



May 18, 2011

Citizens Redistricting Commission  
1130 K Street, Ste. 101  
Sacramento, CA 95814  
[REDACTED]

Re: Boundaries for the 23rd<sup>o</sup> Senate District

Dear Redistricting Commission Members:

I am writing on behalf of the residents of Bel Air Skycrest to offer input on the proposed Senate/Assembly redistricting.

Bel Air Skycrest is just south of Mulholland Drive, at the top of the Santa Monica Mountains, a mile west of the San Diego Freeway. I grew up here, so I have a fairly long perspective (some 40 years' worth) on local issues. As long as I can remember, there have always been special problems and needs binding this community together. First it was the Mission Canyon landfill and years of political and legal battles to close it and keep it closed; now it is the twin issues of development and preservation. We have a lot at stake up here, and this is why we cannot support the proposal to use Mulholland as a dividing line for Senate Districts, putting those of us on one side of Mulholland in one district and our neighbors on the other side of the road (in some cases just yards to the north) in another.

In fact, our community already has a Council District boundary line that runs down the middle of Mulholland, from the San Diego Freeway to dirt Mulholland. **So we know from painful, frustrating experience the kind of problems created by such a split.** As hillside residents, those of us on the north side of Mulholland (CD 5) and those on the south side (CD 11) constitute a clear – and clearly shared -- “community of interest.” The Santa Monica Mountains themselves, along with our proximity to one of the city’s major transportation corridors, the 405 freeway, and to the oversaturated two-mile stretch of religious, cultural, and educational institutions known as the *Mulholland Institutional Corridor*, define many shared issues – environmental preservation, public safety, quality of life. Our needs and our sympathies are united. Yet these lines drawn

by city politics divide and weaken us. When we need help solving some problem, our community has to win the support of not one but *two* council offices, one of which has no real built-in incentive to help us because we are not part of their constituency. We have to work twice as hard and jump through twice the bureaucratic hoops for every item, large or small. It is not efficient, it is not effective, and I can tell you from personal experience it makes for some very unhappy situations and constituents. And the community has suffered in very real ways as a result.

Take our long-time quest for a Master Plan for the Mulholland Institutional Corridor. The need to coordinate with two different Council Districts has made it impossible to achieve. A huge amount of time and effort has been wasted by citizens and politicians alike while we wait for the political planets to align. Meanwhile, unsafe and unchecked expansions continue and the situation on the corridor goes from bad to worse. As concerned residents, we try to keep track of what's going on, but the odds are not in our favor. Sometimes a project slips under our radar simply because, close though it may be geographically, it is technically located in the "other" district. A year or two ago, a situation occurred where one of the larger institutions, which happens to own property on both sides of Mulholland, actually filed an application for a project in CD11 under one of their CD5 addresses, thus avoiding the proper public notification process. So dividing a community like ours between districts, whether these are City Council or State Senate districts, is not a good thing.

In the realm of public safety, the Santa Monica Mountains on both sides of Mulholland are an extremely high risk fire area, as demonstrated by the series of fires that have broken out in the past few years in very close proximity to our neighborhood. The closest of these, the Mountain Gate/ Sepulveda Pass fire of September 4, 2010, was less than a mile away from us. Hillside neighborhoods were put on alert both in the Valley and on the Westside. The fact that these at-risk areas on both sides of Mulholland are currently consolidated in a single district (the 23<sup>rd</sup>) makes sense, both in terms of access to prevention resources and of emergency response during actual times of crisis. Do not dilute that representation. Our public safety depends on it – and when I say *our*, I refer not only to hillside residents like those of Bel Air Skycrest but also to the 4,000-plus students who spend their days on the Mulholland Institutional Corridor.

And then there is Mulholland itself. In addition to offering, for many of us, the only access route to and from our homes, schools and places of business (a powerful uniting factor as regards both our daily commutes and emergency services/evacuations), this two-lane country road is a designated Scenic Highway and Scenic Parkway. People come from all over the world to drive, walk, hike and bike along Mulholland and to take in the amazing city views from the scenic overlooks managed by the Mountains Recreation and Conservation Authority. This resource is enjoyed by the general public as well as the local residents and should be kept in one Senate District.

These are just a few of the reasons why it is absolutely essential that the dividing line between districts should not run smack down the middle of the Mulholland Scenic Parkway! Mulholland may *look* like a convenient dividing line, but it is actually the opposite. In fact, it is itself a resource in need of protection as well as a focal point for the shared community of interest that flanks both sides of the Santa Monica Mountains.

**The existing Senate District 23 boundaries (as shown on the 1991 map) work very well for this community.** If our Senate district boundaries go the way of our CD 5 and 11 Council District boundaries, it will be a disaster for these mountains and for all who live in and enjoy recreational and cultural use of them. Please heed this cautionary tale and ensure the ongoing ability of citizens and politicians to work together to protect and preserve this very important part of Los Angeles.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lois Becker". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned below the word "Respectfully,".

Lois Becker, President  
Bel Air Skycrest Property Owners' Association  
[REDACTED]  
Encino, CA 91426