

REDISTRICTING 2011:

Increasing Latino participation in North San Diego County

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The National Latino Research Center (NLRC) at California State University San Marcos participated in a countywide redistricting effort. Coordinated by the Foundation for Change, NLRC and other organizations tracked participation in redistricting-related activities, assessed knowledge, documented challenges, and identified opportunities for increased civic participation. NLRC focused on participation of Latino, immigrant and Spanish-speaking communities in North San Diego County.



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ABOUT THE NATIONAL LATINO RESEARCH CENTER

The National Latino Research Center (NLRC) is under the auspices of California State University San Marcos Office of Research and Sponsored Projects. The Associate Vice President for Research serves as the authorized organizational representative overseeing the responsible implementation of research and sponsored programs. NLRC is fiscally managed by the University Auxiliary and Research Services Corporation (UARSC), a self-supporting auxiliary organization, recognized by the California State University, incorporated as a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation, and governed by a 10-member board.

The NLRC was founded in 1998 with the mission of promoting research, training, and the exchange of information related to Latino and under-served populations in the U.S. Specializing in applied research, the NLRC is uniquely positioned to bring together key stakeholders from the community, government, NGO sector, and private industry to identify solutions and develop strategies to address local and regional challenges. NLRC's research focus is in the areas of education, health, civic engagement and disaster preparedness. NLRC conducts program evaluations, needs assessments and population studies for community-based organizations and public agencies in a broad range of fields. In addition to research projects, the NLRC provides technical assistance to a range of organizations and actively supports multi-agency collaborations that seek to leverage resources and expertise. For additional information about the NLRC visit their website at <http://www.csusm.edu/nlrc/>.

NORTH COUNTY DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

North San Diego County includes coastal cities, the contiguous cities of Oceanside, Vista, San Marcos, and Escondido, and to vast territories of unincorporated and tribal communities. The most populous communities are nestled in the 49th and 50th Congressional Districts and are connected by the region's main Highway 78 Corridor. According to the 2010 Census, the number of Latino residents in North County cities grew substantially over the past decade. Six out of nine cities in North County saw the percentage of Latinos living within their boundaries grow by 240,383 from 750,965 in 2000 to 991,348 in 2010 (U.S. Census, 2010). In Vista and Escondido, Latinos became the majority group now comprising 49% and 48% of the population, respectively.

However, Latinos are largely underrepresented in San Diego's public landscape where Anglos hold the majority of the elected leadership positions in the county. The disparity is even more pronounced in North County with only a few Latino elected officials. This disconnect can be addressed by beginning to engage and educate the 1.2 million potential new voters of whom 600,000 are eligible to register, 300,000 are registered but do not vote, 150,000 are eligible to naturalize, and 50,000 are turning 18 (San Diego Registrar of Voters, 2011).

In North San Diego County, Latinos represents a young and growing segment of the population. Children (0-17) comprise 39% of the Latino population in North San Diego County. In comparison, non-Latino children make up only 21% of the region's non-Latino population (U.S. Census, 2000). Within North San Diego County school districts along the 78-corridor, Latino children are the largest student ethnic group comprising 55.9% of the



student population (California Department of Education, 2010). Almost 95% of students are eligible for free and reduced price lunch in participating districts (California Department of Education, 2010). Twenty-five percent of students have been identified as English Learners and 95.1% of English Learners' first language is Spanish (California Department of Education, 2010). In every school district in North San Diego County, Latino students receive lower Academic Performance Index (API) scores than any other major ethnic group; English Learners and socio-economic disadvantaged students receiving the lowest score (California Department of Education, 2010). Latinos are highly under-represented in the teaching faculty in North San Diego County school districts, comprising only 12.6% of teachers (California Department of Education, 2010).

In order to effectively address the current and emerging needs in North County, policy makers and community advocates will need to better understand the composition of the community's population in order to design effective solutions.

