secure approval from federal authorities before implementing new statewide districting plans. When reviewing maps, DOJ attorneys have consistently sought to increase the numbers of minority legislators. Minority legislators usually come from districts that are heavily minority in racial makeup. Republicans fully support initiatives to increase minority concentrations in selected districts since each time the minority percentage in one district increases, a concomitant decrease in minorities occurs in one or more adjacent districts. As nearby districts become whiter, they become more likely to elect Republicans.

Georgia's Legislative Black Caucus recognized the trade-offs involved in maximizing black concentrations and supported Democratic initiatives to disperse some of the black population in the 2001 plans in an effort to bolster prospects for some white Democrats. DOJ fought those efforts. Republicans doing redistricting and DOJ will again be on the same page in 2011.

Charles S. Bullock, III is the Richard Russell Professor of Political Science and Josiah Meigs Distinguished Teaching Professor at the University of Georgia. Ronald Keith Gaddie is Professor of Political Science at the University of Oklahoma and co-editor of the Social Science Quarterly. They are co-authors of the award-winning Triumph of Voting Rights in the South. Both have extensive experience in redistricting litigation and Bullock is author of Redistricting: The Most Political Activity in America.

Fighting to preserve fair representation for minorities

<http://www.newsjournalonline.com/opinion/editorials/other-voices/2011/03/27/fighting-to-preserve-fair-representation-for-minorities.html>

March 28, 2011



Corrine Brown represents District 3, which reaches from Duval County to Orange County and covers most of west Volusia County.

The Amendments

Amendments 5 and 6, approved by voters in November, set the same requirements for drawing legislative and congressional districts, including the following:

Districts 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.

Last summer, Congressman Mario Diaz-Balart and I started a challenge to Amendment 6. The amendment, sponsored by a Miami-based group, sought to impose new standards on the Florida Legislature when it takes up congressional redistricting in 2012. (*Editor's note: Amendment 5, also approved in November, sets the same requirements for state legislative districts.*)

When the Florida Supreme Court denied our challenge in state court, we waited and filed a new lawsuit last November, just hours after the polls closed. The reason we took this step is grounded in Florida's history.

After emancipation and the Civil War, the black population of northeastern Florida moved along the St. Johns River, which extends from Jacksonville to just north of Orlando. Because the land was prone to flooding, it was only natural that the poorest Floridians, including freed slaves, would settle there. Segregated housing patterns, demanded by restrictive covenants and enforced by Florida courts, kept the African-American population together well into the mid-20th century. For most of my adult life, there were no minority members of Congress elected from Florida, and few African-Americans elected to the Florida House and Senate. That changed in 1992 when I was elected to Congress, together with Carrie Meek from Miami and Alcee Hastings from Ft. Lauderdale. Both Hastings and I were elected from districts that were plurality black. African-American voters made up the largest single bloc of voters in these districts, but not a majority.

Our ability to get elected came, in part, from the state's adherence to the Voting Rights Act, which prohibited fracturing communities of minority voters among numerous districts.

Recently, the U.S. Supreme Court, in *Bartlett v. Strickland*, ruled that minority voters who cannot show that they can comprise a majority of the voters in single member districts no longer have the right to be kept together. They now can be split apart.

Ordinarily, the Legislature would have the authority and the discretion to keep these communities together when it draws the new congressional districts in 2012. However, the language of the new amendment would appear to prohibit drawing new districts that would have a minority plurality population, rather than a majority.

The way the amendment was written will only invite a challenge to a minority plurality district. That may be the real intent of the sponsors of Amendment 6 -- to have the courts, rather than elected officials, draw the congressional districts.

Both Mario and I have taken a lot of criticism for opposing Amendment 6, but our reasons for fighting it remain unchanged. First, as explained above, Amendment 6 will silence the voice of minorities in our congressional delegation. Rather than having three African-American plurality and majority districts, there will be only one. The 2010 Census figures for Florida were just released and show that almost 1 in 6 of Florida's 19 million person population is black. That single representative will not only have to advocate for the interests of his or her own constituents, but the 3 million black residents of Florida, as well.

The second problem, and the one that is being litigated in court, is that Amendment 6 conflicts with the United States Constitution. Every 7th grade civics student is taught about the Supremacy Clause in our national charter. It provides that the Constitution of the United States is the supreme law of the land.

It is a concept that men and women have struggled to preserve since the republic was founded. It was the reason that federal troops were sent into Little Rock in the 1950s. It was the reason that a Southern governor could not stand in the doorway to progress and disobey a federal court order, and it is why this faulty amendment will ultimately fail.

The Constitution plainly delegates the power to set the "time, place, and manner" for congressional redistricting to the legislatures of the states. Its language only allows Congress, and not state law or popular referendum, to restrict that authority. The framers of the Constitution wanted to entrust the power to draw districts to elected legislators.

Just as earlier amendments which attempted to enforce term limits on members of Congress were ultimately found to be unconstitutional, so too will Amendment 6.

If Florida voters do not accept the results adopted by the state Legislature, they have the same power they have always had: to vote their representatives out of office.

Fair Districts only hope for more moderate Tallahassee -- South Florida Sun-Sentinel.com

<http://www.sun-sentinel.com/news/columnists/fl-legislature-mayocol-b032711-20110326,0,1960201,print.column>

March 28, 2011

sun-sentinel.com/news/columnists/fl-legislature-mayocol-b032711-20110326,0,7837688.column

Every time I hear the latest news from Tallahassee, I wonder if it's time to have a pro-democracy uprising in Florida.

Cairo, Tripoli and now Pompano and Pahokee?

Consider these facts: There are 600,000 more registered Democrats than Republicans in Florida (4.6 million vs. 4 million), yet Republicans control supermajorities in the state House (81-39) and Senate (28-12).

More people voted against Gov. Rick Scott than for him he won with 48.9 percent of the vote last November but so far the rookie Republican has been governing as if he romped in a landslide.

Add it all up and it seems we've got a serious disconnect between what many residents want and what Tallahassee might deliver.

Ask a typical South Floridian if he'd like higher property insurance premiums, the decimation of public schools, steep cuts in corporate taxes, worse benefits for the unemployed, deregulation of telemarketers and auto mechanics, more standardized tests for students and an assault on an independent judiciary, and I'd bet the answer is no.

This is what we could have by the time the current legislative session ends in May.

Gov. Scott has already signed a test-driven teacher merit pay bill into law, even though details on the funding and merit formulas are murky.

"The Legislature has been pretty unconstrained this year," said Dan Gelber, a former Democratic state representative and attorney general candidate. "They've acted so fast and without thoughtfulness."

Perhaps our best hope for a more rational and moderate future rests with redistricting, the political map drawing that takes place every 10 years with a new census.

The redistricting set to take place before the 2012 elections is supposed to be revolutionary.

Last year, 63 percent of Florida voters approved the so-called Fair Districts state constitutional amendments. They are meant to end crazily drawn, gerrymandered districts for state and federal legislators. Districts are supposed to be drawn as neatly and logically as possible, conforming to existing city and county boundaries.

In theory, voters would pick their legislators instead of the other way around.

An end to one-party domination in districts could mean swing voters determine results on Election Day instead of hard-line voters determining results on Primary Day.

"It would deliver a measure of moderation to government," Gelber said.

That's the hope of 63 percent of the electorate. A true voter mandate.

But so far, it looks as if Gov. 48.9 Percent and legislators might flout their wishes.

Within days of taking office in January, Scott quietly withdrew the amendments from the required federal review. (Then-Gov. Charlie Crist submitted them to the U.S. Department of Justice in December.)

And the state House has joined a lawsuit that seeks to overturn the amendments, claiming they are federally unconstitutional. The case will be heard in U.S. district court.

Gelber is now the attorney for the Fair Districts group, which placed the amendments on the ballot through a petition drive.

Gelber said he's hopeful Scott will carry out the will of Florida voters.

Even if the governor does the right thing and the amendments pass federal legal muster, it's still up to the Legislature to redraw the map.

Does anybody believe legislators will do anything to hasten their own demise?

"The Legislature will be obliged to draw seats not designed to favor incumbents or parties," Gelber said. "If they fail, then the court will say so."

The problem is that Florida's redistricting deadlines are so close to the 2012 elections that legal challenges might go beyond the filing period. That could make things easier for incumbents.

The Florida House tried to sabotage the Fair Districts amendments last year with "poison pill" amendments. But the Florida Supreme Court threw the House amendments off the ballot, saying they were vague and confusing.

House Speaker Dean Cannon is still smarting from that defeat, which explains why he's launched an assault on the Florida Supreme Court. His minions have proposed bills that would split the court into civil and criminal divisions and give the legislative and executive branches discomforting control over the judiciary.

I don't know about you, but I'm a lot more comfortable blowing up the current legislative maps than ending our state's separation of powers.

mmayo@tribune.com or 954-356-4508

Scott, lawmakers finally ask approval for Amendments 5 and 6 – Central Florida Political Pulse – Orlando Sentinel

http://blogs.orlandosentinel.com/news_politics/2011/03/scott-law-makers-finally-ask-approval-for-amendments-5-and-6.html March 29, 2011

The application for “pre-clearance” of Amendments 5 and 6 — which put new limits on how the Legislature draws congressional and legislative districts — is on its way to the Department of Justice, submitted not by Gov. **Rick Scott** but by the Legislature itself. Scott in January had withdrawn a pre-clearance request submitted last year by then-Gov. **Charlie Crist**, not long after 63 percent of the electorate approved the amendments last November.

Scott had refused to say when he’d make the submission, prompting backers of the amendments — the Florida League of Women Voters, NAACP and others — to sue him in U.S. District Court in Miami. Another lawsuit was filed by U.S. Reps. **Mario Diaz-Balart**, R-Miami, and **Corrine Brown**, D-Jacksonville — and joined by House Speaker **Dean Cannon**, R-Winter Park — protesting that the amendments would make it difficult, if not impossible, for the Legislature to maintain existing numbers of districts represented by minorities.

The Legislature said today that the governor’s analysis concluded that lawmakers — not Scott — were the appropriate group to seek Justice Department approval, which is required under the Voting Rights Act.

“It was determined that either the Attorney General, as the ‘chief legal officer’ of the State, or the Florida Legislature, as the implementing authority for redistricting, should submit the application,” he Legislature’s statement says. ” The Legislature, House and Senate, then agreed to submit the application to the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ).”

Said Scott in a statement: ““Despite pressure from special interest groups, I committed to Floridians that my review of the preclearance application for Amendments 5 and 6 would be thorough and complete. The action of legislative leaders today delivers on that promise. I commend Speaker Cannon and Senate President Haridopolos for their attention to this important issue.”

Read the request and supporting legal opinion here: [Voting Rights Act](#).

State to finally ask feds about redistricting amendments

http://jacksonville.com/opinion/blog/403455/matt-dixon/2011-03-29/state-finally-ask-feds-about-redistricting-amendments?utm_source=twitterfeed&utm_medium=twitter

March 29, 2011

State lawmakers have filed a request for "pre-clearance" of two constitutional amendments that aim to take politics out of the way Florida's political lines are drawn.

The pre-clearance application was filed by former Gov. Charlie Crist after voters passed Amendments 5 and 6 in November, but was pulled by Gov. Rick Scott, who said he wanted to review it. The application is needed because the Justice Department must sign off on the changes.

The legislature determined that it was their job - not Scott's - to submit the application.

The amendments say that lawmakers can't craft political districts that favor any one party, and must try and draw them along county or municipal lines.

The bill has been steeped in politics with big time cash spent by groups on both sides of the argument. U.S. Rep. Corrine Brown and U.S. Rep. Mario Diaz-Balart have also filed a lawsuit challenging the changes. House Speaker Dean Cannon is also a plaintiff. [More here.](#)

[Flag as offensive](#)

Florida restarts process to clear voter-approved redistricting standards - Florida

<http://www.miamiherald.com/2011/03/29/2140301/florida-restarts-process-to-clear.html>

March 29, 2011

TALLAHASSEE -- Republican leaders in the Florida Legislature on Tuesday asked the federal government to sign off on a pair of voter-approved constitutional amendments requiring lawmakers to draw nonpartisan political districts.

The move comes three months after Gov. Rick Scott drew partisan criticism and was quickly sued for quietly withdrawing the application submitted by former Gov. Charlie Crist.

But authors of Amendments 5 and 6 said the new request contains a number of statements that are clearly intended to undermine the intent of the changes. The application explains that the changes could potentially hurt minority voting strength, but would not if properly interpreted.

Former state Sen. Dan Gelber, a Miami Beach Democrat now affiliated with Fair Districts Now, the group that put the questions on the statewide ballot, said in a statement that he would likely file concerns with the U.S. Department of Justice.

The back-and-forth was just the latest twist for a pair of amendments that aim to stop lawmakers from drawing legislative or congressional districts that favor a particular political party. Lawmakers must finish drawing new Florida districts, including two new U.S. House seats, before the 2012 elections.

Scott said in January that withdrawing the application was part of his push to review all new rules and regulations.

But supporters of the amendments, crafted with the backing of liberal fundraising groups, accused Scott of obstructing the will of voters and sued him. On Friday, Scott was given an extension to respond.

Scott's staff, along with attorneys from the House, Senate and Attorney General Pam Bondi's office, determined the Legislature not the governor is the proper authority to submit the application.

Republican leaders said the initial application did not address retrogression, a legal term that refers to whether a redistricting plan reduces minority voting strength. That's an issue because the federal government must approve major elections changes in Florida after the history of racial discrimination and voter intimidation in five counties: Collier, Hardee, Hendry, Hillsborough and Monroe.

Despite pressure from special interest groups, I committed to Floridians that my review of the preclearance application for Amendments 5 and 6 would be thorough and complete, Scott said in a statement. The action of legislative leaders today delivers on that promise.

Senate Democratic Leader Nan Rich, D-Weston, said the submission was the first positive thing the Republican Legislature has done all session.

It was a mandate by the voters, Rich said. If there was anything that received a mandate in the last election, it was Amendments 5 and 6. So I would say they did the appropriate thing. I am very pleased that they would do that. In that sense, they are listening to the people.

Also at play is a lawsuit brought by U.S. Reps. Mario Diaz-Balart, R-Miami, and Corrine Brown, D-Jacksonville, alleging that Amendment 6 is unconstitutional. The Florida House has joined in the lawsuit.

Times/Herald staff writer Steve Bousquet contributed to this report. Michael C. Bender can be reached at mbender@sptimes.com. Follow him on Twitter [@MichaelCBender](https://twitter.com/MichaelCBender).

Scott relents on Florida's Fair District amendments, but reapportionment battles still loom

<http://www.flcourier.com/florida/4922-scott-relents-on-fair-district-amendments-but-reapportionment-battles-still-loom>

March 30, 2011



By BRANDON LARRABEE, THE NEWS SERVICE OF FLORIDA: A new set of standards for drawing the state's legislative and congressional lines was submitted to the U.S. Department of Justice for review Tuesday, but the battle over the "Fair Districts" amendments and how they could reshape the state's political future showed few signs of letting up.

An 11-page filing with the Justice Department -- which must approve changes to Florida voting and redistricting laws because of the state's segregationist past -- defused one simmering dispute over the state's obligation to submit the amendments for preclearance. It did so by satisfying concerns raised by Gov. Rick Scott, who drew renewed attention to the process when he yanked Amendments 5 and 6 from their first shot at preclearance.

Scott said he was withdrawing the measures, approved with 63 percent of the vote in the November elections, from preclearance scrutiny because of an executive order calling for a review of all new regulations. The move enraged supporters of the standards, who portrayed the withdrawal as a stall tactic.

On Tuesday, Scott said he supported the new filing, which comes from the Legislature.

"Despite pressure from special interest groups, I committed to Floridians that my review of the preclearance application for Amendments 5 and 6 would be thorough and complete," Scott said in a statement issued Tuesday. "The action of legislative leaders today delivers on that promise."

But the Legislature's filing also included a legal theory that could fuel a new conflict with the supporters of Amendments 5 and 6, which are meant to cut back on political gerrymandering.

The amendments' proponents say the selective carving of district lines has created strong GOP majorities in the House, Senate and the state's congressional delegation in spite of Florida's recent reputation as a swing state.

In response, the Fair Districts amendment prohibits boundary drawers, a group led again this time by Republicans, from drawing districts to a particular party or candidate's advantage, a requirement that both sides agree will likely be decided in court.

In the submission to the Justice Department, legislative attorneys drew on the federal Voting Right Act and statements from Fair Districts Florida -- which backed the amendments -- to argue that lawmakers can essentially ignore the new standards if they do so to protect districts designed to enhance the opportunity for blacks, Hispanics and other minorities to elect representatives of their own choice.

"In promoting minority voting strength, the Legislature may continue to employ whatever means were previously at its disposal," says the filing, submitted by House General Counsel George Levesque and Andy Bardos, special counsel to Senate President Mike Haridopolos, R-Merritt Island.

Haridopolos and House Speaker Dean Cannon, R-Winter Park, argued at length last year that the measures could dilute minority voting strength, especially in districts where minority voters play heavily into the final vote but are not a majority. Fair Districts Florida has repeatedly denied that interpretation.

In response to news of the preclearance submission, FairDistricts Now, a successor to the campaign that passed the amendments, suggested Tuesday that it might challenge some of the

Legislature's interpretations.

"We have received and are reviewing the re-submission of the preclearance application," former Sen. Dan Gelber, the group's general counsel, said in statement issued Tuesday afternoon. "We are likely to file a comment with the Department of Justice because the submission contains a number of statements that are clearly intended to undermine the intent of the FairDistricts Amendments."

Cannon, Haridopolos seek 'Fair Districts' preclearance, append qualifications

<http://floridaindependent.com/25299/dean-cannon-mike-haridopolos-seek-fair-districts-preclearance-append-qualifications>

March 30, 2011

Florida House Speaker Dean Cannon and Senate President Mike Haridopolos yesterday [asked](#) the U.S. Department of Justice to approve the two anti-gerrymandering amendments supported by Florida voters in last November's election, appending a lengthy explanation of how they feel the so-called "Fair Districts" amendments should be interpreted. <#>

The move comes two months after controversy [erupted](#) over Gov. Rick Scott's decision to rescind former Gov. Charlie Crist's application for Department of Justice approval. After news of Scott's order became public, the League of Women Voters, the Florida NAACP, Democracia Ahora and others [sued](#) the governor, asking a court to force him to resubmit the amendments — approved by more than 60 percent of Florida voters last year — to the Department of Justice. <#>

According to a legislature press release, Scott determined "earlier this month" that "the proper authority" to submit the amendments to the feds rests with either Attorney General Pam Bondi or the Florida legislature, prompting the latter to act. <#>

In addition to the one-page letter seeking Department of Justice approval (a legal necessity created by [the Voting Rights Act of 1965](#)), Cannon and Haridopolos included an 11-page document outlining their interpretation of how they can implement the Fair Districts amendments while still preserving minority representation in the state legislature and Congress: <#>

Properly interpreted, we do not believe that the Amendments create roadblocks to the preservation or enhancement of minority voting strength. To avoid retrogression in the position of racial minorities, **the Amendments must be understood to preserve without change the Legislature's prior ability to construct effective minority districts.** Moreover, the Voting Rights Provisions ensure that the Amendments in no way constrain the Legislature's discretion to preserve or enhance minority voting strength, and permit any practices or considerations that might be instrumental to that important purpose. **In promoting minority voting strength, the Legislature may continue to employ whatever means were previously at its disposal.** <#>

The argument here seems to be that the legislature should be allowed the freedom to draw lines as it sees fit if it suits the purpose of preserving minority representation, regardless of whether the Fair Districts amendments require the lines to be drawn differently. <#>

The Tampa Tribune's William March [today documented criticism of Cannon and Haridopolos' claims:](#) <#>

Gerald Hebert, an election law expert who has followed Florida's reapportionment battles since 2002, said the legislators were wrong on their proposed interpretations. <#>

"What they're trying to do is get the Justice Department to approve their misinterpretations," he said. "The Justice Department won't do that — they'll simply say they either approve or disapprove the amendments." <#>

Hebert said he intends to file comments with the Justice Department disagreeing with the Legislature's submission. So does the FairDistricts committee that sponsored the petition drive and campaign for the amendments. <#>

"The submission contains a number of statements that are clearly intended to

undermine the intent of the FairDistricts Amendments,” said Dan Gelber, former state senator and unsuccessful Democratic candidate for attorney general, who is the committee’s lawyer. #

Cannon has made the state House a party to a lawsuit seeking to overturn the amendments, and Haridopolos has opposed them in written comments. #

#

In response to news of the preclearance submission, FairDistricts Now, a successor to the campaign that passed the amendments, suggested Tuesday that it might challenge some of the Legislature's interpretations.

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Category: [Amendment 5 + 6 HeadLINES](#)

Florida asks again for OK on political redistricting amendments

<http://jacksonville.com/news/florida/2011-03-30/story/florida-asks-again-ok-political-redistricting-amendments>

March 30, 2011

State lawmakers have filed a request for "pre-clearance" of two constitutional amendments that aim to take politics out of the way in which Florida's political lines are drawn.

The pre-clearance application was filed by then-Gov. Charlie Crist after voters passed Amendments 5 and 6 in November but was pulled in January by Gov. Rick Scott, who said he wanted to review it. The application is needed because the Justice Department must sign off on the changes.

The legislators determined that it was their job - not Scott's - to submit the application.

The amendments say that lawmakers can't craft political districts that favor any one party and must try and draw them along county or municipal lines.

Read: [Bill to end tenure at Florida community colleges passes first hurdle](#)

The bill has been steeped in politics with big time cash spent by groups on both sides of the argument. U.S. Rep. Corrine Brown and U.S. Rep. Mario Diaz-Balart have also filed a lawsuit challenging the changes. State House Speaker Dean Cannon is also a plaintiff.

The Legislature is engaged in the once-a-decade exercise of drawing district lines for the legislative and congressional representatives.

House panel passes health-care opt-out

A House panel Tuesday passed a proposed constitutional amendment that would allow Florida to get out of key provisions of federal health-care reforms passed last year.

The measure has already passed out of the Senate. It says that a government can not 'compel' a person to buy health care coverage.

It would allow the state to opt-out of one of the federal reform's key provisions mandating that people buy health insurance.

The House's version of the proposed amendment has two remaining committee stops. If passed by the Legislature, the issue will go before voters in 2012.

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Florida restarts process to clear voter-approved redistricting standards - Legislature

<http://www.miamiherald.com/2011/03/29/2140301/florida-restarts-process-to-clear.html>

March 30, 2011

TALLAHASSEE -- Republican leaders in the Florida Legislature on Tuesday asked the federal government to sign off on a pair of voter-approved constitutional amendments requiring lawmakers to draw nonpartisan political districts.

The move comes three months after Gov. Rick Scott drew partisan criticism and was quickly sued for quietly withdrawing the application submitted by former Gov. Charlie Crist.

But authors of Amendments 5 and 6 said the new request contains a number of statements that are clearly intended to undermine the intent of the changes. The application explains that the changes could potentially hurt minority voting strength, but would not if properly interpreted.

Former state Sen. Dan Gelber, a Miami Beach Democrat now affiliated with Fair Districts Now, the group that put the questions on the statewide ballot, said in a statement that he would likely file concerns with the U.S. Department of Justice.

The back-and-forth was just the latest twist for a pair of amendments that aim to stop lawmakers from drawing legislative or congressional districts that favor a particular political party. Lawmakers must finish drawing new Florida districts, including two new U.S. House seats, before the 2012 elections.

Scott said in January that withdrawing the application was part of his push to review all new rules and regulations.

But supporters of the amendments, crafted with the backing of liberal fundraising groups, accused Scott of obstructing the will of voters and sued him. On Friday, Scott was given an extension to respond.

Scott's staff, along with attorneys from the House, Senate and Attorney General Pam Bondi's office, determined the Legislature not the governor is the proper authority to submit the application.

Republican leaders said the initial application did not address retrogression, a legal term that refers to whether a redistricting plan reduces minority voting strength. That's an issue because the federal government must approve major elections changes in Florida after the history of racial discrimination and voter intimidation in five counties: Collier, Hardee, Hendry, Hillsborough and Monroe.

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Also at play is a lawsuit brought by U.S. Reps. Mario Diaz-Balart, R-Miami, and Corrine Brown, D-Jacksonville, alleging that Amendment 6 is unconstitutional. The Florida House has joined in the lawsuit.

Times/Herald staff writer Steve Bousquet contributed to this report. Michael C. Bender can be reached at mbender@sptimes.com. Follow him on Twitter [@MichaelCBender](https://twitter.com/MichaelCBender).

Update: Amends 5 & 6 sent to Justice Department after GOP delay | Post on Politics

<http://www.postonpolitics.com/2011/03/amends-5-6-sent-to-justice-department/>

March 30, 2011

The House and Senate agreed Tuesday to send to federal officials the voter-approved Amendments 5 and 6, apparently ending an icy standoff between Republican Gov. **Rick Scott** and Democratic-allied supporters of the redistricting measures.

Sending the amendments to the U.S. Justice Department for “preclearance,” is a routine step in the redistricting process. But Scott added a level of intrigue when he quietly withdrew the state’s request soon after taking office.

Supporters of the so-called Fair Districts amendments, which are aimed at requiring that compact legislative and congressional districts be designed by lawmakers without concern for incumbents or political parties, sued Scott and Secretary of State **Kurt Browning** to force the review to proceed.

The plaintiffs in the lawsuit, filed in federal court in Miami, include the state NAACP, the League of Women Voters, Democracia, a Hispanic political action group, and five individuals from Monroe County.

Former state Sen. **Dan Gelber**, a Miami Beach Democrat and one of the lawyers in the suit, accused Scott of “stalling.”

The governor, for his part, said at the time that the application to the Justice Department was “premature” and that he wanted to review more U.S. Census data before filing. Scott didn’t specify what he wanted to see.

“Despite pressure from special interest groups, I committed to Floridians that my review of the preclearance application for Amendments 5 and 6 would be thorough and complete,” Scott said Tuesday. “The action of legislative leaders today delivers on that promise.”

Legislative leaders, too, didn’t provide much insight on the decision to send the measures for federal review.

But in a statement, leaders said Scott had been unclear about who should make the state’s request. Lawmakers said further analysis determined that either Attorney General **Pam Bondi** or the Florida Legislature was authorized, with legislators opting to make the first move.

Republicans fiercely fought the ballot measures last year. Analysts have said the new standards could make Florida legislative and congressional districts more competitive, potentially weakening the GOP’s command in the state.

UPDATE: The Florida Democratic Party provided more back story later Tuesday to Scott and the Legislature’s pre-clearance move.

Spokesman **Eric Jotkoff** filed a public records request with Scott’s office in early January to gauge whether the governor was using taxpayer dollars to thwart implementation of Amendments 5 and 6.

On Tuesday morning, frustrated Democrats sent a followup letter, threatening legal action if Scott didn’t provide the records requested more than two months earlier. Hours later, legislators made public their decision to send the amendments to the Justice Department.

Democrats also were told by Scott’s office that the long-requested records were now available.

““The Florida Democratic Party will not sit back and allow the will of Floridians to be frustrated or

delayed by those who simply seek to deny Floridians fair elections in fair districts,” said Democratic Party Chairman **Rod Smith**.

Tags: [Justice Department](#), [League of Women Voters](#), [redistricting](#)

Florida Redistricting (Part Two) | Practical State

<http://www.practicalstate.com/2011/03/30/florida-redistricting-part-two/>

March 30, 2011

An important update on Florida's Redistricting:

[Republican leaders in the Florida Legislature](#) on Tuesday asked the federal government to sign off on a pair of voter-approved constitutional amendments requiring lawmakers to draw nonpartisan political districts.

The move comes three months after Gov. Rick Scott drew partisan criticism – and was quickly sued – for quietly withdrawing the application submitted by former Gov. Charlie Crist.

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Scott's staff, along with attorneys from the House, Senate and Attorney General Pam Bondi's office, determined the Legislature – not the governor – is the proper authority to submit the application.

Well, Mr. Gelber, tell that to fellow [Democrat US Rep. Corrine Brown](#) who disagrees with you:

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. ...

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 believe in districts that makes sense, but that they should be drawn by the legislature and should not be subject to court approval. And that will happen, trust me. Someone will see the new districts and find some fault, then sue just because they want to see their name in the newspaper.

The main redistricting hearings won't take place until summer. The final districts don't have to be in place until June 2012, so we are taking our time over here. We also have to get through this session before we can even talk about redistricting. However I will try to keep you updated as much as possible.

While we are on the subject, the [Florida Redistricting site](#) has 2010 Census data up. So I highly suggest you check it out.

I know I am going completely off subject here, but this so minor an update, it doesn't need its own entire blog post. A Florida House [panel passes a constitutional amendment that will give us a ObamaCare opt-out](#). It has a long way to go and it will have to be voted on in 2012, but it has started ([again](#)) for Florida.

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Written by: [BigGator5](#) on March 30, 2011.

Florida Redistricting (Part Two) | RedState

<http://www.redstate.com/biggor5/2011/03/30/florida-redistricting-part-two/>

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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 believe in districts that makes sense, but that they should be drawn by the legislature and should not be subject to court approval. And that will happen, trust me. Someone will see the new districts and find some fault, then sue just because they want to see their name in the newspaper.

The main redistricting hearings won't take place until summer. The final districts don't have to be in place until June 2012, so we are taking our time over here. We also have to get through this session before we can even talk about redistricting. However I will try to keep you updated as much as possible.

While we are on the subject, the [Florida Redistricting site](#) has 2010 Census data up. So I highly suggest you check it out.

I know I am going completely off subject here, but this so minor an update, it doesn't need its own entire blog post. A Florida House [panel passes a constitutional amendment that will give us a ObamaCare opt-out](#). It has a long way to go and it will have to be voted on in 2012, but it has started ([again](#)) for Florida.

[\[Cross-Posted On Practical State.com\]](#)

BIGGATORS.NET



Florida restarts process to clear voter-approved redistricting standards

<http://www.tampabay.com/news/politics/stateroundup/florida-restarts-process-to-clear-voter-approved-redistricting-standards/1160389>

March 30, 2011

By [Michael C. Bender](#), Times/Herald Tallahassee Bureau
In Print: Wednesday, March 30, 2011

TALLAHASSEE Republican leaders in the Florida Legislature on Tuesday asked the federal government to sign off on a pair of voter-approved constitutional amendments requiring lawmakers to draw nonpartisan political districts.

The move comes three months after Gov. Rick Scott drew partisan criticism and was quickly sued for quietly withdrawing the application submitted by former Gov. Charlie Crist.

But authors of Amendments 5 and 6 said the new request "contains a number of statements that are clearly intended to undermine the intent" of the changes. The application explains that the changes could potentially hurt minority voting strength, but would not if "properly interpreted."

Former state Sen. Dan Gelber, a Miami Beach Democrat now affiliated with Fair Districts Now, the group that put the questions on the statewide ballot, said in a statement that he would likely file concerns with the Justice Department.

The back-and-forth was just the latest twist for a pair of amendments that aim to stop lawmakers from drawing legislative or congressional districts that favor a particular political party. Lawmakers must finish drawing new Florida districts, including two new U.S. House seats, before the 2012 elections.

Scott said in January that withdrawing the application was part of his push to review all new rules and regulations.

But supporters of the amendments accused Scott of obstructing the will of voters and sued him. On Friday, Scott was given an extension to respond.

Scott's staff, along with attorneys from the House, Senate and Attorney General Pam Bondi's office, determined the Legislature not the governor is the proper authority to submit the application.

Republican leaders said the initial application did not address "retrogression," a legal term that refers to whether a redistricting plan reduces minority voting strength. That's an issue because the federal government must approve major elections changes in Florida after the history of racial discrimination and voter intimidation in five counties: Collier, Hardee, Hendry, Hillsborough and Monroe.

"Despite pressure from special interest groups, I committed to Floridians that my review of the preclearance application for Amendments 5 and 6 would be thorough and complete," Scott said in a statement. "The action of legislative leaders today delivers on that promise."

Senate Democratic Leader Nan Rich, D-Weston, said the submission was the first positive thing the Republican Legislature has done all session.

"If there was anything that received a mandate in the last election, it was Amendments 5 and 6," Rich said. "So I would say they did the appropriate thing. I am very pleased that they would do that. In that sense, they are listening to the people."

