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To CRC:

As the Commission begins deliberations over its technical services contract, I would like to offer my perspective as Karin MacDonald's colleague and as a veteran observer of commission redistricting. Let me begin by reiterating that I am not a party to Karin MacDonald's bid in any way. Even though I have since 1982 worked in nonpartisan redistricting settings for courts, attorney generals/city attorneys and commissions, it makes a great deal of sense for the Commission to have a clean break from the past. I am also no longer a California resident.

Karin is widely respected across the country for her expertise. She is a frequent presenter on census matters and redistricting for the National Conference of State Legislatures, and while they cannot offer up formal endorsements, they have assured me that should the Commission ask, they will testify to her considerable skills and nonpartisan neutrality. Moreover, Karin has worked tirelessly to educate individuals and community groups across the state about the techniques and principles of redistricting. She has in all instances worked to uphold the intent and purposes of the VRA across California.

There are no doubt deeper forces at work here. For one, redistricting has long been dominated by men. Karin MacDonald is one of the first women to break into this club, and the prospect of women drawing lines no doubt unsettles some traditionalists. But I can assure them that as in everything else, women are every bit the equal of their male counterparts when it comes to the technical aspects of redistricting.

Beyond vouching for Karin's merits, I would like to make a final point about the role of the technical staff. I believe that it is very important for the technical staff hired in California to recognize their appropriate role in the process. I was appointed as Court Special Master for Arizona in the last round of redistricting and assisted their Citizen Commission in finding a solution to their plan being rejected by the Justice Department under Section 5. In general, I thought the Arizona commission operated admirably, but I was surprised at the role they allowed their consultants to play, with some consultants acting almost as if they were themselves Commissioners. Given the complex commission selection process California has implemented, I do not think such a situation would serve the public well in California. Whoever is chosen for this service needs to be removed from decision-making and should merely implement instructions from the Commission. The Commissioners have been given the responsibility of making the hard decisions and the staff should play a subordinate role.

I wish you all the best in your historic endeavor.

Yours sincerely,

Bruce E. Cain

