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GOODBYE TO ALL THAT

By PETER C. DOHERTY

In 2002 Florida's lawmakers did their business faster and more efficiently than has ever been the case when faced with redistricting.

It is just past mid-May and unless compelled to return by an emergency or an adverse ruling on redistricting from the Federal Courts or the U.S. Justice Department, the Florida Legislature will not return to Tallahassee until November. This is an amazing and unprecedented result in a redistricting year.

I have seen four redistricting years: 1972, 1982, 1992, and 2002. In none but 2002 has the legislature managed to complete its business with only two short overtimes. In none but 2002 has the process of redistricting proceeded in a manner that can be described as "smooth." Previous years – indeed all of Florida redistricting sessions since the 1950's, save 2002 – have been characterized by protracted political warfare which slowed, and sometimes completely stopped, the work of the institution.

Not so in 2002. After meeting for a total of about 80 days the work was done – *all* the work was done. The budget was done, redistricting was done, the "must pass" legislation was passed, and the lawmakers had gone home for good.

Of course, not everything the legislature did while in Tallahassee this year was good, needed, well thought out, or even smart — but such is the case every year. Despite this, the fact remains that in 2002 Florida's lawmakers did their business faster and more efficiently than has ever been the case when faced with redistricting. As Floridians, we should be pleased by this nearly unbelievable occurrence.

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