
THIRD READING

Bill No: AB 1441
Author: Soria (D)
Amended: 7/10/25 in Senate
Vote: 21

SENATE ELECTIONS & C.A. COMMITTEE: 4-1, 7/1/25
AYES: Cervantes, Allen, Limón, Umberg
NOES: Choi

SENATE LOCAL GOVERNMENT COMMITTEE: 5-2, 7/16/25
AYES: Durazo, Arreguín, Cabaldon, Laird, Wiener
NOES: Choi, Seyarto

SENATE APPROPRIATIONS COMMITTEE: 5-2, 8/29/25
AYES: Caballero, Cabaldon, Grayson, Richardson, Wahab
NOES: Seyarto, Dahle

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 60-19, 6/4/25 - See last page for vote

SUBJECT: County of Merced Citizens Redistricting Commission

SOURCE: Communities for a New California

DIGEST: This bill creates the Citizens Redistricting Commission in the County of Merced (CRCCM) and tasks it with establishing supervisorial districts for Merced County following the federal decennial census.

ANALYSIS:

Existing law:

- 1) Requires the board of supervisors of each county, following each federal decennial census, to adopt boundaries for all of the supervisorial districts of the county so that the supervisorial districts are substantially equal in population as required by the United States Constitution. These district boundaries need to

comply with the United States Constitution, the California Constitution, and the federal Voting Rights Act of 1965.

- 2) Authorizes a county, general law city, school district, community college district, or a special district to establish an independent redistricting commission, an advisory redistricting commission, or a hybrid redistricting commission by resolution, ordinance, or charter amendment, subject to certain conditions.
- 3) Defines “independent redistricting commission,” “advisory redistricting commission,” and “hybrid redistricting commission.”
 - a) An “independent redistricting commission” is a body, other than a legislative body, that is empowered to adopt the district boundaries of a legislative body.
 - b) An “advisory redistricting commission” is a body that recommends to a legislative body placement of the district boundaries for that legislative body.
 - c) A “hybrid redistricting commission” is a body that recommends to a legislative body two or more maps for the placement of the district boundaries for that legislative body, where the legislative body must adopt one of those maps without modification, except as may be required to comply with state or federal law.
- 4) Establishes redistricting commissions in Fresno, Kern, Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, Sacramento, San Diego, and San Luis Obispo counties, and charges each commission with adjusting districts of supervisorial districts after each decennial federal census.

This bill:

- 1) Establishes an 11-member CRCCM and tasks it with adjusting the boundary lines of the supervisorial districts in Merced County.
- 2) Provides that the political party preferences of the CRCCM members, as shown on the members’ most recent affidavits of registration, shall be as proportional as possible to the total number of voters who are registered with each political party in Merced County, or who decline to state or do not indicate a party preference, as determined by registration at the most recent statewide election. The political party or no party preferences of the CRCCM members are not required to be exactly the same as the proportion of political

party and no party preferences among the registered voters of the county. At least one CRCCM member must reside in each of the five existing supervisorial districts.

- 3) Prescribes specific qualifications to serve on the CRCCM, requirements while serving on the CRCCM, and prohibitions following service on the CRCCM.
- 4) Provides that interested individuals may submit an application to the county elections official to be considered for membership on the CRCCM. The county elections official reviews the applications and eliminates applicants who do not meet the specific qualifications.
- 5) Provides, from the pool of qualified applicants, the county elections official shall select up to 60 qualified applicants. The county elections official is required to publicize the names of the applicants for at least 30 days.
- 6) Provides 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.
- 7) Provides that seven CRCCM members constitutes a quorum and at least seven affirmative votes are required for any official action.
- 8) Requires various outreach and meeting requirements before the drafting of a map and following the creation of a draft map for the supervisorial districts.
- 9) Requires 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.
- 10) Requires the 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.

- 11) Subjects the plan to referendum in the same manner as ordinances.
- 12) Requires the 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.

Background

California Citizens Redistricting Commission. In 2008, voters approved Proposition 11, creating the California Citizens Redistricting Commission (CCRC), and gave it the responsibility for establishing district lines for the Assembly, Senate, and Board of Equalization. In 2010, the voters approved Proposition 20 and gave the CCRC the responsibility for establishing lines for California's districts for the United States House of Representatives. The CCRC consists of 14 registered voters, including five Democrats, five Republicans, and four who have a party preference different than the two largest political parties, all of whom are chosen according to procedures specified in Proposition 11.

Local Redistricting. Prior to 2017, counties and general law cities were able to create advisory redistricting commissions, but were not able to create independent commissions with the authority to establish district boundaries. Instead, the governing body of that jurisdiction generally had the authority to establish district boundaries. Charter cities are able to establish independent redistricting commissions that have the authority to establish district boundaries because the California Constitution gives charter cities broad authority over the conduct of city elections and over the manner for which municipal officers are elected. As a result, a number of California charter cities established redistricting commissions to adjust city council districts following each decennial census. Counties and general law cities did not have this authority in the absence of express statutory authorization.

