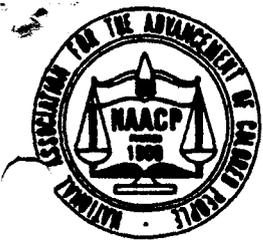


*Bay County Branch*

**NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE ADVANCEMENT OF COLORED PEOPLE**

POST OFFICE BOX 2521, PANAMA CITY, FL 32401  
TELEPHONE (904) 763-5381 • FAX (904) 763-5216 (call first)



STATEMENT FOR  
THE FLORIDA LEGISLATIVE REDISTRICTING PUBLIC HEARING  
City: PANAMA CITY, FLORIDA  
Date: October 16, 2001

Good morning, my name is Herbert L. Howard. I serve as President of the Bay County Branch of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP). First let me thank the Committee for the opportunity to make this brief statement for the record of this hearing. The Florida State Conference will make a full statement to this body prior to the conclusion of these hearings in October.

There are a number of things that concern us about the redistricting process. The most important element at this point is the nature of the standards that the Florida Legislature will use in drawing legislative and congressional districts. The standards you establish will impact this state and its constituencies for the next ten years. These standards will determine whether this state adheres to the concept of one person-one vote and they will certainly determine whether all of the voters of this state have an equal opportunity to elect candidates of their choice to the state house, the state senate and to the United States Congress.

It is equally important to the NAACP that you develop a process that respects the principle of "no regression". The past two redistricting sessions created a number of opportunities that allowed various communities to be able to elect candidates of their choice for the first time in the modern history of the state. We believe that those opportunities must be protected and enhanced. The NAACP believes that the redistricting process must preserve the concept of minority representation.

The redistricting process that you will undertake will drastically reshape the political map of this state. The growth in population and the accompanying need to increase the population of legislative districts is significant. A brief review of the current maps show that most of the districts currently considered to be majority minority districts are currently under-populated. It is important that care be taken to insure the character of these districts and to insure that communities with common interest be kept together. The people who will be served by these districts must influence the determination of common interests.

It is also important as you provide these public opportunities for input into the way the process will be carried out, that you provide an equal opportunity for input in the actual process of drawing districts. There are any number of groups that will seek to influence this activity. It is very important that you provide every opportunity through as many avenues as possible to allow all interested parties to actually participate in crafting the districts, which will serve them during the next ten years.

The NAACP looks forward to working with the members of this committee and your staff persons during the next few months on behalf of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. It is important that when this process is complete that the constituencies are convinced that there is power in their vote. This means that they must be clearly able to influence the election of those people who will make public policy in their communities. This means that the standards that you apply to this process as well as the process itself must be true to our democratic principles. Thank you for this opportunity.

Name: Herbert L. Howard

Address: 539 Harmon Avenue, Panama City, FL 32401

Tel.#: (850)763-5381

Fax#: (850)763-5216



**RESOLUTION**

**BAY COUNTY CHAMBER OF COMMERCE**

**(ELECTION DISTRICTS OF THE FLORIDA STATE SENATE, THE FLORIDA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, AND THE U.S. CONGRESS WITH RESPECT TO THE BAY COUNTY AREA.)**

- Whereas, The Mission of the Bay County Chamber of Commerce is to develop, enhance and maintain a viable business climate and to provide leadership in the development of economic growth and quality of life in Bay County; and
- Whereas, The current population of Bay County is 155,000 and therefore is slightly larger than a State House District, but less than one half of a State Senate District; and
- Whereas, Bay County constitutes a distinct community of interest, with its own tourism corridor and with two military bases with unique and complimentary missions; and
- Whereas, The community of interest is exemplified by an efficient and effective health care and social service area as well as a common media; and
- Whereas, The division of Bay County into multiple Senate Districts has led to representation by Senators who, in some cases, live over two hours away and represent areas with divergent interests; and
- Whereas, The Citizen Leadership Institute of Gulf Coast Community College moderated a Town Hall meeting on October 4, 2001, where the public found common ground concerning the election districts of the Florida State Senate, the Florida House of Representatives and the U.S. Congress for the Bay County area; and
- Whereas, It was the consensus of participants at the Town Hall meeting that the greater Bay County area would be better served if Bay County fully contains one State House District and falls entirely within one State Senate District; and Congressional District Two containing both Tyndall Air Force Base and the Coastal Systems Station; and

**NOW, THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED** that the Bay County Chamber of Commerce urges the Florida Legislature to adopt a Reapportionment Plan which accomplishes the following: **A.)** A State House District which is exclusively within Bay County. **B.)** A single State Senate District which encompasses all of Bay County and **C.)** A Congressional District Two that includes both military bases within Bay County.

**APPROVED AND ADOPTED** by the Executive Committee of the Bay County Chamber of Commerce on this 9th day of October, 2001.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Hugh Roche, Chairman

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Jim Cherry, President





## RESOLUTION

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# CITIZEN LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE

Moderated by Gulf Coast Community College's Citizen Leadership Institute. The Citizen Leadership Institute is a non-partisan program delivery agent of Gulf Coast Community College. The Citizen Leadership Institute sponsored a town meeting on the topic of redistricting. The framing and moderating was funded by the George G. Tapper Endowment of the GCCC Foundation.

