

# ALASKA REDISTRICTING BOARD

## Verbal Testimony Summaries

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# ALASKA REDISTRICTING BOARD COMMUNITY PUBLIC HEARING VERBAL TESTIMONY SUMMARY

Wasilla 10/26/21 Verbal Testimony

Summary Date: November 2, 2021

Name: Dixie Banner

Email or Phone Contact: 

**Dixie Banner mentioned her background in environmental management and asked the board to provide information from a technical standpoint and a summary that gives the general public an understanding of what the board is trying to achieve. The board is making decisions, but they are not being put in writing. There should also be a legend.**

**Deviations also should be explained. Dixie does not feel comfortable making a decision until all the information is provided. Also, people need to be involved, including students in high school, as they will be impacted by the process.**

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Wasilla 10/26/21 Verbal Testimony

Summary Date: November 2, 2021

Name: **Nathaniel (Tanner) Amdur-Clark**

Group Affiliation, if applicable: **Doyon Coalition**

Email or Phone Contact: [REDACTED]

Public Comment: **Nathaniel outlined the changes to the Doyon Coalition map that have been made since their preliminary 40-district map was turned in:**

**A part of the City of Palmer was inadvertently split up into 2 districts (26 and 30); this was unintentional and an error. The updated map corrects this area and further refines the proposed map of the Mat-Su region. These proposed Mat-Su districts maintain low population deviations, keeps local boundaries within the Mat-Su Borough whole, maintains community cohesiveness, are relatively compact with no odd or bizarre shapes, and follows natural features.**

**Nathaniel discussed some general concerns on population deviations:**

- **Board Map v.3's Fairbanks districts are unconstitutional. If you like Board Map v.3, help the board figure out how to fix Fairbanks.**
- **Proposed Districts 31 through 35 are upwardly deviated between 4.26 and 4.43 percent which is about 800 more people than the ideal number in each district. This also results in each person's vote in Fairbanks to be 4.5% less.**
- **If adopted by the board, the districts in Board Map v.3 will be challenged, reviewed by the courts, and struck down. All the work that everyone has put in "will all be for nothing".**
- **Until the 1998 amendments to the Alaska Constitution, plans did not need to justify deviations from the ideal district size of 10%. That is the federal standard and is no longer the case in Alaska as the voters changed the Alaska Constitution which now requires that each district contain a population as near as practicable to the quotient obtained by dividing the population of the state by 40, which is currently 18,335 people. The Constitution states that each population deviation within each district (not region or borough) must be as near as practicable to 0. Large total deviations within a particular region or borough may be evidence of other equal representation issues, and having a low population deviation within a region does not absolve the board of its constitutional requirement to ensure that each district has as near as practicable to a 0 population deviation. This is especially true in urban areas, where the Alaska Supreme Court has acknowledged that the population is sufficiently dense and evenly spread to allow minimal population deviations, especially with new technology where you can click one census block at a time to see how that changes.**

**Achieving near 0 populations is sometimes not practicable. There are also issues of geographic constraints or having no available population in an area that is able to be integrated to create a district with close to 0 deviation. For example, in Southeast Alaska there isn't enough population, so all districts in this area will be slightly under-or-over deviated.**

**If the board will adopt a map that has population deviations, it must show why all of the other examples that have been presented are not practicable. The Doyon Coalition map has deviations that are entirely practicable, therefore Board Map v.3 Fairbanks districts are unconstitutional if adopted by the board in a final map.**

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Summary Date: November 2, 2021

Name: **Ester Huddleston**

**Ester is concerned about the public process as the Mat-Su Borough did not have any information on the location and time of the meetings in the borough. It is clear in the constitution that the public process is in place when it comes to redistricting. Additionally, Ester feels that the board is not giving enough information to the public with the different maps online.**

**Ester noted a concern on boundaries crossing (i.e. Mat-Su Borough integrating with Anchorage and Mat-Su Borough integrating with Denali). Over the last 10 years, there was a population of about 23,000. In District 10, the Mat-Su Borough elected this official and she does not approve moving District 10 into Fairbanks as this would result in the Mat-Su Borough losing their elected officials. There are also many people in the Mat-Su Borough who rely on snow machines and boats to get to their homes as the Mat-Su Borough is still vastly remote. Having an elected official with a different lifestyle representing the Mat-Su Borough is not preferable.**

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Summary Date: November 2, 2021

Name: CJ Koan

Email or Phone Contact: 

**CJ Koan lives in District 12 and supports the Mat-Su Borough having 6 house districts and 3 senate districts as shown in the AFFER map. CJ also supports the addition of the Denali Borough to AFFER map's proposed District 11 as the Denali Borough provides some of the additional population the Mat-Su Borough needs for the 6 house seats.**

**CJ spoke in favor of Board Map v.3. CJ expressed concerns about the AFFER map as the Butte and Palmer should remain together. Additionally, CJ believes that the district in the Fairview Loop area should be extended west through Settlers Bay instead of going north to Wasilla. The Settlers Bay area population is more alike.**

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Summary Date: November 2, 2021

Name: **Glenda Ledford**

Group Affiliation, if applicable: **Wasilla Mayor**

Email or Phone Contact: [REDACTED]

**Glenda reflected on some of Wasilla's legislative redistricting configurations and plans put forth so far, some of which are directly carved into the borough boundary and cities to cure problems created elsewhere in the state. The Mat-Su has enough population for 6 legislative seats and 3 senate seats.**

