

Good afternoon, ladies and gentlemen of the Commission, my name is Virginia Selby and I am a native of Delta County, having been born and raised in Paonia. I am here to testify why I believe it is wrong to include Delta County in the proposed House District 61. Admittedly, I do not have a solution and I know it is a very difficult job, given the sparse population and rugged terrain, but I believe the crucial elements of the criteria, that communities of interest - ethnic, economic, cultural, demographic, trade area and geographic- which are to be preserved within a single district whenever possible, have been completely ignored in drawing up the proposed District.

(slide 1) If you will please look at this relief map, you will see that Delta County more or less sits in a three-sided bowl, surrounded by mountains on the north and east and canyons on the south. In order for Delta County residents to reach Carbondale and points north and east, without going through Grand Junction, we must travel over McClure Pass - in good weather. To reach Gunnison and Crested Butte, we have a choice of traveling over Kebler Pass - in good weather - or going to Montrose and then east. By and large, the easiest access to the rest of the state is either to the north, through Grand Junction, or to the south, through Montrose.

(slide 2) For years, McClure Pass was nothing more than a gravel road. The story is that two caterpillar operators had a race to see who could get to

the top first. The west side is much like it is now, but the east side consisted of about four switchbacks, one or two of them sharp enough that backing up to get around them was not out of the ordinary. Needless to say, during the winter, McClure Pass was impassable and during the summer could intimidate even experienced drivers, particularly in wet weather. It was and is a definitive barrier, not only physically, but economically, socially and psychologically, even though the road has been paved and the east side vastly improved. Most Delta County residents only use the pass as a shortcut, in good weather, when traveling to Denver and points east. Weather permitting, oil and gas field employees who live in Delta County will travel over McClure as a shortcut to jobs around Basalt and along the I-70 energy corridor, and there are some women who brave the pass on a daily basis to clean houses in Aspen, where the pay scale for these jobs far exceeds what is paid in Delta County. Those who do travel the road year-round, however, do so knowing full well that they could encounter wildlife, endangering life and limb, or if the weather turns bad while they are there, they have three choices: stay put, traveling I-70 to Grand Junction before heading south and east to their homes in Delta County, or take their chances coming over McClure Pass.

Aspen and Glenwood Springs have, for years, relied on tourism for their

livelihoods. *(slide 3)* Glenwood is famous for the hot springs spa and pool which have attracted visitors from all over, while *(slide 4)* Aspen has long been known as the playground of the rich and famous, in large part thanks to its excellent skiing areas. There is some agriculture and oil and gas, but tourism is the major source of income for most of the district. There are very limited economic ties between Delta County and Pitkin and Garfield Counties.

Meanwhile, the sustaining economy of Delta County is agriculture and coal mining. While tourism is important to the county's economy, it is not sustainable, as there are limited overnight accommodations and restaurant facilities in the county, especially in the east end around Paonia and Hotchkiss. The expense of catering to tourists in this area is not feasible.

(slide 5 & 6) According to the 2007 Agriculture Census there were approximately 1300 farms in Delta County, amounting to over 252,000 acres - the equivalent of more than one farm for every square mile in the entire county! Also, more than 90 percent of all farms in the county are operated by a family or individual, not corporations.

(slide 7) Much of the county's agricultural basis has been in fruit growing, especially in the eastern part of the county, covering more than 2,500 acres. Although there has been a friendly rivalry for many years between that area and the Palisade/Clifton fruit-growing area, there has also been a cooperative

effort in marketing as well. If fruit farmers in the North Fork Valley have their crops frozen out - not an unusual happening with the altitude being what it is - they purchase fruit from the Palisade/Clifton area to sell to consumers in the North Fork Valley. A lot of the fruit trees such as peaches and apples have been pulled out in favor of wine grapes in both areas, and they, too, collaborate a good deal. What fruit not consumed in the county is trucked out, by way of Grand Junction or Montrose for processing elsewhere, like the Gerber Company plant at Fort Smith, Arkansas or Texas, where some of the organic fruit growers send their fruit.

The people of Delta County are, basically, very down-to-earth, practical people who value the land and believe strongly in the county's history. Many of the native families can trace their roots back to the Slavic countries as their ancestors came, first to Crested Butte, and then to Somerset and Bowie to work in the coal mines. We are trying to preserve this lifestyle and the conservative values that our founding fathers brought when they came into this valley. The people in Aspen and Glenwood, however, are of a different mind-set, and, for the most part, do not share the same values as Delta County. For instance, Pitkin County was recently awarded a \$24 million grant to purchase new buses for commuters between Glenwood and Aspen that have wi-fi available so that people can use their laptops while traveling.

Meanwhile, many of the residents of Delta County don't even own computers and don't feel a need for them! Pitkin County is one of the richest counties not only in Colorado, but in the United States. As you can see by the next slide (*slide 8*) Delta County ranks 22nd in per capita personal income in the state, while Pitkin ranks first.

All the coal mined in the North Fork Valley is shipped out by rail by way of Grand Junction before it is sent to locations all over the country. Because of its low sulfur content, it is especially useful in production of electricity, cement and steel-making processes and coal gasification. In 2009, Colorado, as a whole, was tenth in the nation in coal production and in 2010, mines in the North Fork Valley alone produced 9,956,000 tons of coal, which is approximately 40% of the state's total coal production. The newest mine in the state is one that Oxbow Mining has proposed for Oak Mesa, northwest of Hotchkiss.

For years, Grand Junction has been the Mecca for shopping for clothing, electronics, and home repair supplies for Delta County residents. Shopping in Glenwood and Aspen is out of the economic realm of most Delta County residents, so there just is not any sort of trade area between Delta County and Pitkin and Garfield Counties. Grand Junction, and now Montrose, have far greater shopping opportunities, plus easier highway

access and both locations are becoming hubs for specialized medical services. For air travel, Delta County residents have a choice of Grand Junction or Montrose, and traveling by rail requires boarding the Amtrak at the more convenient Grand Junction rail station, or traveling to Glenwood Springs - in good weather.

As you can see from my presentation, the criteria for communities of interest are not met by the proposed reapportionment plan.

My biggest question is why the Commission would choose to hold these hearings in Montrose and Mesa Counties, neither of which are adversely affected by the suggested reapportioning plan, but you completely ignore Delta County, the most adversely affected county in this entire area. Why?

Thank you.