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REAPPORTIONMENT PUBLIC HEARING

SEPTEMBER 20, 2001 - 2:00 P.M.

CIVIC CENTER
WAUCHULA, FLORIDA

REPORTED BY:
KRISTEN L. BENTLEY
COURT REPORTER
Division of Administrative Hearings
DeSoto Building
1230 Apalachee Parkway
Tallahassee, Florida

1 MEMBERS IN ATTENDANCE
 2 SENATOR ALEX DIAZ DE LA PORTILLA
 3 SENATOR STEVEN A. GELLER
 4 SENATOR DURELL PEADEN, JR.
 5 SENATOR DANIEL WEBSTER
 6 REPRESENTATIVE RANDY JOHN BALL
 7 REPRESENTATIVE FREDERICK C. BRUMMER
 8 REPRESENTATIVE PAULA BONO DOCKERY
 9 REPRESENTATIVE JOHNNIE B. BYRD, JR.
 10 REPRESENTATIVE MARIO DIAZ-BALART
 11 REPRESENTATIVE MIKE FASANO
 12 REPRESENTATIVE LINDSAY M. HARRINGTON
 13 REPRESENTATIVE CHARLIE JUSTICE
 14 REPRESENTATIVE BRUCE KYLE
 15 REPRESENTATIVE SANDRA L. MURMAN
 16 REPRESENTATIVE MITCH NEEDELMAN
 17 REPRESENTATIVE LESLIE WATERS

1 public hearings. And remind you that this is a public
 2 hearing, the sole and only purpose of which is to hear from
 3 the public on matters of redistricting. It's not a
 4 legislative committee meeting and we will not take any type
 5 of legislative action in this or any subsequent public
 6 hearings.

7 Instead, this is the public's forum where we have the
 8 opportunity to receive citizen input about your electoral
 9 districts. And it will not be a time for legislative
 10 debate. All Representatives and Senators will have,
 11 including your Senators and Representatives, will have
 12 numerous opportunities in the subsequent committee meetings
 13 and the floor debates in the Legislature to address all the
 14 members' concerns and wishes.

15 Today, however, is for our constituents. We will not
 16 diminish your voice by taking up your valuable time today
 17 with legislative debate. Following my remarks we will have
 18 legal counsel give a general overview of the legal
 19 considerations in redistricting. Then our staff will
 20 provide some specific information about the census results
 21 in this region and the state. The rest of the time today
 22 is reserved for you, the citizens.

23 Every ten years after completion of the updated
 24 national census the Constitution requires that the Florida
 25 Legislature redraw the boundaries of all the districts of

1 PROCEEDINGS
 2 SENATOR WEBSTER: Good afternoon. I'd like to start
 3 the meeting by saying the Pledge of Allegiance, if
 4 everybody would rise for the Pledge.
 5 (Pledge.)
 6 SENATOR WEBSTER: My name is Daniel Webster. I'm a
 7 Senator from District 12, chairman of the Senate Committee
 8 on Reapportionment. It's my pleasure to welcome you today
 9 to this public hearing. Senators and Representatives are
 10 here to listen to the residents of the area and consider
 11 your input in this very important process. Since these are
 12 joint meetings, we've divided our responsibilities
 13 throughout these public hearings that will be held
 14 throughout the state in these next few weeks.
 15 It's my pleasure at this time to introduce
 16 Representative Johnny Byrd who is chairman of the House
 17 Procedural and Redistricting Council. Chairman Byrd will
 18 preside over today's hearing. Chairman Byrd.
 19 REPRESENTATIVE BYRD: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'm
 20 Johnny Byrd, a Representative from House District 62 and
 21 chairman of the House Procedural and Redistricting Council.
 22 It's also my pleasure to welcome you to this public
 23 hearing, it's one of over 20 to be held throughout Florida
 24 through the summer and the fall. First, I'd like to
 25 explain the procedure that we will use throughout these

1 the Florida House, the Florida Senate, and Florida's
 2 Congressional districts. The Legislature will take up this
 3 task in the next legislative session beginning January the
 4 22nd, 2002 and ending on March 22nd, 2002.

5 The districts we draw will first be used in the
 6 elections in the fall of 2002. Redistricting is a central
 7 element of our representative democracy. We take this task
 8 on with humility and due regard for the importance and
 9 difficulty of the job. We are also committed that the
 10 process will be fair, open, and inclusive.

