

Preliminary redistricting plan affects Tahoe's state Senate seat

By Jim Sanders, Sacramento Bee

Political careers of numerous California state senators could be altered or jeopardized by a key decision made Friday by the independent commission drawing new districts.

What seemed like a simple numbers game by the 14-member panel carried massive stakes because it signaled which lawmakers may be forced to run next year and which in 2014.

Put simply, senators drawn into new districts that are identified by odd numbers must gear up campaigns immediately, while those in even-numbered districts can relax for three years.

Affected senators are Ted Gaines, R-Roseville (who represents Lake Tahoe); Ed Hernandez, D-West Covina; Rod Wright, D-Inglewood; Mimi Walters, R-Laguna Niguel; and Tom Berryhill, R-Oakdale.

Two other senators were caught in the numbers game, but the issue may be moot because they are vying for other offices – Democrat Leland Yee for San Francisco mayor and San Diego Democrat Juan Vargas for Congress.

Political junkies and Capitol aides were eagerly awaiting the commission's vote.

"The minute this came out, the tweets were flying – I got a ton of hits on my website," said Paul Mitchell of Redistricting Partners.

Effects of numbering extend beyond lawmakers' careers to

communities, too, because some areas may find themselves with two senators in 2013 while others will not be represented by anyone their voters placed in office, Mitchell said.

Though important, the numbering decisions Friday were tentative. Their impact could change if draft maps are altered before a final vote Aug. 15.

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