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

The Legislature also authorized, but did not require, counties and general law cities to establish redistricting commissions. SB 1108 (Allen, Chapter 784, Statutes of 2016), authorized two different types of commissions: independent commissions and advisory commissions. SB 1108 generally provided cities and counties with the discretion to determine the structure and membership of an advisory or independent redistricting commission, but established minimum qualifications for commission membership. While SB 1108 imposed few restrictions and

requirements on advisory commissions, it did subject members of independent commissions to extensive eligibility requirements and post-service restrictions. Subsequently, SB 1018 (Allen), Chapter 462, Statutes of 2018, allowed for a third type of redistricting commission: hybrid redistricting commissions. Hybrid redistricting commissions recommend to a legislative body two or more maps for the placement of the district boundaries for that legislative body, where the legislative body must adopt one of those maps without modification.

Political Party Preferences. If chaptered, the CRCCM makeup will be required, as shown on the members' most recent affidavits of registration, to be as proportional as possible to the total number of voters who are registered with each political party preference in Merced County, as determined by registration at the most recent statewide election.

If the February 10, 2025 Report of Registration is used to calculate the potential party preference composition of the CRCCM, Democrats would have 4 or 5 members, Republicans would have 3 or 4 members, No Party Preference voters would have 2 or 3 members, and each of the remaining party preferences (American Independent, Green, Libertarian, and Peace and Freedom) would have 0 or 1 member.

Comments

Author's Statement. Over the last several decades Californians have been moving redistricting away from elected officials and placing that responsibility in the hands of independent citizens to ensure a fairer process. In 2008, California passed Proposition 11, which created a Citizens Redistricting Commission to redraw district lines for state offices to ensure fair elections and increase representation from historically excluded groups. Since then, there have been several successful attempts at creating independent redistricting commissions for counties. Both urban and rural counties, including Fresno, Los Angeles, San Diego, and San Luis Obispo have either already established redistricting commissions or are slated to in after the next U.S. Census in 2030.

As a continuation of these past efforts to improve representation and engagement in local elections, this bill calls for the establishment of the CRCCM. This will be a major step in ensuring that the residents of Merced County live in districts created by a fair and impartial process that promotes transparency, accountability, and public trust in county government

Related/Prior Legislation

SB 977 (Laird, Chapter 450, Statutes of 2024) created a Citizens Redistricting Commission in San Luis Obispo County.

AB 1248 (Bryan) of 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. AB 1248 was vetoed by Governor Newsom who raised fiscal concerns with the measure.

SB 52 (Durazo) of 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. SB 52 was vetoed by Governor Newsom. Governor Newsom's veto message stated the following: "While I agree with the goal of the author's proposal, this bill is contingent on the enactment of Assembly Bill 1248, which I have vetoed."

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) of 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. SB 139 was vetoed by the Governor who noted that the proposal be considered in the annual budget process.

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.

FISCAL EFFECT: Appropriation: No Fiscal Com.: Yes Local: Yes

According to the Senate Committee on Appropriations, 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.

SUPPORT: (Verified 8/29/25)

Communities for a New California (Source)
American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, AFL-CIO
California Common Cause
California Federation of Labor Unions, AFL-CIO
Cultiva Central Valley
League of Women Voters of California
PowerCA Action
SocioEnvironmental and Education Network
United Domestic Workers of America (UDW), AFSCME Local 3930

OPPOSITION: (Verified 8/29/25)

Fresno County Board of Supervisors
Kings County Board of Supervisors
Merced County Board of Supervisors
Rural County Representatives of California
Tulare County Board of Supervisors

ARGUMENTS IN SUPPORT:

In a letter supporting this bill, the California Federation of Labor Unions, AFL-CIO, stated, in part, the following:

As a continuation of past efforts to improve representation and engagement in local elections, AB 1441 calls for the establishment of a redistricting commission for the County of Merced. This will be a major step in ensuring that the residents in the county live in districts created in a fair and impartial process that promotes transparency, accountability, and public trust in county government.

ARGUMENTS IN OPPOSITION:

In a letter opposing this bill, the Merced County Board of Supervisors stated, in part, the following:

While the bill states its intent to ensure fairly drawn districts as part of the decennial redistricting process, this [Board of Supervisors] finds it to be unnecessary and costly while undermining local control and disregarding Merced County's longstanding commitment to fair and equitable redistricting.

ASSEMBLY FLOOR: 60-19, 6/4/25

AYES: Addis, Aguiar-Curry, Ahrens, Alvarez, Arambula, Ávila Farías, Bains, Bauer-Kahan, Bennett, Berman, Boerner, Bonta, Bryan, Calderon, Caloza, Carrillo, Connolly, Elhawary, Fong, Gabriel, Garcia, Gipson, Mark González, Haney, Harabedian, Hart, Irwin, Jackson, Kalra, Krell, Lee, Lowenthal, McKinnor, Muratsuchi, Nguyen, Ortega, Pacheco, Papan, Patel, Pellerin, Petrie-Norris, Quirk-Silva, Ramos, Ransom, Celeste Rodriguez, Michelle Rodriguez, Rogers, Blanca Rubio, Schiavo, Schultz, Sharp-Collins, Solache, Soria, Stefani, Valencia, Ward, Wicks, Wilson, Zbur, Rivas

NOES: Alanis, Castillo, Chen, Davies, DeMaio, Dixon, Ellis, Flora, Gallagher, Jeff Gonzalez, Hadwick, Hoover, Lackey, Macedo, Patterson, Sanchez, Ta, Tangipa, Wallis

Prepared by: Scott Matsumoto / E. & C.A. / (916) 651-4106
8/30/25 18:42:27

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