



October 4, 2021

Sent via email

Fresno County Advisory Redistricting Commission
2281 Tulare St, Third Floor
Fresno, CA 93721

Dear Members of the Advisory Redistricting Commission,

At last week's community workshop, Fresno County provided individuals the ability to participate remotely for the first time. It is however, equally important that Fresno County have processes set up to ensure the public not only can speak, but that all can understand each speaker's comments, and that the speakers' remarks are captured correctly. We have commented about this concern before and are writing to reiterate that the September 29 meeting again fell short of this expectation.

Examples of issues at the September 29, 2021, meeting include:

- Automatic translator did not work correctly for both English and Spanish speakers, leaving members of the public not able to comprehend what the speaker was saying if they spoke a different language than themselves.
- The moderator and recorder were not familiar with the names of Fresno County cities and unincorporated communities, nor where they are located. This caused several items to either be misspelled or misidentified (including communities of interest). In addition, the recorder failed to identify most communities the speaker did or did not feel connected to
 - League members as well as other individuals provided a few corrections in the questions and answers section of the zoom meeting, but lots of valuable COI information was not captured.
- There was no recorded acknowledgement of support for specific maps or similar comments previously recorded, leaving the impression that one person's comments could mean as much as a comment made by many individuals.
- One zoom user had ten speakers at their location. The moderator allowed all ten speakers to speak consecutively and stopped the public comment section right afterwards. This was unfair to other speakers patiently waiting their turn.
- Public comment period ended at 7:30PM for the consultant to talk about mapping presentation slides that the public has seen multiple times. When the mapping presentation was over, the moderator opened for public comments for individuals still online. At 8:00PM, the moderator noted that all public members had been able to speak, when in fact many had left the meeting, since he had stated earlier that the public comment period had concluded and others still had a raised hand when the meeting ended.

For future meetings we recommend:

1. Live translators be used for languages other than English.
 - a. Translators and moderator work in tandem to be respectful of the speaker and audience by asking the speaker to provide time for translators to inform the public of their message every couple of sentences.
2. The moderator gives clear rules at the beginning of the public comment section by informing the group:
 - The planned length of the comment period, however, should not be cut short if people want to speak. The Public Workshop / Public Hearing should focus on obtaining comments from the public and should not be cut short, without good cause.
 - How long each speaker can talk (giving additional time for speakers' messages that need to be translated)

Ask each speaker to inform the group if they are speaking as an individual or with a specific group and/or if they are speaking in favor of a specific map.

- Allow two speakers at a time from one location, other speakers need to get in line after other speakers wanting to talk have been heard.
- The consultant-employed recorder of notes must work with a County employee familiar with the region to ensure comments are properly recorded. Since Commissioners and Supervisors rely only on these notes, their accuracy is crucial.

We urge you, even at this late date, to correct these errors since public participation is not only critical but also a mandatory element of a fair and effective redistricting process. Since few opportunities remain for public participation, particularly from language minorities, we must insist that all means be taken to correct these flaws in the County's public participation.

Sincerely,



Marianne Kast
President