

The Commission needs straw-man (starter set) maps

A "straw-man proposal", is a brain-stormed simple proposal intended to generate discussion of its disadvantages and to provoke the generation of new and better proposals. Often, a straw-man document will be prepared by one or two people prior to kicking off a larger project. In this way, the team can jump start their discussions with a document that is likely to contain many, but not all the key aspects to be discussed.

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Straw_man_proposal

The Commission is responsible for the creation of district maps of California in four flavours:

- State Assembly
- State Senate
- Board of Equalization
- Congressional

Each of the forty State Senate districts is to be created by joining two adjacent State Assembly districts. Each of the four Board of Equalization districts is to be created by joining ten adjacent State Senate districts. Both of these activities can reasonably be accomplished in committee.

However, creation of the base State Assembly districts requires consideration of myriad (several hundred) details about the content and boundaries of each of the eighty districts required. For fourteen people to discuss each of the necessary decisions (several thousand) and then accept public comment and vote on those decisions would take years.

The Commission does not have YEARS to perform this task!

PUBLIC COMMENT: Straw-man map proposal

The same would be true for the additional task of constructing California's fifty-three Congressional districts. There is no synergy between the State Assembly District map and the Congressional District map since eighty are required in the former and only fifty-three in the later. Furthermore there is an additional rule to be applied for the Congressional District map. That is, "plus or minus one" among all the districts.

Several organizations state-wide have advised the Commission of their intent to create complete maps of the state as part of their testimony about Communities of Interest. You can be certain that each of these proposed maps will be different from all others and that each of them will be very favorably drawn to enhance the groups' specific interests and agenda.

To accept any statewide map submitted by an admittedly biased group as your straw-man, would invite serious concern among all other groups and from California's population as a whole. This would ignite lengthy comment from most other groups. It would also serve to degrade popular opinion of the effectiveness of the Commission to serve in the better interests of all Californians.

A strawman or trial map provides a base for testing the application of all required rules and laws. These include:

- Compliance with the U.S. Constitution (d.1)¹.
- Compliance with the federal Voting Rights Act (d.2).
Specifically:
 - section two
 - section five for Monterey, Yuba, Kings and Merced Counties
- Substantially the same population in each district.
- Districts shall be geographically contiguous (d.3).
- Respecting boundaries of cities, counties, local neighborhoods and local communities of interest while minimizing their division to the extent possible (d.4).
- Encourage geographical compactness (d.5).
- Not considering the place of residence of any incumbent or political candidate and not favoring or discriminating against any incumbent, candidate or political party (e).

It would also become a starter set of district definitions to which testimony about Communities of Interest should be applied. Two such straw-man maps are required, one for State Assembly Districts and one for Congressional Districts.

The Commission should select one unbiased, impartial and independent individual or two to create your two straw-man maps, subject to review by chosen subject matter experts and the Commission as a whole.

These individuals do not need to be the same persons who assist the Commission during collection and application of testimony on Communities of Interest.

Without the straw-man maps, creation of the initial maps becomes a committee function (advisory subcommittee of three or more Commissioners, or the Commission as a whole).

¹ Parentheticals refer to the text of the Voters First Act within section 3.2

PUBLIC COMMENT: Straw-man map proposal

Committees are historically lousy at creating things, but have been very good at changing and adjusting elements of a complex proposal put before them. Committees, especially large committees, need a starting point, something to prompt the discussion.

However, one or two skilled individuals can easily perform the initial creation tasks (with oversight). Furthermore, this task can be split into two independent parts because the State Assembly District map and the Congressional District map have no correspondence below the state level. Each can be completed in a short time (two or three weeks) by a single individual (with oversight).

Then, the real work can commence.

Namely, application of testimony received about Communities of Interest.

NOTE:

The Commission should ignore any statewide map submitted and probably should ignore maps of individual districts unless they have been constructed on the Commission's then current map or are illustrative of a significant and large community of interest having a significant presence (>50% ?) within that district.