

POLITICS

Independent commission considers final voting map for San Diego County


The San Diego Union-Tribune



Aminat Adelekan assists voters on Tuesday, Nov. 3, 2020 in National City, CA. (Jarrod Valliere / The San Diego Union-Tribune)

BY DEBORAH SULLIVAN BRENNAN

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San Diego  The San Diego County Independent Redistricting Commission considered a final map for new county voting districts during a packed public meeting Thursday night.

The maps will set the lines for county supervisors' jurisdictions for the next decade. The commission was scheduled to vote to finalize its the new boundaries later Thursday night, before its Dec. 14 deadline to deliver its decision to the Secretary of State.

However some commissioners expressed concerns about the final draft map and asked that the decision be delayed to address those.

Commissioner Barbara Thompson Hansen said she thought the final maps excluded some important San Diego neighborhoods from District 4 in Central San Diego and asked the commission to hold an additional meeting next week. Co-Vice Chair Carmen Rosette-Garcia asked for real-time changes to the map during the public meeting, so that the commission could consider yet another version Thursday night. Representatives for the demographer, FLO Analytics, said they could accommodate additional changes on short order. Because of shifting demographics over the past 10 years, San Diego County must adjust boundaries to balance the number of constituents in each district while preserving cities, neighborhoods and "communities of interest," which includes areas with common geographic, economic or cultural interests. The 14-member bipartisan commission was convened to draw new boundaries for San Diego County. Commissioners considered 2020 U.S. Census data and heard from hundreds of public speakers and considered dozens of maps, including those prepared by their demographer and others submitted by the public. They work independently from elected officials and are prohibited from considering its effects on political parties or representatives.

The new map under consideration would retain District 1, including Imperial Beach, National City and Chula Vista as a "minority/majority" district where nearly 60 percent of the population is Latino and 51 percent of voting age citizens are Latino. The district is currently represented by a Latina official, Supervisor Nora Vargas

District 2, now served by Supervisor Joel Anderson, would be redrawn to include the largest expanse of unincorporated land, spanning from the border with Mexico to the county borders at Riverside and Imperial County.

Under the new map District 3, represented by Supervisor Terra Lawson-Remer, would become a coastal district that extends from Coronado to Carlsbad and includes part of central San Diego.

District 4, covered by Board of Supervisors Chair Nathan Fletcher, would retain parts of central San Diego along with the cities of Lemon Grove, La Mesa and El Cajon. The inclusion of El Cajon sparked protest from local officials and

activists, including El Cajon Mayor Bill Wells and Chaldean community leaders, who said that city has more in common with rural East County than with urban San Diego neighborhoods.

The new map would add the city of Escondido to District 5 in North County, along with the other State Route 78 cities of San Marcos, Vista and Oceanside, Camp Pendleton, the unincorporated communities of Fallbrook, Bonsall, Rainbow and Valley Center and a number of tribal reservations. With the addition of Escondido, the district would lose Carlsbad to the coastal District 3. Supervisor Jim Desmond represents District 5.

An important criteria for the commission is to protect the rights of minority voters in each district. Consultants Christian Grose, a political science professor at the University of Southern California, and Natalie Masuoka, chair of UCLA’s department of Asian American Studies, analyzed 10 years of county voting data to determine how the new map could affect minority communities’ ability to elect their preferred candidates.

Their analysis found that minority voters in the new version of District 1, the Latino majority district, would have been able to elect their candidate of choice in 100 percent of elections during that decade. Minority voters in District 4, in central San Diego, would have had 80 percent success. Those in District 3, on the coast, and District 5, in North County, would have elected their preferred candidates 40 percent of the time, while minority voters in District 5 would not have elected any candidates of their choice during that time.

Those figures were indications of how likely minority voters in those areas would be able to elect preferred candidates in future contests, they said.

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