Also at play is a lawsuit brought by U.S. Reps. Mario Diaz-Balart, R-Miami, and Corrine Brown, D-

Jacksonville, alleging that Amendment 6 is unconstitutional. The Florida House has joined in the lawsuit.

Times/Herald staff writer Steve Bousquet contributed to this report. Michael C. Bender can be reached at mbender@sptimes.com. Follow him on Twitter [@MichaelCBender](https://twitter.com/MichaelCBender).

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Critics say lawmakers want to continue gerrymandered districts

<http://www.2.tbo.com/content/2011/mar/30/301202/critics-say-law-makers-want-to-continue-gerrymander/new-s-politics/>

March 30, 2011

By [WILLIAM MARCH](#) | The Tampa Tribune

Published: March 30, 2011

Updated: 30 min. ago

TALLAHASSEE - Florida legislative leaders Mike Haridopolos and Dean Cannon have resubmitted the state's new anti-gerrymandering amendments for federal approval, but in a way that critics say seeks to allow the Legislature to continue drawing districts to benefit Republicans.

The action means the amendments continue to be a political football despite having been approved by 63 percent voter majorities in the November election.

Republicans, including Cannon, the state House speaker, and Haridopolos, state Senate president, oppose the amendments because of the likelihood they'll reduce the Republican majorities in the state House, Senate and congressional delegation.

The amendments would forbid drawing legislative districts designed to benefit either political party or incumbent officeholders.

Before taking effect, the amendments must get federal approval from the U.S. Department of Justice, called "preclearance," to assure they don't undermine minority voting rights under the federal Voting Rights Act.

Gov. Charlie Crist submitted a routine application for that preclearance before leaving office, but Gov. Rick Scott withdrew it just after taking office. That drew accusations that he was trying to frustrate the will of the voters.

On Tuesday, Cannon and Haridopolos submitted a new application, but said in it that the amendments could harm minority voting rights in Florida, depending on how they're interpreted.

If so, Cannon and Haridopolos said, the Department of Justice shouldn't approve them.

Under another interpretation, the two said, the amendments would not harm minority voting rights and could be approved. That interpretation, they said, would allow the Legislature to continue to pack black and Hispanic voters into a few districts, as they have done in the past.

That process protects Republicans in the surrounding districts by leaving those districts mainly white, giving Republicans a net gain in seats. That has helped build the GOP majorities of more than 2-1 in the Legislature and congressional delegation.

In the 1992 and 2002 reapportionments, the process resulted in districts such as Tampa U.S. Rep. Kathy Castor's 11th District. The heavily black and Hispanic, Democratic-voting district makes Castor politically invincible, but it also leaves majorities of Republican voters in several surrounding districts, including those of Reps. Gus Bilirakis, Vern Buchanan, Dennis Ross and Bill Young.

In 2002, lawyers for the Legislature acknowledged part of the intent of the district plans was to benefit the GOP.

Critics on Tuesday charged that the application by Haridopolos and Cannon was a ploy aimed at getting ammunition from the Justice Department to undercut the amendments in a court battle.

Cannon responded saying he and Haridopolos want the amendments to be precleared, but added, "Our goal is to preserve the gains made for minority representation over the last two decades, two decades that have seen the number of minorities in the Florida Legislature and in Florida's Congressional delegation more than double. "

Gerald Hebert, an election law expert who has followed Florida's reapportionment battles since 2002, said the legislators were wrong on their proposed interpretations.

"What they're trying to do is get the Justice Department to approve their misinterpretations," he said. "The Justice Department won't do that -- they'll simply say they either approve or disapprove the amendments."

Hebert said he intends to file comments with the Justice Department disagreeing with the Legislature's submission. So does the FairDistricts committee that sponsored the petition drive and campaign for the amendments.

"The submission contains a number of statements that are clearly intended to undermine the intent of the FairDistricts Amendments," said Dan Gelber, former state senator and unsuccessful Democratic candidate for attorney general, who is the committee's lawyer.

Cannon has made the state House a party to a lawsuit seeking to overturn the amendments, and Haridopolos has opposed them in written comments.

When he withdrew the application for preclearance for the amendments, Scott said the application was "premature" and incomplete because the state hadn't yet received Census data.

But in a news release Tuesday, Cannon and Haridopolos said Scott had asked the Legislature and Attorney General Pam Bondi to give him "assistance in determining who was the proper authority to actually file the preclearance application and what information should be included in that application."

"It was determined that either the Attorney General, as the 'chief legal officer' of the State, or the Florida Legislature, as the implementing authority for redistricting, should submit the application," the release said.

It said the previous application was deficient because it "did not substantively address the fundamental question of whether or not Amendments 5 and 6 were retrogressive to minority voters," meaning whether they would undercut minority voting power.

The new application included a five-page discussion of the effect on minority voting power.

In it, lawyers for Cannon and Haridopolos argued that the amendments could harm minority voters by requiring districts to be compact and follow city or county lines where possible.

The lawyers said breaking those rules has led to more black and Hispanic members of Congress and the state Legislature by allowing oddly shaped districts that take in more minority voters.

The lawyers said the amendments should be interpreted to allow that practice to continue to protect the minority incumbents, even if the Voting Rights Act doesn't explicitly require it. If so, they said, the amendments could be approved.

Hebert said the question of who should submit the application was a non-issue.

"Florida's secretary of state, on behalf of the governor, has made hundreds of submissions for preclearance over the years, and this has never been an issue," he said. The state gets preclearance for elections changes ranging from redistricting maps to deadlines for mailing absentee and overseas ballots, he said..

The state of California, Hebert noted, recently received preclearance for anti-gerrymandering amendments passed last November in response to an application submitted by its secretary of state without a lengthy discussion of the effect on minority voters.

Hebert said the Florida amendments explicitly say the Voting Rights Act's requirements are to be respected.

He said the legislative leaders are "trying to use the Justice Department's decision as a stamp of approval for their interpretation, which would allow them to continue the same gerrymandering practices they've used in the past."

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Debate Escalates in Florida Over Redistricting

<http://politic365.com/2011/03/31/debate-escalates-in-florida-over-redistricting/>

March 31, 2011

Florida's 2012 elections are going to be quite a showdown, as evident by the pre-campaign season drama currently unfolding in the Sunshine State. As reported by guest contributor, Laura Berrocal, in [Florida Policymakers Call Foul on Fair Districts Push](#), U.S. Representatives Mario Diaz-Balart (R-FL) and Corrine Brown (D-FL) filed a lawsuit blocking passage of Amendments 5 and 6 also known as the "Fair Districts" amendments. Brown and Diaz-Balart allege the legislation violates the U.S. Constitution, but in a counter-suit Florida House Democrats Perry Thurston, Joe Gibbons, Luis Garcia, and Janet Cruz filed a lawsuit to ensure that the Fair Districts amendments do in fact become law.

The Fair Districts amendments are supposed to make the practice of gerrymandering illegal. Gerrymandering is the practice that attempts to establish a political advantage for a particular party or group by manipulating geographic boundaries to create partisan, incumbent-protected, or neutral districts.

In spite of the pending lawsuits, this past Tuesday Republican leaders asked the federal government to give its approval on the amendments. The original application for amendment approval was withdrawn by Governor Rick Scott. It had been approved by voters and filed by former Governor Charlie Crist.

Scott said in January that withdrawing the application was part of his push to review all new rules and regulations.

Now, it's turned into a debate over who has the right to submit the application – the governor or the legislature – as well as whether changes made to the new application in fact still protect the voters of Florida from gerrymandering. Republican leadership say the new request "contains a number of statements that are clearly intended to undermine the intent" of the changes. The application explains that the changes could potentially hurt minority voting strength, but would not if "properly interpreted."

While at first brush it seems the GOP leadership is keen on ensuring fairness when it comes to drawing nonpartisan political districts, Brown, Diaz-Balart and their supporters are claiming just the opposite. It's like they are warning voters ahead of time of the ways in which the amendments might be used to promote gerrymandering.

Gerald Hebert, an election law expert who has followed Florida's reapportionment battles since 2002, said the legislators were wrong on their proposed interpretations.

"What they're trying to do is get the Justice Department to approve their misinterpretations," he said. "The Justice Department won't do that — they'll simply say they either approve or disapprove the amendments."

The lawsuits and argument over who has the right to submit the application for amendment approval is all because new Census data requires lawmakers in Florida to redraw the lines for new districts. That means two new U.S. house seats will be created before the 2012 elections.

Author: Elesha Barnette



Contributing Blogger/Vlogger @Politic365 --- Prior to joining Politic365, Elesha Barnette spent nine years with Procter & Gamble. Elesha has a rich, diverse background in sales analytics as well as merchandising & marketing of Fortune 500 brands. In addition to her experiences in business development, Elesha has also run a freelance media production company that develops stories for screen. Elesha has

a Bachelor of Arts from the University of North Carolina - Chapel Hill in Communications/Media Production.

Related Articles:

Is the Florida GOP 'protecting minority voting rights' or maintaining power?

<http://www.flcourier.com/florida/4958-protecting-minority-voting-rights-or-maintaining-power>

April 1, 2011



GOP fights 'Fair District' amendments

FROM STAFF AND WIRE REPORTS

A new set of standards for drawing the state's legislative and congressional lines was submitted to the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) for review Tuesday, but the battle over the "Fair Districts" constitutional amendments, also known as Amendments 5 and 6, and how they could reshape the state's political future, showed few signs of letting up.



Orange County voters waited in line in Maitland on November 2, 2010. (JOE BURBANK/ORLANDO SENTINEL/MCT)

An 11-page filing with DOJ – which must approve changes to Florida voting and redistricting laws because of the state's racist past – defused one simmering dispute over the state's obligation to submit the amendments for preclearance. It did so by satisfying concerns raised by Gov. Rick Scott, who rescinded former Gov. Charlie Crist's

application for DOJ approval.

Study or stall?

When Scott yanked Amendments 5 and 6 from their first shot at DOJ preclearance?in the wake of an executive order calling for a review of all new regulations, the move enraged supporters of the standards, who portrayed the withdrawal as a stall tactic.

The League of Women Voters, the Florida State Conference of NAACP branches, Democracia Ahora and others subsequently sued Scott, asking a court to force him to resubmit the amendments – approved with 63 percent of the vote in the November elections – to DOJ.

No favorites

According to the amendments, 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 minorities or non-English speakers the equal opportunity to participate in the political process and elect representatives of their choice.

Districts must also 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.

Political impact

Registered Democrats exceed Republicans by almost 600,000 voters in Florida. But boundaries drawn by the Florida Legislature over the past 20 years have helped the GOP dominate the Legislature and Florida's seats in Congress.

Such boundaries were created during redistricting in 1992 and 2002 to create voting districts with as many Black Democrats as possible. That helped clear the way for Florida to elect its first Black

representatives in Congress since shortly after the Civil War – including Jacksonville’s Rep. Corrine Brown, who fought against the amendments – while also increasing the small number of Blacks then serving in the Legislature.

Led to GOP control

But such "packed" districts also reduced the Democratic population in surrounding areas. That allowed Florida Republicans, in 1996, to win control of the Legislature for the first time in 122 years.

Redistricting in 2002 solidified the GOP’s grip on legislative power, and helped them get a veto-proof supermajority in the Florida Legislature in 2010 – in spite of Florida’s recent reputation as a political "swing state" that votes both Democratic and Republican.

The Florida NAACP and most Black Democratic lawmakers have rejected Republican claims that Amendments 5 and 6 will hurt Black Floridians, saying that Voting Rights Act protections are unaffected.

Protecting Black voting rights?

The GOP-dominated Legislature’s filing also included a legal theory that could fuel a new conflict with the supporters of Amendments 5 and 6.

Legislative attorneys drew on the federal Voting Right Act and statements from Fair Districts Florida – which backed the amendments – to argue that lawmakers can essentially ignore the new standards if they do so to protect districts designed to enhance the opportunity for Blacks, Hispanics and other minorities to elect representatives of their own choice.

"In promoting minority voting strength, the Legislature may continue to employ whatever means were previously at its disposal," says the filing, submitted by House General Counsel George Levesque and Andy Bardos, special counsel to Senate President Mike Haridopolos, R-Merritt Island.

Haridopolos and House Speaker Dean Cannon, R-Winter Park, argued at length last year that the measures could dilute minority voting strength, especially in districts where minority voters play heavily into the final vote – but are not a majority. Fair Districts Florida, with the NAACP’s support, has repeatedly denied that interpretation.

Challenge coming

In response to news of the preclearance submission, FairDistricts Now, a successor to the campaign that passed the amendments, suggested Tuesday that it might challenge some of the Legislature’s interpretations.

"We have received and are reviewing the re-submission of the preclearance application," former Sen. Dan Gelber, the group’s general counsel, said in a statement issued Tuesday afternoon. "We are likely to file a comment with the Department of Justice because the submission contains a number of statements that are clearly intended to undermine the intent of the FairDistricts Amendments."

Brandon Larrabee of the News Service of Florida contributed to this report.

Florida restarts process to clear voter-approved redistricting standards » TCPalm Mobile

http://m.tcpalm.com/news/2011/mar/30/florida-restarts-process-to-clear-voter-approved/?partner=yahoo_feeds

April 3, 2011

TALLAHASSEE — Republican leaders in the Florida Legislature on Tuesday asked the federal government to sign off on a pair of voter-approved constitutional amendments requiring lawmakers to draw nonpartisan political districts.

The move comes three months after Gov. Rick Scott drew partisan criticism — and was quickly sued — for quietly withdrawing the application submitted by former Gov. Charlie Crist.

But authors of Amendments 5 and 6 said the new request "contains a number of statements that are clearly intended to undermine the intent" of the changes. The application explains that the changes could potentially hurt minority voting strength, but would not if "properly interpreted."

Former state Sen. Dan Gelber, a Miami Beach Democrat now affiliated with Fair Districts Now, the group that put the questions on the statewide ballot, said in a statement that he would likely file concerns with the U.S. Department of Justice.

The back-and-forth was just the latest twist for a pair of amendments that aim to stop lawmakers from drawing legislative or congressional districts that favor a particular political party. Lawmakers must finish drawing new Florida districts, including two new U.S. House seats, before the 2012 elections.

Scott said in January that withdrawing the application was part of his push to review all new rules and regulations.

But supporters of the amendments, crafted with the backing of liberal fundraising groups, accused Scott of obstructing the will of voters and sued him. On Friday, Scott was given an extension to respond.

Scott's staff, along with attorneys from the House, Senate and Attorney General Pam Bondi's office, determined the Legislature — not the governor — is the proper authority to submit the application.

Republican leaders said the initial application did not address "retrogression," a legal term that refers to whether a redistricting plan reduces minority voting strength. That's an issue because the federal government must approve major elections changes in Florida after the history of racial discrimination and voter intimidation in five counties: Collier, Hardee, Hendry, Hillsborough and Monroe.

"Despite pressure from special interest groups, I committed to Floridians that my review of the preclearance application for Amendments 5 and 6 would be thorough and complete," Scott said in a statement. "The action of legislative leaders today delivers on that promise."

Draw fair districts for all Floridians, as citizens mandated

<http://www.newsjournalonline.com/opinion/editorials/other-voices/2011/04/03/draw-fair-districts-for-all-floridians-as-citizens-mandated.html>

April 3, 2011

In last Sunday's News-Journal, [U.S. Rep. Corinne Brown, D-Jacksonville](#), [reiterated her idea](#) that the Fair Districts amendments "will silence the voice of minorities in our congressional delegation." Nothing could be further from the truth.

Thanks to the 63 percent supermajority of Florida voters who voted "yes" in November, Amendments 5 and 6 are now enshrined in the Florida Constitution. They will ensure that when politicians engage in redistricting next year, they will no longer be permitted to draw districts to favor themselves or their political allies. Instead of districts designed for politicians, we will now have districts drawn to benefit all of the people of Florida.

It is not surprising that the opponents of the amendments in the fall were incumbent politicians who wanted to be able to continue to make deals to have sure-win electoral districts created for themselves.

But politicians can't publicly say what they really want -- to continue gaming the redistricting system - - so they look for other ways to scare the public.

Rep. Brown and her colleague, U.S. Rep. Mario Diaz-Balart, R-Miami, trumped up a claim that application of the new laws would diminish minority representation and take us back to the days in Florida when minorities did not have a voice in government.

So, let's take a look at what the new constitutional provisions really say. In reality, they contain specific protections for minority voters -- protections that never existed before passage of the amendments. With regard to minority voting protections, the Fair Districts amendments say: "*districts shall not be drawn with the intent or result of denying or abridging the equal opportunity of racial or language minorities to participate in the political process, or to diminish their ability to elect representatives of their choice.*"

The language could not be more clear. Under the law, passed overwhelmingly by the voters, politicians will no longer be legally permitted to discriminate against minority voters or diminish their right to representation. Splitting up communities to suppress the voting power of minorities is simply not allowed. Furthermore, under the new redistricting standards, Florida must still follow the federal Voting Rights Act. That is why the NAACP, Democracia Ahora, the Florida Black Legislative Caucus and the Florida Black Caucus of Local Elected Officials supported the amendments.

So, why have Congresswoman Brown and Congressman Mario Diaz-Balart sued -- not once but twice -- to have these amendments invalidated? They are politicians who want to hold on to their power to have districts designed to ensure their own re-elections. The Florida Supreme Court rejected their claim last summer. So, they filed it again in federal court -- within hours after the polls closed Nov. 2.

Although most states follow rules for redistricting that are in their constitutions -- and, therefore, not subject to legislative whim -- these members of Congress wrongly claim in their current case that the Legislature, rather than the people of Florida, should set the rules for redistricting. They know that politicians will always protect their own in redistricting. But, in Florida, our constitution provides that all political power resides in the people.

In passing the Fair Districts amendments, the people of Florida have spoken about how they want their political districts to be drawn. The people of our state have demanded that districts be drawn in a manner that is fair and equitable to all Floridians. It is the duty of our elected officials to follow that law and stop trying to overrule the will of 3.1 million voters.

MacNab is president of the League of Women Voters of Florida; Mursuli is president of Democracia Ahora and Nweze is president of the Florida NAACP.

Redistricting News-Florida Submits Preclearance Submission with Caveats

<http://www.redistrictingonline.org/nbflapreclearmemo040411.html>

April 4, 2011

The Florida legislature, with Gov. Rick Scott's approval submitted the state's preclearance request for newly approved constitutional amendments limiting partisan considerations in the redistricting process. The amendments, approved by Florida voters in 2010 prohibit districts drawn with the "intent to favor or disfavor a political party or an incumbent," and requires that districts be compact and where feasible, utilize existing political and geographical boundaries, unless compliance with [those] standards conflict with Florida's voting rights language or with federal law.

While the clear intent of the new state constitutional language is to remove partisan consideration out of the line drawing process, the Governor, and legislature have made the argument that this wholesale removal of partisan consideration from the process could violate the Voting Rights Act, at least under one interpretation.

Tuesday's preclearance submission application, written by legislative staff seeks to resolve the possible Voting Rights Act conflicts that are already the [subject of a lawsuit by two of Florida's U.S. representatives](#)- by suggesting to the Civil Rights Division a "non-retrogressive" interpretation of the amendments. The submission identifies two specific issues with the amendments' language that it says could be cause for concern, and offers an interpretation that would make them consistent with both federal law and Florida's own voting rights language.

Two Interpretations

The submission explains that the amendments' compactness requirement and its mandate that districts conform to existing political subdivision boundaries can only be overridden if compliance with them would violate the federal Voting Rights Act or Florida's voting rights act provision, which reads similar to its federal counterpart. Legislative counsel however, argues that Florida's Voting Rights Act language has been construed more liberally than the federal statute and its related case law.

At least one of the concerns intimated in the submission is that if the amendment language is construed such that there is no distinction between the federal and state voting rights act language, legislators will not be able to "lawfully" draw minority "influence" districts. Districts such as these are not required by the Voting Rights Act because by definition they do not comprise an actual majority of minority voters—a threshold that the Supreme Court requires before a state is obligated under the Act to draw or preserve such a district. Thus, there is no statutory mandate that exists today under the Voting Rights Act to build such districts. The submission contends that the State of Florida's voting rights language **does** require these types of districts whenever possible.

"Previously, the Legislature could disregard compactness and break through political and geographical boundaries in order to create districts in which minorities were able to elect their preferred candidates, even where the federal Voting Rights Act (the VRA) did not require such districts. Thus, the Legislature could—and did—downplay geometric compactness and breach political and geographical boundaries to create districts in which minority-preferred candidates had an opportunity to be elected, even where the minority voting-age population comprised less than a numerical majority, and where the district was not, therefore, required by Section 2 of the VRA."

The second concern discussed in the submission is the constitutional amendments' language prohibiting considerations of party or incumbency. The submission contends that these are normal and required considerations when evaluating compliance with the federal Voting Rights Act. Determining whether a minority group has the opportunity to participate in the electoral process necessarily involves considerations of party, and incumbent success or failure. While the submission does not point this out, the Justice Dept's preclearance guidelines say this:

Where a change

may affect the electoral influence of a

racial or language minority group, [the Voting Section will consider] returns

of primary and general elections

conducted by or in the jurisdiction,

containing the following information:

(1) The name of each candidate.

(2) The race or language group of
each candidate, if known.

(3) The position sought by each candidate.

(4) The number of votes received by
each candidate, by voting precinct.

(5) The outcome of each contest.

In the end, the submission urges the Justice Department to construe the amendments such that the legislature will have the ability to work around the constraining language when necessary to preserve minority representation. Organizers behind the constitutional amendments dispute that there is any potential conflicting language in them and that broaching the subject of “two” interpretations of the state constitution is simply an attempt at getting out from under the stringent guidelines that voters approved. Not surprisingly, more lawsuits are promised.

House District 78: A lesson on redistricting

http://miamiherald.typepad.com/nakedpolitics/2011/04/house-district-78-a-lesson-on-redistricting.html?utm_source=twitterfeed&utm_medium=twitter

April 5, 2011

Want a lesson on redistricting? Just take a look at Florida House District 78.



The district -- which covers four southeast Florida counties and where registered Democrats outnumber Republicans 2-to-1 -- has the distinction of being the only district in the state that has not had a November election since the lines were redrawn in 2002.

Not one general election. Not one in 2002. Or 2004. Not 2006. Not 2008. Or 2010, according to records kept by the Division of Elections.

Three different Democrats have served the district, which includes parts Martin, Okeechobee, Palm Beach and St. Lucie. Not one of them had to count votes in November.

The current representative for the district is **Steve Perman** -- who was elected in 2010 without a primary or general election. That means no one ran against him -- not even a write-in candidate, according to Division of Elections results. That means if you're reading this story, you've seen Perman's name one more time than voters going to the polls in Martin, Okeechobee, Palm Beach and St. Lucie counties.

10 New Findings from the U.S. Census

<http://abcnews.go.com/print?id=13313561>

April 7, 2011

As the Census Bureau Rolls Out New Data, a Look at Some of the Most Surprising

By SUSANNA KIM

April 7, 2011 —

The [2010 U.S. Census](#) shows [minority groups](#) growing, old industrial cities like Detroit and Cleveland shrinking, and plenty of homes still to be had in central Florida. Those are just some of the pieces of information coming out as the Census Bureau rolls out data from last year's survey.

Here are some of the new findings from the census:

1. White children could be "minority" by 2019; Hispanics and Asians account for all the growth among the nation's child population.

From 2000 to 2010, the population of white children declined by 4.3 million, while Hispanic and Asian children grew by 5.5 million, based on data from the 1990, 2000 and 2010 decennial censuses.

William Frey, a demographer at the [Brookings Institution](#), estimated in a report that if data from the 2010 Census is taken into account, there will be a minority white child population "quite likely" by 2019. Previous Census Bureau projections showed that the U.S. would become "minority white" by 2042, and the child population could reach that by 2023.

"The good news is we have a much-needed demographic magic bullet for what otherwise would be an aging, shrinking population," Frey said. "The new minority growth is great for our labor force for decades on out."

But Frey said people who are "anti-immigrant" could try to use fear to use these population growth figures for political purposes. Currently, white children are the "minority" in 10 states and 34 large metropolitan areas.

"I think there's a great tendency for fear and unease for older people who, when they were growing up, didn't experience a lot of immigration," Frey said. "Americans are generally good spirited people but if you have politicians that try to fan the flames it has a bad result."

Zvia Naphtali, professor of public administration at New York University, said there are more likely a larger number of minorities than calculated by the Census.

"Often people in the country illegally don't want to have anything to do with institutions and don't participate in the Census," Naphtali said.

2. Detroit Loses a Quarter of its population

[Detroit](#) lost over 237,000 people over the last decade, causing its population to drop by 25 percent. The motor city's population fell to 713,777 in 2010 from 951,270 in 2000. While a drop was expected, the degree of the population loss was still surprising to many.

"The scale of it was pretty alarming to people," said Ezra Glenn, of the Urban Studies and Planning department at MIT.

3. The Growth of the Sunbelt

The warmest areas of the country saw greater population growth than the coldest areas of the country. The warmest 40 percent of counties have average population growth of over 8 percent from 2000 to 2010, and the coldest 40 percent of counties had average population growth of under 3 percent, according to Edward Glaeser, an economics professor at Harvard and director of the Taubman Center for State and Local Government.

"This trend is certainly not new," said Glaeser in a policy brief, because January temperature has been a "powerful predictor of area growth" for decades. Fewer regulations and lower taxes may also be contributing to growth in places like Dallas, Atlanta and Houston.

4. The Poorest County in the U.S. is in Kentucky

[Owsley County, Ky.](#), had the lowest median household income in the U.S., not including Puerto Rico. The county's median income decreased to \$18,869 in 2009 from \$20,346 in 2000, according to the Census Bureau's American Community Survey data.

5. Westchester, N.Y., has highest property taxes in the U.S.

Residents in Westchester County, N.Y. had a median \$9,044 in [real estate taxes](#), according to the Census Bureau's American Community Survey data in 2009. Three counties in New York and seven counties in New Jersey comprise the top-ten list.

6. Orlando, Fla., is nation's most vacant city

In [Orlando](#), the home vacancy rate is 4.3 percent and apartment vacancy rate is 23.6 percent, according to Census data from the fourth quarter of 2010 compiled by Forbes.

7. Puerto Rico has more African Americans and American Indians

The number of [Puerto Ricans](#) identifying as black or American Indian increased over 50 percent in the past ten years, according to Census data. Over 461,000 of the island's 3.7 million population identified as black, an increase of 52 percent. Meanwhile, 20,000 said they were American Indian, an increase of 49 percent, according to the Associated Press. The population that identifies as white decreased about 8 percentage points to 76 percent.

8. Percentage of parenting among same-sex couples is highest in the south

The region with the highest percentage of same-sex couples raising children (26.3 percent) was the "East South Central" region, which includes Alabama, Kentucky, Mississippi and Tennessee. The number of couples raising children under 18 there were 6,283, while there were 17,583 same-sex couples not raising children in those states.

The West South Central region, which includes Arkansas, Louisiana, Oklahoma and Texas, came in second with 26 percent of same sex couples raising children, or 13,914, according to the Census Bureau's American Community Survey Data. The number of same-sex couples not raising children was 39,665 in that region.

Third was New England, at 24.4 percent, or 9,322 same-sex couples raising children with 28,877 couples not raising children.

"This parenting data is counter to many peoples' expectations," said William Gates, demographer with the Williams Institute. He said he is anticipating additional data from the 2010 Census.

9. Cleveland sees lowest population in 100 years

Cleveland's population decreased by 17 percent to 396,815, according to the Census Bureau, after

80,000 residents left the city. "We knew there was going to be a loss. We did not think it was going to be this many," Cleveland Mayor Frank Jackson told the [Cleveland Plain Dealer](#).

10. More blacks in south moving to suburbs

The percentage of [African Americans](#) in metropolitan areas of the south who moved to the suburbs increased to 58 percent, compared to 41 percent in the rest of the U.S., according to Census figures. That's up from 52 percent in 2000, according to The Associated Press.

Public must take advantage of unprecedented input on the drawing of new Florida congressional district lines »

TCPalm Mobile

<http://m.tcpalm.com/news/2011/apr/05/editorial-public-must-take-advantage-of-input-on/>

April 8, 2011

Results of the 2010 U.S. Census, coupled with new voter-approved rules for redistricting, could mean some major changes for the Treasure Coast when it comes to electing members to Congress next year.

Currently, Martin, St. Lucie and Indian River counties are represented by three separate members in Congress. Although Florida will be electing two additional members, increasing from 25 to 27 representatives, the Treasure Coast could be represented by a single congressman or congresswoman.

Whether that would increase the focus of the lawmaker to the Treasure Coast or reduce the influence of the Treasure Coast can be debated. But certainly, some changes are in store.

Because of the Census, the "ideal" number of residents in a congressional district will increase from 639,295 to 696,354. Census results show that the populations in District 15, represented by Bill Posey, R-Rockledge, and District 16, represented by Tom Rooney, R-Tequesta, far exceed that number, and the population of District 23, represented by Alcee Hastings, D-Miramar, is slightly less than the ideal.

And, as voters have said they want to eliminate gerrymandering and for districts to be more compact and follow natural boundaries, such as city and county lines, as much as possible, Districts 16 and 23 are certainly likely to change as they are among the most gerrymandered in the state.

Rooney's District 16 extends from one coast of Florida to the other and includes portions of Martin, St. Lucie, Palm Beach, Charlotte, Glades, Hendry, Highlands and Okeechobee counties. Some of those counties have very little in common.

Hastings' District 23 meanders through South Florida and includes parts of Martin and St. Lucie counties, stretching to Fort Pierce, and sections of Palm Beach, Broward and Hendry counties. The main thing those areas have is a large Democratic and African-American population, represented by the black Democratic congressman.

Posey's District 15 is more compact and includes all of Indian River County along with portions of Brevard, Polk and Osceola counties.

As a result of the divided interests and divided representation on the Treasure Coast, much of Rooney's focus has been on St. Lucie and Martin counties, Hastings' focus has been largely on Fort Pierce, and Posey's focus has been largely on Indian River County and the Space Coast.

The congressional district lines are going to be redrawn in some fashion and, as that process proceeds, residents of Florida and the Treasure Coast will have unprecedented opportunities to have their say on where the lines should go.

Dozens of public hearings are to be conducted this summer and fall to receive input on the redistricting process. And software will be available on Internet sites for residents to give their input.

"Our purpose is to have 19 million auditors, 19 million participating in the reapportionment process," said Don Gaetz, R-Niceville, chairman of the Senate Reapportionment Committee. "It's to invite not just the politicians and interest groups, but to invite people who live in the neighborhoods and communities to tell us where they think the lines should be drawn."

The most useful public tools may be through the Florida House's Redistricting Committee, chaired by Will Weatherford, R-Wesley Chapel, House Speaker-elect. Beginning in July, an Internet site called MyDistrictBuilder — with links on Facebook, Twitter and YouTube — will allow the public as well as lawmakers to access information and make proposals on district lines.

In the meantime, residents can get substantial information about the process and the schedule for implementing the changes at www.floridaredistricting.org.

By their votes last year on fair district amendments to the state Constitution, Florida residents indicated they wanted more public involvement and less legislative control over where district lines are drawn for Congress and for state House and Senate districts. The opportunity for that is forthcoming and people need to take advantage of it. The outcome could be immeasurably important.

Miami will fight Census figures, believes population over 500,000 - Breaking News

<http://www.miamiherald.com/2011/04/06/2154462/miami-will-fight-census-figures.html>

April 8, 2011

Miami, suffering the same budget constraints as many other major U.S. cities, has begun a challenge to the 2010 Census count that put the city's population at just under 400,000 – a move that if successful could eventually net the city tens of millions of dollars.

City leaders and experts on the Census believe the actual number of Miami residents is above 500,000, and blame the low count on chronically under-reporting undocumented immigrants, and on a couple of new problems unique to Miami: the inability of Census takers to get past security guards at many of the new condo towers that line Brickell, downtown Miami and even Midtown Miami, and a flood of new families that left Haiti after the January 2010 earthquake.

Miami Mayor Tomas Regalado said he recently visited the principal of Little Haiti's Jesse J. McCrary, Jr. Elementary school, who told him he was "overwhelmed by new arrivals from Haiti after the earthquake. In the past two months at that school they have admitted 78 children."

