

**Commissioner Jones Testimony June 20, 2011****Western Slope House District proposals**

Map 3004 is superior based on the Constitutional Criteria because it has the same number of county splits, one less city split than 3002 and 3001, and divides significantly fewer communities of interest than 3001, 3002, and 3003.

Map 3004 starts by extending off the San Luis Valley district (62) that was drawn to comply with the Voting Rights Act. All House plans presented split five counties. Map 3004 does not split any cities, 3001 and 3002 have one city split. (Note: later it was revealed that 3002 had an extra county split and no city splits when zoomed on the screen to southwest Eagle County.) Map 3004 is also superior in preserving the community of interests of the Roaring Fork Valley, Lake County with Eagle and Summit Counties, the Gunnison Valley, San Juan mountain tourist areas and the West End agricultural areas that include Montrose County south. Maps 3001, 3002 and 3003 split from three to five of these five communities of interest.

**Garfield and Eagle counties**

First, to balance population across districts, **Eagle and Garfield counties are divided between different districts in proposal 3004**. However, it does so in ways that acknowledge longstanding geographic and economic realities in these counties.

**The Roaring Fork communities** in southwestern Eagle county are geographically separated from the I-70 communities in Eagle county and have closer economic and transportation linkages with other Roaring Fork communities than with I-70 communities like Vail.

In Garfield County as in Eagle County, a geologic divide creates an economic divide. Gas naturally occurs in western Garfield County and especially in recent years the economy of western Garfield County has been significantly driven by activity surrounding the extraction of natural gas. East of Garfield County's "hogback" formation however, gas ceases to exist, and the economy of eastern Garfield County is instead characterized by tourism and outdoor recreation activities such as rafting.

Southwestern Eagle county and eastern Garfield county, while distinct from other parts of those respective counties, have much in common with each other. These areas share an economy largely driven by outdoor recreational tourism, from Glenwood Springs at one end of the Roaring Fork area to Aspen at the other. CO highway 82 is a primary transportation artery for this area, and the Roaring Fork Transportation Authority exists to serve the needs of residents within this area. The resort areas at the Aspen end of the Roaring Fork area in Pitkin County depend on employees from the Glenwood Springs end of the Garfield County area. Proposal 3002 splits the city of Basalt which is in both Pitkin and Eagle Counties. (Note: During the meeting it was shown on the screen that the City of Basalt, which spans between both Eagle and Pitkin Counties, was not split; which means that Eagle County was split, creating a total of six county splits in 3002, one more than in 3004 and 3001).

## Montezuma and San Miguel counties

Since the last reapportionment Montezuma County has been divided between two districts in a way that does not respect communities of interest.. Unlike Eagle county or Garfield County, there is no natural geologic divide following the split in Montezuma county. **Both 3001 and 3002 maintain this split.**

**However, 3004 proposal makes Montezuma county whole in a single district and instead achieves population balance along a more logistical division in another county, San Miguel.**

While San Miguel County is a small county, it encompasses two distinct areas. The eastern end of the county is defined by the Telluride resort area, which also draws visitors in the summer given Telluride's status as a historic mining town. Thus in eastern San Miguel county tourism is a primary economic driver. However in western San Miguel county there is no similar tourism and economic activity instead centers on agricultural and to some extent gas extraction and uranium exploration. This distinction was recognized by the San Miguel county commissioners when they adopted differing sets of oil and gas exploration rules for the eastern and western ends of the county. **In this respect western San Miguel County has much in common with Montrose County, with which it would be combined in the 3004 proposal.** The San Miguel split in 3004 is along the school district boundary.

Conversely, **as a resort-driven tourist economy, eastern San Miguel county has much in common with the ski and hot springs economies of Pagosa Springs, Durango, Ouray, and Ridgway, with which it would be combined in the 3004 proposal.**

Opponents of 3004 may say that the mountain passes along U.S. highway 550 are challenging to drive and would make the district challenging to represent. **However, it is exactly this striking topography that characterizes the significantly tourist economy-driven nature of this district** and make it logical that these areas be represented as a unit. In addition to the ski areas, hot springs, and historic towns of this district, U.S. 550, **the "Million Dollar Highway" is itself a tourist draw**, and the several turnoffs along the highway that provide an opportunity for drivers to pull over and take photos speak to this.

