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## **Citizens File Lawsuit To Remove Poison Pill, Amendment 7, From November Ballot**

May 21, 2010 - Tallahassee, FL - Today, the Florida NAACP, Florida League of Women Voters and Democracia Ahora filed suit in Tallahassee, seeking the removal of a misleading ballot amendment, Amendment 7, from the November ballot. This "poison pill" amendment, placed on the ticket by Tallahassee politicians, is a brazen attempt by those in power to continue their absolute control of the redistricting process. Amendment 7 parades as an amendment measure to create "standards" for the legislature to follow when they draw their own district lines and those of congressional districts. But in reality, the legislature's amendment is an attempt to eliminate all rules and give the politicians free reign to draw districts that only serve to protect their own political futures. It is intentionally written to fool voters about its chief purpose and true effect.

Amendment 7 was passed in direct response to the placement of two citizen-initiated amendments on the ballot, FairDistricts Amendments 5 and 6. These two amendments will create real mandatory and enforceable standards for redistricting at the legislative and congressional level. Amendments 5 and 6 will prohibit the current practice of drawing districts to favor an incumbent or political party. By placing Amendment 7 on the ballot, a majority of legislators proved beyond a reasonable doubt that they want to continue to use redistricting as their own, personal political, incumbent protection plan.

"Amendment 7 is a sham. In placing it on the ballot, the Legislature wants the people to think it does one thing when it clearly does another. While FairDistricts Amendments 5 and 6 contain mandatory and enhanced protections for minority voters, Amendment 7 makes those protections optional. The potential impact of Amendment 7 on minority voters in the

state of Florida is deeply troubling," says Adora Obi Nweze, President of the NAACP of Florida and plaintiff in the case.

Deirdre Macnab, State President of the Florida League of Women Voters and a fellow plaintiff, says, "These legislators claim that Amendment 7 is needed to 'clarify' provisions of the FairDistricts Amendments 5 and 6, but that claim is deceptive and false. They are just trying to hold onto their power."

"The present system was designed by those 'in power.' So, it would be no surprise that those in power placed Amendment 7 on the ballot to confuse voters to hold onto that power," says former State Comptroller, General Bob Milligan. Milligan is also a plaintiff in the suit.

"Our forefathers believed in responsive government and our Constitution says that all political power resides in the people. The legislators want to continue drawing district lines to favor themselves. Their amendment should be off the ballot!" says plaintiff Nathaniel Reed, former Assistant Secretary of the Interior under Presidents Nixon and Ford.

"Amendment 7 only serves to confuse voters and puts the rights of minority voters at the mercy of those in power. Politicians are trying to eliminate the assurances in FairDistricts Amendments 5 and 6 that minority voting rights cannot be diminished in redistricting," says Jorge Mursuli, President of Democracia Ahora and an individual plaintiff in the lawsuit.

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