

## **MINUTES OF CITIZENS ADVISORY FORUM: September 17, 2011**

Members present: State Senator Curt Thompson, COS Louise Johnson & Legislative Assistant Brett Zupan others are listed on the CAF Sign In Sheets

### **OPENING REMARKS:**

The attendance reflects the fact that Curt's new state senate district will expand further northward to include more territory in the Lawrenceville area. In the past, these residents of Gwinnett County were jokingly referred to as "Curt's constituents in the greater 5<sup>th</sup> State Senate District" because of their gravitation toward Curt's constituency service, when in fact, they were not yet constituents.

### **ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

Curt encourages everyone to visit [JimCoonan.com](http://JimCoonan.com). He describes the respected Coonan as a "progressive George Will", chiefly because Coonan engages in honest commentary from a progressive viewpoint. Right now, there are ten must-reads on the site—one of them is the federal Jobs Bill proposal (what it'll do and not do). There is a lot of local information, as well. Coonan's forte is in messaging. He has a lot of experience in knowing which messages work and how to frame them for maximum effect.

### **MEETING TOPICS:**

Curt shared with us that he experienced in a special redistricting legislative session controlled by Republicans was when he had one minute to look over the final draft of reapportioned county commission and school board districts in Gwinnett County before being asked to vote yes on it. Instead, Curt intends to file a complaint with the Justice Department and voted no. The new county commission and school board districts appear to be drawn purely out of incumbent protection motives. He could see no evidence that the Voting Rights justifications for redrawing districts were based on racial and language group's consideration. "Language groups" is an important distinction when it comes to taking into account Asian populations. For example, more than 80% of Koreans in America are bona fide citizens; yet, only 3% of them are registered to vote.

The legal questions emanating from Voting Rights Act determinations lie in its Section 5 ("Did you go backwards to the Jim Crow days in denying minorities true representation?") and in its Section 2 ("Could you have drawn extra minorities-majority districts?"). One specific concern of Curt's is that the Shiloh district is essentially split into halves...and that Centerville and Promised Land is drawn into an area with Rest Haven.

Other local redistricting notes...there is now a new open seat around Loganville. Gwinnett has increased the number of state house districts from 15 to 18. The City of Lawrenceville is split among five house districts. The end result will probably mean that the number of Democrat state representatives in Gwinnett will be reduced from six seats to four seats.

Statewide, the 2010 Census now shows that half of all Georgians live in metro-Atlanta counties. This population trend is responsible for ten state house districts moving from South Georgia to north. The Buckhead community can be considered now a winner, because it is now in a district that seems tailored for their demographic group. Buckhead Republicans are more affluent than Gwinnett Republicans. "South Peachtree Street in Norcross is not anything like West Paces Ferry in Buckhead Atlanta," says Curt.

The Republican leadership did a good job in ensuring their party's domination of Georgia politics for years to come. Curt can only see maybe one state senate district that could truly be considered swing. It's SD 23, currently held by Jesse Stone, a moderate Republican in south Richmond County. With 47% of its population affiliated with Democratic voting history, a Democrat could feasibly win.

A Coonan observation is that no Republican ever won in a district that has greater than **35% black** voting age population. Georgia Republicans know this. They surgically formed districts in which they think they can win, by using a "bleaching" tactic that involves putting whites (in general) with black Democrats together in the same districts. A prime example is the new state senate district in Cobb County that Doug Stoner must represent with 55% constituents tied to Republican voting histories, versus 45% tied to Democratic voting histories.

**Our next monthly CAF meeting will happen on Saturday, October 15, 2011 at 10:30 a.m. in Café 45. The featured speaker will again be Alan Essig from the Georgia Public Policy Institute.**

Meeting Minutes Recorded  
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