

## **STAFF REPORT ON TRUSTEE RESIDENCE AREAS**

### **BACKGROUND:**

At its January 12, 2012 meeting, the Board of Trustees requested that staff review and report on the question of whether it should consider abolishing the current trustee residence areas in light of dramatic changes in population within the District. The request stemmed from information presented by legal counsel in the form of updated Census data showing that the current trustee residence areas are significantly out of balance in terms of total population. This report makes findings and recommendations concerning this issue. Staff consulted with legal counsel (Schools Legal Service) in preparing this report.

### **A. Background on Trustee Residence Areas.**

When the District was created by unification in July of 1974, two trustee residence areas were established. One trustee residence area (“the Rand Trustee Residence Area”) is located in the Rand/Johannesburg area and is comprised of the territory of the former Rand Joint School District, which became part of the District upon unification. One of the District’s seven trustees must reside within this trustee residence area.

The second trustee area is comprised of the remainder of the District (representing the territories of the former China Lake Joint School District and Indian Wells Valley Joint Union School District), in which the remaining six trustees must reside. (See Unification Election of the Burroughs Attendance Area, County Counsel’s Analysis, 1973.)

### **B. Need for Rebalancing Trustee Residence Areas / Results**

Schools Legal Service advises that trustee residence areas should be balanced in terms of total population. With a seven-member Board, this would mean that the Rand Trustee Residence Area should consist of one-seventh of the total population of the school district.

The 2010 Census indicated that the total population in the District is now 35,267, so the Rand Trustee Area should contain 5,038 residents. (See 2010 Census and Related Data Profile from National Demographics Corporation.) Over time, the population in the Rand/Johannesburg area has declined significantly to the point that the Rand Trustee Residence Area now contains only 377 residents. Thus, if the existing trustee areas are rebalanced in light of 2010 Census results, the Rand Trustee Residence Area would need to be extended into Ridgecrest to gain sufficient population. The result would be a trustee area where approximately 92 percent of residents would be from areas outside Rand/Johannesburg, and residents of Rand/Johannesburg would comprise less than 8 percent of the population of the rebalanced trustee area.

### **C. Process for Abolishing Trustee Residence Areas**

The Education Code provides that the District can abolish its trustee areas by resolution of the Board of Trustees. This would then need to be approved by the Kern County

Committee on School District Organization. Normally, the decision to abolish the trustee areas would be submitted to the voters at the next election (November 2012). However, the State Board of Education has a process which permits districts to seek a waiver of this requirement. An application for such a waiver could be filed so that these changes could be implemented for the 2012 elections.


#### **D. Additional Benefits From These Changes**

If the trustee residence areas are abolished, candidates for all school board seats could then come from any portion of the District. This should help streamline the campaign and election process and will no longer require the qualification of candidates based upon their area of residence within the District. This may also result in an increase in candidates for school board seats, since, according to the Kern County Elections Division, there are only 120 registered voters in the Rand Trustee Area who would be eligible to run for the designated seat.

Future demographics, legal and other costs incurred in rebalancing trustee residence areas in light of Census information would also be eliminated.

**CONCLUSION/RECOMMENDATION:** The Rand Trustee Residence Area served an important purpose at the time the District was unified in 1974, by preserving a voice for that community and the residents of the former Rand Joint School District. Separate trustee residence areas can no longer promote that purpose given the population changes within the District. To simplify the electoral system and possibly foster an increase in candidates for school board seats, and eliminate future costs, the Board may wish to consider abolishing the trustee residence areas.

Respectfully submitted,

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Joanna Rummer, Superintendent