

To: Task Force on Consolidated Government
From: Mr. Michael Hoffman
Re: Vote Dilution in At-Large Voting Systems
Date: Thursday, November 14, 2013

Summary:

- 1) "One man, one vote" is the law. ALL at-large systems are examples of vote dilution, some to a greater extent than others.
- 2) The Duval electorate wants a representative Council, which is why they supported a residency requirement for at-large districts. However, the continuation of at-large elections for these 5 seats dilutes the vote of citizens, particularly African Americans and all citizens with modest incomes. (Example: Vote count from elections supervisor for most recent At-Large 5 election.)
- 3) My preference is for 19 single-member districts, which would produce smaller districts and arguably more-responsive representation. An option is a bicameral Council with single-member representation for all seats in each chamber.

**Full remarks made before Task Force on Consolidated Government
public meeting, Regency Square Library, 11/13/13**

“One man, one vote” is the measure of electoral equality. Regard less of how you parse it, vote dilution occurs when there is at-large representation, such as we have in Jacksonville. Elimination of the at-large seats brings the city to a “level playing field” in electoral terms.

My recent email to the task force, which displayed the precinct results of the at-large District 5 election two years ago between Mr. Foy and Mr.

Lumb, is a classic example of vote dilution of ethnic or racial minorities as well as those of modest economic means. At-large elections don't always result in such egregious consequences as the Foy-Lumb race; but, in tandem with off-year elections that typically feature smaller voter turnouts, at-large elections consistently favor blocs of older, white, better-off, and better-educated voters.

Robert Cassanello's 2013 book – *To Render Invisible: Jim Crow and Public Life in New South Jacksonville* – covers race relations from Reconstruction until 1920, including voting. In this period African Americans exercised the franchise and held public positions, but gradually were eliminated from meaningful participation by white elites. Three episodes encapsulate this process: the loss of home rule (1888-1892) that occurred in response to a black majority controlling the ballot box in 1888; the 1906 gerrymandering of Jacksonville voting precincts that eliminated the last majority-black precinct and any hope of African Americans holding a seat on the city council until the 1960s, and the passage of the Florida Legislature of a white-primary law that banned African Americans from voting in the Democratic Party primaries until the 1940s. (See my book review below from the online Florida Times-Union, July 21, 2013.)

The original version of the Consolidation Charter of 1968 that went to the local Legislative delegation to be made into a bill and then a law, was altered by the delegation. Instead of 21 single-member districts, the delegation changed the electoral system to 14 single-member districts and 5 at-large seats. (I have encouraged the task force to take written or oral testimony from surviving members of the delegation, including Dr. Girardeau, to better understand the actions of the delegation in this instance.)

Some 20 years ago the electorate insisted that a residency requirement be added because of a concern that at-large seats were being monopolized by white elites. This electoral alteration did not change the

at-large voting system, which continues to dilute the vote of African Americans and all voters of modest means.

Elimination of the at-large seats produces a level playing field in local elections by ending vote dilution. Having 19 representatives from 19 districts lowers the ratio of voters per representative, which brings local government closer to the people.

Jacksonville needs a robust economy and racial comity, and the two are connected at many points. The at-large seats are vestiges of a century and more of white suppression of black votes. Let's have a level playing field in politics, and then we will be freer to work on the economy.

Michael Hoffmann

PRECINCT	Registered_Voter	Foy_Total_votes	Lumb_Total_Votes
4	1696	222	157
07A	1140	235	171
07B	1076	243	88
07D	1024	231	122
07E	762	165	83
07G	1083	326	58
07H	1739	435	91
07J	2556	809	107
07L	1287	294	66
07P	2587	1108	120
07Q	2207	808	138
07R	1454	354	130
07S	692	182	27
07T	1406	295	119
07V	207	64	26
07X	2629	1012	160
8	1624	483	80
08B	1226	349	109
08C	2137	646	189
08D	2231	915	119
08G	1163	322	151
08J	1431	566	90
08K	939	218	56
08L	749	213	35
08N	2130	563	82
08P	1247	369	39
08R	809	233	34

