House Redistricting Plan Best For Lafayette

By DONNA FONTENOT
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A state reapportionment plan approved by a House subcommittee and due before the Legislature's Nov. 2 special session is "the best (Lafayette Parish) can get," Rep. Luke LeBlanc told the Council of Governments last night.

Still, he said, fights on the floor of the House and even in court have not been ruled out.

LeBlanc said the plan recommended by the reapportionment subcommittee of House and Governmental Affairs Committee, of which he is a member, can in no way give Lafayette Parish four representatives within parish lines.

Instead, it puts three representatives — LeBlanc, Ron Gomez and Mike Thompson — inside the parish and two others outside.

Rep. Raymond "La La" Lalonde would have 58 percent of his district within Lafayette and 41 percent in St. Landry.

About 10 percent of Rep. John John's largely Acadia Parish district would also fall in Lafayette.

"John John certainly is not happy. Many of us are not happy," LeBlanc told the COG group. "But it's the best we can get...I can bet it's the one that will be approved."

He said, while admitting "I'm happy," that Lalonde and Thompson are also displeased.

Under the plan, District 44 (Gomez) will change only slightly and District 45 (LeBlanc) will not change at all. Thompson's District 43, however, has grown by nearly 17,000 persons and is the one to be split with Lalonde and John.

The subcommittee is trying for no more than a 5 percent plus or minus deviation from 14,038 in each district.

Lalonde, who was at the COG meeting, said he thinks it "unfortunate" that the plan strips him of 15,000 people from the northern part of his St. Landry Parish district, but he does not "see anyway out of it."

Court Fight?

LeBlanc said he expects another Lafayette plan proposed by the Seventh Congressional District Black Alliance to come up again and probably end up in court.

It, like the subcommittee's original plan by New Orleans Rep. Emile "Peppei" Bruneau, also has Lafayette sharing a representative.

The Alliance plan, earlier turned down by the subcommittee, would make LeBlanc's district a 56 percent black majority district and put Thompson and Gomez in one district.

An active member of that group told The Advertiser earlier this week the Alliance still intends to fight the plan now recommended.

The Legislature is also working to reapportion the state's Senate seats, Public Service Commission districts and U.S. Congressional slots.

COG Elects Richard New President

The Lafayette Parish Council of Governments — a body of jurors, school board members and area municipal officials — chose a new slate of officers last night at its monthly meeting.

Taking over from past-president Carroll Chiasson is J.J. Richard.

Also named to serve were Lance Kimball, vice president; Mervin Harmon, secretary; and Danny Aucoin, treasurer.

COG meets each third Wednesday of the month at Arnold Bernard's Construction near Carencro.