

LOUISIANA REDISTRICTING

Draft draws concern

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SW La. legislators: Proposal puts Armes against another incumbent

BY JIM BEAM

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Two Lake Area legislators said they aren't completely satisfied with the way new state House districts are being redrawn.

Reps. Mike Danahay, D-Sulphur, and Brett Geymann, R-Moss Bluff, said their main area of concern is the way a member of the Southwest Louisiana delegation is being forced to run against another incumbent.

Rep. James Armes, D-Leesville, would be placed in the same district as Rep. Chris Roy, D-Alexandria, for the fall elections. Danahay said the change stems from the creation of a minority district in the Natchitoches-Red River-DeSoto area.

Democrats aren't happy that two of their own legislators are being thrown into the same district.

The situation with Armes could change, however, since the Legislative Black Caucus wants another minority district to be created in the Shreveport area. If that happens, it could affect House districts south of that area.

House Speaker Jim Tucker, R-Terrytown, explained the new lineup of the 105 House districts at a meeting of the House Governmental Affairs Committee on Friday. Danahay and Geymann are members of the committee.

Tucker said pundits who have said the districts were drawn in advance are saying so "out of pure ignorance." The last work on the plan took place Thursday evening, he said.

Danahay said his District 33 would lose the Niblett's Bluff and Ged precincts because his population numbers were too high to meet the required number of residents for each district. He said those precincts and a southeast Calcasieu Parish precinct would become part of District 47, which includes Cameron and Vermilion parishes and has no incumbent.

The ideal population for each House district is 43,174, but that can vary from 5 percent above to 5 percent below that number.

Danahay said his district would keep the Starks area and move up to DeQuincy, but that he would lose the city of DeQuincy. He would pick up two Carlyss precincts now in Republican Rep. Chuck Kleckley's district and lose two precincts in Beauregard.

Rep. Dorothy Sue Hill, D-Dry Creek, would pick up the two Beauregard precincts and the city of DeQuincy. Kleckley's district is now within the Lake Charles area.

Geymann would pick up two more precincts in Beauregard, but lose some central Lake Charles precincts. They would become part of District 34, represented by Rep. A.B. Franklin, D-Lake Charles. Geymann said he would retain his strength in Moss Bluff and Westlake and still have Lake Charles precincts.

The New Orleans area would lose six minority districts. They would be shifted to the North Shore of Lake Pontchartrain and to Baton Rouge and its outlying areas.

Other minority districts would be created in the Acadiana and Monroe areas.

Tucker said the plan is only a starting point. Legislators will have an opportunity during a special session, which opens Sunday, to try and make changes in their districts.

Tucker said he will file a bill that reflects the plan he outlined Friday. The Senate leadership hasn't announced any reapportionment plans for its members.