

# Fight brews over districts

## 2theadvocate Blogs

-  [Tiger Tracks](#)
-  [Louisiana Politics](#)
-  [Behind the Party Scene](#)
-  [Exposure](#)
-  [Jaguar Nation](#)
-  [WBRZ Weather Team](#)
-  [Black & Gold](#)

## 2theadvocate Newsletters

- [Breaking News Alerts](#)
- [Breaking Sports Alerts & Results](#)
- [The Advocate's Daily Digest](#)

## Louisiana Links

- [Governmental Links](#)

A list of important local and statewide governmental offices.

- By [MARSHA SHULER](#)
- Advocate Capitol News Bureau
- Published: Jan 21, 2011 - Page: 8A

## Comments (3)

Even before plans are drafted, state Democratic and Republican Party representatives talked Thursday about potential lawsuits over the drawing of new election district lines by the Louisiana Legislature.

A state House official also raised the possibility of a second legislative session if its legislative redistricting plan doesn't win required federal approval the first time out.

"That would not be an unusual circumstance," said House Clerk Butch Speer, noting that it took the Louisiana House more than one attempt in 1980, 1990 and 2000. But House leadership is committed to avoid that occurrence this time, he said.

The observations came during a League of Women Voters-sponsored panel discussion on various aspects of redistricting — the once every decade realignment of election districts to reflect population shifts since the last census.

The Louisiana Legislature is set to open a special session March 20 to consider redrawing maps for legislative, congressional, state Board of Elementary and Secondary Education, Public Service Commission, Louisiana Supreme Court and possibly courts of appeal districts.

The Legislature will work under a tight time schedule. Any plan needs federal approval of new Louisiana House and Senate districts prior to the early September sign-up of candidates in Oct. 22 and Nov. 19 elections.

“We support a fair, a transparent process that allows voters to hold elected officials responsible for their actions,” said Ruth Ulrich of Monroe, a newly elected southern regional Republican National Committee vice chair.

Forty-three states ended up in litigation on election district plans a decade ago, said Ulrich. She said she expects more lawsuits this time around, including in Louisiana.

“We have a little more control (of governor’s offices and legislatures) this time,” said Ulrich, noting Republican successes at the ballot box since 2000.

The state Democratic Party considers the special redistricting session “as a beginning of a process that lasts through August and beyond,” said Kevin Franck, the party’s communication director.

Franck noted Louisiana had problems in the past gaining the required federal pre-clearance of legislative and congressional redistricting plans. He said the party wants to make sure any plans that advance comply with federal law, which assures any redistricting does not dilute the voting strength of black people.

“We want to take the politics out and put the people in and make sure all voter’s rights are protected,” said Franck. He said “partisan politics” should not have any role in drafting of plans.

Franck said Democrats have already protested — to no avail — the composition of the Louisiana House committee in charge of redistricting. The panel has twice as many Republicans as Democrats.

Ulrich and Franck said the political parties have legal counsel ready to weigh in on the redistricting battles. In addition, each said the parties have specialists ready to analyze plans to see how well they comply with the U.S. Constitution as well as federal and state election laws.

If you enjoy Advocate News coverage why not get it first, directly in your inbox? [Sign up today for our Daily Digest newsletter](#) and get the news delivered to you!

**Find this article at:**

<http://www.theadvocate.com/news/114339534.html?showAll=y&c=y>

Check the box to include the list of links referenced in the article.

Copyright © 1992-2008, 2theadvocate.com, WBRZ, Louisiana Broadcasting LLC and The Advocate, Capital City Press LLC, All Rights Reserved.