11 These public hearings represent a crucial first step
 12 in the process. We appreciate that we are doing the work
 13 of the people. We want to hear from you and help you
 14 participate in a meaningful way. To encourage public
 15 participation, House Speaker Tom Feeney and Senate
 16 President John McKay have scheduled these public hearings
 17 throughout the state. All members of the Legislature's
 18 redistricting committees as well as local delegation
 19 members have been invited to these public hearings.

20 These hearings will be taped so they also can be made
 21 available for all members of the Legislature. The House
 22 and the Senate have designed web sites as a tool for public
 23 input and will broadcast select hearings on Florida's
 24 public television stations. The web addresses for the
 25 House and Senate legislative redistricting are available at

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1 the sign-in table in the back.
2 A link will also be available from the Florida
3 Legislative web site. The redistricting plan for the
4 State, House, and Senate will be passed in the form of a
5 joint resolution which will not be subject to the
6 Governor's approval or veto but will be reviewed by the
7 Florida Supreme Court. On the other hand, the plan
8 determining Congressional districts will not be reviewed by
9 the Florida Supreme Court but will be subject to the
10 Governor's veto or approval.
11 I encourage everyone to carefully review the 2000
12 census. It is the essential building block on which
13 Florida's redistricting plans will be built. The United
14 States' census web site is available also at the sign-in
15 table. But, again, we are here to listen and consider your
16 voice. We encourage each member of the public to testify
17 and help craft your legislative district. Also encourage
18 written submission in addition to the testimony during the
19 public hearing.
20 Everyone who wishes to speak should fill out a
21 speaker's card on the table in the back. It's the only way
22 that we'll know who wishes to speak and after the hearing
23 who actually spoke. Speaker's cards are available at the
24 table in the rear. In addition, because we want to hear
25 from as many people as possible, we will limit comments to

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1 four minutes.
2 On behalf of House Speaker Tom Feeney and Senate
3 President John McKay and the members of the Florida
4 Legislature, I look forward to working with all of you on
5 this historic and important task. At this time, I would
6 like to recognize George Meros who is an attorney with the
7 House legal team who will give us a brief legal
8 presentation. Thank you, Mr. Meros, you are recognized.
9 MR. MEROS: Thank you, Mr. Chairman, members. I
10 almost don't need this. My name is George Meros. I'm with
11 Gray, Harris, and Robinson. I serve as cocounsel to the
12 House of Representatives on this task.
13 I am here on behalf of the House along with former
14 Senator Jim Scott who serves as counsel for the Senate. I
15 will give you simply a brief overview of the law regarding
16 reapportionment and redistricting. Many of you have heard
17 it, but I give it also for the benefit of the public. This
18 presentation is by no means comprehensive. It will simply
19 give you some key words and some key topics with a brief
20 explanation to give some context to the analysis here.
21 The task of reapportionment and redistricting is the
22 process of dividing residents of a jurisdiction, in this
23 case, the residents of the entire state of Florida, into
24 different electoral seats. It is a Constitutional
25 requirement both of the Florida Constitution and the

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1 federal Constitution. It must be done after the end of the
2 most recent federal census.
3 Florida's population has increased and substantially
4 so. And because of that, we will have two additional
5 members in Congress next year for a total of 25 seats. We
6 will have to, the House and the Senate, will have to craft
7 a Congressional plan that creates 25 contiguous districts
8 to cover the entire state, one for each member of Congress.
9 The Legislature will also be required to divide the
10 Senate into no more than 40 Senate districts and the House
11 into no more than 120 districts.
12 The Florida Constitution permits but does not require
13 that the Senate be divided into as few as 30 districts and
14 the House as few as 80. This public hearing process
15 commences the process. It will be followed of course by
16 legislative hearings this fall and the regular session
17 beginning in January of 2002 and ending in March of 2002.
18 Although the legislative process related to
19 redistricting can be concluded in the regular session, the
20 Constitution provides for additional sessions and review
21 processes in the event that the Legislature is unable to
22 come you up with a plan in the regular session. Let me
23 give you a few examples.
24 The Constitution requires that the Governor reconvene
25 the Legislature with a special session if there is not a

