

Subject: Santa Clarita Valley Redistricting

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From: Berta González Barbier [REDACTED]

To: <votersfirstact@crc.ca.gov>

Conversation: Santa Clarita Valley Redistricting

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May 17, 2011

Honorable Citizens Redistricting Commission members,

I am a Los Angeles native, 60 years of age, and have lived in several communities throughout Los Angeles County before finally purchasing my home in Santa Clarita 18 years ago. I am a bilingual first generation American of Hispanic ancestry. I live in the community of Canyon Country within the City of Santa Clarita. Canyon Country is the largest and most populous community within the City and the most ethnically diverse area of the Santa Clarita Valley. I take care of my disabled brother, which has prevented me from attending meetings held outside of the Santa Clarita Valley (SCV). I have requested you hold a meeting here so that others and I could familiarize you with our area and testify before you locally but it does not appear that my request will be granted so I will enclose my comments here.

The entire Santa Clarita Valley is not all one city due to the injustice of another government agency, the **Local Agency Formation Commission** commonly referred to as LAFCO. When we incorporated as a City in 1987, we requested that our new city include the entire Santa Clarita Valley but LAFCO felt the result would produce too large a city and denied our request. We have been trying to remedy that injustice ever since. Many communities and tracts have subsequently annexed into the City of Santa Clarita and other areas continue to request

annexation, there are several areas in process now.

We are located in northern Los Angeles County and abut Ventura County to the west. To be specific, I believe the Santa Clarita Valley extends north to beyond Castaic, south to the City of Los Angeles border generally around the junction of the *Interstate 5 (I-5)* and State Route *14 (SR 14)*, west to the Ventura County line, and east to the community of Acton. After Acton, you descend the grade into the Antelope Valley. While the Commission has discussed nesting us with the Antelope Valley and I would not object, it appears those residents are not interested in that proposal.

We have requested that you not split our valley into separate districts. I was dismayed to hear while watching the hearings on the internet that were held in San Fernando, Lancaster and Norco that you are considering splitting us up and the comment “well they are not one city”. LAFCO prevented one unified city within the Santa Clarita Valley, but that was our intent. In the Santa Clarita Valley we all share many social and economic interests. Several examples are:

One same hospital, Henry Mayo Newhall Memorial Hospital (Henry Mayo) which also serves Piru and Fillmore to the west, and all the way up to the Kern County line going north; one same Santa Clarita Valley Chamber of Commerce to support our local businesses; one same water wholesaler, the Castaic Lake Water Agency; one same Junior and Senior High School District, the William S. Hart Union High School District; one same community college, College of the Canyons; one same series of interconnecting Public Trails and Open Space Districts; one same Los Angeles County Sheriff’s Department to address public safety issues; one same Los Angeles County Fire Department for fire suppression and other emergency services; one same Business Enterprise Zone to attract and retain businesses, creating local jobs; one same local newspaper, The Signal; one same local radio station, KHTS AM 1220: one same fierce determination to remain a safe and beautiful area.

Additionally, in the Santa Clarita Valley we also use the same parks, attend the same churches, travel the same streets and roads, and shop at the same stores. We eat in the same restaurants, go to the same libraries, patronize the same barber and beauty shops, deal with the same issues of traffic, pollution, and spill over crime, etc caused by our close proximity to the huge metropolitan City of Los Angeles (LA).

The residents of the City of Santa Clarita approved and continue to fund an Open Space District to purchase open land. Our open space creates a buffer and surrounds our valley, not just our city, with open space, separating us from the San Fernando Valley area of the City of Los Angeles. Many Hispanics such as me moved to this area to enjoy a higher quality of life and escape the highly dense areas of the San Fernando Valley and all of its attendant problems of violent crime and gangs, deteriorating neighborhoods, and the obvious neglect by residents and City of Los Angeles elected leaders. Many young families also left because of the poorly performing schools and their desire to enroll their children in our award winning schools here in the SCV. It would be a terrible travesty to pair areas that we sacrificed to move out of with the Santa Clarita Valley.

Economically, not currently within the city limits but within our valley, there is an approved major expansion of the Disney Studios at Golden Oak Ranch, which will provide approximately 4000 new jobs. We have several other smaller production companies in the SCV and local filming is vital to our economy. It is very important for the Studios to deal with only one Congressional district when dealing with Federal issues, and one State Senate, Assembly, and Board of Equalization district when dealing with State issues and is not divided among two or more districts creating more red tape, delays and cost over runs. We want to keep as much filming as possible in the State of California and within the Santa Clarita Valley. Our economy depends on it.

We have also been working closely with the County of Los Angeles to develop a planning tool we call One Valley One Vision to ensure cohesive future planning and development between city and unincorporated county areas of the Santa Clarita Valley. Several major residential developments have already been approved, among them Newhall Ranch with 20,885 homes extending to the Ventura County line on our western border along State Route **126** (SR **126**), and staying within LA County north along **Interstate 5 (I-5)** Centennial at Tejon Ranch with an already approved 23,000 homes, and several other projects in the Castaic area. To the east in Canyon Country, we have Skyline Ranch, Golden Valley Ranch, and Vista Canyon Ranch developments among several others. I am attaching a map of approved developments to give you a better idea of the planned and approved growth just within our valley.