Getting Census takers into Brickell condo towers, meanwhile, has "always been a problem," said Miami Commissioner Marc Sarnoff, whose district includes most of the city's skyscrapers. The problem has only been compounded by the new residential towers in Brickell and downtown, making it difficult for the Census to accurately reflect the area's recent population boom.

"I got them into about five of them [buildings]," he said, adding: "They've always underreported Brickell."

Outside experts on the Census hired by the city say an undercount could cause Miami to be shortchanged by more than \$20 million in federal money for much-needed services like affordable housing and policing. The city's share of sales and tax revenues are also based in large part on population figures.

A study recently commissioned by the U.S. Conference of Mayors estimated that an undercount could mean more than a \$1 billion of lost revenue over the next decade for Miami.

To challenge the Census headcount, the city is looking to Social Compact, a Washington D.C.-based nonprofit that helps encourage private investment in inner cities. The last time Social Compact worked with Miami, in 2008, it successfully challenged annual population estimates issued by the U.S. Census Bureau separately from the decennial count. The Bureau bumped up the city's estimated population by more than 80,000 residents, bringing Miami's population to 424,000 residents.

But the 2010 Census count, though substantially lower than the estimate, now becomes the official baseline for the city, even though most demographers consider the estimates to be more reliable than the headcount, which is notorious for missing minorities and the poor.

John Talmage, the former president and CEO of Social Compact, said that his analysis, which relies on various population databases, would put Miami's population at around 504,000. He noted that only 68 percent of Miami's residents returned Census questionnaires, below the 72 percent average nationwide, and in some areas such as Little Haiti and parts of downtown the return rate was below 50 percent.

A recent study by Miami's Downtown Development Authority showed many of the towers built during the real estate boom, which were mostly empty three years ago, are now more than 85 percent full.

The challenge, though, could prove difficult. According to the U.S. Census website, potential count

problems for the 2000 census were identified for fewer than three percent of jurisdictions across the United States, and the total net gain in the U.S. population of 281 million was just 2,700 people.

Talmage told city officials there are two ways Social Compact can go about challenging the numbers: send workers back out to the streets to recount — an expensive option New York City has used — or spot-check addresses and use available databases, including data from Florida Power & Light, to develop accurate population figures.

Regalado is being joined in his fight to adjust the Census numbers by his daughter, Miami-Dade School Board Member Raquel Regalado. already facing severe state budget cuts, Miami-Dade's public schools — 53 of which are in the city — stand to be shortchanged millions of dollars in federal funding for low-income students if the official population number doesn't rise, she said.

"We are in a situation where we have to use everything in our power to retain as much of the funding as possible," Raquel Regalado said.

Miami Herald staff writers Kathleen McGrory and Andres Viglucci contributed to this report.

Redistricting Battle Under Way Across U.S.

<http://www.nytimes.com/2011/04/08/us/politics/08redistricting.html?pagewanted=print>

April 8, 2011

WASHINGTON — As a congressman from Buffalo, [Brian Higgins](#) is usually on the receiving end of entreaties from high-powered lobbyists. But with state lawmakers in Albany and nationwide preparing to redraw their electoral districts, Mr. Higgins has turned the tables, appointing his own lobbyist to try to save his district — and his job.

Mr. Higgins, a Democrat, hired a longtime Albany insider, the former majority leader of the New York Assembly, Paul Tokasz, to do his bidding in the once-a-decade process of recarving the state voting map. With so much riding on the outcome, “you can’t leave it to chance — you have to be aggressive about it,” Mr. Tokasz said.

Now that census population figures have been tallied and redistricting is beginning in earnest, hundreds of officials around the country are relying on a wide array of political tools — some unorthodox, many old standbys — to try to keep their grip on power, or pry it away from their opponents.

Beyond hiring lobbyists, major players in Washington — including high-priced lawyers, union officials, House leaders and national party operatives — are spending time and money to influence how officials in state capitals design the political maps that will affect the balance of power in Congress for the next decade.

The stakes are enormous, with Republicans looking to use their control of a majority of statehouses to cement their hold on the House in 2012 and beyond. Eighteen states are either adding or losing Congressional seats; Texas is the big winner with four additional seats, while New York and Ohio are each losing two.

“What we want,” said Representative Lynn Westmoreland, a Georgia Republican who is leading his party’s national redistricting, “is to make sure this issue is on everyone’s radar and put ourselves in position to defend a lot more maps.”

At the same time, state leaders are facing countervailing pressures from reform-minded groups that want to lessen the impact of partisan politics on a process that has been plagued for decades by shenanigans — and symbolized by the oddly shaped district maps that take their nickname (“gerrymander”) from an early 19th-century Massachusetts governor, Elbridge Gerry, who drew the first one in the shape of a salamander.

In New York, for example, Gov. [Andrew M. Cuomo](#) is pushing to create an independent commission to redraw the boundaries for Congressional and legislative districts, with strong support from government watchdog groups.

In Florida, political leaders have set up [MyDistrictBuilder](#), a Web site that will allow voters to propose new, nonbinding maps for the state’s districts. And in Virginia, teams of students from area colleges entered a contest to design new Congressional maps to be considered by a bipartisan advisory commission appointed by Gov. [Bob McDonnell](#).

Still, few are betting against the old guard. “In the politics of redistricting, the legislators still prefer to do it in the back rooms,” said J. Gerald Hebert, who is executive director of the [Campaign Legal Center](#), a nonprofit group in Washington that has pushed for greater transparency in redistricting.

Nationally, the Democratic and Republican parties are each expected to raise \$10 million or more for political and legal costs to help state parties in redistricting, according to party leaders and strategists.

Party leaders say they are mindful of avoiding the legal problems that tripped up the former

Republican congressman [Tom DeLay](#) after he successfully led a wholesale redistricting effort in Texas in 2003.

Mr. DeLay's efforts, which led Texas Democrats to flee the state for Oklahoma in a walkout similar to those seen this year in the labor disputes in Wisconsin and Indiana, produced more seats for state Republicans in Texas and helped the [Republican Party](#) gain control of the House in Washington in 2004.

But the notoriety of the episode underscored Mr. DeLay's brass-knuckles political style and ultimately helped cause his abrupt departure as House majority leader as well as his conviction last November for money laundering as part of the redistricting effort.

Democrats, aided by a ruling last year by the [Federal Election Commission](#) that declared redistricting work exempt from some election financing restrictions, have set up a trust fund for litigation growing out of the redistricting. The trust's structure will allow Democrats to raise unlimited amounts of "soft" money without running afoul of finance restrictions put in place in 2002 by the McCain-Feingold law, election lawyers say.

The Democrats' fund-raising is intended to provide "the best data, the best ability to analyze the data, and the best legal team we can," said Representative Mike Thompson, a California Democrat leading the party's redistricting efforts across the country.

"We'll raise whatever we need to raise to do that," he said in an interview.

Lawmakers say they are taking nothing for granted. Mr. Thompson quips that his own Napa Valley district has two borders that California legislators cannot change — the Pacific Ocean and the Oregon state line — but beyond that, "who knows what they'll do?"

Republicans have not yet set up an organization to raise money for redistricting, as the Democrats have done. But Mr. Westmoreland, the Georgia congressman, scoffed at the notion that Democrats have a head start. "As long as they think that they're in the lead, I'm going to let them think that they're in the lead," he said.

Individual members of Congress and outside groups are also angling to influence the outcome.

Members of New York's House delegation, for instance, pumped about \$378,000 from their own campaign accounts into the coffers of state lawmakers in Albany during the last election cycle, according to an analysis of state campaign records by the [New York Public Interest Research Group](#), a government watchdog organization, as normally obscure legislative races drew strong national attention with the redistricting battle looming.

Even Representative Joseph Crowley, a powerful local [Democratic Party](#) chairman in New York City and a national leader in the party, appears concerned about the prospect of Democrats' losing two seats in the redistricting. Like Representative Higgins and a handful of others, he recently hired a prominent Democratic lobbyist, Brian Meara, to work on redistricting for him.

Mr. Crowley did not return calls seeking comment. But his office indicated that he was too busy with his Congressional work to monitor the Albany redistricting by himself and so he decided to hire a lobbyist to do it.

Critics see the idea of members of Congress hiring private lobbyists to influence state lawmakers — all in an effort to retain their own power — as a bit unseemly, but hardly surprising.

The redistricting process is "brazenly political," said Blair Horner, legislative director for the [New York Public Interest Research Group](#). "What's best for the public is an interesting afterthought. What matters most is protecting their own political skins."

The [American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees](#), meanwhile, has set up the

Foundation for the Future, a tax-exempt “527” group with a \$750,000 budget to help demographers, mapmakers and other experts aid Democrats. The organization grew out of meetings the union had with top advisers to [Nancy Pelosi](#), the House minority leader, and others.

Representatives of the union and the foundation huddled recently near the Capitol with Democratic House members from Texas, where Republicans are seeking to map all four new seats in conservative-leaning areas — eight years after Mr. Delay pushed through his own infamous plan in Texas. Democrats who attended the meeting predicted Texas would again be a major redistricting battleground.

Relations between state lawmakers and their Congressional counterparts in Washington are often distant at best. But in the once-a-decade ritual, state lawmakers in Texas and elsewhere have suddenly been hearing frequently from jittery members of their Washington delegations.

“It’s been gratifying to know,” State Senator Craig Estes of Texas, who sits on the redistricting committee, told a local newspaper, “how many congressmen are now my closest friends.”

Read here: Speaker Cannon's memo regarding the House Redistricting Committee and Subcommittees

<http://insidethelinesfla.com/legislative/read-here-speaker-cannon%e2%80%99s-memo-regarding-the-house-redistricting-committee-and-subcommittees>

April 10, 2011

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On Friday, Speaker Dean Cannon sent a memo to House Members regarding their interest in serving on the House Redistricting Committee and Subcommittees, and the timeline for the House's redistricting outreach efforts. You can view the memo at www.floridaredistricting.org under Legislative Resources.

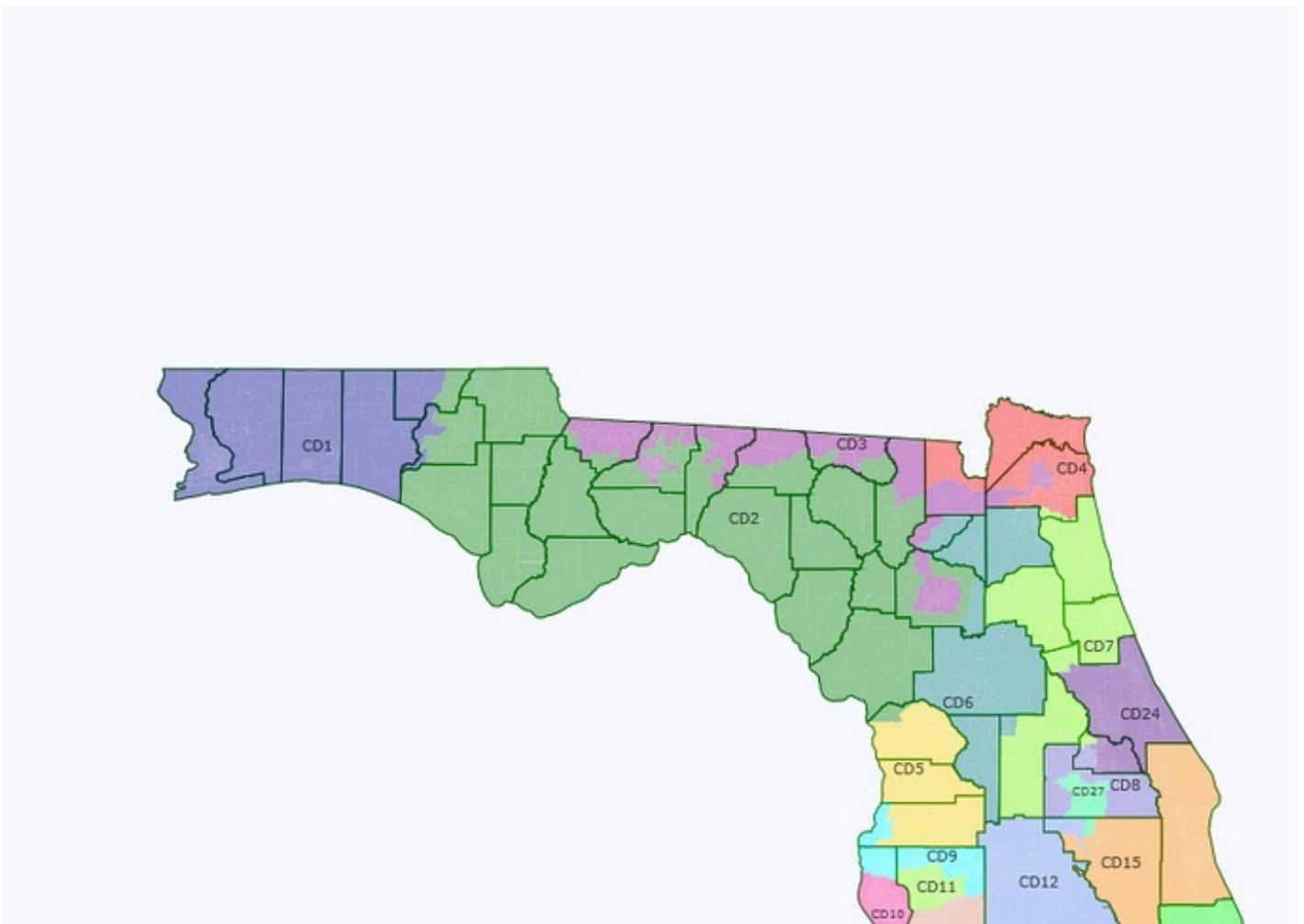
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Red Racing Horses:: My first stab at Congressional Resdistricting in Florida (Part 1: Panhandle and North Florida)

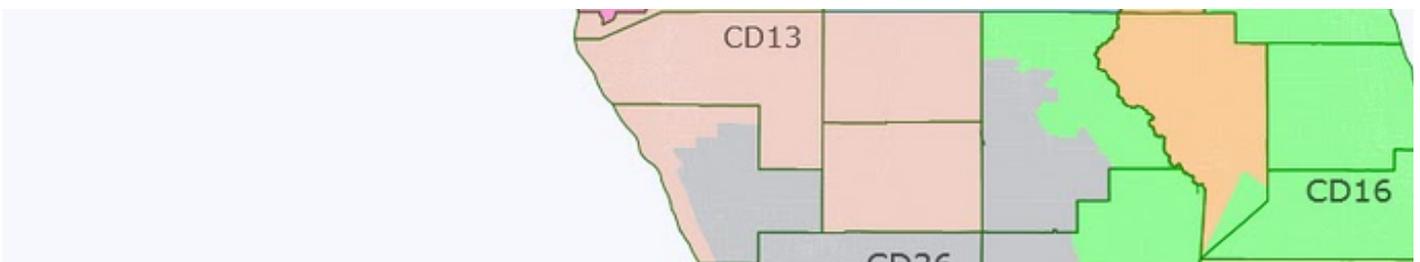
<http://redracinghorses.com/diary/268/my-first-stab-at-congressional-resdistricting-in-florida-part-1-panhandle-and-north-florida> April 10, 2011

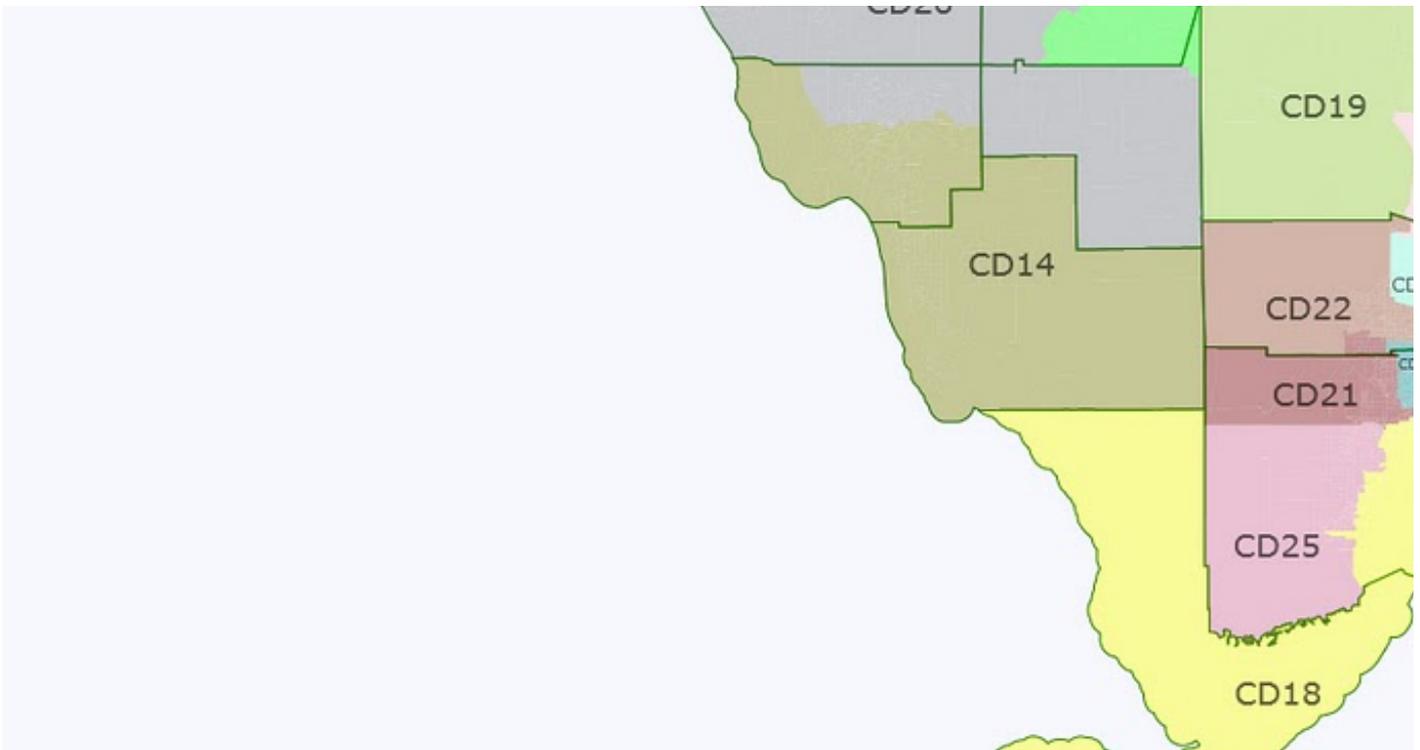
As a former Florida resident, I try to create a 27-district plan for Florida using Daves Redistricting App 2.0 with the 2010 population data. I try to allow most major counties to have at least 1 district that's totally within them. If circumstances do not allow this, I will then keep counties whole as much as possible out of my good government instincts and to match the spirits of Florida's Amendment 6 on congressional redistricting. The only major exception is in my FL-3, designed to allow the Dems to keep a foothold in North Florida, and in the areas where my new districts are located (more of that covered under my districts). Each of the district will also have a deviation from the ideal population per district of 696,341 by less than 1000 people, and the results can be seen as the following:

Overview- Northern half

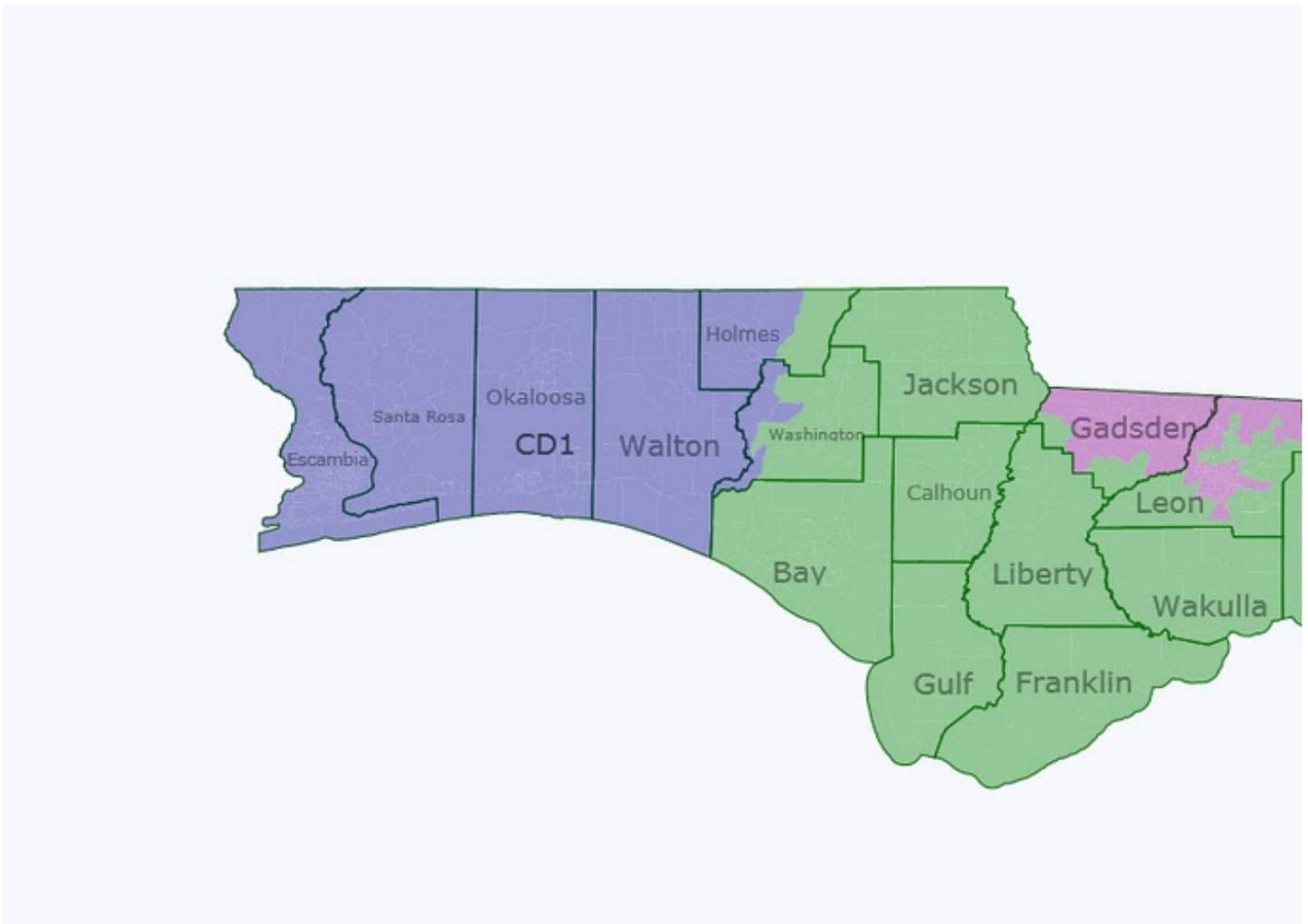


Overview- Southern half

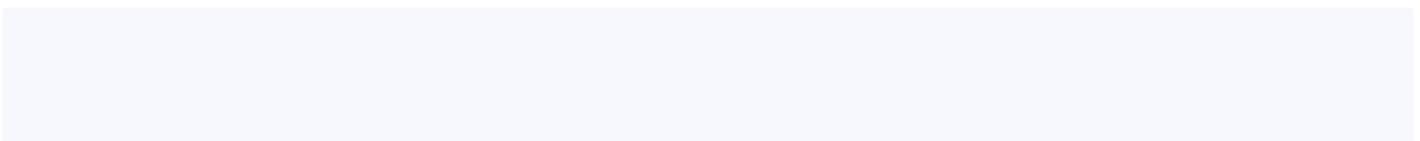


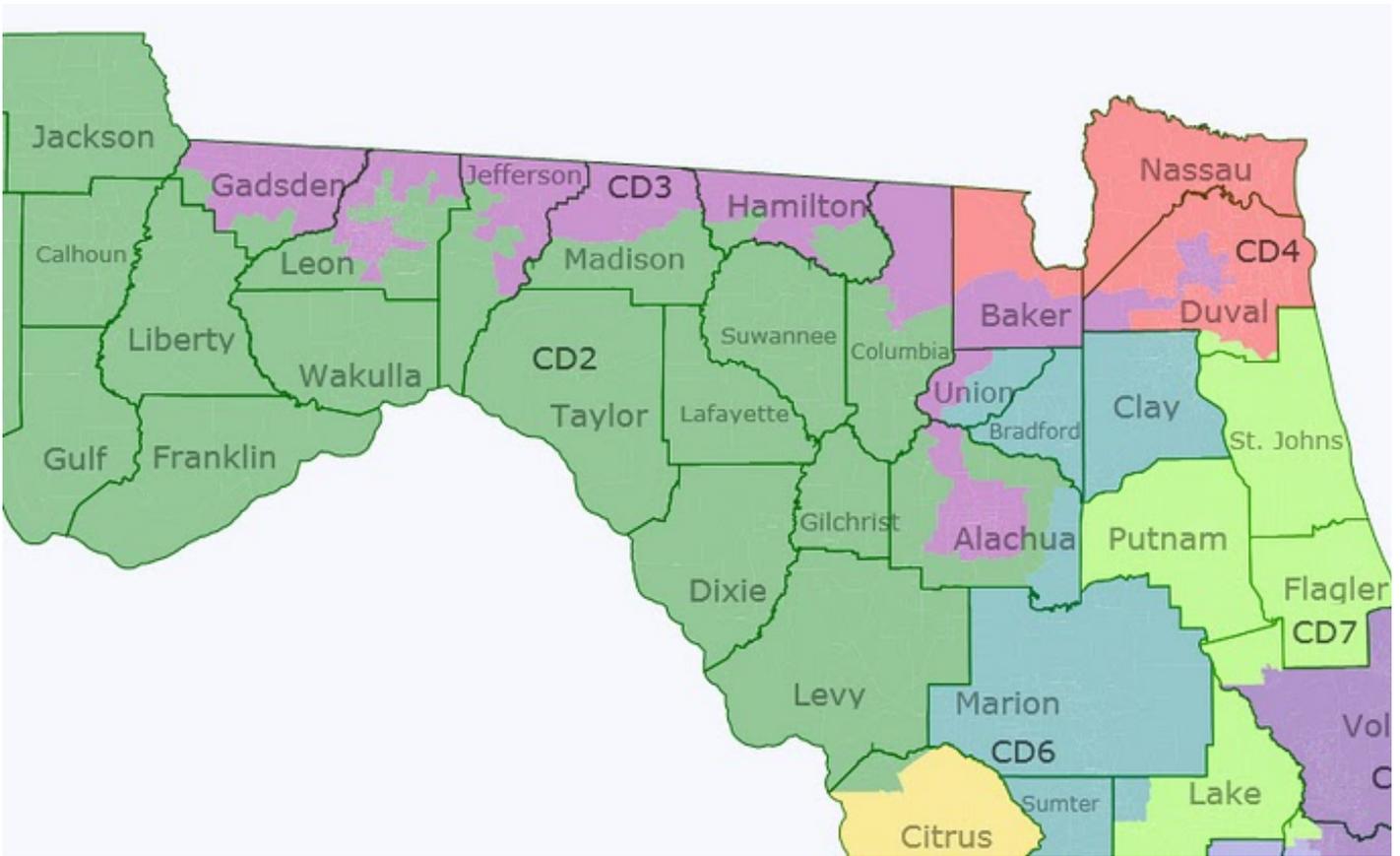


Panhandle

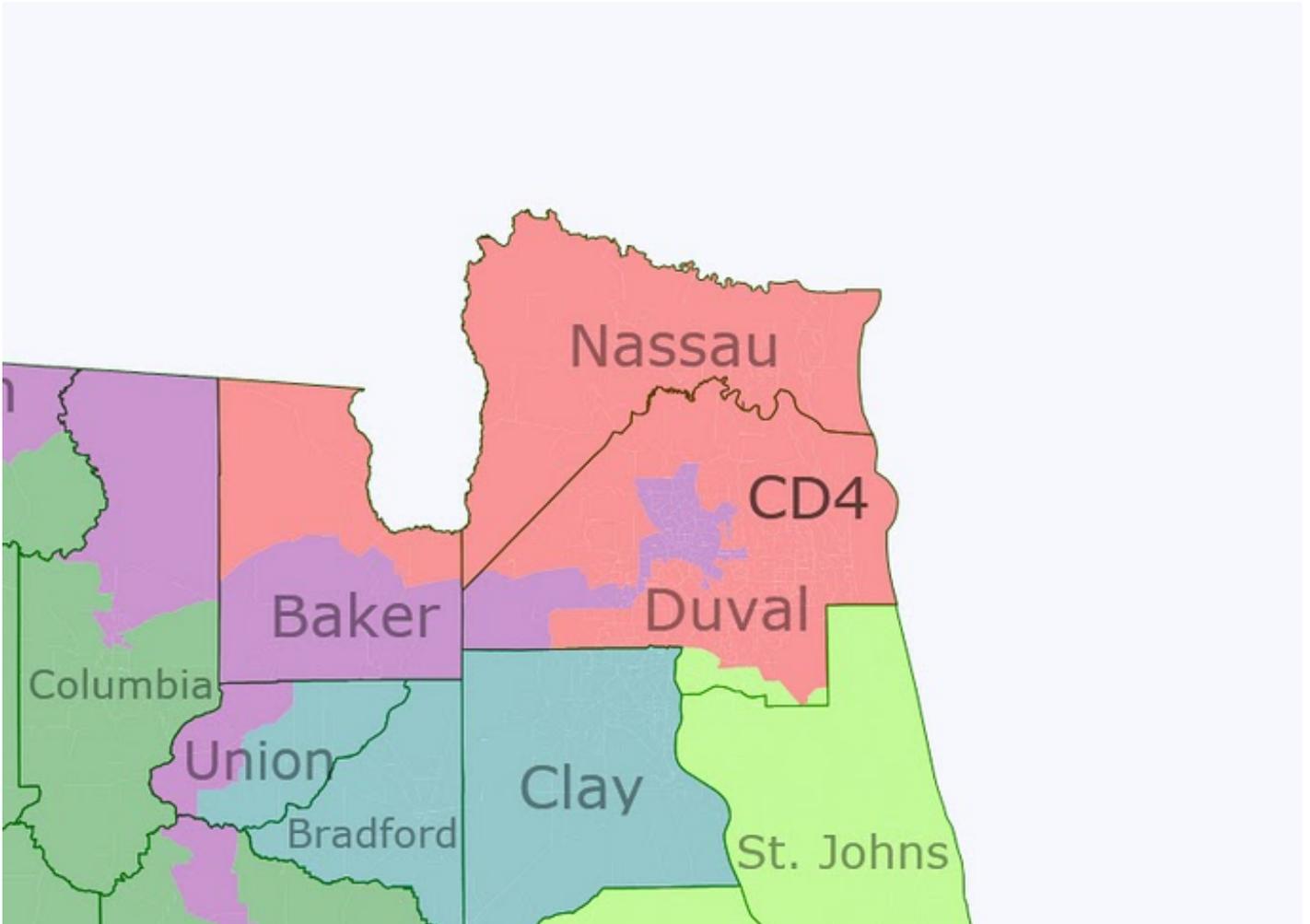


North Florida





Jacksonville Area



FL-1 (Rep. Jeff Miller, R- Chumuckla), Blue

This district now consists all four of the Panhandle's westernmost counties (Escambia, Santa Rosa, Okaloosa and Walton), but retreats from most of Washington County and about one-third of Holmes County. **Safe Republican.**

FL-2 (Rep. Steve Southerland, R-Panama City), Green

Now dips into Holmes and Washington County. It also takes Levy County from FL-5 and FL-6 and gain most of rural Alachua County from FL-6. On the other hand, it is largely removed from Gadsden County and the city of Tallahassee. **Likely Republican.**

FL-3 (Rep. Corrine Brown, D-Jacksonville), Purple

This is the new North Florida Democratic vote sink, and one of the few really ugly gerrymander here. It spans from Gadsden County through Tallahassee; with one arm extending to the black areas of Jacksonville and the other extending into the city of Gainesville. These areas are the only Democratic bastions in otherwise heavily GOP North Florida, and I feel that compact districts containing Gainesville, Tallahassee and black areas of Jacksonville would be fairly to heavily Republican. On the other hand, this incarnation allows the Democratic votes in the Orlando area to be freed up. They will be in my FL-27. Rep. Brown should still be fine in this 43% black district, although she may face primary challenge from Gainesville or Tallahassee candidates like former State Sen. Al Lawson, who had unsuccessfully primaried then-Rep. Allen Boyd last year. **Likely Democratic.**

FL-4 (Rep. Ander Crenshaw, R-Jacksonville), Red

This district is now more focused at the Jacksonville area. It takes most of Duval County that's not in FL-3 (minus a small southern sliver in FL-7), all of Nassau County and Northern half of Baker County. The rural areas formerly attached to it are divided among FL-2, 3 and 6. **Safe Republican.**

FL-6 (Rep. Cliff Stearns, R-Ocala), Teal

It unites Marion County (Stearn's political base) with portions from the old FL-8, and also unites the very conservative Jacksonville suburb of Clay County with bits from the old FL-3. These hubs are connected with a sliver of rural Alachua County. It then extends South to take all of Sumter County and the Lady Lake (The Villages) portion of Lake County. The real competition would be between a Clay County and a Marion County/The Villages Republican. **Safe Republican.**

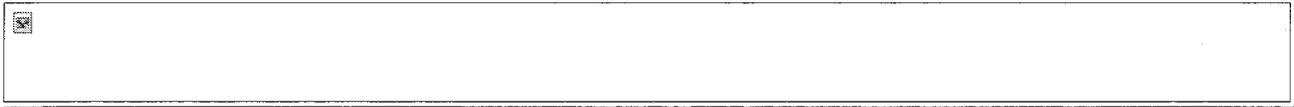
FL-7 (Rep. John Mica, R-Winter Park), Apple Green

While Rep. Mica's home of Winter Park is drawn out of this district, it retains significant portions of his current constituency at St. Johns and Flagler counties. It now includes all of Putnam and most of Lake (minus the Lady Lake area) counties, with small slivers in Duval, Volusia and Seminole counties (with no significant population centers in the latter two) just for population purposes. Should be fine for Mica as long as he is willing to move. In an open-seat scenario, expect a vigorous GOP primary between a St. Augustine and a Lake County candidate. **Safe Republican.**

My partisan count for the seats so far are **5R, 1D.**

Central Florida districts (**FL-5, 8-12, 15, 24 and 27**) up next.

