



Everything New Orleans

St. Bernard, eastern New Orleans House members jockeying in redistricting

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By **Bill Barrow, The Times-Picayune**

Rep. Reed Henderson, D-Violet, and his fellow Democrats who represent portions of population-depleted eastern New Orleans could be headed for an intense battle over **legislative redistricting**.



File photo

Rep. Reed Henderson

Henderson, whose District 103 is anchored in St. Bernard Parish, said he wants to continue to represent the neighborhoods Orleans Parish from Paris Avenue east to the St. Tammany Parish line. But the 9,000 residents in those 17 precincts are coveted numbers as Reps. Charmaine Marchand Stiaes (District 99), Austin Badon (100) and Wesley Bishop (101) angle for New Orleans districts that could give them the best hope for re-election.

House districts must end up with populations ranging from 41,105 to 45,332. The ideal is 43,174. The problem is that the existing **Districts 99, 100 and 101, all entirely contained within New Orleans, combine for only 71,674**

residents, according to the U.S. Census Bureau count that governs redistricting. Adding all of the Orleans population in District 103 still isn't enough for two complete districts. Reed's district is 19,531 short of the ideal,

though he stands to pick up population from the adjacent district of Rep. Nita Hutter, R-Chalmette, who is term-limited.

Bishop, who won a January special election, said his priority is to have two House Districts as close as possible to being self-contained in Orleans Parish east of the Industrial Canal. Those sentiments are in line with several residents who spoke at a **public forum on redistricting Thursday night**.

But Henderson said the idea is self-defeating. For New Orleans to preserve influence in the legislative process, it should want as many districts as possible reaching into the parish, even if it means more actual representatives who may live outside the city. "We are all in the same boat on this end of the canal," Henderson said. "We've all been forgotten. We were all wiped out. We are all struggling to come back."

The remapping session begins March 20 and must end by April 13.