REDISTRICTING PLAN

Redistricting happens every ten years after the U.S. Census Bureau releases population counts. The redistricting process started in the 1960s after the U.S. Supreme Court acknowledged that decades of racism and political discrimination had led to concentration of political power in White and wealthier communities thereby causing population inequality (mal-apportionment). In effect, votes of people living in populous districts were worth less than the votes of people living in less populated districts. Population inequality violates the U.S. Constitution's guarantee to equal protection. In order to comply with the U.S. Constitution, district populations are mandated to contain about the same number of people to ensure that votes are equal – "one person, one vote."

Through redistricting, communities throughout the country review district population and redraw electoral district boundaries in order to address any changes in population concentration. Redrawing processes of electoral districts including congressional, state, county, municipal, school, and special districts have different rules and criteria used to decide how and where lines are drawn.

NLRC participated in a San Diego County redistricting effort with the purpose of increasing community participation in the process of redrawing political boundaries. Coordinated by the Foundation for Change, NLRC and other organizations tracked participation in redistricting-related activities, assessed awareness and knowledge, documented challenges to participation, and identified opportunities for increased civic participation. NLRC focused on participation of Latino, immigrant and Spanish-speaking communities in North San Diego County.

Latinos and immigrants have had a long presence in the area yet their representation and involvement in political/civic affairs remains significantly low. Thus, by closely following a political process that occurs once in a decade but that has great political implications for communities throughout the country in particular for minorities and underrepresented groups, we hoped to gain insight into the mechanisms in place that facilitate and/or hinder the involvement of the largest minority in the state, Latinos.



Redistricting activities were divided into outreach, training and education, participation in public hearings, networking, and research.

Community Outreach

Increasing community awareness of redistricting process

Redistricting processes tend to take place with little community input. NLRC conducted a series of community outreach meetings and presentations with diverse stakeholders providing general information regarding redistricting and how to get involved in the process. Throughout the month of May, NLRC held presentations for Líderes Comunitarios from Poder Popular describing the redistricting process and its relation to the work they had conducted during the Census 2010 campaign as well as discussing political implications for Latinos in North County. Additionally, on May 26, 2011 NLRC presented at the FarmWorker CARE Coalition monthly meeting to inform members about redistricting and motivate organizational members to assist with community outreach and to get involved in public hearings. On June 7, 2011 NLRC hosted a Redistricting Roundtable discussion at the university to network, share information, and identify new opportunities to increase involvement in redistricting at county and state levels. NLRC developed printed materials to simplify information about redistricting and outline important dates and timeline of upcoming events in redistricting process. NLRC provided information to local media to write stories about redistricting and the North County Times wrote a story about NLRC's effort to increase community awareness about redistricting (See Appendix). Another strategy NLRC used to increase outreach to community organizations was through informational emails containing information on state level public input hearings and links to information about the city, county, and state redistricting process. Included in these emails were website links (e.g., redistricting CA, ReDrawCA, San Diego Assistance Site, etc.) directing community members to resources and tools developed to aid in the creation of maps and submission of strong testimony.

Education and Training

Building local capacity of organizations and individuals

The redistricting process is complex requiring extensive knowledge of legal requirements and technology employed to draw maps. Parties responsible for redistricting must comply with requirements including U.S. Constitution equal population, federal Voting Rights Act, contiguity, maintenance of political subdivisions, neighborhoods, and communities of interest, compactness, and nesting. In addition to compliance with legal requirements, redistricting is completed using sophisticated computer software programs.

NLRC participated in a series of educational and training activities designed to build local capacity of organizations and individuals.

ReDrawCA: This is a website that enables users to learn redistricting basics,



access redistricting data, and draw districts and communities of interest. Two NLRC representatives attended an informational training session hosted by Foundation for Change on ReDrawCA to learn how to use the tool to then train community residents to use it. Participants had the opportunity to learn how to put their communities on the map by using the new online Web tool ReDrawCA (www.redrawca.org).

Greenlining Institute: The Greenlining Institute is a national policy, organizing, and leadership institute working for racial and economic justice that created an initiative to oversee redistricting in communities of color.

