



## *Florida House of Representatives* Democratic Office

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### **Minority Leaders Blast GOP Redistricting “Clarification” Proposal** *Joint Resolution is a Desperate and Deceptive Attempt by Leadership to Maintain Power to Draw Districts for Political Self-Gain*

**TALLAHASSEE, FL** – Minority leaders gathered in the State Capitol today to blast 11<sup>th</sup>-hour legislative proposals (SJR 2288/ HJR 7231) that would undermine citizen backed efforts to prohibit lawmakers from drawing districts for their own political gain or political purposes.

As a recent Orlando Sentinel editorial reported, gerrymandering is “about protecting the seat of anyone holding elective office. In 2004, no legislative or congressional incumbents — not one — lost a re-election bid (and) despite Florida’s Democratic tilt that had the state vote for Barack Obama in 2008, not a single incumbent legislative Republican lost.”

Republican leaders argue that the measures will protect minority voter representation, yet HJR 7231’s minority protections are optional. The Fair Districts amendments are mandatory.

“Proponents of the proposed joint resolution are telling us it does one thing when it clearly does another,” said Representative Joe Gibbons. The proposal has been called “a sham” by the NAACP, and opinion leaders in the news have called it ‘deceptive,’ ‘sneaky,’ and ‘despicable,’ but the bottom line is that this amendment is a lie.

“No one can honestly read joint resolution HJR 7231 and tell me that it strengthens protections relating to minority representation,” added Representative Gibbons.

Representative Perry Thurston said, “The simple fact is that those in power want to protect their ability to draw their own districts in order to protect their own seats and to keep their friends in power.

Representative Thurston added, “We need to be honest with the people of Florida and call this what it is...Republican leaders aren’t trying to protect minority rights, they’re trying to protect their power. They’re protecting their power to rig elections by picking voters before voters can pick them.”

“My fellow lawmakers should not accept this kind of dishonesty which reflects poorly on all of us as legislators. Members should reject this proposal when it comes before them and leadership should not be allowing this measure to be heard,” said Representative Thompson.

“The current proposal purporting to ‘clarify’ Amendments 5 & 6, is a lie. The proposal does not clarify or enhance anything. In fact, it substantially weakens the special protections for minority voters contained in the Fair Districts amendments,” added Representative Thompson.

The measures at issue appeared last week of session after months of workshops orchestrated by Republican leaders to find fault in the FairDistricts amendments and to create an impression that they are unworkable.

“We’re hearing a lot about transparent government these days but we as members did not have an opportunity to ask questions or discuss the provisions in these measure until just last week,” said Representative Luis Garcia. “Now they’re trying to ram this measure through as if they’ve had deliberative debate, and that’s simply not true.”

“The public is tired of political games and not being listened to by those in power,” concluded Representative Garcia. “This joint resolution is slap in the face to every one of those 1.7 million Floridians who signed the FairDistricts petitions.”

Representatives concluded by emphasizing that leadership in both houses needs to show some statesmanship and back off this fatally flawed proposal.

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