08S	946	280	52
08W	704	179	61
08Y	1144	343	145
08Z	1869	391	205
9	287	18	55
09B	1034	224	73
09C	1204	337	43
09D	1277	415	56
09E	1494	339	98
09F	855	155	24
09H	1392	452	72
09J	1319	373	73
09M	1437	296	102
09N	926	203	59
09P	1342	330	52
09R	1071	271	43
09S	1456	262	148
09T	1177	276	53
09Y	1302	280	151
09Z	920	141	157
10	1739	656	95
10A	3688	1302	172
10C	1644	254	286
10D	1274	176	246
10E	1261	439	67
10F	1820	589	81
10G	1834	579	74
10H	1744	593	89
10J	2670	1064	132
10L	1287	133	250
10V	1060	164	282
12B	663	80	205
	83071	23254	6348

PRECINCT	Registered_Voter	Foy_Total_votes	Lumb_Total_Votes
1	4500	475	1550
01A	2526	349	581
01B	1619	222	412
01C	1056	151	308
01D	2478	361	524
01E	2658	347	473
01F	1708	175	306
01G	4305	589	914
01H	1817	340	448
01N	1822	296	331
01P	3512	527	865
01R	1384	200	192
01S	2237	375	327
01T	2458	332	635

01W	997	97	373
01X	1218	142	445
2	1978	172	332
02A	2201	262	414
02B	1401	161	449
02C	2444	220	449
02D	1600	227	136
02E	5486	565	669
02F	1512	132	209
02G	4318	357	745
02H	1053	143	268
02K	1490	212	191
02L	1590	195	269
02M	5347	519	837
02N	924	86	168
02P	1981	249	396
02T	1314	121	314
3	2326	242	428
03A	1720	126	669
03D	2555	239	628
03E	4333	305	530
03F	2403	173	246
03G	3311	193	904
03H	4734	358	849
03K	2854	216	757
03L	2500	125	261
03M	1645	160	434
03N	2609	237	420
03R	3089	201	832
03S	2153	173	465
03T	2242	171	355
03V	353	35	117
04A	2453	285	623
04B	1693	145	239
04E	2790	298	943
04F	1660	189	376
04G	1113	131	254
04H	2011	247	314
04J	1907	192	565
04K	2258	278	559
04L	2103	203	546
04M	1913	218	435
04N	1593	194	370
04P	2241	228	415
04S	1692	204	309
04T	5156	394	691
04V	4471	321	737
5	1945	230	628
05A	1843	246	430
05C	1354	187	130

