



EAST SAN JOSÉ DEMOCRATS

SAN JOSE CA 95173-1391 • (408) [REDACTED] • [REDACTED]
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6/10/11

Citizens Redistricting Commission
901 P Street, Suite 154-A
Sacramento, CA 95814

Esteemed Commissioners:

On behalf of the East San Jose Democrats, I express our vehement opposition to the “San Jose” Assembly and Senate District visualizations that were released by the commission on June 7, 2011. Although our organization is partisan, this issue goes beyond party. The proposed district labeled, “San Jose” represents a dilution of the political voice of the voters of East San Jose. By removing large segments of East San Jose from the rest of Central and East San Jose and placing us in districts to the north in Alameda County as well as in San Benito and Monterey County, the proposed plan would for all intents and purposes be removing our political voice at the state level.

East San Jose Dilution

The proud and active area of East San Jose has historically been disenfranchised. In the past, city leaders purposely incorporated around East San Jose in order to leave the high concentration of working class Latinos outside the city limits. As such, residents of East San Jose had no voice in city affairs as evidenced by the fact that our East San Jose neighborhoods are some of the last ones to be incorporated and receive basic city services such as sidewalks and streetlights.

As seen in your plans, the Census Designated Places of Alum Rock and East Hills which you have disconnected from the rest of East San Jose and San Jose are unincorporated areas that are, for the most part, within the urban service area of the City of San Jose and have yet to be annexed into the City. Alum Rock CDP is wholly within San Jose’s urban service area.

Your plans seem to connect these two Census Designated Places with the Mt. Hamilton range and San Antonio Valley solely based on the route corridor of Hwy 130 which is known as Alum Rock Avenue on the valley floor until it reaches into the hillside. Alum Rock is a community of interest of East San Jose not the rural hillside and especially not over the mountain range. This type of redistricting makes sense when geography is the main driver and is a logical first draft. As you know, much more must be taken into consideration based on the Voting Rights Act. Communities of interest are a key consideration.

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The Berryessa issue of being split into four districts since the last redistricting effort is now being shifted to its neighbor to the south. While the East San Jose Democrats believe the Berryessa issue should be solved by bringing that strong community of interest together, it should not be fixed on the back of East San Jose.

In the case of East San Jose, unfortunately, it seems that we are being forced to relive this dark chapter of our recent history and our voice is once again being silenced. The present visualization of the "San Jose" Assembly and Senate districts would cut out a large segment of East San Jose and place it in a district that is completely distinct from us. Furthermore, you place other sections of East San Jose in a district to the north whose demographics are completely inconsistent with ours. The proposed boundaries for the San Jose district are completely unacceptable and cannot in good conscience be given further consideration.

Your current visualization shreds into three sections, the greater historic, "Sal Si Puedes Neighborhood" where Cesar Chavez lived and began his civil rights activism. The heart of San Jose Chicano activism is split into two when you cut King Road and East San Jose in half. Our largest East San Jose Elementary school district, Alum Rock Union School District, is split up into three assembly and senate districts which will completely dilute the districts voice at the state level. The ramifications of the proposed "San Jose" district are too numerous to include in this letter. As a community of interest, East San Jose must be kept whole with the rest of East and Central San Jose. The needs of East San Jose in terms of public safety, public transportation and a whole slew of other factors including our history necessitate that we are kept whole.

An alarming trend in this redistricting process is the fact that in every proposed district for San Jose, from Congress down to Assembly, the Latino vote is split up and consequently diluted. In Congress the Latino populations goes down by approximately 8% and in the Assembly district Latinos lose approximately 15% and in the Senate the Latino population loses approximately 12%.

Consideration

Our request is that you provide a visualization and subsequently adopt a Central and East San Jose Assembly District that includes Mckee Rd as the northern boundary, all of East San Jose or at the very least up to the urban service area boundary line. To the west use highway 87 as the western boundary in the northern part of the district and use your discretion in the rest of the district to create a district that is contiguous, cohesive and avoids a major drop in the current ethnic populations, as is the case with the current visualization where the Latino population falls by 15%. We also urge you to keep San Jose whole. Placing San Jose City Hall on the fringes of a district that encompasses several smaller cities to our northeast is incredibly disrespectful, considering that ours is the 10th largest City in the nation.

I urge you to reassess your visualization for San Jose and East San Jose. The East San Jose community and consequently the Latino community of East San Jose have steadily been making progress. If any semblance of what you have proposed makes it to the final maps, the effects would be extremely detrimental to our community.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'AQ', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Andrés Quintero
President
East San Jose Democrats

Subject: Citizens Redistricting Commission Meeting in San Jose

From: Steven Levin <[REDACTED]>

Date: Fri, 17 Jun 2011 17:28:30 -0700

To: <[REDACTED]>

Why is the San Jose Citizens Redistricting Commission meeting for public input on Saturday, June 25? Saturday is the Jewish Sabbath, a day of rest, so holding a Saturday meeting precludes religious Jews from attending.

This meeting disregards the opinions of religious Jews by precluding them from being able to attend to discuss redistricting. The commission should be sensitive to diversity in California, so this sends a negative message.