



FLORIDA CONGRESSIONAL REDISTRICTING: AN ANALYSIS OF HISTORICAL PERFORMANCE DATA AND REDISTRICTING RISK

*By: Alex Alvarado, Executive Director
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Analysis of Florida congressional districts using 2018-2024 statewide and congressional race data reveals that aggressive redistricting strategies aimed at maximizing Republican seat count may paradoxically increase Republican vulnerability to adverse electoral conditions.

Current Republican congressional performance relies substantially on incumbency advantages worth 73.7 percentage points in aggregate across twelve districts.

Florida's Democratic-controlled districts already exhibit maximal geographic concentration, with partisan performance indices ranging from D+25 to D+40. This saturation of Democratic voters creates a fundamental constraint on Republican redistricting strategies: **any attempt to generate additional Republican-leaning seats necessarily requires diluting existing Republican vote margins across a larger geographic footprint.**

Consequence: Such redistricting efforts increase Republican electoral vulnerability, expanding the number of competitive seats from three to seven. Districts previously classified as safe Republican strongholds (R+20) would be restructured into marginally competitive seats (R+8).

No Major Party (NMP) voter behavior demonstrates significant geographic heterogeneity: NMP voters in competitive urban/suburban districts lean Democratic (+5% to +26%), while NMP voters in safe Republican rural districts lean heavily Republican (+60% to +84%).

Modeling suggests that aggressive redistricting would increase competitive seats from 4 to 7 while producing zero net gain in Republican seats.

KEY FINDINGS

FINDING 1: THE 73.7-POINT INCUMBENCY CUSHION

Republican congressional candidates overperformed their districts' baseline partisan performance by an average of +2.4 percentage points in 2024. However, twelve districts account for 73.7 percentage points of total incumbency advantage.

District	2024 Result	Baseline	Incumbency Effect	NMP Share
CD-26	R+41.8%	R+30.9%	+10.9%	31.1%
CD-27	R+20.8%	R+10.5%	+10.3%	33.0%
CD-28	R+29.1%	R+19.8%	+9.4%	33.0%
CD-12	R+42.1%	R+33.9%	+8.2%	27.2%
CD-21	R+23.6%	R+16.6%	+7.1%	28.2%
CD-2	R+23.3%	R+16.8%	+6.4%	19.7%

Critical Point: Redistricting inherently reduces or eliminates these advantages through new boundaries, incumbent displacement, and loss of constituent service benefits.

FINDING 2: NMP GEOGRAPHIC SORTING

The assumption that NMP voters behave uniformly is false. NMP voters exhibit extreme geographic sorting:

Statewide NMP: 63.5% R / 36.5% D

But this masks critical geographic variation:

Competitive Urban/Suburban	Safe Republican Rural
CD-14: NMP lean D+26.5%	CD-2: NMP lean R+83.7%
CD-10: NMP lean D+19.5%	CD-12: NMP lean R+79.3%
CD-24: NMP lean D+18.9%	CD-26: NMP lean R+77.4%
CD-9: NMP lean D+8.9%	CD-18: NMP lean R+65.8%
CD-22: NMP lean D+4.2%	CD-6: NMP lean R+61.0%

The Trap: Creating new competitive seats necessarily incorporates Democratic-leaning NMP populations from suburban areas. The heavily Republican NMP voters are already packed into safe rural districts.

FINDING 3: SPECIAL ELECTION VALIDATION

Recent Florida special elections (SD-14, HD-87, HD-51) validate the redistricting risk thesis. All three featured open seats, significant NMP populations, and systematic Republican underperformance of -5% to -8%.

District	2024 Result	Baseline	NMP Share	NMP D Lean	Status
CD-23	D+4.9%	D+4.8%	32.3%	+3.8% D	Competitive
CD-13	R+9.6%	R+11.8%	29.3%	+6.8% D	At Risk
CD-15	R+12.4%	R+10.6%	29.8%	+30.2% D	At Risk
CD-7	R+13.1%	R+12.6%	32.3%	+25.7% D	At Risk

These four districts would become tossup or flip Democratic without incumbency protection—exactly what the special elections demonstrated.

