

Tom Patten and Anne Heissenbuttel submitted a rebuttal to my letter to the editor and it was printed in the Ledger Dispatch in its December 3rd edition. I enjoyed working with each and every member of the Redistricting Committee, and especially Tom and Anne. Tom and Anne are both dedicated to making Amador County a better place to live, and it was an honor to work with them, as well as all the committee members. Every committee is actively trying to improve our community in some way. I'm glad Tom and Anne took the time to read my letter and think about it critically.

In their letter, Anne and Tom state: "Redistricting must meet the following criteria in addition to balancing population between districts: "To the extent practicable, districts shall be geographically contiguous, respect local neighborhoods or community of interest (COI) boundaries to minimize division, respect geographic integrity of cities and census designated places, provide easily identifiable boundaries and provide geographical compactness."

Their contention is that it is not practicable to devise a map that provides representation for Pine Grove, and that is where we disagree. I feel that it is very practicable to design such a map, and a number of maps were produced that did just that. The primary reason these maps were rejected was because of the self-interest of the sitting board members, not because they were not practicable. The maps were, and still are, very practicable, and would result in a much fairer distribution of population among the five districts, if they were actually considered. The selection process completely sidestepped and ignored this mandatory criterion, except respecting the geographic integrity of cities that already have sitting supervisors. If you're in Pine Grove, you don't have a dedicated supervisor now, and you're not likely to anytime soon. Your community's geographic integrity is sliced up into pieces to fill out districts that don't have enough population to justify the representation they currently have. Trying to justify any map made in the "classic style" that carves up Pine Grove and saying that it meets the requirements of the mandatory criteria for geographic integrity is to blatantly ignore the plain facts.

Tom and Anne were certainly correct in pointing out my error in inferring that that the supervisors were responsible for having a map displayed with their homes annotated. If they directed that to happen I wasn't aware of it and I should not have suggested that they did. Regardless of who directed it to happen, it should not have. I certainly didn't want to know where they lived, because that knowledge tainted the whole process. The law is clear that district boundaries will be drawn without favoring any party or individuals, and since the mandatory criteria of geographic integrity was obviously not met, it was very inappropriate to apply a rigid litmus test based on elected officials addresses.

I was also happy that Tom and Anne brought up the public comments by Robin Peters, when he observed that the City of Sutter Creek is contained within one district, but neighborhoods lying just beyond the city limits would fall into three different districts on many of the proposed maps. This is the same point that I had been making throughout the redistricting process – that putting a district boundary right on a city limit ignores the nearby neighborhoods that identify as being a part of that incorporated city's extended community.

In this case, the City of Sutter Creek was used as the boundary for D4, leaving the surrounding area in other districts. This is because if Sutter Creek is gerrymandered so it can be attached to Pine Grove, as it currently is, more neighborhoods around Sutter Creek means fewer neighborhoods in Pine Grove, making the gerrymandering more obvious and less acceptable. This is one more reason that Pine Grove should have a dedicated member on the Board of Supervisors. Pine Grove's geographic integrity is just

as important as Sutter Creek's, and a map that recognizes that would result in all of Sutter Creek's outlying neighborhoods being in the same district as the town itself.

This is a classic Catch-22. The population analysis performed by county staff and provided in the Board Agenda packet for the December 7th meeting shows the extent that Pine Grove is carved up by the various maps. It also reveals that Pine Grove, by the county's own analysis, is now the second largest population center in the county. Jackson, Sutter Creek, Plymouth, Lone and upcountry all have strong representation on the Board of Supervisors, who have personal incentives to maximize the status quo of the district lines. Pine Grove does not have strong representation, in spite of having more than enough population to justify its own seat on the board, and therefore will apparently continue on without a board member who has its concerns of their citizens as their first priority.