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REDISTRICTING COMMITTEE

TUESDAY, JUNE 21, 2011

7:00 P.M.

FORT WALTON BEACH HIGH SCHOOL

FORT WALTON BEACH, FLORIDA

Transcribed by:

CLARA C. ROTRUCK

Court Reporter

1 T A P E D P R O C E E D I N G S

2 CHAIRMAN GAETZ: Good evening, everyone,
3 we are delighted that we have such a good large
4 and obviously interested crowd here tonight.

5 The Joint Senate House Redistricting
6 hearing is called to order, and we want to
7 thank Principal Charlene Cuveon of Ft. Walton
8 Beach High School, Dr. Alexis Tibbets, the
9 Superintendent of Schools here.

10 In case you didn't know, this is Ft.
11 Walton Beach High School, the home of the
12 Vikings, one of the historically highest
13 performing schools in the United States, not
14 just once, but for year after year after year,
15 so you are in a great school.

16 And we thank the administration of Ft.
17 Walton Beach High School and Superintendent
18 Tibbets for allowing us to use this facility
19 this evening for what is our third public
20 hearing in a series of 26.

21 We started yesterday in Tallahassee. We
22 had a hearing earlier today in Pensacola. This
23 is our third hearing, and tomorrow we will be
24 in Panama City, and then on to the rest of the
25 state.

1 Thank you all for being here, especially
2 members of the public who have come to share
3 their comments and recommendations to help
4 shape Congressional Senate and House Districts
5 for the next decade.

6 My name is Don Gaetz. I serve as Chairman
7 of the Senate Reapportionment Committee.
8 Typically the Speaker Designate of the Florida
9 House, Will Weatherford, would be with us
10 tonight. He has been with us in the preceding
11 hearings and he will be with us going forward,
12 but he had a family commitment come up and so I
13 can guarantee you that he will be watching the
14 pod cast of this hearing and he will be fully
15 informed by professional staff and given copies
16 of all of the testimony that is being given
17 tonight.

18 Tonight's hearing is being webcast
19 statewide by the Florida Channel and over the
20 Internet, and I can report to you that we have
21 extraordinarily heavy Internet traffic for this
22 issue, and for our Joint Committee hearings,
23 and we are delighted to report that to you.

24 Before we go further I would like to ask
25 each member of the Committee if they would just

1 identify themselves as to whether they are a
2 Representative or a Senator and indicate where
3 in the state you live, where you represent, so
4 that the folks here in northwest Florida and
5 Okaloosa County can have an opportunity to see
6 how diverse the House and Senate Committees
7 are.

8 And if we may start with our Former Senate
9 President, and still Senator, Senator Gwen
10 Margolis.

11 Senator, would you, and I apologize that
12 we don't have microphones, so we are
13 politicians, so we will talk loud.

14 SENATOR MARGOLIS: My name is Gwen
15 Margolis, and I represent the eastern part of
16 Broward and Miami-Dade.

17 SENATOR HAYS: I am Alan Hays from
18 Umatilla. I am a Senator from District 20,
19 which represents a portion of five counties.

20 SENATOR DEAN: My name is Charlie Dean,
21 and I am Senator for District III. I have the
22 largest Senatorial district east of the
23 Mississippi River. It goes from Palmetto,
24 Citrus to the Hernando County line, to Baker,
25 and Duval County lines, all a part of 13

1 counties.

2 REPRESENTATIVE GAETZ: I am Representative
3 Matt Gaetz, and I live two miles down the road.

4 REPRESENTATIVE PASSIDOMO: I am Kathleen
5 Passidomo, representing Collier County,
6 representing parts of Collier County,
7 representing Naples, Marco Island.

8 REPRESENTATIVE GOODSON: My name is Tom
9 Goodson, District 29.

10 REPRESENTATIVE CRUZ: My name is Janet
11 Cruz, and I represent District 58.

12 A VOICE: (Inaudible).

13 REPRESENTATIVE CALDWELL: Matt Caldwell,
14 District 73, that would be Ft. Myers.

15 REPRESENTATIVE STARGEL: I am
16 Representative Kelli Stargel, north of Polk
17 County, Lakeland.

18 REPRESENTATIVE HOOPER: I am Ed Hooper,
19 Representative from Clearwater and Pinellas
20 County, the most district populated county.

21 A VOICE: (Inaudible)

22 REPRESENTATIVE BURGIN: Hello, my name is
23 Rachel Burgin, and I represent District 56.

24 SENATOR THRASHER: Thank you, I am Senator
25 John Thrasher. I live in St. Augustine. I

1 represent District 8, which is parts of Nassau
2 County that starts at Fernandina Beach, parts
3 of Duval County, parts of St. Johns County,
4 which is where St. Augustine is located, part
5 of Flagler County and I end up in Volusia
6 County at the International Speedway.

7 REPRESENTATIVE FORD: Clay Ford,
8 Representative for District 3, ninety-five
9 percent of Pensacola, five percent Gulf Breeze,
10 I talk just like ya'll do. People down south
11 have trouble understanding me.

12 REPRESENTATIVE PRECOURT: I am
13 Representative Steve Precourt from down south
14 at House District 41, a little area that
15 includes University Studios and Walt Disney
16 World.

17 REPRESENTATIVE ADKINS: Hi, I am Janet
18 Adkins, Florida District 12.

19 REPRESENTATIVE CLARKE-REED: I am
20 Representative Gwyndolen Clarke-Reed, Broward
21 County, House District 92. I serve seven
22 cities, Deerfield Beach, Pompano Beach, Oakland
23 Park, Rose Manor, Tamarac (inaudible).

24 REPRESENTATIVE ROGERS: Hazel Rogers,
25 Representative of District 94, parts of Broward

1 County.

2 REPRESENTATIVE BERNARD: Mack Bernard,
3 Representative for West Palm Beach.

4 SENATOR MONTFORD: Senator Bill Montford,
5 District 6, (inaudible).

6 A VOICE: My name is (inaudible). I
7 represent the most conservative county in the
8 state, Broward County.

9 A VOICE: (Inaudible)

10 A VOICE: (Inaudible).

11 A VOICE: (Inaudible).

12 A VOICE: (Inaudible)

13 CHAIRMAN GAETZ: Thank you all very much.
14 I am sorry, fire away, we got the second row.

15 REPRESENTATIVE DRAKE: Brad Drake,
16 Representative for House District 5, and I am
17 also very privileged to represent Okaloosa
18 County, as well as Holmes, Washington. My
19 district runs all the way to the Georgia line,
20 up in Marianna.

21 CHAIRMAN GAETZ: Senator Evers.

22 SENATOR EVERS: I am Senator Evers and I
23 cover everything north of Senator Don Gaetz,
24 Escambia, Santa Rosa, Okaloosa, Walton,
25 Washington, Holmes and north Bay.

1 REPRESENTATIVE ABRUZZO: I am Joseph
2 Abruzzo from District 85, which is Palm Beach
3 County (inaudible).

4 CHAIRMAN GAETZ: Anyone else? If not,
5 thank you very much, Senators and
6 Representatives for introducing yourself to the
7 folks here in Okaloosa County where I am very
8 proud to live and proud to represent.

9 Our sole purpose tonight is to hear from
10 the public about how you believe the legal
11 standards governing redistricting should be
12 applied in your community, in this community so
13 that you are represented in Washington and
14 Tallahassee fairly, equitably and sensibly.

15 And I know there may be folks who are
16 already prepared to admonish us that Amendments
17 V and VI need to be followed.

18 Let me tell you on behalf of Speaker
19 Weatherford and myself and every member of this
20 Committee, we all took an oath to preserve,
21 protect and defend the Constitution of the
22 United States and of the State of Florida.

23 Those two provisions are in our
24 Constitution. They will be faithfully adhered
25 to and they will be followed, and any

1 redistricting plan that this Legislature
2 presents to the Supreme Court of Florida will,
3 in our judgment, and to the best of our
4 ability, follow every constitutional and legal
5 requirement.

6 Our procedures tonight are simple, but
7 they are important. It is important, as I said
8 before, that you sign in so we can create an
9 accurate public record of all attendees and
10 speakers, and also you may opt to join our
11 e-mail lists or our mail lists so that we can
12 keep you informed about how the redistricting
13 process is working.

14 If you haven't signed in, please do so,
15 please raise your hand at any point tonight if
16 you wish to speak and a staff member will come
17 to you and pick up your card, either your
18 appearance card or your attendance card.

19 Before we begin I would like to recognize
20 Representative Steve Precourt who will give us
21 a few introductory comments on behalf of the
22 House of Representatives.

23 Representative Precourt will explain how
24 today's hearing fits into the redistricting
25 process. You are recognized, Representative.

1 REPRESENTATIVE PRECOURT: Thank you, Chair
2 Gaetz, and as the Chairman said, I am Steve
3 Precourt, House District 41 from central
4 Florida, filling in for Chair Weatherford.

5 I am Vice-Chair of the House Redistricting
6 Committee and just wanted to give you a little
7 outline of where we are going in today's
8 meeting and of the overall process.

9 Every ten years the Legislature is
10 required by our Constitution to redistrict the
11 state based on increases, decreases and
12 movements around the state of the population.

13 Now, because Florida has grown more than
14 the other states over the last ten years, we
15 will be growing from 25 Congressional Seats to
16 27 members of the U.S. House of
17 Representatives. That is one of the major
18 things that we will have to do in this process.

19 Now, because some of our -- parts of our
20 state have either increased or decreased
21 disproportionately in population, many of our
22 Senate and House Districts are going to have to
23 change.

24 We are not going to get any new House or
25 Senate Seats, but we are going to have to move

1 the boundaries around because they have either
2 added too much or too little population.

3 Now, when the redistricting process is
4 completed the Congressional Districts must be
5 equal in size of population and each contain
6 696,345 people.

7 The 40 Senate Districts must also be
8 nearly equal at 470,033 people, and our 120
9 House Districts must also be nearly equal at
10 156,678 people.

11 Now, there is some maps over on the side
12 of the room that there to ya'll's left as you
13 are facing us showing this area of the state,
14 and the current boundaries, the current
15 boundaries of the districts, and the number of
16 people which must be added or subtracted from
17 those districts to achieve that equal
18 representation.

19 Now, the equality of representation isn't
20 the only legal requirement that our
21 redistricting plans must meet. The laws and
22 important court cases governing redistricting
23 are explained in detail on the House and Senate
24 websites.

25 Now, those websites are listed on the

1 Redistricting 2012 brochure that was available
2 when you came in, and if you don't have one,
3 staff has them available for you as well.

4 Please make sure and pick one up before
5 you leave. Our Redistricting 2012 brochure
6 summarizes the Federal and State laws and
7 outlines the topics that we hope that you will
8 discuss here at today's meeting as well.

9 If you didn't go a brochure, as I said,
10 they are available from staff, but also on the
11 tables outside of the meeting hall, and if you
12 want one right now our staff would be happy to
13 get a copy for you. If you need it just wave
14 to them.

15 Those websites that we have, we have made
16 available to the public all of the demographic
17 information from the U.S. Bureau of Census that
18 will be used in drawing the districts and used
19 in the redistricting software that we as
20 Legislators will be using.

21 Now, these websites will allow any member
22 of the public to see all of the district maps
23 that are being proposed by the Legislators and
24 for the citizens, ya'll, to propose your own
25 district maps for your own communities or for

1 the whole state if you would like, using those
2 same tools that are available to us as
3 Legislators and to our staff.

4 Now, before, during and after this hearing
5 tonight the Senate and House professional staff
6 are available to actually show you the simple
7 steps to getting on-line and making your
8 submission either now if you care to or in the
9 weeks to come.

10 We want to assure you that every
11 recommendation from any member of the public or
12 any group will be made publicly available.

13 In fact, we already have some public
14 submissions available on the web for review.
15 The submission of proposed maps, the drawings
16 that you might come up with is one of the most
17 effective, if not the single most effective
18 form of public participation in the
19 redistricting process. That is why we
20 encourage you strongly to avail yourself of
21 these resources that we put out there for you.

22 The redistricting schedule under which we
23 are operating is imposed by our State
24 Constitution. The Constitution does not permit
25 the Legislature to act on legislative maps

1 before the second year after the census, in
2 other words, before 2012.

3 Now, we have accelerated this process as
4 much as we possibly can by moving up the 2012
5 legislative session from, where typically it is
6 in March and April, to January and February of
7 next year, by beginning our statewide hearings.

8 We have also accelerated the process by
9 beginning our statewide hearings five months in
10 advance of that 2012 advanced session.

11 Now, it has been suggested that the
12 Legislature should draw maps first and then ask
13 the public to comment. We believe that puts
14 the answer ahead of the question.

15 There should be no preconceived notions,
16 no preconceptions created by politicians or
17 anyone else, but rather your public testimony
18 should be free and unrestricted and untainted
19 and give us something to work with.

