

Partisan Mid-decade Redistricting in Florida Will Harm Black and Brown Voters

Background

In July 2025, Texas began a mid-decade redistricting push in order to net more GOP seats in Congress, as directed by the president.¹ From there, Florida and several other states followed suit, attempting to either emulate or oppose Texas' endeavor.²

Partisan Gerrymandering and Its Intersections With Race

Redistricting is a normal and necessary function of democracy, typically undertaken every 10 years in order to adjust for changes in population and ensure that districts at every level of government reflect the people who make them up. However, gerrymandering and mid-decade redistricting are both ways of abusing the redistricting process to gain partisan advantage.

Gerrymandering has been used to undermine the political power of minority communities through two key methods: cracking and packing. Cracking occurs when a cohesive community is split up into multiple districts, so that they cannot vote as a bloc. Packing occurs when a large minority community is assigned to one single district, so that it cannot make another district competitive.³ Both tools can be used to target any type of minority community, but across the Deep South, they are often used against Black and Brown communities. While racial gerrymandering directly targets voters based on race, partisan gerrymandering aims to benefit one political party. But in practice, the two often overlap. Because voters of color often support one party's candidates as a bloc, partisan gerrymandering can dilute their voting power — without explicitly invoking race. **These tactics undermine the ability of Black and Brown voters to elect leaders who represent their communities.**

One solution, often mandated by the courts to enforce Voting Rights Act compliance, has been the creation of majority-minority or plurality-minority districts. These districts are drawn specifically to ensure that Black and Brown voters have a fair chance at electing candidates of their choice.⁴

Recent History of Florida Redistricting

1992: Florida voters elect their first Black congressional representatives since Reconstruction, after a judge orders the creation of three plurality-Black districts.⁵

2010: Florida voters approve the Fair Districts Amendment by over 63%. The amendment is added to the Florida Constitution. It prohibits both partisan and racial gerrymandering.⁶

2011-2012: Florida lawmakers embark on a road show around the state, ostensibly to collect public input for the state's regular redistricting. However, the process ends up being subverted by partisan operatives, in what a state circuit judge would later deem a "conspiracy."⁷

2022: Governor DeSantis vetoes a redistricting map drawn by the Legislature and instead pushes for the adoption of his own map, which notably dismantles CD-5 in North Florida, one of the state's only two majority-Black congressional districts.⁸ This creates significant Black underrepresentation in Florida, which is 15% Black.⁹ Civil rights groups immediately file suit.¹⁰

2025: The Florida Supreme Court, now predominantly composed of DeSantis appointees, rules in favor of the 2022 DeSantis map. Meanwhile, President Trump calls for Republicans to redistrict ahead of the 2026 midterm elections. Governor DeSantis, emboldened by the recent court ruling, proposes irregular mid-decade redistricting to further gerrymander Florida.¹¹

Expected 2025 Mid-Decade Redistricting Targets

It is expected that mid-decade redistricting in Florida will focus on three areas with large minority populations: Tampa Bay, Orlando and Miami. Gerrymandering these communities further would prevent Black and Brown Floridians from electing candidates of their choice. This would erase hard-won and vital representation and, by doing so, increasing the likelihood of specific partisan outcomes in neighboring districts. Three areas most likely to be targeted are:

CD-20: Governor DeSantis explicitly announced his intention to target this district in an Aug. 20 press conference.¹² This is the last remaining majority-Black congressional district in Florida, encompassing Black neighborhoods in West Palm Beach and Fort Lauderdale, as well as Riviera Beach. The history of segregation is not forgotten in this district. It was the late 1950s when Riviera Beach decided it needed *to segregate* its beaches. As the city did so, white segregationists burned a cross on a nearby to terrorize their Black neighbors.¹³

CD-14: This district's population is 28% Hispanic and 15% Black.¹⁴ It encompasses Tampa Bay and a portion of St. Petersburg, an area which has long been a safe haven for communities of color. In the early 20th century, Cubans fleeing Spanish imperialism, Jews fleeing pogroms, and Sicilians fleeing poverty all came to Ybor City (also in today's CD-14) to create a vibrant multicultural community.¹⁵ Meanwhile, Tampa's Central Avenue was a key stop on the chitlin circuit, frequented by Ella Fitzgerald and Louis Armstrong.¹⁶

CD-10: This district's population is 25% Black, 30% Hispanic and 33% white.¹⁷ It includes the northern part of Orlando and the small town of Eatonville. In 1887, Eatonville was incorporated as the first town in the U.S. "organized, governed and incorporated" by newly emancipated Black people.¹⁸ Eatonville was a beacon of hope immortalized in Zora Neale Hurston's seminal novel *Their Eyes Were Watching God*.

Conclusion

It is incumbent upon the state of Florida to protect all voters, including voters of color, by adhering to the highest standards of transparency and fairness in redistricting and abiding by the Fair Districts Amendment in the Florida Constitution.

Endnotes

1. "Texas Republicans, including Gov. Abbott, were reluctant to redraw the state's congressional maps. Then Trump got involved." Texas Tribune, 7/22/25
2. "What to know about the congressional redistricting trend kick-started by Trump," ABC News, 9/17/25
3. "How Gerrymandering Works," Brennan Center for Justice, 8/9/25
4. "Minority Voting Districts," EBSCO, viewed 9/18/25
5. "How Ron DeSantis Blew Up Black-Held Congressional Districts and May Have Broken Florida Law," ProPublica, 10/11/22
6. "Floridians Restricted Gerrymandering. Their Justices Are Retreating on Enforcing That," Bolts, 8/12/25
7. "How Ron DeSantis Blew Up Black-Held Congressional Districts and May Have Broken Florida Law," ProPublica, 10/11/22
8. "How Ron DeSantis Blew Up Black-Held Congressional Districts and May Have Broken Florida Law," ProPublica, 10/11/22
9. DataUSA: Florida, viewed 9/18/25
10. "Florida redistricting map sued for lack of Black districts and alleged GOP bias," The Tributary, 4/22/22
11. "Floridians Restricted Gerrymandering. Their Justices Are Retreating on Enforcing That," Bolts, 8/12/25
12. "DeSantis targets Florida congressional districts, seeks changes that could aid Republicans," South Florida Sun Sentinel, 8/20/25
13. "Florida Communities Order Racial Segregation at Beaches," Equal Justice Initiative, viewed 9/18/25
14. "Congressional District 14, FL, Census Reporter, viewed 9/29/25
15. "Ybor City," Southern Cultures, 2023
16. "Harlem of the South: Tampa's impact on African-American musicians," Rochester First, viewed 9/9/25
17. "Congressional District 10, FL," Census Reporter, viewed 9/18/25
18. "About Eatonville," Town of Eatonville, viewed 9/5/25