

POLITICS

San Diego County redistricting panel solving puzzle of new voting district maps

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NOV. 3, 2021 5 AM PT

San Diego —

More than 100 speakers weighed in on new county boundaries at a public hearing by the San Diego County Independent Redistricting Commission on Monday night.

At the hearing, held at Chula Vista City Hall and streamed online, commissioners considered the second set of four draft maps created by the demographer FLO Analytics, which showed different strategies for reorganizing county voting districts.

They also listened to scores of speakers describe what they liked about potential boundary lines and what they want to change.

“We heard a lot of that (Monday) night saying they’re completely happy with their current lines and would prefer they not change, (and other) people saying there are decades of injustice here and they would like to see lines that correct historical unfairness,” said Commission Chair David Bame, a retired U.S. diplomat.

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Because of shifting demographics over the past decade, San Diego County must adjust boundaries to balance the number of constituents in each district while preserving cities, neighborhoods and “communities of interest,” which include areas with common geographic, economic or cultural interests.

Members of the public have called for a supervisorial district encompassing North County cities along the State Route 78 Corridor and northern backcountry communities of Fallbrook, Bonsall, Rainbow and Valley Center.

They also expressed interest in a district extending east-west along the U.S. Mexican border, a coastal district covering the beach communities from Coronado to Encinitas and a district

encompassing the Black, immigrant and refugee communities in Lemon Grove, La Mesa and El Cajon.

Some described a desire to see Asian Pacific Islander communities grouped together in central county areas that could include Mira Mesa, Sorrento Valley and Rancho Peñasquitos, or Claremont Mesa and Kearny Mesa.

Other speakers addressed the shared interests of backcountry communities on issues such as wildfire and water supply. And some stated their desire to retain areas with high populations of retired and active-duty military together.

Each proposed scenario has its own logistical challenges within the legal and mathematical puzzle of redistricting.

A North County district comprised of the five cities along the State Route 78 Corridor — Escondido, San Marcos, Vista, Oceanside and Carlsbad — along with northern backcountry communities, would exceed the average size of about 669,000 residents that each district should include. So any map for a north district must exclude either Escondido or Carlsbad or the rural unincorporated communities.

While some residents of eastern San Diego County advocated for one district representing all unincorporated back country areas, state law and the county charter require unincorporated land to be split among multiple districts, Bame said.

Commissioners made several requests for additional maps, which the demographer will create before the next meeting Nov. 13.

Commissioner Kristina Kruglyak proposed modifying draft map 7 to create a north coastal district of Oceanside, Vista, Carlsbad, San Marcos, Camp Pendleton, and Rancho Santa Fe, with a separate north district including Escondido and East County. She also proposed adding Barrio Logan to the border district and other adjustments.

Commissioner Ramesses Surban proposed swapping some communities between a coastal district and an East County district on draft map 6.

That could entail moving Alpine and Pine Valley from the border to the East County district, and placing the working class communities of Logan Heights, Sherman Heights and Barrio Logan in the border district, where they could be part of a majority Latino voting bloc.

In a separate motion, Commissioner Chris Chen suggested making similar changes but using draft map 7 as the basis.

Co-Vice Chair Rosette Garcia recommended adjusting draft map 7 to draw a northern district including Escondido, San Marcos, Vista and Oceanside — all cities with high Latino populations.

In that scenario, the new district would extend to the northern and eastern county borders to consolidate North County Tribal reservation land. The plan also calls for Carlsbad **to** be included in the coastal district to preserve the appropriate population size.

“I wanted to give the (Independent Redistricting Commission) a District 5 that responded to the Latino community of interest we had been hearing about,” Garcia said. “That meant removing Carlsbad and including Escondido, and going north all the way to Fallbrook and then east.”

Updates

11:10 a.m. Nov. 10, 2021: This story was updated to reflect draft map number references

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