



## ALASKA REDISTRICTING BOARD

**Alaska Redistricting Board Meeting**  
**April 7, 2022 | 12:00 p.m.**  
**Anchorage Legislative Information Office and Zoom Virtual Meeting**  
**1500 West Benson Blvd, Anchorage, AK 99503**

The Alaska Redistricting Board met on April 7, 2022. Present participants are below:

John Binkley	Chair of the Board
Melanie Bahnke	Board Member
Bethany Marcum	Board Member
Budd Simpson	Board Member
Nicole Borromeo	Board Member
Peter Torkelson	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 12:00 p.m. With all board members present, a quorum was established.

### **Adoption of Agenda**

Member Bahnke moved to approve the agenda as presented. Ms. Marcum seconded the motion.

The motion passed unanimously.

### **Public Testimony**

Public testimony was given as follows:

- Rabbit Creek Community Council Member, Ann Rappoport, the council strongly opposes any redistricting that combines the Rabbit Creek and Hillside communities with Eagle River for the purposes of government representation. The council has also submitted extended comments on this matter when the Anchorage Assembly redrew districts; the same requirements held to the Anchorage Assembly also apply to the Alaska Redistricting Board. Anchorage and Hillside are not contiguous, compact, or relatively socioeconomically integrated. Both communities are separated by an uninhabited area (Chugach State Park). Also, the constitution requires that local government boundaries are also considered, and the Anchorage Assembly has kept Hillside together. East Anchorage neighborhoods should also be kept together. The following reasons for



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opposing the Hillside and Eagle River pairing were also listed: Hillside frequently deals with water septic issues and wildfire risks, there are limited road service areas, Hillside students attend different schools than Eagle River students, and both communities travel on different roads to travel to Downtown Anchorage. Ann referred to the 2010 Hillside District Plan that defines Hillside boundaries and included a public process. This plan speaks to the community's preferences. The Rabbit Creek Community urged the board to adopt a map that keeps neighborhoods together which can be done with the proposed Option 2 Map, or the original map proposed by Member Bahnke.

- Anchorage resident, Cyndi Saunders, agreed with Ann Rappoport's testimony and testified in favor of the Option 2 Map. Some concern was expressed on prior board members' comments about making the map look beautiful as opposed to looking at voting boundaries. Cyndi asked for the board's explanation of this. Cyndi testified against pairing Eagle River and Anchorage together. Member Binkley explained to Cyndi that in terms of a map being "beautiful", he does not specifically recall the instance, he explains that the terminology refers to the idea that the map could appear complex in some House districts more than others. The word "beautiful" could be referring to the compactness of the district or its clearly drawn bounds.
- Eagle River resident, Susan Fischetti, testified in support of a Chugach Mountain district as outlined in the Option 3-B Map for the following reasons:
  1. Districts 22 and 9 are the two large districts with several acres of parks and mountains; there are no other districts like this.
  2. Upper Hillside and Eagle River have previously been combined as a Senate pairing and it is still logical to pair them.
  3. Anchorage has become more urbanized. Eagle River and Hillside residents chose a suburban lifestyle surrounded by mountains and wildlife rather than the city.
  4. Joint Base Elmendorf Richardson (JBER) districts should remain intact and this map achieves that.

Susan agrees that there is public confusion about the Anchorage Assembly redistricting process where several community members testified to keep the Assembly districts separate. Now, the public is struggling with the changes being presented by the board and this may impact their willingness to call in.

- Anchorage resident, Leon Jaimes, noted that he is not confused by the municipal redistricting and Senate pairings and testified in support of the Option 2 Map. This map addresses the correction requested by the court to fix the Senate District K pairings and keeps communities of interest together such as Eagle River, Muldoon, and South Anchorage. When Leon moved here in 2012, he researched neighborhoods to live in and many responses were given about living in Eagle River and no responses indicated that Eagle River was similar to South Anchorage. Muldoon and East Anchorage were seen as a community. Leon still follows some of the same online forums discussing moving to Alaska and the same discussions are still being held. A geographic connection does not make two districts contiguous.
- Anchorage resident, Judy Eledge, testified in favor of the Option 3-B map for the following reasons:
  1. The map revises Senate District K as the court ruling requests.
  2. The map has a logical pairing of House Districts 9 and 22 that are most similar and were paired when Tom Bundy was elected.
  3. House Districts 9 and 2 are contiguous districts with a long, common boundary and similar road and snow removal services.
  4. House Districts 9 and 22 mainly consist of high-income single-family homes.



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5. It may not be contiguous, but it keeps similar communities together. Based on testimony heard, that is what the general public wants.

Judy testified against the Option 2 Map as she believes that military voters should not be paired with Downtown Anchorage because it would diminish their representation.

