

2012 Redistricting Hearings: What Concerned Floridians Should Know

The Legislature's TIMELINE for drawing districts is unfair to Florida voters

- The Legislature plans to pass district maps at the end of the 2012 session – March 9. This means Florida's maps will be approved later than almost every other state in the nation.¹ That leaves only three months for court approval and review by the Department of Justice, a process that at best will take much more than three months.
- According to this timeline the new district maps will not be finalized and approved before qualifying for the 2012 elections closes on June 8. And they might not be finalized until August.
- According to the Legislature's own lawyer, this will cause "massive voter confusion".² Challengers or new candidates will have little if any time to mount campaigns and **voters will be voting for candidates they have had little opportunity to get to know.**
- **So why won't the Legislature prepare the maps earlier, debate them in the Fall and pass them the first week of session, doubling time for litigation to run its course and for preclearance by the Justice Department? Because late maps help incumbents!** The current timeline is designed as an incumbent protection plan.
- Bills were filed last session requiring maps be drawn earlier. These bills didn't even get hearings. Leadership wants to protect its incumbents.
- **This is outrageous!** Florida voters should not and will not tolerate such blatant efforts to undermine fair and competitive elections.

The Legislature should not be spending taxpayer money to oppose FairDistricts

- The Legislature has spent well over a million dollars of taxpayer money hiring lawyers to fight FairDistricts.
 - It fought approval of the amendments for the ballot in 2008. The Supreme Court ruled for FairDistricts.
 - It held over 30 hours of committee meetings in 2009 and 2010 to try to find fault with the amendments using lawyers from Speaker Cannon's former firm who were paid \$300-per-hour.
 - It tried to take a second bite at the apple in 2010 arguing in court that the amendments should be stricken from the ballot. The Supreme Court rejected their argument.
 - It tried to confuse voters by placing Amendment 7 on the ballot with misleading language. The Supreme Court struck Amendment 7 from the ballot.

¹ Many states including Alabama, Arkansas, Colorado, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Louisiana, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, Nevada and Oklahoma have already completed or almost completed redistricting.

² Bradenton Herald, 4/20/2011

- It convinced the Governor to withdraw the amendments' preclearance application from the Justice Department. Then it reapplied after a lawsuit was brought to force resubmission.
- Representatives Brown and Diaz Balart have sued to have Florida's new redistricting standards declared unconstitutional. The Florida House has joined them – which means the **Legislature is using taxpayer money to attack and invalidate a provision of our state constitution that was supported by 63% of Florida voters.**
- Kurt Browning, Florida's Secretary of State, is the defendant in that case. (Remember, Browning headed up the opposition to FairDistricts during the campaign!) **So Florida taxpayers are now paying to sue and defend the same lawsuit.**
- All of this money is being spent while teachers are being fired, social services are being cut, and not a single job is being created. Yet, the House and Senate have set aside upwards of \$30 million to fight Amendments 5 & 6 in court and promote their version of a redistricting plan.
- The Tallahassee politicians feel free to spend outrageous sums to protect their seats while they cut funding for critical services that benefit millions of Floridians.
- The Legislature should be working to uphold the constitution – not spending our money to protect their own interests at the expense of the provision placed there by almost 2/3 of the electorate last November.
- If the Legislature would stop trying to get out of following the new FairDistricts standards and apply them as the voters intended, there would be no need for litigation and no need for the massive amounts of taxpayer money they are planning to spend.

Where are the maps?

- The Legislature is holding 26 hearings around the state. But no maps are being provided for citizen comment. This exercise is a total waste of time – asking for comment in a vacuum.
- Other states that have public hearings do so in order to allow citizens the opportunity to comment on actual proposed maps.
- Have legislators drawn maps yet? If so, why are they not showing them to us? When will they show them to us?
- If they have not drawn maps yet, why not? When do they plan to draw them? What are they waiting for?
- These hearings have no purpose other than to make legislators *appear* to be listening but they are not giving the public an opportunity for meaningful comment on real maps.