

Search Terms: **Rose Institute, Rose Institute**

FOCUS™

[Search Within Results](#)[Edit Search](#)[Print](#)[Email](#)[Document List](#)[Expanded List](#)[KWIC](#)[Full](#)Document 1 of 3. [next](#) ▶▶Copyright 2005 McClatchy Newspapers, Inc.
Fresno Bee (California)

October 23, 2005, Sunday FINAL EDITION

SECTION: MAIN NEWS; Pg. A1; INFOBOX**LENGTH:** 1531 words**HEADLINE:** Prop. 77 draws new line in sand If approved, Fresno residents could lose a representative.**BYLINE:** John Ellis and Jennifer M. Fitzenberger The Fresno Bee**BODY:**

The central San Joaquin Valley's political landscape could change dramatically if voters approve Proposition 77 in the Nov. 8 special election, including the possibility that Fresno residents would be represented by one or two members in Congress instead of the current three.

The retooling of district lines could force congressional incumbents such as Merced Democrat Dennis Cardoza and Mariposa Republican George Radanovich to battle against each other. State Senate and Assembly districts would shift, reining in some of their far-reaching boundaries and likely changing who some Valley residents call when they need the government's help.

And, barring lawsuits and other snafus, the changes would be made in time for next year's June primary and November general elections. One of the initiative's key provisions is that districts be immediately redrawn.

"Your districts would definitely change, there's no doubt about that," says Tim Storey, redistricting analyst for the National Conference of State Legislatures, which has offices in Washington, D.C., and Denver. "It's just a given there would be substantial changes in the representation that the Valley would get."

Prop. 77 would reform California's redistricting process by, among other things, taking the task of drawing congressional and state Senate and Assembly seats from the state Legislature and giving it to a panel of three retired judges.

For that reason, no one can predict the ultimate outcome of this mid-decade shift. There are, however, rough guidelines in the measure that give some hints about how political maps of the region might look next year.

For instance, it states that "district boundaries shall conform to the geographical boundaries of a county, city, or city and county to the greatest extent practicable."

It also says districts should be as compact as possible.

In theory, this translates to cobbling together so-called "communities of interest" and eliminating some of the confusing, jigsaw-puzzle districts formed after the 2000 census. That effort was widely criticized as a sweetheart deal brokered by Democrats and Republicans to benefit incumbent politicians from both parties.

One likely outcome is that the city of Fresno, divided among three congressional districts, would become one or two districts.

A congressional district represents 639,088 people, based on 2000 census numbers. If Fresno, Clovis, their

county islands and some fringe metropolitan areas are combined, the area could be a single congressional district -- an urban area with common interests.

Al Smith, interim CEO of the Greater Fresno Area Chamber of Commerce, says such compact political districts encourage elected officials to be more responsive to the needs of the community. It's an impossible task now, he says, when the districts are "spread out over all of hell's half acre."

That said, Smith likes that Fresno has three voices in Congress and isn't so sure the undivided attention of one would be better than the divided attention of three.

Others disagree.

Jim Patterson, Fresno's former mayor and an unsuccessful 2002 congressional candidate, thinks the city should have a single congressional district.

"Here we are the sixth-largest city in the state of California and we're sliced up with three representatives in Congress," Patterson said.

Patterson says a single representative could have more clout in Congress because he or she could focus on Fresno issues rather than having to pay attention to issues more important to rural areas.

But with the power to draw the lines vested in three judges, the Valley's political map ultimately could depend on how familiar they are with the area and where they start sectioning the state, says Karin Mac Donald, director of the Statewide Database at the Institute of Governmental Studies in Berkeley. Election and census data from Mac Donald's database is used in the redistricting process.

More than likely, Fresno -- and Fresno County -- would be represented by two congressional districts, says Douglas Johnson, who coordinated a hotly disputed study of Prop. 77's likely effects for the **Rose Institute**, a branch of Claremont McKenna College in Southern California.

The twist, and the reason Fresno likely would go to from three to two congressional districts instead of three to one, is Kings County, which is subject to the federal Voting Rights Act. As such, it must be kept whole and is part of a heavily Hispanic district.

Johnson says that means a district that runs along the Valley's west side from Fresno to Bakersfield should stay pretty much intact, though its exact boundaries are unknown. That district -- currently the 20th Congressional District -- is represented by Fresno Democrat Jim Costa.