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1 plan in the regular session. That session shall not exceed
2 30 consecutive days following the regular session.
3 From here it becomes a little more tedious depending
4 on the result of whether there is a plan or if there is not
5 a plan. If during the regular or special session plans are
6 adopted by the Legislature, the Governor -- for Congress,
7 the Governor has the opportunity to approve or veto that
8 plan. And under Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act, which
9 I'll describe briefly later on, the Justice Department must
10 review that plan because certain parts of the state are
11 what we call covered jurisdiction under the -- covered
12 jurisdictions under the Voting Rights Act.
13 Now with respect to the State and House -- State House
14 and Senate seats, if the Legislature adopts redistricting
15 plans then 15 days after passage of that plan or plans the
16 Attorney General is required to petition the Supreme Court
17 to review the plan and determine whether the plan is valid.
18 If the Florida Supreme Court declares the plan to be
19 invalid in whole or in part the Constitution then directs
20 that the Governor must reconvene the Legislature in an
21 extraordinary session of no more than 15 days during which
22 the Legislature is required to adopt a joint resolution
23 conforming the plan to the order of the Supreme Court.
24 Assuming that the regular and special sessions end
25 without the adoption of a redistricting plan for the State

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1 Legislature, the Attorney General must request the Florida
 2 Supreme Court at that point to commence deliberations and
 3 to establish a plan itself. And within 60 days of that
 4 petition the Supreme Court must submit a plan.
 5 And as with Congressional redistricting, there will be
 6 a Section 5 preclearance process for the State plan as well
 7 as the federal plan. In effect, there are two process, the
 8 Congressional redistricting and the State redistricting.
 9 The difference is with the Congressional redistricting the
 10 Governor can veto or sign that bill. With the State plan,
 11 the Governor has no veto power but it is subject
 12 automatically to review by the Florida Supreme Court.
 13 Just a couple of redistricting principles to keep in
 14 mind for you and the members of the public. The
 15 Legislature is guided by two key elements in a
 16 redistricting plan. First is the concept of one person,
 17 one vote. And the second, of course, is the requirements
 18 of the federal Constitution and federal statutes.
 19 The concept of one person, one vote arose out of
 20 decisions in the United States Supreme Court in the 1960s
 21 which invalidated legislative districts in certain states
 22 and plans in certain states where there was a great
 23 disparity in population among districts. One district
 24 might have 120,000 citizens. Another district might have
 25 50,000. But the court in effect said that each person's

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1 vote should essentially count as much as another. So there
 2 should be generally population equality among districts so
 3 that each person's vote can have essentially the same
 4 weight.
 5 There is somewhat a difference in the legal
 6 requirements as to how close population must be to satisfy
 7 this standard. With regard to Congressional districts, the
 8 requirement is the population equality must be as close to
 9 mathematical identity as possible in essence. If the
 10 population deviation in the districts are 1 percent or less
 11 then presumptively those plans and the one person, one vote
 12 element is satisfied with regard to Congressional
 13 redistricting.
 14 With regard to state redistricting, a total deviation
 15 of up to 10 percent in population among the districts has
 16 been upheld. So there is greater leeway in state districts
 17 to have some difference in population.
 18 The other important factors, of course, are both the
 19 United States Constitution and federal statute. The
 20 federal statute most at issue here is the Voting Rights Act
 21 of 1964. Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act as amended
 22 prohibits any practice or procedure including redistricting
 23 plans that impair the ability of a minority community to
 24 elect candidates of choice on an equal basis with
 25 nonminority voters.

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1 Another section of the Voting Rights Act is Section 5,
 2 the preclearance standards, which requires that certain
 3 voting changes, again, including redistricting be approved
 4 in advance before they go into effect. They have somewhat
 5 of a different analysis.
 6 With regard to Section 5, there are five
 7 jurisdictions, counties in Florida that are covered by this
 8 preclearance process. Those are Collier, Hardee, Hendry,
 9 Hillsborough, and Monroe Counties. Most requests go to the
 10 United States Attorney General. They do not have to. They
 11 can go to the federal district court for the District of
 12 Columbia, but that is seldom done.
 13 Preclearance is obtained if the Attorney General
 14 either approves or indicates no objection or fails to
 15 object within 60 days of sufficient. Whether it is through
 16 the court proceeding in the District of Columbia or in the
 17 Attorney General's Office, the covered jurisdiction, the
 18 covered county, in this instance the state submitting the
 19 plan, bears the burden of demonstrating that the proposed
 20 voting change does not have the purpose and will not have
 21 the effect of denying or abridging the right to vote on
 22 account of race or color or membership in a language
 23 minority.
 24 The Section 5 analysis is also at least in part called
 25 a retrogression analysis. These are simply some of the