31, Male, Independent, MS-02 (Hometown FL-19)



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Sunday, April 10th, 2011 | Posted by [Peter Schorsch](#)

Read here: Speaker Cannon's memo regarding the House Redistricting Committee and Subcommittees



On Friday, Speaker Dean Cannon sent a memo to House Members regarding their interest in serving on the House Redistricting Committee and Subcommittees, and the timeline for the House's redistricting outreach efforts. You can view the memo below:

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The Florida House of Representatives
Office of the Speaker

Dean Cannon
Speaker

MEMORANDUM

TO: Members, Florida House of Representatives

FROM: Dean Cannon, Speaker

DATE: April 8, 2011

RE: House Redistricting Committee and Subcommittees

During the 2012 Session, the House will engage in the constitutionally required process of redistricting. The lead up to this process will begin this summer. Starting in July and ending in November, the House, in conjunction with the Senate, will hold approximately 30 public hearings across Florida.

The House is developing our next web-based redistricting application (MyDistrictBuilder) currently available in "beta" format at www.floridahouse.gov/redistricting. The application will be fully functional by this summer. The 2010 Census data has been uploaded into the beta version of our House application.

Some additional preparatory work will be required prior to this summer. Consequently, the Redistricting Committee, the House Redistricting Subcommittee, the Senate Redistricting Subcommittee, and the Congressional Redistricting Subcommittee will hold several meetings during the final weeks of this Session.

Members interested in serving on the Redistricting Committee or subcommittees should notify the Speaker's Office by 6:00 p.m. on Tuesday, April 12, 2011, by e-mailing spk@flh.com. Please be aware that service on the redistricting committee or subcommittees will require attending 25% of the summer's public hearings, including attending meetings outside of your home region.

As we begin the redistricting process, I would remind you that we will conduct this process in accordance with both the letter and the spirit of the law. Consequently, Members should refrain from discussing their personal political ambitions, their personal district preferences, or the ambitions or preferences of other candidates or affiliates with the Chairman, the members, or the staff of the Redistricting Committee or the redistricting subcommittees.

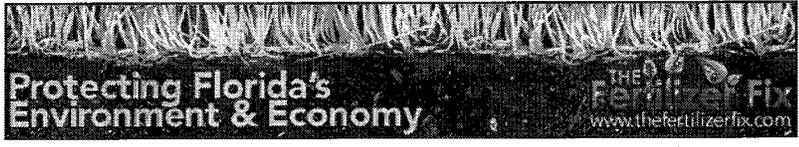
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redistricting Legislature: Legislature wants to be the fox guarding the redistricting process

<http://www.sun-sentinel.com/news/opinion/fl-nscol-redistricting-legislature-0420110411,0,7450400.story>

April 11, 2011

Everyone knows that foxes shouldn't guard henhouses. Everyone, that is, except for the [Florida Legislature](#). As the debate rages over the state's next round of redistricting, the Legislature argues that it can be trusted to draw the new lines fairly. The Legislature also insists that no one else — not even the people — can tell it how to go about its district-drawing business.

Some background: In November, Florida's voters approved two initiatives aimed at stopping gerrymandering. The measures bar politicians from trying to "favor or disfavor a political party or an incumbent" when they draw district lines. Not surprisingly, the Legislature hates the new rules. Its leaders tried various shenanigans to defeat the initiatives, and the House has now joined a lawsuit claiming that the measures are illegal.

The suit focuses on the Constitution's Elections Clause, which states that electoral rules "shall be prescribed in each State by the Legislature thereof." According to the Legislature, this language means that it, and only it, has the power to design congressional districts. Any interference with its authority — even a ballot measure endorsed by the people themselves — is unlawful.

This is a bad argument that, if accepted, would entrench gerrymanders across the country. Starting with the merits, the Supreme Court rejected a nearly identical challenge almost a century ago. In 1915, Ohio's general assembly passed a district plan that the public then voted down in a referendum. The Court upheld the referendum because the Elections Clause merely authorizes the state political process as a whole to regulate redistricting.

The same logic applies to the Florida initiatives. Ballot measures are explicitly sanctioned by the Florida Constitution, and so can be used to create new electoral rules. The Elections Clause doesn't distinguish between regular legislative action and policies enacted in other ways.

The awful implications of the Legislature's position are also worth noting. For one thing, if only legislatures could draw district lines, then governors and courts would be barred from taking any part in redistricting. The separation of powers would be erased in the electoral arena.

Most insidiously, the Legislature's position would bar efforts to reform redistricting via direct democracy. Since politicians have little incentive to shake up the status quo, measures placed directly on the ballot are often the only way that the public can fight gerrymandering. If the Legislature has its way, though, the expressed will of the people would be just another infringement of its limitless power.

The suit against the initiatives, then, is deeply flawed in terms of both law and policy. What it says about the Legislature's mindset is also disturbing. The whole point of the measures was to convey the public's dislike of politics as usual in Tallahassee. But the Legislature seems not to have gotten the message.

Nicholas Stephanopoulos is an academic fellow and lecturer at Columbia Law School, where he specializes in election law.

Redistricting: the ultimate over-under game

<http://www2.highlandstoday.com/content/2011/apr/11/LANEWSO1-redistricting-the-ultimate-over-under-gam/>

April 11, 2011

By GARY PINNELL

Highlands Today

Published: April 11, 2011

SEBRING - It's redistricting time again, and Highlands County Elections Supervisor Joe Campbell is hoping that the representatives and senators on the redistricting committees will be a little easier to work with.

"The last time they did it, they followed US 27 down to Sun 'n Lake, went three-quarters around the traffic circle, then west on Granada, and they went right through a bunch of vacant lots that had been platted, but no one was living there," Campbell said Friday.

When a house was built, should Campbell put the bedroom in one district and a living room in another? And what determines where the homeowner should vote: The bedroom, where he sleeps, or the living room, where he spends most of his time?

"I called them," Campbell said. "They said, 'That's your problem.' It was a nightmare. This year, they've said they're going to try to work with us a little better. I just want them to use some kind of a marker, like a street, and not just a census block."

In the 1990s, Highlands County was into two different state house districts, two state senate districts, and two congressional districts. It got easier in the 2000s. Currently, the county is split only by state house districts 66 and 77.

Where will we go?

Congressional District 16, represented by Tom Rooney, R-Tequesta, is overbalanced by 101,366 people.

Highlands County has 100,000 people, and it's in the northwest corner of District 16. Is there a chance the whole county could wind up in a different congressional district? Even worse, could the county be split into four congressional districts?

District 16 is surrounded by three districts to the north and west that are also over: CD12, +145,000, represented by Dennis Ross, R-Lakeland; CD 13, +61,000, represented by Vern Buchanan, R-Sarasota; and CD 15, +117,000, represented by Bill Posey, R-Rockledge.

Highlands is on the borders of 12, 13 and 15, so it could be pulled into any of the three.

The other contiguous district is 23, to the south, which is under by 12,000.

GOP chair Andy Tuck spoke with Rooney at a Lincoln Day dinner in Charlotte County.

"He told me he was going to fight to keep Highlands County in his district, because he was the only Florida member on the agriculture committee, and we are in a heavily agricultural district."

Both the Democrat and the Republican committee chairs agree that Highlands County should remain in one congressional district and one state house district.

"My preference would be to stay in District 16," said Tuck. "We have a great congressman (Rooney)."

"You don't know what you're going to get with a new district," Tuck said.

After talking it over with former Democratic chair Pat Hogan, interim chair Paula House agreed. Although Republicans only outnumber Democrats by 27,698 to 24,804 (with 11,237 independents), the county predominately votes Republican in congressional and state elections.

"So it doesn't make much difference which district we're in," House said.

State house districts

House District 66, represented by Ben Albritton, R-Wauchula, has 5,348 too many people. House District 77, represented by Denise Grimsley, is short by 9,223 people.

Could the Avon Park and north Sebring precincts be drawn into District 77?

It's not known how many men, women and children live in Precincts 4 and 16, but Karen Kensinger, Campbell's deputy supervisor of elections, said there are 7,800 voters in precincts 4 and 16 – northwest Sebring and Avon Park.

"The least number of districts you've got, it makes it the easier for us," Campbell said.

House and Tuck also agree that Highlands County should receive Avon Park and north Sebring from HD 77.

"And only because it makes no sense at all for a little sliver of Highlands County to be in another district," Tuck said.

What will happen?

Those are geographical decisions, Highlands County leaders acknowledged. However, redistricting is an inherently political decision based on an objective census.

"The Redistricting Committee has not been chosen," Albritton said. "I trust that the members ... will be well equipped and eager to listen to public input and make fair decisions on our state's district designs. Rep. Will Weatherford, the redistricting committee chair, is a very fair man, a great listener and a great consensus builder. "

The constitutional amendments Floridians adopted in the Fall 2010 election reflect that spirit, House said.

"They suggest keeping neighborhood identity together," House said. "There are some guidelines like that, that they're going to have take seriously."

"The House Redistricting Committee is putting together the most open and interactive redistricting process in our state's history," Grimsley said. "We will gather input from members of the public through 30-plus public meetings this summer and encourage Floridians to submit their own redistricting maps through the online program, MyDistrictBuilder."

"It's too soon to tell what the final product of this open, interactive redistricting process will be and where districts may or may not end up," she said.

Highlands Today reporter Gary Pinnell can be reached at gpinnell@highlandstoday.com or 863-386-5828

Democrats Unveil Plans to Beat Tea Party at Own Game in Brandon Meeting

<http://bloomingdale.patch.com/articles/democrats-unveil-plans-to-beat-tea-party-at-own-game-in-brandon-meeting-2>

April 13, 2011

Democrats are in the process of setting up their own think tank in Florida, a party leader revealed in candid talk with Brandon supporters last night.

Tired of ceding the intellectual high ground to their opponents, Alex Sink said the party is well on its way to forming its own think tank.

Sink, the 2010 Democratic nominee for governor, lost to Republican Rick Scott by a 1 percent margin.

"There has got to be a place doing thorough, honest research that people can turn to. We don't want people saying Florida Democrats have no ideas."

Sink, of Thonotosassa, former chief financial officer for the state, unveiled the plan at an April 12 meeting of the East Hillsborough County Democratic Club.

Decrying the abundance of think tanks and institutes on the right, Sink said it was time Democrats joined the fray. Helping small business growth, increasing employment and protecting the environment would be a few of the core ideas of the Democrat's new think tank.

"We need to counterbalance (right-wing think tanks)," Sink said.

Ostensibly a meeting to discuss redistricting in Florida, Sink made the revelation toward the end of her remarks to local democrats at a small Causeway Boulevard restaurant.

On redrawing districts, Brandon and eastern Hillsborough County need more equitable representation in Congress and democrats hope an upcoming redistricting plan will do just that. But don't hold your breath, Sink told local Democrats.

"More than likely this whole thing will end up in the courts and a judge will end up drawing the districts. We can just hope for reasonable judges."

Florida's voters last year overwhelmingly approved two ballot initiatives aimed at stopping politicians from trying to "favor or disfavor a political party or an incumbent" when they draw district lines.

The amendments aim to stop lawmakers from drawing legislative or congressional districts that favor a particular political party. Lawmakers must finish drawing new Florida districts, including two new U.S. House seats, before the 2012 elections.

Even if a redrawn congressional district results in a Republican victory, Sink said she would be happy to have someone who was accessible.

"If we are going to have a Republican congressional representative, I'd just as soon take a Republican from Brandon you might run into at lunch. I'm tired of splitting our congressional representation over three people, none of whom lives near Brandon. Where's our voice? We need to make these districts start making sense."

Current voting boundaries are out of date and don't reflect how Brandon has changed, said M. Gail Gottlieb, director of programs for the Democratic Club.

"(Sink) is getting to the root of the problem," Gottlieb said. "This area is not represented well and the boundaries are antiquated. They don't reflect the diversity and reality of Brandon today."

Democrats are hoping for boundaries that reflect those realities when the lines are redrawn, Gottlieb said.

“Having a fair district is the start, after that let the chips fall where they may.”

Looking ahead to next year’s elections, Sink said Democrats can regain seats but they will need to work harder.

“Maybe we need to make the next election about dissatisfaction with Tallahassee,” she said. “We believe there will be a huge backlash favoring Democrats next year.”

If so, Democrats will need to do a better job getting their voters to the polling booths. Sixty percent of Republican voters turned out for last fall’s statewide elections with only 48 percent of Democrats showing up to vote.

“We can’t win if our voters are not motivated,” Sink warned. “(Senator) Bill Nelson will be fighting for his life in the 2012 elections and our president will be on the ballot so we are going to need a very aggressive get-out-the-vote campaign.”

The East Hillsborough Democratic Club was formed in 2005 by supporters of presidential candidate John Kerry and has members in Brandon, Riverview, Plant City, Mango, Lithia, and points in between. The group gathers from 6:30 to 8:30 p.m. on the second Tuesday of each month at Giordano’s Restaurant, 11310 Causeway Blvd., in Brandon.

Information: Angie Angel, club president, 813-334-8376 or demsinbrandon@aol.com.

Great, we'll send you an email as soon as a follow-up is published!

Redistricting Should Reflect Latino Growth, Say Texas Groups : NPR

<http://www.npr.org/2011/04/13/135381548/redistricting-should-reflect-latino-growth-say-texas-groups>

April 13, 2011

Census figures show the population of Texas has grown eighteen percent in the last decade. Hispanics account for sixty five percent of that increase, which has earned Texas four additional congressional seats. As new congressional districts are being created, some Latino groups argue that representation should reflect the changing demographic. To discuss the Lone Star state's redistricting process, host Michel Martin speaks with Texas State Senator and chair of the senate's redistricting committee, Kel Seliger and Nina Perales, director of litigation of the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund (MALDEF).

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MICHEL MARTIN, host:

I'm Michel Martin and this is TELL ME MORE from NPR News.

Coming up, the federal government's new push to figure out why minorities tend to have poorer health than the majority white population and to do something about that. We'll talk with a top official from the health and human services department about what's being called a first-of-its-kind effort to narrow the health gap.

But, first, in Texas and across the country, a battle is intensifying and lines are being drawn, literally. U.S. census numbers have come out and states now have the daunting task of redistricting, taking stock of their new population numbers and redrawing their congressional districts. People are watching states with huge population growth like Texas to see exactly how growing communities will be represented in the political process.

Texas' population surged 18 percent since the year 2000, allowing the state to pick up four congressional seats. That's more than any other state. And Latinos accounted for a 65 percent of that population growth. Latinos have also driven huge population growth in Florida, Arizona, Nevada and Georgia, helping those states pick up additional seats in Congress.

That growth also fuels a question - will states redraw their districts to better reflect their increased Latino populations, and if so, how? Some say that Latinos should be grouped in new districts that make them the majority to increase their political power. Others argue that Latino populations spread over multiple districts can still have significant influence.

We wanted to talk about how Texas is thinking about this, so we've called upon Texas State Senator Kel Seliger. He is chair of the state senate's redistricting committee. He is a Republican. He's serving a second term. And he's with us on the line from his office at the state capitol in Austin, Texas. Welcome, senator, thanks so much for joining us.

State Senator KEL SELIGER (Republican, Texas; Chair, Redistricting Committee): Thank you very much for having me.

MARTIN: We're also joined by Nina Perales. She is the director of litigation for MALDEF, the Mexican-American Legal Defense and Educational Fund. Her organization recently proposed its own redistricting map for the state of Texas, which would create two new majority Latino districts and she's with us now from her office in San Antonio. Nina, thank you for joining us.

Ms. NINA PERALES (Director of Litigation, Mexican-American Legal Defense and Educational Fund): I'm glad to be here.

MARTIN: So, senator, let me start with you. I mean, I think it's fair to say that the goal of each party in the redistricting process is to maximize its own opportunities. That's fair, isn't it?

State Sen. SELIGER: I think that's fair. Yes.

MARTIN: OK. So, how does the new Latino population figure into your goals and strategy for drawing these lines?

State Sen. SELIGER: Because we must have a process and a product that is fair and legal. And the Voter Rights Act makes certain requirements on us when we compose these districts. And those requirements perfectly align with what you're talking about in growth of the overall population in the Latino population. And we must address that growth and the location of the residents of the members of that minority population.

MARTIN: So the first thing is that the districts have to pass constitutional muster, and then the second thing is what? Of course you want to maximize opportunities for Republicans candidates. So, what does that mean?

State Sen. SELIGER: There are no legal requirements to maximize opportunities for Republicans or Democrats, but there certainly are when it comes to historically underrepresented minorities. And so as we draw lines, we look at the requirements of the Voter Rights Act and you can bet that that's exactly what Ms. Perales is doing. And at some point we're going to meet in a legal discussion over all of those lines.

MARTIN: OK. Nina, what are you looking for? As we mentioned, that your organization has recently proposed its own redistricting map. What do you hope for? How exactly do you want the new districts to represent the growth in the Latino population?

I should mention that the population of Latinos in Texas is now 37 percent and it's accounted for - that population has accounted for most of the growth in the population in Texas. So, what do you think should happen?

Ms. PERALES: Well, your numbers are correct. And from our perspective, we don't look at whether districts are Democratic or Republican. We look at whether the districts offer Latinos the opportunity to elect their candidate of choice. So, we work outside the partisan framework. We look at Latino population, we look at voting patterns and we try to draw redistricting plans that offer a fair opportunity for Latinos.

MARTIN: Is it the working assumption that a majority Latino district offers a Latino candidate the best opportunity? Is that the working assumption?

Ms. PERALES: Well, it is under the law when there is what we call racially polarized voting. When Latinos are voting cohesively for their preferred candidate, when non-Latinos or an Anglo majority are voting cohesively for a different preferred candidate, in those situations, you may need to have a Latino majority district to offer an opportunity to elect a Latino-preferred candidate.

MARTIN: And do you believe that that's the case in Texas - that there is racially polarized voting?

Ms. PERALES: Yes. And the courts have found that as well.

MARTIN: And, senator, do you think that that's true? Is that your understanding as well?

State Sen. SELIGER: That is my understanding, yes.

MARTIN: What are the implications there? One can see historically where that might be the case, but you also have new trends in politics throughout the country where minority candidates have been able to achieve electoral success in very diverse circumstances.

Like, for example, in New Mexico, Susana Martinez, who is a Latina, is the governor of the state elected by, obviously, a multiracial coalition. Marco Rubio in Florida, who is of Latino heritage, represents the whole state and statewide office. Not to mention, of course, the president of the United States, who is African-American. So I think that some would argue whether those patterns still hold sway. Nina?

Ms. PERALES: Well, I think it's important to keep two things in mind. First of all, the race of the candidate isn't necessarily tied to whether they're the minority candidate of choice. So, minority voters, Latino voters, can prefer a candidate regardless of his or her race. And we see that in Texas. We see that there are Anglo representatives both in the state house and also in Congress, who are the Latino candidates of choice.

So I think pointing to an elected official who is either African-American or Latino doesn't necessarily tell you whether that person was the candidate of choice of Latino voters. And, also, though, your point is very true that Latinos and other minority voters can be very diverse in their candidate preferences. And as we move forward in time, hopefully we'll become more diverse.

MARTIN: If you're just joining us, you're listening to TELL ME MORE from NPR News. We're talking about efforts to redraw the congressional map, following on new census figures. We're focusing our conversation on Texas, where State Senator Kel Seliger heads up the process. We're also speaking with Nina Perales. She's legislative director for MALDEF, the Mexican-American Legal Defense and Educational Fund.

Senator Seliger, is your - I don't know if you feel comfortable saying this at this point in the process - but do you feel at this point that it is likely that there will be two new majority Latino districts, given all that you know about the population patterns, prior voting patterns and so forth? Do you think - is that the direction that you're heading in?

State Sen. SELIGER: You're right. It's too early to say. But we will certainly assess the population as we go through there, because in some cases, it may very well be required. MALDEF and the coalition to which it belongs, has published a map that clearly shows increased number in Hispanic opportunity districts. And I venture to say since Ms. Perales was involved with it, it is a perfectly valid map.

MARTIN: Nina Perales, can I ask you this? Now, you've told us that your effort is not partisan, but the Latino vote does tend to trend to Democratic. Wouldn't your plan, in effect, add two Democratic seats?

Ms. PERALES: I can't tell you the answer to that because we've never run any political numbers on our districts. We take our role as a nonpartisan advocate very, very seriously. We don't know whether the districts that we've proposed will elect a Democrat or a Republican.

MARTIN: Senator Seliger, couldn't it be an advantage to state Republicans to draw Latino majority districts because that would, in effect, aggregate the Democratic votes in those districts?

State Senator SELIGER: Yes. But I don't know if that's the primary concern of ours. And keep in mind that in a couple of traditionally - that are both Hispanic and Democratic districts, congressional districts - that a couple of Republicans were elected. One Latino and one Anglo. And so it's hard to address any hard and fast rules.

MARTIN: What are you hoping for at the end of this process? And do you think that what you hope for is achievable, which is to say, a process that just about everybody thinks is fair. Senator, I'll give you that first word.

State Sen. SELIGER: That is absolutely the ideal. Whether it's achievable, I don't know. What is achievable, I think is a process, one that is both fair and it's legal. And as far as congressional redistricting goes, it has ended up -at least parts of it in the courts since 1971 - it may be a little bit too optimistic to think that that won't happen to one degree or another this time. But you described

the ideal situation. Sure, we'd love to have it work out that way.

MARTIN: Nina Perales, what about you? Do you feel that at the end of the day that you can achieve a process here that all sides will feel is fair?

Ms. PERALES: Yes. I do believe that we can achieve a fair process. And I think we're off to a great start. Senator Seliger has been very open to proposals and very gracious in considering the proposals that we and others have put forward. And on the House side there is also an openness. We're seeing public hearings and so far, you know, we think the process is working very well.

MARTIN: Nina Perales is the director of litigation for MALDEF, the Mexican-American Legal Defense and Educational Fund. She joined us from her office in San Antonio. Also with us, Kel Seliger. He is the chair of the Texas state Senate's redistricting committee. He is a Republican. He's serving his second term. He represents Amarillo. And he joined us from his office at the state capitol in Austin. I thank you both so much for joining us.

State Sen. SELIGER: Thank you.

Ms. PERALES: Thank you.

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Rep. Corrine Brown Stands Firm Against 'Fair Districts' Fiasco

<http://politic365.com/2011/04/18/rep-corrine-brown-stands-firm-against-%E2%80%99fair-districts%E2%80%99-fiasco/>

April 18, 2011

U.S. Congresswoman Corrine Brown (D-FL) recently spoke out in regard to her steadfast opposition to Fair Districts Florida, an effort to amend the redistricting process in the Sunshine State. "I remain categorically opposed to the plan being advocated by the organization that ironically calls itself 'Fair Districts,' Florida," said Brown. "Certainly, if their plan were carried out, it would bring about the exact opposite of fairness."

The "Fair Districts" amendments, also known as amendments five and six, are supposed to make it illegal to draw legislative and congressional districts "to favor or disfavor an incumbent or political party." The amendments are sponsored and are being supported by a non-profit, non-partisan group out of Miami called "Fair Districts Now."

Congresswoman Brown has been joined by Congressman Mario Diaz-Balart (R-FL), in a lawsuit that claims the amendments violate Federal Law and the U.S. Constitution.

In a statement about her stance, Brown notes the reasons why she is fighting the amendments as follows:

Recently, the United States Supreme Court in *Bartlett v. Strickland* ruled that minority voters who cannot show that they can comprise a majority of the voters in single member districts no longer have the right to be kept together. They now can be split apart.

Ordinarily, the Legislature would have the authority and the discretion to keep these communities together when it draws the new Congressional districts in 2012. However, the language of the new amendment would appear to prohibit drawing new districts that would have a minority plurality population, rather than a majority.

The way the amendment was written will only invite a challenge to a minority plurality district.

Brown warns that the move to split blocks of minority voters up in the name of "fair districts" could lead to the loss of two African American and three Hispanic U.S. House seats, nine African American state legislative seats, and seven minority state Senate seats. Brown wants voters to see through the smoke screen and realize what is truly at stake.

Over one-third of Florida's population is comprised of African American and Hispanic constituents. To silence that many people by making their candidates of choice un-electable would be a violation of Section 2 of the Voters Right Amendment which focuses on ensuring the electoral processes are equally accessible to minority voters.

Brown's second reason for the lawsuit is explained as thus:

Amendment 6 conflicts with the United States Constitution. The Constitution plainly delegates the power to set the "time, place, and manner" for Congressional redistricting to the legislatures of the States. Its language only allows Congress, and not State law or popular referendum, to restrict that authority. The Framers of the Constitution wanted to entrust the power to draw districts to elected legislators.

Brown warns against the political regression minorities in Florida will face if these Amendments are enacted, or if the courts use this legal battle as an opportunity to become the last word in redistricting.

For most of my adult life, there were no minority members of Congress elected from Florida and few

African-Americans elected to the Florida House and Senate. That changed in 1992 when I was elected to Congress, together with Carrie Meek from Miami and Alcee Hastings from Ft. Lauderdale. Both Hastings and I were elected from districts that were plurality Black. African-American voters made up the largest single block of voters in these districts, but not a majority.

She concludes, "Our communities have fought too hard, for too long, to take this giant step backwards to our state's Jim Crow days."

Hopefully Floridians will wise up and realize that the Fair Districts Amendments are not the way to go about exacting a change in leadership; and that casting a vote for or against a particular candidate is the way one goes about that. If these Amendments manage to slip in, minority voters will find their collective voting power diluted; and then when they wish to exact change through the electoral process, there will likely be fewer names on the ballot they want to vote for.

Author: Elesha Barnette



Contributing Blogger/Vlogger @Politic365 --- Prior to joining Politic365, Elesha Barnette spent nine years with Procter & Gamble. Elesha has a rich, diverse background in sales analytics as well as merchandising & marketing of Fortune 500 brands. In addition to her experiences in business development, Elesha has also run a freelance media production company that develops stories for screen. Elesha has

a Bachelor of Arts from the University of North Carolina - Chapel Hill in Communications/Media Production.

Related Articles:

House names its redistricting committees: Weatherford chairs

<http://miamiherald.typepad.com/nakedpolitics/2011/04/house-names-it-redistricting-committees-weatherford-chairs-.html>

April 19, 2011

It's the game behind the game this session as Florida lawmakers prepare for the once-a-decade redrawing of legislative and congressional districts and the House leadership has decided who will be in charge.

The head of the effort will be the Republican speaker-designate Rep. **Will Weatherford**, R-Wesley Chapel, with the vice chairmanship for the coveted role going to Rep. **Stephen Precourt**, R-Orlando. Chairman of the subcommittees are **Rep. Rob Schenck**, R-Spring Hill, Rep. **Dorothy Hukill**, R-Port Orange, and Rep. **John Legg**, R-Port Richey.

Here's the list of committees and members. They begin their work Wednesday morning at 8 a.m.:

Redistricting Committee

Weatherford, *Chair*

Precourt, *Vice Chair*

Adkins

Bernard

Chestnut

Dorworth

Eisnaugle

Fresen

Frishe

Holder

Horner

Hukill

Jenne

Jones

Kiar

Legg

Nehr

Rogers

Rouson

Schenck

Workman

House Redistricting Subcommittee

Schenck, *Co-Chair*

Dorworth, *Co-Chair*

Frishe, *Vice Chair*

Baxley

Bernard

Campbell

Clarke-Reed

Corcoran

Diaz

Drake

Hooper

Julien

Nuñez

Rogers

Young

Senate Redistricting Subcommittee

Hukill, *Co-Chair*

Nehr, *Co-Chair*

Workman, *Vice Chair*

Boyd

Caldwell

Crisafulli

Cruz

Ford

Jenne

Kiar

Logan

Rouson

Stargel

Williams, A.

Williams, T.

Congressional Redistricting Subcommittee

Legg, *Co-Chair*

Holder, *Co-Chair*

Horner, *Vice Chair*

Abruzzo

Albritton

Brodeur

Burgin

Chestnut

Fullwood

Goodson

Passidomo

Plakon

Reed

Taylor

Trujillo

The Redistricting Committee and Congressional Redistricting Subcommittee will meet on Wednesday, April 20, 2011, at 8:00 a.m. The House Redistricting Subcommittee and Senate Redistricting Subcommittee will meet on Thursday, April 21, 2011, at 8:00 a.m.

Florida redistricting process begins under new rules

<http://www.palmbeachpost.com/news/state/florida-redistricting-process-begins-under-new-rules-1421199.html?printArticle=y> April 20, 2011

Posted: 6:46 p.m. Wednesday, April 20, 2011

House Speaker-designate Will Weatherford sounded an early bipartisan tone Wednesday as the committee he chairs began the inherently political work of re-drawing Florida's political maps.

"We're interested in what the future of the state should look like . . . Not based on what your own personal preferences may be," the Wesley Chapel Republican said at the redistricting committee's first meeting.

But House Democratic Leader Ron Saunders of Key West took a more dour tone later in the day when he briefed his caucus on how to approach the work: Zip it, or you might be sorry.

"There will be litigation," Saunders told his members. "There's always litigation. Silence is golden."

What followed was a litany of advice on how rank-and-file Democrats should avoid having seemingly harmless commentary or attempts to represent their districts show up in a coming court fight.

Under the "Fair Districts" amendments voters approved last fall, lawmakers will be tasked with drawing the boundaries without the intent of helping or hurting political parties or incumbent politicians.

That means evidence of individual members trying to scope out what their future district might look like — or making suggestions on how to draw the lines — could be used to show that the law was being violated.

Democrats have been overtly giddy that the 2012 round of redistricting would undo the Republicans' legislative super-majorities and 19-6 edge in Congress, given that Democrats hold a roughly 800,000-voter advantage over Republicans in Florida.

But Saunders advised his members against using House redistricting software that is being made available to the public to tinker around with the maps, because they didn't know who might be monitoring the site. Using state computers to play with the mapping software creates a public record, he said.

And above all, don't express any opinions about what the maps should look like at public meetings.

"It's kind of like on 'Law & Order,'" Saunders said. "Anything you say can and will be used against you by your political opponents."

Senate President Mike Haridopolos, R-Merritt Island, and House Speaker Dean Cannon, R-Winter Park, have called the Fair Districts amendments a "full employment act for lawyers." But Weatherford on Wednesday said he planned to follow their guidance, regardless of whether his party considers them a good idea.

