



ALASKA REDISTRICTING BOARD

Alaska Redistricting Board Meeting
April 8, 2022 | 10:00 a.m.
Anchorage Legislative Information Office and Zoom Virtual Meeting
1500 West Benson Blvd, Anchorage, AK 99503

The Alaska Redistricting Board met on April 8, 2022. Present participants are below:

John Binkley
Bethany Marcum
Budd Simpson
Nicole Borromeo
Peter Torkelson

Chair of the Board
Board Member
Board Member
Board Member
Executive Director

Agenda

- Call to Order & Establish Quorum
- Adoption of Agenda
- Public Testimony
- Adjournment

Call to Order

Chairman Binkley called the meeting to order at 10:02 a.m. With four out of five board members present, a quorum was established. It was noted that Member Bahnke was not in attendance due to traveling.

Adoption of Agenda

Member Simpson moved to approve the agenda as presented. Member Borromeo seconded the motion.

The motion passed unanimously.

Public Testimony

Public testimony was given as follows:

- Anchorage resident, Andrew Gray, stated his relationship with the military and Joint Base Elmendorf Richardson (JBER) as a member of the Alaska Army National Guard. During his deployment with another soldier from the trailer court across from Northway Mall, Andrew recounted a discussion. Andrew answered that he'd never met anyone who lived in a trailer park, and the other soldiers at the table during this discussion stated they'd lived in a trailer park at some point in their childhoods. Andrew recounted this story to tell the story of many military members joining in escaping the poverty from their childhood. Andrew referred to a 2018 demographic analysis from the Council on Foreign Relations that shows over 60% of enlistments came from neighborhoods with a median household income between \$38,000 to \$80,000. Nineteen percent of recruits came from households of less than \$38,000. The average annual pay in Eagle River is \$129,768. More than 80% of military recruits come from families, unlike



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those in Eagle River. As more enlisted choose to live off base, they inevitably end up in lower-cost housing in Mountain View, North Muldoon, or Midtown. Yet, members of the board insist on pairing Eagle River with JBER. Higher ranking officers are the military members that can afford to live in Eagle River. The Congressional Research Survey reports that 63% of military service members are white, and 37% are non-white. JBER is more diverse, with 60.7% of the voting-age population identifying as white and just under 40% identifying with non-white. However, 88% of senior military officers are white, and these higher-ranking officers can afford to live in Eagle River. Andrew also pointed out that the voting age population in Chugiak-Eagle River is over 73% white. Andrew argued that the Senate district pairing Eagle River with JBER is egregiously unconstitutional, if not more so. The minority residents of JBER will be overridden by Eagle River's wealthy, white residents as the goal is to increase the Senate representation of Eagle River. As Member Marcum stated on the record on November 5, 2021: "This allows Eagle River to have more representation." On April 7, 2022, Chairman Binkley explained to a testifier that the state redistricting and the Anchorage reapportionment of Assembly districts are not the same processes. During Anchorage's reapportionment, Eagle River was guaranteed two Assembly members. The tactic was to minimize the population represented by both Eagle River Assembly members to increase representation. This was achieved by several public testimonies against pairing Eagle River with any part of Anchorage. The option most strongly considered was the pairing of Hillside and Eagle River. Andrew referred to a quote stated by Assembly member Jamie Allard at a town hall held on January 27, 2022: "It was brought up the fact that if we are connected to Hillside, or we are connected to Girdwood, you would literally have to ride a bald sheep in order to get to those areas - unless we drove approximately from our location almost an hour to get to Hillside and an hour and a half to get down to Girdwood. I would also point out that when folks are saying that we have things in common over there, look at who their elected officials are: Suzanne LaFrance and John Weddleton. Wonderful people, but you have to still ask, "What do we have in common with those areas?" We don't." Andrew thanked Assemblywoman Allard for saving the business of the political process. Although the message is different in redistricting, the goal is not. By avoiding the pairing of two Eagle River House districts together, which by any metric is how you would create the most compact, contiguous, and socioeconomically integrated Senate district - the board is seeking to expand Eagle River's influence in the Alaska Senate. We know from numerous studies that voter participation increases family income. In the 2016 presidential election, 48% of voters in the lowest income categories voted, while almost 86% of voters in the highest income categories cast a ballot. This is true in Eagle River, as they participate in elections at a significantly higher rate than the neighboring low-income voters. Therefore, if Eagle River receives two Senators, Eagle River will elect those senators. There are no adverse consequences to the board adopting another unconstitutional gerrymandered map. There is a chance that no lawsuit will be brought forth, and the gerrymander could stand for another ten years. Even on an expedited schedule, it would take several months after an appeal to the Alaska Supreme Court before the board is sent back to re-work the Senate pairings. The November 2022 elections will approach, making it too late to print new ballots. No board members will be held personally liable for unconstitutional pairings and have nothing to lose but will gain continued Republican control of the Alaska Senate. Andrew testified against the Option 3-B Senate pairings and testified in favor of the Option 2 Senate Pairings that keep JBER with Downtown Anchorage, South Anchorage intact, and Eagle River intact.

