



# City of Watsonville

*"A Community of Opportunities"*

December 14, 2021

**Via email**

2020 California Citizens Redistricting Commission

Dear Commissioners and Staff of the Citizens Redistricting Commission:

The City of Watsonville appreciates the hard work and persistence that the Citizens Redistricting Commission (CRC) members and staff have shown in the redistricting process. We want to make clear to the CRC, that: the Monterey Bay Area is a Community of Interest and your current proposed maps will disenfranchise our rural Latino and working families of the Monterey, San Benito, and Santa Cruz communities. The Counties of Monterey, San Benito, and Santa Cruz have shared interests and characteristics that define them as a community of interest. All three counties have a shared economy in agriculture, media markets, culture and history.

The proposed map would carve Watsonville out of the neighboring communities of interest in Santa Cruz and Monterey counties and place it in a district with little to no common voices or interests. The unfortunate thing is that Watsonville has faced attempts to dilute its voice before - with a precedent-setting Supreme Court case ensuring that the residents of Watsonville would have a seat at the table.

In *Gomez v. the City of Watsonville* the plaintiffs argued that the at-large elections system in Watsonville used for City Council elections was unconstitutional and violated the federal Voting Rights Act of 1965. At the time, Latinos in Watsonville made up half of the city's population (it's higher now) - Latinos had been elected to the City Council since the city's incorporation. The U.S. 9th Circuit Court of Appeals unanimously agreed - and an appeal to the U.S. Supreme Court allowed the 9th Circuit's decision to stand.

This proposal for the new Congressional district brings forth many of the same concerns - diluting Watsonville's voice on the federal stage and, in particular, diluting the voices of Santa Cruz County farmworkers, non-native speakers and first generation residents.

Watsonville, a primarily agriculturally-based economy where the median income is approximately half that of the federal average, is much more aligned economically and socially with Santa Cruz and Monterey counties. Many of the surrounding areas (currently all placed in the 20th Congressional District) are communities of interest - attending the same faith institutions, working for the same agricultural companies, attending the same local schools, and relying on the protections along the federally-funded Pájaro River Flood Control Project for economic and life safety issues. Watsonville

often partners with Santa Cruz County and Monterey County (and in particular the Town of Pájaro) on issues surrounding the Pájaro River and agricultural issues.

The proposed map would carve Watsonville out of the neighboring communities of interest in Santa Cruz and Monterey counties and place it in a district with little to no common voices or interests. It's hard to argue that Watsonville has more in common with the Silicon Valley than it does its direct agricultural neighbors - yet that's what the proposed map purports. It is important to note that Watsonville is not requesting or supporting this change and enacting such a map would only dampen the influence and access that the City of Watsonville is currently afforded in the 20th Congressional District.

We urge the Commission to not approve the proposed map moving Watsonville out of the 20<sup>th</sup> Congressional District.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jimmy Dutra", with a stylized flourish extending to the right.

Mayor Jimmy Dutra