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Subject: Public Input
To: votersfirstact@crc.ca.gov

Good Day Commissioners,

Thank you for the hard work you are all doing to improve our state. You are all carrying the hopes of many that the next decade will bring a more representative democracy to our towns and neighborhoods in California. I am a political science student in Central California and although I cannot watch most of your meetings, I am thankful for the care you take in posting transcripts as they have been as much of an education as many of my college courses, and they allow students like me to keep up and even learn along with many of you.

I am writing because I, as a fan of your Commissions charter, was very upset and concerned at the appearance of partisan bias at best and party influence at worst. My concern boiled over when reading dialogue that was recorded in your 25 February 2011 transcripts. A political science professor (whom I do not know and have never heard of prior to your hearings) named Douglas Johnson was reportedly in the transcripts “invited” to speak to the commission regarding some aspect of redistricting [p 78, line 23, 25 Feb]. I read his testimony and felt like I had gained something I had not previously had, a macro-perspective of the history and controversy of recent-past California redistricting. I ‘googled’ some of his political commentary as I read it and found it to be a very widely held opinion of past redistricting decisions in this state (i.e. nothing in the presentation was out of line with common public sentiment about motives regarding past redistricting strategies or decisions). It is true that with every opinion there is another one, but certainly this invited professor was asked to provide his.

And this brings me to the crux of what has urged me to take time from studies and write this letter. It was 2 days later before I finished the Feb 25 transcripts and read some comments by Commissioner Blanco that seemed, even after several re-reads, to be completely unfair and very partisan. I don’t mind stating for the record that I am an independent, and have even started a

campus Student Independent organization at my school. And with a fair re-reading of both testimonies, I became VERY concerned for the Commission and thus for us as communities bound by the decisions you make. And based off of what is written in the record, there seems to now be several instances of partisanship leaking out amongst some of the commission. And I feel compelled to say in writing, please reconsider your motives!

First of all, Commissioner Blanco was the lead objector to seeking a bi-partisan compromise to adding technical consulting capabilities. [P 379, lines 1 – 9, 25 Feb] Comm. Blanco provides personal testimony, stated as fact, that “her” [Karen MacDonald] “is personally independent” and in the same paragraph states that if the commission tried to consider both MacDonald and Rose for technical assistance with the mapping process that this would be unfair because one is independent and one is a Republican. She seemed to propose that a Democrat would have to be added to the mix to make it fair (this is in response to some commissioners trying to seek a bipartisan approach to hiring both technical consultants to advise the commission). C. Blanco states [p379 line 8] “I don’t think that is a bi-partisan approach”. I would invite C. Blanco to look up the definition of the word ‘bi-partisan’ in the dictionary and learn that the word means “supported by members of two parties”. And in case the Independents on the Commission have not informed her, I would like to remind C. Blanco that Independent voters count too and don’t need a Democrat to keep a Republican or a Democrat on their toes. I would actually offer that would be a better situation as it would breed less gridlock and ideology than an two major party members as decades of politico have proven.

[P379 line 21-p 380 line 23 25 Feb] C. Blanco begins a personal campaign against a professor INVITED to appear before the Commission and share his opinion. Her comments included statements like: “inappropriate”, “showed bias”, “concerned that they (written presentation) were going to have them on our website....but what can you do about it?”, “...in a public document...use language like that, which is very derogatory, and nothing ...said anything bad about republicans”. Why would C. Blanco feel this way?

As a supporter of Prop 11 and Prop 20, this entire line of thinking is shameful to me. I can see why C. Blanco would not want the presentation posted, because the contents of it do not support ‘her’ facts. That presentation described how the legislature as a whole (both parties), have used redistricting to secure their incumbency and rig the game. It is true that many of the decision makers mentioned were Democrats, but let us not forget who was in power to make those decisions. No characterization presented by Prof. Johnson was not anything I haven’t had to pay money to learn in school and in popular reporting. I was shocked to see C. Blanco want to protect either the public or the Commission from a presentation that outlined the fact that the legislature (Democratically controlled) created secret pacts and made important decisions based on self interest. I hope C. Blanco will read my letter and be surprised to learn that we, the public, already know the legislature is corrupt....that’s why your there. And you are there because you were expected to be able to put your own biases and your own self interest aside

and do what's right for ALL of California, not just the part you agree with. Having read every word of testimony, at least what is publicly available, I can say in good conscience that the Citizens Redistricting Commission is a wonderfully constructed group that does seem to have the right heading. But C. Blanco has differentiated herself from the group by displaying the very bias she accuses others of. I urge her and the commission to pull yourselves back, and put your integrity forward. We are counting on every one of you to save our state! And please don't ever invite a guest to speak to you and then demean them. Good luck in your work.

Wendy Schindler