## REDISTRICTING TOWN MEETING

The comments below are the citizen's views on redistricting at the town meeting on Thursday, October 4, 2001.

### FLORIDA SENATE

#### Problem Statement:

The problem is that we don't elect the senator. We have very little impact in senate elections. We vote, but we don't elect anyone. With three senators representing Bay County, our voting power is diluted. One citizen said, "Most campaign here because we have deep pockets."

#### Common Ground Statement:

All of Bay County should be a one-senator district.

#### Rationale:

We are the financial, mercantile, medical and educational hubs of the surrounding counties. It stands to reason that we also should be the political hub.

#### Citizen Statement During Forum:

"We need someone who wakes up every morning thinking about Bay County."

### FLORIDA HOUSE

#### Problem Statement:

The challenge for redistricting the Florida House is to find ways of establishing the district(s) to reflect the varying concerns and common values of the "community" of Bay County. Although Bay County has a diverse cultural population, the sense of "community" generally supercedes partisanship among the constituents. Florida House representation, as best as possible, must reflect this feeling of unity in Bay County.

#### Common Ground Statement:

Construct a "compact county" district in Bay County.

#### Rationale:

This choice designs a district around the densely portions of Bay County encompassing like-grouped industries, towns, neighborhoods, military, education, and other economic interests.

#### Citizen Statement During Forum:

"If it ain't broke don't fix it."

### U.S. CONGRESS

#### Problem Statement:

The predominate problem is that we currently have two congressmen representing Bay County, and many say that we, therefore, do not have a united front in representing the interest of Bay County's military bases.

#### Common Ground Statement:

Have all of Bay County in one district.

#### Rationale:

Bay County would be best served if both bases were in the same district.

#### Citizen Statement During Forum:

"We need to be in a district were we have the only two bases."



# REDISTRICTING: REPRESENTING BAY COUNTY

## INTRODUCTION

Every ten years, to ensure the equality of representation in the U.S. House of Representatives, updated Census figures are used to adjust House districts across the nation. This also applies to the state legislature, the Florida Senate and the Florida House. When the Florida legislature meets in January, its first task will be to draw new state legislative districts. The results of redistricting will be partisan; meaning, those in control of the state legislature will draw lines to ensure they remain in control. This year, the Republicans will draw the lines to benefit them as the Democrats did ten years ago. "An area that did not vote for me in the past, was no longer in my district," states one former congressman.

Two members of Congress represent Bay County. On the state level, the county is divided into three senate districts and two legislative districts. While these men and women work hard for our best interest, there is no guarantee that future policy makers will do the same. Of the five people representing us in Tallahassee, only one lives in Bay County.

Some of the concerns voiced by citizens regarding redistricting reflect the county's diverse population as well as its varied economic structure. Many were concerned about the effect on the area of losing one of the military bases. Loss of a base not only would hurt the economy but also would impact future educational goals of the area. Therefore, at issue is whether or not the military bases are contained in a single district or split between two districts.

Many in the educational sector are concerned about funding for our schools. Our legislators have done a good job in securing money for our programs, but as money gets tighter and with term limits in state government, our power base for funding will erode.

Minority voters want their voice heard. How the district is divided will change or reduce the impact and the affect of their vote.

In general, all citizens want more inclusion in the legislative process than they have experienced in the past. They want their views represented, not just those of special interest groups. They want the elected officials' to have a sense of community and voice of that community in each political arena.

## THE FLORIDA SENATE

The problem is that we don't elect the senator. We have very little impact in senate elections. We vote but we don't elect anyone. With three senators representing Bay County, our voting power is diluted. One citizen said, "Most campaign here because we have deep pockets."

**CHOICE ONE:** Bay County should be a one-senator district, either by aligning Bay County with Washington and Calhoun Counties or aligning Bay County with Gulf and Franklin Counties.

### In Support:

- We are the financial, mercantile, medical, and educational hubs of the surrounding counties. It stands to reason that we also should be the political hub.
- If we elect the senator, then we will have his or her loyalty and the influence he or she can provide in the senate.
- Bay County gives a great sum of money to candidates, both Democrat and Republican.
- The entire population will be in one district.

### In Opposition:

- Having three votes is better than having only one vote.
- In years prior, we had the political influence because we had senators that lived in and around the area.
- This view does not guarantee that the senator will be from Bay County.
- With eight-year term limits, it won't matter because we will have no more influence than any other district.

**CHOICE TWO:** Bay County should be divided into two districts.

### In Support:

- The county is big enough to allow for two senators, thus giving the county more influence in Tallahassee.
- The county will benefit from having two political perspectives.
- The areas around Bay County have concerns and interests common to Bay County; all could benefit with two senators uniting for the common good.

### In Opposition:

- Bay County's political base would weaken.
- Two senators would not have the entire county's best interests in mind, only that portion he or she represents and the rest of their district.
- Money needed to support the county would be spread over too large an area.