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1 rules, many of which are far more complex than time
 2 permits. But I and my colleague Senator Scott stand ready
 3 to assist you through this process.
 4 REPRESENTATIVE BYRD: Thank you, Attorney Meros. At
 5 this time, I'd like to recognize Todd Thomson, the House
 6 Redistricting -- of the House Redistricting Committee.
 7 Because of the layout here, Todd is over to my far left.
 8 And Todd will make a brief presentation on some information
 9 from the 2000 census that we'll be looking at through the
 10 process. You're recognized, Mr. Thomson.
 11 MR. THOMSON: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. Today, I'd
 12 just like to give a brief census overview for the state of
 13 Florida and the area that we're in today.
 14 Over the past ten years, according to the United
 15 States census, Florida has grown by about 3 million people,
 16 roughly 23 and a half percent. As a result of this growth
 17 Florida has gained two new Congressional seats for a grand
 18 total now of 25. Miami-Dade County is Florida's most
 19 populous county. The five most populous counties are
 20 listed: Miami-Dade, Broward, Palm Beach, Hillsborough, and
 21 Pinellas.
 22 Flagler County experienced the fastest rate of growth
 23 in Florida at a 73.6 percent rate. The five counties that
 24 received the largest rate increase in growth over the last
 25 ten years are Flagler, Sumpter, Collier, Wakulla and

1 Osceola. Jacksonville remains as Florida's most populous
2 city. The five most populous cities in Florida are
3 Jacksonville, Miami, Tampa, St. Petersburg, and Hialeah.
4 The minority population in Florida has grown over the past
5 ten years.

6 The African-American percentage has risen by about
7 1 percent and the Hispanic percentage has risen by about 4
8 and a half percent. And Hispanics now outnumber
9 African-Americans in the state of Florida. The median age
10 in Florida has increased from 36.3 according to the 1990
11 census to 38.7 according to the 2000 census.

12 A very important group in Florida is our senior
13 citizens. Age 65 and above in Florida has grown to just
14 over 2.8 million people. While this is an increase of over
15 400,000, it is actually a decrease in the percentage of the
16 population from 18.3 percent to 17.6 percent. As Mr. Meros
17 touched upon, each district will have a certain number of
18 people and the ideal population for each district has grown
19 over the past ten years.

20 In 1990, the average State House district will have
21 about 108,000 people. At this time it will have 133,000
22 people. In 1990 the average State Senate district had
23 about 323,000 people. This year, the average State Senate
24 district will have about 400,000 people. And in 1990 the
25 average Congressional district had 562,518. This time each

1 Congressional district will have 639,295.

2 Now I'd like to give you some population numbers for
3 the Hardee County area. Hardee County grew, for the past
4 ten years, at a rate of 38.2 percent. And population now
5 is just under 27,000. Population of the town of Wauchula
6 is 4,368.

7 Highlands County, according to the 2000 census, has a
8 population of 87,366. This is an increase of 27.7 percent
9 over 1990. Manatee County has a population of just over
10 264,000; a 24.7 percent increase over 1990. DeSoto County
11 population is now at 32,209. This is an increase of
12 35 percent over 1990. And Sarasota County's population has
13 grown to just over 325,000. This is an increase of
14 17.3 percent over the 1990 population.

15 And you can find all this information and more at both
16 the House and Senate redistricting web sites, which you'll
17 find the information on the back tables. Thank you,
18 Mr. Chairman.

19 REPRESENTATIVE BYRD: Thank you, Mr. Thomson.

20 Ladies and gentlemen, as I stated earlier, we'll be
21 using speaker's cards and we're going to call the people
22 up. There is a number in the lower right-hand side of the
23 card and we'll just go by the numbers. Starting with
24 Number 1.

25 So whoever signed up first, please come forward. And

1 I'll remind the speakers that we'll be limiting your
2 remarks to four minutes. And if the four minutes is not
3 enough, we'll certainly accept written submissions if you
4 have those. Welcome to the public hearing.

5 MS. CARLTON: Good afternoon. Very loud. My name is
6 Barbara Carlton. I'm with Peace River Valley Citrus
7 Grower's Association and I welcome you to Florida. I'm
8 here to share a story with you. A story of culture, a way
9 of life, of life in Hardee and DeSoto Counties and rural
10 Manatee and Sarasota Counties.