20 Now, our intent is to use the
21 recommendations made by you tonight and at our
22 other 25 public hearings, as well as
23 information that we get through the Internet
24 and social networking and stuff that is hard
25 copy that is mailed to us and any other way

1 that we get it, as the basis for developing one
2 or more options for these district maps as we
3 go forward.

4 And once we developed those options we
5 will discuss them in open public meetings
6 before any votes are taken, even in committee
7 votes.

8 Now, throughout the process we will
9 solicit additional public input, not just these
10 initial meetings so that the proposed maps can
11 mature and develop with the public involved
12 deeply in the process.

13 All of this is going to be done before the
14 Legislature votes on or finally approves any of
15 those maps.

16 Whatever the Legislature votes on during
17 session next year is then going to be submitted
18 for judicial review to insure that the final
19 plans meet every legal requirement, not only in
20 our State Constitution, but the Federal laws as
21 well.

22 Now, because our mission today is to hear
23 from you, 100 percent of the time tonight
24 between now and I believe 9:00 o'clock as we
25 are scheduled will be used to ensure that every

1 member of the public who is here and wishes to
2 speak will have time to present the testimony
3 they would like heard and will be listened to
4 respectfully without interruption or argument.

5 And if after every citizen has had his or
6 her say there is still some time remaining
7 before our scheduled adjournment, any member of
8 the Committee may make any statements or offer
9 any observation, and we are also going to read
10 some feedback that we have recently gotten via
11 social media.

12 Of course, any member of the Legislature
13 may today or at any time propose maps or plans
14 or we will make all of that available to the
15 public as it is prepared and developed.

16 Mr. Chairman, I hope this description of
17 our schedule and the process helps to stage
18 tonight for a successful hearing and I will
19 turn the microphone back to you.

20 CHAIRMAN GAETZ: Thank you very much.
21 Let's get into it with those who have signed up
22 to speak. We have at the moment 24 individuals
23 who wish to speak.

24 What that means is that we will have time
25 for everybody. If everybody can keep their

1 comments to say three to five minutes, and we
2 are not going to be really restrictive on time,
3 but if we get more people who show up later in
4 the hearing and they would like to speak, then
5 I hope you will forgive me if I try to hold
6 people to a time limit, because I am an
7 advocate for the last person on this list just
8 like I am an advocate for the first person to
9 be able to speak and let everyone on the
10 Committee know what their views are.

11 President Margolis has admonished me to
12 make sure that you know that the maps that are
13 there on my right and on that side of the room
14 are available for you to look at so that you
15 will see what the current districts are.

16 So there are maps and we can use those
17 maps as a take off point to either criticize or
18 find fault or find value or virtue in any of
19 the districts that exist now.

20 If Chairman Weatherford were here he would
21 remind us all that none of us, nobody in the
22 Legislature, has a district. The districts are
23 developed based on the population data and
24 based on the redistricting software that is
25 used in conformance with the law.

1 So this is not about trying to find a way
2 to protect somebody's district. It is to find
3 a way to listen to your views as to how the
4 laws ought to be carried forward here in
5 northwest Florida.

6 With that said, what we will do is I will
7 call two testifiers at once so that the second
8 person can be on deck and ready, and our first
9 testifier are Mary Blackwell representing the
10 League of Women Voters of Okaloosa County.

11 Ms. Blackwell, it is good to see you
12 again.

13 MS. BLACKWELL: It is good to see you,
14 too, Don. First, I would like to thank the
15 Committee members for being here and for
16 providing this opportunity to comment on
17 redistricting, and I commend you for
18 encouraging citizen participation in the
19 process and I thank everybody who has come.

20 This is really important and I am glad you
21 are a part of it. I only have three points to
22 make.

23 First, the Legislature's timeline for
24 drawing the districts is too slow. The last of
25 the scheduled public hearings is September 1st.

1 Your timeline shows four months, as you
2 mentioned, for interim committee meetings, from
3 September through December.

4 Your own Committee staffs who work on the
5 redistricting and reapportionment issues year
6 around and some of whom, like John Guthrie, for
7 example, have been there for decades, should be
8 able to present you with several options right
9 now.

10 But as you said, you wanted to start with
11 a clean slate, that is fine, but after the end
12 of the hearings on the first of September, and
13 you absorb the public input, you mentioned
14 yesterday, Don, at the hearing that this is the
15 Internet age.

16 So I would like to see some options for
17 maps out there for comment and by the end of
18 September, so the public can have a chance to
19 influence the actual maps and not just talk in
20 generalities about what we would like to see.

21 And actually, I don't think there is any
22 secret about what we want to see, since the
23 Fair District Amendments received about
24 63 percent approval rating from voters in
25 November.

1 So please get all of those things done
2 where you are looking at the maps and making
3 those up, that is the time, that four months of
4 interim Committee meetings so you can be ready
5 to vote in January.

6 Please don't be wringing your hands next
7 spring and saying there is not enough time.
8 There is plenty of time, so let's not waste it,
9 it is not fair to candidates, it is not fair to
10 constituents.

11 The second point, the Legislature
12 shouldn't be spending taxpayer money to oppose
13 implementation of the Fair District Standards.
14 As you all know, Representatives Brown and
15 Diaz-Balart have sued to have Florida's new
16 redistricting standards declared
17 unconstitutional even though they were approved
18 by the state Supreme Court before they were put
19 on the ballot.

20 The Florida House has joined this lawsuit
21 and the Secretary of State, Kurt Browning, is
22 the Defendant in the case. So this means
23 Florida taxpayers are now paying both to
24 prosecute and defend the same lawsuit. It is
25 just not right.

1 Senator Gaetz, you already said that you
2 and your colleagues were going to be upholding
3 the Constitution. I am counting on you, so
4 please stop spending our money trying to
5 undermine the provisions that were placed there
6 by 63 percent of the voters last November.

7 The final point, you mentioned you didn't
8 want to start out with any maps, and you are
9 having these 26 hearings, that is really
10 fabulous, but no maps are provided for citizen
11 comment.

12 Your Committee staffs, you already have
13 staffs working full time year round on these
14 issues, and I am sure they already have some
15 working drafts. I thank you again for taking
16 the time for citizen input and for the citizens
17 for making it, but it is hard to make
18 substantive constructive comments in a vacuum.

19 We have the technology as you mentioned,
20 to make the maps quickly with the available
21 census data. So I charge you to develop the
22 maps as soon as possible after the public
23 hearings conclude and you absorb all of that
24 citizen input so they can be out there for the
25 citizens to see well before you vote on them in

1 January.

2 And we do need to be ready to vote on them
3 in January, because only then will the public
4 have an opportunity for meaningful comment on
5 the real maps that are under consideration.
6 Thank you.

7 CHAIRMAN GAETZ: Thank you very much,
8 Mary. We appreciate you being here. Henry
9 Kelley is our next speaker, and following
10 Mr. Kelley, Patricia Rowe. Henry Kelley and
11 then Patricia Rowe.

12 Mr. Kelley, thank you for being here
13 tonight for taking your time, and you are
14 recognized.

15 MR. KELLEY: Thank you, Senator. On
16 behalf of the Committee I saw you yesterday in
17 Tallahassee and had the chance to address it
18 and said I would be back in Ft. Walton with a
19 few comments.

20 On behalf of the Ft. Walton Beach Tea
21 Party I am still disappointed to see criticisms
22 leveled at the Committee.

23 I appreciate that we are starting with a
24 blank slate. I mentioned yesterday that I have
25 gone in and used the software. I have drawn

1 Congressional Districts and I have drawn Senate
2 Districts.

3 The 120 House Districts, it is a little
4 daunting, but there is no reason that we cannot
5 -- that any group that has a staff can --
6 everyone can participate in this after about 15
7 minutes of using the software. So a few
8 particulars.

9 Mary Blackwell just mentioned the Fair
10 Districts was approved by 63 percent, and
11 Senator, you referred to the Constitution which
12 I just happen as a Tea Party guy to bring one
13 with me, and as I have been drawing up the maps
14 I call attention to the Tenth Amendment of the
15 Constitution which reserves the power of this
16 to the states.

17 And it is my belief that there is going to
18 be a major conflict between the Fair Districts
19 Amendment and some of the Federal rulings that
20 have resulted in gerrymandering districts, and
21 I encourage you to listen to the will of the
22 voters because this has now been codified in
23 our Constitution.

24 And I would ask that you take the will of
25 the Florida voters into consideration above

1 that of what a Federal Court Judge says in
2 keeping with the Tenth Amendment to the
3 Constitution, and nowhere in the United States
4 Constitution does it give the Federal
5 government the right to draw our districts.

6 Now, a few particulars for the northwest
7 Florida area. As I said, I have drawn the
8 maps several times, and particularly as we look
9 at the Senate and House Districts, and as we
10 look at the maps, one of the things that the
11 Fair District Amendments does say that the
12 media has made a lot of comments on is the use
13 of geographic boundaries.

14 But Amendments V and VI also say existing
15 political boundaries, and I would ask you to
16 consider that due to the unique nature of our
17 geography that our interests have more in
18 common horizontally across northwest Florida
19 than we do vertically.

20 In other words, Pensacola beach, Ft.
21 Walton Beach and Panama City Beach, they all
22 have something in common, and despite what our
23 friend from Daytona Beach says, you know, we
24 are kind of proud of this stretch of beaches,
25 and if you are not familiar with northwest

1 Florida along I-10 is mostly agricultural and
2 rural interests.

3 And I believe in looking at the
4 populations that our region should be drawn
5 horizontally, both within the Florida House
6 Districts and within the Florida Senate
7 Districts.

8 And on that note I wish to thank the
9 Committee for their time and the hard work. We
10 intend to participate on behalf of Tea Parties
11 around the state at as many of the hearings as
12 possible.

13 We will be submitting plans on-line and
14 like I said, I am thankful we are starting with
15 a blank slate and I appreciate your time.
16 Thank you, Senator.

17 CHAIRMAN GAETZ: Thank you very much,
18 Mr. Kelley. Next is Patricia Rowe and after
19 Ms. Rowe, Jan Dale.

20 MR. ROWE: I am Patricia Rowe, and I pass.
21 The people have pretty much said more than I
22 could possibly.

23 CHAIRMAN GAETZ: As we say in the Senate,
24 those who pass give eloquent testimony. Thank
25 you. Jane Dale, no, no, no. Let's not let

1 this become a habit. Anybody who wants to
2 speak.

3 MS. DALE: I am just going to do it right
4 here.

5 CHAIRMAN GAETZ: Jane, we can't have you
6 do it there because we want to carry you on
7 statewide television. No pressure. No
8 pressure, and after Ms. Dale is Edward
9 Armbruster, please.

10 MS. DALE: It is too bad you know me so
11 well, sir.

12 First I want to thank everybody for being
13 here tonight, and please, you all, it is very,
14 very important that we, the grassroots as we
15 always say, we really need to come with an open
16 mind and learn and listen to what everybody has
17 to say tonight and the other meetings, and that
18 is very very important and I hope we all use
19 both of our ears. Thank you all very much.

20 CHAIRMAN GAETZ: Thank you, Jane. Next,
21 Edward Armbruster and following Ed's comments,
22 we have, I believe it is Al, K-a-u-s-e-s.

23 MR. KAUSES: Al Kauses.

24 CHAIRMAN GAETZ: Al Kauses, of course. I
25 am sorry, Al, my handwriting is even worse than

1 yours. Ed, please go ahead.

2 MR. ARMBRUSTER: Thank you, Senator, I am
3 going to give back my time because your staff
4 out here answered my questions, and I thank
5 you.

6 CHAIRMAN GAETZ: Thank you very much, sir,
7 we appreciate your being here. Al, you are up,
8 followed by Howard Hill. Thank you very much
9 for being here tonight, Al, we appreciate your
10 presence and you are recognized.

11 MR. KAUSES: Well, thank you, and I thank
12 you all, ladies and gentlemen, for coming up
13 here and giving us a chance to yap before you.

14 I am here with the Florida Panhandle
15 Patriots as well as the Republican Party, and
16 as well as me, 23-year citizen of Okaloosa
17 County.

18 And we have one minor little thing here in
19 Okaloosa County that I would like to see taken
20 care of if at all possible.

21 We have got a little tail that runs in
22 Fred Drake's district out of Defuniak down here
23 in Okaloosa County, and being on just west of
24 Hurlburt here and I am on the shore side there,
25 I get caught up in this three or four-mile

1 segment down there.

2 And Brad gives me great service, and I
3 thank you, sir, and Matt, who's district kind
4 of runs up to that point and he has to jump
5 over my house to get to the rest of his
6 district, west of there, gives me great service
7 also. Thank you.

8 And we -- I would like to see that taken
9 care of. I think that would be very easy for
10 the Redistricting Committee and everybody else
11 to look into that and take care of it.

12 I totally agree with the beaches are the
13 beaches and the north end are the north end,
14 and I think those representing both up north
15 and down south have that in common and they can
16 take care of it a lot better.

