
Subject: East Bay districts: Congressional, State Senate and Assembly

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From: Rachel Kahn-Hut <[REDACTED]>

To: <[REDACTED]>

Conversation: East Bay districts: Congressional, State Senate and Assembly

Dear Commissioners,

I attended the meeting you held in Oakland on May 21st. I want to support a point made by several speakers and introduce another.

1) As speakers throughout the East Bay said, the current East Bay Districts (Congressional #9; State Senate #9; Assembly #14 and #16) make no sense culturally, politically or geographically. While the districts (mostly) follow the Alameda County lines, as one person testified, these lines may have had meaning historically, they no longer do. (In fact, while this is beyond your responsibilities, it may be time to consider redrawing the lines so that Alameda county runs from the SF Bay to the Oakland Berkeley Hills and Contra Costa runs east from the hills and along the 680 corridor.) But for now we are stuck with the county lines which we have. And while there is a certain logic to having the districts within counties, it does not make sense when the western halves of of Contra Costa and Alameda Counties have more in common with each other in terms of demographics, concerns and allegiances than does either with its eastern half. In fact I would wonder how any elected official, with the best intentions, could adequately represent what are often very divergent interests and perspectives. I believe that you mostly heard from people in the east (around the 680 corridor) speak to this issue. Since the population seems to be mostly west of the hills, the representatives for all the years I have lived here (30) have also been from the west. I can well understand that those from the eastern half of each of these counties often do not feel represented.

I am speaking here as someone who lives in Oakland, in the western half of Alameda County, that we too on this side of the Berkeley Oakland Hills feel the same cultural, political and geographic divide that those in the eastern half spoke of and would welcome districts which more accurately reflect the social distinctions of this area.

1) I do not have the information regarding the specific numbers so I am

not making specific recommendations. But it seems reasonable to me to have U. S. Congressional seat #9 (currently held by Barbara Lee) run along the SF Bay from Richmond down to Hayward. This would include areas such as the island of Alameda which between Oakland and the bay, but which is in another district.

2) The same is true for State Senate seat #9, currently held by Loni Hancock.

3) The problem with assembly seats is a bit different. While Assembly seat #16, currently held by Nancy Skinner does include population east of the Berkeley Oakland Hills and should be adjusted so that it is entirely on the west side, Assembly seat #14, currently held by Sandre Swanson, is entirely between SF Bay and the Hills. But the northern line between these two assembly districts is very strange. I agree with some of the speakers on May 21 who said that we should have one assembly person for Oakland (and Alameda). If that is not possible, and some of Oakland must be put into another district, then, at least the division should be more "rational". Currently there is a "bulge" of #16 which goes into #14. It is very confusing for people doing political work since a large section of #14 is, in fact, south of a section of #16. I live in that "bulge" and am often getting materials and precinct workers for candidates in #14. There is no demographic, cultural or social reason that I can see for the lines to be drawn as they are. It might make more sense to take a line (maybe rt#24) as the dividing line since it goes across most of Oakland from the bay to the hills. That does have the problem of dividing the "Rockridge" area of Oakland, but that area is already--though not quite so centrally--divided now. Another solution might be to take 51st as a dividing line (it is a natural one between neighborhoods) at least down to Shattuck. Another option would be for #14 to go farther north and have the Oakland/Berkeley border the division between #14 and #16. There would be certain logic here as this is one which people have learned to deal with though it also bisects neighborhoods (and even houses).

Thank you for your hard work (I can see it is going to be) and for your consideration.

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