



THE BERMAN BRIEFING

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Dear Friends,

This week, the Florida Legislature returned to Tallahassee for a Special Session on one major issue: redistricting. That means lawmakers are trying to redraw Florida's congressional district lines again.

Florida completed redistricting after the 2020 Census, when states normally update district maps to reflect population changes. But now, in the middle of the decade, legislative leaders are pushing to change those lines once again. This is not routine.

District lines decide which communities vote together, who represents you in Congress, and how much power your community has in elections. When those lines are changed, your voice can change too.

That is why I want to explain exactly what is happening and why I am deeply concerned.

Who Drew the Map?

Normally, congressional maps are developed through the legislative process with committee work, public discussion, and input from elected members.

That did not happen here.

This map was drawn by Governor Ron DeSantis's administration and handed to the Legislature just 24 hours before the Special Session began.

What made matters worse was that the proposed map appeared on Fox News before many legislators had even had the opportunity to fully review it.

When Floridians elect lawmakers to debate issues in the open, they expect members of the Legislature, not television networks, to see the final product first.

The leak raised immediate concerns that this process was being managed as a political rollout rather than a transparent legislative discussion.

What happened in the Rules Committee?

One of the most important moments of the week came when the Senate Rules committee had the chance to question Jason Poreda, the individual from the Governor's office responsible for drawing the map.

I questioned Mr. Poreda extensively about how this map was created, what data was used, and whether partisan outcomes were considered in drawing these district lines.

Florida voters approved constitutional protections requiring that districts not be drawn to unfairly favor one political party over another. Yet we were being asked to advance a map that had been produced behind closed doors and released on an extremely compressed timeline.

Senate Democrats raised serious transparency concerns, but notably, some Republicans also voted no as questions mounted over both the process and the political implications.

Senators on both sides were angered that the map had been leaked to Fox News before the Legislature had a full opportunity to examine it. Even with those objections, the proposed map was advanced out of committee.

What Happened on the Senate Floor?

After hours of debate, the map was brought before the full Senate. I raised concerns about fairness, transparency, and whether this proposal violated Florida's Fair Districts protections.

We debated whether lawmakers were being asked to approve a map designed for political gain rather than fair representation. We debated whether the public had truly been given a voice.

Despite those concerns, the measure ultimately passed the Senate and was approved by the Legislature, largely along party lines. The Senate approved the bill in a 21-17 vote.

The fact that it passed does not erase the serious constitutional questions that remain. This map will be challenged in court.

How South Florida Is Affected

For those of us in Palm Beach County and across South Florida, this map is not some distant Tallahassee issue. Congressional districts currently represented by Lois Frankel and Debbie Wasserman Schultz are dramatically redrawn under this proposal, and portions of Broward and Palm Beach Counties are split apart and redistributed into neighboring districts.

