

Subject: California Redistricting Commission

From: "Chris Graber" <[REDACTED]>

Date: Tue, 24 May 2011 17:36:18 -0700

To: <[REDACTED]>

California Redistricting Commission

Dear Commissioners:

I am a resident of Livermore, and I am writing to urge your support of all of the Bay Area Maps submitted on May 24, 2011 by the California Conservative Action Group and the California Citizens Redistricting Task Force.

I support a fair and competitive Congressional District comprised of Lamorinda, Walnut Creek, Oakley, Antioch, Clayton, Brentwood, Discovery Bay, the San Ramon Valley, and the Tri-Valley (Dublin, Pleasanton, Livermore).

Thank you,
Chris Graber

Subject: follow up on my comments at 5/21 hearing

From: Dave Kadlec 

Date: Tue, 24 May 2011 11:54:03 -0700

To: 

Commissioners,

I was speaker #88 at your May 21st hearing in Oakland, and this email is expanding on my testimony.

At the hearing, I tried to address three issues: (1) that the Commission should not parcel up Oakland among three Assembly Districts as in the current map, with most of the city in one district that it dominates but around 20% of the city making up fairly small parts of two different districts on which they have relatively little influence; (2) that the Commission should minimize the number of people who will go two years with no representation in the State Senate or go two years with two representatives in the State Senate due to their residence changing from an odd-numbered district to an even-numbered district or vice versa; and (3) that the Commission should recognize the impossibility of drawing an ideal map with single-member districts and draw on their experience drawing maps to recommend that the state should consider electing its legislature and Congressional delegation from multi-member districts using a proportional or semi-proportional election method.

Regarding Oakland's Assembly district(s), Oakland and Piedmont, which is entirely surrounded by Oakland, together have a population of approximately 400,000, and Alameda has a population of approximately 75,000. The three cities together are about 10,000 over the ideal size for an Assembly district. Assuming that a two percent deviation is too large to allow, your two reasonable alternatives are to put almost all of Oakland in a single district with Piedmont and Alameda (and the remaining small portion in a district with Berkeley and other cities to the north), or to divide Oakland into two large pieces, each with at least 150,000 population, one of which would be in an Assembly district with Alameda, San Leandro and other communities to the south and the other in an Assembly district with Berkeley and other communities to the north.

Regarding the odd and even numbered Senate districts, the odd-numbered districts will be next up for election in 2012, and the even-numbered districts in 2014. Thus, absent special elections, residents of areas moved from an odd-numbered district to an even-numbered district will not have had an opportunity to vote on any State Senators who will be in office from December of 2012 to December of 2014, and residents of areas moved from an even-numbered district to an odd-numbered district will have two State Senators on whom they voted in office during that same period. Because there are a bit over 180,000 more residents in currently odd-numbered State Senate districts than in currently even-numbered districts, you will have to move around 90,000 Californians from odd-numbered to even-numbered Senate districts. Try not to move many more than that.

The problem is somewhat complicated by the fact that the current Senate districts of the same parity aren't all in single contiguous blocks, so that there are three different connected groups of odd-numbered districts and six different connected groups of even-numbered districts,

ranging from one block of six even-numbered districts almost half a million under the target population and another block of three even-numbered districts almost a quarter of a million over the target population. (Specifically, the three groups of SD 1, SD 3, SD 5, SD 7 & SD 9 (total deviation +84917), SD 11, SD 13, SD 15, SD 17, SD 19, SD 21, SD 23, SD 25, SD 27, SD 29, SD 31, SD 33, SD 35 & SD 37 (+40370) and SD 39 (-33779) are each surrounded by even-numbered districts, and the six groups of SD 2, SD 4 & SD 6 (+6026), SD 8, SD 10, SD 12, SD 14, SD 16 & SD 18 (+171162), SD 20 (-44791), SD 22, SD 24, SD 26, SD 28, SD 30 & SD 34 (-472132), SD 32 (+14661) and SD 36, SD 38 & SD 40 (+233562) are each surrounded by odd-numbered districts.) Still, even without doing anything overly clever, you should be able to keep the population moved from an odd to an even district below 550,000 and that moved from an even to an odd district below 450,000. If your Senate map moves more than a million people to Senate districts of a different parity than their old Senate district, you will be needlessly giving just under half of them extra votes at the expense of the other just over half.

