

**Subject:** Central California Redistricting Maps

**From:** Cecil Russell <[REDACTED]>

**Date:** 6/28/2011 4:55 PM

**To:** [REDACTED]

Gentlemen,

Thank you for this opportunity to submit comments on the first round of draft maps that have been compiled by your Commission.

On behalf of the nearly 1,000 business members of the Modesto Chamber of Commerce, I am submitting these comments.

The great Central Valley of California has made great strides in the last 10 years to finally gain a voice with the elected officials representing this area. When viewing the draft maps proposed by the Commission, we now have great concerns that the elected representation for the Valley will be greatly compromised and that the voices of the people of the Central Valley will be lost, possibly forever.

According to the California Constitution, the definition of a "community of interest" is a contiguous population which shares common social and economic interests that should be included within a single district for purposes of its effective and fair representation. Examples of such shared interests are those common to an urban area, a rural area, an industrial area, or an agricultural area, and those common to areas in which the people share similar living standards, use the same transportation facilities, have similar work opportunities, or have access to the same media of communication relevant to the election process.

When applying this definition to the draft maps you can clearly see there are three areas in the Central Valley that have been compromised: Lodi, Madera, and Merced County with the inclusion of parts of San Jose into Senate district 12. The Central Valley is recognized as one of the world's most productive agricultural (Ag) regions. With an Ag based economy, the Central Valley has very different and distinct needs when it comes to water, transportation, air quality, and industries. Combining any valley community with an unlike community that has so many dissimilar issues (i.e. San Jose with Merced) would make it extremely difficult to be represented fairly and effectively.

In June the Commission had on its website the attached draft map that had significantly different boundaries for the 12<sup>th</sup> Senate district, and would keep Ag-based valley communities together. We ask that the Commission seriously consider the future of our region and support policies and actions that will enhance its sustainability by going back to that option. While not perfect, it would address our concerns for the Merced and Madera areas and allow the Valley to continue its strong voice and fair representation.

Respectfully,

Cecil Russell

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**Cecil Russell**  
**President CEO**  
**Modesto Chamber of Commerce**

[REDACTED]



— Attachments: —

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Redistricting - Merced(1).pdf

242 KB

June 28, 2011

Citizens Redistricting Commission  
1130 K Street, Suite 101  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Fax: (916) [REDACTED]

**Via Email: June 28, 2011**

Commission Members,

The Merced area was given only one, 3 hour, mid Saturday afternoon opportunity to attend a public hearing for the congressional redistricting. I imagine that like other smaller communities in the San Joaquin Valley we were not unique in this process. The hearing was referenced in a small article that appeared in our local paper, Friday, April 15, 2011, -- *the day before the scheduled hearing*. We were out of town as were many residents. Those that weren't were most likely rushing to complete their 2010 taxes. This was our one and only opportunity to stand up and be counted.

"We want to hear from the community about how they feel about representation of their particular area," he said. "If they have any concerns about that, give us information about how the lines should be redrawn so that their interests are satisfied." Read more: <http://www.mercedsunstar.com/2011/04/15/1853507/redistricting-panel-wants-merced.html#ixzz1Qc7OVxMt>

I supported the need for change and many well informed and politically savvy individuals voted for the "Voters First Act" –state wide initiative which authorized your commission and its work. Why? We were fed up. Gerrymandering is an outrage. I have been a public school educator for most of my career. My colleagues and I who have attempted to teach government have been hard pressed to make the case that "your vote counts" when their respective district boundaries have more in common with the shapes of stuffed animals than any rational process. How does a teacher counterbalance, the precedents of one man, one vote, with the contradictions inherent in the majority party drawing the lines in Sacramento? In almost 20 years of teaching, I have witnessed students studying this issue being blown away anew, each year, by the bizarre figures and shapes that comprise the boundaries of our current congressional districts. Common sense dictates that the public is not served by partisan politics framing our representation in Washington, D.C. How can teachers convince our youth to participate and that "their vote counts" (the last presidential election, excepted) when it is really about positioning a district for incumbency, now and forever? Despite this history, given a choice between your proposal for the San Joaquin Valley counties and the current boundaries with a good ole boy network that is entrenched, corrupt and bankrupt—we would choose the latter – without hesitation.

Hiram Johnson would be appalled at the rate at which the initiative process has been manipulated and has made a mockery of the intentions that created the initiative, recall, and referendum process in our state. Somehow, many of us thought that the California Citizens Redistricting Commission would be different.