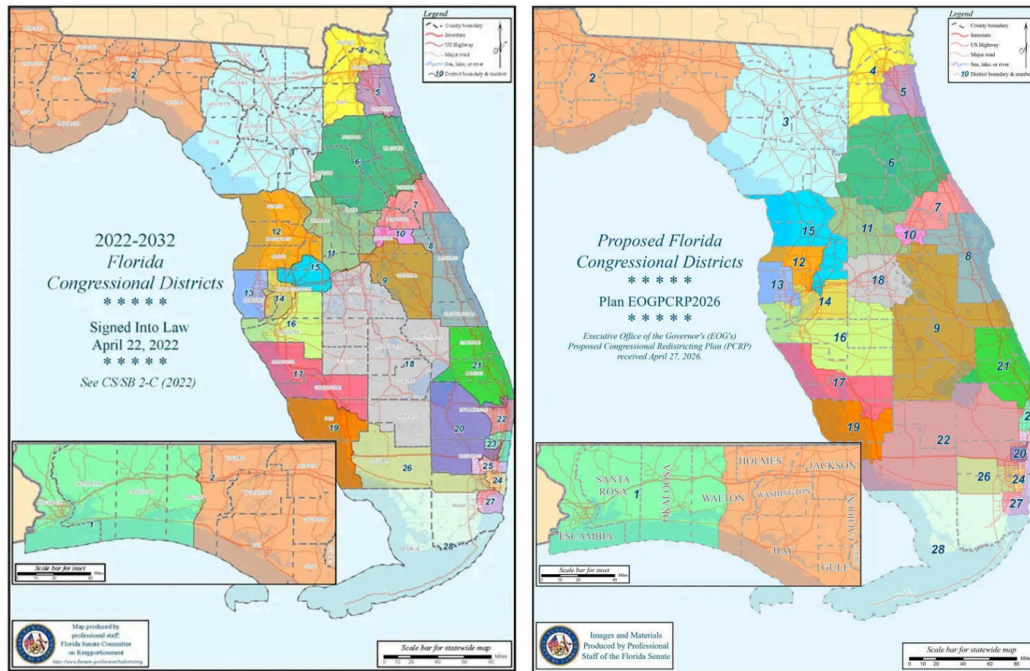
The current Boca Raton and northern Broward-based district is pushed north into central Palm Beach County, while the area it currently covers is carved into multiple surrounding districts. Palm Beach County voters who are used to being grouped with neighboring South Florida communities could now find themselves represented in districts stretched far beyond the communities they know.

Longstanding minority representation is also affected. The proposal removes Palm Beach County from the historically Black 20th Congressional District entirely, a move that civil rights advocates warn could weaken Black and brown voters' influence in our region.

In plain terms, South Florida communities that have voted together for years are being broken up and reassigned.

That means neighborhoods with shared concerns may no longer speak with one unified voice in Washington. Voters should choose their representation, not the other way around.

Let's compare the Governor's map to the current maps



The map approved by the Legislature would significantly reshape congressional representation across the state.

How Does This Change Florida's Map?

The map approved by the Legislature would significantly reshape congressional representation across the state.

Districts in Tampa, Orlando, and South Florida that currently elect Democratic members of Congress would be dismantled and folded into surrounding Republican-leaning districts, making those seats far more difficult to remain competitive.

As a result, Florida's congressional delegation could shift even further to the right. Republicans currently hold 20 of Florida's 28 congressional seats, and analysts project this new map could increase that number by as many as four seats.

Neighborhoods that have voted together for years and share the same concerns about housing, healthcare, transportation, environmental protection, and cost of living are now being carved apart and placed into entirely different districts.

None of the Governor's purported justifications or pretexts for this mid-cycle redistricting are meaningfully addressed in this plan:

This map is an unconstitutional partisan gerrymander in violation of the Fair Districts Amendments to the state constitution and possibly the Voting Rights Act in violation of the Supremacy Clause to the US Constitution. No effort was made to ensure that minority groups historically discriminated against within the strict scrutiny framework allowed by the 14th Amendment had the ability to meaningfully participate in the electoral process.

Instead, the Governor's letter indicates he stayed willfully blind to all racial considerations.

Where Do We Go From Here?

Although the Legislature has now approved this new congressional map, the conversation does not end here.

Given the serious questions surrounding both the process and the constitutionality of the proposal, I expect this map to face legal challenges.

Florida voters put Fair District protections in place for a reason. Those protections were designed to ensure that district lines are drawn fairly and without partisan manipulation.

In the meantime, I remain committed to keeping our community informed and continuing to advocate for a redistricting process that is transparent, lawful, and centered on fair representation.



District Office

2300 High Ridge Road
Suite 161
Boynton Beach, FL, 33426
(516) 292-6014



Tallahassee Office

228 Senate Office Building
404 South Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399
(850) 487-5031



Email

berman.lori.web@flsenate.gov

CONTACT US



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facebook.com/loribermanfla



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[@leaderberman](https://www.instagram.com/leaderberman)

