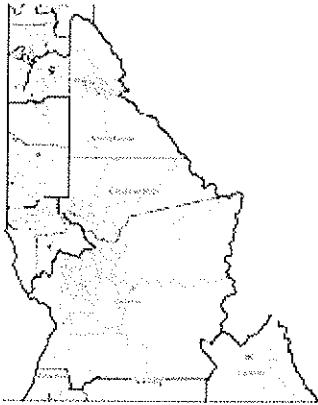


# Shoshone County part of huge district



**By Mary Orr**

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To say that the new legislative district that includes Shoshone County is big is an understatement.

The district, which includes part of Kootenai County and all of Shoshone, Clearwater and Idaho counties, encompasses more than 13,500 square miles. Nine states are smaller.

In addition to the sheer size of the newly-created legislative District 7, its rural characteristics and remoteness of some communities will make it difficult for legislators to stay in touch with his or her constituents.

Some officials and residents are not happy with the district. Despite their concerns, they are not certain what they can do about it.

While the redistricting commissioners kept their promise not to unnecessarily split counties, they grouped several of them together creating at least one massive district.

The district is more than 260 miles long and does not have a highway to connect one end to the other. A legislator would have to travel between four and five hours to cover their district in one direction. The only routes from one end of the district to the other don't even lay within the district. Legislators will have to follow Highway 95 from Coeur d'Alene to Riggins, or State 3 from Kellogg to connect with Highway 95 in Spalding.

"Our district is bigger even than some states," Shoshone County Commissioner Jon Cantamessa said. "A district this size would be almost impossible to not only campaign in but to stay in contact with constituents."

He said he believes the method that Idaho uses to redistrict damages the republican form of government.

"I am talking about the form of government that is the republic," Commissioner Cantamessa said. "We've gotten into the straight democratic one-man, one-vote philosophy in Idaho."

The weakness in that is that rural areas do not receive same representation that they do in a republic form of government, he said.

"You can easily see that on the national scale because Idaho has the same number of senators as California and New York do," Commissioner Cantamessa said. "That is a simple example of how a republic operates. I think we made a mistake in Idaho when we decided not to have as part of our form of government a representative at the state level from each county."

Commissioner Cantamessa said Shoshone County doesn't have any plans to file a lawsuit.

"We sure would do anything we could to get a more reasonable plan though," he said. "We still need to discuss the issue and make sure we completely understand everything before we decide to do anything."

Liz Codoni of Calder said she is also unhappy with the new district. She said she would have rather been included in a district with the counties north of Shoshone because they have more in common than with Clearwater or Idaho Counties.

"I am displeased but I am sure that nobody cares whether Shoshone County is displeased," Ms. Codoni said. "We will probably never even see the people that are representing us."

The commission was unable to fully comply with all the requirements listed in the state code for redistricting guidance. All six commissioners voted unanimously to waive the requirements that precincts be kept intact and that all counties included in a district be connected by state highways.

According to the redistricting commission District 7 is evidence of the difficulty they had in creating legislative districts in a state with a diverse landscape and comparatively sparse population density.

"The Commission recognizes that this district is large and not ideal; however, it is necessary to meet the one person one vote requirement and is consistent with other Idaho constitutional and statutory requirements."

The population of District 7 is 42,948 people. With a total state population of

approximately 1.6 million divided into 35 districts, the ideal district size is a population of 44,788.