

# Contra Costa Times editorial: Supervisors need to use reason in reshaping their districts

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AFTER 14 public workshops and more than 300 comments from residents, Contra Costa supervisors get down to the once-a-decade task of redrawing their own political boundaries on Tuesday.

But, with all due respect to the people of the county, the harsh reality is that a majority of the supervisors have their own personal and political agendas that supersede the key goals of redistricting: Creating districts that are geographically logical and maximize the preservation of communities of interest.

Ten years ago, county supervisors threw out that principle. They were instead driven by political ambition and retribution, creating one district from Walnut Creek and the San Ramon Valley around Mount Diablo and all the way to Knightsen and Discovery Bay. The map also split Walnut Creek into three different districts. It wasn't about good government and constituent service. It was about political payback.

This year, it's more about "me." It's about supervisors wanting to protect their political turf, or stick with what is most comfortable for them. The population distribution this year provides an opportunity to create logical districts that respect natural geographical boundaries and minimize the division of cities.

We're pleased to see that Supervisors John Gioia of Richmond and Federal Glover of Pittsburg understand this. In preparation for Tuesday's meetings, each of the five supervisors has submitted a preferred plan, which can be viewed at [www.ccredistricting.com](http://www.ccredistricting.com).

Gioia and Glover submitted nearly identical maps that would create a West County district: a shoreline district from Hercules to Pittsburg; an East County district from Antioch to the county line; a district from Orinda to San Ramon; and a central county district that includes Pleasant Hill, Clayton and most of Walnut Creek and Concord.

But it will take support from one of the three other supervisors to reach a deal. Unfortunately the others have

their own agendas, as their proposed maps show.

Supervisor Mary Piepho of Discovery Bay has the most illogical proposal, which includes a district for her stretching from Bethel Island and Discovery Bay around Mount Diablo, picking up Clayton and Walnut Creek. It defies logic and to some extent perpetuates the mess that was made in 2000. Moreover, Piepho's proposal maldistributes the population so badly that it would surely be subject to legal challenge for violating the principle of equal representation.

Supervisor Karen Mitchoff of Pleasant Hill, in her quest to preserve all of Concord in her district, proposes dividing Walnut Creek three ways and splitting Antioch into two districts. Moreover, she also creates a district for Piepho stretching from Bethel Island and Discovery Bay to Walnut Creek.

The proposal by Supervisor Gayle Uilkema of Lafayette can best be described as preservation of the status quo, with some minor changes to balance the populations. Simply put, Uilkema is resistant to substantial change, and, consequently is willing to put up with perpetuation of the currently unwieldy map. She says she wants to preserve the diversity of her current district, which stretches from Hercules and Martinez to Lamorinda.

We concur that diversity is a good idea, but the goal should be diversity of representation on the board. Toward that end, district lines should not divide minority communities, and hence undermine their voting strength, which is a problem with the current districts. This is not only a key moral principle, it's an overriding legal one.

Clearly Gioia and Glover have the right idea. Of the remaining three, Mitchoff's proposal is closest, but it can only make sense if she eliminates the stretch of an East County district all the way to Walnut Creek. Right now the best hope for a logical compromise lies in a meeting of the minds between Gioia, Glover and Mitchoff.