

Raymond J. Gonzales, PH.D.



April 14, 2011

California Citizens Redistricting Commission
At Bakersfield, California

Dear Commissioners:

First let me thank you for holding this hearing in Bakersfield. Your decision to gather here and take testimony on redistricting signifies your concern for the citizens of the Southern San Joaquin Valley and how their interest will be taken into account in your deliberations.

I speak to you as an individual, but one who has been intimately involved in redistricting issues in this area over the years. First of all, I served in the Assembly in the early 1970's and was myself affected by court-ordered redistricting that took place just prior to the 1974 elections. I was defeated in my assembly race, and many attribute my defeat to a less than fair redistricting plan that was enacted for those elections. That is not my concern here, however.

In 1990, after the census was completed for that decade, I served as Chair of the Kern County Latino Redistricting Coalition. It was our interest at that time to contribute to a fair redistricting plan since the Courts had taken over the processes from the Legislature for the elections to be held in 1992. We spent many hours in preparing our plan, which we intended to submit to the Masters who were charged in preparing a design, which would be forwarded to the California Supreme Court.

After the 1990 census, just as in this most recent census of 2010, the Latino population of the Southern San Joaquin Valley had increased significantly. Kern County has experienced a 27% jump in population in this last decade, most of it powered by the growth in the Latino community. Today, Kern County is 47% Latino. This is a significant reality if one considers the fact that none of the five Supervisors in the county is Latino, and all are Republicans. Just this last year the first Latino was elected to the City Council in the history of the city.

However, at the legislative level we have seen a more equitable opportunity for Latino representation. This has not occurred by accident. As a result of the efforts in 1990 by the Kern County Latino Redistricting Coalition, legislative districts were recommended to the Masters by our Coalition. The Masters liked our plan, and in

fact, I was invited to testify before the California Supreme Court prior to its making its final decision. In its decision the Court referenced our contribution by noting that the Coalitions had put forth a worthwhile proposal. They agreed with our recommendation and as a result, Latinos were eventually elected to the Assembly and the Senate based on our plan. Coincidentally, the first Latino was also elected to the County Board of Supervisors in a district that we had also designed.

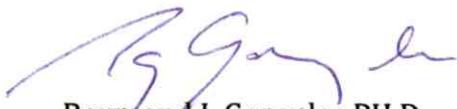
Essentially, what we did was to take note of the "community of interests" of a group that for most of the history of this region had been split up to protect long-serving incumbents. We basically laid out a plan that included heavily Latino neighborhoods and overlaid a supervisorial, assembly, and senate districts that included these neighborhoods. These districts are virtually the same today. The only reason we have lost the supervisorial district is that a Republican governor appointed a Republican to fill a vacancy in what had been for years the only Democratic and Latino supervisorial district in the county.

The passage of Proposition 11 was an effort by the people of this state to take partisanship out of the process of redistricting and end the many years of "Gerrymandering" that had resulted in the blatant protection of incumbents by both political parties, a reality born out by the fact that incumbents were reelected 95% of the time. As a member of the Assembly during the time the legislature attempted to draw new districts after they had failed in 1971 and then again in 1973, I can attest to the fact that all types of deals were being cut to protect incumbents by designing the most absurd districts one can imagine. One district was even proposed for me, which of course, I objected to, that would have made my western boundary the high tide mark in Santa Barbara, while the Republican incumbent swept around me at low tide to pick up the rest of his district.

Let us hope the you will serve the people of California well by using reason, facts and logic in your design of legislative and congressional districts. By your appearance here and at other locations in the state, I am confident that you take your job most seriously and will make every effort to produce a fair and equitable plan for all of the citizens.

I thank you for the opportunity to appear before you tonight.

Sincerely,



Raymond J. Gonzales PH.D.