

April 7, 2011

Citizens Redistricting Commission
1130 K Street, Suite 101
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Griffith Park Community of Interest

Dear Sirs and Madams:

I would like to urge you to keep together Griffith Park and the communities that touch it in the legislative districts you draw. Currently, this one park, and the very similar neighborhoods that abut it, are represented by three state Assemblymembers, two state Senators, and four U.S. Congressmembers. During a recent grassroots lobbying effort, residents in the same neighborhood group had to petition a very large group of legislators, causing confusion, dilution of resources, and lack of accountability.

It is particularly important to keep Griffith Park and the surrounding neighborhoods in one state legislative district because Griffith Park, as a dynamic, well-patronized urban wilderness, continually seeks state grant money and other appropriations, for which funding originates at the state level. Furthermore, the strong entertainment-industry presence in the area makes many area residents, and the local economy, dependent on the fortunes of the Entertainment Industry, which is largely regulated by the state.

It is furthermore preferable that the Park and surrounding neighborhoods are drawn into one Assembly district (not just one Senate District), as generally, Assemblymembers, with their more manageable district sizes, are often more approachable and closer to the people they represent.

Griffith Park is the largest municipal park with "urban wilderness" in the United States. That means it is the largest expanse of public land, surrounded entirely by municipal neighborhoods, that features largely unspoiled, untouched "virgin" lands, in the entire nation.

The neighborhoods surrounding Griffith Park are as follows: the City of Burbank, most notably the "Rancho" subdivision of equestrian properties in the south of the city; Universal City (including Universal Studios); and the Los Angeles neighborhoods of: the Hollywood Hills (including Hollywood Knoll,

Cahuenga Terrace, Hollywoodland, Beachwood Canyon, and The Oaks); Los Feliz; Silver Lake; and Atwater Village.

The communities that touch Griffith Park share many things in common, making them, together, a community of interest. All feature similar socio-economic qualities, similar employment patterns, trail access, park egress and park access, distinct traffic patterns, equestrian trails, equestrian-zoned properties, foothill elevation, urban watershed pathways, increased municipal fauna presence, similar crime patterns, and a similar history and outlook.

For example, the neighborhoods surrounding Griffith Park all share issues like:

Similar socio-economic traits and employment patterns. The neighborhoods surrounding Griffith Park have a long history of entertainment-related employment and focus, not just based on the large number of films and television programs filmed in the Park itself. The original Walt Disney studios (and Disney's residence) were just a few blocks south of the Park, and several studios, including NBC-Universal, Dreamworks, and Warner Bros., to name a few, continue to adjoin the Park. Based on this tradition and current proximity, it is estimated that as many as one out of five residents in the neighborhoods surrounding Griffith Park are employed in the entertainment industry in some way, and are thus heavily dependent of the economics of the same.

Similar traffic patterns. The neighborhoods surrounding the Park face more traffic on weekends than weekdays, patterns that are diametrically opposed to other neighborhoods in close proximity.

The Equestrian lifestyle. Each side of the park has equestrian areas, and many of the neighborhoods bordering the park feature horse properties, which are otherwise rare in the modern urban context, and getting rarer. Preserving the semi-rural nature of the equestrian properties and the other park-adjacent properties is a major goal of area homeowners.

Unique microclimates. The areas around Griffith Park are at a slightly higher elevation than the rest of the Los Angeles and San Fernando Valley basins, resulting in unique (often colder) microclimates in the adjacent neighborhoods, particularly the canyon neighborhoods. And because of the significantly higher elevation of the several peaks of Griffith Park, all neighborhoods share the same water drainage and runoff issues.

Urban fauna presence. Griffith Park is home to mule deer, coyotes, hawks, and several other wildlife species not typically seen in Los Angeles County urban neighborhoods. The presence of these fauna, most notably coyotes and hawks, presents the inhabitants of the neighborhoods that touch Griffith Park with the same challenges, particularly for pet ownership and refuse disposal.

Shared history and outlook. The developments immediately around Griffith Park were settled at approximately the same time, immediately after the donation of the Park by Colonel Griffith to the City of Los Angeles. Thus, the neighborhoods around the Park share similar architecture, "feel," "look," and outlooks.

Similar crime profile. The neighborhoods surrounding Griffith Park, because of their semi-rural or wilderness-adjacent character, face similar crime profiles. All have occasional issues with drunk driving through the neighborhoods after special events, individuals passing through the residential neighborhoods to commit crime in the Park, individuals passing through the neighborhoods for sexual encounters in the Park, and drivers speeding through the neighborhoods to access the Park. Those neighborhoods thus share many of the same concerns when it comes to crime and criminal-justice issues.

For these reasons and others, the communities surrounding Griffith Park should be kept in the same legislative district. It is important to keep communities which share so many unique characteristics together, to allow the residents of the local neighborhoods to petition their governments effectively on the unique concerns detailed above. We thank you for your consideration of these points and concerns as you embark on drawing the lines that will affect our neighborhoods.

Sincerely,

LARRY KAPLAN

