

Re-Districting of Congressional Seats Due

By VINCENT THOMAS
Assemblyman, 68th District

One important item of unfinished business so far as legislative reapportionment for California is concerned, is that for the 38 congressional seats to which our state is now entitled. Ever since the late, lamented "federal plan" for organization of our state Legislature went into effect in 1930, both Assembly and Congressional seats have been redistricted after every federal census.

Because of California's continued rapid population growth, the size of our congressional delegation has been increased after each census since 1930 from 20 seats in 1930 to 38 in 1960. These increases themselves would have brought about redistricting, but the Legislature has in each instance redrawn the boundaries for all districts,

but has adhered to the principle of respecting county and Assembly district lines.

Following the U. S. Supreme Court's "one man, one vote" decisions, our state Senate established a special Committee on Legislative Organization and Reapportionment, which made extensive studies of the many problems involved in redistricting. The California Supreme Court, acting on suits calling for mandatory reapportionment of seats in our Senate, Assembly, and Congressional delegation, ordered our Legislature to come up with acceptable redistricting laws by the end of the 1965 session, but permitted delay in action on the Congressional seats because of the magnitude of the job to be done on the Legislature itself.

AS ALL ARE aware, the

Legislature completed its mandatory task on its own reorganization within the time limit, its work was approved by the Court, and the bill is now law. A majority of seats in the Senate were given to the populous southern counties, and a few significant changes were made in Assembly districts. Seats in the newly aligned districts will be filled at the November general election.

The Senate Reapportionment Committee recently announced that it is launching studies on the population and other problems involved in Congressional reapportionment. Since new district boundaries must be drawn on the basis of population as it was distributed in the 1960 census, even if action is completed in the 1967 general session, it can affect only two congressional elections, those

in 1968 and 1970, plus whatever special elections for seats in Congress are held before the 1970 census.

DISPARITIES in population between existing congressional districts are considerable, but nowhere near as great as those which existed between Senate seats before the change. The average population per district is 413,610. The largest has almost 592,000 residents, 43 per cent above the average. The smallest has just over 301,000, 26 per cent below

the average. From this, it would appear that relatively few major changes in congressional district boundaries will be necessary, and that there will be no appreciable shift in congressional representation between various sections of the state.

The Senate Committee also revealed that it may study reapportionment of the State Board of Equalization. The four districts from which board members are elected are the same as the four congressional districts which the state had in 1879.

Federal Plan to Relax Codes Opposed by Hahn

The county should not relax its building and safety codes to provide space for

Head Start programs despite pressure from some anti-poverty officials, Supervisor Kenneth Hahn has declared.

Hahn contends space is available for such classes without forcing pre-school youngsters to meet in sub-standard or unsafe buildings. "The children and their parents must be assured buildings fully meet the Fire and Building and Safety codes of the County of Los Angeles," Hahn said. "Of all groups which need to have a safe, strong facility, it is the children."

IN THE EVENT of a disaster, Hahn said, political bickering over the responsibility between federal and local officials "would be lost in a public outcry asking why little children were permitted to occupy a hazardous dwelling."

County supervisors have called for reports on all anti-poverty projects in unincorporated areas which are being conducted in buildings which do not meet all codes. County Fire Chief Keith Klinger and County Engineer John Lambie were asked to make "the reports."

NOTING THE county has under way a vigorous slum clearance program where codes are enforced, Hahn said no sacrifice should be made because of political pressures.

"With millions of dollars available in the anti-poverty program, sometimes going for foolish projects, I can't understand why children are supposed to be put into buildings that are not safe," Hahn said. "It certainly is a paradox."

Hahn suggested the use of existing schools, churches, lodge and military halls and women's clubs—all of which meet the codes and now are used parttime.

75 Unsafe Structures Demolished

Los Angeles County's vigorous slum clearance program resulted in an additional 75 unsafe, vacant structures being demolished during the month of July, reports Supervisor Kenneth Hahn.

Hahn initiated the intensive program in 1960 to have the County Engineer closely inspect and cite for corrective action structures which are unsafe for human occupancy. Most are rundown buildings, vacated for months, and owned by absentee landlords, Hahn said.

During July, 1966, 11 structures were repaired, 75 were torn down and 19 were barricaded pending corrections. A CITIZENS' board known as the Rehabilitation Appeals Board considers appeals made by owners of structures cited as unsafe. In approximately two-thirds of the cases the owner, when cited by the County Engineer, voluntarily complies and makes the correction without an appeal, according to Hahn.

The July actions bring the total this year throughout the county to 50 structures repaired, 277 demolished, and 44 barricaded.

"Only through constant inspection can hazardous structures be cleared from communities," Hahn said. "When a structure is left vacant for several months and is allowed to run down, it creates a dangerous situation for youngsters of the neighborhood and greatly detracts from community beautification."

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