

Los Angeles Times

Letters to the Editor: Northern California is more than the stereotypes, and it's being left behind



Rep. Doug LaMalfa, speaking at an Aug. 11 town hall in Chico, says he fears his constituents will suffer under Gov. Gavin Newsom's remapping plan.

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To the editor: Northern California (by which I mean the counties north of Sacramento, not San Francisco) is our home. Reading staff writer Jessica Garrison's article on redistricting, however, it looks more like a collection of stereotypes ([Why many voters in Northern California fume about Newsom's maps - Los Angeles Times](#) - Aug. 20th).

Yes, our counties are largely rural. Agriculture forms the backbone of many local economies. Some of the stereotypes do hold true, and it is no secret that our region tends to vote more conservatively. But that is not the whole story. We are also home to universities, hospitals, cultural events, museums and growing cities like Chico and Redding. And like every other part of California, we share the same fundamental needs: safe communities, access to healthcare, good schools, affordable housing and opportunities for our children.

What the article missed most is the frustration we feel at being left behind. The challenges facing our region — healthcare shortages, high cancer and opioid abuse rates, suicide, underperforming schools, rising housing costs and limited job opportunities — mirror those in California's urban centers. Yet our communities are routinely ignored by Sacramento.

It is easier to dismiss people by labeling their beliefs as unpopular or out of touch than it is to engage with the real issues. The truth is that we are not so different from our fellow Californians in the south. We want good jobs, homes for our families and better futures for our children.

If indeed the strength of our state is diversity, then we need to also consider that we are way more similar than this story made us appear. Perhaps then we can start addressing the real issues we face and closing the political divide between the far right and far left in both our state and country. Perhaps there will be a realization that limiting our voices through redistricting due to national upheaval has the unintended consequence of letting more Californians fall into the abyss of having their needs being ignored.

Andrew Coolidge, Chico

This writer is the former mayor of Chico.