Local state Senate and Assembly districts also would see change, likely because of state Senate districts such as Merced Republican Jeff Denham's. His territory runs from the San Joaquin Valley across the Coast Range to the Salinas Valley. Clearly, Johnson says, the two are very different regions with different needs.

Pushing that district fully into the Salinas Valley or fully into the San Joaquin Valley would have a domino effect on other districts, Johnson says.

Another sweeping Senate district is that of Bakersfield Republican Roy Ashburn, running from Visalia to Bakersfield in the Valley, and then to the San Bernardino County city of Needles in the Mojave Desert.

With the change of Senate districts, the Assembly will follow because the concept of "nesting" would return, according to the Prop. 77 text.

In the redistricting following the 1990 census, a panel of retired judges "nested" two Assembly districts -- 80 in all -- inside each of the 40 Senate districts.

State Sen. Chuck Poochigian, a Fresno Republican, says such a strategy helps citizens better identify their representatives. If you know who represents you in the Assembly, it's easier to figure out who your state senator is, he says.

Still, all this possible change has politicians wondering, and worrying, about the future.

One is Assembly Member Mike Villines, a Clovis Republican. If Prop. 77 passes, he expects his district to become more competitive.

"My sense is redistricting will hurt Mike Villines," he says. "Redistricting will change the face of California politics considerably."

Still, Villines says the change is necessary for fair elections.

The **Rose Institute** study, however, doesn't foresee any competitive Valley Assembly districts.

In the state Senate and Congress, it's a different story.

The **Rose Institute** study foresees 25 competitive districts statewide -- seven in the Assembly, eight in the state Senate and 10 in Congress -- if Prop. 77 is approved. The **Rose Institute** says there are now no competitive seats in Congress, one in the Senate and three in the Assembly.

Of the competitive districts, the **Rose Institute** foresees one in Congress in an undefined area covering "Merced, Mariposa and Madera" counties. That region is currently represented by both Merced's Cardoza and Mariposa's Radanovich.

Johnson says it wouldn't surprise him to see Cardoza and Radanovich placed in the same congressional district, though he also says there is a chance that Costa and Cardoza -- both Democrats -- could face each other.

Radanovich said it would be premature to comment: "Any type of district that might result after redistricting really is purely speculative. The focus of the whole process is to give the governor flexibility in Sacramento to get his job done."

Said Cardoza: "I think it's all speculation. I think that these three judges can virtually do anything they want to do and decide to do."

In the state Senate, the **Rose Institute** predicts a competitive district in an undefined area covering San Joaquin and Merced counties.

Any change in that area would affect Poochigian's district, though Poochigian will be termed out of office next year and wouldn't be affected by the change.

Poochigian's district is a perfect example of radical redistricting.

In 1998, when he was first elected to the state Senate, his district stretched from Fresno to Bakersfield on the east side of the Valley. After the 2000 census, his district was redrawn to run from Fresno County in the south to San Joaquin and Tuolumne counties in the north.

Says Poochigian: "You're never going to achieve perfection, nor are you going to please everyone, but I'm absolutely convinced that it can't be worse than it is now."

The reporters can be reached at jellis@fresnobee.com, jfitzenberger@fresnobee.com or (559) 441-6330.

INFOBOX

PROPOSITION PREVIEW

Proposition previews

The Nov. 8 special election features eight statewide initiatives. Beginning today, The Bee previews the propositions in a weeklong series. Each day's coverage includes a story examining the initiative and pro and con perspectives.

Today: Prop. 77, redistricting

Monday: Prop. 74, tenure for public school teachers

Tuesday: Prop. 75, union dues

Wednesday: Prop. 76, state budget

Thursday: Props. 78 and 79, prescription drug discounts

Friday: Prop. 80, electricity regulation

Saturday: Prop. 73, abortion notification

GRAPHIC: THE FRESNO BEE MAPS - State Assembly districts State Senate districts Congressional districts
See microfilm or PDF page for complete details.

LOAD-DATE: October 24, 2005

Document 1 of 3. [next](#)▶▶

[Terms & Conditions](#) [Privacy](#) [Copyright](#) © 2005 LexisNexis, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All Rights Reserved