

7/27/11

Michael Lerner
Lerner Vineyard
955 Ballard Cyn Rd
Solvang, CA 93463
Phone: (805) 686-2440
Fax: (805) 686-2450

Supervisor Wolf
511 E. Lakeside Parkway
Santa Maria CA 93455
Phone: (805) 568-2192

RE: Redistricting of Santa Barbara County 2011

Dear Supervisor Wolf,

On July 12th, 2011, I had the pleasure of presenting to you and your fellow board members a redistricting plan I compiled on behalf of the Central Coast Winegrowers Association (CCWGA) and Santa Barbara Vintner's Association (SBCVA), jointly. I mention these associations again because as of the day of my presentation I had not received a majority vote of approval from the members of these organizations, however recently I have. Either way I was honored to be a participant with the other 15 map submissions, and was grateful for your consideration. I did not make it back to the afternoon session as I did not expect a decision to be made, and was shocked to find out that a map had been chosen with a 3-2 vote, with Joni Gray and Steve Lavagnino opposing. Furthermore, a subsequent newspaper article mentioned both opposing supervisor's frustration, as was mine, that it appeared the proponents of the chosen map already had made up their mind before all of our presentations. It is in this regard that I am writing you directly, as I recently came across another newspaper article in which Joni Gray and Steve Lavagnino were urging the other supervisors to either reverse their position or agree to perhaps suspend this decision so that an independent panel could make the final decision. I urge you and your fellow supervisors to allow this to go to a redistricting steering committee – as do most other counties in California.

I first became aware of this redistricting process by attending a June 1st meeting in Solvang, CA, hosted by the County under the direction of Mr. Bozanich. From this presentation the criteria that needed to be considered were presented – and are listed here as was presented by the county in both the publication *Welcome to Public Workshop on Redistricting 2011*, by Dennis Bozanich with the County Executive Office of County of Santa Barbara, as well as a PowerPoint presentation titled *County of Santa Barbara Redistricting Process*, also written by Dennis Bozanich. The criteria are as follows:

- 1) Equal Populations
- 2) Cohesiveness
- 3) Contiguity
- 4) Integrity
- 5) Compactness of territory
- 6) Geography and topography
- 7) Communities of interest
- 8) Compliance with the federal Voting Rights Act

Nowhere in the information conveyed to the public was “voter disenfranchising” ever discussed or listed as criteria. If this was a criterion it should have been listed, otherwise County staff failed the public. In fact while compiling the map with one of the county engineers, he let it slip that the board had already given them instructions seeking maps with the smallest amount of change; this also was not part of the criteria presented to the public.

The reference to compliance with federal Voting Rights Act is for ensuring equal minority representation in each district. The only criterion with any substantial impact to any redistricting process is enforcing the communities of interest. I quote from the published workshop materials: “Examples of such interests, among others, are those common to an urban area, a rural area, an industrial area or an agricultural area” Please note the “or” in this sentence as it infers that a community of interest is not achieved when industrial areas merge with agricultural areas. For example, UCSB and its surrounding industry such as Ratheon, Citrix, etc., are not the same type of community as vineyards or horse ranches in the Santa Ynez Valley. This was essentially the premise of the map I generated, as well as 10 other maps submitted – to preserve communities of interest. The current approved map fails to achieve this goal.

At the public meeting on June 1st, 2011, in Solvang, I asked Mr. Bozanich if there were a system of “checks and balances” for this process since ultimately the supervisors would decide the redistricting. This could prove to be a conflict of interest, especially should a supervisor have to decide to move a population base knowing full well that it might affect a future election. Honestly, Mr. Bozanich avoided the question by stating that from all the public workshops he had lead everyone seemed to be happy with both his or her supervisors and their respective districts. I believe that this entire process was flawed since there is an inherent conflict of interest for any supervisor: each of you know your voting demographics and would be inclined to not lose potential supporting Census blocks to another district. The truly fair way to complete this redistricting process is to create a redistricting steering committee, staffed in the following way:

- 1) Assessor-County Clerk-Recorder (Chair-person)
- 2) Assistant County Executive Officer (Co-Chair-person)
- 3) Chief of Staff – 1st District
- 4) Chief of Staff – 2nd District
- 5) Chief of Staff – 3rd District

- 6) Chief of Staff – 4th District
- 7) Chief of Staff – 5th District

This is an example of how Riverside County is handling their redistricting for 2011 (please visit <http://rivcoredistricting.org/FAQs.aspx>), a county not that different from ours structurally, with a university, urban areas, rural areas, industrial areas, agricultural areas (Temecula wine and horse country) and Native American gaming. This approach ensures district representation in the process, yet relieves the conflict utilizing a chief of staff and not the supervisor. However, should the board decide this approach may have been better served earlier on, then perhaps a review of the *California Codes on Redistricting Elections Code Section 21500-21506* is necessary. Section 21505 states that the board may appoint a committee composed of residents of the county to study the matter of changing boundaries of the supervisorial districts. Having members of the public submit maps generated by County owned software hardly constitutes a study of the matter.

Lastly, should the supervisors still feel that minimizing voter disenfranchising is paramount to preserving the communities of interest of the districts they represent, I would ask in particular then to consider how much voter disenfranchising occurs in the third district when the UCSB student population votes on local matters and then graduates and leaves the area shortly thereafter. These students share more in common with Santa Barbara City College than they do with Solvang or Santa Ynez, yet can influence the valley “way of life.” Also, selecting a “status quo” map is essentially pushing aside many issues that will come back to haunt us in the next ten years to be dealt with again in 2021, at which time Goleta, Isla Vista, and UCSB will most likely have to move to the 2nd District if Santa Maria continues to grow. The map currently chosen is, in my opinion, a copout and does nothing to better our communities. I admit that even the map I submitted would need further work, but at least it addresses the interest of our communities and can also relieve the tension between the north and south parts of the County.

Please feel free to contact me via email (michael@larnervineyard.com) or my mobile at (805) 350-1435, should you want to discuss this further. I welcome your response and would like the opportunity to meet with you personally some day soon as I may be in front of your board on another matter - that is, if my one objecting neighbor decides to appeal our family Tier II winery development plan past the Zoning Administrator and Planning Commission (Please visit www.larnervineyard.com for more information).

Sincerely,

Michael Larner

Larner Vineyard