

Plaintiffs want Supreme Court to consider redistricting case

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TALLAHASSEE _ Florida's November election is no longer in danger of being changed, but the lengthy challenge to the state's congressional districts isn't over.

A coalition of plaintiffs that sued over the congressional maps is appealing a Leon County judge's ruling earlier this month that the Legislature's second attempt at drawing those political lines was constitutional.

Within 10 days, the coalition also will file a request that its appeal be certified directly to the

... in time for the 2016 elections,” read a notice filed Friday with the Tallahassee-based 1st District Court of Appeal.

Leon Circuit Judge Terry Lewis ruled in July that the congressional maps drawn by the Legislature during the 2012 redistricting process were at odds with anti-gerrymandering provisions in the state constitution. Two of the state’s 27 seats were drawn to favor Republicans, he said.

Lewis approved a revised map the Legislature adopted in a special session to redraw the two unconstitutional seats, held by U.S. Reps. Corrine Brown, D-Jacksonville, and Dan Webster, R-Winter Park. The new map made tweaks to seven total districts.

Though the plaintiffs still believe the redrawn congressional lines are invalid, they are no longer trying to change them prior to the 2014 general election in order to “assist the district court in administratively processing this appeal.”

The plaintiffs, led by the League of Women Voters of Florida, said the maps still are drawn to favor Republicans, pointing to, among other arguments, that the GOP would continue to hold a registration advantage in 17 districts. In an Aug. 18 motion, the district asked Lewis to move election dates so that there was time to redraw maps.

“The citizens of Florida have already endured elections under gerrymandered districts after the Legislature blatantly disregarded their will,” read a motion the plaintiffs filed in the case earlier this month.

Local election officials testified that upending the election calendar would be nearly impossible to handle in 2014. In a motion filed by attorneys for the Legislature, the Florida State Association of Supervisors of Election said a special election in the affected districts couldn’t happen until spring 2015.

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