- Eagle River resident, Susan Fischetti, testified in support of Option 3-B and clarified that her testimony on behalf of herself should not be confused with her testimony on behalf of the State of



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Alaska. Both testimonies outline two separate issues. This should also apply to the community councils who pass resolutions for the Assembly redistricting and are now carrying it over to the state. In Susan's experience attending community council meetings, there are usually six to twenty attendees that may not always represent the thousands of voters in their areas. Susan expressed concern about the "intimidation and attacks against private citizens in this office when they are nervous and fear of saying the wrong thing." Some testimonies have also gone over ten minutes and have become a numbers game while attacking Eagle River. The Option 2 map has claims of gerrymandering, not Option 3. Eagle River and Hillside Anchorage share landmass and miles along the Chugach Mountains, making them contiguous. Also, military members are prominent in Chugiak-Eagle River and should be paired with JBER. They are contiguous and have been historically paired for several years.

- Hillside Home and Landowners Association member, Katie Nolan, stated that the association has represented Hillside Anchorage since 1970, several years before being incorporated into the Municipality of Anchorage. The Hillside District Plan (a set of planning documents) was created for the community in 2010. Hillside still consists of the same areas that have been represented with the addition of community councils in various areas. The Hillside Home and Landowners Association met on April 7, 2022, to review the revised proposed maps from the board and recognize that neither map is perfect, but the map that meets Hillside's needs is Option 2. The idea that Hillside is contiguous with Eagle River ignores that one of the largest state parks in the nation is between the two communities. It is also quicker to get from Anchorage Hillside to Whittier in Kenai Peninsula than traveling to Eagle River. Additionally, there are separate road systems and different services; Eagle River has its own Parks Department, and there are things done with Eagle River that are not appropriate for Anchorage. The most significant issue is that Hillside likes seeing their representatives from Juneau at their meetings when they are not in session. Their representatives can't effectively represent an area far away from Hillside adequately. This is not the best option for the representative or the community to build a relationship. Katie referred to public comments about the Hillside community consisting of wealthy households. She stated that they also have high-density housing and workforce housing, just like other Anchorage residents.
- Soldotna resident, Joan Corr, testified in support of Option 3-B and stated that she has several friends in Rabbit Creek in Anchorage and Eagle River that would have more in common than what is shown on Option 2. Joan also does not see any similarities between military members and Downtown Anchorage.
- Girdwood Resident, Briana Sullivan, testified on behalf of herself but also currently sits in an elected seat on the Girdwood Board of Advisors. Briana spent several years living near District 22 and now calls District 9 home. For the same reasons cited about local government and acknowledging compact areas of town found during this process, the Senate redistricting could also follow identified voting areas of the municipality. Over the last few weeks, several of the public have urged the board to quickly make a crucial decision, not waste time, not pair Eagle River with Girdwood, and take the Alaska Supreme Court ruling when making these considerations. It is prudent to solve the unconstitutional error in splitting Eagle River to give them more representation. Pairing House Districts 22 and 23 have been cautioned against by the courts. Thus, Briana urged the board to revert to pairing House Districts 22 and 24. In the public process, we start with our roots, neighbors, communities, and representatives. These public offices are held by residents in the areas they live in who understand the nuances of their cities and have a vested interest in serving their constituents. Citizens can support and vote for their residents, so it makes sense for their representatives to be within reach. Contiguous districts



