



May 19, 2011

Washington State Redistricting Commission
Attention: Lura J. Powell, Chair, and Commission Members
1063 Capitol Way South, Suite 16
P.O. Box 40948
Olympia, WA 98504-0948

Dear Dr. Powell and Members of the Commission:

As Mayor of the City of Renton, I am writing to express my community's interests as you work on the redistricting of Washington State Congressional and Legislative districts. First, let me thank you and the members of your committee for taking on this challenging task. The growth and demographic shifts that Washington has experienced over the last 10 years have been dramatic. Over the past decade, Renton grew to be one of the ten largest cities in Washington State, with 82-percent population growth between 2000 and 2010. Along with other south King County cities, we experienced the greatest change in ethnic diversity (162 percent) among the ten largest cities in Washington, which resulted in significant corresponding shifts in housing, communities of color, immigrants, various ethnic groups, and non-English speaking communities.

These changes make the work of your committee that much more difficult, but also that much more important. For the purposes of your consideration, the following comments are organized into general statements that are relevant to both Legislative and Congressional boundaries and specific comments about our desires in the Congressional and Legislative arenas.

General Comments

The City of Renton has been well-served over the last decade by its relatively even split among multiple Congressional and Legislative districts. Renton is a community that is characterized by strong residential neighborhoods and major employers such as The Boeing Company, which assembles the 737 at its Renton plant. We are both urban and suburban in character. In fact, Renton's geographic location at the south end of Lake Washington, and at the intersection of Interstate 405 and four state highways, affords us a strategic relationship as both an east King County and south King County community. Representation by districts that serve both areas provides us a strong voice in issues that impact these unique "personalities."

As you may know, Renton has significant populations in its remaining potential annexation areas. In all, 35 percent of the remaining urban unincorporated population of King County resides in areas designated to eventually annex to Renton. It is important to factor our future boundary into the new boundaries. This is of particular importance in the West Hill/Skyway area, where an annexation measure is expected to be presented to the voters in February 2012. In your efforts, please include the entirety of the West Hill, Fairwood and East Renton unincorporated areas into the same Congressional and Legislative district(s) as the rest of the City of Renton.

Congressional Districts

While we enjoy our representation by two US Representatives in the 8th and 9th Districts, we would not want to have a portion of our community split off into a third district. If dividing Renton into three districts is unavoidable, I urge you to give this third district a significant population base inside the city, as we have found in past years that members of Congress are more likely to provide representation to areas where they have a significant vested interest.

Legislative Districts

Renton is currently served by five Legislative Districts: the 5th, 11th, 37th, 41st and 47th. Ideally, we would like to see significant populations in Renton continue to be represented by all of these districts. We understand that southern and eastern expansion of Seattle districts, including the 11th and 37th, may significantly impact the 41st and 47th District boundaries. Renton values its relationship with both the 41st and 47th and hopes that a significant portion of the city can continue to be served by them.

However, we recognize that boundary adjustment is unavoidable. It would be extremely helpful if at least one district—if not more—could have a majority of its population base in the city. And, for reasons stated previously, I again urge you to ensure that each district that represents Renton has a significant number of Renton voters within its boundary.

My staff and I stand ready to assist you in this important process. If you would like additional information, please contact Alex Pietsch, Administrator of the Department of Community & Economic Development, at apietsch@rentonwa.gov or 425-430-6592. I look forward to seeing the outcome of your efforts.

Sincerely,



Denis Law
Mayor

DL:aa

cc: Honorable Cheryl Pflug
Honorable Margarita Prentice
Honorable Adam Kline
Honorable Steve Litzow
Honorable Joe Fain
Honorable Glenn Anderson
Honorable Jay Rodne
Honorable Bob Hasegawa
Honorable Zack Hudgins
Honorable Sharon Santos
Honorable Eric Pettigrew

Honorable Marcie Maxwell
Honorable Judy Clibbon
Honorable Mark Hargrove
Honorable Pat Sullivan
Renton City Council
Jay Covington, Chief Administrative Officer
Alex Pietsch, CED Administrator
Marty Wine, Asst. Chief Administrative Officer
Suzanne Dale Estey, Economic Development
Director