Commissioners:

When the boundaries for California's state and federal districts are finalized, please consider giving them names, as is the practice in many countries similar to California—not just numbers. Electoral districts in Canada, the UK, Australia, and New Zealand are all named after the community they cover. Given that the Commission's goal is to represent authentic communities of common interest, it seems like a natural fit to give our districts names that reflects what those communities are—showing that the Commission is fulfilling its role, and also helping districts see themselves as a coherent, cohesive unit, and not just a random number.

Names don't have to be innovative to be effective. Current SD-6 covers central Sacramento. Call it SD-Sacramento or SD Capitol. Names could also be longer, like they are in many other countries. Current SD-5 covers Gold County and parts of the Central Valley. Call it SD Gold Country—Madera. Current AD-70 covers Long Beach and Catalina. Call it AD Long Beach—Channel Islands. Or names could be descriptive. Current SD-2 covers the North Coast. Call it SD North Coast. Or call it SD Redwood Empire. Local people already have names for their communities, and you're missing an important piece if you ask people to draw their community but refuse to use its name.

At the moment, districts sometimes get identified by the city where their representative is located, or where he or she has their primary office. But this practice isn't consistent with the existence and purpose of the Commission, which is to put the community of interest at the center of the district's identity. It doesn't make sense to describe current AD-10 as AD-10 (Greenbrae), based on where the current Assemblyman lives—Greenbrae is a miniscule part of the district. Nor does it make sense to describe it as AD-10 (Santa Rosa) or AD-10 (San Rafael) or AD-10 (Novato), since none of these cities is at the heart of the community. Anyone from AD-10 would understand the area as AD North Bay or AD Marin-Sonoma.

No one understands their district as a number. No one, even after a decade with the current lines, knows they are "AD-10." And if they do, it means nothing to them. Keep numbers as an option if you have to, but give the districts names so people can better conceptualize the community that's being represented in the Assembly or Senate or House. It will better serve Californians, and it will demonstrate that you are approaching your work thoughtfully and with your mission in mind.

Thanks

Niall Roberts
Sausalito