

First Coast Tiger Bay Tracks



January 2023 The First Coast Tiger Bay Club, Inc. P.O. Box 2608, Jacksonville, FL 32203

Redistricting and Gerrymandering Explained January 20, 2023



The **First Coast Tiger Bay Club** is preparing an impressive set of public affairs programs for 2023. Our premier presentation on **January 20th** features **Dr. Nick Seabrook** of UNF, a nationally renowned expert on redistricting and gerrymandering. This is a very timely topic as redistricting court cases are currently pending both for the Jacksonville City Council and Florida U.S. House districts.

The U.S. Constitution requires legislative district boundaries be redrawn every ten years to account for population shifts and each district is supposed to have approximately the same number of people. While drawing district boundaries to benefit a particular party—gerrymandering—is illegal, computer programs to accomplish that are readily available. For more than ten years the national Republican State Leadership Committee's [Project REDMAP](#) has successfully gerrymandered many districts in states like Florida; Democrats have tried to do the same in other states but been much less successful overall.

There are two broad gerrymandering methods: *packing* (consolidating the other party's voters into a few districts where they become redundant and win by large margins) and *cracking* (splitting the other party's strongholds among multiple districts where they will be a minority in each district).

The 28 Florida U.S. House congressional districts are illustrative of how gerrymandering works. The U.S. Constitution assigns the district redrawing responsibility to the state legislatures. After the Florida legislature did that in 2022, Gov. Ron DeSantis vetoed it and submitted his own redistricting plan. The legislature acquiesced and approved governor's plan that effectively "cracked" (or diluted) Democratic strongholds in both north and central Florida and "packed" other Democratic strongholds into a small number of districts in south Florida. In reviewing that plan

the nonpartisan [Princeton Gerrymandering Project](#) gave Florida an overall grade of 'F' in partisan fairness. It estimated Republicans would win 20 of the 28 districts (or 71%) even though the party vote would be fairly evenly divided. Their predictions were spot-on.

The Jacksonville City Council was also supposed to draw new district boundaries consistent with population changes for the 2023 elections. A federal court found their first two attempts to be unconstitutional and the court finally had to submit its own plan which is still being contested.

Elections are the lynchpin of democracies and thrive only when election districts are drawn fairly and all voters have an equal voice. To help us unpack the intricacies of redistricting in our city and state, the First Coast Tiger Bay Club is proud to present Dr. Nick Seabrook, a Professor and Chair of the Department of Political Science and Public Administration at the University of North Florida. His BA in American Studies is from the University of Nottingham (UK) and he earned both his MA and Ph.D. in Political Science from the University at Buffalo (SUNY).

Nick's research focuses on the intersection of law and politics in the United States, with a particular emphasis on election administration. He is the author of two books on redistricting and gerrymandering: *Drawing the Lines: Constraints on Partisan Gerrymandering in U.S. Politics* (2017) and *One Person, One Vote: A Surprising History of Gerrymandering in America* (2022). For a preview of some of Dr. Seabrook's scholarly presentations on redistricting see his site on C-SPAN (<https://www.c-span.org/person/?134632/NickSeabrook>).

We hope you can join our inaugural 2023 forum on redistricting issues with Dr. Nick Seabrook on **January 20th**. Democracies thrive only when citizens participate.

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FIRST COAST TIGER BAY CLUB meets for lunch every month, except June, July and December, on the 3rd Friday at 11:30 at The River Club, 1 Independent Drive, 35th Floor. Cost for the event, which includes the wonderful buffet and parking, is \$32.

Reservations are required: E-Mail: fctigerbay@gmail.com

The First Coast Tiger Bay Club is a multi-partisan political forum that promotes free and open debate but does not support any candidates or issues.

*Dr. Stephen Baker, Newsletter Editor
Henry Cordes, Publisher*

**Reservations are REQUIRED. Please RSVP by
Monday January 16, 2023
E-mail: fctigerbay@gmail.com .**

The First Coast Tiger Bay Club is a multi-partisan political and civic forum designed to explore crucial issues of the day by interacting with outstanding speakers in an open format. The club is non-partisan, never supports particular candidates, nor take sides on issues.