3004 respects the boundaries of the two federally recognized tribes with the Southern Ute in HD 59 and the Ute Mountain Ute HD 58. This allows each separate tribe to have its own representative if their positions differ and two representatives representing their interests if their interests are the same.

Finally, although Hinsdale county borders four of the counties of House District 59 in the Democratic proposal, it should not be included in this district as there is no road joining Hinsdale to these counties. CO 149 links Hinsdale County to Gunnison County to the north, and it is more logical therefore to include Hinsdale County with Gunnison County in a separate district.

### Gunnison County

Maps 3001, 3002, and 3003 divide Gunnison County. However, they do not do so in a way that respects communities of interest. While the town of Gunnison and the town of Crested Butte are separated across different districts, there is no basis for this separation. **The two towns are a short drive apart on a straight, relatively flat road. There is no geologic separation as in Eagle county, nor is there much economic separation,** as the various restaurants and motels in Gunnison offer accommodations for visitors to the Crested Butte ski area up the road. This division also does not respect the agricultural community of interest of the area. **In summary, proposed divisions of Gunnison County do not make sense, especially compared to other possible ways of dividing other counties that make more sense regarding communities of interest.**

### Summit County

**Map 3003 proposal divides Summit County for the sake of balancing population. However, this division seems somewhat arbitrary, particularly compared to other possible ways of dividing counties.** In 3003, everything west of the town of Silverthorne would be represented in House District 49, while the east of the county would be represented in House District 56. However, the House District 49 portion of the county is not sharply divided geologically from the rest of the county, unlike the natural division in Eagle County. CO Highway 9 which runs north of Silverthorne is relatively easy road to travel. While it is true that the ski areas of Summit county are south of Silverthorne, nonetheless along Highway 9 are several state park campgrounds which provide summer recreation opportunities to visitors to Summit county. **Thus the proposed House District 49 area of the county does have a common economic link with the proposed House District 56 area of the county. There is less of an economic separation than in Garfield County, for example.**

### Larimer County

In map 3003 House District 49 includes about 35,000 people from Larimer County. The remaining population in Larimer County is too high for three additional districts and too low for four additional districts. Also, when combined with Weld County, the remaining Larimer population does not divide into an even number of districts. **Thus it appears that this manner of dividing Larimer County may necessitate another county split later in the reapportionment process.**

### Park County

In map 3002 House District 61 divides Park County in a way that appears to be arbitrary. There is a possible, somewhat natural division in Park County, to separate the Bailey area near the Jefferson county border from the rest of Park County. **This sort of arbitrary split for the sake of population balance should be rejected in favor an alternative county split that better accords with natural geologic, economic, or social divisions in a county.**

## Delta County

To avoid other, less logical county splits such as some mentioned above, 3004 divides Delta County among three districts. **While it is true that other proposals divide Delta among two districts, they do so at the expense of introducing other county divisions elsewhere. In Delta County as elsewhere, 3004 aims to make any county splits necessary to balance population follow logical lines that comport with on the ground social or economic realities of the communities affected.**

**Residents of Delta county speak of three areas within the county:** the town of Delta itself; the “surface creek” area of central Delta county including the communities of Orchard City and Cedar Edge, and the “north fork” area of eastern Delta county including the communities of Crawford, Hotchkiss and Paonia. **These three divisions are reflected in the way Delta County has chosen to draw its three county commissioner districts.**

**Because the town of Delta shares a highway linkage (U.S. 50) with Montrose County and the city of Montrose itself, 3004 adds Delta to HD 58.** No other communities of Delta County as immediately share this common transportation linkage with Montrose County.

The “surface creek” communities along Grand Mesa are home to a **growing wine industry**, which is also a growing industry in Mesa County, with which this area of Delta County would be included in 3004. The city of **Grand Junction also depends on snowpack on Grand Mesa for part of its water supply and maintains a reservoir on Grand Mesa**, suggesting another basis for combining this area of Delta county with a Mesa county district. The Grand Junction Public Works department even monitors snowpack on Grand Mesa with an eye to available water supply and this information is available on its web site.

Finally, the “north fork” communities of Crawford, Hotchkiss and Paonia all feature a **growing economic interest in small scale organic farming operations**; therefore it makes sense that these communities should be represented together even if Delta county is to be divided across multiple districts. Also, **the north fork region of Delta county shares an economic interest with adjacent Gunnison County in coal mining**, suggesting an economic basis for this part of Delta county to be combined with a district including Gunnison county.