

From: contact@redistricting.wa.gov
To: [zzRedistricting.Commission.Voicemail](#)
Subject: Redistricting Contact Form
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Question:

Recommendation: Lincoln, Garfield and Columbia counties share a unique characteristic among all Washington counties - our population peaked in 1910 and we've never recovered. If you excluded the small but growing cities of Pullman, Clarkston and Othello, you could say the same thing about Whitman, Asotin and Adams counties. The dryland farming region of the state shares a common environment and culture, dealing with an infrastructure that is at the same time both overbuilt and deteriorating. For this reason, these six counties of eastern Washington need to remain together in the 5th Congressional District. We are truly a minority population.

This brings us to an existing problem which you now have the opportunity to resolve. A small area of Adams County in the Othello panhandle was split off into the 4th Congressional District, and that's a problem according to my neighbors in Adams County. Low density, low population counties struggle to cover all the bases with a smaller "human infrastructure." The busy people are all trying to be too many places at once. Splitting a small county into two Congressional Districts or two legislative districts is NOT a political advantage, but serves to marginalize populations and reduce citizen engagement. County boundaries should be respected in federal and state redistricting.

In 2000, there were three possible legislative assignments for Lincoln County - the 7th, the 9th or split between the two. In conversations with neighbors, there is a strong consensus that we do not want to be split. We've seen the effect on our neighbors to the south.

Lincoln County is currently in the 7th Legislative District (NE Washington), participates in Lake Roosevelt management issues along with other counties of the 7th Legislative District and has developed working relationships on other county level services. Both political parties have active legislative committees and have maintained ties across the largest legislative district in the state of Washington. Improved east-west roads in NE Washington have changed since the days when the 7th Legislative District was Adams, Lincoln and Ferry counties, improving connections across northeast Washington.

On the other hand, Lincoln County shares similar issues with the 9th District (SE Washington) when it comes to large scale commercial agriculture, environmental, water rights and a shrinking economic base. Assigning Lincoln County to the 9th District might allow the Commission to eliminate the legislative district split in Okanogan County by placing it entirely in the 7th Legislative District, while pulling some areas of southeast Spokane County back into more compatible suburban districts.

Shifting Lincoln County south would not address another critical challenge to redistricting. Large districts with long travel times and multiple government entities become nearly impossible for any legislator to effectively represent. Assigning Lincoln to the 9th could make sense if Asotin/Garfield/Columbia reconnected to the 12th District. Creating three more "horizontal" rural legislative districts (northeast, east central and southeast) each with an appropriate portion of Spokane County could help provide more compact districts for better cohesiveness and citizen engagement.

The only way to keep the rural districts from becoming too large will be to incorporate appropriate areas of denser Spokane County. School districts are the local entity that most defines community in rural areas, and school district boundaries should guide the Commission as they look at the communities of Deer Park, Riverside, Medical Lake and Airway Heights. 2/3 of the students in the Reardan-Edwall School District live in Spokane County on the West Plains area north and west of Airway Heights. Airway Heights, Medical Lake and Cheney are destinations for services not available in Lincoln County and share a similar small town culture.

In summary: Lincoln County has common economic, environmental and social characteristics with the majority of the 9th District Palouse counties, but we also have good working relationships with the NE Washington counties of the 7th District. We're good with either one. We know we're small and the world does not revolve around us, but please don't split us in either federal or state district levels.

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