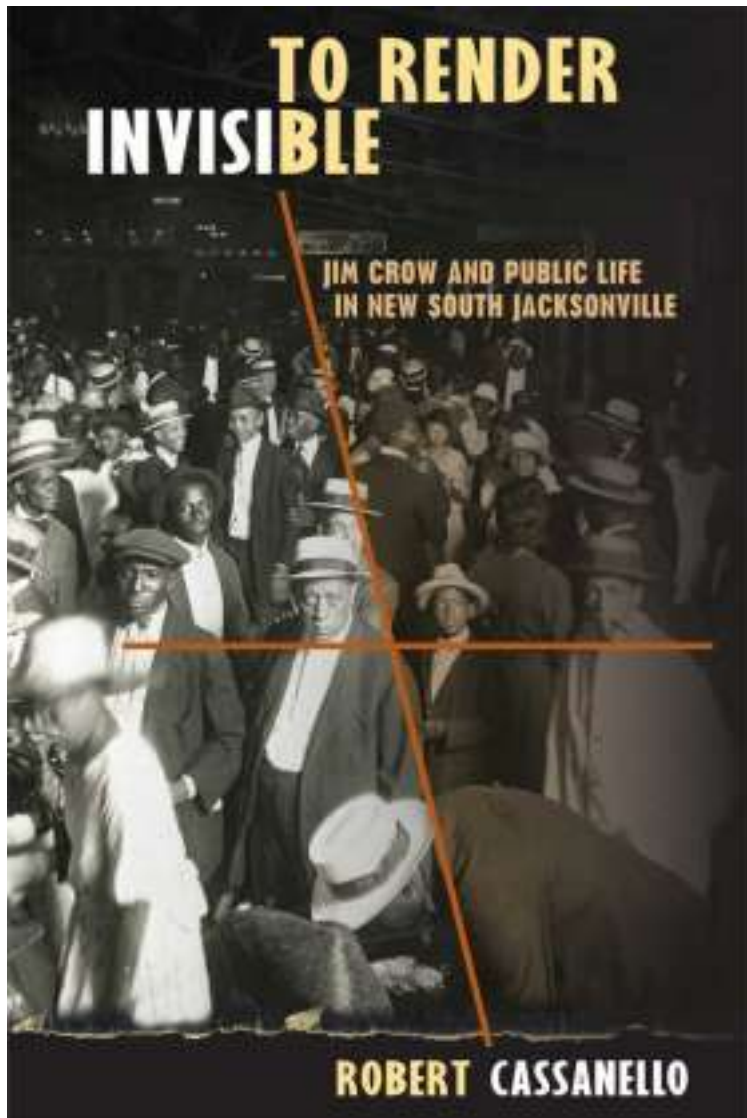
05D		2497	234	526
05E		2055	229	849
05G		2064	220	436
05H		4181	446	1278
05J		3794	375	1258
05L		2578	244	486
05M		1681	200	555
05N		2030	211	515
05P		1884	166	413
05R		2605	263	553
05T		1757	143	286
05V		1096	105	125
05W		1759	144	248
	6	2534	267	577
06A		2163	177	817
06B		1750	152	315
06C		1539	138	549
06D		2553	268	873
06E		1874	151	651
06F		2668	229	886
06G		3257	258	1055
06J		5552	491	1133
06K		2133	165	574
06L		2269	200	471
06M		1689	175	377
06N		4917	381	1403
06P		2227	178	522
06R		5552	389	782
06S		2958	249	705
06W		1327	113	482
	7	2605	379	479
07N		1510	200	364
07W		111	10	28
07Y		1286	187	124
08F		2353	541	316
08I		1111	295	205
08O		3229	1215	293
08T		1301	330	307
08U		1591	289	326
08V		1592	106	573
08X		2438	519	385
09A		899	144	115
09G		966	133	166
09I		1142	126	245
09O		2058	304	319
09Q		1670	176	395
09U		1354	144	251
09W		426	76	43
09X		1339	287	127
10N		2393	469	263

10P	1695	276	216
10Q	2186	297	444
10R	1070	117	235
10S	1637	176	385
10T	2127	379	198
11	748	28	41
11A	310	31	116
11B	2988	344	740
11C	7252	784	1300
11D	1945	161	593
11F	878	126	149
11G	2359	595	397
11H	3540	380	743
11J	2171	484	364
11K	311	16	108
11L	2298	173	301
11M	3927	375	791
11N	592	55	214
11P	1412	118	373
11R	1935	181	719
11S	1125	90	374
11T	1666	267	341
11V	2626	296	432
11W	1993	120	216
12	1433	227	403
12A	2361	292	713
12C	1223	89	354
12D	1760	251	189
12F	1926	224	543
12G	2312	360	366
12H	1587	183	417
12K	2588	429	445
12L	2933	314	826
12M	1902	260	419
12P	2001	319	292
12R	3242	476	907
12S	1671	196	234
12V	4260	603	749
12W	3127	581	521
12X	2637	461	388
12Y	3285	447	449
12Z	2100	248	537
13	1397	100	226
13A	1850	177	459
13B	2564	201	594
13C	3123	237	614
13D	1764	146	271
13E	2559	268	587
13F	2236	261	400
13G	2610	319	760

13H	2413	292	687
13J	2654	248	637
13K	1826	153	286
13L	1721	175	228
13M	1544	108	572
13N	1478	109	293
13P	1993	168	410
13Q	1916	122	760
13R	2344	185	476
13S	2181	221	252
13W	3962	383	1013
13X	2315	220	472
13Y	877	101	133
13Z	1367	138	296
14	1867	245	326
14A	3070	342	382
14B	2308	219	352
14C	2460	300	488
14D	3148	345	469
14E	1505	215	423
14G	1636	238	331
14H	2352	357	674
14I	1868	204	324
14K	2527	345	459
14L	1418	134	502
14N	1476	129	466
14P	1993	160	951
14Q	1780	205	209
14R	1949	184	846
14S	721	93	187
14T	3269	492	752
14Y	2081	226	498
14Z	2014	286	456
	435549	49514	94076

