

FairDistricts Now

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Contact: Jackie Lee, 305-445-5442

Jackie@fairdistrictsnow.org

Groups Ask Legislative Leaders to adopt a redistricting timeline that makes sense

Today, leaders of the Florida League of Women Voters, Florida NAACP, Common Cause Florida and Democracia USA sent the attached letter to Legislative leaders asking them to adopt a timeline and rules that require both houses to vote on the final plans no later than Friday, January 13, 2012 . While the redistricting committees are traveling the state to get input on what maps should look like, the groups also want greater opportunity for the public to comment when it really matters – when the Legislature has the maps that will be voted on. For months, the groups have expressed deep concerns about the current timeline for redistricting. If the legislators follow their published plan, districts will not be finalized before the deadline for qualifying. This violates the intent of the FairDistricts amendments because it provides built in protection for incumbents and makes it difficult or impossible for challengers to mount effective campaigns.

Deidre Macnab said, “We need to our Legislative Leaders to ensure there will be no chaos and confusion for candidates and voters. We call upon them to adopt a timeline that makes sense for the people of Florida and allows for greater public input when they do get around to showing the citizens that maps that will be voted on.”

Letter is attached.

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LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®
OF FLORIDA



August 10, 2011

SENT VIA EMAIL & FACSIMILE

Hon. Mike Haridopolos
409 The Capitol
404 South Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1100

Hon. Dean Cannon
420 The Capitol
402 South Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1300

Hon. Don Gaetz
420 Senate Office Building
404 South Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1100

Hon. Will Weatherford
418 The Capitol
402 South Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1300

Gentlemen:

We urge you to adopt a timeline for redistricting that makes sense for Florida. Failure to approve maps in early January 2012 will most assuredly delay final approval of new districts until close to election day thus causing massive voter confusion and precluding organized, thoughtful elections. We are also concerned that the present timeline does not allow for public comment or input on the maps that will actually be considered by the Legislature.

In order to address both of these problems please consider adopting a timeline and rules to require:

- An October 3 deadline for legislators to file all proposed redistricting plans. This is more than 30 days after completion of your travelling public hearings;
- Completion of all committee review of the maps by the conclusion of the interim committee hearings in December 2011. You could even convene committee hearings throughout the state in late November or in December;
- Require that any amendment to a plan be filed with sufficient notice to afford citizens an opportunity to review the various plans and even travel to Tallahassee or other location to testify before any final committee vote; and
- Vote on the final plans on the Floor by no later than the end of the first week of session, Friday, January 13, 2012

Following this proposed timeline will allow Florida citizens a greater opportunity to consider and comment on the maps you are about to pass. And it allows an extra two months for court and Justice Department reviews making the possibility of orderly elections more real.

Unless you conclude the committee process before session, Floridians may not see the Legislature's redistricting maps until the very eve of passage. Citizens at public hearings have repeatedly expressed concern that after 26 public hearings around the state they will still be in the dark as to what the House and Senate intend to do with district maps. In response to these concerns, Chairman Weatherford recently promised that the public would be given three days notice prior to any vote on a redistricting map and any proposed amendments would be available two days prior to a vote.

But citizens have no practical ability to travel to Tallahassee to appear at committee hearings and no assurance that they would be heard even if they could get there. The ability to send last minute emails or make web posts is not sufficient. And if the final maps are amended before passage – as they has been in previous redistricting sessions – according to your schedule, the public will have very little notice.

In public hearings, Senator Gaetz has suggested that the Courts and Justice Department should plan to expedite their reviews of the plans. That same logic should apply to the *Legislature* which has the unilateral ability to control *its* own timeline. Florida already has one of the latest redistricting timelines in the nation. Supervisors of Elections from many counties have testified at hearings that failure to accelerate the timeline will impair their ability to conduct elections and will create havoc with absentee and military voting. And the House's lawyer, Miguel DeGrandy said at a committee hearing on 4/19/11: "Voter confusion was rampant in 1992. What I can tell you is . . . the sooner that you start, the less chance there is of something like that happening." Bradenton Herald, 4/20/11.

During recent hearings of the redistricting committees, members have acknowledged we could easily minimize this dislocation by following the timeline we suggest.

We urge you to use your interim committee meetings to generate the maps that will be sent to the Floor and then have both houses vote on the final plans no later than Friday, January 13, 2012.

We recognize that many measures come out of the legislature with little or no public input into the final product. But redistricting is too important for a "Tallahassee special." A timeline without the deadlines we suggest is a guaranteed recipe for disaster.

A democracy only works when citizens are afforded the opportunity to have their voices heard in a meaningful way and to fully participate in deliberative elections. Please adopt rules to advance the timeline so as to maximize the opportunity for citizen input and make it possible for us to have an election free of chaos and confusion.

With great thanks,

Sincerely,



Adora Obi Nweze
NAACP



Deirdre Macnab
LWV of Florida



Rudi Navarra
Democracia USA



Nathalie Shortal
Common Cause

CC:

Senator Gwen Margolis	Representative Dennis Baxley	Representative Mia Jones
Senator Lizbeth Benacquisto	Representative Mack Bernard	Representative John Patrick Julien
Senator Oscar Braynon, II	Representative Jason Brodeur	Representative Martin David Kiar
Senator Larcenia J. Bullard	Representative Jim Boyd	Representative John Legg
Senator Charles S. "Charlie" Dean, Sr.	Representative Rachel Burgin	Representative Ana Rivas Logan
Senator Nancy C. Detert	Representative Matthew Caldwell	Representative Peter Nehr
Senator Miguel Diaz de la Portilla	Representative Daphne Campbell	Representative Jeanette Nuñez
Senator Greg Evers	Representative Charles S. Chestnut, II	Representative Kathleen Passidomo
Senator Anitere Flores	Representative Steve Crisafulli	Representative Scott Plakon
Senator Rene Garcia	Representative Gwyndolen Clarke-Rapp	Representative Betty Reed
Senator Andy Gardiner	Representative Richard Concoran	Representative Hazelle P. Rogers
Senator Alan Hays	Representative Janet Cruz	Representative Darryl Ervin Rouson
Senator Jack Latvala	Representative Jose Felix Diaz	Representative Robert Schenck
Senator Evelyn J. Lynn	Representative Brad Drake	Representative Kelli Stargel
Senator Bill Montford	Representative Chris Dorworth	Representative Dwayne Taylor
Senator Joe Negrón	Representative Eric Eisnaugle	Representative Carlos Trujillo
Senator Nan H. Rich	Representative Clay Ford	Representative Alan B. Williams
Senator Maria Lorts Sachs	Representative Erik Fresen	Representative Trudi K. Williams
Senator Gary Siplin	Representative James Frishe	Representative Ritch Workman
Senator Eleanor Sobel	Representative Reggie Fullwood	Representative Dana Young
Senator Ronda Storms	Representative Tom Goodson	
Senator John Thrasher	Representative Doug Holder	
Representative Stephen Precourt	Representative Ed Hooper	
Representative Joseph Abruzzo	Representative Mike Horner	
Representative Janet H. Adkins	Representative Dorothy Hukill	
Representative Ben Albritton	Representative Evan Jenne	