

April 8th, 2011 -

Dear Editor:

Your reporter Terry Last has rightfully uncovered the attempt by the so called "redistricting committee" of Socorro Electric Cooperative to mislead members by spreading the word that professional consultants like Research and Polling, Inc. would charge "hundreds of thousands of dollars" to properly equalize the five election districts of the member owned cooperative. These professionals at R&P, Inc. know how to do it in a way that meets the requirements of federal voting laws to assure voting rights and Equal Protection provisions of the Constitution. At a cost of approximately \$20,000 to \$30,000, it's a bargain.

The SEC bylaws prescribe the method by which election districts are changed and created in Article III Section 8. By ignoring this bylaw over decades as population changes made district representation unequal, the board deliberately circumvented the by-law to protect their seats in under populated districts, what I call dwarf districts. (This was accomplished by having the Chairman appoint a "Redistricting Committee" months before the 2008-2009 trustee elections. The attorney at the time did not want the "Survey Committee" which the by-laws require, involved.)

The redistricting plan was devised by incumbent trustees who have a natural conflict which suggests gerrymandering districts as their goal. Dr. Wolberg, the committee chairman, admits that districts are not "of as equal member population as possible" or "of substantially equal member populations" which is what the by-law and Constitution respectively require. Case law has established that deviations in district populations of 10% or more are unequal and violate due process and equal protection provisions. The board by calling for a vote on this badly bungled plan is trying to defeat another by-law by replacing unequal districts with a different plan of unequal districts. Members should take charge and vote NO to their plan. During New Business, the members can address other needed bylaw changes.

The committee has wasted enough time and costly staff personnel hours. Let's obey the by-laws, hire a professional firm like Research and Polling to equalize districts to the standard of the democratic principles to which all rural electric cooperatives are legally bound. Due to all the failures of this board the SEC is in technical default on USDA-RUS loans (similar to bankruptcy). It is time to start doing things right by focusing on what is best for the cooperative membership. Having an equally weighted vote is essential to the "one person one vote" mandate and in the cooperatives best interest.

The suit filed by the board against the members "The Socorro Electric Co-op., Inc. v Charlene West and all unnamed Member/Owners of Socorro Electric Cooperative, Inc., et al." is in court now with a hearing to take place in Socorro May 18th. All the boards' actions over the past several years including their current efforts are under the Court's scrutiny. I think justice within the next several months shall be served.

Sincerely,

Charlie Wagner

This is an informative article on redistricting in which Mr. Last was able to get data on member count and a map of the proposed districts. Unfortunately, the chart and map are not on the "Chieftain" website. You may view and download a map of the proposed redistricting at either the Socorro Electric Co-op's website or [here](#) Proposed District Map

The figures on the following chart are from the co-op. I question their accuracy as to "Member Count" especially in regard to Catron County. District 4's member count exceeds the ten percent variance that is allowable under the federal laws for redistricting. Also, be sure to check out the real cost of a professional redistricting.

Current Member Count Proposed Member Count

District 1 1,676 2,196

District 2 897 2,100

District 3 4,344 2,141

District 4 888 2,641

District 5 3,488 2,215

April 4, 2011 -

Governor Martinez signed into law HB 42 which allows voting by mail in electric coop district meetings and elections. We all owe a debt of gratitude to our Representative Donald L. Tripp for guiding this bill through the House and Senate. We all also need to attend the 2011 Annual Meeting this coming Saturday to vote in a new bylaw to the SEC bylaws which will make vote by mail count toward a meeting quorum.