



CITIZEN OUTREACH

Putting the Public Back in Public Policy

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The Honorable Todd Russell
First Judicial District Court
885 East Musser Street, Suite 3031
Carson City, Nevada 89701-3031

VIA EMAIL

Dear Judge Russell,

On behalf of the thousands of Nevada citizens represented by our organization, I am writing today to express concern that Secretary of State Ross Miller – who played politics with his decision to conduct a “battle royale” for the Congressional District 2 Special Election - is now at it again with his recommendations for the panel of “masters” you requested.

At first glance the participants he recommended are impressive and seems to be nonpartisan, three Republicans, three Democrats and one Nonpartisan. But first glances can be deceiving:

- Former Republican State Senator Bill Raggio supported Democrat Senator Harry Reid in the 2010 election. As a result, his caucus removed him as Minority Leader. Senator Raggio would be biased in any redistricting decisions.
- Former Democrat State Senator Terry Care makes his living lobbying the Legislature which is controlled by Democrats.
- Eva Garcia-Mendoza is a partisan Democrat who was nominated for a judicial position by Senator Harry Reid and was a delegate to the DNC National Convention.
- Heather Murren might be registered Nonpartisan but she supported Senator Harry Reid in the 2010 election and, according to the FEC gives approximately 76% of her campaign contributions to Democrats.
- Bob Erickson is a registered Republican but works for the Legislative Council Bureau and his ultimate bosses are Assembly Speaker John Oceguera and Senate Majority Leader Steven Horsford, both Democrats and both hold their seats until the next election unless they resign. Speaker Oceguera announced this morning he is running for one of the seats that will be drawn by this panel and Majority Leader Horsford is expected to follow suit.

Redistricting, if done correctly, is a straightforward matter. The problem with our modern partisan redistricting is all parties try to draw the district lines to control their political futures. Both parties are guilty of this. Instead the districts should be drawn for equal representation, not for partisan political gain.

With today's sophisticated software a redistricting plan could be completed in a matter of weeks by any number of competent independent professionals. The ideal plan would not take politics into consideration and should be based on six simple principles:

I. Each district should be based on equal population with a maximum deviation of 1% from the ideal population.

II. To the extent possible district boundaries shall coincide with the boundaries of political subdivisions.

III. Districts shall be composed of convenient contiguous territory. Areas which meet only at the points of adjoining corners are not contiguous.

IV. Districts shall be reasonably compact in form, to the extent consistent with the standards established by subsections 1, 2, and 3. In general, reasonably compact districts are those which are square, rectangular, or hexagonal in shape, and not irregularly shaped, to the extent permitted by natural or political boundaries.

V. No district shall be drawn for the purpose of favoring a political party, incumbent legislator or member of Congress, or other person or group, or for the purpose of augmenting or diluting the voting strength of a language or racial minority group. No political data may be used for the purpose of drawing the districts. No consideration for existing elected representatives may be used.

VI. In order to minimize electoral confusion and to facilitate communication within state legislative districts, each plan representative district is wholly included within a single senatorial district and that, so far as possible, each representative and each senatorial district shall be included within a single congressional district. However, the standards established by subsections 1 through 5 shall take precedence where a conflict arises between these standards and the requirement, so far as possible, of including a senatorial or representative district within a single congressional district.

If these six principles are adhered to in a redistricting plan it should be fair and would guarantee equal representation for all the citizens of Nevada.

Respectfully yours,



Dan Burdish
Chief Executive Officer
Citizen Outreach