

Comments at 8/4 OC redistricting community workshop

Good evening, my name is Cynthia Valencia and I am a Senior Policy Advocate and Organizer at the ACLU of Southern California and also a member of the People's Redistricting Alliance. I am a current resident and grew up in Orange County. I am here today to uplift communities, specifically in current district 1, that are being disenfranchised and their vote is being diluted because of the current district configuration. For this redistricting cycle, it will not be sufficient for the Board or County staff to just slightly redraw the lines from the 2011 process. As a reminder, in 2011 there was an ultimately successful attempt to draw supervisorial lines that ensured full Republican control of the Board of Supervisors, with every then-Supervisor meeting with the OC Republican chairman. Additionally, GOP leaders made multiple statements to local news outlets about their success in maintaining Republican control for all the Board of Supervisors seats. Similar behavior would be violating the Fair Maps Act passed in 2018. And this year, the board and County staff need to make the changes necessary to right the wrongs from 2011. The Act also ranks keeping communities of interest as one of the top principles the Board must consider in drawing lines, and excludes relationships with political parties, incumbents, or political candidates as factors that the Board may consider when assessing communities of interest.

As the testimony you've heard today confirms, there are communities of interest in Orange County that are made up of large concentrations of Latinx voters. These communities share interests and concerns in common, tend to support the same candidates and policies, and have been negatively impacted by the current configuration of the districts because they have been unable to elect candidates of choice, since the drawing of the district maps in 2011. The Voting Rights Act mandates the creation of minority-majority districts in precisely in these situations.

We want to reiterate, that the Board must not attempt to meet its Voting Rights Act obligations by placing most Latinx voters into just one majority-Latinx district. Like cracking, the Supreme Court and state law also prohibit packing: placing as many Latinx voters into just one district so they have less political power than their size merits. The only reason for this board would avoid drawing Latinx majority districts this cycle would be to protect incumbency and/or political party interests. This not only violates the Voting Rights Act but now also violates various provisions of the Fair Maps Act. Latinx voters should, like all other voters, be equally and fairly represented in the new supervisorial district map. We at the ACLU and People's Redistricting Alliance are more than happy to work with County staff and the Board of Supervisors to ensure they will not violate the Voting Rights Act or the Fair Maps Act. Thank you.