**CHOICE THREE:** The county is doing fine with its present configuration. Leave it alone.

### In Support:

- Three voices are better than one or two.
- The county itself is separated socially and economically; three senators would represent these interests well.
- In the old days, three senators gave the county an advantage over most of the state; it could happen again.

### In Opposition:

- Each senator must represent his or her larger population areas.
- With eight-year term limits, the county will never have senators with the seniority to represent it as it did in the old days.
- We would not have direct representation.



# COUNTY'S "COMMUNITY" OF CONCERNS



## THE FLORIDA HOUSE

The challenge for redistricting the Florida House is to find ways of establishing the district(s) to reflect the varying concerns and common values of the "community" of Bay County. Although Bay County has a diverse cultural population, the sense of "community" generally supercedes partisanship among the constituents. Florida House representation, as best as possible, must reflect this feeling of unity in Bay County.

**CHOICE ONE:** Construct a "compact county" district in Bay County. This choice designs a district around the densely populated portions of Bay County encompassing like-grouped industries, towns, neighborhoods, military, education, and other economic interests.

### In Support:

- The two military bases would be in the same district and better contribute to Bay County's social and economic base.
- Generally, the diverse cultural neighborhoods remain intact and better represented.
- The compactness maintains a community of interest for the more densely populated areas rather than mix them with the rural concerns.

### In Opposition:

- This option sacrifices bi-partisanship by creating a district based on interest rather than political party.
- The outlying rural areas may feel left out and unimportant to Bay County's welfare.
- This most likely divides at least one town, thereby causing cities to have two representatives with whom to do business/politics.

**CHOICE TWO:** Create a Bay-Walton coastal district. This type of district will extend westward and bring common coastal interests under one representative.

### In Support:

- A coastal district creates a common and consistent tourist corridor.
- Because the coastal area brings in an abundance of tourism dollars, this option is pro-growth by capitalizing on Bay and Walton's most visible moneymaker.
- Coastal areas have similar needs, and their common infrastructure requirements and support will be more manageable.
- Having a single representative for the coastal area will enable better representation for building codes and insurance costs.
- This option allows for a better emphasis on disaster relief and preparedness necessary for the hurricane-prone area.

### In Opposition:

- Because growth and development of this area would be of greater priority, its environmental sensitivity would be at risk.
- Military concerns will be sacrificed for the sake of the more wealthy tourism and development interests.
- This choice disrupts the current legislative relationships.
- Creating a coastal district will divide the minority (particularly the African American) community, thus diluting the strength of their voice.
- Because the western part of this district is more developed, it may gain immediate power that would diminish Bay County's ability to influence legislative policies.

**CHOICE THREE:** Divide Bay County into eastern and western districts.

### In Support:

- This choice truly represents bipartisanship with no one political party's desire for control at the heart of the decision.
- This would create more evenly sized geographical districts for ease of recognition and more likely maintain the integrity of whole communities.
- With each district containing coastal, urban, and rural communities, the distribution of property and wealth would be much more equitable.

### In Opposition:

- Bay County's military bases would wind up in separate districts.
- This choice disrupts current legislative relationships.
- This choice does not take into account and maintain communities of interest or culture.

## U.S. CONGRESS

The predominate problem is that we currently have two congressmen representing Bay County, and many say that we, therefore, do not have a united front in representing the interest of both of Bay County's military bases.

**CHOICE ONE:** Keep things the way they are. The county is presently in two districts.

### In Support:

- This provides the county with two members of congress rather than one; with double representation, its voice is stronger.
- If the members of Congress are from different parties, as they are now, the one whose party is in control always will represent the county.

### In Opposition:

- There are multiple bases in one district. With possible base closures in the future, one local base may be vulnerable.
- We do not present a united voice.
- We have almost no chance for a local person to be elected; therefore, the county's interest most likely would not be the elected officials' primary concern.

**CHOICE TWO:** Have all of Bay County in one district.

### In Support:

- Bay County would be best served if both bases were in the same district.
- There would be more representation with an agricultural, small town, and rural flavor.
- Both military bases would be best served in one district

### In Opposition:

- There is a chance that a member not of the county's majority political party would represent the county.
- Two voices are stronger than one, particularly on the federal level
- One congressman or woman cannot truly represent the varied interests of Bay County's diversity.

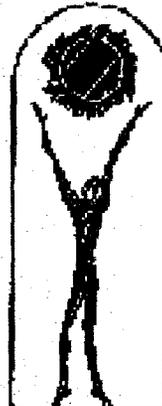
**CHOICE THREE:** The voting area should be divided horizontally with the inland and coastal areas being separate districts.

### In Support:

- Both military bases will be in the same district.
- This choice creates districts according to natural geographical boundaries and interests.
- Often the rural communities and the coastal communities have different or opposing needs; therefore, each will have its own voice in Congress without conflicting loyalties.

### In Opposition:

- The county cannot sacrifice the bases for the major interest—tourism.
- The physical size of the northern district will make it impossible to serve and would add to campaign costs.
- The interest of small cities might be compromised by large city interest.



Gulf Coast Community College  
Citizen Leadership Institute  
5230 West Highway 98  
Panama City, FL 32401  
(850) 872-3823

GCCC is an equal access / equal opportunity institution.

