

Letter to El Cajon City Council  
RE: Redistricting Process

February 3, 2021

The Honorable Bill Wells  
Mayor of the City of El Cajon  
200 Civic Center Way  
El Cajon, CA 92020

Cc: Councilmember Gary Kendrick  
Councilmember Michelle Metschel  
Councilmember Steve Goble  
Councilmember Phil Ortiz  
City Manager Graham Mitchell  
City Attorney Morgan Foley, J.D  
City Clerk Angela Cortez, CMC

RE: 2021 Redistricting Process

Dear Mayor Wells,

On behalf of the community organizations listed below and the residents of El Cajon, we write in the interest of protecting the democratic process and urge you to engage in a redistricting process in 2021. By ensuring a fair and equitable redistricting process upon receipt of 2020 Census Data, you will be protecting the rights of residents to equal representation utilizing the most recent and up-to-date data.

Hundreds of jurisdictions in California will be redistricting ahead of the 2022 gubernatorial primary and general elections. It is urgently important that El Cajon start a process for redistricting as soon as possible given that the COVID-19 global pandemic will present unique challenges to the process and public participation. It is imperative for the City to begin planning now to secure the expertise, tools and resources necessary to ensure a fair, open and complete redistricting process. The demand for redistricting experts and consultants is high, therefore the City should not wait to begin this planning process.

The United States Constitution requires that all single-member voting districts within a local jurisdiction be as substantially equal in population as possible. See, e.g., *Reynolds v. Sims*, 377 U.S. 533, 579 (1964); *Avery v. Midland*, 390 U.S. 474, 485 (1968). State law also requires that charter cities, such as El Cajon, comply with this requirement by adopting new maps following each decennial census. Cal. Elec. Code § 21621 (a).

In 2017, the City used 2010 census data to draw its first-ever council districts. Census Bureau estimates show that while El Cajon's population has grown, not all areas have grown at the same rate. This means that the existing district boundaries will need to be examined and, quite likely, redrawn to ensure all districts are equal in population in accordance with 2020 total population data.

In addition, and equally important, federal and state law require El Cajon to comply with Section 2 of the Federal Voting Rights Act (VRA). El Cajon used 2014 American Community Survey (ACS) citizenship voting age population (CVAP) data to draw district boundaries in 2017. Since that time, the Census Bureau has released updated data. The City must engage in an open redistricting process to ensure VRA compliance.

Finally, a new state law requires that cities ensure that communities of interest are captured to the extent practicable in a new district map, Cal. Elec. Code § 21621(c)(2) Like the total population, we know communities of interest do not remain stagnant. The only way the City can conduct an assessment of communities of interest is through a public redistricting process.

We know that this is a time of crisis in our country and our region. However, local democracy and the rights of the residents to equal and fair representation cannot, and should not, be an additional burden. Again, many jurisdictions in the region, large and small, have started their redistricting process and others are starting soon.

We, Alliance San Diego and Partnership for the Advancement of New Americans, in addition to the undersigned, respectfully request you and the city council act now and confirm you will engage in a public redistricting process, as well as begin planning for that process as soon as possible. We thank you for your leadership and urge you to exercise that leadership in the interest of upholding the democratic principles at the foundation of our society. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Vanessa Greene at (845) 420-2064 or [vanessa@alliancesd.org](mailto:vanessa@alliancesd.org).

Respectfully,

California Black Census and Redistricting Hub  
California Common Cause  
Center on Policy Initiatives  
The Chicano Federation  
Kurdish Community Islamic Center of San Diego  
License to Freedom  
League of Women Voters of San Diego  
Madjal Arab Community Center of San Diego  
Pillars of the Community  
San Diego American Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee