

FLORIDA REPUBLICANS JUST CAN'T STOP TILTING PLAYING FIELD IN THEIR FAVOR

Even while the Florida legislature struggles to undo the damage from the blatantly partisan changes in Florida's voting law enacted shortly after Rick Scott's 2010 election as governor, new evidence is emerging on improper and illegal collusion by Republicans in drawing Florida's new legislative districts, despite a 2010 constitutional amendment preventing such actions. Here's the latest from the Tampa Bay Times:

Florida legislative leaders appear to have authorized staff members to use private email accounts and had "brainstorming meetings" with Republican Party consultants to attempt to draw favorable political districts, despite a constitutional ban on such coordination.

/snip/

Republican Sens. Andy Gardiner of Orlando and Jack Latvala of Clearwater sent emails using private email accounts to the RPOF consultants.

"What does this do to my district?" Gardiner asked in an email to Bainter after the Fair Districts coalition submitted a substitute map during the Senate's special session on redistricting in April.

Bainter replied, "In fact very good. But I have to tell you, this map is little more than a hatchet job cutting all kinds of stuff up."

And yet, the constitutional amendment passed in 2010 was meant to prevent exactly this kind of

collusion to help one party:

This damning evidence of partisan collusion comes on the heels of even more evidence relating to the Republican bill that aimed to suppress Democratic votes by cutting early voting hours across the state in the 2012 election. It turns out that Democratic precincts also were understaffed and underequipped to the point that more than 200,000 voters gave up in frustration in November and left the long lines before voting. Unsurprisingly, this analysis showed that the problem affected Democrats more than Republicans:

In Florida, he concluded, the lost voters appeared to favor President Barack Obama. Of the 201,000 "missing" votes, 108,000 likely would have voted for Obama and 93,000 for Republican Mitt Romney, he said.

This suggests that Obama's margin over Romney in Florida could have been roughly 15,000 votes higher than it was. Obama carried the state by 74,309 votes out of more than 8.4 million cast.

Had the vote in 2012 been as close as it was in 2000, this Republican ratfucking of voting clearly would have delivered Florida to Romney and undoubtedly was the primary reason the changes were made.

It's little wonder then, that Rick Scott has done a complete about-face and now is trying to erase his role in suppressing Democratic votes while "championing" restoration of the same early voting days he played an instrumental role in eliminating. And his Secretary of State is joining in on the attempt to re-write history as he claims that the effort to fix the voting law Scott and Detzner's fellow Republicans gutted is now a nonpartisan effort with only fairness in mind:

Gov. Rick Scott's elections adviser urged legislators on Monday to return to

14 days of early voting in Florida and to add locations to avoid repeating the chaos that plagued voting in 2012.

Testifying before a House committee, Secretary of State Ken Detzner largely echoed the views of county election supervisors. They want to offer from eight to 14 days of early voting, including on the Sunday before Election Day, and at more sites, including courthouses and civic centers.

“The bottom line is, voter confidence must be restored,” Detzner said.

“Supervisors of elections and county commissions must take it upon themselves to oversee elections through responsible leadership and administration.”

For years, elections officials and Democratic legislators have tried to increase the sites used for early voting.

Sadly, we learn from today’s New York Times that Florida’s Republicans are not alone. It turns out that Democrats waited longer to vote than Republicans in much of the country:

Several recent polls and studies suggest that long waiting times in some places depressed turnout in 2012 and that lines were longest in cities, where Democrats outnumber Republicans. In a New York Times/CBS News poll taken shortly after Election Day, 18 percent of Democrats said they waited at least a half-hour to vote, compared with 11 percent of independents and 9 percent of Republicans.

A Massachusetts Institute of Technology analysis determined that blacks and Hispanics waited nearly twice as long in line to vote on average than whites. Florida had the nation’s longest lines, at 45 minutes, followed by the District

of Columbia, Maryland, South Carolina and Virginia, according to Charles Stewart III, the political science professor who conducted the analysis.

So much for the concept of free and fair elections. Despite all the blathering about preventing voter fraud, it is crystal clear that Republicans controlling state legislatures across the country put much time and effort into suppressing Democratic votes. Will voters ever wake up to this hijacking of our electoral system, or will the abuses only continue to get worse?