

April 15, 2011

Dear Commissioners,

You have a historic opportunity to draw legislative districts that make sense for California. I hope you will seize that opportunity and keep San Joaquin County together in a single Congressional district, a single state Senate district, and two state Assembly districts.

As you know, San Joaquin County is currently divided between two Congressional districts, two Senate districts, and several Assembly districts. This scheme arbitrarily fractures San Joaquin County and prevents its residents from electing legislators of their choosing. As a result, none of the legislators who currently represent San Joaquin County actually lives here. This arbitrary division is particularly problematic in Stockton, where the district lines cut through neighborhoods, school districts, and hospital service areas.

In my role as President of St. Joseph's Medical Center, which is located in Stockton, I can attest to the fact that Stockton and the other communities in San Joaquin County are interconnected. They share the same hospitals, including St. Joseph's, the same schools, and the same interests—most notably agriculture. However, St. Joseph's is currently gerrymandered into the 18th Congressional District, which means we are located in a different district than much of Stockton and San Joaquin County, the communities we serve. If I were to drive one block west from St. Joseph's, I would be in the 11th Congressional District. St. Joseph's is also gerrymandered into a different Assembly district than many of the adjacent neighborhoods. This arbitrary division of downtown Stockton makes no sense, and you should correct it.

Downtown Stockton should not be treated merely as a pool of extra population; it should be respected as a community and kept whole. Stockton and San Joaquin County currently lack a voice at the table both in Sacramento and Washington, where critical debates about health care, housing, and the economy are taking place. The outcome of those debates will shape this county for decades to come—Stockton has one of the worst foreclosure crises in the nation, for example—and we need a voice at the table. I respectfully request that you take this opportunity to draw common-sense districts that keep Stockton and San Joaquin County together.

Sincerely,

Donald J. Wiley
President and CEO
St. Joseph's Medical Center