

Statement by California Citizens Redistricting Commission's

Current Rotating Chair Stan Forbes On ProPublica Article On

Commission's Redistricting Process

"Of course partisan political interests tried to influence the Commission's independent process, but that goes with the territory, and the Commission had its eyes wide open and was very aware of that possibility. The important point is that the Commissioners were not unduly influenced by that. We drew district maps that were fair and representative. In fact the California Supreme Court unanimously, by a 7-0 vote, dismissed litigation against the maps finding that the Commission followed the Constitution, Federal Voting Rights Act and the Voters First Act.

If the Democrats successfully gamed the system then why are there two Congressional districts in the Los Angeles area where Democratic incumbents are having to run against each other? One of the match-ups includes two of the most influential and powerful Democratic Congressmen in the nation, Howard Berman and Brad Sherman. In Central California, Democratic Congresswoman Lois Capps, who was in the infamous "Ribbon of Shame" Gerrymandered district, is in a more competitive district and faces a strong Republican challenge. ProPublica neglected to point out those facts.

ProPublica was just dead wrong when it stated that the Commission shut down its public input process and decided to hold remaining meetings in Sacramento. This was following an unprecedented 34 public input hearings. When the Commission held remaining meetings in Sacramento it was in order to work with mapping consultants to draw the lines. Every one of those meetings was streamed live, archived on the Commission's website along with transcriptions. The Commission received thousands of comments in writing from the public during this time. In fact many Commissioners referred to the comments as they came in real-time during the meetings.

I believe that ProPublica was in error when it suggested that the Commission could have referenced political party registration data during our process. The Commission was barred from drawing districts in consideration of incumbents, candidates or political parties. To reference political party registration numbers would have looked highly suspicious to the public. It also begs the question: If the Commission is barred from drawing partisan maps, why reference the registration data?

There has never been a more transparent or open redistricting process in California history. The Commission drew districts that were based on the totality of the wide and varied testimony, not just listening to one group or maybe the last person we heard."