

----- Original Message -----

Subject:To Correct Gerrymandering of US Congressional Districts in San Luis Obispo County and Bakersfield

Date:Thu, 26 May 2011 17:49:10 -0700

From:John Uebersax <[REDACTED]>

To:[REDACTED]

Dear Commission:

Attached please find a letter (pdf) file that requests action to correct two significant instances of gerrymandering in the 22nd US Congressional District.

Your kind assistance in acknowledging receipt of this email and attachment is most appreciated.

Sincerely,

John Uebersax

John Uebersax PhD
Paso Robles, California
[REDACTED] (mobile)



Uebersax - Further citizen comments_2011_05_26.pdf

337K

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Thursday, 26 May 2011

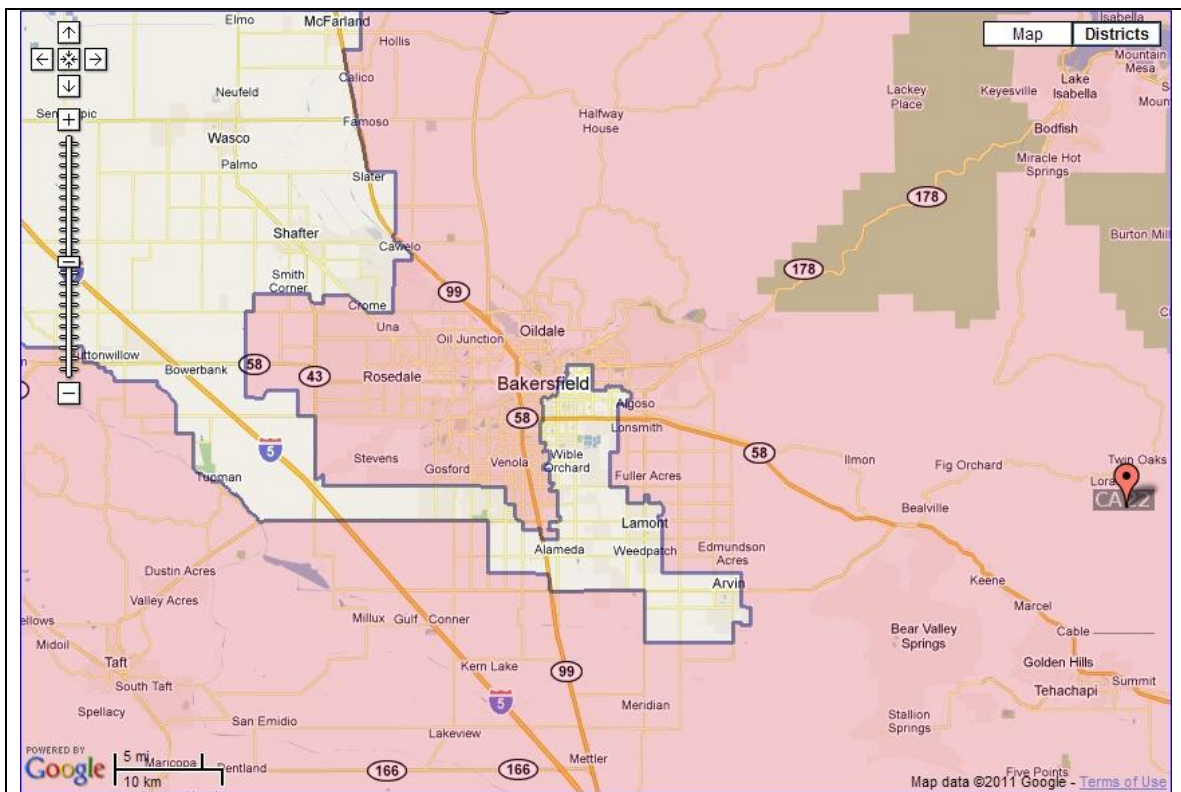
California Citizens Redistricting Commission
Sacramento, California (by email)