With all due respect to Dr. Gabino Aguirre, I disagree that the Santa Clarita Valley does not form a community of interest with Piru and Fillmore to our west. Historically we all share having been part of the Rancho San Francisco land grant owned by the Del Valle family. We also share the Santa Clara River watershed whose downstream area is called Heritage Valley and consists of Piru, Fillmore, and Santa Paula. The upstream portion of the Santa Clara River watershed is known as Soledad Canyon and includes the communities of Acton, Vincent, Ravenna, and Agua Dulce. Floods and droughts affect all of these areas.

Additionally, many of the residents of Piru and Fillmore work at the United States Postal Service Santa Clarita Processing & Distribution Center facility near State Route **126** (SR **126**), and at the Valencia Industrial Center, and the Valencia Commerce Center. They also attend College of the Canyons, seek medical attention from local doctors and dentists and services at Henry Mayo Newhall Memorial Hospital (Henry Mayo), shop at our SCV shopping centers, and of course travel our local streets and highways, particularly State Route **126** (SR **126**) and **Interstate 5** (**I-5**). They also sell their produce, honey, nuts, etc at our local Farmer's Markets in Newhall and College of the Canyons (COC), and at our Saugus Swap Meet. Residents of Santa Clarita travel State Route **126** (SR **126**) to access the beaches at Oxnard and Ventura, visit Rancho Camulos and Lake Piru, and support the farm fresh produce stands along the way. Many fundraising events have traditionally been held at the Piru Mansion. We are neighbors and share many things.

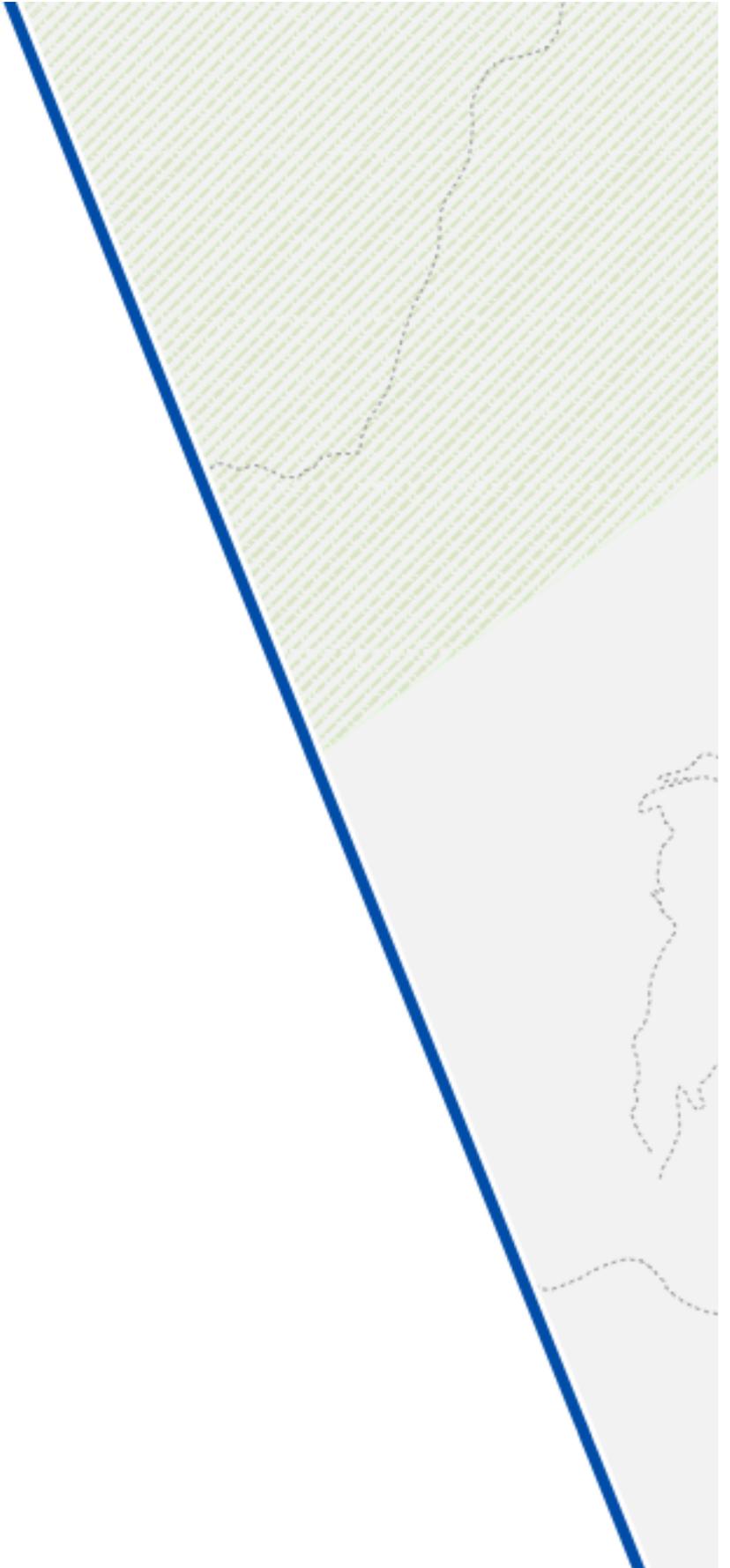
When the Santa Clarita Valley suffers natural disasters such as fires or earthquakes, Fillmore, Piru, and the Simi Valley share our same fate and we theirs since our fault lines and open space districts with dry brush hillsides abut theirs. I would argue that these areas are all contiguous. Simi Valley residents have testified that they would like to nest with Santa Clarita and I believe we are very similar communities. When I began looking for a home to purchase years ago, my preferred choices were Santa Clarita and Simi Valley.