"They're very clear. They're in the constitution. I raise my right hand every two years and promise to uphold it, and so I'm going to follow it," Weatherford said. "Whether it's good or not, there's a lot of differences of opinion. But it's the law and I'm going to follow it."

Florida will get two additional congressional districts in 2012, bringing its U.S. House delegation to 27. The "ideal" sized congressional district will grow from 639,000 people to 696,000. State Senate seats will go from 399,000 people to 470,000, and state House seats will grow from 133,000 to 156,000.

The state grew from 15.98 million in 2000 to 18.8 million in 2010. Minorities now make up 42.1 percent of Florida's population, led by Hispanics at 22.1 percent.

adeslatte@tribune.com or 850-222-5564. Follow him on Twitter @adeslatte.

House redistricting panel makes first moves, fights to follow later

<http://www.postonpolitics.com/2011/04/house-redistricting-panel-makes-first-moves-fights-to-follow-later/>

April 20, 2011

The House Redistricting Committee took its first tenuous steps Wednesday in what will certainly turn into a combative, partisan fight over redrawing House, Senate and congressional district boundaries — a battle that will likely consume much of next year.

Committee chairman **Will Weatherford**, R-Wesley Chapel, began Wednesday's first hearing saying he wanted to "set the tone," for the lengthy rewrite, which will eventually include court reviews and an army of lawyers on both the Republican and Democratic sides.

"Once we get started its going to be fast and furious and there's going to be a lot of work involved," Weatherford said, also adding some cautions taken from an earlier letter to lawmakers from House Speaker **Dean Cannon**, R-Winter Park.

"Members should refrain from discussing their personal political ambitions, their personal district preferences or the ambitions or preferences of other candidates or office-holders with the chairman, the members or the staff of the redistricting committee...I think that's pretty clear. But I'd read it three or four times," Weatherford added.

But already there's been a dust-up.

When Cannon unveiled his list of Democratic appointees to the redistricting panel Tuesday, absent was incoming Democratic leader Rep. **Perry Thurston** of Plantation.

Thurston and other Democrats complained, suggesting that ruling Republicans seemed intent on naming a less influential lineup for the rival party, outnumbered by two-to-one in the House.

"Their leadership is represented on the committee and we feel that our leadership should be represented, too," Thurston said Wednesday, acknowledging that talks are underway with Cannon — through Weatherford.

Weatherford said, "I think that's a conversation that has to take place. It's early."

Meanwhile, the committee heard presentations from legal and demographic advisors about the time-frame facing lawmakers and the changes that have taken place in Florida since district lines were last drawn in 2002.

Some highlights: Florida will gain two congressional seats, bringing the state's delegation to 27 members, same as New York, which is losing two seats because of a population decline reflected in the 2010 U.S. Census.

Florida's minority population has grown sharply in the past 10 years, the Census showed. Sixteen percent of Floridians are black, compared with 14.6 percent a decade ago, while the state's population is 22.5 percent Hispanic compared to 16.8 percent when lawmakers last conducted redistricting.

The whitest county, then and now — Citrus, where 93 percent of residents are white, compared with 95 percent in 2000. The county with the fewest white residents, Gadsden, with 35.9 percent now compared with 38.7 percent a decade ago.

The economic health of Florida may also be reflected in the demographic findings presented Wednesday to the panel by **Amy Baker**, coordinator of the Legislature's Office of Economic and Demographic Research.

Miami-Dade has the largest percentage of residential loans in foreclosure: 18.7 percent, while counties where home loans are troubled span most of South and Central Florida.

North Florida? Not so bad, Baker reported.

“The state is essentially split in half,” Baker said.

Tags: [reapportionment](#), [Rep. Perry Thurston](#), [U.S. Census](#)

Rep. Thurston Could Make it Onto Redistricting Panel After All

<http://www.sunshinestatenews.com/blog/rep-thurston-could-make-it-redistricting-panel-after-all>

April 20, 2011

Rep. Perry Thurston, D-Plantation, the next-in-line to be the House Minority Leader, was named early on as the Democratic point man for the redistricting process. But when members for the redistricting House committees were named Tuesday, Thurston's name was not among them.

Thurston, speaking after the House Redistricting Committee's first meeting Wednesday, said that could change.

"I think there's a move afoot to make that correction," Thurston said.

Rep. Will Weatherford, R-Wesley Chapel, who chairs the committee, said that decision is one that is being made by House Speaker Dean Cannon, R-Winter Park.

"I don't know the details of that," Weatherford said when asked about the move to insert Thurston on the committee. "I'm not in charge of appointments," he added.

House meets for first time on redistricting amid questions about slow pace | Florida politics blog: The Buzz

<http://www.tampabay.com/blogs/the-buzz-florida-politics/content/house-meets-first-time-redistricting-amid-questions-about-slow-pace>

April 20, 2011

The Florida House convened its first meeting of its redistricting committee seven weeks into session today and, after an overview by lawyer **Miguel DeGrandy**, Rep. **Even Jenne** asked: Are they moving fast enough?

DeGrandy, a state rep from Miami during the 1992 redistricting brawl that was lasted for two years, recalled how he qualified to run for re-election only to have the court redraw the district, knock him out of the district he lived in, and forcede him and dozens of other legislative hopefuls to rush to their elections office and refile. Confusion reigned and DeGrandy warned that could happen again.

"Voter confusion was rampant in 1992," he said. "What I can tell you is your concern is well-founded and the sooner that you start, the less chance there is something like that happening."

DeGrandy, who believes there is a "100 percent chance" the redistricting plans will be challenged in court, told members: "There is a possibilty you may run for election in a plan that is ultimately thrown out by court."

Rep. **Will Weatherford**, the Republican chairman of the committee, said he has no plans to accelerate the process that now calls for lawmakers to convene their regular session two months earlier than normal, in January 2012, to provide enough time for the required court clearance of the redistricting plans.

"We're going to see how that plays out," he said after the committee hearing Wednesday. "Right now, the way we see it is we want to hear from the people first. We want to spend time talking with the citizens of the State of Florida....Once we do that, we'll be in a position where people will file bills."

Rep. **Perry Thurston**, a Fort Lauderdale Democrat and incoming Democratic leader, said he has proposed a bill to start the clock sooner but it, and the Senate companion by Sen. Nan Rich, hasn't gotten a hearing.

Meanwhile, the threat of a lawsuit looms on everything legislators do. Weatherford, wary of being deposed by lawyers for any challengers, warned members not discuss with him or with each other how they'd like to see their districts drawn.

Weatherford said, also adding some cautions taken from an earlier letter to lawmakers from House Speaker **Dean Cannon**, R-Winter Park.

"Members should refrain from discussing their personal political ambitions, their personal district preferences or the ambitions or preferences of other candidates or office-holders with the chairman, the members or the staff of the redistricting committee," Weatherford said, urging them to re-read a letter of cautions from House Speaker Dean Cannon, R-Winter Park.

"There's no doubt -- the new constitutional requirements are very specific in that we should not have intent to favor or disfavor any political incumbent or party or individual," Weatherford said. "What we're interested in is what the future of the state should look like based on population trends, based on compactness and geographic boundaries, not based on what individual own personal preferences may be.

"It's probably different from what most legislators are used to but the benefit of a term limited legislature is no body went through it before -- so it's new for everyone."

TALLAHASSEE -- House Speaker-designate **Will Weatherford** on Wednesday gave a bit of advice to his fellow lawmakers charged with overseeing Florida's politically charged redistricting process over the next year.

"Don't go talk to people about what you want your district to look like," said the Wesley Chapel Republican who will work with his Senate counterpart on the constitutional task of drawing new legislative and congressional maps based on new U.S. Census population data.

Weatherford's Redistricting Committee held its first meeting Wednesday. And already, there's been a small dust-up with minority-party Democrats over the perceived slight of Rep. **Perry Thurston**, the Broward County Democrat and point-man for his caucus on redistricting. Thurston wasn't appointed to the panel this week by House Speaker **Dean Cannon**, R-Winter Park, who's office has said he never requested the post. Thurston says he's made it clear he wanted on the panel, and showed up Wednesday to listen.

Thurston also said he had a suspicion why he was left off, but was keeping that under wraps until after Cannon's office potentially changes course and names him to the committee later today.

"I think there may be some changes," said Thurston, the incoming Democratic House leader. "I'm hopeful so we can have our leadership represented in the process as well."

And if the first week is any indication, there's some pragmatic and legal reasoning behind Weatherford's words.

"Incumbent-protection" and party jostling for control of the Legislature have landed Florida's last two redistricting attempts -- two decades ago by Democrats, and the 2001 effort led by Republicans -- in protracted legal fights.

The courts had to draw Florida's congressional maps in the 1990s when the warring sides couldn't agree on how to comply with federal Voting Rights Act in drawing minority seats.

Legislative staffers, including former House member **Miguel De Grandy**, who led the GOP legal challenge of the maps in the 1990s, and economist **Amy Baker** gave the committee a briefing of what the redistricting process could hold.

Florida will be apportioned two additional congressional districts in 2012, going from 25 seats in the U.S. House of Representatives to 27. And more people will be drawn into each. The "ideal" sized congressional district will grow from 639,000 people to 696,000. State Senate seats will go from 399,000 people to 470,000, and state House seats will grow from 133,000 to 156,000.

Florida has also grown more diverse and densely populated since the last redistricting round. The state grew from 15.98 million in 2000 to 18.8 million in 2010. Minorities now make up 42.1 percent of Florida's population, making it more diverse than New York, which was 41.7 percent minority last year. Hispanics are the largest minority group in Florida, at 22.1 percent. Nearly 4.9 million people in Florida speak a language other than English in their homes, and 18.8 percent of the state's population was born in a foreign country.

And the population is scattered between mega-counties and tiny ones. Florida has five counties with more than 1 million people -- Miami-Dade, Broward, Palm Beach, Hillsborough and Orange -- but 26 counties out of 67 here have fewer than 50,000 residents.

In Pinellas County, there was an average of 3,348 people living on every square-mile of land, and in Liberty County there were 10 people per square-mile.

Now that Florida voters overwhelmingly passed the "Fair Districts" amendments last fall, the process gets even more potentially confrontational. Lawmakers will be tasked with drawing the boundaries without the intent of helping or hurting political parties or incumbent politicians.

That means evidence of individual members trying to scope out what their future district might look like -- or making helpful suggestions on how to draw the lines -- are admissible evidence that the law was being violated.

Senate President **Mike Haridopolos**, R-Merritt Island, and Cannon, who both campaigned against the Fair Districts amendments, have called the amendments a "full employment act for lawyers."

And two current congressional members -- U.S. Reps. **Corrine Brown**, D-Jacksonville, and **Mario Diaz-Balart**, R-Miami -- are suing in federal court, arguing the Fair Districts amendments will hurt minority representation. The Florida House, at the behest of Cannon, has joined in the suit.

But Weatherford --Cannon's successor -- said Wednesday he planned to follow their guidance regardless of whether his party considers them a good idea.

"They're very clear. They're in the constitution. I raise my right hand every two years and promise to uphold it, and so I'm going to follow it," Weatherford said. "Whether it's good or not, there's a lot of differences of opinion. But it's the law and I'm going to follow it."

Weatherford conceded his direction to lawmakers not to fixate on their own districts is novel advice in a process driven for decades by gerrymandering.

"We're interested in what the future of the state should look like . . . Not based on what your own personal preferences may be," Weatherford said.

"It's probably different than what most legislators are used to. But the benefits of having a term-limited Legislature is nobody went through it 10 years ago. So it's new to everyone."

Thurston said he had faith Weatherford would run a non-partisan process, "to the extent that it can be."

"When it comes to politics, I think this is one of the most partisan aspects you can have," Thurston said. "He's going to try to keep it as non-political as he can. But I think that's going to be difficult."

Florida House meets for first time on redistricting amid questions about slow pace - Breaking News

<http://www.bradenton.com/2011/04/20/3130358/florida-house-meets-for-first.html>

April 21, 2011

The Florida House convened its first meeting of its redistricting committee seven weeks into session today and, after an overview by lawyer Miguel DeGrandy, Rep. Even Jenne asked: Are they moving fast enough?

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"We're going to see how that plays out," he said after the committee hearing Wednesday. "Right now, the way we see it is we want to hear from the people first. We want to spend time talking with the citizens of the State of Florida....Once we do that, we'll be in a position where people will file bills."

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Lawmakers drawing districts warned to keep quiet

<http://floridaindependent.com/27687/law-makers-drawing-districts-warned-to-keep-quiet>

April 21, 2011

As the Florida House prepared to hold its first redistricting meetings, Democratic leader Ron Saunders warned members of his caucus that lawsuits are coming, so “silence is golden,” because any opinion they expressed publicly could become evidence, [according to the Orlando Sentinel](#). #

His comments recall [remarks by GOP senators](#), who during their first redistricting meeting earlier this year warned colleagues to watch what they say in emails, which could be “discoverable” during the lawsuits many of them seemed to think were inevitable. #

This is one reason other states put their redistricting processes in the hands of independent commissions. When lawmakers are charged with drawing their own districts (or the state Senate and U.S. Congressional districts they may run for someday), just about all of them have inherent conflicts of interest of some kind, and just about anything they say can be used against them in court. #

Redistricting Gets Off to Awkward Start in House

<http://www.sunshinestatenews.com/story/redistricting-gets-off-awkward-start-house>

April 21, 2011

A squabble over membership looms as committee bones up on law



Ron Saunders and Rep. Perry Thurston

Kicking off the first meeting of the House Redistricting Committee, Rep. Will Weatherford, R-Wesley Chapel, who chairs the committee, said Wednesday redistricting "is not supposed to be a political process."

That's going to be easier said than done, as there has already been some political sniping over the membership of the committee, before the hectic process of drawing the congressional and legislative boundaries has really begun.

When members for the full Redistricting Committee and three subcommittees were announced Tuesday by House Speaker Dean Cannon, R-Winter Park, the legislator named by Democrats to lead them in the process, Rep. Perry Thurston of Plantation, was not on the list. That prompted House Minority Leader Ron Saunders of Key West to send Cannon a memo omitting the Democratic selection for a ranking member on the full Redistricting Committee.

"I anticipated Representative Perry Thurston being selected to the Redistricting Committee and expected to recommend him as the Democratic ranking member of the House Redistricting Committee. Because he was not appointed to the committee, the Democratic caucus will not recommend a ranking member to the committee. Regardless, Representative Thurston will continue to serve as our lead on redistricting matters," Saunders wrote in the memo.

Thurston, who is slated to be Saunders' successor as the House Democratic leader, attended the meeting Wednesday and said there is still a chance he could be placed on the panel.

"In speaking to Chairman Weatherford, I think there's a move afoot to make some changes. I do think that we certainly need to have representation from our leadership as does the Republican caucus," Thurston said.

Whether that will happen or not, though, remains to be seen. Weatherford said appointment decisions were made by Cannon, who doesn't look like changing his mind.

"Currently the speaker has no plans to make changes to the appointments announced on Monday," Cannon spokesperson Katie Betta wrote in an e-mail, adding that Thurston did not respond to his memo asking members whether or not they wanted to serve on the committee.

Still, Thurston said that he will lead the Democrats on redistricting, but has faith in his fellow party members that did make it onto the committee.

"I will be the lead whether those changes are made or not. We have some excellent people who were selected, and we're going to look forward to working together with them. I have their full support as the leader for redistricting, but they have my full support in the fact that they'll be able to do the job that's necessary to make sure that the process is fair," Thurston said.

Wednesday's meeting was largely informational, as members listened to updates on state and federal redistricting laws, as well as the latest demographic trends reflected in the 2010 U.S. Census, on which the new district lines will be ostensibly based. Weatherford, echoing his counterpart in the Senate, Don Gaetz, R-Niceville, called for an open, transparent, apolitical process.

"It's not supposed to be a political process. It's a process that's based on population, it's a process that's based on the law, and we're going to follow it to the greatest extent that we possibly can," Weatherford said.

As the flap over the membership proves, that will be very difficult as the process moves along. There are no less than four members of the House Redistricting Committee -- Rep. James Frishe, R-St. Petersburg, Rep. Dorothy Hukill, R-Port Orange, Rep. Martin Kiar, D-Davie, and Rep. John Richey, R-Port Richey -- with their eyes on a state Senate seat in 2012. Of course, legislators must also add two new congressional districts.

Reach Gray Rohrer at grohrer@sunshinestateneews.com or at (850) 727-0859.

Leaders differ on Thurston, but agree on redistricting silence

<http://insidethelinesfla.com/legislative/leaders-differ-on-thurston-but-agree-on-redistricting-silence>

April 22, 2011



House Democrats continued pushing Wednesday for their leader on redistricting to be appointed to the committee charged with redrawing the state's political boundaries, as the process opened with warnings to lawmakers to limit their public comments on the once-a-decade undertaking, reports Brandon Larrabee of the News Service of Florida.

There were conflicting reports about the status of Rep. Perry Thurston, a Plantation Democrat who is his party's informal leader on redistricting matters and is scheduled to become House minority leader after the 2012 elections. House Speaker Dean Cannon, R-Winter Park, left Thurston off the House Redistricting Committee; House Minority Leader Ron

Saunders, D-Key West, responded by saying he would not recommend a ranking member of the committee to Cannon.

Throughout the day, Thurston and Saunders said there were discussions underway with House GOP leaders that could lead to Thurston being named to the panel.

"I think there's a move afoot to make some changes," Thurston said shortly after the committee's first meeting, a largely educational session. "I do think that we certainly want to have representation from our leadership [on the committee], as do the Republicans."

At an afternoon caucus meeting, Saunders also told members that Democrats were talking with leadership.

"They have the next three speaker designates on their side selected," Saunders said. "We think it's only fair to have our next speaker designate selected as well."

But a spokeswoman for Cannon said earlier Wednesday that there was no truth to the suggestion that the speaker was considering placing Thurston on the committee.

Whatever the outcome, Saunders told Democrats that Thurston's role would not change.

"Whether he is the ranking member or not, he will be our lead on redistricting," Saunders said.

But as that drama played out, leadership of both parties warned their members about speaking publicly about the redistricting process, particularly under new constitutional amendments aimed at limiting partisan gerrymandering.

"Don't go and talk to members of the committee," House Redistricting Chairman Will Weatherford, R-Wesley Chapel said he's told lawmakers. "Don't come and talk to me or chairs about what you want your district to look like. What we're interested in is what the future of the state should look like based on population trends, based on compactness and geographic boundaries, not based on what individuals' own personal preferences may be."

The reason, as Saunders explained it, is relatively simple: Legal action surrounding whatever plans the Legislature approves is considered a certainty — and any comments by lawmakers could be used as evidence in court.

"There will be litigation," he said. "Even if [Amendments] 5 and 6 had not passed, there's always litigation after reapportionment."

Saunders even advised members against drawing maps using the House's official Internet-based program. "We don't know who's monitoring the software," he said.

While lawsuits have become almost a traditional part of Florida redistricting process, lawmakers and observers say the so-called Fair Districts Amendments just increase the likelihood of legal action in 2012.

"I don't think it's been as much of a foregone conclusion as it is this time around," said Susan MacManus, a political science professor at the University of South Florida in Tampa. " ... It's going to keep a lot of lawyers busy."

Category: [Legislative HeadLINES](#)

Florida Democratic Party formally responds to Republican claims in Fair Districts Preclearance Application



Florida Democratic Party Chairman Rod Smith today submitted to the U.S. Justice Department's Civil Rights Division the party's response to the Florida House and Florida Senate's application for preclearance on the Fair District Amendments.

In his response with the Justice Department, Chairman Smith writes:

The Legislature's submission contends that the Amendments hypothetically may have a retrogressive effect. This letter will demonstrate that the language of the new constitutional provisions is unambiguous and the Legislature's suggestion that the Amendments potentially could be applied in a retrogressive manner finds no support in either the language of the Amendments or the purpose behind their adoption. On the contrary, the Amendments firmly embed the principle of racial fairness in the Florida Constitution to further protect minority voting rights. Indeed, not only was the intent of the drafters to support racial fairness, but also the Amendments' public supporters included minority and civil rights organizations that have been historical advocates of racial fairness in voting rights.

Chairman Smith notes that hypothetical arguments made by the Republicans are irrelevant to the issue of preclearance on the amendments:

The Florida Legislature's preclearance submission speculates about what "could" be argued when crafting or evaluating a redistricting plan, the "potential obstacles" to minority voting strength, and how the Amendments may "perhaps" be interpreted by a court in light of Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act. Preclearance Submission at 5-6. But there is no rational reason to engage in hypothetical scenarios at this stage. The Attorney General's preclearance of the Amendments would not, of course, exempt from the preclearance requirement the implementation of the particular voting change that is governed by the Amendments as a matter of Florida law. In other words, the redistricting maps the Florida Legislature ultimately draws will themselves be subject to preclearance review, at which point the Attorney General will have the opportunity to evaluate whether the Amendments have been misapplied to allow for retrogression. Therefore, if, in the future, the Amendments are misinterpreted in a way that creates a plan that violates Section 5, that plan will fail preclearance because of those misinterpretations, not because of the text or intent of the new constitutional provisions.

Chairman Smith adds that the Republicans' claims that the Fair District Amendments would hurt minority representation are "particularly puzzling in light of the fact that the Florida Legislature will be charged with interpreting and applying the Amendments in the first instance."

Chairman Smith concludes:

The Amendments explicitly protect minority voting rights, creating a state constitutional right to an equal opportunity to elect minority-preferred candidates where the law once was silent. Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act requires an analysis of whether minority groups will be "worse off than they had been before the change." 28 C.F.R. § 51.54(a). The Amendments provide just the opposite, enabling redistricting legislation that will better protect minority voting strength.

Category: [Democrats vs. GOP](#)

Hometown News

By Patrick McCallister

For Hometown News

DAYTONA BEACH - The 2010 census is in, meaning the Florida Legislature must revisit its decennial battlefield: reapportionment.

And many of the predictable apportionment battle lines are emerging.

"The citizens should be closely following this process, so they aren't caught by surprise," said State Representative Dewane Taylor, Daytona Beach. "Their participation should be noted."

To increase public participation in the upcoming redistricting, the Florida Legislature is rolling out a new web application: MyDistrictBuilder. When completed, the web app will allow users to get information legislators must consider to draw Florida's new legislative boundaries and to try their hands at it, too.

Many of MyDistrictBuilder's final functions aren't available yet, but those who register on the site now will receive updates about redistricting developments in the legislature, including when public hearings are to be held. Residents can go on and create what they think are good districts, and officials say eventually that information will be used when creating the actual districts.

Reapportionment is an old fight for Florida, a state where reapportionment has long been manipulated for continued political power. Redistricting has been so contentious in the past that it led to a 520-day legislative session in 1955-56.

State Senator Evelyn Lynn, Daytona Beach, hopes a lot of Floridians will use MyDistrictBuilder.

"So (voters) know how we'll be looking at things," she said. "The more they become familiar with everything, the better off we'll be."

Florida gained in the last census. The state will have 27 congressional seats with populations of 696,000 - it picked up two congressional seats. The region of Osceola to Volusia counties, the so-called I-4 Corridor, gained about 540,000 residents from 2000 to 2010, so Central Florida will likely get one of the new congressional seats.

Reapportionment comes with a new wrinkle in the tablecloth.

Last fall, voters overwhelmingly approved two "Fair Districts" amendments to the Florida Constitution. The amendments will force legislators to draw districts that more closely follow existing political boundaries, such as county lines, and keep them compacted. The amendments were widely backed by Democrats hoping to regain some political advantage in the state with a single county that likely decided the 2000 presidential election.

Of Volusia's more than 320,330 registered voters, 127,600 are Democrats. There are 109,600 registered Republicans. About 15,000 identify with smaller political parties, while 68,250 have no party affiliation. However, a look at its representation belies the numerical advantage of Democrats. While the county includes all or part of six house districts, Rep. Taylor is the only Democrat representing Volusia in the Florida House. Sen. Anthony "Tony" Hill, Jacksonville, is the only Democrat representing the county in the State Senate. Volusia has four senate districts.

Democrats outnumber Republicans among Florida's 11,247,000 voters. There are more than 4.6 million registered Democrats, and slightly more than 4 million Republicans. About 363,000 Florida voters are registered among smaller parties, and another 2.2 million are without party affiliation.

However, the Florida House of Representatives has 81 Republican members and 39 Democrats. The State Senate is filled with 12 Democrats and 28 Republicans. Of Florida's 25 congressional seats, only six are filled by Democrats. Volusia County has three congressional districts. Two are occupied by Republicans, and Democrat Corrine Brown's Jacksonville district only includes a small portion of West Volusia.

Florida has one Democrat and one Republican in the Senate.

In the middle of the last century, the state had redistricting rules to keep state and federal districts compact and consistent with existing political boundaries. That wasn't so much for keeping representation proportionate; it was about keeping conservative Democrats in power. They were nicknamed the "Tallahassee Pork Chop Gang."

A federal judge ruled against the practice in 1967 because it kept African-Americans' votes from having much influence in any election. Additionally, it gave disproportionate power to counties with smaller populations, which often ended up with as many state and congressional seats as larger, urban counties. The judge's ruling was first reflected in the 1972 reapportionment.

After the legislature ends its regular session, it'll begin considering reapportionment. There'll be public hearings about redistricting throughout the state, according to Sen. Lynn.

"We've opened it up to everybody who'd like to be involved," she said. "We're going to have about 30 meetings throughout the state."

Rep. Taylor said MyDistrictBuilder users can have a profound affect on the future of Florida politics by helping to create its political boundaries.

"It's a first step toward making sure we incorporate the ideas of our citizens," he said, and added, "What I've been hearing is we need to make sure we follow the Fair District amendments that passed."

MyDistrictBuilder is at <http://floridaredistricting.cloudapp.net/MyDistrictBuilder.aspx>.

Candidates Starting to Line Up to Take on Corrine Brown

Two Republicans and a Libertarian ready to take on veteran Democratic incumbent



Rep. Corrine Brown

While 2010 was a very strong year for Republicans in the state and across the nation, Democratic U.S. Rep. Corrine Brown routed her Republican challenger, businessman Mike Yost, taking 63 percent to his 34 percent. With it, she won a tenth term in Congress. Nevertheless, she has already drawn three opponents -- two Republicans and a Libertarian -- looking to knock

her off in 2012.

Yost, who defeated two other Republicans in the primary to take on Brown last time, is hitting the ground running as he seeks a rematch in 2012.

Yost noted earlier in the week that he was optimistic about his chances, thinking that Brown's recent fund-raising struggles could be used to his advantage.

"She is over \$45,000 in the hole (and is being sued over that, too!) to start off her 2012 race and ... we know a lot of changes will happen for 2012," claimed Yost.

While Brown opposed the constitutional amendments backed by FairDistricts Florida in 2010 -- scoring points with Republicans in the Legislature -- Yost insisted that redistricting will help a Republican candidate against Brown in 2012.

"This district is not going to be the same as it was in 2010," insisted Yost.

"The FairDistricts amendments mean that it [the district] can't favor one party over the other, or an incumbent over a challenger," maintained Yost, adding that the amendments also make districts "compact" which, he insisted, it was not now.

Yost thought that Florida gaining two congressional seats would also hurt Brown.

"Historically, those are drawn in the regions where the most population growth occurred," mused Yost. "Central Florida is most likely where one will go, and Corrine is going to lose most, if not all, of that part of her current boundaries. Expect this district to move farther north, not be sprawled from Jacksonville to Orlando, just to create a 'seat' for Corrine to win in perpetuity.

"There will be far more Republicans and conservatives in this new 3rd Congressional District," added Yost.

Yost certainly seems more willing to take off the gloves this time out. On Thursday, in an e-mail to supporters, Yost slammed Democratic activists for targeting Florida Republican U.S. Rep. Alan West and U.S. Rep. Dan Webster at recent town hall events -- and insisted that Democrats and their allies were going to be busy in North Florida.

"Already Organizing for America (OFA) -- Obama's grass-roots team, the DNC, and the usual radical union suspects -- SEIU, AFSCME, and others -- are setting up camp, pitching tents, and digging the latrines for the Jacksonville mayoral race," wrote Yost. "They will not leave either after this election. Their attempt is to motivate, train, and recruit for 2012's presidential race. and win in Jacksonville!"

Yost accused the Democrats, who he maintained "must take Florida for 2012 in order to win the White House," of preparing to launch unethical tactics.

“They would love to make sure that every Republican town hall meeting was disrupted, every election stolen, and every single unregistered voter is a Democrat,” insisted Yost. “They will go to any possible means to win this state.

“I am prepared to draw the line in the sand and tell the people of this district the truth -- that we are not going to see a recovery under this administration's policies of ‘shared poverty,’” continued Yost. “And if they keep electing the same bunch in Washington election after election, they can expect more of the same from a corrupt Corrine Brown they have now.”

Nor does Yost have a clear shot at the Republican nomination. Standing in Yost’s path is political newcomer LeAnne Kolb who, with her husband, owns a small business in Orange Park.

“I’m disillusioned with what I see in Washington,” Kolb, whose husband had been in the military, told Sunshine State News on Thursday.

Kolb called herself “very, very pro-life” and noted that she was a lifetime member of the National Rifle Association and opposed to all forms of gun control, including registration. Saying she would defend the ideals of the Founding Fathers, Kolb said there was little difference between her and Yost on the issues but kept her fire focused on Brown.

“We line up pretty much the same on a lot of the issues,” said Kolb of Yost.

“My goal is to get Corrine Brown out of Congress,” added Kolb, pointing to the Democrat’s almost two decades in office. “That’s enough for anybody.”

Kolb agreed with Yost that redistricting, which the Legislature is already starting to tackle, will help make the district more competitive.

“The people who do the redistricting will do it fairly,” Kolb said.

Besides the two Republicans, a third candidate looks likely to jump in against Brown -- Hilliard architect Gerald Nyren who is looking to run as a Libertarian.

As Yost noted, Brown is certainly running on fumes for the moment, with more than \$21,500 in debt and \$8,500 on hand at the end of March. But none of the challengers has been able to make much headway on that front. Nyren and Kolb have not begun fund-raising efforts, while Yost had \$6 on hand at the end of March and almost \$1,200 of his own in debt.

Reach Kevin Derby at kderby@sunshinestatenews.com or at (850) 727-0859.

Next week's Redistricting Meetings | Inside The Lines powered by Three Bridges Advisors

Next week's authorized meetings times for the Redistricting Committee and subcommittees will be as follows:

- Monday, May 2 – Redistricting Committee – 9:30 a.m. to 10:30 a.m. – 17 House Office Building
- Tuesday, May 3 – House Redistricting Subcommittee – 8:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. – 17 House Office Building
- Wednesday, May 4 – Senate Redistricting Subcommittee – 8:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. – 17 House Office Building
- Thursday, May 5 – Congressional Redistricting Subcommittee – 8:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. – 17 House Office Building



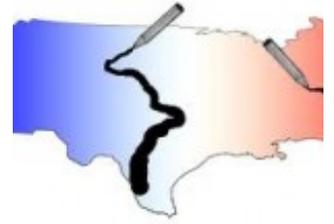
The meetings will consist of a tutorial of the House's [MyDistrictBuilder](#) online redistricting application.

This week, committee members were given a visual tour of the site in their respective committee meetings. Staff responded to questions and even implemented a couple suggested changes to MyDistrictBuilder, per the request of committee members.

Category: [Legislative HeadLINES](#)

The Week in Redistricting (for Apr. 24-30)

Welcome to a new feature summarizing what occurred in the always-interesting saga otherwise known as Redistricting (with, for the time being, a lot of help from my friends at the House Redistricting Committee).



MyDistrictBuilder Video Tutorials

MyDistrictBuilder's video tutorial library has been revised to reflect recent updates to the application. For the whole library, visit the "How to Use MyDistrictBuilder" playlist at <http://www.youtube.com/MyDistrictBuilderFL>, or click on the individual video links below:

Redistricting Committee Meetings Underway

By the end of this week, the Redistricting Committee and each of its subcommittees will have met twice each, covering several topics. Last week, committee members heard a presentation regarding the legal fundamentals of federal and state redistricting laws, and then another presentation regarding Florida's 2010 Census data and demographics. This week, committee members are diving deeper into several topic areas, including public participation and outreach, legislative procedures, and Florida's constitutional requirements.

