

Email 3.21.11
James Johnson, Assessor
Vernon Parish /
House Districts / HD 30

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March 21, 2011

Speaker of the House Jim Tucker:

On behalf of the Vernon Parish Assessor's Office I would like to voice my concern and opposition to the proposed district maps and how they will undoubtedly negatively affect Vernon Parish, and more specifically our office. All of this seems to be introduced and proposed extremely quickly, without giving us much time to properly digest this and determine what repercussions will faced by our parish, but there are several issues that immediately surface when I see these maps.

The most obvious concern is that including Leesville and Fort Polk into a district with Rapides and Alexandria will create a divided interest for our representative and Vernon Parish and the Leesville/Ft. Polk communities will suffer as a result. Leesville and Fort Polk are not as closely tied to Alexandria and Rapides as they are DeRidder and Beauregard which as you know is currently part of District 30. This will no doubt create a situation where we will be competing with Rapides and Alexandria for resources and even competing for access to our representative. The result will be less support for Leesville and Fort Polk. In these troubled economic times, the growth and development of Fort Polk are some of the only factors generating any stability and economic activity in the entire Central Louisiana region. In fact, Fort Polk is the second largest employer in the state second only to the state itself. Our parish and this region of the state depend on Fort Polk and Fort Polk is too important of a resource to be forced to compete with another, larger metropolitan area.

James Armes has served the needs of our parish and communities and Fort Polk very well over the several years that he has represented us. In fact, James Armes has done everything that we have asked of him and exceeded our expectations with each request. I can think of no representative to which we have had more access than James Armes. Changing his district from 30 to 25 is a disadvantage, is unfair, and will result in less representation for our parish and our resources here, such as Fort Polk.

James Armes has been very helpful to the Vernon Parish Assessor's Office, each and every time we have called upon him, and has been essential in helping to find us funding for all of our other needs. I would hate to lose him as a representative. I also oppose how this will affect our other representatives, Frankie Howard, and Dorothy Sue Hill.

This is your office - we are here to serve you

In summary, the new proposed district maps will put James Arnes in a new district which will be unfair to him and to the citizens of his district. It will force Leesville and Fort Polk to compete with Alexandria and Rapides which will be harmful to the single biggest asset of central Louisiana, and maybe all of North Louisiana for that matter. It will reduce the representatives that have a share of Vernon Parish from four to two, which will result in loss of representation. The census data shows that the population of Vernon Parish has not declined over the past ten years, so this suggests that reducing our representation is not in the best interest of our Parish, but more of a numbers game to benefit surrounding areas. I do not pretend to have a perfect solution for you and I recognize that your job of redistricting is a hard one. But please consider our concerns before moving any further in the redistricting process, and reducing our representation.

Michael C. Bealer



Chief Deputy
Vernon Parish Assessor's Office