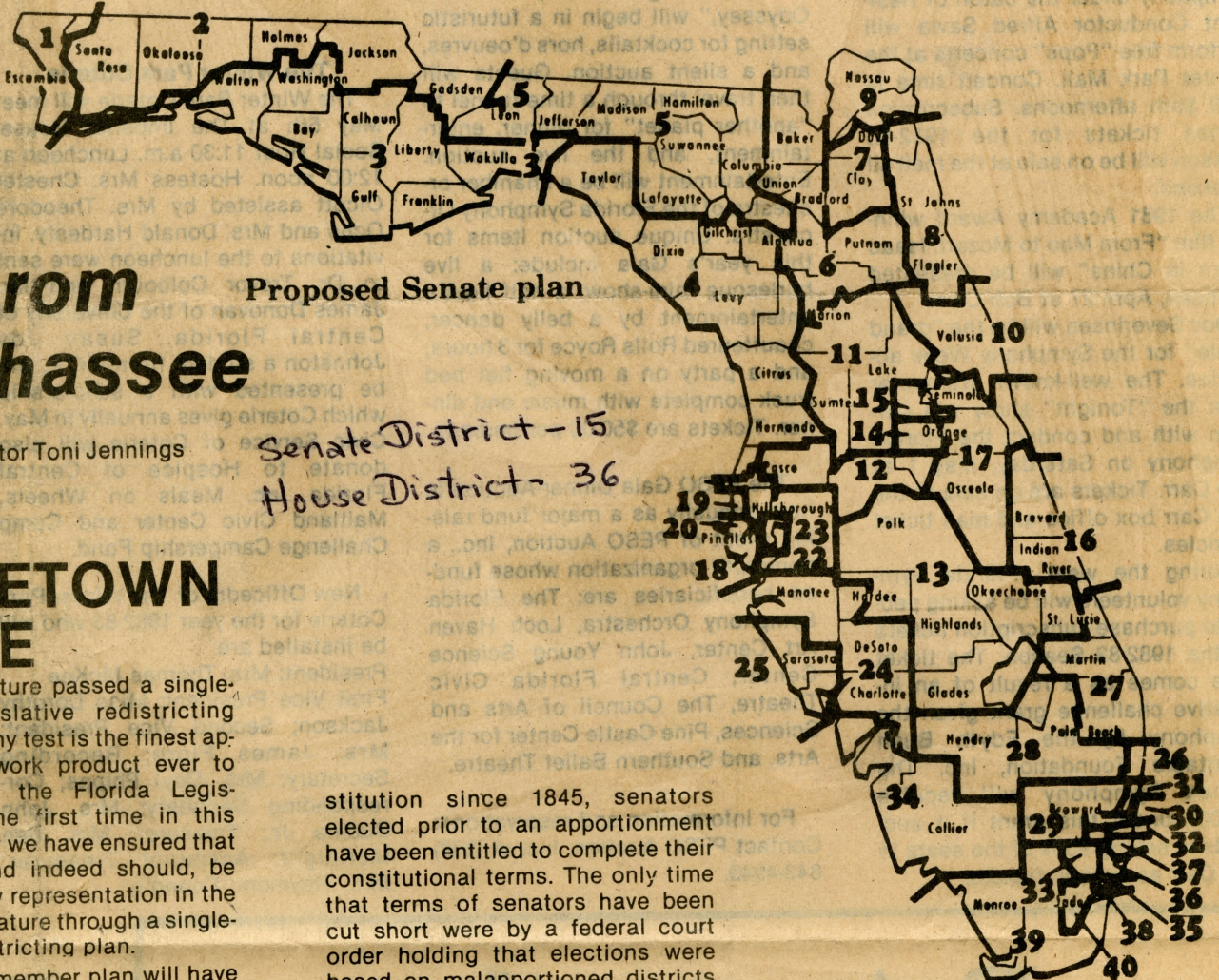


April 22, 1982

Twenty Cents



From Tallahassee

by Senator Toni Jennings

Senate District - 15
House District - 36

HOMETOWN VOICE

The Legislature passed a single-member legislative redistricting plan that by any test is the finest apportionment work product ever to emerge from the Florida Legislature. For the first time in this state's history we have ensured that there can, and indeed should, be equal minority representation in the Florida Legislature through a single-member redistricting plan.

The single-member plan will have an enormous effect on the citizens of this state. In Winter Park, voters will now be afforded the opportunity to choose one senator and one representative to make their views known in Tallahassee. Under the new plan, Winter Park's senate district is district 15 in which I serve. The House district, would be district 36 and presently no incumbent House member resides in that district. Unlike past years, the voter will know exactly who to go to with their problems and concerns. No longer will citizens have to pick and choose between six representatives in Orange County and two senators when trying to determine who, in fact, is "their" representative or senator. On the other hand, Winter Park will only have two voices in the Legislature rather than eight. Some minor personality conflict, a political party difference or a simply misunderstanding could leave individuals with no one to let their views be known in either house of the Legislature now that we will not be under a multip-member plan.

The single-member redistricting plan seemed to fly through the legislative process with very little opposition. However, other issues in the reapportionment procedures are yet to be resolved.

We sent a plan to the Florida Supreme Court for their review and hopefully their approval that leaves two very important questions about the plan unanswered -- staggered terms for senators and the numbering of districts.

The staggered terms issue has truly been crucified by both the House of Representatives and the press. The Florida Senate is a continuing body whose members are elected for staggered four-year terms as provided by the Florida Constitution. Thus, one-half of the Florida Senate stands for office every two years. There is no language in the Florida Constitution which permits or even refers to the shortening of the four-year terms of a senator elected prior to an apportionment. In all legislative apportionments under the Florida Con-

stitution since 1845, senators elected prior to an apportionment have been entitled to complete their constitutional terms. The only time that terms of senators have been cut short were by a federal court order holding that elections were based on malapportioned districts and by a constitutional mandate, as in 1972 when it was necessary to shorten the terms of some senators elected after an apportionment in order to reinstate staggered terms. [This has happened only twice in Florida history, in 1845 when Florida became a state, and in 1972 when the terms of all senators expired at the same time because all were required to run in 1968 for four-year terms as a result of the earlier federal court order.]

This is an issue that obviously belongs in the Courts and not one that the Senate and House would ever have agreed upon.

The numbering of districts issue is a new one to Florida. The House of Representatives lifted the issue from the California Constitution which provides that district numbering should start at the northern end of the state and work down to the southern end of the state with district one being contiguous to district two, district two to district three and so on. This argument truly has gotten out-of-hand in its importance in Florida's legislative redistricting process.

For over a hundred years, districts in Florida have been consecutively numbered and composed of contiguous territory but have not been numbered from one end of the state to the other as the House claims is required. Quite frankly, it seems silly to me that this issue even surfaced for discussion.

The U.S. Justice Department now has sixty days to approve or disapprove the Florida legislative plan. The Florida Attorney General is allowed 15 days to review the plan and once he has finished his review, the Florida Supreme Court has 30 days in which to deliberate on the plan. Should the legislative redistricting plan run into problems with any of these reviewing authorities, the Governor can call the Legislature back into special session to work out the discrepancies in the plan. If the Legislature cannot agree, the Courts could ultimately draw the final district boundary lines.

If you have any questions or would like to review larger, more detailed maps of your legislative district please do not hesitate to call or come by my office.