- Anchorage resident, Yarrow Silvers, cautioned the board to avoid the appearance of gerrymandering and referred to the court ruling that found the Senate District K pairing to be unconstitutional as it split Eagle River into two districts to increase the majority party representation at the expense of East Anchorage voters. Yarrow testified against Map 3-B because it would split Eagle River into two separate Senate districts again to increase the majority party's representation at the expense of voters outside of Eagle River. The map swaps the voters' voices who will be silenced and does not correct the constitutional error. There have also been consistent public testimonies from Eagle River residents to keep their communities intact. Yarrow cautioned the board to adopt pairings by an individual "who chairs the Alaskan Republican Party and uses political data to map but also sent this board a chart that shows how the political date relates to proposed pairings, who the incumbents are, and even a column that appears to indicate whether certain incumbents were electable or not - a chart which was referenced by at least two board members during the process and whose initial suggested Eagle River pairings were found to be unconstitutional." Yarrow expressed support for a simple fix that keeps Muldoon communities intact and Eagle River communities intact and asked the board to reject politically motivated pairings that give other communities more representation at the expense of other communities of interest. Yarrow asked the board to stop utilizing contiguity of a type that has been described by the Supreme Court Justice as second-rate contiguity and what has been described by Budd Simpson as "basically affixion". For context behind her statement, Yarrow referred to a quote by Member Simpson at the Alaska Redistricting Board meeting held on February 3, 2022: "And so I could not ever describe 33 as compact. It's barely contiguous, and by barely, I mean the part that connects the northern part of that to the southern part basically has almost no people in it. It is basically affixion in my mind." Yarrow also referenced a discussion between Supreme Court Justice Matthews and the board's legal counsel, Matt Singer, on March 18, 2022, about salt contiguity being second-rate. In this discussion, Matt Singer stated the board's perspective to see salt contiguity as second-rate. Yarrow referred to statements made by Member Marcum regarding the need to pair Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson (JBER) with Eagle River to remain intact and represented together. Yarrow assured Member Marcum that the area is a block of trees with no infrastructure and likely has few residents. Thus, is no justification for breaking down Eagle River, Downtown, and South Anchorage using second-rate contiguity. Yarrow pointed out that service members live all over Anchorage and are represented by their place of residence, not their workplace. Yarrow opposed the idea of JBER communities only being represented by Eagle River, where there is no access to JBER. However, there are access gates to JBER in Anchorage, where JBER residents are integrated with the surrounding communities in North Anchorage District 17. Yarrow referred to the historical connections with past maps and noted that maps are recreated every ten years as the populations change. Back then, Eagle River's population was vastly different, requiring the community to be split into two Senate districts but now has an opportunity to be a single Senate District. Yarrow testified in support of keeping Eagle River communities intact and encouraged the board to listen to Eagle River residents who have testified to preserve their communities. North Eagle River has the same independent road service areas and snow removal services as South Eagle River. Pairing South Anchorage with Eagle River opens the board up to further lawsuits from Eagle River and South Anchorage residents. Yarrow expressed concern with political blocks urging people to



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testify based on politically motivated reasons, such as saving a certain number of Republican Senate seats. This action has resulted in submitting the same form letter daily and changing testimonies compared to what was said one month ago in the municipal redistricting process. The Anchorage Assembly's redistricting resulted in a 3.6% deviation in municipal maps based on public testimony. In contrast, the Anchorage pairings under consideration do not practicably change variations.

- Jamie, a House District 28 (soon to be District 9) resident, clarified that this district includes Southeast Anchorage, Girdwood, Portage, and Whittier. Jamie researched some numbers that were shared with the board:
  1. Eagle River to Southeast Anchorage distance: 27 miles
  2. Eagle River to Girdwood distance: 67 miles
  3. Eagle River to Portage distance: 78 miles
  4. Eagle River to Whittier distance: 87 miles (includes tunnel scheduling)Depending on the route taken, one must cross 6-8 unrelated House districts from Eagle River to Southeast Anchorage. Jamie testified in support of keeping Eagle River districts intact.
- Anchorage resident, Lee Hammermeister, testified in favor of Option 3-B. Lee is a lifelong Eagle River resident and remembers attending school with students who lived on Joint Base Elmendorf-Richardson (JBER). A portion of JBER workers lived in Eagle River and their children attended school in Eagle River. Additionally, the distance between the district pairings in Option 3-B is closer than the long drive for the alternative pairing presented in Option 2, which would take over one hour. Overall, it is more sensible for Eagle River to align with JBER as outlined in Option 3-B.
- Anchorage resident, Forrest McDonald, testified in support of Option 3-B and noted that this conversation was being held because board members were caught having discussions with individuals not on the board who gave the board members instructions on how to gerrymander the process. McDonald expressed concern with the board that certain public testimony from the same person, multiple times, and treating those testimonies as they have, created a perception that the board may favor non-members over others. Allowing non-board members to have more input on the process than other Alaskans disenfranchises the people that the appointed board members represent. Member Borromeo defends the matter by stating the rules that accompany the opportunity to give public testimony and verbal assault is strictly prohibited. Member Borromeo asks Forrest McDonald if he is aware of Senator Begich's 3<sup>rd</sup> party plan submitted to the board. McDonald is aware of the plan and mentions text conversations between the Senator and Borromeo. Member Borromeo clarifies and confirms that she acted within compliance with the board and the State Superior Courts' regulations and did preserve and submit the conversation to which the court did not find any wrongdoings with the matter.
- Anchorage resident, Sandra Graham, testified in support of Option 3-B as she taught at Birchwood ABC Elementary several years ago. During her time there, she saw many military families attend this school. Sandra also spent time in Girdwood at her father's cabin growing up and knows that Girdwood and Eagle River have significant differences between the two communities. Sandra encouraged the board to look at the differences between the communities.
- Anchorage resident, Jieun McDonald, testified in support of Option 3-B because it is the best representation of the Korean community, and it is her opinion that the board does not consider the Korean community's best interests. Member Bahnke explains that the Senate pairings look at districts that are as contiguous as they are practical. Meaning that they touch but are also easy to



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travel between. Member Bahnke continues to say that all communities are important considerations when voting for what is ultimately best for the entire State of Alaska.

- Anchorage resident, Roy Syren, testified in support of Option 3-B because it is the fairest map and districts should remain together.
- Kimberly Hunt, expressed concern about the credibility of her testimony on April 6, 2022 and noted that she is familiar with and misses the "pre-pipeline perspective". Hunt reiterated her support for the Option 2 map to avoid unnecessary delays and honor the court rulings. This map seems to keep contiguous communities intact.

### **Adjournment**

Member Simpson motions to adjourn the meeting. Member Bahnke seconds the motion. Member Borromeo adjourns the meeting at 2:02 p.m.