



September 10, 2021

Colorado Independent Congressional Redistricting Commission
1580 Logan St., Suite 430
Denver, CO 820203

Associated Governments of Northwest Colorado (AGNC) members would like to provide comment on Congressional redistricting maps related to the northwest Colorado region. AGNC is a council of governments and, besides our planning region, includes three (3) additional associate members. Our members appreciate that the initial Congressional district map for the region largely reflected two major rural districts on the west and east side of the state. This configuration is very important to our region and the associated communities of interest.

However, our members strongly object to the most recent map for the congressional districts as it divides one of the largest and most comprehensive communities of interest in the entire state, the Western Slope. Many interests make the West Slope a community of interest including:

- 1) Water – the West Slope is the “Water Tower” of the west. As stated in the CLUB 20 letter dated May 5, 2021, “The Colorado River Basin covers 9,830 square miles (9.4% of the total area of our state), with the headwaters beginning in Grand County. All or parts of eight counties are found within the basin (Eagle, Garfield, Grand, Gunnison, Mesa, Pitkin, Routt, and Summit), and the presence of the Colorado River directly impacts the western slope way of life. (Cite: Surface Water Resources).”
- 2) Public Lands – There are many similarities for West Slope counties in dealing with issues related to public lands whether they are federally or state managed. More than 70% of the West Slope is made up of federal lands, urban dwellers do not understand nor appreciate the issues associated with this level of government interaction. Every aspect of rural community life is impacted by these lands from access to the land, to lack of funding sources due to the inability to tax these lands, to managing visitor impacts, and runoff associated with these lands.
- 3) Forest Health and Watershed Restoration – the entire West Slope understands the need for forest health which clearly has a beneficial effect on watershed restoration – urban interests do not understand nor appreciate this need and often advocate counter to the best practices in this area. Urban delegates have told West Slope interests that the votes are in the urban area, and it doesn’t matter what rural constituents say – this is not representation.
- 4) Agriculture – the West Slope is home to many varied agriculture interests from raising cattle and sheep to growing peaches, corn and a growing wine industry, agriculture needs are similar across the region. These products are significantly different than those in front range communities. West Slope agriculture is big business for the region as well as the state and it is important that this region and community of interest be represented by delegates that are immersed in this heritage and culture.

These community interests and more were outlined in the CLUB20 letter address to the Colorado Independent Redistricting Commissions on May 5, 2021. AGNC members support the letter and the map submitted by CLUB20 in conjunction with Action 22 and Progressive 15. The CLUB20 letter is attached for further review by the Commission.

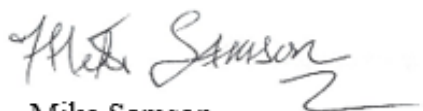
AGNC members, who are elected officials, have adopted the attached resolution regarding redistricting. We ask that you consider this resolution in the deliberations of Congressional redistricting as it relates to the Western Slope of Colorado.

AGNC members believe that the current map does not meet the stated criteria, "As much as is reasonably possible, the commission's plan must preserve whole communities of interest and whole political subdivisions, such as counties, cities, and towns. To facilitate the efficient and effective provision of governmental services, ..." The proposed map divides the West Slope and essentially mutes the voice of rural constituents. The proposed Congressional map relegates northwest Colorado counties to a highly uncompetitive district; one that would be difficult to serve, would require the delegate to travel through numerous other districts to serve the entire area. The degree of difficulty in covering such a district is exponentially greater than a district encompassing all of the Western Slope. This district fails the test of compact districts. Further, it does not consider the significant geographic barrier that is the Continental Divide.

Rural counties and communities are inherently "disadvantaged" by the sheer size of urban areas. This Congressional map exacerbates that disadvantage by further taking away the voice, the legitimate concerns, and the right to representation in Congress by formulating districts that are will very likely be filled, 100%, by urban dwellers from along the I-25 corridor. This is not representative government; it is tyranny of the masses.

We urge you to redraw the Congressional redistricting maps to reflect the rural communities of interest within the state thereby giving them the opportunity to have a voice in congressional matters that are of importance to those communities. We support and encourage you to support the map submitted by CLUB20, Progressive 15 and Action 22 or a reasonable variation thereof keeping the West Slope intact as a vital community of interest within the state. Thank you for the opportunity to provide comments on the current Congressional redistricting maps; if you have questions regarding our concerns, you may contact Bonnie Petersen at 970-665-1095 or via email at bonnie@agnc.org.

Sincerely,



Mike Samson
AGNC Chairman
Garfield County Commissioner



Chris Nichols
AGNC Vice-Chairman
Craig City Councilman

Enclosures: AGNC Resolution 21-2
CLUB20 Letter Dated May 5, 2021