FINDING 4: THE REDISTRICTING PARADOX

Modeling three redistricting scenarios reveals that aggressive redistricting produces no seat gain while doubling competitive exposure:

Scenario	R Seats	D Seats	Competitive	Notes
Current Map	20	7	4	With incumbency
Baseline	21	8	3	No incumbency, same boundaries
Aggressive	21	8	7	Vote dilution, NEW SEATS
Defensive	21	8	3	Shore up vulnerable seats

Critical Finding: Aggressive redistricting creates the same number of Republican seats as doing nothing, but doubles the number of vulnerable competitive seats from 3 to 7.

WHY REDISTRICTING BACKFIRES

Traditional gerrymandering theory fails under current Florida conditions due to four critical constraints:

1. NMP Voter Heterogeneity

NMP voters in competitive districts lean Democratic. Creating new competitive seats increases exposure to Democratic-leaning NMP populations. The aggregate +27% R lean does not apply to marginal seats.

2. Incumbency Masking Baseline Weakness

Current performance relies on 73.7 percentage points of incumbency advantage. Redistricting eliminates these advantages, causing performance to revert to baseline—which is 2.4 points worse on average and up to 10.9 points worse in specific districts.

3. Limited Democratic Packing Opportunity

Safe Democratic districts already run D+24 to D+41. There are minimal Democratic voters left to crack without creating new Democratic seats.

4. Competitive District Dynamics

Safe R+20 seats face minimal scrutiny. Marginal R+5 to R+10 seats attract better-funded Democratic candidates, national party investment, media scrutiny, and higher-quality primary challenges.

THE EFFICIENCY GAP ILLUSION

The current +17.1 percentage point efficiency gap appears to suggest room for optimization. However, efficiency measures vote-to-seat conversion but ignores seat security:

Map Type	Distribution	Efficiency Gap	D+6 Wave Impact
Aggressive	8 @ R+20, 13 @ R+2-8	+21 pts	Flips 7-10 seats
Current	12 @ R+20, 8 @ R+10-20	+17 pts	Flips 2-4 seats

The aggressive map has higher nominal efficiency but dramatically lower resilience to adverse conditions.

CONCLUSION

Analysis of Florida congressional district performance from 2018-2024 reveals that aggressive redistricting strategies aimed at maximizing Republican seat count encounter significant structural constraints under current electoral conditions.

SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

- **Substantial Incumbency Dependency:** 73.7 percentage points of incumbency advantage across twelve districts
- **Geographic NMP Sorting:** Democratic-leaning in competitive districts (+5% to +26% D), Republican-leaning in safe rural districts (+60% to +84% R)
- **Zero Net Seat Gain:** Aggressive redistricting produces 21 R seats (same as baseline) while doubling competitive seats from 3 to 7
- **Special Election Validation:** Republican underperformance of -5% to -8% in open-seat, high-NMP competitive districts

IMPLICATIONS

The analysis indicates that Florida Republicans face a choice between maximizing seat count and maximizing seat security. Aggressive redistricting aimed at capturing 21-22 seats would create 7-10 competitive seats vulnerable to:

- Wave elections (D+6 to D+8 national environment)
- Candidate quality differentials
- Further shifts in NMP voter behavior
- National party investment in competitive races

Current electoral conditions in Florida, particularly the geographic distribution of Democratic-leaning NMP voters in competitive districts and the substantial incumbency cushion protecting current marginal seats, indicate that aggressive redistricting optimization carries significant downside risk with minimal upside potential.

Redistricting would replicate open-seat conditions across multiple congressional districts simultaneously, potentially converting a durable 20-seat Republican majority into a fragile 21-seat majority dependent on favorable conditions.

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This analysis was prepared using official Florida voter registration data, Florida Department of State certified election results from 2018-2024, and empirically derived voter behavior models.