To the California Citizens Redistricting Commission:

August 23, 2021

I am a retired senior citizen, and my community has been Del Norte County since 1989. We are located immediately south of the Oregon border. Crescent City is the largest city, with a small airport and a commercial harbor. Most of this county is state or national parkland. As a coastal county, most everyone in Del Norte lives within a few miles of the ocean, with the rest living within an hour of the coast.

I am writing to support the current arrangement of keeping Del Norte County grouped with other California coastal counties similar to us. Several years ago we were grouped with counties located across a mountain range in central northern California, and that felt very remote while it lasted. The last thing I can remember about the eastern counties was a few years ago, when some counties there supported seceding from California, and forming a new state of Jefferson.

Listed are a number of practical reasons to keep the current coastal district arrangement, which has been working well in many respects with everyday life in Del Norte County:

1. There is a mountain range between Del Norte county and neighboring counties to the east, with no direct road through those mountains within the county. To get there, there are two ways only: drive north to Medford, Oregon, then angle east and south, or else head south on 101 and travel through other coastal counties that do have roads to the east, then head north again.

2. Our small airport has flights to Oakland International Airport. The closest other airports are Eureka airport, 90 minutes south on the coast in Humboldt County, and the Medford, Oregon airport, 2.5+ hours away. Air travel to counties to the east have not had any priority along the coast for air routes.

3. Del Norte is connected most closely with Humboldt County, for educational resources. College of the Redwoods community college in Eureka has an auxiliary campus in Del Norte. Humboldt State University in Arcata relies on College of the Redwoods for students to continue onto a 4 year degrees such as nursing, or to graduate school. These campuses are used primarily because it is economical.

4. Because our principal industries are so different from the interior, there can be conflict with water usage. For instance, the Klamath River does go east, but there is no road or river transportation. The farming communities due East need the Klamath for water. Del Norte County and our local tribes are interested in the water from the Klamath for fish, especially to restore spawning grounds for salmon. To that end, some dams are due for removal along the Klamath, to help restore the spawning grounds.

5. The primary road out of Del Norte County and other nearby coastal counties is Highway 101, running along the western coast. Del Norte is working with other agencies
and nearby communities in California to manage a massive slide area on Highway 101, Last Chance Grade which is sliding into the ocean, on this single coastal access road. That effort has been taking and will take decades. It has taken many years to finally get an interest group organized and functioning, and the environmental impact studies are nearly done. Rearranging the boundaries of interest groups is not going to help the process whatsoever, and might just delay it even further, since eastern counties have no reason to need or advocate for Highway 101.

6. Medical care in Del Norte County consists of Sutter Coast Hospital, the Open Door Medical Clinic System in both Humboldt and Del Norte, and clinics and hospitals immediately to the north and south in both California and Oregon. As for air ambulances, it is faster to reach Medford, for a tertiary care center, than anything to the east in California. If driving, medical care is found either north to Oregon medical facilities, or else south along the coast to reach Eureka, if a specialist is needed for more advanced care. Actually, all of us are most familiar with the communities along Highway 101, from many trips back and forth for medical care, as well as for education, shopping, recreation, etc.

7. There are many personal reasons for feeling connected to other nearby coastal communities. For instance, many of us have family in Humboldt, often due to kids who went to Humboldt State, then settled there after graduation. Also, I worked and volunteered for several years for the Area 1 Agency on Aging, headquartered in Eureka, but serving both Del Norte and Humboldt counties, with multiple grant programs through the Del Norte Senior Center in Crescent City vital to seniors living in Del Norte. I also volunteered several years as a parent with the Crescent City Swim Club, attending many swim meets. Travel was both north and south, but not east, because it was just too far to travel with the kids and parents carpooling to participate in meets. Most importantly now, my personal doctor is with the Open Door Clinic in Humboldt, and there is also a large Open Door Clinic here in Crescent City. As for the few grocery stores here, one is Wild Rivers Market, for organic food especially, whose local parent company is Eureka Natural Foods in Humboldt. Residents and visitors here enjoy the cool Pacific ocean climate, with national and state parks and tribal lands that overlap with the Humboldt boundary.

This is a sampling of the many connections a typical resident of Del Norte County has, with needs and activities common to the communities along the coast. We are connected with the other coastal counties most of all because it is a necessity, since Del Norte is small and rural, and needs those connections. I am barely aware of what is across the mountains further east, because I do not need to be. There is nothing in common with them that matters to me, no transportation, no news, no interests between landlocked counties and my coastal one, no educational resources, no medical, social or shopping needs. Even the climate is different. The ocean is intertwined with our identity, and I hope we will be allowed to stay grouped with other coastal counties, with which we have the most in common.
Sincerely,

Helen S. DuVernay