17 I haven't had a chance to check out the
18 rest of the state, but I am going to do so,
19 your Redistricting cite is outstanding. It is
20 a little more construction coming up on it, but
21 I am going to delve into the south end down
22 there as well.

23 I think we will look at Daytona Beach as a
24 matter of fact. Again, I want to thank you
25 all, Magnolia Grill is outstanding, and enjoy

1 yourselves while you are up here and thank you,
2 Senator.

3 CHAIRMAN GAETZ: Thank you very much, Al,
4 we appreciate your testimony. Next we will be
5 privileged to hear from Howard Hill.

6 MR. HILL: As a retired politician, I
7 pass.

8 CHAIRMAN GAETZ: Howard passes, and next
9 we hear from Judy Burn-Riley, and following
10 Judy Burn-Riley, we will hear from Don Riley.

11 MS. BURN-RILEY: No relation.

12 CHAIRMAN GAETZ: No relation, at least as
13 far as we know. Mr. Riley is from Miramar
14 Beach, and Judy, of course, is from Niceville.

15 MS. BURN-RILEY: I am from Niceville, born
16 and raised in Okaloosa. First of all I just
17 want to say thank you for coming here.

18 Personally, I haven't seen so many elected
19 Democrats in Okaloosa County in, oh, too long,
20 and therein lies the issue, I suppose.

21 I want to thank you also for not skipping
22 Ft. Walton. I realize your Chair has a certain
23 bit weight and usually they go from Pensacola
24 to Panama City, and we have to travel if we
25 want anybody to hear what we have to say. So I

1 really appreciate what -- that you are here.

2 I have the same thing to say in terms of
3 the maps as has been said before. It is very
4 hard -- I went on the website. I found it a
5 little cumbersome quite frankly, and every
6 place it said it is under construction, it is
7 going to get better, trust us.

8 And so I will go back to it to try to see
9 what kind of input I can put to -- and put in
10 the numbers and see if we can get rid of the
11 rat tails and the packing and the stacking and
12 the things that have been done in the past.

13 I would caution you that the \$30 million
14 as I understand is what the redistricting costs
15 us, has been allotted in a budget that has
16 taken money from teachers and from a lot of
17 different areas that are very dear to our
18 heart.

19 If that is an incorrect figure, I
20 apologize, but there is a lot of money involved
21 in the hearings that you are going around 26
22 places in the state, and I would hope that, I
23 don't know if, now that you have come to Ft.
24 Walton, I don't care where you go, but if you
25 -- if you can cut those down.

1 I am concerned about the timing, excuse
2 me, but I am a little skeptical. When someone
3 says they are dragging their feet because they
4 don't want to get finished until it is so close
5 to the deadline that they won't have lines in
6 place.

7 So only an incumbent will have a real
8 advantage or will have a certain advantage and
9 that people who want to run won't know what the
10 districts are, they won't know where the lines
11 are, and a lot of time is being taken up by 26
12 public hearings.

13 And while I applaud the openness, I would
14 urge you to be ready on January when you do go,
15 be ready with your committees. Don't -- don't
16 -- don't make them right, make them wrong and
17 that is what I would like to say, thank you.

18 CHAIRMAN WEATHERFORD: Thank you very
19 much, Judy. Appreciate your testimony, and
20 next we will hear from Don Riley and following
21 Mr. Riley will Susan Harris be on deck and
22 ready, please.

23 Thank you, Mr. Riley, for being here, and
24 you are recognized.

25 MR. RILEY: Thank you, sir. Thank you,

1 Senator Gaetz and the other members of the
2 Committee, both for your public service as well
3 as for allowing me to offer my thoughts here
4 tonight regarding Florida's redistricting
5 process.

6 My name is Don Riley, and I live in
7 Miramar Beach. I am President of the Grand
8 Dunes Condominium Association.

9 I have one simple request for the
10 Committee. Please keep the legislative
11 districts in northwest Florida as close as you
12 can to where they are today.

13 Our Constitution requires that no district
14 lines be drawn to favor or disfavor any
15 political party or an incumbent, and to me the
16 solution seems rather simple. Move the
17 district lines as little as possible and little
18 credence can be given to any charges that lines
19 were moved for anyone's benefit.

20 Further, the current legislative district
21 lines have worked well. In the Florida Senate,
22 the similar towns along the Gulf of Mexico and
23 south of the Eglin Reservation, such as Miramar
24 Beach, Niceville, Shalimar, Navarre, Pensacola
25 Beach have one Senator whom we like,

1 incidentally, Don Gaetz.

2 The similar towns in the northern
3 panhandle, Milton, Defuniak Springs, Pace and
4 Crestview are represented by Senator Evers.

5 Currently the boundary between Senator
6 Gaetz and Senator Evers' districts runs
7 parallel to the Gulf of Mexico as others have
8 noted before me, creating a coastal district
9 and a northern district.

10 And I think it is far preferable to having
11 the boundary between their two districts
12 running vertically, perpendicularly to the
13 gulf, creating eastern and western districts
14 instead.

15 Radically changing the district lines
16 would be devastating to our coastal community
17 interests and would weakened our representation
18 in the Legislature, and it would similarly
19 disserve the interests of our neighbors living
20 in the northern part of this part of the
21 Florida panhandle.

22 I would urge you, please, keep the
23 district lines as they are now. Thank you.

24 CHAIRMAN GAETZ: Thank you very much,
25 Mr. Riley. We appreciate your testimony.

1 Next, Suzanne Harris, please, Ms. Harris, and
2 following Ms. Harris, Ed Winkelseth. Suzanne,
3 thank you for being here tonight and we
4 appreciate your testimony before the Committee.
5 You are recognized.

6 MS. HARRIS: Thank you. I want to thank
7 all of ya'll for coming. I think it is a
8 wonderful open process and that makes me feel
9 so good about our government that people care
10 to hear what we have to say.

11 My name is Suzanne Harris, and I am a
12 Walton County resident, and I represent
13 Edgewater Beach Condominium Association Resort.

14 As a local business woman I see how
15 economically diverse the panhandle of Florida
16 is. I live in a condominium on the Gulf Coast.

17 When I walk outside of my condominium and
18 I stand on the beach and I look up and down the
19 beach as far as I can see in any direction, I
20 see like property of mine, condominiums, rental
21 resorts, houses, but they are all basically the
22 same.

23 If I were north of the bay I would see a
24 totally different geographical dimension. I
25 would see farm land instead of sand and I would

1 see cattle and chickens and I would see a lot
2 of different things that are due to farming and
3 not that relate to the sand and the beach and
4 the tourist industry that we have here.

5 Currently the legislative districts are
6 mostly drawn in a way that recognizes the
7 uniqueness of our coastal areas. For example,
8 Senator Gaetz is my Senator. He is always
9 there for the coastal community. It doesn't
10 matter when we ask him to come, day or night,
11 he is always available. Most of us have his
12 cell phone number plugged into our cell phone
13 and I can tell you, he will tell you, I have
14 called him many a night saying, help, we need
15 something done for us.

16 He understands our district. His district
17 line is along the coast from Pensacola, Ft.
18 Walton, Destin, South Walton and into Panama
19 City. He understands us. I can't say that to
20 you enough.

21 Likewise, Senator Evers represents the
22 northern portion of Walton County, along with
23 the northern portions of our panhandle
24 counties.

25 This should not change. Please, I am

1 begging you, do not replace the current
2 district lines with a strict adherence to
3 county boundaries, instead, link together the
4 cities, the towns and the communities along the
5 coast wherever possible for Legislative and
6 Congressional Districts.

7 This will also allow you to link together
8 communities in the northern panhandle that
9 share the same economic interests.

10 The Florida Constitution requires the
11 Legislature to respect geographical boundaries
12 when drawing districts. In the Florida
13 panhandle the most significant boundary is
14 created by the vast land owned by the United
15 States Department of Defense north of Freeport,
16 Niceville and Navarre.

17 If the Legislature will draw the districts
18 either north or south of the military land, the
19 district community south along the coast and
20 north along the Alabama border will be best
21 represented.

22 I thank all of you. I used to live in Ft.
23 Myers, Florida, I still have a condo in Sanibel
24 Island, so I am very familiar with your
25 district.

1 I just came back from Palm Beach, not West
2 Palm, but Palm Beach, and I think all of ya'll
3 that live along there understand that everybody
4 doesn't have the same interest, and the beach
5 communities are only interested in bringing
6 tourism here and prospering for businesses and
7 the northern part of our district is interested
8 in totally different areas, and it would be
9 such a shame to combine them.

10 Now, I am going to leave you with one last
11 thing. I live in Walton County on the beach.
12 All of my County Commissioners live over an
13 hour away from Walton County that represent
14 Walton County.

15 It is very hard when you go to a County
16 Commissioner meeting in Walton County and you
17 have people from Paxton and Mosey Head and
18 Freeport on the Commission. They don't really
19 have the true understanding, and I can tell you
20 this firsthand because I am also on the Tourist
21 Development Council of Walton County.

22 I can tell you firsthand, it is very
23 difficult for them to understand the problems
24 that we in the beach front communities have.

25 Thank you.

1 CHAIRMAN GAETZ: Thank you very much,
2 Suzanne. Mr. Winkelseth, please, and following
3 Ed, Brenda Hall, Brenda Hall would be on deck,
4 please. Mr. Winkelseth, thank you for being
5 here.

6 MR. WINKELSETH: I am Ed Winkelseth, I
7 live over in Shalimar. I appreciate seeing all
8 of you folks. I am a 31-year -- 31 and-a-half
9 years in the military taught me to have fun.
10 So I am going to throw a hand grenade just like
11 I did at the staff meetings, and say I disagree
12 with all of the folks.

13 I believe in vertical alignment of the
14 counties. All I -- I live in the south end and
15 all I hear about is the beaches and we got to
16 refurbish the beaches, and we got to do this
17 for the tourists.

18 I believe if our Representatives are
19 representing north to south in the county, they
20 will learn the south part. They will know the
21 north part, and they will be fighting for their
22 whole counties.

23 I have got things drawn up just with
24 numbers. I won't hit a whole lot, but the big
25 thing is, Escambia County has got two

1 Representatives.

2 It would be slightly less than the ideal
3 district population. Hopefully the Committee
4 is smart enough to realize ideal is something
5 to go with.

6 Somebody like Matt, he picked, he would be
7 24,000 people over, but he is young and he can
8 handle that kind of thing. Brad Drake, he
9 wouldn't have to run out to see Al. I wouldn't
10 want to go see Al anyhow, but I have laid it
11 out, I have laid out the numbers. I have laid
12 out the differences.

13 The biggest thing is, we are counties, our
14 Representatives should be fighting for the
15 whole county, not for the beach people, not for
16 the tourism.

17 We have got people that live here year
18 round, and I did the same thing with the
19 Senators' list and I changed the one for
20 Congressman Miller, took one county away so
21 maybe he will be available to conduct Town Hall
22 meetings in our various counties.

23 Like I say, I just believe we got to get
24 over this north end of the county and south
25 end. I went to high school in that quote,

1 unquote, conservative district down there in
2 Broward County, south Broward. I learned
3 enough to get out of Florida because them
4 people are flaming Liberal.

5 No offense to you flaming Liberals on the
6 panel, and I went in the military for 31
7 and-a-half years and then eight and-a-half
8 years civil service. I screamed at the TV and
9 I did everything.

10 When I finally retired I ran into guys
11 like Henry. We still disagree a lot. Al, the
12 other folks, folks in the Republican Party, and
13 I decided to get involved.

14 Five years ago you wouldn't have seen me
15 at one of these meetings. I would have been
16 sitting home drinking a beer and cussing you
17 people out for not doing what I think should be
18 done. So as a result I have laid it out.

19 You can look at it, Henry will probably
20 crucify me when I leave here but that is
21 another story.

22 CHAIRMAN GAETZ: Ed, thank you very much.

23 MR. WINKELSETH: I have got it on a USB,
24 too.

25 CHAIRMAN GAETZ: Okay. Thank you, thank

1 you, and we will make this information
2 available to all members of the public.

3 Brenda Hall is next. Can we have a little
4 order there in south Florida? Thank you.

5 Brenda Hall is next and following
6 Ms. Hall, Mayor Sam Seevers from the City of
7 Destin.

8 Brenda, you are recognized. Thank you for
9 being here tonight.

10 MS. HALL: Brenda Hall. I have lived in
11 this area for 45 years, and I would like to
12 reiterate just a little bit about the maps not
13 being available and the public hearings before
14 the maps.

15 I think the public has already voted and
16 provided you with the guidelines for
17 redistricting. We paid for the software and
18 these engineers that are going to run it to
19 build new districts.

20 Until you provide the maps for comment,
21 this hearing process is a waste of precious
22 time and money. However, I would like to use
23 some of you time and my money.