There are several ways to learn more about these briefings and meetings:

FloridaRedistricting.Org – Presentations

FloridaRedistricting.Org Page 2

Florida Channel's Video Archives

Video Update

Want to see what's new with www.floridaredistricting.org, particularly the resources available at Page 2 and Page 3? Check out the latest [video update](#) by visiting MyDistrictBuilder's [YouTube page](#).

Category: [Legislative HeadLINES](#)

Florida Channel launches Redistricting Site

The Florida Channel recently added another resource for the public to follow the redistricting process [here](#). H/t to FloridaRedistricting.org.

The site will archive redistricting committee meetings and those meetings the Legislature will host throughout Florida this summer through fall. Whether you miss a meeting or maybe you want to use public testimony to help create a redistricting plan with [MyDistrictBuilder](#), the Florida Channel is expected to have the information available through 2012.

Category: [Latest HeadLINES](#)



Central Fla. Hispanic population gaining - 05/01/2011

By MIKE SCHNEIDER and LAURA WIDES-MUNOZA Associated Press

Posted on Sun, May. 01, 2011

Rubio. Martinez. Alvarez. Diaz-Balart. Cruz. Gonzalez. The list of prominent Florida politicians with Spanish surnames is growing, a reflection of the state's expanding Hispanic population.

But the list is deceiving in one respect - it remains almost exclusively Cuban-American. While the state's Puerto Rican, Venezuelan and Mexican communities are all on the rise, they often remain almost politically invisible, especially when it comes to electing their own to Congress and the Legislature.

The 2010 U.S. Census showed that Hispanic growth in the Puerto Rican-heavy central Florida counties along Interstate 4 was almost as large as the Latino gains in Cuban-dominated South Florida during the past decade. Despite that, Puerto Ricans and other non-Cuban Hispanics continue to lag Cubans in political influence.

Nearly all of the 13 Latino members of the State Legislature are Cuban-American. One is Puerto Rican and another is of Spanish descent. In Florida's congressional delegation, the three Hispanic members of the House and Sen. Marco Rubio are all Cuban-American.

That parity in Hispanic gains between the I-4 corridor and South Florida has political importance as it could lead to at least one new Latino-majority congressional district in the center of the state and possibly another in the south. And it could lead to a geographic shift in Florida Hispanic's political and economic power. The Census bureau plans to release greater details on Hispanics from the 2010 Census this week.

At just over 1 million, Cubans-Americans still are Florida's largest Hispanic group, making up about a third of the state's Latinos, according to the Census' American Community Survey. Puerto Ricans now number more than 725,000. Yet even in communities where Puerto Ricans are well represented, they still sometimes have difficulty asserting their power. Take Orange County where Puerto Ricans make up almost half of the Latino community. Three Hispanics were appointed recently to a 15-member redistricting panel, but they were two Cuban-Americans and a Nicaraguan-American. That caused an outcry.

"We want to be at the table making the decisions," Puerto Rican activist Zoraida Rios Andino said. "It is unbelievable that still today we don't have a representative who will look after our interests."

The 2010 Census shows that Hispanics now make up almost 1 in 4 Floridians, up from 1 in 6 a decade ago.

And even in the Cuban-heavy south, the population has become more diverse. Heavily Hispanic cities like Miami-Dade County's Hialeah Gardens, a first stop for recent Cuban immigrants, became even more Latino, but many of the newcomers are Central American. Weston, an upscale Broward County suburb, has a thriving Venezuelan community and is regularly featured on the websites of Caracas real estate agents.

Indeed, there are some signs of the growing influence of the Hispanic communities in the I-4 corridor. Orange County Democrats recently elected a woman of Puerto Rican descent to chair their organization. Both Orange and Osceola counties in metro Orlando have elected Puerto Rican county commissioners in the past 15 years.

During last year's Tampa mayoral race, the debate hosted by the city's Latin Chamber of Commerce was one of only two where all five candidates appeared. And national Republican groups are already working there to reach out to Hispanics in advance of the 2012 election. The region is fertile ground since Puerto Ricans, as U.S. citizens, are instantly eligible to vote. And they tend to be less loyal to the Democratic Party than the nation's Hispanic population as a whole.

Meanwhile, the Puerto Rican Chamber of Commerce of Central Florida has hundreds of members and is growing. Puerto Rican-based banks and universities have opened branches in metro Orlando. And in June, another chamber of commerce is organizing a summit to boost trade between Florida and the island.

But despite all these gains, most non-Cuban Hispanic communities aren't electing their members to high office in proportions that reflect their numbers - their organizations are fragmented and have little political

involvement.

Tampa-based political consultant Angelette Aviles, a Puerto Rican, hopes Puerto Ricans and other Hispanic groups will take a closer look at the how Cuban-Americans have influenced politics, especially by channeling political donations. That has allowed Florida's Cuban-Americans to influence even national politics.

"There's still a big lack of engagement" among non-Cuban Latinos, she said. "There's a lack of understanding that it takes more than just voting to shape the political process."

Evelyn Perez-Verdia, a Colombian-American media and government relations consultant and former Tampa resident agrees, but she also criticized both major political parties. She maintains that outside Cuban-dominated South Florida, the parties seem more interested in getting out the Hispanic vote than in grooming Latinos to run for local office. She noted that party political leaders still tend to come from the predominantly white, old-boy and old-girl political clubs.

Back in Orlando, the redistricting committee has four more meetings to help figure out the new political boundaries. Martha Santoni, an Orlando native of Cuban descent who is on the advisory board, said the mayor and commissioners who appointed the members likely didn't know the backgrounds of the Hispanics on the board.

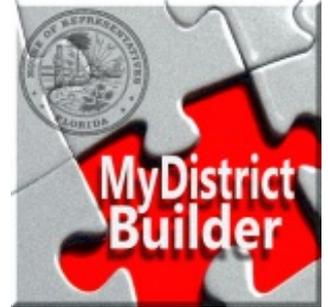
"I don't think they see me as a Puerto Rican or Cuban - they see me as a Hispanic business woman," said Santoni, who is married to a Puerto Rican.

But Rios Andino said having a Puerto Rican on the board does make a difference.

"We want Puerto Ricans that are involved with the issues affecting our community," Rios Andino said. "This is an eye-opener for the Puerto Rican leadership that we can't turn the other way. We have to start asking questions about why we aren't being included."

Census redistricting data is loaded into MyDistrictBuilder

The U.S. Census Bureau provided Florida with its 2010 Census Redistricting data, the block-by-block data that the House will use as the foundation for the redistricting process. Last week, the House Redistricting Committee successfully loaded that data into the “beta” version of MyDistrictBuilder, which you can access via the banner at www.floridaredistricting.org or directly at <http://floridaredistricting.cloudapp.net/MyDistrictBuilder.aspx>.



With the 2010 Census data in-hand, you can now use MyDistrictBuilder to become familiar with the new portrait of Florida’s many communities. You will see that the data grid (bottom of the screen) and region labels include new values. Currently, values from the 2010 Census and the American Community Survey are included.

Note: The “Save” and “Open” functions will be disabled for the next couple weeks, as we continue to improve the functionality of the site.

Category: [Maps](#), [Maps](#), [Maps](#)

Broward Politics | Sun Sentinel Blogs

U.S. Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz, D-Weston, becomes chairwoman of the Democratic National Committee on Wednesday. Questions and answers with Wasserman Schultz all this week.

In the past you've occasionally criticized the president when you've disagreed with him, as when he came out in favor of offshore oil drilling. Will you be constrained in your new role?

I generally have found myself in agreement with President Obama on most every issue. I will probably share my differences, when they arise, in a different way now than I have before. There are many different ways of being an advocate.

The nice thing about this job is that I will have much more direct access to the president than I had up to this point. So I will be able to share any concerns that I have with him personally, if they arise. But even more so, I am going to have an opportunity to be involved in weighing in on decisions in some ways before they happen. This is not a policy job, it's a political job, but I will be able to be involved by being a part of the circle that discusses various issues

I feel like I'll have a more effective and close in way of expressing my concern

Have you changed your interactions with constituents since the assassination attempt that wounded your close friend, U.S. Rep. Gabrielle Giffords, D-Ariz.?

I don't even think about it. They counseled us all of us as members to talk with our local law enforcement and get advice from them on how security should be handled at public events, and so we did that. And [Broward] Sheriff [Al] Lamberti, my staff met with the sheriff and his people and some of the local police agencies in my district, so we follow their guidance when it comes to public events and security.

[Wasserman Schultz has always had a police officer or two at town hall meetings for example. At an April 20 town hall meeting in Pembroke Pines, security was heavier, with at least six uniformed and plain clothes officers around the room.]

What is your take on Gov. Rick Scott and the Florida Legislature?

I just think they're being horrifically irresponsible. I think what they are engaged now is the most massive power play where they recognize they likely will not have a two thirds majority and the governor's mansion for any more than this two years. And they're trying to cram in every extreme radical proposal that they can possibly get through during this time because I think they realize they aren't likely to have it again.

It's dangerous, and detrimental to the things that we care about in Florida, and I really worry about the impact on the quality of life of the people of Florida after they're done.

They are slashing and burning. I am very worried about what our public education system is going to look like once they're done with it...

The Republican Legislature and Rick Scott are really engaging in a never mind what you think Floridian, we know better. We're going to do it our way, and to heck with you and your opinion.

All congressional district boundaries will change next year to reflect population changes uncovered in the 2010 Census. And the decisions will be made by the Republicans who control state government in Tallahassee. Will your new role as the national head of the Democratic Party make you more of a target? Will they be able to damage you?

I'm not really worrying about that. We passed amendments 5 and 6 and they're required to draw districts that are fair.... They can't draw districts that favor a party that favor an incumbent.

They have to respect municipal boundaries. Voters I think chose wisely when they supported that amendment, and I think the district will be shaped in a way that I think makes sense.

But that doesn't mean they're not going to try. But if you think about the politics of it, they're going to want to try to keep Allen West on the safe side. To try to go after me they either have to put Republicans from the districts to the south of my district or Republicans from his district in my district.

Or they could cram you and Democratic Congressman Ted Deutch together?

Ted lives in Boca and I live in Weston. There's just too many Democrats, too many voters to do that. But it's possible. I will run on my record, and hopefully people will continue to think that I'm doing a good job.

Categories: None

COMMENT BOARD GUIDELINES:

You share in the SunSentinel.com community, so we just ask that you keep things civil. Leave out the personal attacks. Do not use profanity, ethnic or racial slurs, or take shots at anyone's sexual orientation or religion. If you can't be nice, we reserve the right to remove your material and ban users who violate our [Terms of Service](#).

Florida lawmakers quietly stockpile millions to pay legal fees in upcoming partisan redistricting battle

Updated: 9:39 p.m. Wednesday, May 4, 2011

Posted: 9:37 p.m. Wednesday, May 4, 2011

While bemoaning deep cuts to health-care, education and public employee benefits, Florida lawmakers have stockpiled millions of dollars in funds that they control and are packing away even more to pay legal bills as Florida begins the partisan process of redistricting this year.

Buried within the \$69.67 billion budget agreed to this week, the Senate is giving itself a 26 percent spending boost -- more than \$9 million above last year -- to finance the coming legal fight.

The House, meanwhile, is sitting on \$30 million in "discretionary" reserves -- cash that the chamber hasn't spent over the years but that doesn't revert back to the treasury, as do unspent dollars in state agencies' budgets.

That little-known pot of cash is roughly the same size as the corporate income tax cut lawmakers gave to Gov. Rick Scott this week. And it's more than what the Legislature authorized for a three-day sales-tax holiday for back-to-school shoppers in August.

Republican leaders in both chambers say they need the cash because they're planning to spend up to \$20 million litigating over the re-drawing of political maps that will begin in earnest this summer. And they're pointing the finger at the FairDistricts amendments voters passed last year to make it more difficult to gerrymander legislative and congressional districts.

"The problem with redistricting every decade is it's unpredictable. The litigation this year is likely to be more broad and complex than it has been in past decades," said House Speaker Dean Cannon, R-Winter Park.

Lawmakers have made much ado about their frugality in recent years, voting twice to cut their own salaries. After assuming the Senate presidency, Mike Haridopolos, R-Merritt Island, declared last winter that he had saved taxpayers more than \$1 million by laying off senior Senate staffers and consolidating their jobs.

But redistricting is one area where they've spared no expense. Cannon has already spent approximately \$800,000 on legal fees for redistricting, \$700,000 of which was paid to his former Orlando law firm, GrayRobinson.

The expected cost of the coming fight has set off an eleventh-hour skirmish between the two chambers. The Senate has quietly complained that the House forced it to add the money to its public budget, while the House has amassed reserves over the years.

Unlike the House, the Senate needed the new appropriation because the chamber has already spent \$8.7 million from its discretionary fund this year on things like information technology services (\$4.8 million) and communications and outside consultants (\$830,000). One consequence of those expenditures is an upgraded website that prominently features Haridopolos, who is a candidate for the U.S. Senate.

Senate Budget Chairman J.D. Alexander, R-Lake Wales, said the chamber had been "pretty aggressive at controlling costs" but that the House is appropriated more money every year -- with 120 members, it's three times the size of the Senate -- and has squirreled away money while the Senate was spending down its reserves.

"Out of respect for the House, we haven't tried to insist that they not carry that forward," Alexander said. "Hopefully they'll be responsive, but if not the people of Florida can see what they do" on the Transparency Florida Web site that posts all state spending, including outlays by the Legislature.

Last fall, a group called FairDistricts.org put Amendments 5 and 6 on the ballot as an attempt to de-politicize the redistricting process; the amendments prohibit drawing legislative and congressional districts to benefit certain members or parties. Cannon and Haridopolos campaigned hard against the amendments, but failed to persuade voters, who approved the constitutional changes.

As a result, “There will be more people who believe they have standing to file lawsuits,” said Senate Redistricting Chairman Don Gaetz, R-Niceville, who prepared the chamber’s redistricting budget and said lawmakers spent close to \$10 million a decade ago defending their redistricting efforts.

“The Whigs now have standing under the constitution to file a lawsuit,” Gaetz added sarcastically. “I think it could be an unfortunate use of taxpayers’ money to deal with all these costs.”

Haridopolos said he was “just being a practical person” by seeking the extra money in the Senate’s budget, because lawyer costs are higher than 10 years ago and he anticipates a greater number of challenges.

“I let people know reapportionment costs a lot of money, and it will cost even more with Amendment 5 and 6,” Haridopolos said. “And we have to pay for it.”

But FairDistricts general counsel Dan Gelber called it “disingenuous” to say the amendments would create more lawsuits – noting that lawmakers themselves are suing to block them. U.S. Reps. Mario Diaz-Balart, R-Miami, and Corrine Brown, D-Jacksonville, sued after the amendments passed last November – arguing they would make it more difficult to draw districts that will elect minority representatives -- and the Florida House joined the lawsuit.

“Florida taxpayers are paying so legislators can wage a legal battle against reforms overwhelmingly supported by the people,” said Gelber, a former Democratic lawmaker from Miami Beach.

“They must obviously be frightened by the amendments to have a \$30 million reserve.”
adeslatte@tribune.com or 850-222-5564.

Redistricting hearings in Southeast Florida the week of Aug. 15

By Jim Turner on May 6, 2011 1:07 PM Share: The first state legislative and U.S. Congressional public redistricting meetings in Florida will be held along the Panhandle the week of June 20. For Martin County residents, the public sessions for the once-a-decade redrawing of the districts could be closest to the Treasure Coast in late-July or mid-August, according to the House Redistricting Committee. St. Lucie County has been lumped into the Central Florida region with Orlando and Melbourne, where public comments will be heard the week of July 25. No locations have been announced for the meetings. Martin County, part of the Southeast Florida region that stretches from the St. Lucie County line south to Key West, is tentatively scheduled to have meetings the week of Aug. 15. Again no locations have been announced. The second round of hearings, the week of July 11 in Northeast Florida, include sessions: July 12, 8 a.m., Flagler College, St. Augustine. July 12, 6 p.m., The News-Journal Center at Daytona State College, Daytona Beach. Categories: Florida House, Florida Redistricting Tags: Florida House, Redistricting Previous Post: Hastings renews call to improve access to AIDS screening Leave a comment Name Email Address URL Remember personal info? Comments (You may use HTML tags for style) Captcha: Type the characters you see in the picture above. Search this blog About Martin County Politics Jim Turner has been with the E.W. Scripps Co., the parent company of Scripps Treasure Coast New papers, for several years at various company newspapers and covering various topics ranging from the environment, police, schools, government and politics. E-mail Jim at Jim.Turner@scripps.com. Read stories by Jim Turner here. Comments Archives May 2011 (24) April 2011 (64) March 2011 (2) Categories Tags 19th Judicial Circuit (1) 2012 Election (7) Afghanistan (1) Alcee Hastings (8) Bill Nelson (1) Business Development Board of Martin County (2) Clerk of the Court (1) Deepwater Horizon (1) Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee (2) Doug Smith (1) Federal Election Commission (1) Florida House (14) Florida Legislature (1) Florida Redistricting (3) Florida Senate (7) Florida Supreme Court (2) Gayle Harrell (1) Gov. Rick Scott (8) Immigration (3) Iraq (1) Joe Negron (3) Josue Larose (1) Judge William L. Roby (1) Jupiter Island (1) Lt. Gov. Jennifer Carroll (1) Marco Rubio (1) Mark Foley (1) Martin County Clerk of the Court (1) Martin County Commission (17) Martin County Democrats (1) Martin County Republicans (2) Martin County School District (1) Martin County Sheriff (1) Martin County Sheriff (3) Martin County Supervisor of Elections (1) Moveon (1) Nathaniel Reed (2) Palestinian government (1) Pentagon (1) President Obama (2) Rep. William Snyder (6) Research Coast (1) School Board (1) Sheriff Robert Crowder (1) St. Lucie Inlet (5) Steve Perman (1) Tea Party (4) Tom Fullman (1) Tom Rooney (21) U.S. Congress (8) U.S. House (7) U.S. Senate (3) Unemployment (1) Visit Florida (1) WAAM (1) moveon.org (1) Alcee Hastings Congress Eve Samples Florida House Florida Legislature Florida Supreme Court Gov. Rick Scott Immigration Joe Negron Jonathan Dickinson State Park Martin County Business Development Board Martin County Commission Martin County Supervisor of Elections Moveon.org Rick Scott St. Lucie Inlet TCPalm Tea Party Tom Rooney William Snyder Links Treasure Coast political news and information TCPalm on Facebook More news and information from our local news partners Scripps Interactive Newspapers Group © 2009 The E.W. Scripps Co. Privacy Policy | User Agreement Contact Us | About Us | Advertise With Us | Site Map

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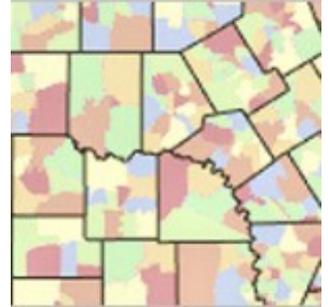
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July 12, 8 a.m., [Flagler College](#), St. Augustine.

July 12, 6 p.m., [The News-Journal Center at Daytona State College](#), Daytona Beach.

Redistricting committees release their public hearing schedules

The House and Senate redistricting committees released their schedule for summer public hearings during a joint meeting Friday morning, just as most lawmakers are getting ready for a break from the legislative grind, reports the News Service of Florida. Under the schedule, the committees will spend June 20-22 touring the Panhandle, with stops in Tallahassee, Milton, Fort Walton and Panama City. The panels will head to the rest of the northern end of the state from July 11-13, with stops in Jacksonville, St. Augustine, Daytona Beach, The Villages and Gainesville scheduled. No specific stops have been slated for the committees' swings through Central Florida (July 25-28), Southeast Florida (tentatively scheduled for Aug. 15-18) and Southwest Florida (tentatively Aug. 29-Sept. 1).



Category: [Legislative HeadLINES](#)

Lines are drawn on first reapportionment hearings

Meeting in the House chamber Friday morning, legislators announced the first round of statewide public meetings on reapportionment, the once-a-decade job of redrawing all legislative and Congressional districts to conform to population changes.

"This process will only be successful if we let the public start the conversation," House Speaker **Dean Cannon** told lawmakers. "This process will only be successful if we let the public start the conversation. Your task this summer will be much more about listening than talking."

Here is the schedule for the first four public meetings:

* June 20: Tallahassee, Capitol, 412 Knott Building, 1-4 p.m. and 6-8 p.m.

* June 21: Milton, Milton Community Center, 10-1 p.m.

* June 21: Fort Walton Beach, Fort Walton Beach High, 6-9 p.m.

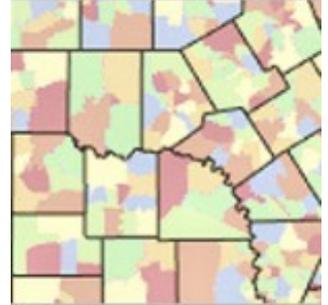
* June 22: Panama City, Gulf Coast Community Center, 10-1 p.m.

The second round of public forums in July will be held in Jacksonville, St. Augustine, Daytona Beach, The Villages and Gainesville.

-- Steve Bousquet

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First round of reapportionment hearings announced | Florida politics blog: The Buzz

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They use our money to fight us - Fred Grimm

By Fred Grimm

Don't worry. Despite the most brutal budget cuts in state history, the taxpayers of Florida still have millions set aside for their epic battle against the taxpayers of Florida.

Both houses of the Florida Legislature managed to find plenty of money — also known as your money — for the slush funds underwriting their costly lawsuit against the Fair Districts amendments.

The Orlando Sentinel reported this week that the legislative leadership has figured on spending \$20 million, and plenty more if necessary, to preserve their sacred right to re-draw state Senate, state representative and congressional districts in whatever squished-out, crazy-map shapes best protect their political self-interest.

You'll be paying the legal costs to subvert a pair of constitutional amendments approved by 62.6 percent of the voters last fall.

You'll also be paying the legal costs to defend those same amendments. The state of Florida is the named defendant in the lawsuit. That would be you, with the governor (however unenthused) secretary of state and attorney general standing in for the citizens of Florida when the case opens before U.S. District Judge Ursula Ungaro in Miami on July 29. Just to give the matter cosmic balance, the Florida Senate and House of Representatives are listed as both plaintiffs and defendants.

Oh my, but we seem intent to spending gobs of money, in a very lean year, cannibalizing ourselves in court. Apparently, we're prepared to spend about as much over the next year suing ourselves as on Everglades restoration.

We're cutting money for schools by eight percent, reducing reimbursements to hospitals by 12 percent, cutting funding to nursing homes, jacking up college tuition by eight percent, laying off 4,492 state workers and cutting the pay of those still left on the state payroll by three percent.

Yet the Legislature found enough money under the sofa cushions to spend \$20 million, maybe \$30 million, maybe more, to insure lawmakers aren't forced to draw new legislative districts using the logical, non-partisan criteria voters approved last fall.

House Speaker Dean Cannon has led the charge into internecine warfare. "The litigation this year is likely to be more broad and complex than it has been in past decades," Cannon complained when the Orlando Sentinel inquired about the prodigious amounts both houses have set aside to fight this nuisance lawsuit.

Except Cannon and his fellow pols, desperate to create (with the help of sophisticated computer programs) districts that essentially inoculate incumbents from serious political opposition, are the very nuisances doing the suing.

"It's a little disingenuous for them to complain about the litigation," said former state senator Dan Gelber, who represents the Fair Districts group, which shepherded redistricting reform onto the ballot last year. "It's like the boy who murdered his parents and asked for mercy because he's an orphan."

Most of the money, of course, will go toward attorney fees. The Sentinel reported that House Speaker Cannon has already burned through \$800,000 in the redistricting fight. And \$700,000 of that went to GrayRobinson, the Orlando-based firm that also happens to be Cannon's former employer. Small world, I guess.

Of course, when the elected representatives of the citizens of Florida decide to sue the citizens of Florida (and themselves in the bargain) they need expensive expertise to sort through the moral and legal morass.

And lots of your money to pay for it.

Polk County Lawmakers To Help Redraw Florida's Voting Boundaries

Published: Monday, May 9, 2011 at 9:33 p.m.

Last Modified: Monday, May 9, 2011 at 9:33 p.m.

TALLAHASSEE | As legislators return home for a summer respite from a long session three members of the Polk County delegation will continue working.

'My plan going into redistricting is to take political ambitions and parties out of the mix. And I take that very seriously.'

State Rep. Mike Horner

Reps. Kelli Stargel, R-Lakeland, and Mike Horner, R-Kissimmee, whose district includes the southeast portion of Polk County are serving on the House's Redistricting Committee and its subcommittees. State Sen. Ronda Storms, R-Valerico, whose district includes a small portion of western Polk, is on the Senate's Redistricting Committee.

All can look forward to more than 20 public hearings this summer and fall, with one planned for Polk County.

The joint House and Senate hearings will enable members to gather information and to explain the process to the average citizen.

"The hearings are a way for constituents to be come fully informed about redistricting, and I am sending out information on redistricting to my constituents," Stargel said.

Stargel said she will be notifying those living in her House District 64 when a hearing is held in Polk County and in nearby areas.

She said she will encourage voters to go to a House redistricting website that will allow them to make their own redistricting maps.

Every 10 years after the decennial census state legislatures across the nation must redraw the boundaries for legislative and congressional districts.

The Florida Legislature will continue to have 120 seats in the House and 40 in the Senate.

But because of the state's increased population, it will pick up two additional congressional seats, giving Florida 27 seats and more political clout.

The ideal population for the various districts in Florida is 696,345 residents in congressional districts, 470,033 in state Senate districts and 156,678 people in House districts.

The target is to bring each district as close to those numbers as possible.

Horner's district is several thousand people over that number, as is House District 65, represented by Rep. John Wood, R-Winter Haven.

Both are likely to see drastic changes in their boundaries.

In the House, Stargel sits on the Senate Redistricting Subcommittee and Horner sits on the full Redistricting Committee as well as the Congressional Redistricting Subcommittee.

The Senate held redistricting meetings earlier in the session, but the House redistricting members didn't start meeting until the last two weeks of the session with workshops and study groups.

Last November, the state's voters approved Amendments 5 and 6 to the state Constitution. What are known as the Fair Districts amendments require compact districts without party preference.

The Legislature tried to form its own amendments and when they were thrown out by the state Supreme

Court, Speaker of the House Dean Cannon tried to pass changes to water down the Supreme Court's powers.

Supporters of Fair Districts said it will stop the strangely drawn districts designed to help a particular party, a sitting legislator or particular groups.

But some opponents have said such compact districts will dilute the voting power and opportunities of minorities.

Horner said he does not give credence to any talk of gerrymandering or trying to circumvent Fair Districts.

"My plan going into redistricting is to take political ambitions and parties out of the mix. And I take that very seriously," he said.

"Amendments 5 and 6 are enshrined in the Constitution and we are going to abide by them, but that has always been my intentions — compact districts," he said.

Stargel and Horner said that Floridians should take advantage of a website being readied by the Florida House for July. Known as My District Builder, it allows everyone to build their own legislative districts. The software will tell the designer when a district is too large or too small.

Advance information about the website can be found at <http://www.floridaredistricting.org>.

[Ledger Political Editor Bill Rufty can be reached at bill.rufty@theledger.com or at 863-802-7523.]

Phil. Jewish Voice Testifies at Joint House-Senate Redistricting Hearing

by: Publisher



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Thu May 12, 2011 at 17:17:38 PM EDT

Testimony on Congressional Redistricting Given at Joint Hearing of the Pennsylvania [State Senate Committee](#) and [State House Committee](#) on State Government

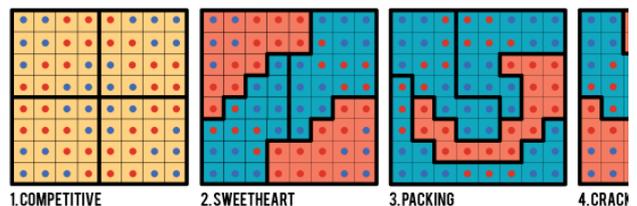
Honorable Chairmen and members of the committees, thank you for holding these hearings and for me to speak to you today. Holding hearings like this is an important first step in including the public crucial part of our democratic process.

Public oversight is a crucial part of the checks and balances necessary to ensure that redistricting p not abused to advantage any political party, protect incumbents, or punish political rivals. Democrac requires competitive elections and representative government.

In a democracy, voters choose their representative to protect the common interest. Unfortunately, we have grown accustomed to a system of gerrymandering which turns democracy upside-down so that it is politicians who choose their voters strategically in order to advance their personal interests rather than the other way

around. Packing the voters into a small number of districts in order to isolate them. (Figure 3) Cracki across multiple districts in order to dilute them. (Figure 4) And counting convicts where they are imprisoned rather than where they usually live. In a state like Pennsylvania where the process is totally controlled by a single political party, there may be a temptation to engage in partisan gerrymandering unless the media and the public are vigilant in their oversight.

Even when Democratic and Republican politicians share power, there is a possibility of mutually agreeable "sweetheart" gerrymandering as Democrats and Republicans engage in unseemly exchanges of constituents with the Democrat legislator



Eight Pennsylvania House districts meet n federal population requirements only bec they count prisoners as local resi



offering up his Republican voters in exchange for his Republican colleague's Democratic voters. (Figure 2)

In order to encourage public participation in the redistricting process, the Philadelphia Jewish Voice and its partners - the Jewish Social Policy Action Network, the League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania and Common Cause Pennsylvania - hope to run a Redistricting Contest similar to those run in Virginia and [Ohio](#) and being run in [Michigan](#), Arizona and Massachusetts.

172nd State House District



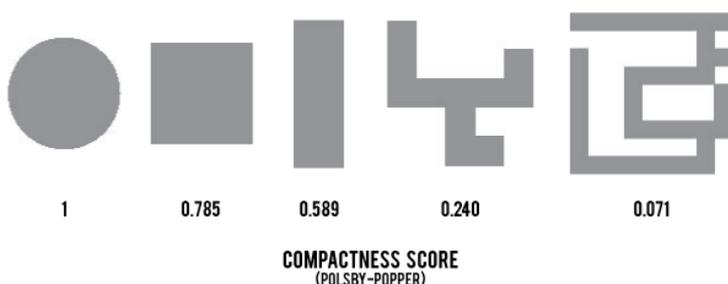
A PROJECT OF THE MICHIGAN CENTER FOR ELECTION LAW AND ADMINISTRATION IN PARTNERSHIP WITH THE MICHIGAN REDISTRICTING COLLABORATIVE

... because voters should choose their Representative: not the other way around.

The idea is to make Azavea's DistrictBuilder, Redistricting Software, and the underlying geographic demographic and electoral data available freely on the Internet. We now have the technology to allow everyone to have a say in the redistricting process.

The Pennsylvania Redistricting Contest will be judged by impartial numerical criteria measuring: **equality, continuity, integrity, competitiveness, proportionality and compactness.**

1. **Equality.** The principal of one-man, one-vote is enshrined in the Voting Rights Act and the Pennsylvania Constitution. We will not allow districts to deviate from their ideal population range; we will reward plans which promote higher standards of equality. Furthermore, we will require majority-minority districts be maintained as required by the Voting Rights Act.
2. **Contiguity.** Each district must be contiguous and not contain any parts which are connected to other parts at a single point.
3. **Integrity.** The Pennsylvania Constitution prohibits legislative districts which divide any "county, incorporated town, borough, township or ward...unless absolutely necessary." By minimizing such divisions, voters understand easily who their representative is, and township and county officials do not have to interface with as many legislators. Our contest will penalize redistricting plans which unnecessarily divide these communities of interest.
4. **Competitiveness.** Gerrymandering undermines the democratic process by creating uncompetitive districts. When 90% of an incumbent's constituents belong to his political party, the incumbent is guaranteed reelection and no longer has any incentive to be responsive to the needs of his constituents. Non-competitive districts make everyone's vote irrelevant and reduce accountability. Our contest will penalize plans which create these sorts of lopsided districts.
5. **Proportionality.** The goal of partisan gerrymandering is to deliver a disproportionate share of the state's representation into the hands of the political party controlling the redistricting process. In Pennsylvania, there are over 4 registered Democrats for every 3 registered Republicans, yet Democrats only hold 37% of the Congressional delegation, 40% of the State Senate, and 40% of the seats in the State House.



6. **Compactness.** Bizarre shaped districts are a tell-tale sign that a map-maker is up to no good.

extending tentacles out of a district of their supporters to encompass his residence, or excising a community of opponents in order to secure his reelection. Our contest classifies districts whose perimeter is disproportionately long compared to its area, and penalizes redistricting plans accordingly.