11 Peace River Valley Citrus Grower's Association
12 represents commercial citrus growers in these four
13 counties. Although the daily grind of agriculture
14 operations is much less than romantic, you can talk to any
15 brother for a few minutes and quickly understand the love
16 he feels for his job, his farming operation and his
17 community. Note the four counties we represent are very
18 different in nature.

19 We have two coastal counties whose populations are ten
20 times that of the two interior counties. Yet within the
21 four communities -- or the four counties, exist communities
22 and people who will exemplify the culture being explained
23 today. You are mandated to provide equal representation to
24 all Floridians based on the 2000 U.S. census. It will
25 take -- if you take the time to look at the statistics that

1 we were shown for DeSoto, Hardee, Manatee, and Sarasota
2 Counties, you will note that the population in Hardee and
3 DeSoto Counties has increased in the ten-year period
4 between 1990 and 2000 more than the heavily-populated
5 coastal communities.

6 As a matter of fact, the population in these two
7 counties has grown more than the state average in that same
8 time period. Why this trend? Urban citizens are falling
9 in love with our rural communities. Who wouldn't want to
10 live in a setting where you can swing quietly under a
11 200-year-old oak tree and watch a variety of birds and
12 other wildlife moving throughout your property?

13 Growing up in Manatee County, I'm privileged to say I
14 was part of an agricultural community. Even back then the
15 town was a busy and large place; however, the bulk of the
16 community was agriculture in nature and all the leaders of
17 the community were agriculturalists. Citrus, tomato,
18 cattle and other crops were the mainstay of the community.
19 Sarasota was very much the same.

20 In the '80s Interstate 75 split these counties. It
21 brought development east providing food and lodging for the
22 tourists. And today you'll find that development from the
23 west border of the county to the east border of the county
24 in both Manatee and Sarasota Counties. This is all on land
25 previously used for agriculture.

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1 An agricultural community in a rural setting cannot be
2 represented as part of the larger urban district. Votes
3 count and it's certainly understandable for an elected
4 official to place a vote within the Legislature that
5 pleases the majority of his constituents. Urban
6 constituents may not understand the uniqueness or
7 importance of a rural agricultural community.

8 The University of Florida, Institute of Food and Ag
9 Sciences has just completed a study stating that Florida's
10 citrus industry contributes total economic impacts of \$9.3
11 billion in industry output to Florida. \$4.18 billion in
12 value-added impact and supplies, 89,700 jobs. This is one
13 agricultural industry in 23 Florida counties. Locally
14 virtually all jobs are connected to agriculture, most of
15 the citrus industry. The orange tree crop value for our
16 four representative counties is approximately
17 \$225 million --

18 REPRESENTATIVE BYRD: Time is up. Thirty more
19 seconds.

20 MS. CARLTON: Florida agriculture has been represented
21 well in the past by a variety of individuals in the
22 Legislature and we want this to continue. Please help us
23 preserve our agricultural integrity by developing
24 boundaries that reflect this. And help us be linked with
25 similar economic dynamic counties. We have a few members

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1 present that were going to speak today and they were going
2 to say much the same as I. So I'd like to recognize some
3 of our members. Would the members of Peace River Valley
4 Citrus Growers stand up, please?

5 REPRESENTATIVE BYRD: Welcome to the hearing. We'd be
6 happy to hear from any of those that may decide later that
7 they'd like to add to the public testimony. So let's move
8 now to Number 2.

9 MR. PAYNE: Good afternoon. My name is John Payne for
10 the record. I'm from Highlands County and I am a farmer.
11 Mr. Chairman, Senators, and Representatives, first I'd like
12 to thank you, commend you on the process that you've lined
13 out for this very difficult task in front of you. It's not
14 easy. It's brought with lots of potential potholes and
15 conflicting opinions. And to allow a system that's open
16 like this, I think you've done a great service for the
17 citizens of Florida and we appreciate it.

18 I'm going to keep my comments fairly short in general
19 just to give you some feeling perhaps that we have being
20 interior counties and being very rural counties. I am a
21 farmer and that's important to me. It's difficult in these
22 days and times to make a living off the land but we do. We
23 try to stay positive about it and we like to hope that our
24 representatives in Tallahassee understand the issues that
25 face us both being from small rural counties and also being

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1 actively engaged in production agriculture. To that end,
2 we would hope that you'd strongly consider when you draw
3 these district lines, especially for House and hopefully
4 Congressional seats as well, really all the seats,
5 Senatorial as well, that we try to follow existing
6 political boundaries, AKA county lines when and if possible
7 and to perhaps keep counties whole when and if possible.

