Editor's note: The following document is meant to give instructions to community leaders and local civic organizations that want to engage their families, neighbors, and communities on districting and redistricting. At the end, we have included a handout that members of the public can use to construct their community of interest testimony.

HOW TO PREPARE YOUR COMMUNITY TO GIVE TESTIMONY IN THE DISTRICTING OR REDISTRICTING PROCESS

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Attachment A: How to Give of Community of Interest Testimony (Bilingual)

California Voting Rights Project

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1. Getting Started

In order to create district lines that reflect the many different communities in jurisdiction, the line-drawing body and its hired demographer (map drawer) need to hear directly from residents. The line-drawing body will host public input hearings in multiple locations and at various times in order to do this. It is your job to educate community members about the process of districting or redistricting and to prepare those community members to give testimony called “community of interest testimony.”

These materials were created as a resource as you plan your outreach and education.

Every community is different. Some folks will respond well to a formal meeting with a strict agenda and a PowerPoint presentation. Other residents will be more inspired by a small group meeting over food, and still others will prefer a one on one conversation with a friend. You are the expert on your community. You know how to reach them. Let these materials be a resource as you talk to your community about the importance of districting or redistricting.

2. Public Education & Outreach

Districting and redistricting can be a complex and potentially boring subject. Maps? Local politics? Communities of interest? These aren’t necessarily the topics of everyday conversation for most people. However, the process of districting and redistricting is very important and once people understand the significance, it can be an exciting and uniting opportunity for a community.

Here are four things your community should know:

- What is districting/redistricting?
- Why is districting/redistricting important?
- What is the process by which districting/redistricting happens?
- What is a “community of interest” and how do I give “community of interest testimony”?

The first two bullet points can be answered using the sample PowerPoint presentation created by the ACLU. Familiarize yourself with it and, if you deem it valuable, share it with others. If you are undergoing a districting process, here are some simple answers:

- Local government has great power and influence on your day-to-day life. Local elected officials can do everything from boosting your own community’s economy to making sure the streetlight on your corner is fixed.
- It is common sense that in order to understand a community’s particular challenges an elected official needs to live in that community. Currently, our jurisdiction (city, school board, etc.) allows candidates to live in any part of the jurisdiction – and yet make crucial decisions for all residents.
- Districting corrects this. During the districting process, the jurisdiction will be divided into four districts; if a politician wants to represent one district, he or she must live in that district.
If you are going through a redistricting process, here are some talking points:

- Every 10 years, the political jurisdiction (city, county, school board, etc.) in which we live redraws its district lines. That is happening now.
- *(If applicable.*) Our community is split between multiple districts. We would have greater influence with a single elected lawmaker if we were a big portion of one district instead of a small portion of several. We might even be able to elect someone who comes from our community.
- *(If applicable.*) Our community is packed into one district, which means that we are only influential with one local elected lawmakers. Our community is large enough that we should have influence in multiple districts. We might even be able to elect multiple people who come from our community.

Once your community understands the basics of districting or redistricting, you have to educate them on “community of interest” (COI) testimony. A COI is a group of people that share common bonds and interests. Here are some questions that can help community members describe their COI:

- What are my community spaces, like parks, community centers, and shopping centers, that I use with others?
- Do my neighbors and I share the same needs and interests in schools, housing, crime, transit, health conditions, land use, and environmental conditions?
- Do I share a cultural or racial background or identity with others? Do I share a language with others?
- Do I have similar concerns to others around me because of money/income? Are we bonded together by similar socio-economic status, education levels, or housing?

Next, we provide some hands-on guidance on how to train community members to give testimony.

### 3. Testimony Training

What should community members say to the line-drawing body?

1. **Cultural, social, and economic characteristics** – Use personal experience and/or statistics to describe common traits of your community.
   - a. What is the common language spoken by your community?
   - b. What is the common ancestry or nation of origin?
   - c. Is there a common income level in the community? What is the education level?
   - d. Are there common interests in schools, public safety, parks, transit lines, and land use?

