

COUNTY OF SONOMA

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November 16, 2021

Citizens Redistricting Commission  
721 Capital Mall, Suite 200  
Sacramento, CA 95814

**RE: Comment Letter - Congressional Redistricting Visualizations**

Dear Redistricting Commissioners,

On behalf of the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors, I am writing to outline concerns with some of the Congressional California visualizations released last month and to offer a few suggestions for the Commission. As required by the California Constitution, Art. XXI, Section 2(d), the redrawing of Senate, Assembly and Congressional district boundaries must prioritize maintaining geographically contiguity, and maintaining the geographic integrity of any county or community of interest that shares common social, agricultural and economic interests that should be included within a single district for purposes of its effective and fair representation.

Based on our initial review of the visualization maps available, Sonoma County impacts include the removal of one congressional member. Additionally, the proposed Congressional boundaries do not prioritize maintaining geographic contiguity nor do they preserve the geographic integrity of significant communities of interest in our region, including our coastal communities, agricultural communities, and fire survivor recovery and resiliency communities. The County of Sonoma recommends that its current boundaries for congressional representatives be left intact. Having two congressional voices representing Sonoma County's unique issues, such as multiple disasters, is key to the continued resiliency of this community.

**Geographic Contiguity**

The current congressional district boundaries maintain the geographic contiguity of the California coastline. Moreover, the current congressional district boundaries maintain the geographic contiguity of California Wine Country. The proposed revision to the Congressional boundaries disrupts the coastline, and it dissects Sonoma County to connect Marin County to Napa and Solano Counties. This proposed district bypasses one region in a narrow geographic strip to connect to another region. It disrupts the geographic contiguity of the current Congressional district boundaries that serve Sonoma County.

**Communities of Interest**

The disruption of the current boundaries has significant consequences beyond disruptions of geographic contiguity. It disrupts historic California communities of interest whose common interests have been served with fair and effective representation by being maintained in a single Congressional district.

**Coastal Community of Interest:** The current Congressional District 2 includes Sonoma County coastal communities, much of which are in unincorporated areas. Strong representation, achieved by combining them in a single district, is needed in coastal communities for fair and effective representation of those residents.

**Sonoma/Napa Agricultural Community of Interest:** In support of fair and effective representation of the agricultural industry in Sonoma and Napa Counties, this region should be considered a community of interest and included within a single Congressional district. Maintaining the historic geographic integrity of this agricultural region will allow for a collaborative voice on agriculture issues. Agriculture is a driving force of the economy in Sonoma County. Fertile soils and complementary climate make Sonoma County one of the most productive viticulture and farming regions in the world. The most recent crop report in Sonoma County alone estimates a gross agricultural production value of nearly \$1 billion, including a total wine grape value of \$654,020,500. The winegrape industry alone contributes more than \$13 billion to the Sonoma County economy, in addition to over 54,000 jobs.

**Fire Survivor Recovery and Climate Change Resiliency Community of Interest:** The current 5<sup>th</sup> Congressional District boundaries include a community of fire survivors from several counties who have benefitted from a collective voice within a single congressional district, reflecting a need that is likely to continue in the years ahead. In the last few years, Sonoma County has responded to 11 notable disasters, including three major wildfires, five PG&E Public Safety Power Shutoffs, and a homeless encampment crisis. From 2017 through 2021, fires have burned more than 300,000 acres in Sonoma County, destroyed nearly 7,000 structures, and 26 lives have been lost. These fires have similarly devastated regions of Lake and Napa Counties. Our current representatives have gained a deep understanding of local issues facing Sonoma County and have been steadfast advocates for this community. To continue to have effective and fair representation for fire survivors and for building communities with climate change resiliency, these district boundaries should remain intact.

The proposed visualization maps and subsequent impacts to our congressional lines are deeply troubling. For the reasons listed above, we urge the commission to consider leaving our congressional lines as close to current as possible.

Sincerely,

Lynda Hopkins, Chair  
Sonoma County Board of Supervisors

CC:  
Sonoma County Board of Supervisors