24 CHAIRMAN GAETZ: Yes, for a sham it is
25 pretty well attended.

1 MS. HALL: Well, it is a shame, because on
2 June 8th, I would like to remind you that you
3 came and met with the Democrat Women's Club and
4 that you agreed that we would have hearings
5 like this after the maps were made.

6 So I just wanted to remind you that you
7 made that commitment, and -- but what I would
8 like to tell you all is what hasn't been said
9 is that what we voted for, what the public
10 voted for, what the citizens wanted was a fair
11 process.

12 I think that came out in fair districting,
13 and what we feel is always seems to be the most
14 important thing to you folks in the Legislature
15 is what the party wants, not what the citizens
16 want.

17 It is what the party wants, and I am here
18 to say that if -- and Mr. Gaetz said that when
19 his Senate Committee took this up we would not
20 be using party modifiers in deciding who was
21 going to go in which little box on the page.

22 And I would like some sort of a commitment
23 from the House of Representatives that they
24 would do the same thing.

25 If we don't have -- if we take away and

1 make ourselves color blind to red or blue, I
2 think that everybody in the state would agree
3 that they are getting a fair process.

4 We are just working with numbers. I
5 realize that we have to work with other
6 modifiers. We have to work with
7 African-American and Hispanic modifiers, but
8 there is nowhere in our Constitution that says
9 we have to work with Republicans, Democrats,
10 Independent modifiers.

11 So if we just got rid of those modifiers I
12 feel like we would get fair districts. We
13 would get rid of all of those little tail ends,
14 those little rat ends, those little squirrels
15 over on the side, and I think that both our
16 Legislators and the citizens would be happier,
17 and I know the Supervisor of Elections would be
18 a lot happier.

19 So that is my comment and I would like to
20 thank you.

21 CHAIRMAN GAETZ: Thank you very much,
22 Ms. Hall. We appreciate your testimony. Next
23 we will hear from Mayor Sam Seevers from the
24 City of Destin and following the Mayor, William
25 White, please.

1 Madam Mayor, thank you for being here and
2 you are recognized.

3 MAYOR SEEVERS: Thank you so much for
4 allowing me this opportunity to speak. First
5 of all I would like to thank each and every one
6 of you guys for all of the time that you are
7 spending up here and hopefully you will be able
8 to go fishing in the morning, red snapper are
9 biting right now like crazy. So if you get
10 that opportunity, do that and we have got
11 fabulous restaurants all over this area, so
12 please take advantage of it. We could
13 certainly use the income, especially after the
14 oil spill last year.

15 Senator Gaetz, again, thank you so much
16 for your leadership on this Committee. We
17 greatly appreciate it. On behalf of the Destin
18 City Council, we respectfully request that in
19 our city, our small city of 12,305 people, that
20 we have one House District, one Congressional
21 District and one Senate District.

22 Even though we are a very, very small
23 city, an example of one of the issues that we
24 have is Congressman Southerland has about 19
25 homes in our city in his district, and

1 Congressman Miller has all of the rest.

2 It may not -- it may seem like a really
3 good thing, having all of that representation,
4 but what happens is when individual citizens go
5 to vote, they get very confused. And in our
6 last election we had people standing in City
7 Hall wanting to know why they couldn't vote
8 when their neighbors across the street voted,
9 you know, for certain individuals and it just
10 makes it difficult.

11 And if you look on the maps it is really
12 interesting how they have these little tiny
13 juggernauts drawn on it. So we are just asking
14 it to clean it up, no one is asking for a
15 particular person, a particular party,
16 anything, just that the City of Destin is under
17 one House District, under one Senate District
18 and under one Congressional District.

19 So I appreciate your time this evening and
20 you guys have a good night.

21 CHAIRMAN GAETZ: Thank you, Madam Mayor,
22 we appreciate your testimony. William White is
23 next and following Mr. White's testimony, we
24 will hear from Mary Nielsan.

25 Mr. White, thank you for being here, and

1 you are recognized.

2 MR. WHITE: My pleasure. Just as a favor
3 to me, would all of the Democrats on the panel
4 please raise your left hands? Okay. That
5 wasn't exactly an aphrodisiac, but as a Liberal
6 who has lived in Okaloosa County for 35 years I
7 can assure you it is a difficult row to hoe.

8 What I would like to say, it is probably
9 early on in the game if we were to really
10 change the system out of this castle like
11 grotesqueries that get to be districts
12 sometimes and we have got a lot, a lot more
13 shovels full after tonight.

14 Perhaps seeing as no one can comment, I
15 would just like to ask the question
16 rhetorically, perhaps if we were sinical we
17 would say what we are doing here tonight is
18 rearranging the seats on the Titanic.

19 Particularly in a nation where democracy
20 has been shredded to the point where, for
21 example, it takes \$80 million to run for a
22 Senate Seat.

23 We are missing something, and I hope that
24 when it all comes out in the wash, mixes into
25 your equation, because the popular

1 misconception is that, you know, we do have the
2 best government money can buy. Let's prove
3 they are wrong. Thank you.

4 CHAIRMAN GAETZ: Thank you very much,
5 Mr. White. We appreciate your testimony. Mary
6 Nielsan is next and following Ms. Nielsan, Jim
7 Bagby, also with the City of Destin.

8 Ms. Nielsan, you are recognized. Thank
9 you for being here.

10 MS. NIELSAN: Thank you, thank you. Thank
11 you all for coming. This is a wonderful
12 opportunity. My name is Mary Nielsan, and I am
13 a resident of Walton County, in a community
14 along the beaches of south Walton.

15 We would like, many of us in this area
16 would like to have our beaches along the Gulf
17 of Mexico more contiguous with our
18 representation, and although that differs for
19 many people who spoke earlier, I believe that
20 there is opportunity to align things more
21 horizontally as compared to vertically.

22 I don't see that. Another gentleman spoke
23 about it being incongruous and we should all
24 run north, south, but there is opportunity to
25 be had by those communities that differ so

1 greatly amongst themselves from the north to
2 the south.

3 So sometimes you can look at something
4 that seems wrong or seems to be divisive, and
5 instead, you can take that and make a wonderful
6 opportunity out of it. So I would like our
7 leaders to be along the beaches where they have
8 common interest, common problems, and they are
9 working with all of these communities towards a
10 similar goal instead of being fractionated.

11 So that was my theory and I think we
12 should look horizontally a little bit. Thank
13 you.

14 CHAIRMAN GAETZ: Thank you very much,
15 Ms. Nielsan. We appreciate your testimony, and
16 Jim Bagby, a member of the City Council, City
17 of Destin, thank you for your service to our
18 community, and you are recognized.

19 COUNCILMAN BAGBY: Well, thank you,
20 Senator Gaetz, and I want to thank you. One
21 thing you didn't mention is you were
22 Dr. Tibbett's predecessor, and one of the
23 reasons we have great schools in this county is
24 in large part due to your efforts and your work
25 and I just wanted to thank you for everything

1 you have done for this county and for this
2 school in particular where two of my daughters
3 graduated.

4 I would like to thank all of you for
5 coming from all across the state to take time
6 out of your busy summer schedule. Some of you
7 may be off or whatever, and to come and just
8 spend a little time with us to learn our
9 interests, I appreciate it.

10 My name is Jim Bagby. I do sit on the
11 Destin City Council, our Mayor, our beautiful
12 Mayor, just spoke. I am also -- that is my non
13 paying job.

14 My paying job is I am the Town Manager of
15 Rosemary Beach, a little community down in
16 Walton County, as another bench front community
17 and so I go about 30 miles every day along the
18 beach, along the beautiful beaches of northwest
19 Florida.

20 And your job is difficult. I know it is,
21 because you have a lot of things you have to
22 deal with. You have to balance populations,
23 you have to look at geographic boundaries, you
24 have to make sure everything is contiguous.

25 You have to protect the rights of

1 minorities, you have to look at communities of
2 common interest and existing political
3 boundaries and make sure these districts are
4 compact, and a million other things, and I
5 understand that.

6 You know, Representative Ford would
7 understand where Mayor SeEVERS and I are coming
8 from as a former member of the Florida League
9 of Cities, because Destin is, we have got 12 or
10 13,000 people, and I live in Steve
11 Southerland's Congressional District, and I am
12 happy to live in Steve Southerland's
13 Congressional District and I live in Marti
14 Coley's House District.

15 And I am glad to live in Marti Coley's
16 House District, even though she lives about two
17 hours east of me, okay, but if I go about a
18 mile to the west of me I would be in Matt
19 Gaetz's, excuse me, Legislative District, and I
20 would be in Jeff Miller's Congressional
21 District.

22 And a town that small shouldn't be split
23 that many ways, that many times. And so I
24 would ask you to really look at putting all of
25 Destin in one district.

1 The other thing I would ask you to do is
2 put a lot of weight on these communities of
3 common interest. I think there have been some
4 people that alluded to it, you know, if you
5 represent a beach community in south Florida,
6 just think if you went due east or due west for
7 40 miles into that, into the heartland of
8 Florida as opposed to right there in Pinellas
9 County or around the Tampa Bay or whatever.

10 Entirely different issue, entirely
11 different issues being dealt with by those
12 Representatives.

13 We have three main communities of interest
14 in northwest Florida. We have our agriculture
15 on the north, we have our military slash
16 industrial, but mainly military in the center
17 and we do have our tourism, and while I respect
18 the gentleman's view that, well, you know, just
19 keep it in Okaloosa County or keep it in Santa
20 Rosa County, that makes your job harder, okay,
21 because that makes you a mile wide and a
22 quarter of an inch thin, when you are trying to
23 represent interests, our interests in
24 Tallahassee and you have to be an expert in
25 military affairs, you have to be an expert in

1 tourism, you have to be an expert in
2 agriculture.

3 You have to be an expert in 40 other
4 different topics, that, that is not fair to you
5 and that is not fair to us, fair to us, the
6 people that we -- you are representing.

7 So I would ask that you not spread
8 yourself too thin, that you keep Senator Evers
9 in the north who does a great job representing
10 agricultural interests and the interest of our
11 farmers, and you keep Senator Gaetz in the
12 south representing the beach communities, the
13 military and they both do a great job with the
14 military, but we are communities of common
15 interest and I just ask that you put at least
16 as much weight, if not more on that, than you
17 do on some artificial geographic boundary that
18 was created 150 years ago. Thank you very
19 much.

20 CHAIRMAN GAETZ: Thank you very much,
21 Councilman. Next we will hear from Charlotte
22 Flynt, and after Ms. Flynt speaks we will hear
23 from Christy Walker, please.

24 Ms. Flynt, I am sorry, I didn't give
25 Ms. Flynt as much warning as I would have

1 liked, but we are delighted to have you here,
2 and we welcome your testimony. You are
3 recognized.

4 MS. FLYNT: My name is Charlotte Flynt. I
5 am in Precinct 29, Walton County, and a lot of
6 things have been said tonight and I concur with
7 the vast majority of them, but I do hope that
8 you will also keep your hearts that in the
9 south part of the counties not only do we have
10 tourism, we have permanent residents, too, who
11 fund these counties. Thank you.

12 CHAIRMAN GAETZ: Thank you very much,
13 Ms. Flynt. Christy Walker, Ms. Walker?

14 MS. WALKER: I will pass, thank you.

15 CHAIRMAN GAETZ: Thank you very much,
16 Ms. Walker, thanks for being here tonight.

17 Next, Morgan Doolittle and following
18 Morgan Doolittle, and I think it is Ann, is it
19 Ann Hering, yes, it is. Morgan Doolittle.

20 Thank you very much for being here,
21 Mr. Doolittle, and we appreciate your testimony
22 and you are recognized.

23 MR. DOOLITTLE: Well, I actually live in
24 Panama City, Florida, but I work over here in
25 Okaloosa County, and I probably wouldn't have

1 come up and said anything, but I wanted to go
2 on record saying thank you very much for doing
3 this.

4 But also I wanted to support that the
5 Council member's testimony there from Destin.
6 I have heard a lot of different ideas about the
7 vertical separation and all of the ways to
8 break the districts down, but I would also like
9 to, I guess ask that when we do go through this
10 redistricting process, that we -- we cut off
11 those little tidbits, and, you know, you know,
12 like how neighborhoods have sort of been broken
13 up.

14 And I think that is, when you look at some
15 of these maps, you wonder how were these drawn
16 and maybe ya'll weren't there. I think when
17 you look at them yourselves, and you go, well,
18 some of this needs to be fixed obviously, and I
19 would just like to go on record as requesting
20 that and supporting his testimony right there.
21 That was excellent.

22 CHAIRMAN GAETZ: Thank you, Mr. Doolittle.
23 We appreciate it. And for the record, none of
24 us were here. That is a great thing about term
25 limits, we can blame our predecessors and our

1 successors. Ann Hering, Ms. Hering? We will
2 come back to Ann Hering if she had to step out
3 for a moment.

