

From: VICA [REDACTED]
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Message Body:
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Protect Valley communities and interests while redistricting

This year ordinary citizens will have the opportunity to have a voice in a process that has historically been dominated by politics. After each census, state and Congressional district boundaries are redrawn and, this time around, the decisions are being made by the Citizens Redistricting Commission. The initiatives that created the commission (Propositions 11 and 20) received overwhelming support because voters wanted to remove politicians from the process and put it in the hands of the people.

Voters decided to take control of redistricting after years of frustration with gerrymandered districts crafted only to keep incumbents in power—not best represent the communities. Far too often neighborhoods have been split and oddly-contorted lines fill district maps.

Now we must make sure the concerns that led to the passage of Propositions 11 and 20 are addressed by creating fair districts. The aim of good redistricting should be to keep communities of interest together where lawmakers not only understand the needs of their constituents, but live among them.

The Valley Industry & Commerce Association (VICA) has joined forces with several Valley groups to form the San Fernando Valley Redistricting Coalition. The group (comprised of VICA, Valley Vote, the United Chambers of Commerce, Regional Black Chamber of Commerce and Greater San Fernando Valley Chamber of Commerce) support a set of principles to guide redistricting. The principles define the San Fernando

Valley and encourage commissioners to ensure the legislators who represent the Valley have a strong connection to the region.

The San Fernando Valley is defined in the principles as the area bounded by the Santa Susana Mountains to the north and west, Mulholland Drive to the south and the San Gabriel Mountains to the east. It lies wholly within Los Angeles County and includes the cities of: Burbank, Calabasas, Glendale, Hidden Hills, San Fernando and the Valley portion of the City of Los Angeles.

Out of the 12 state Senate and Assemblymembers who represent portions of the Valley, only three of those officials are current Valley residents. And while we have been lucky to have lawmakers who understand the Valley's unique needs, the new districts that will be created should keep Valley communities together and ensure Valley residents are representing these areas. The coalition wants to see these areas of common interest protected.

The desire to see the San Fernando Valley treated as its own community of interest is not new. In fact, LAUSD and LADWP divide the Valley into its own bloc. Many nonprofit groups, such as Habitat for Humanity, also recognize the region's individuality and distinguish the Valley from the City of Los Angeles.

Supporters of the principles feel the best way to ensure equal and satisfactory representation for the Valley is to maximize the number of districts that are wholly within the San Fernando Valley. This can also be accomplished when districts do stray outside Valley boundaries by ensuring the Valley segment includes the majority of the voters in that district and similar communities of interest are protected.

The goals of the coalition's redistricting recommendations are nonpartisan and are only in the interest of obtaining the best and most effective representation for Valley businesses and residents. You simply cannot adequately represent an area, or truly understand the needs of a community, that you do not live in.

The coalition urges Valley residents and leaders to attend the Citizens Redistricting Commission's April 30 public hearing at San Fernando City Hall. Come and show your support for the principles and your community. You can also pledge your support for the principles and join the coalition at www.wearesfv.com <<http://www.wearesfv.com/>> .

The lines are only redrawn every 10 years, giving the districts that will be created a lasting impact on the businesses and residents of these communities. Citizens finally have a significant role in the process and it is important to protect the interests of the Valley rather than fragmenting its tight-knit neighborhoods.

Stuart Waldman is president of the Valley Industry and Commerce Association (VICA). VICA is a business advocacy organization that represents employers throughout the Los

Angeles County region at the local, state and federal levels of government.