**Draft 3 - TESTIMONY TO THE 2021 WA REDISTRICTING COMMISSION**

**Echo Lake Community Snohomish County Reunification Request**

(471  wds.)

I am Rena Connell, a retired educator and resident of the 1st LD.   I am here to tell you about my strangely divided community and to ask your help in uniting us. Let me explain. Echo Lake is a “semi-rural” community, located on a kind of “land island” between Woodinville and Monroe in Southeast Snohomish County.  In the past two years we have created a community group whose mission is: **“To build a rural community that is safe, strong, resilient and inclusive through neighborhood connections and community services.”** The district lines as currently drawn have created one more barrier to this mission.

All residents use Echo Lake Road, which is our sole “road-bridge” to the rest of the Puget Sound because there is no other access road in or out for our entire community.  This community houses about 1500 rural residences and more than 3500 people—but only a few even live within line-of-sight of their nearest neighbors.  While our board strives toward community-building, past districting decisions split our six precincts between two legislative districts which further divides our already separated rural community.   Five precincts are in LD 1.  Only one precinct, Richland, the farthest from the highway, is stuck in LD 39, and their current senator lives in Sedro-Woolley 1-1/2 hours away.

Our board is working toward developing “community unity” that would allow us to support each other together without outside assistance to survive a predicted, regional earthquake.  Keeping Richland Precinct alone and separated into LD 39 is one more communication hurdle for us as we pursue disaster preparedness.   My neighbors across the street both ways from my corner home are certainly part of my “island community” and my potential support system, yet divisively, they are in the other legislative district.   Our legislative district divisions make even residents’ name-sharing more difficult.  Locating neighbors in our own political parties in the other district is hard because the two district data bases are wisely designed with separated security barriers.  Being together in the First Legislative District would give us more opportunities to find our neighbors, strengthen our communications with each other, keep our community joined, and help us advocate politically together as one voice to address many local issues.

**My specific request is for the commission to unify Echo Lake Community into the 1st LD**, which would keep our boundaries convenient and contiguous as we work toward community-building here where road access defines us.  That unification would give us even more opportunities to work together politically for the common benefit of our residents.  We know that your decisions are difficult, and we sincerely thank you for the hard work you do.   We would urge you to consider the specific needs of this “semi-rural island” community, so our divisions are minimized in redistricting.  My parting thought:  **Not all “islands” are surrounded by water!**