



# FAQ's Regarding Fair Districts Florida

## 1. What exactly is "Fair Districts Florida.org"?

FairDistrictsFlorida.org is a nonpartisan state committee working to reform the way our state draws legislative and congressional district lines by establishing constitutionally mandated fairness standards.

## 2. What is wrong with the way our districts are now? Why do we need redistricting? What is the goal of redistricting?

Every 10 years after the Census, our Legislature is required to create new districts lines. Currently districts are determined by the political party in majority control in our House of Representatives and then signed off on by the Governor. Generally speaking, the lines are drawn to favor the party in power. This is called gerrymandering.

## 3. What do we need to do to change this process?

We need to get 1.6 million petitions signed in order to get redistricting on the ballot in 2010. In Hillsborough County, we need 50,000 sets of petitions. There are two petitions which need to be signed. One is Legislative and the other Congressional.

## 4. Has our State Supreme Court approved the language on the petitions?

Yes. On January 29, 2009 the Florida Supreme court approved the language on the petitions.

## 5. So what exactly is being proposed?

- Ensure that ALL voters have an equal opportunity to participate in the political process – includes protecting rights of minority voters
- Require districts be compact, contiguous, community based and equal in population where possible
- Where feasible, making use of existing, city, county, and geographical boundaries

## 6. What does our House and Senate look like now compared to our voter registration numbers?

Currently there are approximately 600,000 more registered Democrats in Florida than Republicans. Approximately 20% of our population is registered as Independent or "other" party.

- Out of 120 House seats there are 77 Republicans, 43 Democrats and no "other" party/Independents.
- Out of 40 Senate seats, there are 14 Democrats, 26 Republicans and 0 "other" party/Independents.

## 7. Where can I read more about this?

<http://fairdistrictsflorida.org>

## 8. I want to help. What can I do?

We need help educating people and getting enough petitions signed in order to get this on the ballot in 2010. Petitions are available on the web site or you can contact Susan Smith at 813-390-3616 or email at [stsmith222@aol.com](mailto:stsmith222@aol.com).

## 9. What do the media have to say about redistricting?

Numerous newspapers have published editorials/articles in support of Fair Districting. Including:

- St. Petersburg Times
- Tampa Tribune
- Palm Beach Herald

**10. I already signed the petitions, may I sign them again?**

No. Under Florida law, it is a first degree misdemeanor to knowingly sign a petition or petitions more than one time for an issue.

**11. Why are there two petitions?**

Congressional and Legislature districts are not the same. Florida law recognizes this difference. As a result, separate petitions are required for each level of representation.

**12. Who can sign the petitions?**

Anyone registered in the State of Florida. You can be a registered voter in any Florida County.

**13. I would like to contribute money. Where can I send a check?**

You may donate on line at [hcdec.org](http://hcdec.org) or Hillsborough County Democratic Executive Committee, PO Box # 152164, Tampa, Florida 33684 or go on the internet to [www.fairdistrictsflorida.org](http://www.fairdistrictsflorida.org).

**14. Why do we need 1.6 million petitions?**

We need 800,000 registered voters for each petition. The 800,000 number allows for a small percentage to be invalidated for a variety of reasons.

**15. I know Republicans who think this is only a Democratic issue. How can I address that? Some example verbiage-**

- a. Even if you have a Republican Representative, if they know that they will be re-elected due to the district lines, what is their incentive to listen to their constituents?
- b. People don't think their votes count. "Safe" district voting is not equal. This is about fairness and ensuring that all of our votes count equally.
- c. Look at Kathy Castor, Asthenia Joyner and Dave Romberg's districts. Kathy and Asthenia cover portions of Hillsborough, Pinellas and Manatee Counties. Dave's area is "Coast to Coast". Kathy's district is connected by water. The areas are not contiguous or community based. With districts like these, it is virtually impossible to support all constituents effectively. Not to mention the costs involved with supporting these large areas. Their districts span hundreds of miles, divide communities and crises cross through many counties. This is not even logical, let alone fair.
- d. During the 2008 elections, only 1 State House incumbent was defeated out of 120 seats; no incumbent state Senators were defeated out of 40. Out of 25 congressional seats, 3 incumbents were defeated (sex scandal-same seat as 2006). In 2006 there was only 1 incumbent congressional seat defeated (and this was due to a sex scandal).