
SENATE COMMITTEE ON APPROPRIATIONS

Senator Anna Caballero, Chair
2025 - 2026 Regular Session

AB 1441 (Soria) - County of Merced Citizens Redistricting Commission

Version: July 10, 2025

Urgency: No

Hearing Date: August 18, 2025

Policy Vote: E. & C.A. 4 - 1, L. GOV. 5 - 2

Mandate: Yes

Consultant: Robert Ingenito

Bill Summary: AB 1441 would create the Citizens' Redistricting Commission of Merced County (CRCCM), as specified.

Fiscal Impact: By requiring Merced County to create and operate a redistricting commission as specified, this bill creates a state-mandated local program. To the extent the Commission on State Mandates determines that the provisions of this bill create a new program or impose a higher level of service on Merced County, the County could claim reimbursement of those costs (General Fund). The magnitude of these costs is unknown, but minimally in the hundreds of thousands of dollars on a decennial basis.

Background: In 2008, California voters approved Proposition 11, which amended the California Constitution to transfer the power to redraw electoral district boundaries for seats in Legislature to an independent 14-member citizen's redistricting commission. Current law requires the board of supervisors of each county, following the census every 10 years, to adjust the boundaries of any or all of the supervisorial districts of the county so that the districts are as nearly equal in populations as possible and comply with the applicable provisions of the federal Voting Rights Act. The Board must adopt supervisorial district boundaries using specified criteria:

Until recently, state law allowed a county board of supervisors to appoint an advisory committee to study and make recommendations on changes to supervisorial boundaries. However, because the Constitution specifically says that "Charter counties are subject to statutes that relate to apportioning population of governing body districts," charter counties couldn't create citizens redistricting commissions to redraw supervisorial districts until state law was amended to specifically authorize them to do so. In 2016, with the passage of SB 1108, the Legislature repealed the authorization to appoint advisory committees and instead allowed a county or general law city to establish a commission to either change the boundaries of the districts or recommend to the governing body changes to the boundaries of the districts.

Because counties could not independently establish redistricting commissions until the passage of SB 1108, the Legislature statutorily authorized redistricting commissions in two counties: San Diego and Los Angeles. In 2012, at the request of San Diego County officials, the Legislature established a redistricting commission in San Diego County and charged it with adjusting the boundaries of supervisorial districts after each decennial federal census (SB 1331, 2012).

In 2016, the Legislature established a redistricting commission for Los Angeles County (SB 958). The Los Angeles County redistricting commission comprises 14 members.

The redistricting commission must be constituted after each census and adjust the boundaries in accordance with specified parameters

In 2018, the Legislature reformed the San Diego County Commission in SB 1108 to import many of the same requirements as SB 958 created for Los Angeles County (AB 801). Both the Los Angeles and San Diego Commissions approved final maps for their respective counties in December, 2021.

In 2018, voters in the County of Santa Barbara approved a local ordinance, Measure G2018, placed on the ballot by the Santa Barbara County board of supervisors, which established the County of Santa Barbara Citizens' Independent Redistricting Commission. The commission is comprised of eleven commissioners and charged with redrawing county supervisorial district lines after the 2020 census using specified criteria.

The Legislature has created independent redistricting commissions for eight counties: Fresno, Kern, Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, Sacramento, San Diego, and San Luis Obispo.

Proposed Law: This bill would, among other things, do the following:

- Establish an 11-member CRCCM, as specified, and task it with adjusting the boundary lines of the supervisorial districts in Merced County.
- Provide that after the time period when the qualified applicants are public, the county elections official shall create a subpool for each of the five existing supervisorial districts. The Merced County Auditor-Controller is required to conduct a random drawing to select one commissioner from each of the five subpools established by the county elections official at a regularly scheduled meeting of the Merced County Board of Supervisors. The five commissioners selected, at a separate public meeting, reviews the remaining names of applicants, interviews the finalists for appointment, allows public comment, and appoints six additional members to the CRCCM.
- Require various outreach and meeting requirements before the drafting of a map and following the creation of a draft map for the supervisorial districts.
- Require the Merced County Board of Supervisors to take all steps necessary to ensure that a complete and accurate computerized database is available for redistricting, and that procedures are in place to provide to the public ready access to redistricting data and computer software equivalent to what is available to the CRCCM members.
- Require CRCCM to adopt a redistricting plan adjusting the boundaries of the supervisorial districts and file the plan with the county elections official no later than 204 days before Merced County's next regularly scheduled election occurring after January 1 in each year ending in the number two.
- Subject the plan to referendum in the same manner as ordinances.

- Require CRCCM to issue, with the final map, a report that explains the basis on which the CRCCM made its decisions in achieving compliance with the criteria prescribed by this bill.

Related Legislation:

- SB 977 (Laird, Chapter 450, Statutes of 2024) created a Citizens Redistricting Commission in San Luis Obispo County.
- AB 1248 (Bryan, 2023) would have required a county or city with more than 300,000 residents, or a school district or community college district with more than 500,000 residents, to establish an independent redistricting commission to adopt district boundaries after each federal decennial census. The bill was vetoed by Governor Newsom.
- SB 52 (Durazo, 2023) would have required an independent redistricting commission for charter cities with a population of at least 2,500,000 people to adjust the district boundaries for the city council. The bill was vetoed by Governor Newsom.
- SB 314 (Ashby, Chapter 389, Statutes of 2023) created a Citizens Redistricting Commission in Sacramento County.
- AB 34 (Valencia, Chapter 315, Statutes of 2023) created a Citizens Redistricting Commission in the Orange County.
- AB 1307 (Cervantes, Chapter 403, Statutes of 2022) created a Citizens Redistricting Commission in Riverside County.
- AB 2030 (Arambula, Chapter 407, Statutes of 2022) created a Citizens Redistricting Commission in Fresno County.
- AB 2494 (Salas, Chapter 411, Statutes of 2022) created a Citizens Redistricting Commission in Kern County.
- SB 139 (Allen, 2019) would have required a county with a population of 400,000 or more to establish an independent redistricting commission to adopt the county supervisorial districts after each federal decennial census. The bill was vetoed by Governor Newsom.
- SB 1018 (Allen, Chapter 462, Statutes of 2018) extended the authority to adopt redistricting commissions to school districts, community college districts, and special districts, relaxed some requirements for members of independent commissions, and allowed for hybrid commissions.
- AB 801 (Weber, Chapter 711, Statutes of 2017) revised the membership of the County of San Diego's Citizens Redistricting Commission to a 14-member commission charged with adjusting the boundary lines of the districts of the Board of Supervisors.

- SB 958 (Lara, Chapter 781, Statutes of 2016) established an independent Citizens Redistricting Commission in the County of Los Angeles to adjust the boundary lines of the districts of the county's Board of Supervisors.
- SB 1108 (Allen, Chapter 784, Statutes of 2016) authorized a county or a general law city to establish a redistricting commission.

Staff Comments: The Commission on State Mandates adopted a statewide cost estimate of \$1.2 million one-time (General Fund) to reimburse Los Angeles County for costs related to the establishment of the Citizens Redistricting Commission for Los Angeles County (SB 958).

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