

The United States Constitution requires that every 10 years after the national census, state and local governments must review the districts for their elected officials to take certain criteria into account and ensure each district within a state or a county has nearly the same population. As a result, Amador County is going through that process now – redrawing the board of supervisors districts based on the results of the 2020 national census. These district lines also define the districts for the Amador County Board of Education and the Amador Water Agency Board of Directors.

With the passage of AB 849 (Bonta) in 2019, California attempted to improve and standardize the local redistricting process and incorporate best practices the state already uses for state-level redistricting. This law was passed in part to discourage partisan gerrymandering and produce district boundaries that are fair and equitable for all. AB 849 lays out five Ranked Redistricting Criteria for counties : geographic contiguity, preserving neighborhoods and communities of interest, keeping cities and census-designated places intact, having easily identifiable boundaries, and geographical compactness . The five requirements are evaluated in this priority order after the population of the districts varies no more than 10 percent overall.

In February, Amador County Board of Supervisors formed a citizen Redistricting Advisory Committee to perform outreach, identify communities of interest, and develop maps that meet the ranked state criteria and are fair and equitable to all residents. Ideally, the board of supervisors would select from one of these maps, or if none of the maps were acceptable to the board, they could then draw their own.

In a recent board of supervisors meeting, it quickly became apparent that other than the relatively equal district population required by law, the board has no intention of complying with any of the ranked criteria spelled out in the law. The board stated clearly that the only maps they will consider would be what they termed “the classic model”, that is, maps that make as few changes as possible to the existing districts. They also made clear that any maps intended to address any of the longstanding issues in the county would be rejected out of hand. It have gone as far as having the committee chairman have a map layer showing the location of the elected officials’ homes superimposed on proposed maps to ensure the changed lines did not exclude them from “their” districts and thereby put them in potential competition with one another supervisor in a future election.

If you live in the Pine Grove area, which currently is split among four supervisorial districts, you will be waiting at least another 10 years if you want a dedicated member of the board of supervisors to advocate for your town. The historical lines with Jackson, Sutter Creek, Plymouth and Lone all having their own county supervisor and the unincorporated areas being left to fend for themselves will remain, even though each of these towns already have their own city councils that their residents can seek out for help on civic matters. This is especially egregious since two-thirds of the county population lives in the unincorporated area. The greater Pine Grove area, alone has more than 4,000 residents and will still be without direct representation on the Board of Supervisors.

In our system of government, the voters are supposed to select their elected officials, not the other way around. This is clearly a case of the Amador County Board of Supervisors flagrantly ignoring the law regarding redistricting to ensure that the currently elected officials of this county get to choose their own voters.

If you find this as outrageous as I do, please consider sending an e-mail to the board of supervisors at [boardofsupervisors@amadorgov.org](mailto:boardofsupervisors@amadorgov.org) and calling your own supervisor. In addition, there will be at least one more public hearing to discuss the maps. I urge you to attend in person or by Zoom to let your voice be heard. It's time to base our county voting districts on the law, not the desires of people who wish to hold office for multiple terms regardless of how the county grows and changes.

Don Dowell

Amador County Redistricting Committee Member

Lockwood Fire Protection District Board Member

Amador Fire Protection Authority Board Member