



Manatee County Democratic Party Urges Manatee County Commissioners to Adopt Proposed Redistricting Map A1

November 30, 2021

In October, the Manatee County Democratic Party called on the Manatee County Board of County Commissioners to support the creation of new commissioner districts that fairly and accurately represent all communities. The commissioners are bound by state statutes to revise district boundaries after each decennial census.

After reviewing the two proposed boundary maps, the Manatee County Democratic Party strongly urges the Board to adopt Plan A1 because it most closely creates districts that are compact, honor existing communities, follow natural geographical boundaries, and provide fair and equitable voter representation on the commission.

The two proposed maps demonstrate divergent points of view on redistricting, with Plan B arguably the more partisan proposal with an intent to silence the voice of select communities.

Plan A1 sets compact, balanced and common sense boundaries. On the other hand, Plan B boundaries zigzag across the county in a way deemed to benefit a political party's agenda rather than voters and their concerns.

The commissioners informally agreed in October to create a "rural" (District 5) and a "coastal" (District 3) district. Though both Plan A1 and Plan B make an illogical decision of excluding the Port of Manatee from the coastal district, Plan A1 at least recognizes communities of common interest along the gulf waters. Plan B carves out the coastal communities to the north and to the south, scattering them to other districts.

The commissioners acknowledged that the population of District 1 and District 5 should be smaller in population than the other three districts in recognition of the massive growth coming to those two areas in the very near future. Plan A1 meets that criteria. Plan B would make District 5 the third largest district in the county.

More than 60 percent of Florida voters approved a constitutional amendment in 2010 that requires the state to make use of geographical boundaries when setting legislative districts. This board should abide by the same standard. Plan A1 follows the natural boundaries between District 2 (Bradenton's central core) and District 5 (neighborhoods east of the Braden River). Plan A1 also respects community boundaries and historical settlement patterns. Plan B bisects downtown Bradenton, carves out pieces of Oneco, and splits neighborhoods.

The most egregious fault of Plan B is that it is designed to diminish the ability of minority communities to elect commissioners of their choice by decreasing minority voting power in District 2. This map was created to unjustly disenfranchise African-American and Hispanic voters.

Essentially, Plan A1 is more closely aligned with the Florida Constitution's fair districting standards and the 1964 Civil Rights Acts, Section 2.

It is time to take blatant politicking and partisanship out of redistricting. Plan A1 should be adopted by this commission.