

To the Citizens Redistricting Commission,

My name is Nathan Monroe. I have been a resident of Hughson in Stanislaus County for the last 4 years, but I spent almost all of my first 20 year here as well. I am also a Professor of Political Science at UC Merced, and previously was on faculty at the University of the Pacific (where I did some research with the San Joaquin County registrar of voters). I voted to pass both Propositions 11 and 20 and watched your public input hearing April 16th. Listening to the testimony and in particular your questions of those questions intrigued me.

In particular I was fascinated to hear all the testimony from various cities and counties asking to be kept whole and how individual Commissioners would ask, “but if you have to be split.” Those questions made me think about where I live and how difficult your challenge is. Keeping one county whole may cause another county to be balkanized and gerrymandered. How do you choose?

I kept thinking on the challenge in the northern San Joaquin Valley. Then I found out about the redistricting assistance centers you helped start. I decided to take an afternoon to go to one of the centers and play with some of the maps in my part of the state.

First, let me say the centers are a great resource and I hope they are getting lots of use. I had hoped to draw Assembly, Senate and Congressional maps but quickly discovered how hard it was and how much time it would take (again gaining even more respect for you and the challenges you have taken on) so I was only able to complete an Assembly map.

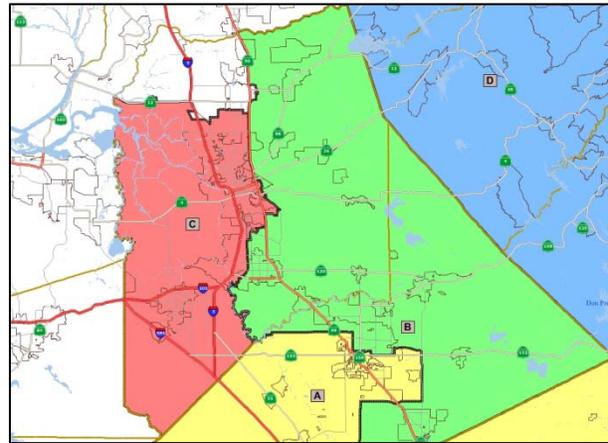
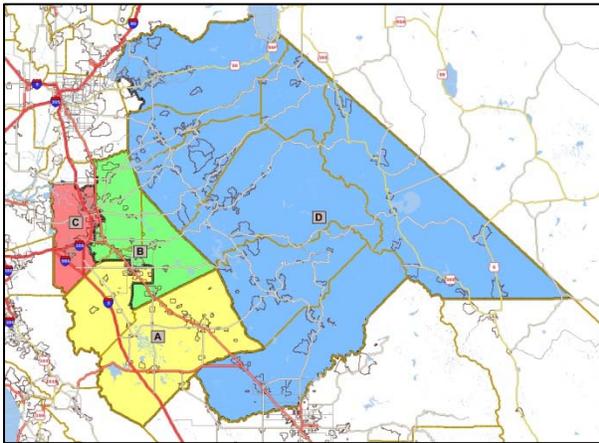
In drawing my proposal I started by looking at the criteria in the Constitution. Of course any maps should begin and end with the law. Next I looked at communities of interest I know about from my long history in the Valley. Two things stuck out in my mind. **First, the Sierras are very different from the Valley.** They have different roads. They have different economies. They have different demographics. They have different policy issues and concerns. One of the few big mistakes I think the judges made in the 1990’s was splitting Stanislaus and sending half of Modesto up into the hills. Before that all of Stanislaus was kept in the Valley. The Court’s action, which was perpetuated by the 2001 gerrymander, had a real negative impact on our representation in Sacramento. Thus I tried to keep the Valley districts in the Valley.

The other big community difference I see is between the North Valley and South Valley. The north San Joaquin Valley is made up of San Joaquin, Stanislaus and Merced. The south San Joaquin Valley is made up of Madera, Fresno, Kings, Tulare and Kern (Look up “Central Valley” on Wikipedia). Folks not from here tend to view the entire Valley all as one big homogeneous swath of crop land, but there really are major differences. We are all dependent on I-5 and Highway 99, but the types of crops we grow, the types of people who live here and even the water issues we face differ significantly depending on which part of the Valley you are in. So in drawing my maps, I tried to keep the north San Joaquin Valley as whole as possible with as many representatives as possible.

Finally, the other factor I considered was fairness. While that isn’t a criteria, it certainly is your ultimate goal. So what does that mean in the north Valley? Before I went to the center I figured out there are about 1.5 million people in the north Valley. That should be enough to draw three whole Assembly districts with about 60,000 people to spare. **So having three districts wholly in the north San Joaquin Valley strikes me as fair.**

Then the question becomes how to divide them up. I know a lot of people from San Joaquin County testified that they wanted their county to make up all of one Assembly seat and most of a second Assembly seat. I think that would be completely unfair to Stanislaus County. Because Merced County likely has to be kept whole, it is going to be the majority of the voters in one Assembly District. ***If San Joaquin makes up the majority of two Assembly Districts it means Stanislaus could be treated like a second-class citizen.*** I tried to find an alternative, but all of those involved connecting parts of the Valley with the Sierras, which as I said before is not fair to the Valley or the hills.

So instead, I would recommend that what is "fair" in my community is to have each of the three counties make up a majority of one Assembly District. That would ensure each representation. San Joaquin would still make up a significant part of a second district, just not a majority.



DISTRICT A: I started this district with Merced and then added people in Stanislaus. My original goal was to split no cities. However, my understanding is that you have directed your staff to identify areas where a single racial/ethnic group can constitute a majority of the voting age population. I could not achieve this without either splitting Modesto or Madera County. Since Madera is a different community of interest, I split Modesto to create a seat that was 50.1% 18+ Latino. 55% of the people are in Merced and 45% in Stanislaus giving Merced its voice.

DISTRICT B: Because I had to split Stanislaus, I wanted to make sure the rest of the county stayed with the San Joaquin Valley. So I took eastern Stanislaus north along HWY-99 to Ripon, Manteca and other cities east of HWY-99. For Commissioners not from the Valley, this is actually another way the Valley is split, with different types of crops grown on either side of the freeway. 65% of the people are in Stanislaus and 35% in San Joaquin.

DISTRICT C: I struggled with what to do with Tracy as it is a little-bit Valley and a little-bit Bay Area. So I looked at historic maps and found that Tracy has been with Stockton since at least the 1970's. If it worked for judges twice (a good endorsement) and Legislature twice (not so good) it worked for me, so I just ran straight up I-5 to combined Tracy with Lathrop and Stockton. 100% of the population is in San Joaquin.

LODI: The only part of the northern San Joaquin Valley I did not put in a Valley district was Lodi. As I said before, there were about 60,000 people to spare. While Lodi could easily be included with other parts

of the Valley, they are the farthest north and also share ties with parts of southern Sacramento County like Galt.

DISTRICT D: Just as I think it is important for the north Valley to be fairly represented, I wanted to make sure the Sierras would also have a voice. I drew a district that started in Madera and ran north to El Dorado. In order to balance the population I cut out El Dorado Hills. As the regional wrap up I believe Stan Forbes said this area was more like Sacramento than the Sierras so I trust his judgment.

NORTHERN CALIFORNIA: To make sure I have not painted the Commission into a corner, I also checked and made sure that everything remaining in Northern California and the Bay Area was enough to draw 23 whole Assembly Districts. If you were to take my recommendations it won't force you to split someone else up.

I hope my work is helpful to you. Just drawing these four districts was a significant challenge and as I said before gave me a new sense of just how hard your job is going to be.

Sincerely,

Nathan W. Monroe
Citizen of Stanislaus County