My city is the unincorporated Joshua Tree, which borders Joshua Tree National Park on the north. It is in the Hi-Desert community called the Morongo Basin in southeastern San Bernardino County. The Morongo Basin includes two incorporated cities – Yucca Valley & Twentynine Palms – and the unincorporated cities of Morongo Valley and its Preserve, Yucca Mesa, Landers, Flamingo Heights, Johnson Valley and Desert Heights. We are also near Pioneertown, Rimrock and the Whitewater Preserve, and some of the recent Sand to Snow monument areas. Our Cong Dist 8 currently groups us with Mono & Inyo counties but also includes more densely populated incorporated High Desert cities that welcome growth of Apple Valley, Victorville and Hesperia, and San Bernardino.

Joshua Tree houses local, county & state government such as a community center & park; the county courthouse, probation and jail; the county offices for land use and our county supervisor with a video feed room where citizens can watch & participate in county meetings; the Calif Highway Patrol; a county fire department; a hospital with emergency room, birthing center, radiography & other services; a residential and short term rehab & skilled nursing center; a water district with about 5,000 connections; a community college and two elementary schools; a post office; a downtown with local shops, eateries, galleries and a weekly Farmers Market; a large historic Retreat Center; a no-kill animal shelter; office of the Mojave Desert Land Trust; a cemetery; and two campgrounds.

Joshua Tree people value the natural world and do not welcome disruptive growth because of the degradation of the environment and limited available water. The water district imports water from the Delta through the Calif Aqueduct and delivered to Joshua Tree recharge ponds by the Morongo Basin Pipeline. Further, Joshua Tree doesn’t share the desire for growth that incorporated cities do because Joshua Tree doesn’t benefit from development impact fees, assessment districts, etc. The County of San Bernardino benefits from those fees when it places development in Joshua Tree, we don’t benefit but we share the impact of the demands on services that growth pushes on us.

In 2015, a local man found a bobcat trap on his private property boudering JTNP. He led the entire Morongo Basin in protesting the trapping of this important animal and by the end of the year bobcat trapping was outlawed in the entire state. The JT community fought and won against a mile-square housing development on an area full of young-growth Joshua Trees, a large multi-year multi-phase housing development next to a school, the high-voltage power towers of LADWP’s Greenpath North, industrial scale solar fields in JT and industrial scale windmills on the Pioneertown flat top mesas.

I believe our cong district should be the Interstate 10 to the south which would include Desert Hot Springs & Thousand Palms in Riverside County, or include and not divide the low desert communities south of the 10, the state lines of Arizona and Nevada to the east of SBC, Mono and Inyo counties, Cabazon to the west, the mountain communities of Arrowhead and Big Bear to the northwest, Lucerne Valley to the north. CD8 should not go north of us to include populous communities but go south to where we predominantly go to shop and for recreation. We do not frequent Apple Valley, Victorville or Hesperia in any numbers.

It would be helpful & less confusing if our congressional and state assembly & senate districts were more similar.

Thank you,

Rebecca Unger
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