Our hope is that the State Government Committees, Legislative Reapportionment Commission, and independent groups interested in political reform will support this initiative and help us make the DistrictBuilder software available to the general public.

Making tools like these available to the public as [Florida](#) and Alaska has value even in the absence of a contest.

However, we look forward to determining the best plan and promulgating it as an unbiased baseline against which the legislature's plans can be compared.

More after the jump.

[Publisher](#) :: [Phil. Jewish Voice Testifies at Joint House-Senate Redistricting Hearing](#)

Thank you for your time. If you would like more details on our proposal and on the results of the Redistricting Contests held or being held in other states, please email me at publisher@pjvoice.com.

Appendices

1. Michigan Citizens' Redistricting Competition Rules and Procedures

2. Feedback from Virginia contest (Prof. Michael McDonald, George Mason University)

These winning student competition plans had an effect on the policy discourse. All three of the winning plans following the governor's criteria were introduced as bills in the state legislature, and all students and faculty members were recognized by the legislature and the governor. A winning congressional plan following the governor's criteria drawn by a team of William and Mary law school students became the basis of a plan adopted by the governor's commission. This congressional plan was notable in that it reconfigured the state's only voting rights district in such a way that made it substantially more compact, and thus enabled districts throughout the state to significantly improve their compactness. The concept of reconfiguring the voting rights district was implemented in a plan championed by the legislative black caucus, which further created an African-American influence district in the Hampton Roads area. This was the plan adopted by the Democratic-controlled Senate.

Voting rights issues were also explored in the state legislative plans. Many students attempted to draw a Hispanic majority voting-age population district, but none were successful. A winning University of Virginia team Senate plan created six African-American majority voting-age population districts, where the current plan only had five. However, these districts were barely above the 55% threshold which was significantly below the percentages that received Department of Justice preclearance under Section 5 the previous decade. The governor's commission explored if it was possible to increase the African-American voting age populations of these districts, but did not find it was possible to do so. Although it was not part of the student competition, a House of Delegates plan drawn by Dr. McDonald and the commission demonstrated it is possible to draw thirteen African-American majority voting-age population districts, whereas the plans adopted by the legislature only had twelve. This thirteenth district was discovered in the course of drawing compact districts that respected existing political boundaries, in accordance to the governor's criteria.

These plans provide evidence that greater public participation enables fresh approaches to draw redistricting plans that may have otherwise gone undiscovered. Redistricting is an extremely complex problem. In a modestly sized state, there are more solutions than there are quarks in the universe (Alderson and McDonald 2010). More eyes on the problem means more opportunities to see new solutions. These plans illuminated paths to improve racial representation, demonstrating that reformers' goals may not necessarily be at odds with the voting rights community.

explore trade-offs among the competition criteria further in our analysis of the student competition, commission, and legislative plans.

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About

The [Philadelphia Jewish Voice](#) is an online non-profit volunteer based community newspaper serving the Philadelphia Jewish Community since 2005. We are dedicated to addressing the important social, and cultural issues facing our community in a spirit of honesty, integrity and diversity.

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Florida Morning: Democrats criticize Corrine Brown, Donald Trump flees Ft. Lauderdale project

By Abel Harding (@abelharding, abel.harding@jacksonville.com)

I HEAR THE TRAIN A COMIN' - Kathleen Haughney: "Florida's Republican-led Legislature passed a number of sweeping reform bills this past session – but the courts may have the final word on whether many of them become law. The Florida Education Association is preparing to sue over a teacher merit-pay measure that Gov. Rick Scott signed into law in March. The Florida League of Women Voters is looking at a lawsuit over a massive overhaul to elections law. And the American Civil Liberties Union's Florida chapter is beefing up its legal staff to tackle several issues, including drug testing for welfare recipients. A number of other issues – including new restrictions on abortion -- are being examined for possible legal action as well. ...Another measure almost certain to be challenged is a major election-law overhaul that changes early voting times, makes it harder for voters to change their address or registration at the polls and puts new restrictions on third-party registration groups, such as the NAACP, partisan activist groups and the League of Women Voters." <http://bit.ly/m7DKMt>

A HOUSE DIVIDED - A must-read from Alex Leary of the St. Petersburg Times: Florida's Third Congressional District looks like someone crushed a giant bug in the Ocala National Forest, splattering it north to Jacksonville and south to Orlando. It's a finely tuned mess that U.S. Rep. Corrine Brown helped create almost 20 years ago by forming an unlikely alliance with Republicans in a bitter fight driven by racial tension. Brown became one of three history-making African Americans elected to Congress from Florida in 1992, and has relied on the district's concentration of black voters to keep her in office. She hails it as a triumph for equality. But others have come to view the bizarrely shaped Third District as a glaring exhibit of everything wrong with redistricting, the once-a-decade redrawing of legislative and congressional voting districts to match population changes. In November, Florida voters overwhelmingly approved constitutional amendments that prohibit legislators from gerrymandering districts to benefit a particular party or incumbent. The Fair Districts measures are supposed to foster a makeup of elected officials that resembles the state's electorate, which is nearly evenly split between Republicans and Democrats. Republicans tried to keep them off the ballot but failed. Now they are suing to stop them from taking effect before redistricting in 2012. So is Brown. 'Our communities have fought too hard, for too long, to take this giant step backwards to our state's Jim Crow days,' she said of the suit, filed less than 24 hours after the polls closed. Brown's role has angered many fellow Democrats and longtime allies, who view it as a selfish act that jeopardizes a chance for reform. 'It's really sad. She is just plain wrong,' said Howard Simon, executive director of the ACLU of Florida. 'I like Corrine,' said Leon Russell, an NAACP leader who has worked on election issues. 'But I wish she hadn't done this. I don't think you should frustrate the process purely on basis of your self-interest, no matter who you are.' Mostly Democrats fret over how bad things have become for them. Republicans now have veto-proof majorities in the Legislature and control 19 of 25 congressional seats." <http://bit.ly/maw1VG>

Good Monday morning and welcome to Florida Morning, your daily digest of political news from around the Sunshine State. Gator mating season is underway, folks. That means nothing for city dwellers, but for those who travel outside urban boundaries, keep the high beams on at night. Making news around the state... Republican leaders tell followers to prepare for a 2012 blitz, lawmakers aren't keen on measuring their own performance and Donald Trump flees a Ft. Lauderdale project.

ACTIVISTS PREP FOR 2012 BATTLE - "Gov. Rick Scott and other top state Republican Party leaders told GOP activists Saturday that the political fight for Florida in 2012 will be a bare-knuckle brawl that determines the country's direction for the next decade. They said the recent election of Florida Congresswoman Debbie Wasserman Schultz to chair the Democratic National Committee and the involvement of liberal organizations in Jacksonville's mayoral race show how badly President Obama needs Florida's 29 electoral votes. But GOP leaders at the party's quarterly meeting said their party has a chance to showcase its conservative candidates next September at a debate and straw ballot, as a prelude to the primary season that culminates with a national Republican convention in Tampa." Tallahassee Democrat: <http://bit.ly/jGBpIX>

TRUMP ABANDONS A FLORIDA PROJECT BEFORE IT HEADS SOUTH - Fred Grimm: "Another vacant season winds to an end for the grand hotel formerly known as Trump. The yellow and blue tower, one of the few modern structures in Broward County designed by a world renown architect, should have been the throbbing heart of the renaissance on Fort Lauderdale Beach. It's empty. As empty, perhaps, as the Trump brand that was used to lure investors into a condominium-hotel scheme that would collapse before a single

guest signed the register. The architectural flourishes of the 24-story building, with great portholes looking out over A1A, were meant to evoke the old fashioned 'elegance and grace of the luxury ocean cruise liners.' In retrospect, maybe the Titanic. More than 100 investors bought into the 248-room project in 2005 and early 2006, putting 20 percent down for units priced between \$500,000 to \$3 million. Lawyer Joseph E. Altschul, who represents purchasers holding stakes in some 50 units, said his clients had bought into that Donald Trump allure. The Trump name. The Trump luxury hotel network. And they paid, he said, about \$200 more per square foot over comparable condo-hotel projects along the beach for that magical Trump name. Preconstruction brochures assured buyers that 'Mr. Trump is committed to personal and direct involvement in everything that this name represents.' Not so much, as it turned out. Two years ago, when the project fell into foreclosure, Trump told the Sun-Sentinel, 'We have nothing to do with the building. We had a licensing deal, and we terminated the licensing deal a long time ago.' Altschul said his clients were shocked to learn that the famous name used to jack up the prices on investment packages for a luxury hotel project was just another cheesy Trump marketing deal." Miami Herald: <http://bit.ly/jFqTRb>

Today marks the birthday of Edmund Kirby Smith. The West Point graduate and St. Augustine native, whose bust is one of two Floridians in the Hall of Statues in Washington, D.C., was born on this day in 1824. At the time of his death in 1893, he was the last surviving full general of the Confederacy.

Your feedback is welcomed and valued. E-mail Florida Morning at abel.harding@jacksonville.com or find me on the Twitters, @abelharding.

LAWMAKERS WANT TO MEASURE EVERYTHING...EXCEPT THEMSELVES - "While they were beefing up required measurements for teachers and state agencies, one of the least-discussed budget decisions Florida lawmakers made this spring was weakening the office that measures them. A year after shaving one-third of the \$8 million budget for the Legislature's Office of Program Policy Analysis & Government Accountability, or Oppaga, Republican lawmakers went even further this spring. In the last week of session, legislative leaders eliminated all dedicated funding for the office – instead folding its budget into a discretionary account controlled by the leadership. This happened in the same 60-day session that saw lawmakers pass a 'Student Success Act' that determines teacher pay based on measurements of their performance in the classroom. They also passed a reorganization that requires Gov. Rick Scott to produce a 'business plan' for economic development that does a better job of measuring what taxpayers are getting in return for hundreds of millions of dollars in tax incentives given to companies. They debated on the House floor why there was not enough research into whether red-light cameras reduce traffic accidents, and why Florida's growth controls hadn't prevented urban sprawl – even though the research suggests it has, to some degree. But when it comes to measuring their own handiwork, ruling lawmakers can't seem to get much satisfaction." Orlando Sentinel: <http://thesent.nl/ijYoLc>

QUOTE OF THE DAY - "Things are completely out of whack in Florida. We're a 50-50 state. We swing national elections. The Fair Districts is needed, and I don't think anyone should be trying to fight it." - U.S. Rep. Kathy Castor, D-Tampa, making the case for Fair Districts in Florida. <http://bit.ly/m2NpYo>

[Flag as offensive](#)

Florida Democrats divided on redistricting, black representation - Florida

By ALEX LEARY

WASHINGTON -- Florida's Third Congressional District looks like someone crushed a giant bug in the Ocala National Forest, splattering it north to Jacksonville and south to Orlando.

It's a finely tuned mess that U.S. Rep. Corrine Brown helped create almost 20 years ago by forming an unlikely alliance with Republicans in a bitter fight driven by racial tension.

Brown became one of three history-making African Americans elected to Congress from Florida in 1992, and has relied on the district's concentration of black voters to keep her in office.

She hails it as a triumph for equality.

But others have come to view the bizarrely shaped Third District as a glaring exhibit of everything wrong with redistricting, the once-a-decade redrawing of legislative and congressional voting districts to match population changes.

In November, Florida voters overwhelmingly approved constitutional amendments that prohibit legislators from gerrymandering districts to benefit a particular party or incumbent.

The Fair Districts measures are supposed to foster a makeup of elected officials that resembles the state's electorate, which is nearly evenly split between Republicans and Democrats. Republicans tried to keep them off the ballot but failed. Now they are suing to stop them from taking effect before redistricting in 2012.

So is Brown.

"Our communities have fought too hard, for too long, to take this giant step backwards to our state's Jim Crow days," she said of the suit, filed less than 24 hours after the polls closed.

Brown's role has angered many fellow Democrats and longtime allies, who view it as a selfish act that jeopardizes a chance for reform.

"It's really sad. She is just plain wrong," said Howard Simon, executive director of the ACLU of Florida.

"I like Corrine," said Leon Russell, an NAACP leader who has worked on election issues. "But I wish she hadn't done this. I don't think you should frustrate the process purely on basis of your self-interest, no matter who you are."

Mostly Democrats fret over how bad things have become for them. Republicans now have veto-proof majorities in the Legislature and control 19 of 25 congressional seats.

"Things are completely out of whack in Florida," said U.S. Rep. Kathy Castor, D-Tampa. "We're a 50-50 state. We swing national elections. The Fair Districts is needed, and I don't think anyone should be trying to fight it."

Brown said she is only trying to preserve what minorities fought hard for.

"I'm not saying it's not a problem. But don't put the problem on African Americans," she said while knocking Democrats for fielding weak candidates around the state and having a weak ground game.

As brash as she is determined, Brown prides herself on the hundreds of millions in tax dollars she has brought home in local project funding. Her slogan: "Corrine delivers."

But she also has been a steady source of controversy, with numerous embarrassing episodes and ethical scrapes. A House panel once investigated whether she improperly took gifts from an African millionaire she pressured the Clinton administration to free from prison.

Time and again, Brown returns to Washington with decisive electoral victories. How she got there is a

political drama of ambition, power and race.

Alex Leary can be reached at leary@sptimes.com.

WMNF 88.5 FM Community Radio, Tampa

05/18/11 Kate Bradshaw

[WMNF Drive-Time News Wednesday](#)

Progressives may not be happy with many of the outcomes of the 2010 midterm elections, but many see the two [Fair Districts](#) amendments voters adopted as a victory. But not everyone is happy that they passed, and there's even a bipartisan effort to challenge the law, which changes the way legislative districts are drawn.

Some say Florida voters overwhelmingly elected Republicans to the state legislature because the GOP's election year strategy brought national issues into local campaigns. Some say it was the battered economy and Republican candidates' promises of tax relief. [American Civil Liberties Union of Florida](#) spokesperson Derek Newton said it happened in big part because of how legislative districts are drawn.

"You had a very conservative, right wing dominated, legislature that got elected to create jobs and reform government and spent almost all their time on abortion and school prayer and things of this nature. And that's just a....that's a natural consequence of having districts that aren't competitive. Districts that are set up to and elect and favor a certain party."

Newton and other supporters of Amendments five and six, known as the Fair Districts Amendments, say the new laws will change that. They require the State House committee in charge of drawing electoral districts to draw them in a manner that's compact and contiguous, and not in any way intentionally favoring one political party over another. State Representative [Darryl Rouson](#), a Democrat from St. Petersburg, is a member of that bipartisan committee. He said the new Congressional and Legislative districts may still have odd shapes, but be more logically drawn than those forged through gerrymandering.

"Lines don't have to be a perfect square. They don't have to be a perfect circle. They can be a triangle, they can even be rectangular and they can be drawn, some would argue, crazily, along different boundaries such as water, ways, or highways to give us districts that have a certain population of people and a certain demographic."

The house redistricting committee will conduct a series of public hearings over the coming months, and use data from the most recent Census to configure the new districts. The ACLU's Derek Newton said the process won't result in districts containing a perfect balance of Republicans and Democrats or exact proportions of people from ethnic backgrounds, but it will better reflect Florida's demographics.

"There are communities that naturally have more Republicans or Democrats in them, I think that's fine. But that's not the case where we've seen in Florida over the last 2 redistricting cycles where there are still several hundred thousand more Democrats than Republicans in Florida, for example. Yet the legislature is almost 3/4 Republican. That's because of some very clever line drawing."

Some lawmakers aren't happy with the new rules. US Representative [Corrine Brown](#) is a Jacksonville Democrat. Her district consists of slices from some eight counties, and looks like giant splatter of paint. She said it's shaped that way to ensure that minority voters will have a say.

"The one time we have a voice in every level of government and this will take these voices away. You've had, at large, 12 districts but this did not represent communities of interest and I think communities of interest is key. To think that for 129 years a state that had 30 percent African Americans and we didn't have any and you talk about going back to that. It is unacceptable. It's crazy."

Brown and Miami US Representative [Mario Diaz Balart](#), a Republican, are suing the state over the new laws. Former state Senator [Dan Gelber](#) is legal counsel for Fair Districts Florida. He said the amendments contain wording that safeguards minority voters.

"Fair Districts Amendments actually have in their texts as a requirement that you preserve racial minorities. And in fact the NAACP and '...' were two of the biggest proponents"

Gelber said the only people who are upset are really incumbents concerned about reelection.

"Incumbents feel a little concerned that they won't be able to draw their own districts anymore. That's really what they are concerned about and, frankly, the overreaching and the gerrymandering in Florida was a result of that precise kind of conduct. So I understand why incumbents don't like Fair Districts Amendments."

St. Pete State Rep Darryl Rouson said some legislators, even himself, are at risk of losing their seats should a shift in a district's demographic makeup really impact how a given district votes.

"I think that some of the minority stronghold districts down in Broward and Dade that might have 60 to 70 percent people of culture will be affected, certainly my district could be affected. It could drop from 51 percent, 52 percent African-American down to about 25 percent, maybe even as low as 15 percent depending on how it's drawn. You know, it'll have quite an impact."

Still, Rouson said, a law is a law.

"All I'm interested in is a fair process. All I'm interested in is following the law as the people approved it at the ballot box and doing what's in the best interest of the citizenry."

He said there is concern that more lawsuits will ensue throughout the process, which could result in an injunction that freezes the law's carrying out. He said he hopes this doesn't happen, given the short time between when the districts get redrawn and the 2012 elections.

"There's always that concern that someone will seek an injunction and kind of stop the process. We hope that doesn't happen. We don't have a lot of time to figure these things out and make them work by qualifying on June of 2012. So we can just be prayerful and hopeful that any challenges that come, and they will come, will be disposed of timely and quickly and we can move forward."

Rouson said the committee will hold about 25 hearings throughout the state, including at least one in the Tampa Bay area this summer. The 2012 legislative session will start in January instead of March so the redistricting, if there are no legal stumbling blocks, will be in place well ahead of the 2012 elections.

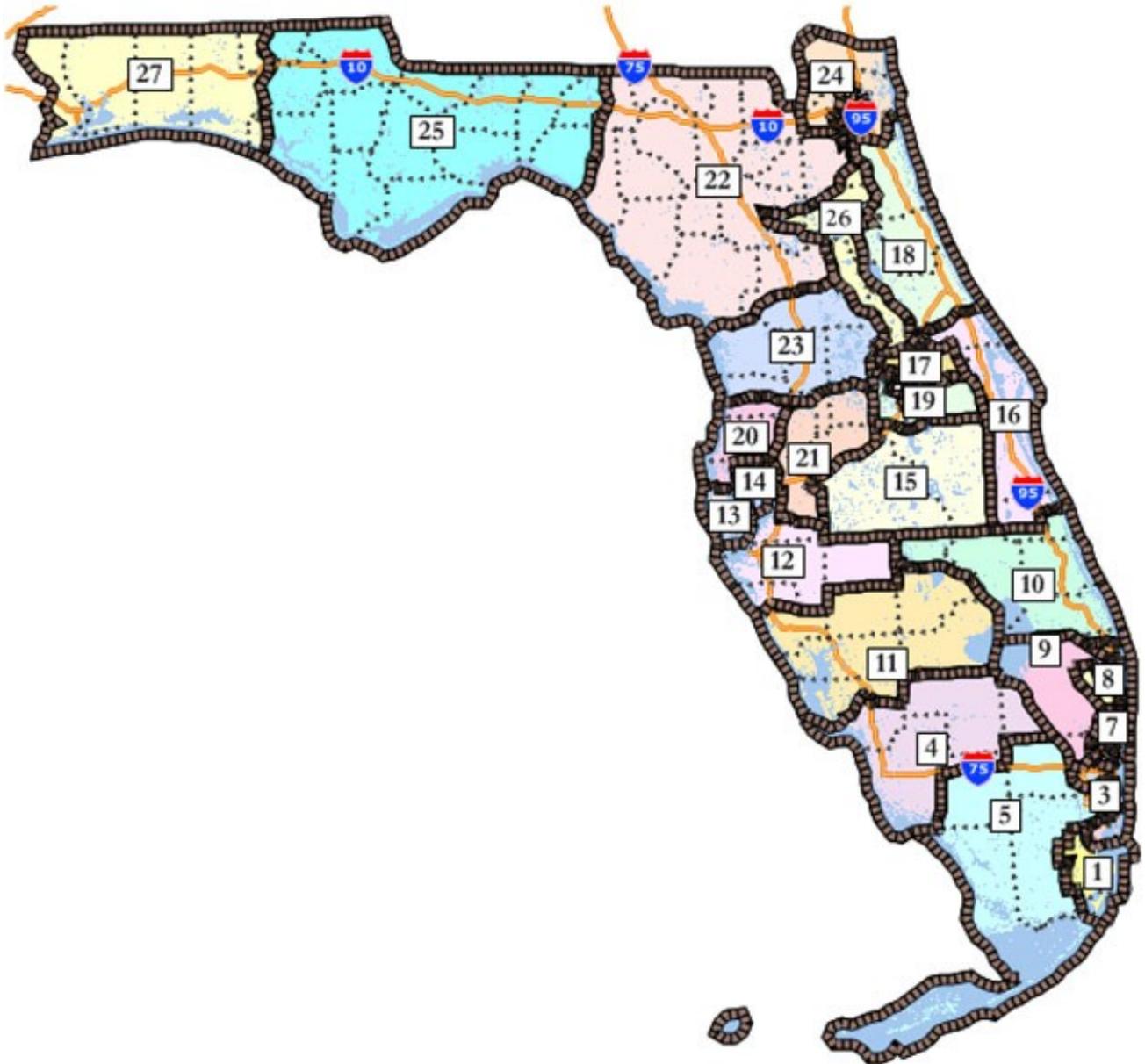
[Previous WMNF news coverage of Redistricting](#)

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Inside The Lines powered by Three Bridges Advisors



Juris Doctorate candidate Ortiz recently finished the onerous congressional redistricting task that Florida lawmakers just began. The work is based largely on the 2010 U.S. Census population for Florida of roughly 18.8 million. Ortiz's challenge was to draw 27 districts instead of the current 25, each with the same population of about 696,345.

In doing that, Ortiz applied "traditional districting principles" — essentially meaning contiguous, compact and of equal population — in creating the scheme intended to comply with the complex and sometimes conflicting legal requirements.

"I sought to draw a map that reflects how I believe Florida divides geographically and culturally," writes Ortiz in a 28-page memo in which he explains his redistricting plan.

Except for a recent three months when he lived in downtown Miami, Ortiz lived in Fruit Cove, a suburb of Jacksonville in St. Johns County for 13 years.

Ortiz worked under the direction of Columbia University School of Law professor Nate Persily, a redistricting expert whom courts relied on to redraw lines in four states following the 2000 Census.

Using state-of-the-art software to develop the new district boundaries, Ortiz applied the federal Voting Rights Act and state constitutional requirements to come up with the maps for Florida's 27 seats. In the detailed

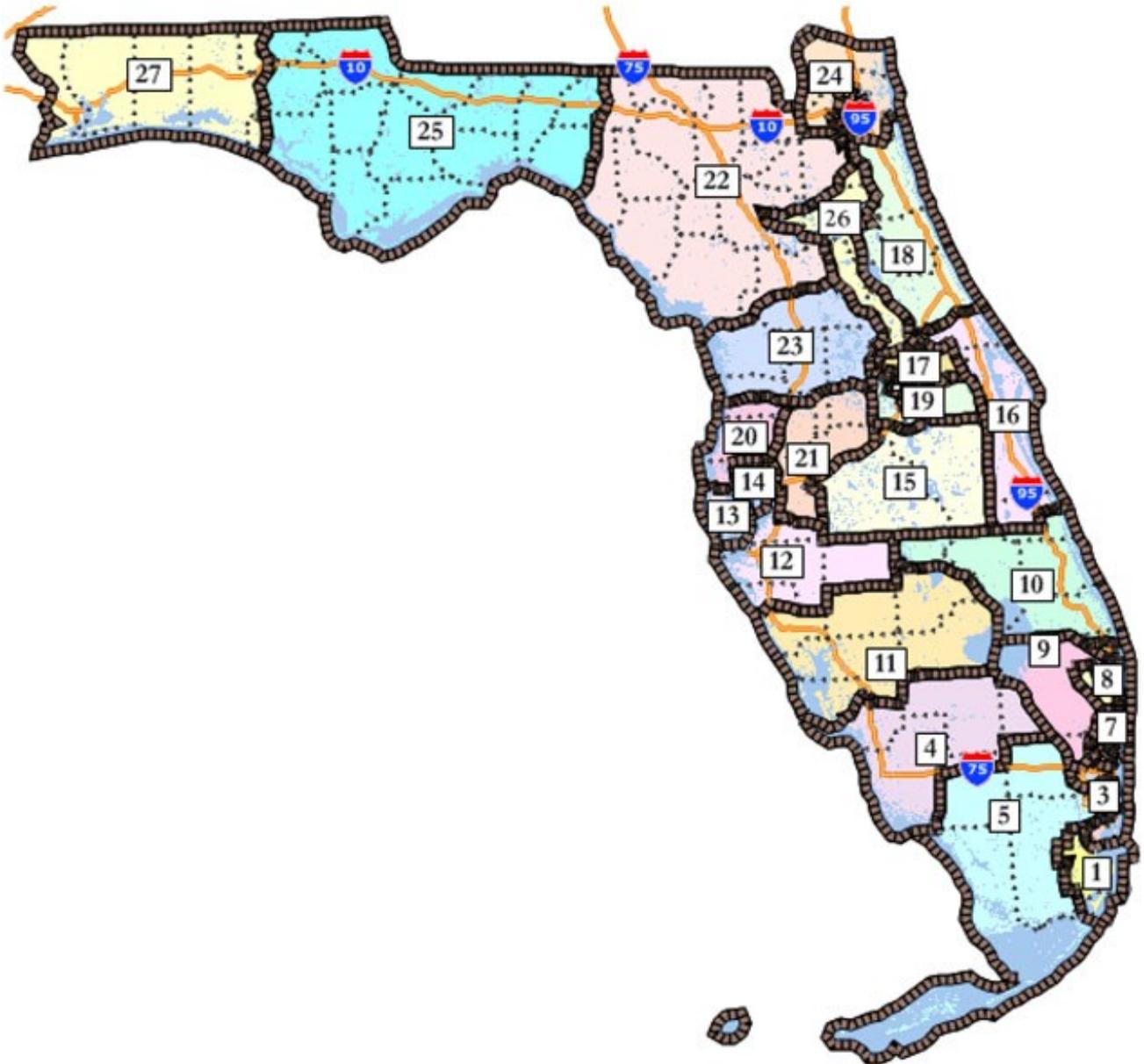
legal analysis, Ortiz explains his rationale for drawing the lines where he did to meet the sometimes conflicting criteria of state and federal laws.

–

In Ortiz's plan, U.S. Rep. Kathy Castor, D-Tampa, won't have her current District 11 stretch across Tampa Bay to pick up a predominantly black community in south St. Petersburg or dip down to pick up parts of Palmetto and Bradenton.

Ortiz's proposed District 14 is more compact in keeping with one of the key new requirements of the state constitution. The new district boundaries are entirely within Hillsborough County, including Tampa and the near suburbs directly north.

Continue reading this story from the [Gulf Coast Business Review](#).



Category: [Amendment 5 + 6 HeadLINES](#)

It's getting started « Miami-Dade Dems#comment-214

Posted on May 20, 2011 by miamidadedems

At the Democratic Party Executive Committee meeting the other day in Miami, state Rep. Franklin Sands of Broward County warned us that the Republican majority in the state legislature, in addition to its other bad intentions, has budgeted \$30 million of our taxpayer money to fight the redistricting amendments that passed last November to be in the Florida Constitution.

This is something we'll have to fight against whenever possible. The Republicans are doing this because fair districts are their worst enemy. Fair districts in a state where Democrats are more numerous than Republicans will mean many more Democrats in the Florida state House and in the US House of Representatives than the present imbalances.

Today I happened on a blog that covers Florida redistricting: insidethelinesFla.com. We should all take note of it and follow it.

And here's a video of an introductory session of the state Legislature body that will be our main target:

Filed under: [Politics](#) Tagged: | [Florida](#), [Redisctricting](#)

Redistricting meetings held around the state this summer | Citrus Daily

The Florida House of Representatives House Redistricting Committee will be meeting around the state this summer to get public testimony on redistricting.

The closest meeting to Citrus County will be on July 13 at The Villages, from 8 a.m. to 12 p.m. at the Colony Cottage Recreation Center.

The next closest meeting will be in Gainesville on the same day from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. at Santa Fe College in the new Fine Arts Hall.

The purpose of the public meetings is to take local input and suggestions for the redrawing of Florida's state legislative and congressional districts. For comprehensive information on redistricting in Florida go to: www.floridaredistricting.org/.

Redistricting refers to the required redrawing of Florida's political boundary lines every ten years after the Census to reflect changes in population. The Florida Legislature must redraw the state's congressional and legislative boundary lines prior to the 2012 elections.

Meet your representative | MyLawmaker

All 120 members of the Florida House of Representatives are elected every two years. Representatives can serve four terms totaling eight years in office.

House districts were drawn in 2002 to include roughly 133,000 people each. New districts will be drawn in 2012 based on the 2010 Census. For the 2011 legislative session, there are 80 Republicans and 39 Democrats, with one vacancy (District 110).

State officials have set up a website, [MyDistrictBuilder](#), which allows you to explore how the districts might be redrawn. But you'll have to be patient. That site currently is very slow to load.

