

# Map draws new political battles ahead

**By Mark Funk**  
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Maple Valley's King County Councilman Kent Pullen no longer has to fear a plan that would have dumped him into an Eastside-oriented district with fellow Republican and Bellevue County Councilman Bruce Laing.

After weeks of partisan haggling, the King County Redistricting Committee Saturday adopted a new political map that, with a few exceptions, leaves the current nine council districts pretty much the way they were.

There are some changes, enough to leave Democrats thinking they've got a shot at ousting Pullen and whoever stands for the 7<sup>th</sup> District seat now held by Normandy Park County Councilman Paul Barden, a Republican, in 1993.

Barden is contemplating a run for Congress next year.

"We've created more swing districts," said Kurt Becker, a Seattle attorney and one of two Democrats on the committee. "The 1<sup>st</sup>, the 7<sup>th</sup>,

the 9<sup>th</sup> are going to be the battlegrounds in two years.

"How would I describe the 9<sup>th</sup> for Pullen? It's a hustle-and-you-win-it seat."

Republicans Jack Donohue and Sally Poliak called the new map an acceptable compromise that gives neither political party a distinct advantage going into elections this November and in 1993.

The GOP currently holds five of the nine seats on the County Council.

The redistricting effort could become moot if county voters approve a sweeping plan for regional government in November that would bring about a complete political makeover by adding four new council districts.

Meanwhile, in South King County:

- Pullen finds himself back in his accustomed 9<sup>th</sup> District, picking up the small cities of Algona and Pacific that have been represented by West Seattle County Councilman Greg Nickels, a Democrat.

- The unincorporated northern portion of Pullen's district, between

Tukwila and Renton, is divided between Laing's 6<sup>th</sup> District and Nickels' 8<sup>th</sup> District.

- Laing picks up a sizable chunk of Renton that was in Seattle Democrat Ron Sims' 5<sup>th</sup> District.

- Nickels loses the slender southern tail of his district that included Algona and Pacific and encompassed the unincorporated area east of Federal Way.

- Unincorporated East Federal Way area goes into Barden's 7<sup>th</sup> District, which in turn loses Vashon Island and a small part of Seattle to Nickels.

If there was a loser in redistricting, which by law takes place every five years, it was the City of Kent.

Kent remains the crossroads of the King County Council, its territory to be divided among districts represented by Nickels, Barden, Pullen and Laing. City officials pleaded with the redistricting commission members not to split up Kent, but its central position in the county's southwest corner made that virtually impossible.

"Kent's got real tough boundaries," Becker.

On the whole, however, the redistricting commission did a better job than had been done in the past of placing cities such as Renton in single districts and trying to keep together areas with similar interests, Donohue and Poliak said.

"If you compare this to the map that was drawn in 1986, fewer cities are split, we got rid of Nickels' tail in the 8<sup>th</sup> District and we tried to be sensitive to communities of interest," Poliak said.

Roger Pence, a Seattle political activist who threatened to challenge the redistricting plan in court if it didn't take into account communities of interest, said he was generally pleased with the final product.

The most significant political development—at least in terms of who controls the County Council next year—may be in Seattle's 4<sup>th</sup> District. Republican efforts change the district now represented by outgoing Seattle County Councilwoman Lois North, a Republican, were unsuccessful.