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make sense; please do not substantially break up communities. The idea of connecting extremely distant House Districts 9 and 22, where thick forests, rivers, drainages, and mountains in between, causes confusion and is far-fetched when there is another logical option. These districts also have six to eight Senate districts in between. Most from Eagle River do not want to be paired with South Anchorage and Girdwood and vice versa. The topography information is missing from district size considerations. Hillside and South Anchorage have more in common with the Turnagain Arm and Girdwood community than with Eagle River. Briana urged Member Simpson to listen to the constitution as read, to the outpouring of public support for Option 2, and the several people providing public testimony. Briana testified against Option 3-B as it is unconstitutional and asked the board not to confuse the public with more maps.

- Juneau resident, Phil Moser, testified in support of Option 2 as it most fairly represents Anchorage and has ramifications for the entire state. South Anchorage is a diverse area, and the representation there represents the people of South Anchorage and adds a voice to diverse communities from Alaska, including Juneau. For this reason, Phil testifies in support of Option 2. Through the process, there have been several warnings about constitutionality, racial non-discrimination, the mandate of the board to keep districts contiguous, and to ensure that socioeconomically integrated communities are connected. Phil has gained trust in Members Borromeo and Bahnke, who he believes have been correct through the process in warning against unconstitutionality and recommends that the board do the same.
- Anchorage resident, Leon Jaimes, referred to previous testimonies about the definition of "contiguous" and Article 6 of the Constitution. The last sentence of the article discusses drainage and other geographic features that should be used as boundaries when possible. Leon pointed out that when looking at the topography, the drainage for District 22 goes into both the Turnagain Arm and Knik Arm of the Cook Inlet. District 9 only drains into the Knik Arm. It is significant that drainage and other geographic features were included because if you look at the highest elevations between Eagle River and Whittier, that is a distinct boundary that should be considered. Leon testified in support of Option 2 as it is the only map that is practicable for Senate District K.
- Alaskans for Fair and Equitable Redistricting member, Randy Ruedrich, stated that he has submitted a map to the board that solely focuses on the new Senate E in Option 3-B, which clearly shows the entire length of the boundary where District 9, District 22, and District 12 meet. This boundary extends east in various segments to the far east side of the Municipality of Anchorage. This map is contiguous. Therefore, the words "being close to contiguous" are irrelevant. This map is also materially the same as a Senate district that has existed in the past and shows that the whole area is socioeconomically integrated with over 37 miles of contiguous territory.
- Anchorage resident, Judy Eledge, expressed that there seems to be a board member who has already decided on a map based on the nature of her questions, asking testifiers. Everyone should be respectful to one another, and the public should not be questioned about what they are saying. Judy testified in support of Option 3-B and expressed concern about the board being accused of gerrymandering Senate District K. However, gerrymandering can be seen in another place to support Senator Tom Begich's seat, who was also seen sending text messages to another board member about Option 2. Option 3-B is the most logical map that pairs House Districts 9 and 22. When you view the entire map, they both share common boundaries as the most contiguous districts. Judy recalled when Senator Cathy Giessel went from Hillside to Kenai in her first term, which seemed like a difficult task for her. Often, some districts were not easy to



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reach. Additionally, pairing House Districts 9 and 22 protects the interest of minority communities of East Anchorage, Muldoon, and Mountain View.