This is simply not the case. The people in our community are baffled. Our region is accurately characterized by the attached editorial by Mike Lynch, which appeared in the Merced Sun-Star on June



**Mike Lynch: Don't mix Valley, coast in legislative districts... Lynch is an independent public policy and political consultant located in Modesto. He was chief operating officer at the Great Valley Center at the time of the Congressional Research Service study of the San Joaquin Valley. Before that he was chief of staff to Assemblyman and then Rep. Gary Condit.**

<http://www.mercedsunstar.com/2011/06/27/v-print/1947234/mike-lynch-dont-mix-valley-coast.html>

In 2005, the Modesto-based Great Valley Center asked the San Joaquin Valley congressional delegation to direct the Congressional Research Service to conduct a formal study of the economic and social indicators of the region.

The study concluded that our eight-county region was "one of the most economically depressed regions of the United States." In fact, in 2000, the San Joaquin Valley had "substantially higher poverty rates than the rest of the country and California." We were even more impoverished than Appalachia.

The San Joaquin Valley is also one of the fastest growing, most diverse, and most environmentally and economically challenged parts of California and the nation.

The eight counties of the valley -- Kern, Tulare, Fresno, Merced, Madera, Stanislaus, San Joaquin and Kings -- constitute one air quality control district, and we fail to meet air quality standards. That is why our schools have asthma warning days.

Too often, the San Joaquin Valley has been considered the "crazy aunt in the attic" who did not meet the state's Bay Area-LA- Hollywood image.

State policy reflected that bias. When California adopted tougher rules on pollution from automobiles, Bay Area cars were exempt, even though the emissions of those cars blew into the valley and became the valley's problem. Bay Area businesses are held to less stringent and less costly air quality standards than those required in the valley, making job development easier over there, and once again leaving us with the job of cleaning up the mess.

Clearly, the valley needs elected representatives who can stand up for us.

That is why the valley embraced the notion of an independent commission to draw the new state legislative apportionment lines. At a minimum, we figured the valley would have representation that would match its numbers and its unique circumstances.

Instead, in its state Senate map, the California Citizens Redistricting Commission proposes to rip the heart out of the San Joaquin Valley by merging all of Merced County and half of Stanislaus with areas on other side of the Coast Range.

Merced and Stanislaus counties have more in common with Sacramento and Riverside counties than with Santa Clara and Monterey counties.

Even the agricultural industry is different on the two sides of this thrown-together district. Air quality issues are different; transportation issues are different; produce moves to market on entirely different routes. The interests of one side will often be in conflict with those of the other, making the senator's job almost impossible to perform.

Only one major road links the two halves of this district. If it were to be blocked for any period of time, it would be easier for the people of Merced and Stanislaus to get to Los Angeles than to the other half of their Senate district to see their representative.

The numbers don't lie. By any measure -- economics, agriculture, diversity, health, air quality, educational opportunity and environment -- Merced and Stanislaus counties should be in San

Joaquin Valley districts. Santa Clara, Monterey and San Benito counties are not part of the San Joaquin Valley.

It is almost as if the commission waited to do the valley last, so that it could be configured in ways to resolve problems elsewhere.

In fact, on the commission's Web site, the Central Coast is listed as part of the Central Valley.

With all due respect to the commission, the Central Coast is not part of the Central Valley.

The commission has a tough job, but there is an easy fix: Keep the heart and soul of the San Joaquin Valley in valley districts. Merced and Stanislaus County should not be in a Senate district that includes Monterey and Santa Clara counties. The mountains of the Coast Range are a barrier in more ways than just topography.

**Subject:** Redistricting comments

**From:** Kathy Halsey <[REDACTED]>

**Date:** 6/28/2011 1:49 PM

**To:** [REDACTED]

Dear Commissioners,

From what I have heard, there is a fair amount of discontent in the Central Valley with the Fresno to foothills Senate seat, as well as the Merced to San Jose Senate seat.

I don't have the brains or patience to draw a whole plan, but I want to advocate that the commission use a map that it drew before the final first draft came out.

The map was on handout 200110601 q2 SD Merced, which I have attached.

The Commission had to be aware of the Voting Act requirements at that time and I believe the lines on that map meet them. Plus, going back to that map is not a major rewrite – if you don't nest all the voting rights seat.

From what I can see, your original Merced district included about 225,000 people in the Salinas area, 200,000 in Stanislaus, 120,000 in Madera and about 75,000 in Fresno. This district would have included communities that are all Ag in nature, and would be approximately 57% Latino.

Such a map would end 1) complaints about Madera and Fresno Ag land getting put in a seat dominated by the Sacramento foothills; 2) the legitimate complaints about including San Jose and Santa Cruz in a Merced County district; and 3) it would unite heavily Latino populations in a district where the Ag economy is a central concern to all.

While including communities on the 101 corridor and 99 isn't ideal, if you must deal with the Monterey and Merced Voting rights issues in one district, I believe this is the far superior option. Honestly, I'd rather see an all central valley solution, but this process is about compromise and this is compromise I believe people could find acceptable; therefore, I encourage you to take a second look at your own draft Merced map.

Sincerely,

*Kathy Halsey*

Turlock, CA 95382

