

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

Dear Commissioners:

My name is Barbara Collins and I live and have a business in Atwater, which is on Highway 99, north of the city of Merced, in Merced County.

I grew up on a rural farm in Turlock, in Stanislaus County, and went on to own and operate three optical stores in Turlock and Merced, a photography business and a restaurant in Merced. My husband and I moved several years ago to Atwater and now operate a thirty acre working horse ranch. We board, train, breed, raise and show performance quarter horses.

I consider my community to be the cities along Highway 99. To the north we shop and have customers from Modesto, Turlock, Ceres, etc. in Stanislaus County. This is where I grew up and went to grammar school. We also draw from as far as Stockton and will occasionally shop for things there that are not available in our immediate area. To the south, we identify best with Merced County communities of Atwater and the city of Merced. I commuted to Merced to a private high school from Turlock and ultimately have continued to have business in both Stanislaus and Merced Counties. We rarely go to the mountain areas, other than an occasional ski trip or to visit my son, who lives in the foothills of Calaveras County.

Our business base has always been the nearby communities north and south of Highway 99. We share the major thoroughfare of the Highway and we are a mixture of rural and small cities. Our economy is based primarily on agriculture. We are beginning to see positive growth from our new UC in Merced, although the economy has given us many challenges, particularly in the Merced area. The mountain areas were not affected as badly in terms of the housing market. We showed a tremendous "boon" which set us up for a tremendous "bust". The mountain areas, that have tourism, did not have the highs and lows as much as Highway 99 corridor has had. In the small cities along Highway 99 in Stanislaus and Merced Counties, we have mostly service related businesses for our residents that work in agriculture, for the government or for our schools, colleges and universities.

Please keep our Highway 99 communities together and don't connect us with the mountain areas of Mariposa, Tuolumne, Madera or Fresno Counties. Those areas do not share our economic base and rely on tourism, national parks and recreation that we don't have in the valley. The mountain areas have their own intrinsic issues that do not pertain to the valley floor. In our area we have more in common with Modesto/Stockton to the north than Madera or Fresno further south.

My son, Glen Sanchez, said he is also going to write to you. He and his wife and family live in Arnold, in the foothills of Calaveras County.

Thank you so much for the work that you are doing.

Sincerely,



Barbara Collins