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Mr. Daniel Claypool, Executive Director  
CA Citizens Redistricting Commission  
Via E-mail  
Daniel.Claypool@crc.ca.gov  
VotersFirstAct@crc.ca.gov

Re: Assembly and Senate District Boundaries;  
Simi Valley, Ventura County

Dear Mr. Claypool and Honorable Commissioners:

The Simi Valley Chamber of Commerce, ("Chamber"), one of the four, Five Star Accredited Chambers in the State of California, writes this letter on behalf of its 800 Simi Valley member businesses. These businesses range in size from small storefronts to multi-million dollar corporations. The Chamber respectfully requests that the Commission include: 1) the entire City of Simi Valley in one Ventura County Assembly District and 2) all Ventura County cities in one Senate District. Our members urge you to adopt the Chamber's recommendations regarding the redistricting of Simi Valley and Ventura County for the reasons stated below.

**I. Concerns Regarding Ventura County Assembly Districts**

**A. Historic and Current Assembly District Boundaries**

Prior to 1973, Ventura County formed a single Assembly District. From 1973 until 2001, Simi Valley remained intact in one Assembly District, albeit separated from the core of Ventura County. In 2001, new district lines were drawn that divided the City of Simi Valley between Assembly Districts 37 and 38. Simi Valley is the only Ventura County city split between these two Districts and is the sole Ventura County city in District 38. The Chamber recommends a return to the historic District boundaries as more consistent with the Voters First Act priorities than any other approach.

## **B. Voters First Act Priorities for Drawing District Boundaries Support the Chamber's Recommendations**

### **1. Districts shall comply with federal law.**

The Voters First Act requires the Commission to establish Districts in compliance with the U.S. Constitution and the federal Voting Rights Act. Inclusion of the entire City of Simi Valley in a Ventura County Assembly District is consistent with the mandates of the Act.

### **2. Districts shall be geographically contiguous.**

All of Ventura County is geographically contiguous; therefore, the inclusion of all Ventura County cities in a common Assembly District meets this redistricting priority. As boundaries are currently drawn, Simi Valley is not geographically contiguous with other cities in the 38th Assembly District. The Santa Susana Hills surround Simi Valley on three sides and separate it from the City and County of Los Angeles. There is, in fact, a natural boundary between Simi Valley and Los Angeles County. Prior to the construction of the Ronald Reagan freeway in 1984, a long and winding two-lane mountain pass road was the only route between Simi Valley and Los Angeles. Currently, the old mountain pass road and the freeway remain the only access routes between Simi Valley and the City of Los Angeles. However, the freeway does not alter the lack of geographic contiguity between Simi Valley and Los Angeles.

### **3. To the extent possible, Districts shall respect the geographic integrity of any city, county, city and county, neighborhood or community of interest.**

The Chamber's recommendation for creation of a voting District that places the entire City of Simi Valley in a single Assembly District with other Ventura County cities complies with both the letter and the spirit of the Voters First Act. Creation of a District comprised of Ventura County cities not only makes sense geographically, but also makes sense because Simi Valley, its sister cities in Ventura County, and Ventura County, form a "neighborhood or community of interest." This approach respects the geographic integrity of our "city, county, city and county," and the economic and social framework of the region.

The County cities' varied and deep interactions with each other demonstrate that they share common social and economic interests that form a "neighborhood or community of interest." Listed below are just a few of many possible examples of how Ventura County, and the cities within the County, are aligned through government, commerce and social networks.

- **Ventura Council of Governments** - This is an active joint powers authority representing all of the cities within Ventura County as well as the County itself. Mayors of Ventura County cities regularly participate in this organization to facilitate cooperative sub regional and regional planning, coordination and technical assistance on issues of mutual concern.
- **Ventura County Transportation Commission** – Through this Commission, Ventura County mayors oversee highway, bus, aviation, rail and bicycle activity, and control the

use of government funds for countywide transportation projects. The coordination of transportation services between Ventura County cities is invaluable to the social and economic fabric of the region.

