

To Ms. Carmen Llanes Pulido,

As a fan of the ICRC who has watched the tape of every meeting, I applaud your idea to write an editorial to define who you are as a group. I was a member of the Applicant Review Panel (ARP) and played a small role in the redistricting process.

First, I need to say how impressed I am with every member of this Commission. Each week, I am more convinced that the ARP did something right if a random drawing resulted in this group of outstanding individuals.

You asked the ICRC members to address two questions: What is the greatest misconception the public has about the Commission and what have the members learned? Although I am not a member of the ICRC, perhaps you can use my perspective on these questions:

- Some members of the public have suggested that the process is rigged and “the fix is in.” I can say that from the start, there has been no political meddling with the process. As an auditor and CPA, I applied for the ARP because I support the concept of a citizen redistricting process as a necessary step in the operation of a true democracy. I had no previous contact with city staff, city leadership, or the citizen groups involved in the proposition to change the city charter.

As the other members of the ARP and I began our evaluation of the applications, we decided to disclose any relationship with the applicants under review and abstain from rating their applications. As it turned out, only three applications required this disclosure, and none of them received sufficient ratings to be selected for the final list. I am confident that we were not influenced in any way in our selection of the final list of 60 applicants, and selected the best of the best based only on the applications and the criteria in the city charter. Political affiliations were never a part of our review.

- I learned to respect the wisdom of the group. There were several applications I passed on, but the other two ARP members saw a talent I had missed. In re-evaluating those candidates, I saw they were right and I was wrong. (As an example, I did not initially see that a talent for making garments would translate into an ability in drawing district boundaries. If not for the better judgment of the other ARP members, we would not have the wise contributions of Anna Saenz.)

I have enormous respect for the citizens who worked so diligently to create the redistricting process, and the voters who approved the proposition to change the city charter. After the proposition passed, the charter called for random drawings to select a completely new set of citizens to carry the process forward. This is the greatest example of trusting the wisdom of the group, and that trust has not let us down so far.

Please feel free to use, or not use, any of this, or to share it with other Commission members. I support what the ICRC is doing, and could not be more proud to have it represent me and the other citizens of Austin in changing the way Austin is governed.

Caroline Limaye

