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Redistricting Testimony
April 13, 2011 – San Luis Obispo

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My name is Cynthia King. I live in the Santa Clara Valley, just outside of Fillmore. I live with my husband on the small family farm that has been in his family for almost 100 years. I work as an Organizational Consultant, and I also volunteer at the Fillmore Legal Aid and the One Step a la Vez Teen Center in Fillmore.

Thank you for the opportunity to let you know about our community of interest, based in Ventura County. I drove for 3 hours - all the way from Fillmore because I care about my community, and we are deeply concerned about being fairly represented.

I am focusing on the communities of Fillmore, Piru and Rancho Sespe to the east, and Santa Paula to the west. According to current districting, these small, agriculturally based communities are divided away from the rest of Ventura County, and have been lumped together with Santa Clarita, Palmdale and Lancaster – communities with whom they have NO affiliation and NO common interests.

Fillmore, Piru, and Santa Paula lie along highway 126 between the Santa Clara River and the mountains that are home to the Sespe Wilderness on the north. In the event of an emergency (such as fire, flood, or earthquake), if highway 126 is closed and the small winding road over Grimes Canyon is closed, Fillmore and Piru can be isolated with no egress.

Aside from the long-standing football rivalry between Santa Paula and Fillmore high schools, these 3 small communities have much in common.

- They are traditionally based on the agricultural economy.
- They have an average Hispanic population of 78%.
- They are predominantly low income. For example, Fillmore has the lowest average family income in Ventura County, but with the highest rate of families where both parents are working.

- While these are some of the poorest communities in Ventura County, with the greatest need, there have traditionally been very few social services available in Fillmore, and almost none in Piru.
- They have very limited public transportation, which only provides access in the direction of Ventura and Oxnard, with NO mass transit links between Fillmore and Santa Clarita (or any part of Los Angeles County).

Therefore, when people need health care, shopping facilities, public services, or access to the community colleges, they go to Ventura and Oxnard – NOT to Santa Clarita, and certainly not to Palmdale or Lancaster, which are basically extensive suburban enclaves that pertain to LA County.

As a farm family, when we need farm supplies, packing houses, or equipment maintenance, we also go to Ventura and Oxnard – never to LA County.

That is why I am urging you to change the boundaries that have existed, which in effect disenfranchise these poor, minority, and largely agricultural populations, so that they are included with the Ventura County communities of Ventura and Oxnard. ~~As the very least,~~ It is critical to keep Fillmore, Piru, and Santa Paula together.

Thank you.

Submitted by Cynthia King