4 Next, Brenda Rees, Ms. Rees. It is great
5 to see you again and thank you very much for
6 being here tonight. You are recognized to
7 speak before the Committee, and following
8 Ms. Rees by the way, is Vickie Ritchson.
9 Ms. Ritchson, if you could be on deck.

10 MS. REESE: Thank you, Senator Gaetz and
11 Committee members and Representatives. I am a
12 Walton County native. I was born in Defuniak
13 Springs but I live on the beach off of 30A in
14 South Walton, so I know the area well.

15 I also would like to let you know that
16 haven't been here before that Walton County is
17 the eighth county created in Florida, nearly
18 200 years old.

19 But thank you for holding these 26 or so
20 redistricting meetings across the state. They
21 are very helpful and will help Floridians and
22 you as we craft our fair districts.

23 I would like to ask you to consider
24 perhaps adding two or five super regional
25 meetings at the end so that those of us that

1 are here early might benefit from all of the 26
2 Committee groups that testify so that we might
3 update our comments somewhat.

4 You have provided maps and I thank you.
5 By taking these current maps into consideration
6 with the census numbers and extensive
7 redistricting guidelines, an individual can
8 quickly see where some changes need to be made.

9 Congressional District I is 2,000 short,
10 and Congressional District II is 45,000 over.
11 That is 696,000 ideal district. Obviously,
12 changes need to be made.

13 You have also offered generous tools for
14 individuals to construct their own maps. I
15 hope to do so soon. Thank you.

16 A quick look at the State House and Senate
17 maps you have provided, along with the numbers
18 indicate change. The 10 percent deviation
19 should be utilized here. Thomas Hanna was a
20 Speaker of the House, by the way, from Pointe
21 Washington, some of you might know that.

22 Congressional District I should take back
23 Blue Water Bay and consolidate as much as
24 Okaloosa County as possible. Congressional
25 District II may need to continue to look to its

1 historical roots. South Walton even has a long
2 history of being with the county next to it,
3 Bay County for a long time.

4 So keeping South Walton with Congressional
5 District II would meet not only the new state
6 requirements of compactness, but also Federal
7 redistricting guidelines of ensuring one
8 person, one vote. Following the Voting Rights
9 Act of 1964, as amended in 1965, being compact
10 and contiguous to name some of the guidelines
11 used for many years in case law by the United
12 States Department of Justice.

13 Two new areas that are very blue, this is
14 a map that I printed off your website so it is
15 very helpful to go on to that Florida
16 Redistricting.org and people can go to that and
17 print material and see all of the very helpful
18 U-Tube explanations of how to draw their maps.

19 But if you look on this map, it is very
20 obvious, there is a very blue area that is
21 extremely over populated that the new
22 Congressional Districts, perhaps one of them
23 may need to come from that area. Maybe the
24 Orlando and the Tampa areas particularly look
25 like that is where you might need to be working

1 on those Congressional Districts.

2 It is practicable to make substantive
3 comments now. It will be good to wait and see
4 what some of the citizens come up with in areas
5 we aren't familiar with, especially the House
6 and Senate Districts where we can have a
7 10 percent deviation.

8 In the Congressional Districts it might be
9 a little bit hard because there is only that
10 one vote that separates them. So once you get
11 to Pensacola you can't go any further west, and
12 so, but again, with the State and House Seats
13 having a 10 percent deviation, that will help
14 us later on to do that.

15 So I look forward to meeting you with
16 again and participating and continuing dialogue
17 to produce a fair redistricting plan for
18 Florida. Thank you very much.

19 CHAIRMAN GAETZ: Thank you very much,
20 Ms. Rees, and Ms. Rees makes a good point when
21 she asks about being able to update your
22 comments based on information that might be
23 presented on the web, or presented by
24 Legislators in Committee.

25 You will have the opportunity to do that

1 either by e-mail and the e-mail lists e-mail
2 addresses for the Senate and House Committees
3 are listed on the brochure that you got when
4 you came in, or the Snail Mail addresses are
5 listed as well.

6 And as a previous speaker from the
7 Democratic Committee indicated, there will be
8 additional opportunities for public input after
9 these hearings are concluded and after maps are
10 presented.

11 Thank you very much, Ms. Rees.
12 Ms. Ritchson, it is good to see you again.

13 MS. RITCHSON: It is good to see you
14 again, Senator Gaetz.

15 CHAIRMAN GAETZ: And thank you very much
16 for being here. You are recognized.

17 MS. RITCHSON: Thank you. I am Vickie
18 Ritchson and I am a concerned citizen. That is
19 how I am here today. I live in the city of
20 Niceville.

21 I happen to be running for the City
22 Council in the election in July, but I am just
23 here as a citizen right now.

24 I just read the article in the newspaper
25 that Senator Gaetz had put in and felt like I

1 needed to be here and be involved, and I want
2 to thank you for this opportunity and I want to
3 say, you know, I hadn't come here with any
4 preconceived notions, but it is wonderful to
5 listen to the people's perspectives to gather
6 my knowledge to be able to go later to the
7 website and give an informed opinion.

8 And I was listening to the vertical and
9 horizontal and I can see both points, and I was
10 thinking that it might be difficult if some
11 line took Eglin and split it down the middle,
12 that you might have two Representatives working
13 together, but at the same time you might end up
14 with two people butting heads.

15 And so in that respect I could see that
16 boundary lines being continuous in a certain
17 like category would make it much easier for
18 representation, making -- I draw maps for my
19 job.

20 I work for a contractor on Base, and part
21 of what I do is draw footprints for the
22 missions out on the property that they do, and
23 in that I do a lot of map drawing. So I am
24 looking forward to going out to your software
25 and playing with it, and I do know it is much

1 easier for me to draw to boundaries that are
2 locateable, a river, a road, an air space,
3 county line.

4 And that makes sense to me, and most
5 cities are not split by county lines. So
6 following, following boundaries makes sense to
7 not split groups of people with like interests.

8 I had a misconception maybe like other
9 people that the last time we had a
10 redistricting, that it was a power play for
11 political power play to grab new areas with new
12 people and for there to be a juggling of
13 Republican and Democratic powers, and I feel
14 like your process here is going to be a more
15 transparent process that will prevent people
16 from feeling that they are being over powered
17 by some political game.

18 The logical lines, the military presence,
19 the beaches and tourist industry are all
20 pertinent things to consider, and I will be
21 taking the rest of the comments that come today
22 and what you present for us in software and
23 maps, and I will be involved in that and make
24 some comments at a later time that where I have
25 an informed decision.

1 But I do appreciate the process you have
2 here, opening it up to just normal people as
3 well as power -- people in power for the cities
4 and the Representatives, but I was just very
5 impressed that there were so many of you who
6 came out tonight for us.

7 CHAIRMAN WEATHERFORD: Thank you,
8 Ms. Ritchson, appreciate it very much. Next we
9 will hear from Aaron Thrush, Aaron Thrush, and
10 following Aaron Thrush, from Jeanne Ashley,
11 please. Mr. Thrush, are you here?

12 MR. THRUSH: I pass.

13 CHAIRMAN GAETZ: Thank you very much, sir,
14 for being here tonight. Jeanne Ashley,
15 Ms. Ashley, and following Ms. Ashley, Ben
16 White, Mr. White. If you will be on deck.

17 Ms. Ashley, thank you for being here, you
18 are recognized.

19 MS. ASHLEY: Thank you, I appreciate it.
20 I have lived all over the country, mostly in
21 cities, so I have not really been part of the
22 gerrymandering until now, and I found out
23 accidentally the night before we were to vote
24 for our delegates, I had been, immediately when
25 I moved here, registered to vote, joined a

1 political party, got to know the people, was
2 anxious to vote for the delegates.

3 The night before I was to go to Crestview
4 I thought I found out that I was in that little
5 split of land right off of 98 that is in a
6 totally different district.

7 And then I was expected to go to
8 Tallahassee to vote for people I have never met
9 and had no clue, you know, who they were and
10 certainly was going to be out voted.

11 I felt disenfranchised. I felt taken,
12 really. I understand that the beach issues are
13 much different from the northern part, and I
14 would like to keep that maintained, but to have
15 an area so spread out that you go from Destin
16 to Tallahassee, that gives us no representation
17 whatsoever.

18 We are totally outvoted. So if you can
19 possibly do something with, I don't know,
20 Walton, Okaloosa, maybe even closer to
21 Pensacola, at least it is not 150 miles away,
22 you know, I would very much like to have a
23 personal relationship with my representation
24 rather than somebody who is way off in the wild
25 somewhere. Thank you very much. Appreciate

1 it.

2 CHAIRMAN GAETZ: Thank you, Ms. Ashley.
3 We appreciate you being here tonight. Next may
4 we please hear from Ben White? Ben White?

5 Mr. White, thank you for coming all the
6 way down from Crestview. We appreciate you
7 being here, and you are recognized.

8 MR. WHITE: Thank you, Representatives,
9 and Senators as well, that make up our
10 government for the State of Florida.

11 One of the things from representing the
12 North Okaloosa Republican Club in Crestview,
13 one of the things that the north looks at if
14 you sat in the middle of 85, on the left is
15 Brad Drake, I mean, on the right is Brad Drake
16 and on the left is Doug Broxson, and then we
17 have Senator Evers.

18 One of the three common, one of the common
19 denominator between those three Representatives
20 is they all live in our district. They know
21 what we are dealing with. They understand it.

22 If I go to the south I do have Matt Gaetz,
23 Mr. Gaetz, and Don Gaetz, that represent the
24 south.

25 They live down there. They understand the

1 rules and problems that those individuals have.
2 So being in Crestview, it doesn't matter
3 whether you turn right or turn left, those two
4 individuals understand the north end of the
5 county.

6 They live it, they understand it, most of
7 them is also born and raised in that area, or
8 grown up from there. I moved in from Crestview
9 from Panama City Beach after serving 23 years
10 in the military and I made it my home, but I
11 can talk to all three of those individuals and
12 they all understand what we are going through.

13 Now, if you do go vertical, not to say
14 Mr. Gaetz isn't a smart man, but his whole idea
15 is that the tourist industry down there and he
16 can flip it down there, but at the same token I
17 want to say this, every one of you represent
18 every one of us.

19 At the end of the day it is your vote that
20 represents the State of Florida, whether you
21 are a Liberal, whether you are a Democrat,
22 whether you are a Republican or Conservative,
23 whatever it be, we are looking for you to lead
24 the State of Florida, so thank you, sir.

25 CHAIRMAN GAETZ: Thank you very much,

1 Mr. White, we appreciate you. Our next two
2 testifiers are Mike Brown and Kim Christopher.
3 Mike Brown and then if Kim Christopher would be
4 on deck, please.

5 Mr. Brown? Mike Brown? If not, Kim
6 Christopher, are you ready? May we take you
7 next? And following Kim Christopher we will
8 hear from Diana Van Oeveren.

9 MS. CHRISTOPHER: Good evening. Thank you
10 all for being here. I really appreciate seeing
11 all of these great faces. I know what you do
12 for us is a tough job, it is a good job and
13 often not rewarding.

14 What you are doing here should be very
15 rewarding for what you are doing for the state
16 of Florida and the citizenry.

17 I have lived in Florida since 1986. I
18 married a native. I came from Texas and I now
19 call myself a Floridian after all these years,
20 and Senator Montford, thank you, I have a
21 doctor in my family because of you as
22 Superintendent of Leon County Schools.

23 I have been through this process three
24 times. this is the third time since 1986.
25 This is probably the most clear and fluid

1 process since I have watched it happen, and I
2 know that the media, the system is better, more
3 transparent because we do have things like the
4 Internet.

5 We do have more conversation, we do have
6 hopefully all of the papers on board, but one
7 thing that I noticed when they were doing the
8 census, I own a piece of rental property. When
9 they did the census they counted my renter.

10 My renter no longer lives in the State of
11 Florida. That happens frequently when you are
12 in areas that surround military bases. It is a
13 very transient population that I don't think
14 has been considered.

15 The renters that I have currently will not
16 be here to vote in the next election, though
17 they are registered to vote. They are required
18 by their military mission for their time here.

19 That is causing issues that I can see. We
20 have across the state of Florida, specifically
21 the panhandle, a large number of people that
22 are on a limited military mission. It could be
23 as short as eight months, or as long as 18 to
24 24 months.

25 Those are for the people being trained in

1 the special missions at Eglin, Tyndall, White,
2 name them all.

3 I would ask, caution you to please
4 consider that demographic when you are drawing
5 these lines, because what we are having now is
6 the influx coming from the new mission at Eglin
7 of a large number of people.

8 Those persons were not counted in the
9 census. So your numbers immediately are
10 inaccurate. So with that I would thank you
11 very much again for your time for being here,
12 for your tremendous effort and I look forward
13 to following your progress. Thank you.

14 CHAIRMAN WEATHERFORD: Thank you,
15 Ms. Christopher. Thank you very much. Very
16 thoughtful testimony. Diana, are you ready?
17 Very good, and following Diana, Dick Troop.
18 Thank you for being here tonight and you are
19 recognized.