8 It would seem to me that would be far simpler in the
9 rural countryside where total populations are lower. The
10 alternative when we do differently than that, typically the
11 bulk of those populations then approach the coastlines.
12 And not that we don't have any -- not that we particularly
13 have problems with the coastline, we're just not terribly
14 assured that their concerns and what's important to them,
15 on a whole host of issues are going to be reflective of the
16 interior counties.

17 So I'd hope you'd take those concerns in particular
18 and then when you look at the resulting districts, to the
19 best of our ability I'd hope we could have districts that
20 for the most part represent the bulk of those populations
21 in terms of their demographics, in terms of their
22 livelihoods, concerns, lifestyles, et cetera. Thank you.

23 REPRESENTATIVE BYRD: Thank you. Number 3.

24 MR. LAMBERT: Good afternoon. My name is Bill
25 Lambert. I'm the county commissioner here in Hardee County

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1 and I want to tell each of you we have dropped the ball. I
2 don't think there's been this many important elected
3 officials in Hardee County ever. And if I'd have known all
4 of you were going to be here, I would have liked to have
5 taken the opportunity to lobby you. Like I said, we
6 dropped the ball. But we'll be back to see you in
7 Tallahassee. I want you to remember this face. I've seen
8 Joe in Tallahassee and I'll try to see each of you when the
9 session starts.

10 Let me begin by saying that we come to you today
11 seeking political parity. We can't run a society strictly
12 dealing with urban interests. And, frankly, if we do not
13 do redistricting right, agriculture and rural interests are
14 going to be left out. We must support agriculture. We
15 must be concerned with the things that go on in the less
16 densely-populated areas of our state. And to wit, we
17 really would like you to consider trying to carve out some
18 districts that restore the integrity of the agriculture
19 life in the state of Florida and rural interests in the
20 state of Florida.

21 I don't know how you're going to do it. We've got
22 some thoughts of our own. We'd be glad to pass them on to
23 you. Do not become bogged down in just dealing -- we have
24 traditionally been tied into coastal representation and
25 they have done us well. We have Lindsay Harrington here

1 today. Poor Lindsay, his entire community is suing
2 industries in Hardee County. Now, you know, that presents
3 real political problems for him. Those fights are going to
4 go on. They are going to go on over water, they're going
5 to go on over phosphate, they're going to go on over the
6 use of chemicals, pesticides and things that's unique to
7 the things we need to produce to feed each of you.

8 So please keep that in mind and we'll be glad to give
9 you our specific thoughts on how these districts should be
10 carved out. Thank you.

11 REPRESENTATIVE BYRD: Thank you. Number 4.

12 MR. SHEPP: Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman, Senators and
13 Representatives. My name is David Shepp. I'm here on
14 behalf of Congressman Adam Putnam. He had planned on being
15 here today but of course had to go back up to Washington
16 yesterday. So he sends his best regards.

17 I just wanted to touch briefly on what Adam had spoken
18 about last month when you came to Lakeland and that is
19 maintaining districts of common interest. Adam does
20 represent Hardee County as well as DeSoto, northern
21 Highlands, Polk, Pasco, and eastern Hillsborough Counties.
22 It's primarily an agricultural community and he has done a
23 very good job representing this area up in Washington in
24 the agricultural committees as well as time he spent in
25 Tallahassee.

1 The fights that are going on between the interior
2 communities and the coastal communities, the differences
3 between the two are very distinct and we would like to go
4 ahead and maintain the central corridor of central Florida
5 for this district, for District 12.

6 We appreciate all the work that you have done and look
7 forward to working with you through this process. And if
8 you ever have any questions for the Congressman, please
9 don't hesitate to contact us. Thank you very much.

10 REPRESENTATIVE BYRD: Thank you. Number 5.

11 MR. CARLTON: Mr. Chairman, I yield my time to the
12 next speaker.

13 REPRESENTATIVE BYRD: Thank you. Number 6.

14 MR. ROBERTS: Good afternoon. My name is Steve
15 Roberts and I'm from Highlands County. I want to thank you
16 for coming here today and allowing us to give our input.
17 House District 78 -- and I'd like to just remind you and
18 show you this picture. I think you could put ink there --
19 it is a crazy district along with many others that are in
20 the state of Florida. But House District 78 and
21 Congressional 16 are nothing more than gerrymanderings that
22 need to be cleaned up. It was part of the mess made ten
23 years ago. They connected us with parts of Florida that we
24 do not have much in common with. If we must be divided,
25 please connect us with like interests.

