

Region 2 Riverside 6/30 before 5

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Subject: Re-districting Committee

Date: Thu, 30 Jun 2011 10:58:18 -0700

From: Jacqueline Rubalcava-Lopez <[\[REDACTED\]](#)>

To: [\[REDACTED\]](#)

Redistricting Committee,

I am a resident of the city of Indio, in the Coachella Valley portion of eastern Riverside County. I have resided here for 35 years. I am disappointed in the tentative maps released by the Commission on June 10th as they appear to perpetuate the cannibalization of Riverside County that has been the pattern under previous decades' redistricting through the Legislature.

Riverside County has a population of over 2 million people and is the fastest growing County in the State of California, yet the frame of reference or starting point for the drawing of legislative district boundaries seems to ignore this growth and significant size of the County and appears to start at the Pacific Coast, moving inland to accommodate districts based in populations in Los Angeles, Orange and San Diego Counties: once again treating the Inland Counties of Imperial and Riverside as afterthoughts.

Riverside County is diverse and has unique challenges that cannot be met if our Legislative representation is combined with coastal communities. Our population is lower income, suburban and rural, with large communities of retired people. The County is about 50% Latino with small populations of African-Americans and Asians.

A more just and effective starting point for delineating Riverside County districts is the eastern border of the State (the Colorado River) which is also the eastern border of Riverside County. A more in-depth analysis of the populations in the inland portion of California shows the community of interest shared by Imperial County and eastern Riverside County. The climate, the economies and the population demographics of eastern Riverside County (the eastern half of the Coachella Valley) and Imperial County are identical. In addition, these communities are contained within the political boundaries of the Imperial Irrigation District and are part of the Southern California Association of Governments (SCAG) statutory planning area for transportation, housing and air quality. The boundary between Imperial and Riverside County is entirely man-made while the boundaries between Imperial and San Diego on the one-hand and the Coachella Valley and western Riverside County on the other hand are physical, natural mountain ranges that separate populations on either side, preventing economic, social and physical interaction. The boundary between Riverside and Imperial Counties also divides the Salton Sea—an environmental challenge contained in the State's largest inland body of water. The communities around the Sea need to work together to mitigate impending air quality disasters and splitting the legislative representation among six (6) different state and federal legislators will not facilitate the solution need to avoid catastrophe when the Sea begins to dry up in 2017.

The appropriate districts to meet the population targets required by law would create an Assembly District that includes all of Imperial County, the communities of the Palo Verde Valley at the border (Blythe, Palo Verde, Ripley) and the eastern Coachella Valley from Palm Desert east. These communities consist entirely of cities no larger than 80,000, with economies based on tourism, retirement and agriculture. They all accommodate "snow-bird" populations that spend the winters but are not full-time residents. This phenomenon supports hospitality, retail and health-care based local economies.

A second Assembly District would start at the political boundaries separating the city of Rancho Mirage from Palm Desert which is also the boundary between Palm Springs Unified School District and Desert Sands Unified School District, and move west to include the communities of Rancho Mirage, Cathedral City, Thousand Palms, Palm Springs and the Banning/Beaumont Pass area to the northwestern county line. While these communities share a number of characteristics with the eastern valley, their economies are not based on agriculture and emphasize conventions, tourism, retirement and health care to a greater extent. In past years, when the community newspaper was locally owned, one version—the Desert Sun—covered the western portion of the Coachella Valley and the Pass while the Indio Daily News covered the eastern portion of the valley. The valley was only unified by the media with the entry of national media companies purchasing local outlets.

If these two Assembly Districts are then nested in a single Senate district, the result is a cohesive district with economic, geographic, demographic and social communities of interest. All of the incorporated cities are small (under 100,000) and no single city will dominate. The challenges of job growth, the needs of a Latino plurality community and economies of tourism, agriculture and the infrastructure needs of a fast growing inland region will be well-represented by a single State Senator, resident in the district.

The criteria established to support the Assembly and Senate districts apply as well to the local Congressional district. Combining the population of Imperial (pop. 174,000) with Riverside County justifies three full Congressional districts to represent these two like counties. This allocation is justified by the population size and profile.

I urge you to end the days where Riverside and Imperial Counties are used in the redistricting process to fill-out urban districts centered in San Diego, Orange or Los Angeles Counties. Given the needs, the size of the population of Riverside County and the additional anticipated growth in this region of the State, I ask you to use this region as a primary frame of reference and not an afterthought, subordinate to the needs of coastal California.