

**Testimony of Warner Chabot, CEO of the CA League of Conservation Voters
To the California Citizens Redistricting Commission
Regarding criteria for establishing new political districts.**

February 26, 2011

This testimony is presented on behalf of the California League of Conservation Voters' 50,000 members and activists. The League is the non-partisan political action arm of California's environmental movement. We work to elect candidates to state office who will protect the environment. We hold those elected officials accountable with an annual environmental scorecard. The League will inform our members of this process so that you can hear from them in future meetings.

On behalf of the League, I urge this commission to create boundaries and districts that contribute to the quality of life for the communities and people within them. As you create new districts, please consider communities of people and their common interests. Then create districts that represent the best interests of those communities.

Start with a blank slate. Look beyond the existing city and county boundaries. Please remember that Proposition 11 established two criteria as superior to all other, for establishing new districts:

One - The Federal Voting Rights Act

Two -The principle of contiguous geographic areas

We recognize and applaud both criteria as common sense principles. Both seek to protect the rights of all citizens and to prevent gerrymandered districts that disenfranchise any group of voters.

This testimony is focused on the second criteria. As you give priority to contiguous geographic areas, consider the natural environmental factors that both define and contribute to the quality of life and the economy of most communities.

Consider what matters to an average family or community - like breathing clean air or access to clean water as well as workable transit and having a secure job and a stable economy. Please consider the natural boundaries that often define communities of common interest. Consider special district boundaries like transportation or air districts and not just city or county lines.

Consider defining factors like watersheds, air basins or unique geography. For example, in most watersheds, communities share a common interest in the supply and quality of their water and the benefits of healthy water systems. And in many air basins, from the central valley to regions of Los Angeles, communities share a common interest in air quality and its impact on the health of people within their community. Communities also share in the need for efficient and effective transit systems.

Natural systems and features often define both the character and boundaries of many urban and rural communities. These natural boundaries like watersheds and mountains often encompass communities of common interest.

The common interest may often include a common economy, like agriculture or tourism. These communities often share other common features from their transportation system to similar demographics.

For example, consider certain natural regions, like the coastal zone or the central valley as communities of common interest. In these regions, communities define themselves by their common geography. These communities often share a common interest in their environment and economic base.

In summary, this Commission should create districts that give priority to communities of common interest. And those communities are often defined by common geography.

So please consider how natural landscapes, like watershed, air basins or common geographies, like coastal regions, define those communities of interest, which deserve a common political representation.

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