1 There is some difference of opinion in how Highlands
2 County should be arranged. It is my opinion that having
3 Highlands as a keystone to a new district will limit the
4 support we would get from the State House or the House of
5 Representatives. We will only have one Representative.
6 The dividing of the city of Ego Park (phonetic) was a
7 concern. But as the county goes so does the cities, they
8 will have only one Representative to contact when needed.
9 Thank you for allowing me to talk with you and I'll be
10 seeing you in Tallahassee too. Thank you.

11 REPRESENTATIVE BYRD: Thank you. Number 7.

12 MS. GRIMSLEY: Mr. Chairman, and members of the
13 committee, my name is Denise Grimsley and I'm currently the
14 chairman for the executive committee for the Republican
15 party of Hardee County and I'm here today representing the
16 beliefs of that committee. I'd like to begin by saying in
17 1992 the Legislature had a closed process that ended with
18 the product of crazy lines, split communities, and partisan
19 politics. I applaud this Legislature and this committee
20 for geographical open meetings such as this one today.

21 What I would like to see and what the committee would
22 like to see is our Florida House seat removed from the same
23 district in Charlotte County and paired with other counties
24 of similar interests such as DeSoto and Highlands Counties.
25 Our representation from Lindsay Harrington in District 72

1 has been excellent. However, individuals historically in
2 that district have not understood our rural interest.

3 The total population of these three counties, Hardee,
4 Highlands, and DeSoto, is approximately 149,000. We
5 believe this would be an adequate seat. We would also like
6 to see our Florida State Senate seat removed from Manatee
7 County. Historically, we have not been adequately
8 represented in the Senate because of this partnership.

9 It would be more appropriate to pair inland counties
10 with other counties of common industry and interest.
11 Examples of a seat would be Highlands, Hardee, DeSoto,
12 Glades, Hendry, Okeechobee, and south Polk Counties.
13 Southern Osceola County would also be another option.

14 We do not believe that cities should be split in the
15 House or the Senate. We also believe that Congressional
16 District 12 should be left intact. Again, thank you for
17 your time and interest in Hardee County and in the great
18 state of Florida.

19 REPRESENTATIVE BYRD: Thank you. Number 8.

20 MR. GRIMSLEY: Mr. Chairman, and committee members, I
21 appreciate very much you giving us the opportunity to
22 address you today. I'll make my comments very brief
23 because there appears to be repetition from what I've heard
24 from other speakers.

25 I would just like to encourage you when you're looking

1 at the state to redistrict us with interior counties such
2 as Highlands, DeSoto, Glades, Hendry. Some of these
3 counties we have something in common with. We have nothing
4 in common with Sarasota and Manatee Counties.

5 If Hardee and DeSoto Counties was able to block vote
6 in some manner, which is impossible, they would still have
7 little input in any election. So I just feel like we're --
8 when we're voting, our voting don't count because we're
9 outnumbered to start with. Besides that, the coastal
10 communities, their economy is based on something entirely
11 different than what the interior communities is based on.
12 And I think we'd have better representation if we could be
13 placed with somebody like Highlands, DeSoto and other
14 counties of the same economic demeanors. Again, I
15 appreciate you giving us this opportunity today. Thank
16 you.

17 REPRESENTATIVE BYRD: Thank you. Number 9.

18 MR. SANDERS: Hi, my name is Kenny Sanders and I'm
19 from here in Wauchula and I'd like to tell you my interests
20 are in agriculture and I believe we need to be separated
21 from Manatee County whose interests aren't anything like
22 mine and I'd just like to mention that to you. Thank you.

23 REPRESENTATIVE BYRD: Thank you. Number 10.

24 MR. BRYANT: Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen of
25 the board. My name is Austin Bryant. I'm here

1 representing Heart of Florida Greenhouses as well as the
2 Florida Nourishment and Grower's Association. Many years
3 ago the coastal areas in some respects shared the same
4 views that we did in the interior counties. The interior
5 counties are in the industry, the industry of life, and
6 that's agriculture.

7 The coastal counties have moved into a different
8 direction and that's population. Growth in different
9 housing developments and whatnot, and this obviously will
10 create a little problem with -- in respect to water rights
11 and population which also includes a chemical -- different
12 views. These people that are moving from up north bring
13 down here and their vote counts the same as yours or mine.