Learn more at myfloridahouse.gov

- **House District 1:** [Douglas Vaughn "Doug" Broxson](#), R-Tiger Point/Gulf Breeze
- **House District 2:** [Clay Ingram](#), R-Pensacola
- **House District 3:** [Clay Ford](#), R-Gulf Breeze
- **House District 4:** [Matt Gaetz](#), R-Fort Walton Beach
- **House District 5:** [Brad Drake](#), R-Eucheeanna
- **House District 6:** [Jimmy Patronis](#), R-Panama City
- **House District 7:** [Marti Coley](#), R-Marianna
- **House District 8:** [Alan B. Williams](#), D-Tallahassee
- **House District 9:** [Michelle Rehwinkel Vasilinda](#), D-Tallahassee
- **House District 10:** [Leonard L. Bembry](#), D-Greenville
- **House District 11:** [Elizabeth W. Porter](#), R-Lake City
- **House District 12:** [Janet H. Adkins](#), R-Fernandina Beach
- **House District 13:** [Daniel Davis](#), R-Jacksonville
- **House District 14:** [Mia L. Jones](#), D-Jacksonville
- **House District 15:** [Reggie Fullwood](#), D-Jacksonville
- **House District 16:** [Charles McBurney](#), R-Jacksonville
- **House District 17:** [Lake Ray](#), R-Jacksonville
- **House District 18:** [Ronald "Doc" Renuart](#), R-Ponte Vedra Beach
- **House District 19:** [Michael B. "Mike" Weinstein](#), R-Jacksonville
- **House District 20:** [William L. "Bill" Proctor](#), R-St. Augustine
- **House District 21:** [Charles E. Van Zant](#), R-Keystone Heights
- **House District 22:** [W. Keith Perry](#), R-Gainesville
- **House District 23:** [Charles S. "Chuck" Chestnut IV](#), D-Gainesville
- **House District 24:** [Dennis K. Baxley](#), R-Ocala
- **House District 25:** [Larry Metz](#), R-Yalaha
- **House District 26 :** [Fredrick W. "Fred" Costello](#), R-Ormond Beach
- **House District 27:** [Dwayne L. Taylor](#), D-Daytona Beach
- **House District 28:** [Dorothy L. Hukill](#), R-Port Orange

- House District 29: [Tom Goodson](#), R-Rockledge
- House District 30: [Ritch Workman](#), R-Melbourne
- House District 31: [John Tobia](#), R-Melbourne
- House District 32: [Steve Crisafulli](#), R-Merritt Island
- House District 33: [Jason T. Brodeur](#), R-Sanford
- House District 34: [Chris Dorworth](#), R-Lake Mary
- House District 35: [Dean Cannon](#), R-Winter Park
- House District 36: [Scott Randolph](#), D-Orlando
- House District 37: [Scott Plakon](#), R-Longwood
- House District 38: [Bryan Nelson](#), R-Apopka
- House District 39: [Geraldine F. "Geri" Thompson](#), D-Orlando
- House District 40: [Eric Eisnaugle](#), R-Orlando
- House District 41: [Stephen L. Precourt](#), R-Orlando
- House District 42: [H. Marlene O'Toole](#), R-Lady Lake
- House District 43: [Jimmie T. Smith](#), R-Inverness
- House District 44: [Robert C. "Rob" Schenck](#), R-Spring Hill
- House District 45: [Richard Corcoran](#), R-New Port Richey
- House District 46: [John Legg](#), R-Port Richey
- House District 47: [James W. "J.W." Grant](#), R-Tampa
- House District 48: [Peter Nehr](#), R-Palm Harbor
- House District 49: [Darren Soto](#), D-Orlando
- House District 50: [Ed Hooper](#), R-Clearwater
- House District 51: [Larry Ahern](#), R-St. Petersburg
- House District 52: [Jeffrey "Jeff" Brandes](#), R-St. Petersburg
- House District 53: [Rick Kriseman](#), D-St. Petersburg
- House District 54: [James C. "Jim" Frishe](#), R-St. Petersburg
- House District 55: [Darryl Ervin Rouson](#), D-St. Petersburg
- House District 56: [Rachel V. Burgin](#), R-Riverview
- House District 57: [Dana D. Young](#), R-Tampa
- House District 58: [Janet Cruz](#), D-Tampa
- House District 59: [Betty Reed](#), D-Tampa
- House District 60: [Shawn Harrison](#), R-Tampa
- House District 61: [Will W. Weatherford](#), R-Wesley Chapel
- House District 62: [Richard "Rich" Glorioso](#), R-Plant City
- House District 63: [Seth McKeel](#), R-Lakeland
- House District 64: [Kelli Stargel](#), R-Lakeland
- House District 65: [John Wood](#), R-Winter Haven
- House District 66: [Ben Albritton](#), R-Wauchula
- House District 67: [W. Gregory "Greg" Steube](#), R-Parrish

- House District 68: [Jim Boyd](#), R-Bradenton
- House District 69: [Ray Pilon](#), R-Sarasota
- House District 70: [Doug Holder](#), R-Sarasota
- House District 71: [Kenneth L. "Ken" Roberson](#), R-Port Charlotte
- House District 72: [Paige Kreegel](#), R-Punta Gorda
- House District 73: [Matthew H. "Matt" Caldwell](#), R-Lehigh Acres
- House District 74: [Gary Aubuchon](#), R-Cape Coral
- House District 75: [Trudi K. Williams](#), R-Fort Myers
- House District 76: [Kathleen C. Passidomo](#), R-Naples
- House District 77: [Denise Grimsley](#), R-Sebring
- House District 78: [Steven M. "Steve" Perman](#), D-Boca Raton
- House District 79: [Mike Horner](#), R-Kissimmee
- House District 80: [Debbie Mayfield](#), R-Vero Beach
- House District 81: [Gayle B. Harrell](#), R-Stuart
- House District 82: [William D. Snyder](#), R-Stuart
- House District 83: [Patrick Rooney Jr.](#), R-West Palm Beach
- House District 84: [Mack Bernard](#), D-West Palm Beach
- House District 85: [Joseph Abruzzo](#), D-Wellington
- House District 86: [Lori Berman](#), D-Delray Beach
- House District 87: [Bill Hager](#), R-Boca Raton
- House District 88: [Mark S. Pafford](#), D-West Palm Beach
- House District 89: [Jeff Clemens](#), D-Lake Worth
- House District 90: [Irving "Irv" Slosberg](#), D-Boca Raton
- House District 91: [George R. Moraitis Jr.](#), R-Fort Lauderdale
- House District 92: [Gwyndolen "Gwyn" Clarke-Reed](#), D-Deerfield Beach
- House District 93: [Perry E. Thurston Jr.](#), D-Plantation
- House District 94 : [Hazelle P. "Hazel" Rogers](#), D-Lauderdale Lakes
- House District 95: [James W. "Jim" Waldman](#), D-Coconut Creek
- House District 96 : [Ari Abraham Porth](#), D-Coral Springs
- House District 97: [Martin David "Marty" Kiar](#), D-Davie
- House District 98: [Franklin Sands](#), D-Weston
- House District 99: [Elaine J. Schwartz](#), D-Hollywood
- House District 100: [Evan Jenne](#), D-Dania Beach
- House District 101: [Matt Hudson](#), R-Naples
- House District 102: [Eduardo "Eddy" Gonzalez](#), R-Hialeah
- House District 103: [Barbara Watson](#), D-Miami Gardens
- House District 104: [John Patrick Julien](#), D-North Miami Beach
- House District 105: [Joseph A. "Joe" Gibbons](#), D-Hallandale Beach
- House District 106: [Richard L. Steinberg](#), D-Miami Beach

- **House District 107:** [Luis R. Garcia Jr.](#), D-Miami Beach
- **House District 108:** [Daphne D. Campbell](#), D-Miami
- **House District 109:** [Cynthia A. Stafford](#), D-Miami
- **House District 110:** [VACANT SEAT](#), -
- **House District 111:** [Erik Fresen](#), R-Miami
- **House District 112:** [Jeanette M. Nuñez](#), R-Miami
- **House District 113:** [Carlos Lopez-Cantera](#), R-Miami
- **House District 114:** [Ana Rivas Logan](#), R-Miami-Dade
- **House District 115:** [Jose Felix Diaz](#), R-Miami
- **House District 116:** [Carlos Trujillo](#), R-Miami
- **House District 117:** [Michael Bileca](#), R-Miami
- **House District 118:** [Dwight M. Bullard](#), D-Miami
- **House District 119:** [Frank Artiles](#), R-Miami
- **House District 120:** [Ron Saunders](#), D-Key West

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U.S. Representatives are up for election every two years. Florida's delegation is currently split between 19 Republicans and six Democrats.

Because of population gains over the past decade, Florida will have two more Congressional seats starting in the 2012 election. Districts are being redrawn based on the 2010 Census.

State officials have set up a website, [MyDistrictBuilder](#), which allows you to explore how the districts might be redrawn. But you'll have to be patient. That site currently is very slow to load.

- **U.S. House District 1:** [Jeff Miller](#), R-Chumuckla
- **U.S. House District 2:** [Steve Southerland II](#), R-Panama City
- **U.S. House District 3:** [Corrine Brown](#), D-Jacksonville
- **U.S. House District 4:** [Ander Crenshaw](#), R-Jacksonville
- **U.S. House District 5:** [Richard B. Nugent](#), R-Spring Hill
- **U.S. House District 6:** [Cliff Stearns](#), R-Ocala
- **U.S. House District 7:** [John L. Mica](#), R-Winter Park
- **U.S. House District 8:** [Daniel Webster](#), R-Orlando
- **U.S. House District 9:** [Gus M. Bilirakis](#), R-Palm Harbor
- **U.S. House District 10:** [C.W. Bill Young](#), R-Indian Shores
- **U.S. House District 11:** [Kathy Castor](#), D-Tampa
- **U.S. House District 12:** [Dennis A. Ross](#), R-Lakeland
- **U.S. House District 13:** [Vern Buchanan](#), R-Sarasota
- **U.S. House District 14:** [Connie Mack IV](#), R-Fort Myers
- **U.S. House District 15:** [Bill Posey](#), R-Rockledge
- **U.S. House District 16:** [Thomas J. "Tom" Rooney](#), R-Tequesta
- **U.S. House District 17:** [Frederica S. Wilson](#), D-Miami Gardens
- **U.S. House District 18:** [Ileana Ros-Lehtinen](#), R-Miami
- **U.S. House District 19:** [Theodore E. "Ted" Deutch](#), D-Boca Raton
- **U.S. House District 20:** [Debbie Wasserman Schultz](#), D-Weston
- **U.S. House District 21:** [Mario Diaz-Balart](#), R-Miami
- **U.S. House District 22:** [Allen B. West](#), R-Plantation
- **U.S. House District 23:** [Alcee L. Hastings](#), D-Miramar
- **U.S. House District 24:** [Sandy Adams](#), R-Orlando
- **U.S. House District 25:** [David Rivera](#), R-Miami

Though a Year Off, Redistricting is Already Dividing Florida's Democrats

With the Legislature session over, Florida lawmakers now turn their attention to next year's herculean task — drawing new political districts.

Every member of the Legislature has a stake in redistricting, because every district could take a new shape. New district lines are needed to adjust for changes in the Florida population.

The same goes for Florida's members of the U.S. House of Representatives. Population growth, as measured by the U.S. Census of 2010, means Florida will gain two more House seats. Any number of congressional districts — there are now 25 House members elected from Florida — will change to make room for those new arrivals.

Redrawing districts makes incumbents nervous — that's always been the case with this once-every-decade process.

This time, however, there are new tensions in Florida around the issue of minority representation and how to balance that concern while addressing two new constitutional amendments that prohibit the kind of gerrymandered districts that are now common in Florida.

These tensions are fracturing the Florida Democratic Party.

Florida now routinely elects minority members to the Legislature and to Congress, but, of course, that was not always the case. Changes in district lines after the 1990 Census created new districts that allowed for historic elections that sent three African-Americans to Congress from Florida — Corrine Brown, Alcee Hastings and Carrie Meek. (Meek retired in 2003; Brown and Hastings continue to serve).

But the districts drawn were unusual. They twisted, turned and rambled in order to pick up enough minority voters and liberal Democrats to make election of black candidates a true possibility. One district, the 3rd Congressional, lay like spaghetti across 14 Florida counties.

That excess was later reined in to a nine-county stretch. [The 3rd Congressional](#), held by U.S. Representative Corrine Brown, is now smaller, but it still reaches from Jacksonville down to Orlando, grabbing part of Gainesville on its way.

Now, many legislative districts and congressional districts in Florida are drawn in similar fashion, whether minority districts are not. The election map is a mess.

The new amendments, known as Fair Districts, were written to prohibit this practice in the future. They require that districts be compact, and that no district be drawn “to favor or disfavor an incumbent or political party.”

The amendments also state that redistricting must not deny minorities “the equal opportunity to participate in the political process and elect representatives of their choice.”

Whether such a balancing act can be accomplished remains to be seen. Brown contends it can't be done. She filed a lawsuit challenging the legality of the Fair Districts amendments on the grounds that Congress, not Florida voters, regulate congressional districts and that the amendments threaten minority incumbents and so violate the Voting Rights Act.

Brown, a Democrat from Jacksonville, is joined in her lawsuit by U.S. Representative Mario Diaz-Balart, a Republican from Miami. Republicans oppose the amendments — they see Fair Districts as an attempt to usurp the party's domination of Florida's elected offices.

In truth, that's what the amendments intend to do.

The group FairDistricts.org drafted the amendments out of concern over the curious nature of Florida's politics: the state is half Republican, half Democratic, when it comes to registered voters, but the GOP holds heavy majorities in both houses of the Legislature and all but six of the 25 seats in the U.S. House.

Many Democrats argue that this is not representative democracy. This system exists, they argue, only because gerrymandered districts compartmentalize blacks and white liberals, leaving other districts more conservative and more Republican.

“Things are completely out of whack in Florida,” U.S. Representative Kathy Castor, a Democrat from Tampa, [told Alex Leary of the *St. Petersburg Times*](#). “We’re a 50-50 state. We swing national elections. The Fair Districts is needed, and I don’t think anyone should be trying to fight it.”

Brown takes a different view, as she told the *St. Petersburg Times*: “Our communities have fought too hard, for too long, to take this giant step backward to our state’s Jim Crow days.”

Those two imperatives — election reform vs. guarding hard-won minority representation — are a fissure within the Florida Democrat Party, and as the state moves toward deciding new district lines next spring, that fissure could grow to a great divide.

Author: wtedmonds

Bill Edmonds is Managing Editor to Politic365.com and a consultant in communications in Tallahassee, Florida. A native of Virginia, he has worked in the Florida capital for three decades in journalism, in public affairs and in communications. He holds a bachelor’s degree in mass communications from Virginia Commonwealth University and a master’s in American Studies from Florida State University.



Legislators have breakfast with West Pasco Chamber

TRINITY --

A crowd filled a banquet room at the Fox Hollow Golf Club on Friday for a light breakfast meeting with some of the area's political heavyweights.

The meeting was presented by the Governmental Affairs Committee of the West Pasco Chamber of Commerce, to give chamber members and the public a chance to hear members of the all-Republican Pasco legislative delegation talk about the just-completed session in Tallahassee.

State Sen. Mike Fasano, state Sen. Jim Norman, state Rep. Rich Glorioso, state Rep. John Legg, state Rep. Peter Nehr and state Rep. Richard Corcoran all accepted the chamber's invitation to speak to their constituents about the issues they felt most attached to during the past year.

"This is our second year doing this," Chamber of Commerce President Joe Alpine said. "It's kind of an open format."

Alpine said he had no idea what the legislators would say, but that's what makes the event interesting. The idea behind the breakfast was to provide a forum between the politicians and their constituents. After the legislators spoke, the floor was then opened to questions from the audience.

"Often, you can't get that close to your legislators," Alpine said.

To make sure there would be time for the six legislators to have their say, a supposed three-minute time limit was imposed for each speaker.

"Three minutes? That's not easy for a senator," said Fasano, who was first up.

Though neither Fasano nor any of his legislative colleagues were held to that limit, they all adhered to its spirit and kept their comments brief. Fasano used a good portion of his time to discuss the pill mill legislation he's backed over the past year.

"Sadly, Florida is known as the pill mill capital across the nation," Fasano said. When people think of Florida, he wants them to think of sun and sandy beaches, not as the hot spot to commit prescription fraud.

"We were successful in getting a piece of legislation to the governor that I truly believe will go after the drug traffickers," Fasano said.

The other topic that Fasano said he felt a personal satisfaction about were measures taken to adjust the juvenile criminal justice system to put more focus on prevention and rehabilitation than on punishment. He and Glorioso shared a personal sense of motivation on this topic.

Instead of putting juveniles in jail and giving them criminal records, the state is now looking at turning the kids around, Glorioso said.

"We have a lot of young adults out there who made stupid mistakes when they were kids," Glorioso said. He has made a few and he imagined most every man in the room did something reckless when they were young.

Norman renewed his support for Gov. Rick Scott's decision to turn down federal stimulus money for a proposed light rail system between the Tampa Bay area and Orlando.

"I thought it was the biggest waste of taxpayer money this area could face," Norman said. The overall rail plan appeared to be designed to make Orlando the "power center of the state" at the expense of the counties on this end of the line.

Corcoran used the occasion to rebut suggestions in the media that little was done during the regular session to fulfill Scott's job-creation campaign pledge.

The Legislature "restored sanity" to unemployment compensation guidelines, he said. He also lauded the passage of a growth management law that puts decisions in the hands of county commissions instead of the state.

"The thing I'm most proud of is, we had the greatest economic calamity since the Great Depression, and the Legislature went up and passed all this great legislation," Corcoran said, to give businesses and the housing market a chance to get back up on their feet.

Rather than look back, Nehr, who is a member of the House redistricting committee, used the forum to let people know about a way they can get involved in the redrawing of Florida legislative districts and its U.S. House districts.

As a result of the 2010 census, Florida picked up two seats in the U.S. House of Representatives and will now have 27.

Floridians have an opportunity to get in on the process, Nehr said. They can visit the Myfloridahouse.org website, click the "My District Builder" tab and watch a tutorial that explains the criteria for drawing district lines. They can submit their own mapped suggestions.

Legg reflected on the overall session. This was the year the Legislature owned up to its problems and faced them head-on, he said.

klowry@suncoastnews.com

(727) 815-106

LWV official to address Coffee Party

Special to The Record

The president of the Jacksonville League of Women Voters will speak at the 6:30 p.m. June 6 meeting of the St. Augustine Chapter, National Coffee party at the Main Library, 1960 N. Ponce de Leon Blvd.

The meeting is open to the public.

Katie Ross, who is also a board member for the League of Women Voters of Florida, will provide an update on current efforts regarding redistricting, the once-a-decade process of redrawing the state's political boundaries.

This year's process must for the first time, follow the guidelines of voter-approved state constitutional Amendments 5 and 6, measures aimed at ending political gerrymandering in Florida.

She will also discuss the controversial election bill recently signed into law by Gov. Rick Scott. The bill cuts early voting days from 15 to 8, and requires some voters who have moved to cast provisional ballots.

The bill stipulates that only those who have moved within the same county will be able to update their addresses at the polls, a change most likely to affect college students.

The bill also requires voter-registration groups' volunteers to register with the state and face fines of up to \$1000 for not submitting voting forms within 48 hours.

While proponents of the bill say it will prevent fraud, opponents, including the League of Women Voters, maintain that the changes will result in voter suppression.

The Coffee Party is a democracy movement that exists online and in many chapters across the country. For information, email gloria_leblanc_coffeeparty@hotmail.com or go to www.coffeepartyusa.com.

Inside The Lines powered by Three Bridges Advisors

The U.S. Department of Justice sent a letter to the state today saying it had no objections to the “Fair Districts” amendments to the Florida Constitution, essentially clearing the state to use the standards in the current round of redistricting, reports the News Service of Florida. “The Attorney General does not interpose any objection to the specified changes,” wrote T. Christian Herren, chief of the voting section of the department’s Civil Rights Division, in the two-paragraph letter. “However, we note that Section 5 expressly provides that the failure of the Attorney General to object does not bar subsequent litigation to enjoin the enforcement of the changes.” Voters approved the changes, which are aimed at limiting political gerrymandering of the state’s legislative and Congressional districts, in the November elections.



Category: [National HeadLINES](#)

Inside The Lines powered by Three Bridges Advisors

With [public meetings on redistricting](#) about to begin throughout Florida, we are getting questions about what kinds of public testimony are appropriate at those public meetings. How can Floridians express the interests of their communities without running afoul of state and federal redistricting laws? How can Floridians talk about redistricting in a way that positively reflects the standards in law?

While it is the goal of the Florida House of Representatives to consider any public testimony that is offered at the public meetings, via the House's [MyDistrictBuilder](#) application, or through any other means, it is equally important to address the reality that – by law - some kinds of input simply cannot be considered in the crafting of Florida's new state legislative and congressional district maps.



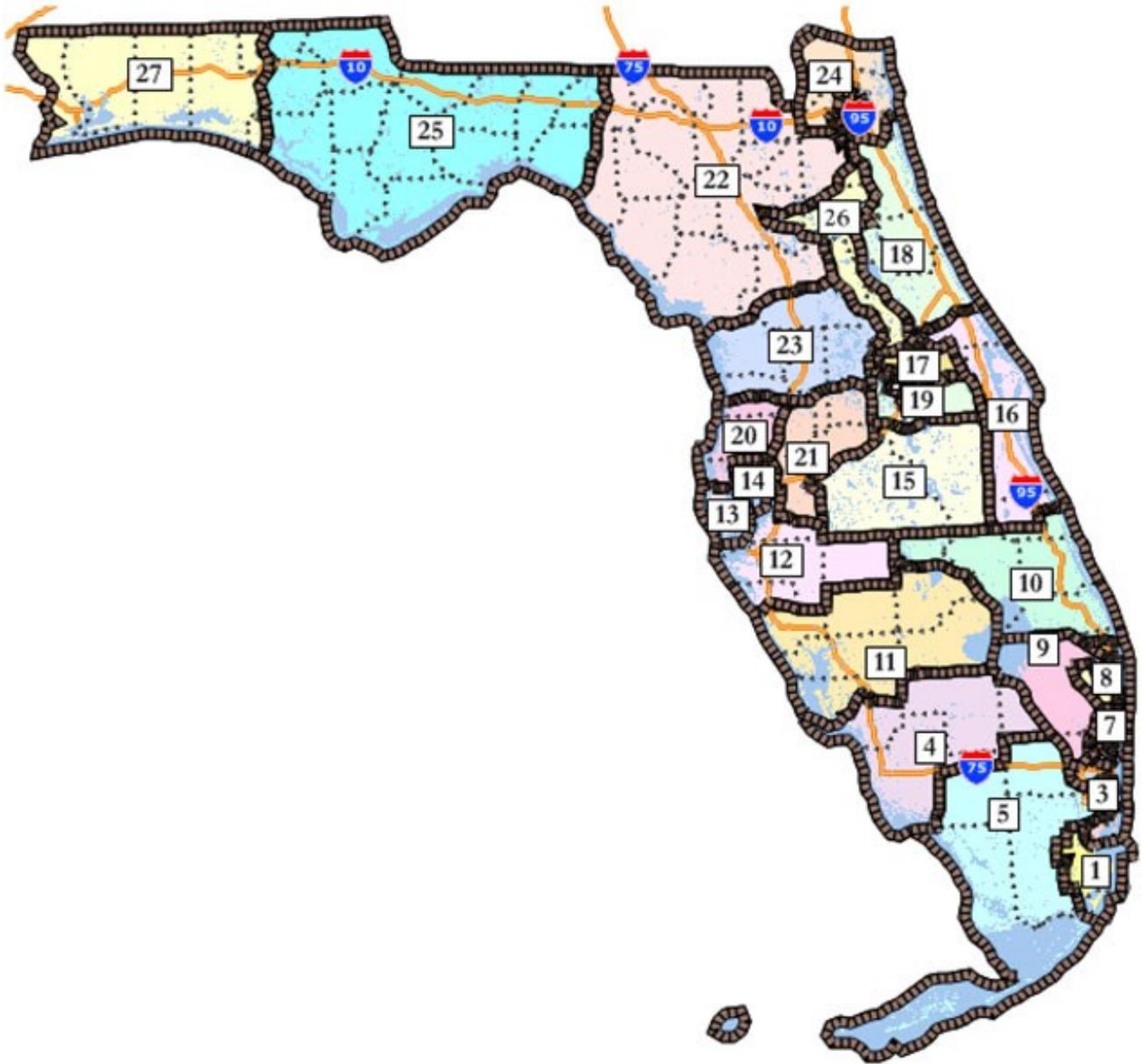
We created the handout below, [Guidance for Public Participation](#), as a reference to the concepts that are promoted and prohibited in federal and Florida redistricting laws. [Guidance for Public Participation](#) can also be found at www.floridaredistricting.org.

The handout gives general guidance for the kinds of public testimony that will be considered, and also the kinds of public testimony that will not be considered. For a greater understanding of these legal issues, visit the [Legal Resources](#) section at www.floridaredistricting.org.

Feel free to email the staff of the House Redistricting Committee (which wrote this post) at mydistrictbuilder@myfloridahouse.gov if you have any questions.

Category: [Legislative HeadLINES](#)

Inside The Lines powered by Three Bridges Advisors



The Florida House of Representatives received the first two redistricting proposals from the public this week. You can check them at <http://mydistrictbuilderplanexplorer.wordpress.com/>.

The first submission is a complete congressional plan for Florida at <http://mydistrictbuilderplanexplorer.wordpress.com/2011/05/27/hpubc0001-ortiz-nicholas-a/>.

The second submission is a partial State House plan for Brevard County area at <http://mydistrictbuilderplanexplorer.wordpress.com/2011/05/27/hparh0002-alvarez-john/>.

Category: [Maps](#), [Maps](#), [Maps](#)

Feds approve redistricting amendments - Florida Wires

TALLAHASSEE, Fla. -- The U.S. Department of Justice is giving its approval to the constitutional amendments voters passed last fall to force lawmakers to draw political districts that are compact and don't favor parties or candidates.

The department wrote to legislative leaders Tuesday. It has to approve of any changes to voting laws to ensure they are not discriminatory.

Lawmakers must redraw legislative and congressional districts during their annual session next year.

Democrats, who make up less than a third of the House and Senate, praised the decision.

);

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'Fair districts' for Florida is only a beginn

By Howard Troxler, Times Columnist
In Print: Tuesday, May 31, 2011

Let's talk about fair voting districts for Florida.

There are 4.6 million registered Democrats in Florida, 4 million registered Republicans, and 2.6 million voters registered as something else.

And yet, when you divide Florida into district elections, Republicans dominate utterly.

Republicans hold 19 of 25 seats in Congress and two-thirds of the seats in both houses of our Legislature.

Maybe this is because Republicans in general are better at electoral politics. (I think they are, by the way.)

Maybe a lot of Floridians agree with the Republican philosophy regardless of their own party registration. (They do, by the way.)

Maybe Republicans tend to recruit better candidates and do a better technical job of winning elections. (They do, by the way.)

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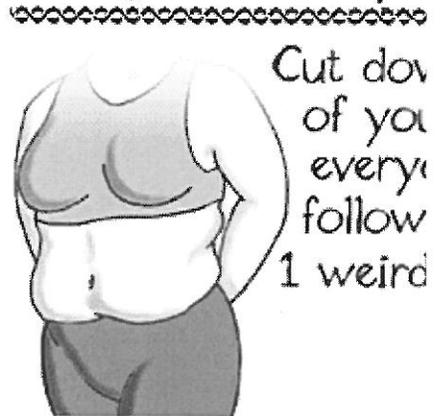
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And *maybe* ...

Maybe one factor in this Republican dominance is that the Republicans get to draw the maps of the voting districts in the first place, since they control the Legislature. The new maps have to be drawn by the spring of 2012.

However, this time around the rules will be different, and we are starting an interesting experiment.

Last November, Florida voters passed two "fair districts" amendments, one for Congress and one for the Legislature. Both declared that districts in Florida can no longer be drawn ...

... with the intent to favor or disfavor a political party or an incumbent.

Problem solved?

No. This is only the beginning of the fights we have to fight.

First, two of our members of Congress (Corrine Brown, D-Jacksonville, Mario Diaz-Balart, R-Miami) immediately filed a federal lawsuit. We'll have to see how that plays out over the next few months.

Next, remember that the Legislature is still going to draw the maps — there are rules involved, and more reasons for people to go to court afterward.

The Legislature's leaders, in opposing the fair districts campaign last year, argue be impossible to live up to their standards.

How can *any* district be drawn that doesn't favor or disfavor somebody? If a par or city is just chock-full of Republicans or Democrats, what are we supposed to do from "favoring" that side?

The courts will have to figure this out from scratch. What, exactly, is acceptable "intent" to favor one party or one incumbent?

(No wonder Dean Cannon, the Republican House speaker, wanted to split the Fla Court in half, and give Gov. Rick Scott a majority of new appointees to hear this

One thing that is *not* going to happen from all this is an overnight political revolt unless the districts are somehow magically rigged in the opposite direction.

Some Republican incumbents will find themselves with more credible challenger: will probably pick up a few seats in Congress and the Legislature, but will not take the state — not until they get a lot better. Black and Hispanic incumbents will find districts less stacked in their favor, but not disastrously so.

The bottom line will be a somewhat more competitive democracy in Florida, and somewhat more aware of the possibility of being challenged. This cannot possibly be a bad thing.

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U.S. Justice Department clears Florida redistricting amendments

[Times staff](#) and wires

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The U.S. Department of Justice green-lighted a pair of controversial redistricting amendments Tuesday, saying that the agency could find no reason why the Voting Rights Act barred the Florida from using the new standards in the once-a-decade redrawing of the state's political maps.

The usually routine preclearance process was thrust into the headlines earlier this year, when Gov. **Rick Scott** withdrew the state's application on Amendments 5 and 6, saying it was in keeping with his moratorium on new regulations. Eventually, the Legislature filed an application for the amendments, which were approved in the November elections.

Because of a history of racial discrimination in five counties, Florida has to submit all changes to voting and elections laws to the Justice Department for preclearance.

Democrats and advocates for the "Fair District" amendments, aimed at limiting lawmakers' ability to craft gerrymandered districts based on political considerations, hailed the agency's letter.

Florida Democratic Party chairman **Rod Smith** suggested that the Justice Department's decision was simply the first step in what is expected to be a contentious battle over the political future of the state.

"While today's approval was a huge step forward, we will continue fighting for a fair redistricting throughout the reappointment process," Smith said.

Alan Grayson eyeing comeback

Former U.S. Rep. **Alan Grayson** — beloved by liberals, loathed by conservatives — sent an e-mail Monday boasting he raised more than \$36,000 in one day from 1,213 donors, the latest sign he's planning a comeback.

"For each one of you who gave, I know you gave for one reason: because I was the kind of congressman that you wanted me to be. And if I ever have the job again, then I will be that kind of congressman again," Grayson wrote.

He recently told the Buzz that he's waiting to see what happens with redistricting. Orlando is likely to get one of Florida's two new congressional seats. Grayson can raise money but his combative rhetoric makes him an easy target. His defeat by Republican **Dan Webster** was one of the highlights for the GOP as it took control of the House.

Grayson denied his efforts are merely to knock down a substantial campaign debt, which reached \$1.6 million at the end of the election. A disclaimer on his website says new money can go toward the debt.

"It's not a cheap thing to maintain an e-mail list with hundreds of thousands of subscribers and send e-mails every week or so, in addition to the TV appearances, the blogging, the occasional out-of-town event, etc.," he told the Buzz. "As to whether I 'return' or not, we'll see."

Scott: Want to run? Avoid me

Scott mentioned last week the run of Republican presidential candidates who have bowed out of the race within days of meeting with him.

He was joking, but his abysmal poll numbers raise the question of what role he — the top-ranking Republican in the country's largest battleground state — will play over the next year to choose President **Barack Obama**'s GOP challenger.

"I was at the correspondents dinner with (**Donald**) **Trump**. I was absolutely convinced he was going to run. He didn't," Scott said on Pensacola-based 1620 AM. "I was with **Haley Barbour** a week before he announced he was not going to run. I guess no one should sit down with me right before they're going to run. Maybe that's it."

Scott appoints energy adviser

Scott has appointed Mary Bane his new special adviser on energy policy.

Bane retired as executive director of the Public Service Commission in December after a tumultuous final year in which her staff admitted to socializing with lobbyists, attending a Kentucky Derby party at the home of a Flower Power & Light lobbyist and staff members of commissioners were found sending text messages to utilities officials.

Bane applied and was nominated for a commissioner position but was rejected by Gov. **Charlie Crist**, who had criticized the PSC for becoming too close to the utilities it regulates.

The News Service of Florida and Times/Herald staff writers Alex Leary, Michael C. Bender and Mary Ellen Klas contributed to this report.

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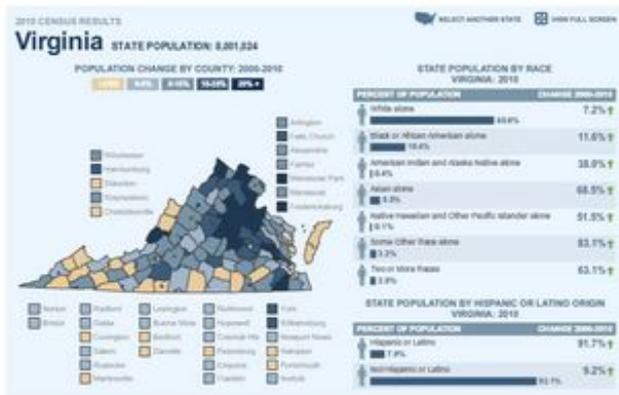


Anderson@Large: Drawing the Lines

<http://andersonatl原因.typepad.com/andersonlarge/2011/02/redistricting-public-mapping-project-district-builders-azavea-tracking-change.html>

February 15, 2011

The Census Bureau has begun to roll out [redistricting data](#). So far, 2010 Census results have been released for 11 states, including Illinois, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, New Jersey and Virginia.



With the release of the [P.L. 94-171 redistricting data](#) -- race, Hispanic or Latino origin, voting age population and housing occupancy status -- the political games will begin.

Yes, data of any kind can make one's eyes glaze over. But get over it. For the first time, we the people can get into the game and draw our own lines. We now have access to free web-based mapping tools to draw congressional and state legislative

boundaries.

In [Florida](#), for instance, the public will be able to [build their own plans](#) and submit them to the state legislature.

A popular public mapping tool, [DistrictBuilder](#), was developed by George Mason University and [Azavea](#), a Philadelphia-based software firm that specializes in geographic data analysis.

Advocacy groups can use [social media](#) to educate the public about why they should care about redistricting, foster participation in the process, and promote transparency.

The upcoming public hearings will provide opportunities to compare citizen-generated plans with the legislature's proposed map. The public will be empowered to question whether the legislature's plan is intended to draw communities of interest or [protect incumbents](#).

For more info, check out [Redistricting the Nation](#).