**The City of Wasilla has a good working relationship and has had communications with the Denali Borough and the city feels that they would be a best associated with the borough. It is also important to the City of Wasilla to keep its corporate boundaries, Greater Wasilla boundaries, and historical boundaries intact.**

**The City of Palmer likely has similar interests as its utility districts and several other services reach beyond the corporate city limits as well.**

**The AFFER map best reflects compact and contiguous boundaries.**

**Board Map v.3 starts to address Wasilla and its associated population to the northwest. The area northeast, the Tanana precinct area and an extension of Wasilla Main Street that turns into Wasilla-Fishhook Road and Lucille Street that serves as a connector; this is represented in the AFFER plan quite clearly, which Wasilla prefers as a configuration.**

**Other areas associated with Wasilla are Knik Goose Bay (KGB) to the south, Park Highway to the east and west are compact and the most contiguous with Wasilla's main highway, intersection on Main Street, and Parks High way. The Greater Wasilla area has historically been associated with KGB, Wasilla industrial area and the airport to the west, and the Tenana precinct north of Wasilla. The 2002 legislative map shows the same configuration of the Wasilla and core area to the north.**

# ALASKA REDISTRICTING BOARD COMMUNITY PUBLIC HEARING VERBAL TESTIMONY SUMMARY

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Summary Date: November 2, 2021

Name: Carolyn Porter

Email or Phone Contact: [REDACTED]

Carolyn Porter lives between Palmer and Wasilla. Carolyn expressed concerns about "sweeping changes" that are unnecessary and believes that it is in the best interests of representatives and constituents to make as few changes as possible.

Carolyn noted that lifestyles differ between Anchorage, Mat-Su Valley, Talkeetna, Fairbanks, Juneau, Kenai, etc. Mixing up different areas can make the jobs for senators and representatives more difficult as they try to address the needs of people who are in different socio-economic settings as others.

Carolyn lives in District 12 where they know their representative and vice versa. They live close, recreate together, dine out together, etc. They are not all the same, but they have a good working relationship. Carolyn would like to see this not tampered with.

Carolyn supports having 6 representatives and 3 senators.

Some maps have pulled in communities that are widely separated socially and economically. The AFFER map is most preferable over the other proposed maps.

Overall, as considerations are being made on redistricting, Carolyn would like the changes to be small.

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Name: **Bee Rupright**

Email or Phone Contact: [REDACTED]

**Bee Rupright, Wasilla resident, spoke in favor of keeping the Mat-Su Borough separate from Anchorage and prefers the AFFER map. Also, soon, there will be a "middle district" in between Palmer and Wasilla.**

**Bee Rupright expressed the importance of thinking about the identity of the people and what areas residents identify with. The other plans do not have senate district pairings and this was an issue for her. Bee would change the AFFER plan to do the following:**

- 1. District 13-G paired with 14-G which would also be different by going up higher to District 16-H. This would create a district in that area. The southern portion of 16-H and the northern portion of 14-G would be joined up together to create a "middle district" including the Knik Goose Bay area.**
- 2. Swing 16H around as it was before, maybe with 14-G and 12-H.**
- 3. Move eastern residents over to Palmer.**



# ALASKA REDISTRICTING BOARD COMMUNITY PUBLIC HEARING VERBAL TESTIMONY SUMMARY

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Summary Date: November 2, 2021

Name: Jesse Sumner

Email or Phone Contact: [REDACTED]

Jesse spoke in favor of the AFFER map as both have the Mat-Su Borough as a compact, self-enclosed, socio-economically integrated group. It is also okay to include the Denali Borough with the Mat-Su Borough as there are shared economic interests. The Mat-Su Borough Assembly, City of Palmer, and City of Wasilla have all supported a 6 district Mat-Su Borough map. There's no reason that the borough should split its district with Anchorage or Valdez as there are no shared socio-economic interests. Any excursion out should include the entirety of the Denali Borough or potentially Glennallen.

The valley deserves their own representation. If the Denali Borough is included and the population is spread over the entire borough, that results in a less than 1% deviation. Growth should also be considered. If there is a deviation, there should be an underpopulation because of growth.

There should be 6 representatives that represent the Mat-Su Borough in large part. The Mat-Su Borough has the population for 5.84 seats, so the borough should have the majority representation in 6 seats. There is no way to break this.

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Name: Loy Thurman

Email or Phone Contact: [REDACTED]

Loy Thurman noted that the valley is the largest growing area in the state so the community should be enlarged. He would be inclined to keep Valdez, but that would be put the population up too high to about 4,000. Glennallen may be reluctant to be combined with the valley, but their residents shop in the valley and are socio-economically integrated in the valley.

Some of the maps bring the valley all the way up to Anderson and Clear and those are parts of Fairbanks; this does not make any sense as this is geographically too far away. Even though the Alaska Supreme Court has had some rulings in the past, covering a large land mass from Anderson to the valley still does not make sense.

A factor to consider is that the valley is the largest growing area and will continue to grow over the next 10 years, whereas more rural areas will be decreasing in size.

The last point is about the Meadow Lakes area. It is constantly being divided and chopped up and Loy would like to see them stay together. This is to the north of Parks Highway, up Church Road to the Little Su and then west to the top of Houston.