

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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*Redistricting amendments on the ballot: Florida voters earn historic chance to vote to stop politicians from rigging districts*

*After November passage voters will choose elected officials – not the other way around*

**Tallahassee, FL** – Today, Floridians took a giant step towards ending the incumbent and political party protection plan that masquerades as legislative and Congressional redistricting. The non-partisan group FairDistrictsFlorida.org gathered more than 1,650,000 petitions signed by Florida Republicans, Democrats and Independents from the Panhandle to the Keys. As a result, today the Secretary of State certified Constitutional Amendment 5 for the November 2, 2010 ballot, and is expected to soon certify its partner, Amendment 6. Florida voters now have a powerful opportunity to stop legislators from rigging and manipulating district boundaries in order to stifle competition while perpetuating their own political power.

“These critical reforms will finally end the legalized conflict of interest that allows legislators to design their districts and those of Congress for their own political purposes,” said Bob Milligan, who was elected State Comptroller during the Lawton Chiles and Jeb Bush administrations.

Under our present system, there are no rules that limit legislators from drawing districts to favor themselves or their parties. Districts in Florida are bizarrely shaped, often meandering for hundreds of miles or from coast to coast. Communities are carved up so that voters living in the same neighborhood are often represented by different members of Congress or state representatives.

As a result, incumbent legislators almost never lose their re-election bids. Only three (out of 140 up for election each cycle) were defeated in the last six years. How could this happen? Because legislators draw up their own districts for one purpose: to ensure that they stay in office!

Former Governor and U.S. Senator Bob Graham said, “Florida’s legislators are choosing their voters instead of voters choosing their representatives. There are presently no rules to stop this self protection plan. And when this happens, the voters don’t have a real choice! These amendments will change that.”

With voter approval in November, Amendments 5 and 6 will establish constitutional rules that will:

- Prohibit politicians from designing districts to favor themselves or their parties;
- Require them to make the districts compact and community based; and
- Make it impossible for legislators to draw districts to diminish the ability of minority voters to elect representatives.

“I am so happy that the voters of Florida will finally have the opportunity to vote to put these fairness standards in the Florida constitution. These amendments provide new protections for all voters and especially minorities,” added Representative Perry Thurston of Broward County.

State Representative Darren Soto, Orange County, said, “Today’s certification bodes well for achieving fair districts in the state of Florida. I think that these new protections will be very popular with my constituents as well as all of the voters of our great state.”

For additional information and the exact language of Amendments 5 and 6, please visit [www.FairDistrictsFlorida.org](http://www.FairDistrictsFlorida.org).