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Ladies and gentlemen of our Legislature:

I've lived in Florida only about 3 years. In that time my Congressional district has been represented by three different persons of two different parties - but I don't consider this a bad thing.

I attended two earlier hearings in this series without commenting. I heard many concerns raised: that redistricting respect and honor our Federal civil rights laws, and that it respect and honor the voters' wishes for compact districts; I'd like to echo those concerns. I also heard concerns that these goals were in conflict. I urge you to recognize that this is a false dichotomy. Meeting both goals may be more challenging than treating them as either-or, but meeting both goals is assuredly possible.

But beyond that, I challenge you to honor the diversity within the districts you draw - not of age, or race, or any demographic, but diversity of ideas. Our nation is in desperate need of intelligent, considerate civic debate; and the surest way to squelch it is to craft districts in which the outcome of a general election is a foregone conclusion.

Uncompetitive districts debase the value of each incremental vote, rendering it virtually meaningless. Competitive districts raise up the value of incremental votes, and encourage citizen participation.

Uncompetitive districts teach our children that those in power can act to protect their own interests at the expense of the people's. Competitive districts place the people's interests first, and encourage our children and all citizens to reflect on what truly constitutes their interest.

Uncompetitive districts breed distrust, cynicism, and apathy. Competitive districts enliven debate, engage voters, and bring accountability to the fore.

Many may say that these are fine ideals, but that you will choose to create districts to protect your own security in office. My friends, such thinking reflects another false dichotomy. I suggest that security in office is completely compatible with competitive districts.

I submit to you that true job security for a public servant rests in consistent delivery of exemplary public service, and that this makes it possible for her or him to consistently win vibrant, competitive, well-contested elections.

Ladies and gentlemen, your unwillingness to craft competitive electoral districts would be the clearest possible evidence of your own suspicion that you are unworthy of office - that you would not win a tough, well-contested election in a competitive district. I fear that you may instead choose to craft districts that - if you'll forgive me - any jackass or, respectively, pachyderm could win.

Show your belief in your own worthiness, and show your belief in your constituents whose government this is. Craft districts that are respectful, honorable, legal, compact - and competitive.

Thank you.