I would close by asking you to please keep our Santa Clarita Valley whole and not pair us with areas of the San Fernando Valley (SFV), if possible. This entire valley is cut off from the SFV and LA during natural disasters and we are forced by geography to function as one community. We are growing to the east, west and north, but not to the south. We are one community in this valley and should not be

divided into separate districts. I hope the information I provided will help you determine which areas are a better fit to nest us with, and illustrate which direction our major growth is heading. Thank you.

Sincerely,
Berta González-Harper

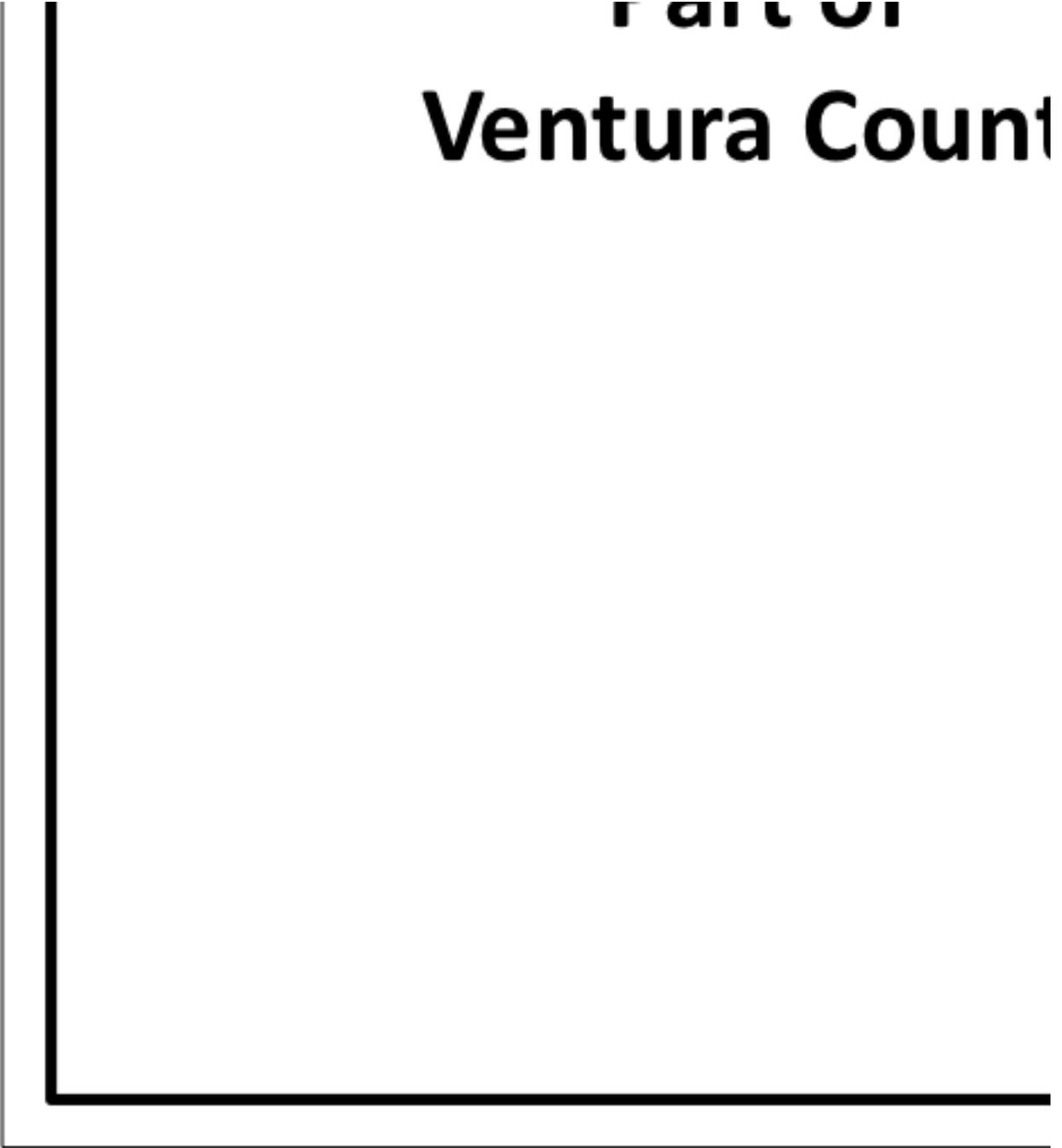






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