2. **Your community story** – Use anecdotes to describe how your community is united.
   - a. Has your community worked together to achieve a common goal? (Examples can include investments in redevelopment, organizing an annual festival or parade, etc.)
b. What are the common activities that your community participates in? (Examples can include a soccer league, a shared religious congregation, a common shopping area, etc.)

3. Relation to communities around you – Identify which communities are most similar to you and most different from you.
   a. Identify which communities share your experience and your cultural, social, and economic characteristics.
   b. Share with which communities around you are different.

4. Map – Your testimony can include a map that demonstrates your community of interest.
   a. Be specific in identifying your north/south and east/west boundaries; include distinctive features such as street names, rivers, highways, etc.

A few friendly reminders about giving public testimony:

- Practice your statement before you arrive. Practice it out loud. Practice it in front of a friend or a family member. There will be a time limit – most likely 2-5 minutes. Make sure you can share your testimony without being too rushed.
- Make sure to arrive on time to the meeting. You will need to fill out a “speaker request slip” when you arrive and submit to the city clerk at the front of the room.
- Speak slowly and calmly. It is okay to be nervous! Just remember the commission and demographer need to hear from you. They NEED to know about your community and YOU are the expert!

Below is a worksheet to assist folks in outlining their testimony and, for people interested in trying to draw a map of their community or neighborhood, a guide to using Google Maps to describe the location and boundaries of their COI.
How to Give Community of Interest Testimony

When you give community of interest testimony to the line-drawing body, you are explaining what bonds you together with your neighbors and loved ones. Your testimony should provide a clear picture of your community’s shared traits and characteristics so that it does not get divided and placed in different districts.

When writing your testimony consider that you are speaking to someone that may have never visited your community. Be as descriptive as possible.

There are four main elements to a community of interest testimony. Each is explained below but remember that there is no one way to describe a community of interest. Each community is unique and so be creative and comprehensive in describing your community of interest.

1. Cultural, social, and economic characteristics – Use personal experience and/or statistics to describe common traits of your community.
   a. What is the common language spoken by your community?
   b. What is the common ancestry or nation of origin?
   c. Is there a common income level in the community? What is the education level?
   d. Are there common interests in schools, public safety, parks, transit lines, and land use?

2. Your community story – Use anecdotes to describe how your community is united.
   a. Has your community worked together to achieve a common goal? (Examples can include investments in redevelopment, organizing an annual festival or parade, etc.)
   b. What are the common activities that your community participates in? (Examples can include a soccer league, a shared religious congregation, a common shopping area, etc.)

3. Relation to communities around you – Identify which communities are most similar to you and most different from you.
   a. Identify which communities share your experience and your cultural, social, and economic characteristics.
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4. Map – Your testimony can include a map that demonstrates your community of interest.
   a. Be specific in identifying your north/south and east/west boundaries; include distinctive features such as street names, rivers, highways, etc.

REMEMBER: You are the expert of your community! The Commission needs to hear from you!
Structuring Your Written or Verbal Testimony

*Introduction:*
My name is _______________________________ and I am from (neighborhood/community) ____________________________ (if applicable include how many years you have lived in this community)

*State Your Goal/Purpose:*
I am here today to request that you keep my community of interest together (or identify any other goal that you have identified)

*Describe Your Community’s Shared Social and Economic Characteristics (use demographic data if possible to show common characteristics)*

*Describe Stories and Examples of Your Community’s Shared Experience (personal stories are an effective way to show that there is unity in your community)*

*Distinguish Your Community:*
My (our) community is similar to ____________________________________________________________
And it is unique/distinct/different from _______________________________________________________

*Define your Community Boundaries: Identify street names, highways, landmarks, parks, lakes, etc.*

*Provide a Community Map (not required): (if you have a computer and internet you can use Google Maps, or simply sketch on paper with labeled boundaries)*

*Conclude Your Statement: Re-State your goal/purpose; thank them for hearing your views.*

REMEMBER …
• Bring 10-12 copies of your testimony to share with the line-drawers and their staff.
• Bring others who will give similar testimony as you and reinforce it.
Cómo prestar testimonio como Comunidad de Interés

Al prestar testimonio como comunidad de interés ante la Comisión de Delimitación de Distritos, estará explicando los vínculos que existen entre usted, sus vecinos y seres queridos en Chula Vista. Su testimonio dará a los Comisionados una clara imagen de los rasgos y características que comparte su comunidad para que no sea dividida y ubicada en distritos diferentes. Al redactar su testimonio, tome en cuenta que se está comunicando con alguien que puede que nunca haya visitado su comunidad. Sea lo más descriptivo posible.