- **Ventura County Judicial System** - The Ventura County District Attorney works out of the central courthouse in the city of Ventura, juvenile hall in Oxnard, and the east county courthouse in Simi Valley. One central jail, operated by the Ventura County Sheriff, serves all local law enforcement agencies operating in Ventura County.
- **Ventura County Social Services** - The County provides foster care, senior care, nursing care, children and family services, employment assistance, and healthcare through the County Hospital. These are just a few of many County social services available to County residents.
- **Trash Disposal** - The countywide landfill is located in Ventura County adjacent to the northwest corner of Simi Valley. Annexation of the landfill to the City of Simi Valley is currently under discussion. If the site is annexed, the primary landfill for all of Ventura County will be located in Simi Valley.
- **Economic Development Collaborative Ventura County (“EDC-VC”)** - The EDC-VC bridges the development gap between the public and private sectors. The organization’s Board of Directors is comprised of elected officials from nine Ventura County cities including Simi Valley, two elected County Supervisors plus leaders from the private sector. The EDC-VC enhances the area’s economic health and vitality by focusing on the attraction, retention and expansion of businesses in Ventura County. Since 2001, the EDC-VC has created or retained 1500 Ventura County jobs. The economic impact of these jobs on Ventura County for the 5-year period 2001 – 2006 is estimated at \$177 million.
- **Chambers of Commerce Alliance of Ventura and Santa Barbara Counties (“Chamber Alliance”)** - Not only Ventura County and city governments coordinate their activities to enhance the quality of life of resident voters; businesses across the County also work together to achieve success. Nine Ventura County Chambers work together through the Chamber Alliance, to address legislative and policy matters of concern to all Ventura County businesses. The Alliance routinely brings the opinions and concerns of Ventura County businesses to the attention of elected representatives in Sacramento and Washington D.C.<sup>1</sup>

The historic, extensively coordinated, cooperative participation of Ventura County cities and businesses in numerous councils and alliances demonstrates that these cities form a “community of interest” whose goal is to maximize the quality of life of residents and the productivity of

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<sup>1</sup> The Redistricting Commission will receive a letter from the Chambers of Commerce Alliance of Ventura and Santa Barbara Counties that will further clarify the “community of interests” shared by Ventura County cities. The Simi Valley Chamber of Commerce joins in those comments.

businesses in Ventura County. The goals of this “community of interest” are distinct from and often conflict with the goals of the City and County of Los Angeles. Los Angeles is a large metropolitan area with large metropolitan issues. Simi Valley and its sister Ventura County cities are small cities that share concerns common to small cities. Los Angeles and Simi Valley, and Los Angeles and Ventura Counties are not part of a “neighborhood or community of interest”.

## **II. Concerns Regarding Ventura County Senate Districts**

### **A. Historic and Current Senate District Boundaries**

Until 1973, all of Ventura County was included in a single Senate District. In 1973, Santa Barbara and Ventura Counties were combined to form Senate District 18. However, a significant portion of southeast Ventura County, including Simi Valley, was excised from the new District 18 and was simply tacked on to portions of Los Angeles County to form a new Senate District 19. Over the ensuing years, the boundaries of the Ventura County Senate District became increasingly convoluted. Today, Senate District 19 includes Santa Barbara County, southern Ventura County and a portion of Los Angeles County, including Santa Clarita. Senate District 17, today, includes northern Ventura County, northern Los Angeles County and portions of San Bernardino County. These boundaries are completely illogical.

### **B. Voters First Act Priorities for Drawing District Boundaries Support the Chamber’s Recommendations**

All of the points stated above pertaining to the need to respect the geographic integrity of Ventura County and its cities, as well as the “neighborhood or community of interest” that the County forms, are equally applicable in the context of drawing Senate District boundaries. As currently drawn, Senate Districts 17 and 19 boundaries respect neither the geographic integrity nor the “communities of interest” within the region. The Chamber’s proposal to include Ventura County and its cities within a single Senate District is the only logical way to meet the redistricting priorities set forth in the Voters First Act.

## **III. Requested Commission Findings**

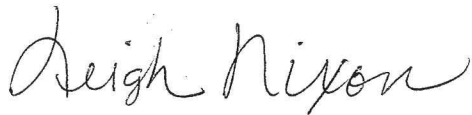
The Chamber respectfully recommends that the Voters First Act requires the Commission to include the entire City of Simi Valley in a single Assembly District with its contiguous sister Ventura County cities. Simi Valley simply should not be in a voting District that includes part of the City or County of Los Angeles.

Further, the Chamber recommends that all of Ventura County should form a single Assembly District and should remain intact in a single Senate District. All of the County is geographically contiguous and is further joined by an intricate government, commercial and social network that forms a “community of interest.” Fair and effective representation requires that the Commission respect the Ventura County “community of interest” in the creation of new voting districts.

If the 2010 census indicates that Ventura County population exceeds the limit for a single Ventura County Assembly District, but is insufficient to fully populate a second Ventura County

Assembly District, the Chamber urges the Commission to look to Santa Barbara County, as necessary, to satisfy population requirements for a second Ventura County Assembly District. Although Simi Valley does not interact with Los Angeles County through government agencies or economic coalitions, Simi Valley does interact with its neighbors in Santa Barbara County through organizations like the Chambers of Commerce Alliance of Ventura and Santa Barbara Counties which is referenced above. There is a much greater commonality of interests between Ventura County and Santa Barbara County than is found between Simi Valley and Los Angeles County. Lastly, if census population results demand that Ventura County form two Assembly Districts, those two Districts should be joined to form a single Senate District for Ventura County representation.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Leigh Nixon". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the printed name and title.

Leigh Nixon  
President & CEO

Cc: Mr. R. Wilcox, Rob.Wilcox@crc.ca.gov