20 MS. VAN OEVEREN: Diana Van Oeveren, I
21 live in Destin, and I would like to reiterate
22 what Mayor Seevers and our Destin Councilman
23 said about a small community that usually talks
24 to each other should be able to talk to each
25 other about who to vote for, and it didn't work

1 this time, either in the House race or the
2 Congressional race.

3 So, and as an example, I wanted to talk
4 only about House District 7, Marti Coley's
5 district. It would be 106 miles for a Destin
6 constituent to drive to Marianna to contact
7 Ms. Coley about anything.

8 If you went 100 miles in the other
9 direction or north, you would be in Alabama.
10 So I think you ought to keep that in mind.

11 The media covers areas perhaps differently
12 than county lines, differently than district
13 lines, but I think that may be something that
14 you should consider as much as you can. Is
15 Ms. Coley covered in the Panama City or the
16 Marianna paper? I don't know, because I don't
17 even have access to those papers unless I can
18 find them on-line. They are not sold in
19 Destin.

20 Our local newspaper tries to cover about
21 three counties, but that is only about half of
22 Marti Coley's district. Her district includes
23 nine counties. The main parts of two and lots
24 of little pieces of seven others, I believe.

25 So I think that is something you should

1 consider. The compactness just is not there.
2 Horizontal districts could be more compact,
3 vertical districts could be more compact in a
4 different way, but right now we have got these
5 little tails and Destin got caught in two of
6 the tails.

7 The suburbs of Marianna, for an example,
8 don't even have Marti Coley as their
9 representative. They are in another district.
10 So give her all of Marianna and take us off and
11 add us to somebody else.

12 The same thing happens in Tallahassee with
13 Steve Southerland's district. Their
14 Congressman on the east side of Tallahassee is
15 not Steve Southerland. He is the Congressman
16 only for a piece of Tallahassee. So I think
17 you ought to keep that in mind and when you get
18 to Tallahassee or near Marianna I am sure they
19 will be addressing these issues in the same
20 way. Thank you.

21 CHAIRMAN WEATHERFORD: Thank you very
22 much. We appreciate your testimony. Dick
23 Troop is next and following Mr. Troop is Sabu
24 Williams from the Okaloosa County NAACP.
25 Mr. Troop.

1 MR. TROOP: The first thing I would like
2 to thank everybody that came from the long
3 distances to be with us tonight. I know you
4 would rather be somewhere else.

5 Something that came up early in the
6 meeting was a discussion of the imaging
7 software, and as I look around, I am happy to
8 see some young people in the group.

9 There is also some of us older folks, and
10 so I started with software when new versions
11 come out. You have imaging software, as I
12 understand it, that is, you know, being built
13 now and so I would like to know that every one
14 of you, all of the Representatives, can turn on
15 your computer, boot up the software, go through
16 and run the software and show how the lines are
17 manipulated north, south, east or west.

18 And it is fine to get help from your staff
19 to learn it, you know, that is part of the
20 game, but I would like to know if you come in
21 by yourself in the morning at 7:00 o'clock, you
22 got it up and you can see how the numbers move
23 around. Thank you.

24 CHAIRMAN GAETZ: Thank you very much,
25 Mr. Troop. I will tell you, Mr. Troop, that

1 when this software was first developed we did
2 get an orientation and we got individual
3 tutoring. So if we don't know how to do it, it
4 is our fault. Sabu Williams, Mr. Williams, and
5 following Mr. Williams we will go back to those
6 individuals who we called earlier who were not
7 able to be present. Perhaps they were out of
8 the room.

9 Mr. Williams, thank you for being here.
10 You are recognized.

11 MR. WILLIAMS: Thank you for having me,
12 Senator Gaetz and I thank all of you for being
13 here. I just walked in the door and somewhat
14 just got home from New York and thought I had
15 to be here and I wanted to make sure that the
16 NAACP's points were made clear to this
17 Committee in terms of how we feel about
18 redistricting.

19 Number one the state of Florida we believe
20 should ensure transparency and fairness in
21 compliance with the Voting Rights Act and with
22 equal protection. You should ensure one
23 person, one vote. You should redistrict in a
24 way that avoids minority vote delusion and you
25 should avoid drawing district lines so that the

1 minority population is over concentrated or
2 packed into election districts.

3 You should also be careful to avoid
4 cracking or fracturing, if you will, which is
5 drawing district lines so that an area of
6 concentrated, concentrated minority population
7 which is large enough for separate
8 representation in that it could constitute one
9 or more majority, minority or majority black
10 districts is divided and spread among several
11 districts that are predominantly White.

12 You should be careful to avoid stacking,
13 which is drawing district lines so that a large
14 minority population concentration is included
15 with a larger white population with a purpose
16 or effect of depriving minority voters of a
17 voting majority.

18 We also respectfully request that you
19 avoid drawing plans that erode minority rights
20 relative to the status quo. That is, that you
21 avoid creating retrogressive redistricting
22 plans.

23 A key traditional redistricting principles
24 to respect for communities of interest. These
25 are defined by three characteristics, the

1 extent to which non members identify members as
2 a distinct community. The extent to which
3 members identify themselves as a distinct
4 community, and the extent to which members are
5 similarly affected by governmental action.

6 African-American citizens form one of the
7 strongest communities of interest in this
8 state, and the redistricting plan should have
9 as a priority the fashioning of districts that
10 accord appropriate representation to
11 communities of interest.

12 We are aware of the redistricting
13 principles outlined in Sections 20 and 21 of
14 the Florida Constitution and they must be
15 adhered to. Specifically, it says, districts
16 should not be drawn with the intent or result
17 of denying or abridging the equal opportunity
18 of racial or language minorities to participate
19 in the political process, or to diminish their
20 ability to elect representatives of their
21 choice.

22 In addition, districts shall be compact
23 and contiguous. Additionally, we want to
24 ensure that the long established principles by
25 the Constitution and the Voting Rights Act of

1 1965 are continued, such as, ensuring one
2 person, one vote and avoiding minority vote
3 delusion.

4 Finally, in producing the data for the
5 maps we ask that you include precinct and
6 district voting age population, VAP, if will,
7 de-aggregated by race or national origin, and
8 would ask that the data also include VAP of
9 citizens who can vote, that is, the position,
10 if you will, of not only the Okaloosa County
11 NAACP, but the Florida State Conferencing
12 NAACP, and thank you for this opportunity.

13 CHAIRMAN GAETZ: Thank you very much, Mr.
14 Williams. I appreciate your testimony. Now we
15 will go back to two individuals who's name we
16 called originally, but they weren't able to be
17 present in the room or perhaps they stepped
18 out. We want to hear from them if they are
19 here.

20 Ann Hering, Ms. Hering?

21 Mike Brown, Mr. Brown? Okay. This
22 concludes all of the individuals who signed up.
23 Now let me ask this. Are there any -- are
24 there any people here tonight who wish to speak
25 and did not have the opportunity to sign up?

1 If so, if you will raise your hand we will
2 get you a speaker card and we will call on you,
3 because we want to make sure everyone has the
4 opportunity to speak if you wish to speak.
5 There is a lady back there.

6 Will a member of our staff please get a
7 speaker card to her? Is -- someone over here
8 as well, and a gentleman in the back, and a
9 gentleman over on the couch.

10 All right. While we are waiting to
11 collect those speaker cards and we will hear
12 from those individuals, let me recognize
13 Vice-Chair Precourt because we, while we have
14 been in session tonight we have received some
15 comments from people who have been following us
16 on the Internet and wish to have their comments
17 registered as well.

18 These may be people from our area who
19 weren't able to come to the hearing tonight,
20 but they want their comments read aloud,
21 Mr. Vice-Chair.

22 VICE-CHAIR PRECOURT: Thank you Mr. Chair,
23 and, yes, in fact, one of them is from this
24 area via Twitter from the Destin Chamber of
25 Commerce.

1 We have the following comment. The --
2 they want to notify everyone that redistricting
3 meetings are taking place. Let's hope that
4 they put the entire city of Destin into one
5 district, not split, and in a coastal district.

6 That is a great comment, and I want to add
7 a little commentary to it, because that is a
8 little bit open to interpretation.

9 This is a really good point to reiterate
10 that the single most effective way to have an
11 immediate impact on this as I believe the
12 gentleman, Al, did tonight, is to submit an
13 actual map.

14 You know, we have all heard over the
15 course of time, a picture paints a thousand
16 words, but it is also usually a lot clearer and
17 less open to misinterpretation. So to the
18 degree that you can submit maps I wanted to
19 reiterate that point. These aren't comments,
20 these are specific issues.

21 CHAIRMAN GAETZ: Okay, we will hear from
22 Tony, and is it Lengyel?

23 MR. LENGYEL: Lengyel.

24 CHAIRMAN GAETZ: Lengyel, I am sorry for
25 mispronouncing your name, Tony. Would you

1 please come forward? We are delighted you are
2 here tonight and anxious to recognize you and
3 hear your testimony.

4 And following his testimony, Jann Coulson,
5 please, would be on deck.

6 MR. LENGYEL: Thank you, sir. Thank you,
7 Senator, my name is Tony Lengyel and I am with
8 the Florida Panhandle Patriots.

9 I appreciate you all being here as well
10 and I see a lot of friends here and I really
11 appreciate the representation by the people and
12 you folks here this evening.

13 I would just, you know, I want to get to
14 these maps and look at these things and I just
15 want to say that I am, you know, a southern
16 California beach boy kid and I gravitated to
17 Florida and I love it here and I live down by
18 the beach.

19 To keep things simple with this process,
20 to look at things from a perspective that
21 everything doesn't need to be changed.
22 Possibly do some tweaking and look at the
23 things like some of the other folks here said
24 tonight, you know, where you have these tails
25 and this and that needs to be -- things need to

1 be straightened up or cleaned up.

2 I don't know that, how many people in the
3 room like all of the changes that have been
4 going on here lately, but, you know, I do think
5 that there needs to be some correction in the
6 process. I think that if you take that into
7 consideration. Let's not overhaul the entire
8 system, but let's kind of do the tweaking and
9 fix things as need be.

10 And by the way, I just wanted to stress
11 that this is my opinion, it is not that of the
12 Panhandle Patriots I am a member. If you ever
13 get a chance you ought to come to one of our
14 meetings.

15 But and also while you are doing this
16 redistricting, you might take a look at putting
17 all of the Tea Parties in one district. It
18 wouldn't be a real tough thing to do, I mean,
19 just keep it in mind.

20 CHAIRMAN GAETZ: We might get some support
21 for that from some people that would surprise
22 you.

23 MR. LENGYEL: Thank you so much, Senator.
24 Thank you all for being here, and we do
25 appreciate your time.

1 CHAIRMAN GAETZ: Thank you, Mr. Lengyel,
2 we appreciate your comments. And now, Jann
3 Coulson and followed by Steve Czonstka. Jann,
4 thank you very much for being here tonight, and
5 you are recognized.

6 MS. COULSON: Thank you. I came to
7 listen, and now that I have listened, my
8 greatest concern I don't hear being
9 articulated, and that is that I am hoping that
10 all of you will listen very carefully to the
11 local officials, especially your County
12 Supervisor of Election officials, because you
13 can draw pretty maps and you can do a lot of
14 things, but when you have a confused
15 electorate, they either don't show up or they
16 show up in the wrong place or they get
17 confused.

18 And in the last Presidential election we
19 turned 100 people away from our precinct
20 because they were confused about where they
21 voted. Because of early voting we were very,
22 very fortunate that none of those who were
23 turned away without an opportunity to vote, but
24 as it got closer and closer to 7:00 o'clock I
25 had real concern that we were going to

1 disenfranchise somebody because those maps are
2 sad.

3 And unless there is a compelling reason to
4 make them long and squiggly, please make the
5 lines logical and reasonable, and I understand
6 that each of you is, by charge, must represent
7 all of the people in your area, and when I see
8 a Senatorial District I know that they are
9 going to be representing not just the beach,
10 contrary to what people may attribute to you.

11 I know your view is broader than that,
12 Senator Gaetz. I am far more concerned that it
13 makes sense. I actually worked for another
14 election authority earlier in my life and I am
15 still trying to figure out what all of the
16 districts are that I live in, and I am very
17 frustrated by that.

18 Literally I have gotten an invitation to
19 go to the Supervisor of Elections Office and
20 look at maps in their office because it is so
21 complex. So please listen to your Supervisor
22 of Elections across the state. Thank you.

23 CHAIRMAN GAETZ: Thank you, and
24 Ms. Coulson, before you leave, let me just say
25 because just you raised the issue that indeed

1 John Guthrie who is our professional staff
2 director in the Senate, has met with the
3 Supervisors of Elections statewide and they
4 were all invited to attend these hearings as
5 the hearings move into their communities.

