



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®
OF FLORIDA

Democracia



Florida
COMMON CAUSE
Holding Power Accountable

June 14, 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:

On November 2, 2010, 63% of Florida voters demonstrated their strong desire to reform Florida's redistricting process by voting for the Fair Districts constitutional amendments. The amendments, at their core, simply require that you draw districts fairly without intent to favor incumbent politicians or political parties.

Later this month, you will begin hearings throughout the state, which have been billed as "listening tours." Legislators in attendance have been told they must remain totally silent. They are not to speak at the hearings at all — not even to answer questions asked by their constituents. Apparently, legislators will not be presenting any maps for citizens to review or comment on.

We believe that these hearings would be much more useful and meaningful if citizens and their representatives could engage in real dialogue about how they want the maps to be drawn. Hearing from legislators about how they intend to comply with the new redistricting rules will engender public confidence, which might counteract the fact that the Legislature has spent and is still spending large amounts of tax dollars to fight the amendments.

Many other states have already presented maps to their citizens for review or have already adopted maps, giving voters and candidates for newly drawn districts ample opportunity to get to know each other. Florida's schedule for redistricting creates unnecessary pressure as primary voting approaches. According to your schedule, it is highly unlikely that Floridians will know their new districts before qualifying, and the process could take much longer if the maps

you draw do not comply with the law. (The House's lawyer, Miguel DeGrandy, has said there is a "100% chance" that the maps will be challenged in court.)

The delay written into your timeline is unacceptable, unfair to the voters, and contrary to the spirit of the Florida Constitution.

In order to secure full compliance with the Fair Districts amendments, to enhance public confidence in the process, and to avoid chaos and confusion at election time, we ask you to do the following three things:

First, **stop using taxpayer dollars to fight the amendments** in order to frustrate the clear will of the voters. At every stage, the Florida Legislature has taken extraordinary steps using taxpayer money to avoid having to follow the Fair Districts rules. It was a party to two suits to keep the measures off the ballot and, after spending more than \$1 million in legal fees to find fault with the Fair Districts amendments, both houses approved a competing amendment that was ultimately thrown out by the courts as "misleading". Now the House of Representatives is using more taxpayer money to sue the State of Florida to stop implementation of the reforms. Florida's taxpayers are paying large sums for lawyers to represent **both** the Plaintiff (the Florida House) and the Defendant (the Secretary of State) in the same lawsuit.

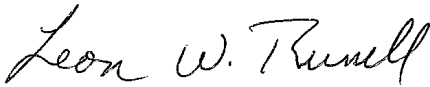
Second, **start presenting maps** for citizens to review so you can draw districts, incorporate comments on the maps, and get them approved with sufficient time before the election to allow voters and candidates to prepare for the election in an orderly fashion. According to Miguel DeGrandy, you should start the map drawing process "as soon as possible" to avoid "rampant voter confusion."¹ Your present plan is to vote on final maps at the end of session next March. Why not draw them earlier, debate and discuss them in committee hearings in the fall, and vote on them during the first week of Session in early January 2012? That would add two months for court and Justice Department reviews and create a real chance for voters and prospective candidates to have approved districts well before qualifying.

Finally, **lift the gag order you have placed on legislators for the hearings**. You have indicated that legislators should not make public statements about redistricting lest they betray intent to engage in political favoritism. You have recently written to your members forbidding them to speak at the upcoming hearings. We are hopeful that such intent to draw districts to favor incumbents or parties does not exist. However, an order to remain silent creates the impression that there is something to hide. We urge you to reconsider this gag order and encourage a productive give-and-take at each of the hearings. This will give voters confidence that their representatives intend to fully comply with the new redistricting standards.

¹"Voter confusion was rampant in 1992," DeGrandy said at a committee hearing on 4/19/11. "What I can tell you is . . . 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 possibility you may run for election in a plan that is ultimately thrown out by court." Bradenton Herald, 4/20/11.

Please let us know that you will do your duty, abide by your oaths to enforce the Florida Constitution, and comply with the Fair Districts amendments. We look forward to your prompt response.

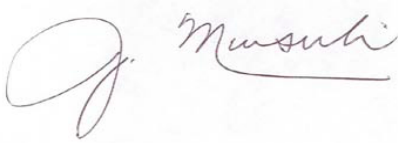
Sincerely,



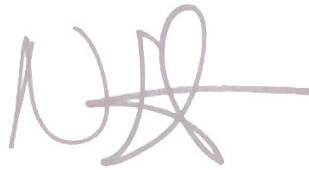
Leon Russell
NAACP



Deirdre Macnab
LWV of Florida



Jorge Mursuli
Democracia



Nathalie Shortal
Common Cause Florida

Cc: (By Email only)

Senator Gwen Margolis
Senator Lizbeth Benacquisto
Senator Oscar Braynon, II
Senator Larcenia J. Bullard
Senator Charles S. "Charlie" Dean, Sr.
Senator Nancy C. Detert
Senator Miguel Diaz de la Portilla
Senator Greg Evers
Senator Anitere Flores
Senator Rene Garcia
Senator Andy Gardiner
Senator Alan Hays
Senator Jack Latvala
Senator Evelyn J. Lynn
Senator Bill Montford
Senator Joe Negron
Senator Nan H. Rich
Senator Maria Lorts Sachs
Senator Gary Siplin
Senator Eleanor Sobel
Senator Ronda Storms
Senator John Thrasher
Representative Stephen Precourt
Representative Joseph Abruzzo

Representative Janet H. Adkins
Representative Ben Albritton
Representative Dennis Baxley
Representative Mack Bernard
Representative Jason Brodeur
Representative Jim Boyd
Representative Rachel Burgin
Representative Matthew Caldwell
Representative Daphne Campbell
Representative Charles S. Chestnut, IV
Representative Steve Crisafulli
Representative Gwyndolen Clarke-Reed
Representative Richard Concoran
Representative Janet Cruz
Representative Jose Felix Diaz
Representative Brad Drake
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Representative Eric Eisnaugle
Representative Clay Ford
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Representative Evan Jenne
Representative Mia Jones
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Representative Martin David Kiar
Representative John Legg
Representative Ana Rivas Logan
Representative Peter Nehr
Representative Jeanette Nuñez
Representative Kathleen Passidomo
Representative Scott Plakon
Representative Betty Reed
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Representative Trudi K. Williams
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Representative Dana Young