

Residents like district lines

Hispanics say the state's lines should reflect their community.

BY TARA MCLAIN
Statesman Journal



Bradbury

WOODBURN — The lines of a proposed legislative district linking Woodburn with northeast Salem will change little if Secretary of State Bill Bradbury follows the testimony given at a hearing Wednesday evening.

About 50 residents from Woodburn, Salem and points in between had a chance to tell Bradbury what they think of his proposal to redraw legislative boundaries to fit changing populations.

Like many testifying, Jaime Arredondo supports a proposal to redraw House District 33 because it would have an unprecedented 40 percent Hispanic population.

"We're at an important stage for the Hispanic community," Arredondo, of Woodburn, said. "It's important to unify the community and allow it to move forward. House District 33 is the best way to do that."

The Woodburn hearing was the 17th of 21 hearings Bradbury is holding across the state to gather information on his version of the new boundaries for state legislative districts. He said he will adopt a final plan by Aug. 15. However, his proposals can be appealed to the Oregon

Supreme Court within 30 days. The lines become final Dec. 15.

Redistricting is required every 10 years to adjust for population changes reflected in the U.S. Census.

Some came to oppose the district, which would separate Woodburn from nearby rural areas.

Pat Turnridge, a South Salem resident who used to run a farm in Gervais, said farmers would lose an important voice if the current district is broken up.

"I would submit that a fast-disappearing minority in this state are the rural and agricultural residents," Turnridge said.

Sen. Roger Beyer, R-Molalla, whose Senate district would lose the Woodburn area under Bradbury's proposal, had a similar concern.

"It is very important to keep a Senate district that represents the rural, agricultural and timber interests in the Willamette Valley," he said.

Woodburn Mayor Dick Jennings welcomed the plan, saying his city's goals are no longer to be an agricultural center but an urban one. Being linked with northeast Salem would help Woodburn move toward that goal, he said.

Whom to contact

To tell the secretary of state what you think about the proposed redistricting plan, send e-mail to his Web site: www.sos.state.or.us

Fax: (503) 986-1616; or send email to:

Secretary of State

Redistricting Office, State Capitol Room 136
Salem, OR 97301

The deadline to submit comments is Aug 3.

"I'd be happier than a clam at high tide if I had someone from Salem telling the Legislature to improve our interchange out here," he said.

Like others, Jennings expressed concern over the exclusion of the city of Hubbard from the proposed district. Many said the town, which is a mile north of Woodburn, is too closely linked with its neighbor to be represented by a different lawmaker.

Don Coss, owner of a Hispanic radio station in Woodburn, said the proposal recognizes the high growth in the Hispanic community, especially since the last census.

"I have heard the voice of this community in the last 10 years go from 'Howdy' to 'Buenas dias,'" he said.

Third-generation Woodburn resident Anthony Veliz said the district does not give Hispanics a handout but prevents the dilution of their votes.

"We've struggled. We've worked our way out of the fields, into the classrooms and into the boardrooms. Can't we just have one House district that can represent the needs of the Latino community?"