14 And as you can see, it's not just the older generation
15 of this area that is interested in restoring and retaining
16 our heritage of agriculture in this community. The younger
17 generation will play an active role in the future and
18 holding this true. Thank you.

19 REPRESENTATIVE BYRD: Thank you. The last speaker is
20 Number 11. If there is anyone else who would like to
21 address the public hearing, please fill out a card. We
22 have one more. Number 11.

23 MS. RANDALL: Thank you very much. We really
24 appreciate you coming to Hardee County and giving us this
25 time. I'm Kate Randall and I'm vice president of Wauchula

1 State Bank. We're a large bank here in Hardee County and
2 of course we have -- our main customer base is ag related.
3 And we have a lot of customers that are very interested in
4 this issue and I'm their voice today.

5 We feel strongly that it would be in the best interest
6 of this county to be in the same district as inland rural
7 counties with the similar problems and concerns which are
8 largely agriculture; counties such as Highlands, DeSoto,
9 Polk, Okeechobee, Hardee, and Glades. We are a rural
10 community, which you've heard, along this problem, we are
11 smaller in population than the coastal counties. We feel
12 because of this that we are not having adequate
13 representation and we are not being heard.

14 And we want to commend Lindsay Harrington who has been
15 an excellent Representative for us. And he has done the
16 best that he possibly could do with us. But we realize
17 that he has to answer to the larger voting district that he
18 has.

19 And we appreciate your time and interest in Hardee
20 County and we hope that you will do what is truly best for
21 Hardee County. Thank you.

22 REPRESENTATIVE BYRD: Number 12.

23 MR. BUNDY: Good afternoon. My name is Carter Bundy
24 and I'm actually with the American Federation of State,
25 County and Municipal Employees and someone from El Torres

1 (phonetic) who is one of our members E-mailed me a
2 statement that he wanted to make. He was going to be here
3 but his truck broke down, one of the many hazards of coming
4 up here. This is Rob Fisher's statement.

5 Good afternoon. My name is Rob Fisher. I live in El
6 Tores, a few miles away and I'm a member of the American
7 Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees. My
8 first point is a positive one. I want to thank the
9 committee for coming all the way out to Wauchula to get
10 public input.

11 My second point isn't as positive. I'm upset that
12 you're holding this hearing in the middle of the day. I
13 work for a living and had to take vacation time to be here
14 because I know this is important. But not everyone has
15 that luxury or is willing to sacrifice vacation. It's hard
16 to believe that you claim to value public input but have
17 decided to hold almost all these hearings when regular
18 working people can't realistically participate.

19 I would also like to see some hearings after the maps
20 are drawn. I understand wanting public input ahead of time
21 but it's going to be even more important to hear from at
22 least some of the public after the first drafts of the maps
23 are finished.

24 As to the specifics of lines around here, I hope
25 you'll try to keep our rural areas together so we can have

1 a consistent voice. Whether we're in agriculture or not,
2 there are obvious similarities in rural areas that should
3 be reflected in our representation. It's frustrating when
4 rural areas get split up to help politicians form cities
5 that need to tack on a few more voters. Because of them no
6 rural area is the primary concern of any one
7 Representative. Thank you for coming out here and letting
8 me, Rob Fisher, speak. And please hold more hearings after
9 you're done with the first draft of the maps.

10 REPRESENTATIVE BYRD: Thank you. That concludes the
11 public testimony. If there is anyone else who wishes to
12 speak, please fill out a card and we will allow you to
13 address the public hearing.

14 Now what we will do is allow any members of the
15 Legislature who wish to speak to do so at this time. And
16 is there anyone who wishes to make a statement? Members?
17 Senators? This is another first. Well, Senator, Geller,
18 you're recognized.

19 SENATOR GELLER: I agree with him.
20 (Applause.)

21 REPRESENTATIVE BYRD: We'd like to thank everyone for
22 coming out today. Your input is important. This is open,
23 fair and a process that depends on the public. So thank
24 you for coming out and we'll stand adjourned.

25 (Hearing adjourned at 3:00 p.m.)

1 CERTIFICATE

2 STATE OF FLORIDA:

3 COUNTY OF LEON:

4 I, KRISTEN L. BENTLEY, Court Reporter, certify that I
5 was authorized to and did stenographically report the foregoing
6 proceedings and that the transcript is a true and complete
7 record of my stenographic notes.

8 DATED this _____ day of _____, 2001.

9 _____
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