Dear Citizens Redistricting Commission:

Subject: Gerrymandering in the 22nd US Congressional District

In a previous letter to the Commission (May 23, 2011) I alluded to the possibility of drawing US Congressional District boundaries by means of some simple, objective, geometric algorithm. This is a very radical suggestion, at least as regards the possibility of its being implemented at the present time. I therefore make here two specific suggestions of a perhaps more practical and immediate nature. These relate to the elimination of two glaring instances of gerrymandering in California's 22nd Congressional and adjacent Districts. To assist with this discussion, two Figures are supplied below.

Figure 1 illustrates a pronounced irregularity in the borders of the 22nd (shaded region) and 20th (non-shaded region) US Congressional Districts. It will be seen how the 20th District extends into the boundaries of the 22nd, wrapping around to the west and south of Bakersfield, and then back to the north – so that Bakersfield is divided between the two Districts.



The eastern part of Bakersfield, it was my impression when recently driving through the area, contains large parts of the lower-income Hispanic and African-American communities. This suggests that the peculiar boundaries were created intentionally to include these groups in the more Democratic-leaning 20th District.

At face value, this highly irregular boundary is a clear case of gerrymandering. It lacks the merit of simplicity, and has the effect of dividing the city of Bakersfield, politically, against itself.

The irregular boundary also serves to help produce two 'safe districts' – a Democratic 20th District, and a Republican 22nd District. Safe districts by no means serve the citizens of California or American democracy. To illustrate: partly as a result of this boundary, the Republican incumbent US Congressman, Kevin McCarthy, was able to effectively run unopposed in the 22nd District in the last General Election (that is, his was the only name on the ballot). The Democratic party, conceding that the 22nd District is predominantly Republican, did not even field a Congressional candidate. As a result, McCarthy did not even campaign; there were no debates, and there was no public engagement with today's vital issues. This example serves to demonstrate how the intentional creation of 'safe districts' constitute an abuse of democracy, and serves nobody's best interests.

Those who actually drew this boundary may have had idealistic intentions – that is, they may have believed there was some principle of social justice served by attempting to produce two ethnically and culturally homogeneous Districts. Again, as mentioned in my letter of May 23, I believe this is a very mistaken notion, because it is ultimately divisive, and fails to recognize the deeper unity of all Californians. Moreover, as I also suggested, the 'homogeneity' theory, couched in terms of sociology and pseudo-science, is ultimately driven, in my opinion, by the joint political ambitions of the Democratic and Republican parties, and the corporate interests that fund both parties.

Stated in the form of a request, then, I:

1. Petition the Commission to correct this pronounced irregularity in the boundary between the 20th and 22nd US Congressional Districts in the city and vicinity of Bakersfield.

Second, I direct your attention to the boundaries of the 22nd and 23rd US Congressional Districts (Figure 2). The 23rd District corresponds to a narrow strip that hugs the coast from Oxnard to the southern edge of Monterey County. (We have a standing joke in San Luis Obispo County, that the 23rd District goes underwater at high tide.)



Besides being absurd at face value, the current boundaries have the effect of dividing San Luis Obispo County between two US Congressional Districts: the southern part of the county, including most of the city of San Luis Obispo itself, being placed in the 23rd District (with Oxnard!), and the northern part of the county falling within the 22nd (with Bakersfield, Mojave, and Lancaster!).

The Commission needs to understand that San Luis Obispo County is, in a very important sense, a single, unified group of people, with a common vision and a common destiny. We are attempting, in our own way, to lead the way in areas like sustainable living and effective county management of social services. We deserve our own distinct voice in Congress, and not to have our influence diluted and divided by swallowing it up in the 22nd and 23rd Districts.

Again, stated in the form of a specific request, then, I

2. Petition the Commission to rectify this problem and to place, by some means, San Luis Obispo County within a single US Congressional District.

Sincerely yours,

John S. Uebersax