Book Review: 'To Render Invisible: Jim Crow and Public Life in New South Jacksonville'

Posted: July 20, 2013 - 10:42pm | Updated: July 22, 2013 - 8:37am



By [Michael Hoffmann](#)

“To Render Invisible: Jim Crow and Public Life in New South Jacksonville” by University of Central Florida professor Robert Cassanello throws into bold relief the history of Jacksonville between the end of the Civil War and World War I, when former slaves and masters struggled to create a new equilibrium in politics and society. The primary site for the political struggle was the franchise; social relations gradually consolidated under Jim Crow laws, creating a separate, invisible existence that operated behind “the Veil,” as W.E.B. DuBois called it.

Postwar Southern legislatures initially created constitutions that excluded black males from voting. The subsequent adoption of the 15th Amendment, guaranteeing suffrage, and congressional Reconstruction with its Union bayonets opened the door for male African-Americans in Jacksonville to vote and hold political office — which they did until shortly after the turn of the century.

Blacks initially voted as a bloc for Republican candidates. The Compromise of 1877 removed the last Union bayonets from the South, signaling the abandonment of African-Americans by the Republican Party and the return to the political arena of native whites. There followed a decade or so of fusionist politics in which blacks had a political opening by voting with white insurgents hostile to the Bourbon Democrats. When fusion tickets were successful, blacks shared in that success — elected as council members, appointed judges and justices of the peace, and employed as police.

The 1888 yellow fever epidemic, which saw large numbers of better-off whites flee the city to escape the fever, created a black electoral majority that voted into office a majority-white Republican municipal government. Jacksonville Democrats went to Tallahassee and complained of mob rule, resulting in the Legislature passing the notorious House Bill 4, which stripped Jacksonville of home rule and tasked Gov. Francis Fleming of Jacksonville with selecting all municipal officers, including the city council and mayor.

Home rule was restored in 1893, but not before the Legislature levied a poll tax and introduced the Australian or secret ballot, both of which had the effect of diminishing voting by poorer blacks and whites. Better-off

blacks continued to vote and there continued to be plenty of political activity behind the Veil in African-American churches, social organizations and grassroots political clubs. Jacksonville's sixth ward, which was overwhelmingly black, turned out a reliable bloc vote, keeping one or two black council members in office until 1906, when the sixth ward was gerrymandered. No blacks served on the City Council again until Mary Singleton and Sallye Mathis were elected in 1967.

Nevertheless, blacks in Jacksonville continued to register and vote, even though there was no hope of being elected to local office. Enough persisted in voting, especially in national and statewide races, so that the 1965 Voting Rights Act provision requiring federal pre-clearance for electoral changes did not apply to Duval (or most of Florida).

The perennial conundrum for readers of local history was posed by James Weldon Johnson in his autobiography, "Along This Way," published in 1934. Johnson recalled that as a youth Jacksonville had been a good town for blacks, that there was political and economic mobility possible (though not necessarily social mobility). By World War I Jacksonville had become a "cracker" town, where skin color was the primary determinant of one's fate.

Retired UNF historian Jim Crooks writes in "Jacksonville after the Fire, 1901-1919" that large numbers of both whites and blacks who migrated to Jacksonville doubled the city's population in the decade after the Great Fire. This tidal wave of immigrants "quite possibly ... contributed substantially to shaping the harsher racial attitudes" noted by Johnson. Indeed, the entire South was in the process of racial bifurcation.

Cassanello complicates this narrative by concluding that "the native white elites were just as interested in maintaining the structures of white supremacy as were poor and working-class whites." The loss of home rule for four years by House Bill 4 amounted to a coup d'etat by leading whites. Even Duncan U. Fletcher, a moderate who was one of two white men who mentored James Weldon Johnson and saw that he got his shot at the bar exam, was a leader of the "Straightout" faction of the local Democratic Party that worked for elimination of black voting.

“To Render Invisible” is a well-researched, nuanced book. The bibliography and endnotes are a mother lode of local history references. There are useful tables and illustrations. A must-read for students of Jacksonville history and politics, especially with a great public debate ahead about the Consolidation charter.

Michael Hoffmann is a historian who lives in Atlantic Beach.