- Anchorage resident, Forrest McDonald, addressed several comments made by the public and board members being critical of people in support of Option 3-B and accusing them of being the same people who were against the Assembly districting pairings. Through actions and commentary, it has been made clear that the voting power and footprint is trying to be reduced as much as possible. Forrest also expressed he is upset about board members asking confrontational questions that push people to re-evaluate their opinions. Members of the public with different opinions, values, and priorities are trying to add to the equation so their voice is heard to result in a diverse array of views and opinions. Forrest would like to know why it was appropriate for the Anchorage Assembly to not pair the two Eagle River districts and why Eagle River specifically has additional follow-up questions that are applied in the process and have not been applied to other areas in the state. There has been no explanation as to why this has happened.
- Anchorage resident, Yarrow Silvers, testified against Option 3-B and stated that the burden of proof for using second-rate contiguity and salt contiguity, as described by Justice Matthews and Matthew Singer, combined with splitting the communities of Downtown Anchorage, South Anchorage, Eagle River, and Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson (JBER) falls on those who think these actions are logical and rational. There has been no sensible argument about using second-rate contiguity and salt contiguity. Option 3-B splits every Anchorage community apart. Keeping communities together is not gerrymandering. Splitting communities is gerrymandering.
- Girdwood Board of Supervisors member, Mike Edgington, stated that the Girdwood Board of Supervisors recently met to review the newly proposed three maps by the Alaska Redistricting Board. The Girdwood Board unanimously voted that Maps 1 and 2 represented more compact and contiguous Senate districts than Map 3. The board also supports similar maps that combine Eagle River with South Anchorage, Hillside, Turnagain Arm, and Girdwood. The main reason for keeping these maps is the contiguousness across the Chugach State Park.
- Anchorage resident, Doug Robbins, quoted the Alaska Constitution describing the legal criteria for redistricting: "Range and other geographic features shall be used in describing boundaries whenever possible." This tells Doug that Option 3, as modified, contradicts the criteria defined in the constitution for designating Senate districts. To validate the pairing, you would have to consider that the Chugach Mountains are not a geographic feature, which is false, or that there is no other possible way to join districts, which is also incorrect. Option 3 cannot stand, according to the constitution.
- Anchorage resident, Julie Coulombe, stated that she was engaged in the reapportionment process and has not called to testify because she has been torn on the maps. During the reapportionment process, she and other community members fought hard to combine Eagle River with South Anchorage. The main issue is that, during reapportionment, a small population of South Anchorage was combined with a large Eagle River population, giving an inaccurate representation of South Anchorage residents. Julie can now support the pairing of Eagle River and South Anchorage because the South Anchorage population has been balanced to provide fair representation. Julie struggles with Option 2 and Option 3-B because of the combination of Hillside and Eagle River since this is what she fought against in the Assembly districts. When you are making lines for Senate districts, it's much different than the Assembly because Senators tackle different issues than Assembly members. Julie pointed out that, during the reapportionment process, there were many arguments that Eagle River and South Anchorage are contiguous by the Chugach State Park, but in this redistricting process, there are arguments

3901 Old Seward Hwy. Ste. 141
Anchorage, Alaska 99503
www.akredistrict.org
907.563.0300



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about it not being contiguous. Julie has lived in Eagle River for 20 years, South Anchorage for 15 years, and has lived on JBER. Through Julie's experience in Eagle River, Julie knows a heavy military population in Eagle River. Julie does not believe a Downtown Anchorage representative well represents the JBER community. Julie cautioned the board against how they have been treating the public, which has intimidated the public into testifying. Overall, Julie does not fully support any of the maps, but Option 3-B better represents JBER residents, and the South Anchorage area combined with Eagle River would also have fair representation.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 12:05 p.m.