My last point was that it is impossible to create single-member districts that allow all Californians to have fair representation in the legislature and in our state's Congressional delegation. Thus your work in drawing lines inevitably involves making choices that leave some people and communities both without a representative of their choosing and with little or no influence on who represents the districts in which they live. The Commission's process should ensure that the basis for those choices aren't to advantage or disadvantage particular political parties or incumbent politicians, but the choices still have to be made. In addition to making the tradeoffs that determine who is effectively represented and unrepresented in the maps you draw, you have a responsibility to draw from your experience and make recommendations about how the way Californians are represented might be changed. I would suggest that the appropriate conclusion is to choose representatives from multi-member districts by proportional or semi-proportional voting methods.

Some communities of interest (broadly defined, not necessarily under the definition you are using) are large enough at the state-wide level to merit representation in the Assembly, but are so widely dispersed that they not only can't dominate any single-member district, they can't even have a major influence on any districts except those that are very closely divided between more dominant groups who are both acceptable as potential allies. With single-member districts, a group needs to have a local majority to guarantee representation of its choice from a district (or a local plurality with other groups too divided to form a coalition). With multi-member districts elected by proportional or semi-proportional voting methods the threshold for representation is lower (just over one sixth of the electorate in a five-member district, and in general for a district with N seats just more than $1/(n+1)$ of the the electorate) so that a group that made up 40% of each of five adjacent single-member districts would be able to choose two of five representatives rather than none.

When you look at communities of interest under your strict definition, if you look at media markets, job markets and transportation systems in the state's major metropolitan areas, there are communities much larger than the sizes of Assembly, Senate and Congressional districts. Simultaneously, there are neighborhoods that are much smaller than district sizes, and other regional and subregional communities intermediate in size. These overlap, as do ethnic and religious communities and groupings related to economic and cultural interests.

Which of these identities matter most to voters in a particular election will depend on the issues of the day, but with single-member districts the map will determine for ten years which of voters' identities have a chance of winning representation and which do not; with multi-member districts, more of these choices are deferred to the voters in each election.

The last point I want to make regarding single-member and multi-member districts is that with single-member districts and winner-take-all elections, we have a trade-off between representativeness and accountability. If only one representative is elected from a district, to the extent that there are real differences between the candidates, those who voted against the winner have their views unrepresented, so homogeneous districts that consistently vote overwhelmingly for one community/party/interest are more representative than those that are more heterogeneous. On the other hand, representatives in such homogeneous districts are less accountable to voters than those in more closely divided districts, as they can expect to be re-elected (or, with term limits, to see their designated successor elected) no matter how well or poorly the representatives from that community/party/interest perform collectively in the legislature or Congress. For example, if a district is split roughly 50-50 between two points of view, one will (barely) win out in each election and almost half the voters will see their views unrepresented until the next election, but they will be able to hold their district's representative accountable in that he or she can expect to lose the next election if the work of his or her caucus in the legislature alienates voters to any degree, but if the district is split 70-30 between the same two points of view, less than a third of voters will see their views unrepresented but they can expect that state to be permanent. Multi-member districts elected with proportional representation eliminate this tradeoff. Consider the case of 5-member districts. In the 50-50 case, both views could expect to almost always elect at least two representatives from the district, and the fifth representative would shift back and forth depending on the quality of individual candidates, the issues of the day and the performance of the caucuses in the legislature; both views are represented, and both have something to gain or lose by doing a good job. In the 70-30 case, the majority view can expect to almost always elect three representatives and the minority one, with the fifth representative again being in play, providing both representativeness and accountability.

In conclusion, I repeat my three requests that the Commission (1) not divide Oakland as did the 2001 Assembly redistricting to leave a substantial portion as minor parts of districts dominated by other cities; (2) minimize the number of Californians moved from even-numbered Senate districts to odd-numbered Senate districts and vice versa; and (3) after drawing its maps produce a public report on its experience that reflects on the feasibility of meeting its presumed goal of fair maps for single-member districts (and, I'd hope, reach the same conclusions I have).

/Dave Kadlecek


Oakland, CA 94604