

OPINION

PASADENA STAR-NEWS

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Pass Prop. 77

Re editorial "Proposition 77 merits passage":

The Star-News editorial nailed it with its support of Prop. 77. As a recently "minted" citizen with the right to vote, I have been appalled at the seeming "lock-up" races, especially in California always seem to be; not to mention how the state Legislature rarely seems representative of its constituents.

The best argument as to why redistricting can't wait until the next census is that Sacramento would use the same old system that it has always relied on, making seats safe for incumbents and their cronies, with little or no consideration as to the needs of those they were elected to represent.

A politician's support or lack of support for Proposition 77 should serve as a litmus test for all California voters. I was in favor of Prop. 77 long before the editorial board endorsed it; I'm glad it has done so now.

After the citizens pass Prop. 77, those of us living in Los Angeles County need to do the same in the county.

As the growing debacle of King/Drew Medical Center has shown us, the Board of Supervisors is in need of major overhauling and reorganization, and the best and simplest way of doing this is thorough redistricting and dividing L.A. County into 11 rather than five districts.

Genevieve M. Clavreul
PASADENA

10/13/2005

Proposition 77 merits passage

San Gabriel Valley Tribune

NOW that redistricting is on the Nov. 8 ballot, if not on the map, it's our hope that voters will give it a thumbs-up. Check "yes" next to Proposition 77.

Critics have complained that three retired judges will be more politically motivated than the Legislature. Impossible.

Whether the majority whip is held by Democrats or Republicans, those in charge will carve out the districts guaranteeing a partisan majority. No, we need a change and we need it now.

Here's how bad the problem is. Last year in the November elections in California, there were 153 state and federal legislative races. Zero challengers won. That's right, after the election machines tallied the votes, every single incumbent had been swept into victory. No one is that good. Even the open seats were taken by the same political party that had the seat before the election. The system has been rigged in the politicians' favor.

What we have now is simply not democracy. We have a party-ocracy where the fat cats run the system and the people are shut out. If it were not for the proposition system, the people would still have no mechanism for reform. But thanks to

Prop. 77, voters have a chance to effect real change.

Now, we know Prop. 77 is not perfect. No ballot measure is. In fact, we were advocating a legislative fix for the past two years, but the do-nothing Legislature would have no part of that. So here we are.

We'd be more comfortable with seven or nine cartographers - three selected by legislative leaders would almost guarantee two Democrats and a Republican at this juncture, but who knows, lawmakers could have a last-minute attack of good government and fairness when faced with the actual task of choosing three nonpartisan judges. (How about one Democrat, one Republican and one independent?)

We are also suggesting that districts be drawn based on geographic proximity, not population. That could mean some districts will have more voters - but that can't be helped. In addition, we think the redraw should allow for at least a 5 percent difference rather than the current 1 percent. It is "making the numbers" that created serpentine districts that even cross county lines. With

Prop. 77, there's hope the new redraw would not split up cities or counties, would bring people together instead of tearing them apart, and bring about real races in which any candidate has a shot at being elected.

GOP Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger is the push behind redistricting, but the irony may be that Republicans stand to lose in a redraw with much of the state registered in the Democratic camp.

Never mind.

The idea behind Prop. 77 is that districts drawn with impartiality have the best chance of giving real power to the people to choose their representatives, whether red blue or Green, as the case may be in a particular district.

With Prop. 77, there is new hope brought to the selection of representatives sent to Washington and Sacramento. That hope is that the people would select their representatives, not the other way around.

Whether voters are for or against Schwarzenegger's other measures, redistricting is a genuine public-service initiative and should be weighed separately from the rest of the initiatives.

It can't be good when the major parties know all they have to do is field a candidate and a win is in the bag. This fuels voter apathy and increases citizen cynicism.

So, the political parties may not like Proposition 77, but voters interested in making a difference should embrace the concept. Vote "yes" on 77 and take back democracy.