6 So we are very interesting in their
7 feedback. So thank you for making that point.

8 MS. COULSON: Thank you.

9 CHAIRMAN GAETZ: Thank you, and next,
10 Steve Czonstka, and following Mr. Czonstka,
11 Gayle Jacobson.

12 Steve, thank you for being here, and you
13 are recognized.

14 MR. CZONSTKA: Thank you for giving us the
15 opportunity to speak. I think that the fact
16 that Okaloosa County is represented by four
17 members of the House, Florida House of
18 Representatives, two Senators and two
19 Congressmen is a positive thing, and so I would
20 just as like to keep that representation. It
21 gives us a voice on things that may come up in
22 the future.

23 I am -- also work for the Supervisor of
24 Elections and am a Precinct Clerk, and I want
25 to echo what the lady before me just said. We

1 had a special election for House District 4,
2 and I live out in Blue Water Bay, Precinct 46,
3 which is split by House District 4 and House
4 District 5.

5 Half of the people who wanted to vote for
6 Representative Gaetz couldn't because they were
7 in Brad Drake's district. Now I know you got
8 to worry about the School Board, you got to
9 worry about County Commission, you got to worry
10 about House and Senate Districts, but I want to
11 again emphasize that if there anyway possible
12 to coordinate with the Supervisors of Elections
13 when they are drawing their precincts, I think
14 that would really minimize voter confusion when
15 they come.

16 Now, a lot of it is the voter's fault.
17 They should know who their Representative is,
18 but we can't always educate the voter as much
19 as we can, so thank you for your opportunities.

20 CHAIRMAN GAETZ: Thank you very much,
21 Steve. I appreciate your testimony. Next,
22 Gayle Jacobson and following Ms. Jacobson,
23 Albert Perez. Gayle, it is great to see you as
24 always, and you are recognized. Thank you for
25 being here.

1 MS. JACOBSON: Thank you all for being
2 here. We really appreciate you visiting our
3 pretty little corner of the world, and we thank
4 you for your service to this state. We realize
5 sometimes it is a very unthankful job.

6 I don't have a lot of comments. I just
7 have a couple. You know how hesitant I am to
8 speak in public. One thing that has been
9 mentioned tonight a couple of times is that
10 some people wish that you had maps already
11 drawn.

12 Now, we -- I happen to like this open
13 forum, this transparency that you are coming
14 with open minds to get our input.

15 We know that if you came with the maps
16 already drawn there would be those who thought
17 deals had been struck, and you know, in smoke
18 filled back rooms. So you kind of are in a no
19 win situation, but I personally appreciate this
20 opportunity for everyone to have input.

21 I feel kind of like I did in elementary
22 school. I live in the same house and I went to
23 three different elementary schools because the
24 boundary got moved several times, and that is
25 what happened to me in the last redistricting.

1 I am one mile from the Walton County line
2 and I am inside CD 2 by one mile. I have had
3 great representation no matter who's district I
4 was in.

5 I can honestly say that I have dealt with
6 Congressmen of both parties, certainly you are,
7 and I call on you a lot, so I have no complaint
8 on a party issue, but we do have some real
9 problems in these little key holes that were
10 cut out last time.

11 You have heard this all before, so we hope
12 that you will, and I know this isn't the only
13 area of the state that has these problems. So
14 I will reiterate what so many others have said.

15 Please keep that in mind, please try to
16 make it a little more compact and easier for
17 those at the polls, because it is problematic
18 for the voters and those who work at the polls,
19 and thank you again for your time.

20 CHAIRMAN GAETZ: Thank you so much,
21 Ms. Jacobson. It is great to have you here.
22 And now, Albert Perez, Albert Perez.

23 Thank you very much for your testimony
24 tonight. We are anxious to hear from you, and
25 you are recognized, sir.

1 MR. PEREZ: Thank you. I just wanted to
2 say good evening to everyone here on the
3 Committee for traveling so far, most of you,
4 and to my fellow neighbors. I haven't had a
5 chance to, but it is great to see all of you
6 here.

7 I think I have a fairly unique
8 perspective. I am not originally from Florida,
9 but I have been here five years, but to this
10 area, but I did graduate from Barry University
11 in Miami Shores, Florida, very close to North
12 Miami.

13 So I am happy to see people from south
14 Florida up here, I am very proud of that, and I
15 am a four-year veteran in the Air Force, I am a
16 member of the Civil Air Patrol here in Eglin.
17 I work at Hurlburt. I served active duty in
18 Eglin, and I am a member of the Okaloosa Young
19 Democrats here.

20 My plead is simple, keep it simple, try
21 and respect county lines as much as possible.
22 I live and work in Okaloosa County. I am very
23 proud of that. I would not -- I know that a
24 lot of people here, my neighbors, some of them
25 work here in Okaloosa, they live in Walton,

1 some live in Santa Rosa.

2 That is great, that works for them and
3 that is great, but for my perspective, I am
4 very proud to live and work in Okaloosa County.
5 I wouldn't have it any other way.

6 So when I invest in my county I want to
7 invest in my county, whether it be property
8 taxes or whether it be working there, even just
9 going to lunch during my lunch break. I would
10 rather keep it that way. So by respecting
11 county lines, it also diversifies.

12 I know the status quo is one
13 Representative for the coast, one
14 Representative north for the north areas, the
15 more agrarian areas, the more agricultural
16 ones. I don't think monopolizing something
17 like that is going to work.

18 I probably agree with the person, the
19 gentleman who stood before me probably an hour
20 ago and threw the grenade. He said, keep, keep
21 it vertical. I am going to elaborate and I am
22 going to go into detail. Just say keep it
23 simple and try and respect county lines.

24 If we have -- during the BP Oil Spill that
25 occurred fairly recently, we only had one

1 Representative who really cared, just one,
2 because it affected their district and maybe
3 the Senator who it affected his district.

4 We won't have gone far, but if we four or
5 three Representatives or Senators who actually
6 cared, I think we would have accomplished much
7 more in the Florida Legislature.

8 Monopolizing has never got this country
9 far, monopolizing representation has never
10 gotten this country far. It is competition and
11 through diversification that we excel. So,
12 yes, we do need to challenge our
13 Representatives. We need to challenge our
14 Senators to diversify.

15 People, people who live in Okaloosa, they
16 should know who their Senator is. They should
17 know who their Representative is, there should
18 not be this crooked line somewhere in the
19 north, somewhere in the south. We have an
20 extension somewhere over here and for the
21 people that spoke on behalf of Destin, the
22 mayor of Destin, exactly, I don't see any
23 reason why Destin needs to be separated in
24 representation.

25 They deserve to be sovereign. I am very

1 proud that Destin is my choice city. That is
2 where I go clubbing, that is where I go
3 dancing. I am very proud of the culture of Ft.
4 Walton Beach.

5 If I wanted something a little more small
6 town, a little more simple, I will go north. I
7 will go to Crestview, I will go to Laurel Hill.
8 I am proud of Okaloosa County. I am proud to
9 know, and from a Civil Air Patrol perspective I
10 get to see it from the sky.

11 I like to keep it that way. It is simple
12 for them, it is simple for my neighbors, it is
13 simple for you, and I definitely also agree
14 with the Tea Party patriot who spoke a few
15 minutes ago.

16 We, if they can get one district, that
17 would be great, because one, you know, you can
18 give them one Senator, one Representative, that
19 is great. You could spread the Democrats out,
20 you know, give them more representation, that
21 would be great, I would go for that, too. So
22 keep Okaloosa sovereign.

23 CHAIRMAN GAETZ: Thank you, Mr. Perez, and
24 thank you, Mr. Perez, for your service as well
25 in uniform and to our country.

1 This -- unless there is someone else who
2 wishes to speak tonight, this concludes the
3 public. Is there a hand up in the back? If
4 not -- yes, there is, there is a hand up in the
5 back, someone wishes to give the benediction.

6 Please, please come forward and we are
7 delighted to have your testimony, and if you
8 would simply articulate your name.

9 MS. GOSSOM: I can do that.

10 CHAIRMAN GAETZ: And address for everyone,
11 because I don't have your card yet, you are
12 recognized.

13 MS. GOSSOM: I can do that, thank you,
14 Senator Gaetz. My name is Joyce Gilley-Gossom.
15 I serve on the Ft. Walton Beach City Council,
16 although I am not representing the City Council
17 this evening. I need to make that very clear.

18 I am maybe not as smart as Mr. Kelley and
19 I may not be as smart as some of the other
20 individuals who said that they have gone on to
21 the website and have used the Map Builder
22 software program.

23 I attempted to do that. I was on a panel
24 earlier today and was asked to share my
25 thoughts about the process, and in preparation

1 for that I did go on to the website,
2 registered, received my certification, went
3 back in and started trying to construct a map.

4 After several days and at least eight to
5 ten hours, I was more frustrated than when I
6 was writing my dissertation. It was easier for
7 me to write my dissertation and do my
8 statistical analyzes myself than it was to use
9 that software program.

10 Now, I am not an IT person, and I am not
11 technological savvy or advanced, however, I do
12 know how to point and click, and I do know how
13 to read all of the symbols.

14 I couldn't even find the information I
15 needed in the 190-page help manual. So I would
16 ask respectfully, just as Mr. Perez said
17 earlier, please keep it simple.

18 When people face a daunting task that is
19 overwhelming to them, a paralysis sets in, and
20 they throw up their hands and say, I can't do
21 this. I don't know how. I don't know what to
22 do.

23 Fortunately I didn't do that. I went to
24 another site, printed a map, took some colored
25 markers and drew my lines on the map. I am

1 going to scan that and I am going to e-mail it
2 to you.

3 CHAIRMAN GAETZ: Okay.

4 MS. GOSSOM: So you will get my map, but
5 my plea is for not just the constituents in Ft.
6 Walton Beach that I represent and serve, but
7 for everyone in the panhandle area. Please
8 make it simple. Please simplify the process.

9 Yes, you had tutorial sessions and you had
10 orientation. We don't, we don't have that. I
11 even looked at the U-Tube videos trying to
12 follow the process and I will give you one
13 example.

14 There were 15 pages I had to go through
15 telling me to open this, click that, go back in
16 now and select this, name it this, name it
17 that, before I ever got to the sentence that
18 said, now it is time for you to draw your
19 lines, 15 pages it took me to do that.

20 So my request, whether it is vertical or
21 horizontal, I think that will come through the
22 process, especially for this area, make it
23 simple and keep it simple for people.

24 CHAIRMAN GAETZ: Thank you,
25 Dr. Gilley-Gossom and I appreciate your

1 comments, but perhaps you weren't here earlier
2 when we did make an offer. We have
3 professional staff who are able, willing and
4 can meet with you if you have 15 minutes.

5 MS. GOSSOM: I do.

6 CHAIRMAN GAETZ: Afterwards they will be
7 happy to sit down with you and, believe me, as
8 un-tech savvy as I am, if I can draw district
9 lines with a Doctorate and your high
10 intelligence, I know we can help you, too.

11 Thank you very much. I appreciate it. Is
12 there anyone else who would like to testify
13 tonight? I am sorry, you have had your shot,
14 sir, we don't do second rounds unless you want
15 to come to Panama City tomorrow, and you are
16 welcome to do that.

17 Anyone else who has not had a chance to
18 speak who would like to speak? If not, let us
19 conclude just by getting back to a couple of
20 things that were raised, and before I do that,
21 let me ask if there are any members, and we are
22 going to defer to Chair Precourt as to the
23 House members, are there any members of the
24 Senate Committee who are here who would like to
25 make any observations or ask any questions.

1 Senator Hays, you are recognized.

2 SENATOR HAYS: Cay you all hear me back
3 over here in the corner? Thank you, Senator
4 Gaetz, and I want to say a sincere thank you to
5 each and everyone of you who come out tonight,
6 particularly for those of you who spoke to the
7 group, because many times public speaking is a
8 very intimidating experience, and you had the
9 necessary fortitude to put your fears behind
10 you and come up and speak, and I thank you for
11 that.

12 I am from central Florida. I grew up in
13 central Florida, but I truly, truly enjoy
14 coming to the panhandle for two major reasons.
15 First and foremost is the unashamed, unabashed
16 proud military presence up here in the
17 panhandle of Florida.

18 Thank each and everyone of you who served
19 our country and for those of you who did not
20 serve our country, you make this a wonderful
21 place for those who do serve, and I thank you.

22 It was my privilege to serve in the United
23 States Coast Guard for four years, some of the
24 finest years of my life, but this is America,
25 folks, and there is no finer country anywhere,

1 and I thank each and every one of you for
2 coming out tonight when you could have been
3 doing anything else, but you chose to exercise
4 democracy and that is what it is all about, and
5 I sincerely thank you.

6 We have heard several, several different
7 points yesterday in Tallahassee, today in
8 Pensacola and again here tonight. None of
9 those points are invalid. Many of those points
10 that we have heard are uninformed, but or
11 misinformed, whichever you might choose to
12 classify them as, but that is not important.

