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Happy Valentine's Day – Local Redistricting

The Republican majority appears to be targeting the largest urban counties and cities in the state that are mostly represented by Democrats. Local redistricting bills for these counties are being pulled out of the normal legislative process and being introduced as general legislation. By doing this, the majority party can offer substitute bills that are more to their liking. This has happened in Augusta/Richmond County, Cobb County and Gwinnett County.

To quote Sen. Jen Jordan (D-6, Atlanta), "We are tearing this body apart … In the name of what? Being able to take local decisions out of the hands of duly elected officials?"

HB890 redistricting the Athens/Clarke County Board of Commissioners passed the Senate. **HB1142** to redistrict the Board of Education has been referred to the Senate State and Local Government Operations committee.

SB457 and **SB458** redistricting Richmond County were assigned to the Senate State & Local Governmental Operations Committee. These bills ignore the maps voted for by the Richmond County Commission and Board of Education.

HB873 redistricting the Gwinnett County Commission passed the Senate and heads to the Governor's desk. The last-minute bill from Rep. Bonnie Rich (R-97, Suwanee) rejected Democrats' attempt to switch the map back

to the one drafted by the County Commission and the majority of the Gwinnett delegation.

SB369 passed out of the House Government Affairs Committee to make elections for the Gwinnett County Board of Education nonpartisan.

HB1028 to redistrict the Cobb County Board of Education and **HB1154** to redistrict the county's Board of Commissioners passed out of the Government Affairs Committee and will go the House Rules Committee before hearings by the full house. Most of the testimony before the subcommittee opposed the bills. In a dramatic end to the full committee hearing a clearly disgusted Rep. David Wilkerson (D-38, Powder Springs) asked to speak for two minutes. He said that the Cobb Democratic delegation, who make up the majority, repeatedly invited Republican members to meet and come to a consensus on the maps, but they refused. The committee chair turned off his microphone and when Rep. Wilkerson continued talking, the chair asked for security to be called. If the maps become law, a lawsuit is likely to follow. The Cobb County Commission maps have been thrown out by the courts in each of the last two redistricting rounds due to violation of voting rights laws.