

**From:** Peter Van Meter [REDACTED]  
**Sent:** Monday, January 31, 2011 4:15 PM  
**To:** Commission, Prop11  
**Cc:** [votersfirstact@auditor.ca.gov](mailto:votersfirstact@auditor.ca.gov)  
**Subject:** Public Comment on Redistricting Strategies

Please distribute the attached comments about redistricting strategies to all Commission members so that they have it available during their subcommittee work this week.

I discovered the primary address for this message in other's comments. If it is the correct one, it should be posted prominently on the website.

Thanks.

**Peter Van Meter**, Principal  
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## **Public Comment on Redistricting Strategies**

January 31, 2011  
Peter Van Meter  
Former Council Member, City of Sausalito  
CRC Applicant

Dear Commissioners:

**I heard some discussion during your meetings concluded on January 28 about redistricting strategies, and I am concerned that you might adopt a method other than a “blank slate” approach.**

Discussion of current district over/under populations, how lines might move, or alternatives based on counties or migration patterns, are irrelevant and must be strictly avoided. The whole point of Props 11 and 20 are that we are starting over from scratch – not just adjusting current districts. *Changes from prior population patterns and districts have nothing to do with the Commission’s end product.*

In fact, strongly promoting the blank slate approach during public outreach and education will have the potential of creating a much higher level of individual citizen participation and excitement.

The Commission must be wary, however, of umbrella interest groups promoting community of interest goals while actually seeking party registration dominance. Conversely, absolutely do not let anyone show you party registration data as a proxy for communities of interest. You know how the law is explicit in your requirement to ignore this data, and it’s best to never see it.

### A Proposed Method of Implementing the Blank Slate Redistricting Strategy

It is clear that communities of interest and the opportunity to elect candidates of choice will be a driving force in the redistricting process. That is why I am recommending that these factors be considered last, as they are important down to the census tract or even block level. Starting the process there, with an agglomeration of neighborhoods and working up to equal population districts, would be an incomprehensively complex task.

1. Start with a baseline that is comprised of equal population, respecting city and county boundaries and geographic features.

Working north to south, draw geographically compact and contiguous Assembly districts containing whole cities and counties where possible, and known neighborhoods in densely populated areas like the Los Angeles basin. Do Assembly districts first, retaining the traditional 2:1 and 10:1 ratios among Senate and Board of Equalization districts. Congressional districts do not conform to these ratios, and should be addressed last.

Dividing up the state is not arbitrary, but must consider geography. This will not be too difficult, as the coastal mountain range and sierras separate counties in much of the state, so there tends to be a natural division among coastal, valley and mountain areas.

2. Add layers of data over these baseline maps showing the populations to be considered in complying with the Voting Rights Act.

I am hopeful that the software selected actually allows for viewing redistricting criteria in translucent layers to allow for making adjustments to lines based on more than one criterion at a time. This first cut would be based mostly on avoiding cracking and packing, with further refinements in step 3.

3. Refine the district lines further based upon communities of interest and additional Voting Rights Act considerations.

This is where the record keeping of the accumulated public input is so essential. Hopefully, the digitized methodology discussed up to January 28 will be implemented. Once more, the simultaneous display of multiple layers could be helpful, as the examples of shared interests listed in Prop 20 may pose conflicts requiring complex resolution strategies.

At this point, and throughout the process, please remember that communities of interest are also related to both natural and man made features. Districts that span bays, jump over mountains and even cross freeways may not only be nonsensical, but may also end up combining incompatible interest groups.