13 The important thing is, everybody needs to
14 realize, we as a group up here are tasked with
15 making the most fair division of this state
16 into Legislative and Congressional Districts
17 that we can.

18 And there is one, actually, there are two
19 foundational elements. First and foremost is
20 our Constitution, and the second is a spin off
21 of the Constitution which is one vote for one
22 person, which dictates the entire population of
23 the state must be divided by 120, and that is
24 the number of 156,000 plus, that goes into each
25 House District.

1 The Constitution doesn't say anything at
2 all about the city lines, the county lines, the
3 precinct lines or anything at all like that.

4 Now, Amendment V directs us to make them
5 as contiguous as we can, as compact as we can
6 and that sort of thing, but the 156,000 in the
7 House Districts and the 470,000 in the Senate
8 Districts, those are the two numbers we have to
9 deal with. Regardless of any other factor,
10 those are the two factors, 470 and 156.

11 My Senate District has to divest itself of
12 106,000 people. In the last ten years we have
13 grown that much in the central Florida district
14 that I am privileged to serve.

15 So instead of serving parts of five
16 counties, I am going to have to consolidate my
17 geographical district. Right now it is
18 85 miles east and west and 55 miles north and
19 south. So if I look at Amendment V and take
20 just two counties.

21 I live in Lake County. I can take the
22 adjacent county of Sumter County and if I take
23 the entire geographical area, those two
24 counties, I still have to go get 80,000 people
25 from some other county. There is not an

1 adjacent county that has only 80,000 people in
2 it, so I can't take just one whole county, and
3 have three county districts.

4 That is just a small glimpse of the
5 daunting task that we have. We absolutely have
6 to draw district lines. There are going to be
7 times when you live on one side of the street
8 and your neighbor on the other side of the
9 street is in a different district.

10 That is life, folks. As I told my three
11 daughters, deal with it. I still love you,
12 honey, but you got to deal with it.

13 It is not as simple -- Mr. Perez says keep
14 it simple. Believe me, I have found in my 65
15 years that is usually the best solution, and I
16 try to keep it simple, but this is not a simple
17 process. It is very, very complicated.

18 After we finish our task we then have to
19 have the Governor accept it or reject it, but
20 if he rejects it we have to go back to work
21 again. If he accepts our work then it goes to
22 the Florida Supreme Court. Then it goes to the
23 United States Department of Justice.

24 There, you know, that old adage about too
25 many cooks spoil the soup. It may very well

1 may be happening, so we need to keep it simple.
2 I say all of this not to, not to try to make
3 any excuses whatsoever.

4 Every one of us asked for the privilege of
5 serving the people whom we represent and we are
6 honored to be here. We are somewhat humbled by
7 your presence, and thank you for the
8 participation, but we just ask you for some
9 understanding, that this is far, far more
10 complicated than it really appears on the
11 surface, and you must dig into it, and so thank
12 you for being here, and when all else fails,
13 pray for us, people, we sincerely need your
14 prayers.

15 CHAIRMAN GAETZ: Thank you. Senator
16 Thrasher.

17 SENATOR THRASHER: Thank you, Senator
18 Gaetz. I will try to talk loud so I don't have
19 to use the microphone. I have visited with
20 Senator Gaetz many, many times over the last
21 two and a half, three years that I have been in
22 the Senate, and he talks constantly about the
23 folks in this area, and having come here
24 tonight and seeing the servility, the
25 incredible ideas that you have presented to us

1 for consideration only goes to show that he is
2 absolutely right about the folks that he
3 represents.

4 And it is an honor and privilege, I know
5 for me and I think for probably all of our
6 colleagues who have sat here and listened to
7 the incredible amount of good ideas in a civil
8 manner in which you have presented them to us,
9 and I appreciate that more than I can tell you,
10 I really do.

11 It means a lot to all of us. It means --
12 it makes this effort that we are going through
13 to go around the state and listen to folks so
14 much more enjoyable, but also beneficial for
15 the end product that we will ultimately come up
16 with.

17 Senator Hays is absolutely right. We have
18 got to draw 40 Senate Seats. We got to draw
19 120 House Seats, we got to draw 27
20 Congressional Seats for 18 million people in
21 the state of Florida.

22 There are how many here tonight, 250. How
23 many will we reach in our 26 Senate and House
24 tour, who knows, several thousand perhaps, but
25 we have got to draw those lines for 18 million

1 people who reside in this great and wonderful
2 state.

3 But you have given us tonight the hope, I
4 think that we can get the job done, because you
5 have done it in a civil way, you have given us
6 ideas that make, that are material ideas that
7 will go to help us when we get ready to start
8 doing the process of drawing the maps to make
9 it, to understand what you all have cared
10 about, what you have said, what you have
11 pleaded to us for and what your dreams and
12 hopes are for this area.

13 Every single member, every single member
14 of this group, I don't know that I am the
15 oldest, maybe -- maybe there are a couple other
16 that may be a little older, but I want to give
17 you some example of the diversity of this
18 Committee.

19 This young lady right here is an
20 incredible Representative in the House of
21 Representatives. She is 28 years old. The
22 last time those maps were drawn she was 18. I
23 will be 68 years old this year. So there is an
24 incredible amount of diversity, there is an
25 incredible amount of new ideas, she has got two

1 computers here.

2 I wouldn't know how in the world to begin,
3 to begin to each begin what she has been doing.
4 She drew my district while we were sitting
5 here, and I drew my district earlier, and it
6 was on this map right here. So let me tell you
7 something.

8 We care about what you came here to talk
9 to us about, and I thank Senator Gaetz for
10 bringing us here. I thank each and everyone of
11 you for coming here. I can assure you that
12 this will continue to be a transparent process.

13 I have been around the Legislature in
14 different capacities for a long time.
15 Somebody, the lady who was the last speaker
16 said she had drawn a map with crayons or
17 colored pens or whatever, that is the way it
18 used to be done in the Florida Legislature.

19 These kinds of hearings and these kinds of
20 meetings were never done. The maps were drawn
21 in the backs of rooms at the end of the session
22 and presented to the Legislature for voting.

23 This is going to be entirely different.
24 It will be in my opinion the most transparent
25 process in this, in this type of activity that

1 the Florida Legislature has ever engaged in.

2 So God bless you for being here and thank
3 you for your great community interest, and I
4 promise you, we will do the best we can. Thank
5 you.

6 CHAIRMAN GAETZ: Chair Precourt, let me
7 yield to you for any comments that you and
8 members of the House of Representatives might
9 wish to make, comments or questions.

10 CHAIR PRECOURT: Thanks, and I will hold
11 my comments until after any of the other
12 Representatives that want to speak. Anyone,
13 Representative Gaetz?

14 REPRESENTATIVE GAETZ: Thank you,
15 Representative Precourt, and I sit right in
16 front of Representative Kair on the Florida
17 House of Representatives. We used to go back
18 and forth about how great our districts are.

19 So I hope that all of my colleagues in the
20 House can see how proud I am of the folks that
21 I continue to represent, and just on behalf of
22 the Representative Ford and Senator Evers, I
23 wanted to thank everyone who has come here from
24 all parts of the state to the panhandle. It
25 means so much to us.

1 It is unique for us to have so many
2 leaders all across Florida comment and
3 participate and to listen to our people and I
4 would say this.

5 We have heard a lot about north Florida
6 tonight and I hope that members of the
7 Redistricting Committee have heard what many of
8 us who represent this area know, and that is
9 that we don't have an entirely different
10 culture in northwest Florida, but there are
11 distinctions and differences just like there
12 are in your parts of the state.

13 So I have tremendous trust in my
14 colleagues on both sides of the aisle for all
15 of the state to take this input and put it to
16 use for some good for the people. Thank you
17 all very much.

18 CHAIRMAN GAETZ: Zack Taylor.

19 A VOICE: Thank you for the introduction,
20 ya'll, I wasn't able to finish and I started
21 talking about Daytona Beach.

22 CHAIRMAN GAETZ: I guess we don't need
23 that police escort after all.

24 A VOICE: I don't know. I don't know.

25 CHAIRMAN GAETZ: Representative Ford, you

1 are recognized.

2 REPRESENTATIVE FORD: I am going to use
3 the mike. I am not going to talk that long,
4 but Senator Thrasher and I were talking up here
5 earlier. We met in my district in the last
6 meeting this morning, and I just sincerely wish
7 I could have brought everybody at my district
8 meeting here so they could learn some
9 servility. We, and that is a sincere
10 statement.

11 There is a reporter here from Miami, I
12 hope she is not going to print this in the
13 paper. I see you, Mary Ellen, don't do that.
14 I would like to be reelected if I can next
15 time. I am in trouble. But I am sincere in
16 that.

17 You have given us good ideas. I have
18 served, personally served 16 years on the Local
19 City Council and many people here, Mayor
20 Anderson, Sam, of course, Mayor Sam and others
21 I served with many years. So I can appreciate
22 the problems that the cities face.

23 I can assure you that I will do everything
24 I can to avoid those problems. Small cities,
25 and I have two cities in my district, Gulf

1 Breeze and most of Pensacola. Pensacola is too
2 big for us to say we are not going to be able
3 to peel off some parts of that. It is
4 impossible to do.

5 Small cities though, that is something
6 that is doable and you have got a perfect right
7 to ask that we take a look at that, a valid
8 point and I appreciate the fact that it was
9 brought up here.

10 I can assure you that I and I think I can
11 speak for most everybody else, we are going to
12 try to avoid those kind of problems. There is
13 no, no use in doing that and it serves no
14 purpose, and I thank so much for having us
15 here. I appreciate the courtesy that you have
16 shown us since we have been here. Thank you.

17 CHAIR PRECOURT: Thank you. I believe
18 that is most of the Representatives that want
19 to talk. I just want to, if I could, Chair
20 Gaetz, address a few issues that were raised
21 here tonight.

22 CHAIRMAN GAETZ: Of course.

23 CHAIR PRECOURT: Thank you, and we have
24 actually heard some of these things around the
25 state and other places and in the media as

1 well, and I hope that we can clarify just a
2 half dozen brief items.

3 One thing that keeps getting kicked around
4 is that the Florida House has 20 million-dollar
5 or 30 million-dollar legal fund for
6 redistricting. That is just inaccurate.

7 We do have reserves, but they are for many
8 contingencies and I think this is just a news
9 report that was inaccurate from the start and
10 unfortunately it has been repeated frequently.

11 We in the House side have chosen to
12 include party data in the, that data that is
13 available for redistricting. We do have to
14 have this by Federal government dictate to test
15 the map alternatives against the requirements
16 of the Federal Voting Rights Act. So that data
17 will have to be accessed one way or another so
18 we are, our decision was to make it available
19 to everyone.

20 Another thing that has been kicked around
21 out there is that there is a gag order on
22 members of the Committee. I believe clearly
23 tonight we have established that there is no
24 gag order.

25 Also, this issue, and we heard both sides

1 of it tonight and you all did a terrific job,
2 several of you, of addressing this. The issue
3 of whether or not there are maps here that we
4 already have drawn and provided to you without
5 letting the public speak first.

6 If we did it any other way there would be
7 a huge criticisms of us. In fact, this process
8 that we are using as tried and true process and
9 for those of you who like the Federal
10 government's dictates, it is very similar to
11 the NEPA permitting process where we collected
12 the data.

13 The data wasn't available until April or
14 from the census, and presented you with the
15 existing conditions and the data so that we
16 could get feedback from you before we start
17 drawing lines.

18 It always, the general public brings more
19 information to the table than a bunch of
20 analysts sitting behind their computers are
21 going to have.

22 We are going to get public comment
23 throughout the process. That is another thing
24 that people think that this is their only
25 opportunity to speak to this issue now. That

1 is absolutely untrue. This is the beginning of
2 it. This is the data collection phase.

3 Once we have this we will prepare a number
4 of alternatives that you will have the
5 opportunity to look at again and that will be
6 in the various forms that Chair Gaetz
7 mentioned, as well as in the public hearing
8 process that is the normal process of passing a
9 bill in Tallahassee.

10 And then finally, to this, to this
11 question that we are moving too slow, again, we
12 have only had the information available to
13 present to you for a number of weeks and we are
14 trying, doing the best we can with a bunch of
15 really good staff to get this process moving as
16 quickly as possible. So, in fact, we can have
17 a credible process that meets all of the
18 requirements.

19 And then finally just from a personal
20 standpoint, being from central Florida as well,
21 this has been a great meeting.

22 Ya'll have been very, very constructive in
23 engaging in this conversation that we hope to
24 use to develop the best set of maps for the
25 citizens of Florida that we can. Thank you,

1 Chair Gaetz.

2 CHAIRMAN GAETZ: Thank you very much. Are
3 there any other comments from members of the
4 Committee? If not, Representative Precourt
5 moves we rise.

6 (Whereupon, the proceedings were
7 concluded.)

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