

Formal Testimony re: ICRC Preliminary Map

Commissioners:

Would like to offer some balanced feedback on your Preliminary Map of Sept. 28, 2013.

Honoring the Commission's deliberations and recent release stating, "The ICRC has said publicly that they believe the map is about "90% there," I offer the below series of balancing proposed changes consistent with the prior statement and to improve upon the preliminary map abiding by the following priority of requirements:

§ 3. REDISTRICTING.

(E) The commission shall establish the boundaries of the council districts for the City of Austin in a plan using the following criteria as set forth in the following order of priority:

(1) districts **shall comply with the United States Constitution**. Each council district shall have **reasonably equal population with other districts**, except where deviation is required to comply with the federal Voting Rights Act or allowable by law.

(2) districts **shall comply with the federal Voting Rights Act** (42 U.S.C. Sec. 1971 and following) and any other requirement of federal or state law.

(3) districts **shall be geographically contiguous**.

(4) the geographic integrity of any local neighborhood or local community of interest **shall be respected in a manner that minimizes their division to the extent possible without violating the requirements of any of the preceding subsections**. A community of interest is a contiguous population that shares common social and economic interests that should be included within a single district for purposes of its effective and fair representation. Communities of interest shall not include relationships with political parties, incumbents, or political candidates.

(5) **to the extent practicable**, district boundaries shall be drawn to encourage geographical compactness such that nearby areas of population are not bypassed for more distant populations.

(6) **to the extent practicable**, district boundaries shall be drawn using the boundaries of existing election precincts.

(7) **to the extent practicable**, district boundaries shall be drawn using geographically identifiable boundaries.

(F) The place of residence of any **incumbent or potential political candidate shall not** be considered in the creation of a plan or any district. Districts shall not be drawn for the purpose of favoring or discriminating against any incumbent, political candidate, **or political group**.

Proposed changes consistent with public testimony to the Commission:

- Move Pct. 422 from Dist. 3 to Dist. 9
- Move West Split Portion of Pct. 461 from Dist. 9 to Dist. 3

- Move Pcts. 446 & 425 from Dist. 5 to Dist. 3
- Move Pcts. 461 (full) & 430 (if necessary) from Dist. 3 to Dist. 5

(cont...)

Proposed changes... (cont.)

- Move Pct. 315 (pop. 2,704) from Dist. 8 to Dist. 5
- Keeping in mind Lost Creek (4,500 pop. from 2010) coming into Dist. 8 in 2015
(See ATX Annexations: <http://austintexas.gov/department/proposed-annexations>)
- If necessary Move Pcts. 213, 212, 364, 221, & 338 from Dist. 10 to Dist. 8 (contiguous)
Above change also resolves the split Pct. 364 problem without requiring changes by the County Clerk.

- Move Pct. 250 from Dist. 9 to Dist. 7
- Move Pcts. 226, 112, & 113 from Dist. 7 to Dist. 1
- Move Pcts. 325 & 206 (part) from Dist. 1 to Dist. 9 *
(* 'Symbolism' is not a standard equal to the VRA in either the Charter nor the ICRC's agreed to mapping process.)

- Move Pcts. 266, 240, & (if necessary) 237 from Dist. 10 to Dist. 7
- Move Pcts. 374, 333, 334, 335, & 336 from Dist. 6 to Dist. 10
- Move Pcts. 109, 111, 216, 160, 215, 148, 225, & 219 from Dist. 7 to Dist. 6

Minority Op. Districts

Above changes **strengthen** the minority opportunity Districts 1 & 3 without changing Districts 2 & 4.

District 8, Population Variance, and Lost Creek

It is pointed out that after the above changes the total variance (7,978) of your District populations may vary from as low as Dist. 8 (74,327) to a high for Dist. 4 (82,305). Dist. 8 would then be able to receive the Lost Creek 2010 population of 4,500 in 2015 for a total of no less than 78,827, thereby requiring no further redistricting changes by the Commission in 2015. The Lost Creek annexation is by far the largest annexation on the books for Austin. (See Map at: <http://austintexas.gov/department/proposed-annexations>)

District 7 Logic for the Final Report

These changes still leave intact a Dist. 7, south of Parmer Lane, north of the River, which coincides with the parallel MoPac Transportation Corridor (#2 trans. cor. in ATX) & the Burnet Rd. Development Corridor (a leading devel. cor. in ATX), two important areas of communities of interest along the whole of Dist. 7. (See: <http://www.mopacexpress.com> and <http://bit.ly/19ZXtHg> and <http://bit.ly/18afuSD>) Both MoPac and Burnet Rd. are expected to receive significant influxes of City resources in the coming years/decade that need to be properly managed, and could be expected to benefit from the **focused** attention of a Councilmember.

(cont...)

Summary

It is believed the above changes resolve almost all substantive testimony complaints with the ICRC's Preliminary Map yet leave the Commission's map close to "90% intact."

In case this is my last testimony to the Commission, I'll take the opportunity to thank ALL of the Commissioners for their generous and diligent volunteer work in helping to make Independent Citizens Redistricting an original success in Austin, Texas.

Brad Parsons,
Austin, TX.