

My goals in chairing this commission are pretty straightforward. They are to comply with the Arizona Constitution, the U.S. Constitution and the Voting Rights Act and to achieve preclearance, ideally on our first try, from the Justice Department. I understand that there are partisan feelings and passions on all points on the political spectrum and I'm sensitive to that. However, the proposition passed by the voters of the state of Arizona and now incorporated into our state Constitution has resulted in the chair of the IRC being an Independent both times we've done this so far. As it happens, Independents are the fastest growing voting bloc in the state. So it makes sense to have an Independent voice on this commission and I am the Independent that my fellow commissioners in their wisdom, however questionable in this case, unanimously chose. This puts me smack dab in the middle of all partisan disputes and that is how Proposition 106 was designed. All I can do is honor my colleagues' choice by working as hard as I can, using my best judgment, listening to my conscience and making what I believe are the best decisions for our commission and for the people of Arizona.

We had only seven responses to our mapping consultant Request for Proposal. From those initial seven, we chose to interview four firms. None of those firms is free from partisan connections. In fact, it seems it is in the very nature of this kind of technical work that, over the course of a career, a firm has partisan affiliations themselves and is hired by partisans or partisan officeholders to do the kind of work that they do. As in any kind of business, if you do a good job, you tend to get referrals and follow up business from the people with whom you do business. And over time a partisan pattern often develops. I think it is important to note that all of the mapping consultants we interviewed, whatever their partisan stripe, either personal or work related, are first and foremost business people who are in business to earn a living and give the best possible service to their clients. From my own perspective as an Independent, it might have been nice if we had four firms that had only ever worked for or been associated with Independents but apparently firms like that either don't exist or don't read Requests for Proposal which require summer work in the remote corners of Arizona. Who knows?

Of the four firms we interviewed, there were three that, to varying degrees, appeared to have closer affiliations with Democrats and one that appeared to have closer affiliations to Republicans. For the sake of fairness and balance, I would have preferred to have two of each and I'm sure that having at least two options clearly perceived to be on the Republican side would have been the preference of our Republican commissioners. But that was not the result of our RFP response. In fact, only one perceived Republican leaning firm even applied and we had no control over that somewhat surprising result. So that was the hand we were dealt.

It is very important at this point to note that we carefully considered many aspects of each firm's experience, capacity and technical skill and it is on these painstakingly developed criteria that our selection is based. But I know that, in the minds of some members of the public and press, the partisan connections are the main focus. To that end, of the four firms we interviewed today, two, though each had considerable experience, also had more strongly perceived direct political ties to and past involvement with our state. Understandably, the commissioners of the opposite party to those perceived ties had

strong objections to each and I had my own concerns. Of the two remaining, one, while skilled and Arizona based, lacked statewide redistricting and preclearance experience which I viewed as absolutely essential. The other made a markedly stronger case than anyone else and instilled full confidence. That firm was Strategic Telemetry.

It is true that Strategic Telemetry's principal, Ken Strasma, has done the bulk of his work for Democrats. He has been completely forthright about this in both his Request for Proposal and his interview. He has also, notably from my perspective as an Independent, worked for Mayor Mike Bloomberg of New York, perhaps the best known Independent in the country and someone with the wherewithal to hire the best possible technical help. I'd also like to point out that Strategic Telemetry's Public Input Manager, who will attend mapping hearings and focus on all public input issues is a Republican and former Texan who served in the White House as Associate Director of Political Affairs for President George W. Bush, where she was, among other things, the primary political contact to grassroots folks in eight states. Speaking of Presidents, I must say the fact that Mr. Strasma played a key technical role in what has been widely viewed as the single most technically advanced Presidential campaign in American history is not something I view as a negative. I liken this kind of technical political work to playing major league baseball. In order to play at that level, you have to play in either the National or the American League. Otherwise, you don't play at all. There are only two options. Also, to best judge a player's ability, you look at his stats, not where he plays. Mr. Strasma has played in the majors with great distinction.

I understand that reasonable people can differ on this selection, as Mr. Freeman and Mr. Stertz have, but I would encourage members of the public to watch the presentations from our Friday, June 24th meeting on our website at azredistricting.org and judge for yourselves.

As has been noted, the role of a mapping consultant is a technical one. The consultant works solely at the direction of this commission. Period. If our experience thus far has shown anything it is that this commission takes its role extremely seriously and is paying very close attention to the process at every step. If there is any perception by me or my fellow commissioners that maps are being drawn in a way that is counter to our express direction or if the consultant is acting in anything beyond a technical capacity, we won't hesitate to let the consultant and the other commissioners know. This is not a shy group.

As Mr. Strasma has said, it is inevitable that not everyone will be one hundred percent happy with this or any similar commission's final plans but with a highly skilled technical consultant, and an open, transparent and fully documented process, any dissatisfaction can at least be minimized—and to the extent that a member of the public feels dissatisfied with the maps, they will know the reasons for each decision and should not have any cause to question the fundamental soundness of the process.

So we need to keep our eyes on the ball, which means complying with the Constitutional requirements and the Voting Rights Act. Our goal is also to achieve preclearance with

our maps on the first try and avoid the additional taxpayer expense and delay that would result from an objection.

We've chosen the firm which we think has the best ability to help us achieve that outcome and, in my view, that choice was abundantly clear. Also, by choosing the firm with the least amount of direct, prior in-state involvement, I believe we have a fresh start with minimal baggage related to anything that has happened here previously.

As for our commission, I have great respect for Vice Chair Freeman, Vice Chair Herrera, Commissioner McNulty and Commissioner Stertz and I've enjoyed getting to know and working with each of them. They are an outstanding group of dedicated Arizonans who sometimes have principled and heartfelt differences. That is to be expected given the way the voters of Arizona and now our Constitution have designed this commission. Nevertheless, I will continue to strive for agreement and consensus. And I know we will continue to treat each other as we would like to be treated. Even though we come from varied backgrounds and perspectives, we all want to do the best possible job, serve the public in an honorable and open manner and leave a positive legacy for our great state.