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Contra Costa board resets its political boundaries

By Lisa Vorderbrueggen
Contra Costa Times
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MARTINEZ -- Contra Costa supervisors narrowly adopted new electoral maps Tuesday that will shift half the county's population into a new district in time for the 2012 election.

On a contentious 3-2 vote, Supervisors Federal Glover, John Gioia and Karen Mitchoff prevailed after months of discord and without a majority for any map alternative.

Supervisors Mary Nejedly Piepho and Gayle Uilkema, whose terms end in 2012, supported a configuration that would have left the existing boundaries largely intact and kept from splitting any city between districts.

Glover and Gioia, of Pittsburg and Richmond, respectively, had for weeks unsuccessfully pushed their preferred map, which proposed significant change.

The men finally secured a third vote after they agreed to push all of Concord into Mitchoff's district. The former Pleasant Hill councilwoman had opposed splitting the city and refused to budge.

Political boards must adjust their electoral districts once a decade in to comply with the "one person, one vote" mandate in the Constitution.

As the divided vote suggests, the new map has winners and losers.

Walnut Creek, Antioch, Pinole and the San Ramon Valley will each have two supervisors, an outcome the cities opposed.

The new map shifts Piepho, of Discovery Bay, out of the bulk of San Ramon Valley and into a large, East Contra Costa district with Oakley, Brentwood, Byron, Knightsen and most of Antioch.

Piepho

retains Blackhawk and the Tassajara Valley, which worries environmentalists. A developer has proposed a housing and orchard project in the Tassajara Valley and opponents lobbied to shift its representation away from the Republican.

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Uilkema, of Lafayette, will lose Martinez, Rodeo and Hercules and shift into the San Ramon Valley towns of Danville, Alamo and San Ramon. She retains Rossmoor.

Glover's district shifts west, stretching from an industrial area in northern Antioch along the waterfront including Martinez and on to Hercules and portions of Pinole.

The boundaries gives him a large number of new constituents. That may work in his favor as he is widely viewed as vulnerable in the 2012 election, and the move allows him to start fresh with voters who don't know him.

Mitchoff's territory expands into Walnut Creek, now split between two supervisor districts instead of three.

She will continue to represent Concord, Pleasant Hill and Clayton.

Gioia will see the least change -- he gains half of Pinole but the rest of his district is unchanged.

Contact Lisa Vorderbrueggen at 925-945-4773 or IBAbuzz.com/politics. Follow her at Twitter.com/lvorderbrueggen.

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