Cuatro elementos son básicos al prestar testimonio como comunidad de interés. Abajo explicamos cada uno, pero recuerde que no existe una sola forma de describir una comunidad de interés. Cada comunidad es única así que sea creativo y detallado al describir su comunidad de interés.

1. Características sociales y económicas – Use experiencias personales y/o estadísticas para describir rasgos comunes de su comunidad.
   a. ¿Qué idioma común habla su comunidad?
   b. ¿Qué ascendencia comparte su comunidad? Mexicanos, filipinos, afroamericanos, etc. (deje que la Comisión conozca nuestra diversidad)
   c. ¿Existe un nivel común de ingresos en la comunidad? ¿Cuál es el nivel de educación?
   d. ¿Existen intereses comunes relacionados con escuelas, seguridad pública, parques, líneas del transporte público y uso de la tierra?

2. Historia de su comunidad – Use anécdotas para describir lo que une a su comunidad.
   c. ¿Ha trabajado su comunidad unida para alcanzar una meta común? (Los ejemplos pueden incluir inversiones en redesarrollo, organización de un festival o desfile anual, etc.)
   d. ¿En qué actividades comunes participa su comunidad? (Los ejemplos pueden incluir una liga de fútbol, congregación religiosa, zona comercial, etc.)

3. Relación con las comunidades vecinas – Identifique qué comunidades son más parecidas y cuáles son más diferentes a la suya.
   a. Identifique cuáles comunidades comparten su experiencia o características sociales y económicas.
   b. Comparta con la Comisión cuáles de sus comunidades vecinas son diferentes a la suya.

4. Defina sus límites – Explique dónde se encuentra su comunidad en Chula Vista. Su testimonio puede incluir un mapa que muestre a su comunidad de interés.
   b. Sea específico al identificar los límites norte/sur y este/oeste; incluya rasgos distintivos tales como nombres de calles, ríos, carreteras, etc.
   c. El mapa no tiene que incluir los cuatro distritos de Chula Vista. Si usa un mapa, solo tiene que mostrar el contorno de su comunidad.

RECUERDE: ¡Usted es un experto en su comunidad! ¡La Comisión quiere escuchar su opinión!
Estructurando su testimonio escrito u oral

*Introducción:
Me llamo ____________________________ y vivo en (vecindario/comunidad) _____________________ (si aplica, incluya cuántos años ha vivido en esta comunidad) _____________________

*Expresue Objeto/Propósito:
Estoy aquí hoy para solicitar que la Comisión mantenga unida a mi comunidad de interés (o identifique cualquier otro objetivo que haya identificado)

*Describa las Características Sociales y Económicas Comunes de su Comunidad (si es posible, incluya información demográfica para demostrar las características comunes)

*Describa Historias y Ejemplos de las Experiencias Comunes de su Comunidad (las historias personales son una forma efectiva de demostrar que su comunidad es unida)

*Describa su Comunidad:
Mi (nuestra) comunidad se parece a

Y es única/distinta/diferente a

*Defina los Límites de su Comunidad: Identifique nombres de calles, carreteras, parques, lagos, etc.

*Provea un Mapa de su Comunidad (no es obligatorio): (si tiene una computadora y conexión al internet, puede usar Google Maps o simplemente puede dibujar un mapa e identificar los límites)

*Concluya su Testimonio: Vuelva a expresar su objetivo/propósito, agradezca a la Comisión por escuchar su opinión.

PRÓXIMOS PASOS...
• Traiga 12 copias de su testimonio para compartir con la Comisión y el personal de la ciudad.
• Pida a otras personas que apoyen su testimonio, ya sea expresando puntos de vista similares durante una audiencia pública o enviando su testimonio por escrito a la Comisión de Delimitación de Distritos.