

Describing Your Community for Redistricting

You Have a Voice in California's Redistricting Process

California's electoral district lines are being redrawn this year. This includes congressional, assembly, and city council districts. These lines affect your ability to elect representatives who will fight for your priorities. One of the best ways you can shape district maps is by telling the line-drawers where you live and what matters to your community.

What is a "Community of Interest" and Why Does it Matter?

A "Community of Interest" is just a technical term for a group of people that live in a certain area and would benefit by being kept in a district together because they share similar social and economic interests. Communities may have shared interests based on many factors, like shared language and immigration status, shared economic conditions or job types, and shared concerns about schools, housing, or other policy issues.

Keeping communities of interest together in one district helps build community power to affect elections and lift up concerns to elected representatives. The California Citizens Redistricting Commission and local redistricting bodies are required to try to keep communities of interest together when they draw the new maps. By telling the statewide Commission and local line-drawers about your community, you'll help them understand where exactly your community is located so that they can take them into account when drawing the lines.

How to Tell the Statewide Commission about Your Community

Giving "Community of Interest" testimony is like storytelling. Who is your community? What do you all have in common? Where do you live and where do you gather? There are multiple ways you can share your story with the statewide Commission.

<p><u>Attend a Regional Meeting with the Statewide Commissioners</u> Summer 2021</p>	<p>This summer, the statewide Commission responsible for drawing maps for Congress, state senate, and assembly will hold regional meetings to hear from the public. Calling in to speak is a powerful way to make sure your community is heard. All participants will be given a few minutes to tell the Commission about their community.</p> <p>For more information on these meetings and how to call in, check the Commission's website</p>
<p><u>Draw and Describe your Community Online</u> Open Now - October 2021</p>	<p>You can draw a map and submit a written description of your community online at DrawMyCACommunity.org (available in multiple languages). This information will go directly to the statewide Commission.</p> <p>You can also submit detailed written testimony or hand-drawn maps of your community by emailing the statewide Commission at votersfirstact@crc.ca.gov.</p>

Check your local city, county, and school board website for more information on how to share community of interest testimony with local commissions and line-drawers who are redrawing those district lines.

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Submitting Community of Interest Testimony

The following questions are from the statewide Commission's online tool for providing Community of Interest testimony. Use the space below to write down your thoughts. You can then go to DrawMyCACommunity.org to submit this information with an online map.

Check out our reflection questions on the next page for more ideas about how to describe your community!

Describing your community:

Give your community a name: _____

Tell us about your community. What are your shared interests? What brings you together? What is important to your community?

Are there nearby areas you want to be in a district with? Nearby areas you don't want to be in a district with? Why or why not?

Is there anything else you can tell us about your community?

Identify where your community is located.

- If you use the statewide Commission's online tool at DrawMyCACommunity.org, you will select areas on an online map to show where your community lives. You can also draw on your own map or a printed map and send it to the Commission.
- If you are speaking at one of the statewide Commission's public input meetings or submitting a paper form, be sure to describe the location of your community in detail:

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Developing Your Testimony

Use the following questions to help brainstorm what you want to include in your testimony. You don't need to answer all of them—they're meant to help you think more about what you want your testimony to look like.

Tell us about your community.

Where is your community located?

- What streets, intersections, highways, or geographic features mark the boundaries of where your community lives?
- What are some meaningful places for your community? Identify where these are (on a map or provide their intersection). Describe their importance. Consider listing community centers, schools, places of worship, major workplaces, culturally-specific business centers, places the community gathers or spends time.

What are your shared interests? What brings you together? What is important to your community?

- Who is part of your community? Is it primarily families, immigrants, renters, workers in a particular industry?
- What is the history of your community and its experience in your city or region?
- What kinds of jobs do people in your community have? What types of housing?
- Does your community share a common language or ethnicity? If so, what is it?
- Does your community share similar incomes or financial circumstances? If so, what?
- What are some issues and policy needs that are important to your community (healthcare, jobs, environmental justice, education, and more)?
- If your community was going to gather for a meeting, event, or protest, what would it be about?

Are there nearby areas you want to be in a district with? Nearby areas you don't want to be in a district with? Why or why not?

Tip: If you are describing your community to the statewide Commission, you might want to think about bigger areas, like cities within your region, along with your neighborhood itself. The statewide Commission is drawing maps for Assembly, Senate, and Congress, so the districts will be large. If you are describing your community to local line-drawers who are deciding city, county, and school district lines, you might want to focus on your neighborhood and smaller areas.

- What communities live in nearby areas?
- Are there other communities that are similar to yours? What makes you similar?
- Are there any that are different? What makes you different?
- Are there issues that are important to your community that are also important to nearby communities? Which communities and where do they live?

Is there anything else you can tell us about your community?

- Why is your community important to you?
- Why is it important to keep your community together in one district?

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Examples of Written Testimony

In 2011, people spoke up to share information about their communities with the Commission. They helped make the maps better! Below are some examples of their testimony.

Testimony of an Oakland resident, submitted on May 21, 2011

Good Afternoon. I want to thank the Commission for the opportunity to testify about my Community. I am a resident of Oakland and have been a long-time community activist and public service provider in the East Bay for over 25 years.

I first ask the commission to keep Oakland's Chinatown whole. Oakland Chinatown is in downtown Oakland and is centered around 8th Street and Webster. The area is very diverse, with Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese and other Asian Americans living, working and owning businesses there. There are also a number of community nonprofit organizations that provide services to the Oakland Chinatown.

Second, I want to emphasize that Oakland and the surrounding cities of Alameda and Berkeley are very diverse with many Asian Americans, Latinos and African Americans residents. Across racial groups, many of these residents are underserved and rely upon critical social services provided by government agencies and community institutions. The attached map shows levels of per capita income in this area and illustrate the need residents have for a strong voice at the state and federal levels on issues of social services and jobs & economy.

Based on these common needs, I recommend to the commission to ensure that Alameda, Berkeley, and Oakland districts are economically grouped to ensure that the diverse population in these areas has fair and responsive representation.

Testimony of the UC Small Farm Program Advisor, submitted on May 23, 2011

I am the Small Farm Program advisor for the UC Extension in Fresno County. As part of the Small Farm Program, my staff and I work with the Southeast Asian farmers in Fresno County. One of the groups we work with among the Southeast Asian farmers is the Hmong American Cooperative. We provide education to the farmers in all aspects of farming, including pest and weed management, crop diversity, and complying with federal and state work laws.

The Southeast Asian farmers in Fresno County are made up of Hmong, Lao, Cambodian, Yao, and Vietnamese. They are unique among farmers in Fresno in at least two ways. First, most farmers in Fresno own their land and live on their farms. However, the majority of Southeast Asian farmers lease their land and do not live on the land. Second, the Southeast Asian farmers generally grow vegetables for the markets catering to the Southeast Asian communities in Fresno, such as lemon grass and Chinese long bean. This means they have different farming and marketing needs.

The Southeast Asian farmers lease land throughout Fresno County. However, the majority of the farms are located south of Ashlan Avenue to Selma and west of Academy. Although the leased farms are generally outside the City of Fresno, my assistant, estimates that about 40% of the Southeast Asian farmers live in a neighborhood within the City of Fresno where a large number of Hmong and Lao families live. The general boundaries of the neighborhood are Shields to the north; Highway 41 to the west until Belmont then First Street south of Belmont; Jensen to the south; and Temperance to the east.