To: The California Citizens Redistricting Commission

From: Christine Johnstone

I live in the unique community of Rancho Mirage, California located in the heart of the Greater Palm Springs Valley also known as the Coachella Valley, in the County of Riverside. The Coachella Valley is currently in California’s 36th Congressional District, which is represented by a policy maker that listens to the community they represent and creates policies that support the residents of this district. The district is largely bound by Riverside County lines to the north and south, stretches to the California-Arizona border in the east and includes Hemet, Beaumont and Banning to the west.

My community of interest is the Coachella Valley, its nine cities, 13 unincorporated communities, and five tribal nations. Primary languages include English and Spanish, with large Hispanic sub-communities in several of the cities. The valley sustained significant negative business impact during the Covid-19 pandemic and impact to vulnerable community members. The valley is rebounding however with assistance from the Chamber of Commerce and its unified cities approach to support. The community is focused on affordable housing for seniors, underserved and homeless populations. The community came together during the 2020-2021 Covid-19 pandemic to conduct outreach to advance vaccinations for its residents through collaboration with hospitals and community agencies such as churches and community centers achieving high overall vaccination rates.
Based on 2018 data, there are approximately 18,000 full time residents with a day time population of 25,635. The neighborhood is bounded between Highway 111 and California Highway 10. It is both a busy commercial business district and residential area. This community is vibrant as a focal tourist destination with high seasonal activity from snowbirds from across the U.S. and internationally in the winter months. Rancho Mirage is in close proximity to a wide variety of attractions such as the Palm Springs Aerial Tramway, The Living Desert Zoo & Gardens, Coachella and Stagecoach music festivals, and Joshua Tree National Park. Hiking trails are available and tennis, cycling, and golf are common recreational activities.

Rancho Mirage business activity is a major contributor to the over 5.5 billion contributions generated from the 14 million annual visitors. The city is currently seeking additional resorts and hotels, mixed-use developments, entertainment options, and retail to augment community services that proliferate jobs for community members. Eisenhower Medical Center, a high-quality health system provides inpatient and outpatient medical care to its community and is the largest employer in the Coachella Valley with 6,000 employees and contractors.

During the 2011 redistricting process, both local Republicans and Democrats argued that the Coachella Valley should be defined as a community of interest and kept together, instead of being split into separate districts and was subsequently unified. A map from spatial analysis firm Azavea shows the Coachella Valley as balanced in population with 0.6% difference in 2018 population versus target population. My request is that this 36th district be maintained in its current state following the 2021 redistricting. This would maintain a unified Coachella Valley with Hemet, Blythe, and other current regions that support our health, economy, and other shared community interests.

Sincerely,

Christine Johnstone