Good afternoon esteemed Commissioners, I am addressing the intersections in the Coachella Valley of Congressional District 36, California’s Senate District 28 and Assembly Districts 42 and 56.

My name is Edwin Ramoran and I was born and raised and live and work in what is known as Sec He / the indigenous land of the Agua Caliente Tribe of the Cahuilla Indians, also known as Palm Springs in the Sonoran Desert, and my family’s been based here since the 1960s. I attended Cielo Vista Elementary, Nellie N Coffman Middle School in Cathedral City, and graduated the Class of 1989 from Palm Springs High School. I am proud to have also received a Bachelors degree from the University of California, Riverside. My family is largely in Palm Springs’s minority-majority district 1 in the Coachella Valley of Riverside County. I currently serve as a Human Rights Commissioner for the City of Palm Springs, but I am making public comment today here as a home healthcare provider, independent food deliverer, and an organizer with Bayanihan Desert which works on Filipino community engagement, also involved with the Black and Brown Redistricting Alliance. Bayanihan Desert has been involved in working on civic engagement with local municipal representation, voting rights, districting, elections, health, food insecurity, housing, poverty, antiracism, and cultural programming. We were involved in helping shape Palm Springs District 1 which brought together this two historic African American neighborhoods and large neighborhoods of Latinx and Filipinx residents. We have been involved with local organizations like the National Alliance of Filipino Americans and the oldest organization of the Filipino-American Association of the Coachella Valley, plus National Ecumenical Forum on Filipino Concerns - Inland Empire and Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance - Inland Empire, as well as Engage Coachella Valley and Inland Equity Partnership on housing, poverty, and equity and a coalition and working relationship with Riverside and San Bernardino County organizations including Chicano Indigenous Community for Culturally Conscious Advocacy & Action to address racial inequality and police brutality.

My mother and I live in the historic mixed working-class and middle-class Veterans Tract neighborhood, includes a unique Filipino enclave. We live on E Camino Parocela very close to many of our Ilocano/Filipino family, a half block away from Cielo Vista Charter which was Cielo Vista Elementary when I was a child; walking distance to Demuth Park on Mesquite Avenue which extends east as Dinah Shore / Mid-Valley Parkway and major commercial shopping at Ramon Road and Gene Autry (Hwy 111 that connect south to E Palm Canyon and north to Interstate 10). My neighborhood has a main road on its west end called El Cielo that connects to the PS International Airport, City Hall, and the campus of Desert Oasis Healthcare. Demuth Park is right next to the Palm Springs Waste Water Treatment Plant, so we deal with bad air quality from there combined with the Salton Sea air which is of major importance. As a Coachella Valley resident, we need to save the Salton Sea.

Our Filipino communities have been part of the historic communities that came out since the early 20th century farm work during the U.S. colonial period of the Philippines. Filipinos are found throughout the Coachella Valley and have worked the farms in the Eastern Coachella Valley. The history of the modern-day labor movement was founded firstly by Mexican and Filipino farmworkers in the fields of our eastern Coachella Valley area and the organizing in San Joaquin Valley / Central California. Many Filipino veterans like my Grandfather after World War II came to live here and build families. Many have worked in agriculture, service and hospitality industries and in the medical field. I urge creative ways to reunite these historic communities. Many of these communities worship (largely Catholic and Protestant) and work and attend school in both AD 42 and 56. Some of my immediate family of Seventh Day Adventists founded its church in Palm Springs with leaders from Loma Linda and eventually made their current church home in Desert Hot Springs which serves a congregation that extends west to Hemet and San Bernardino County and east to Coachella.

I am interested in ways to reunite the families and communities that have been historically located in the area I live. From a personal perspective, it would be great to help consolidate the diverse Filipino communities separated by Assembly Districts , families, residents, and households that cover Palm Springs in AD 42 to those just east in Cathedral City and north to Desert Hot Springs in AD 56. There is a strong daily connection between these three areas; for instance these three communities are in the same Palm Springs Unified School District and are geographically connected clearly.

The Filipino communities are diverse residents who are well represented by all political parties and income levels. I am interested is seeing how you may creatively consolidate these communities just as they are in Congressional District 36 and California Senate District 28. There can be potentially stronger community organizing that consolidates Palm Springs, Cathedral City, and the Desert Hot Springs regions. This may mean an Assembly District that includes these together but without the high desert or Mojave Desert
communities and San Bernardino County areas; it may also be about helping consolidate the communities they have been separated by multiple assembly districts including Hemet and Yucaipa.

I would urge thinking of ways to support especially our underserved, underrepresented working-class communities of color. I support colleagues who have been explicit about ways to counter structural racism, and please support and uplift African American, Latinx, Native American, and Asian American and Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander communities and upholding the protections of the California Voting Rights Act. One way is to please support consolidating Filipino communities locally in Coachella Valley so that we can work towards stronger unity, engagement, organizing, and representation.

Edwin Ramoran
Palm Springs, CA 92264