On May 10, 2011 representatives from the NLRC attended a training hosted by the Greenlining Institute at Malcolm X Library in San Diego to learn about the state level redistricting process and receive tools that will help in the development of public testimony to effectively describe one's community of interest before the commission.

On May 24, 2011 NLRC redistricting coordinator contacted Greenlining Institute's San Diego Community Redistricting Leader to receive a train-the-trainer education. Initially the representative from Greenlining Institute was invited to conduct two community presentations being hosted by NLRC but was unable to present due to work schedule conflicts and instead proposed to train NLRC staff to carry out the presentation. NLRC staff received training and then NLRC trained other community leaders.

Greenlining Institute offered a second training on June 15, 2011 in preparation for a post-map hearing that took place on June 20, 2011 in San Diego. Community members gathered to look at districts under the first draft of maps proposed by the Citizens Redistricting Commission. Participants were given guidance on how to analyze the maps to determine whether lines fairly represented their communities and were given advice for submitting public comments to the Commission about their area. Greenlining developed useful educational and training tools available at <http://greenlining.org/initiatives/redistricting>.

San Diego Redistricting Assistance Site: In March of 2011, the Redistricting Group at Berkeley Law (affiliated with the Statewide Database) opened six technical assistance sites in the following locations: San Diego, Los Angeles, San Bernardino, Fresno, Sacramento and Berkeley. The sites, designed to encourage public participation in the state redistricting process, had computers and redistricting software available for use by the general public, so that individuals and groups could develop map submissions or testimony for the states Citizens Redistricting Commission while the Commission was deliberating. Starting on July 12, 2011, the public could view the CRC map visualizations in detail at the redistricting sites. Managed by staff at the University of California, Berkeley, School of Law, the sites were independent from the Citizens Redistricting Commission itself. This was a project funded by The James Irvine Foundation to increase access to data, software and information about the 2011 Redistricting Process. To access the resources, visit the link: (<http://swdb.berkeley.edu/resources/RTAC/>).

on June 1, 2011 NLRC staff visited the assistance site to gain proficiency on



redistricting software, learn about the process for using the site, and obtain information on available resources and materials in preparation for a Redistricting Roundtable event being hosted by the center on June 7, 2011 where this information would be shared with attendees to encouraged them to use this useful resource.

Online Resources: National organizations including Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund (MALDEF) and National Association of Latino Elected Officials (NALEO), National Council de la Raza (NCLR), and others developed websites and distribution lists to provide redistricting information and updates. NLRC staff subscribed to multiple email listserv from key government and non-profit organizations working on redistricting in order to monitor and obtain the most up to date information on news, articles, press releases, analysis, reports, and action alerts issued by these organizations.

NLRC identified relevant and timely information and make it accessible to individuals and organizations that have limited access to educational and training materials.

Participation in Public Hearings

Increasing understanding of communities of interest

In addition to conducting general community outreach activities, increasing access to education and training materials and resources, NLRC actively participated in public hearings providing expert testimony on Latino communities in North County.

San Diego City: Redistricting in the City of San Diego received a great deal of attention because a new district would be redrawn in the city. Two representatives from the NLRC attended public input hearings hosted by the Redistricting Commission of the City of San Diego on April 19 and 20, 2011. These gatherings were instrumental in obtaining basic knowledge on the redistricting process at the city level. Each public hearing started with an overview of the process, key demographics and terms, its purpose and opportunities for public involvement. The introduction highlighted this cycle as being unique given that a new district would be added to the city to accommodate the population growth of the last ten years. In both of these occasions interpretation and materials in Spanish were available; however, in other hearings local advocates had to request for interpretation to be available.

One of the most meaningful aspects of attending these hearings was witnessing how the different communities/interest groups interacted among each other. A great number of people from various ethnic and interest groups in the City of San Diego showed to testify and talk about their communities of interest. At first there was a high degree of tension among various racial/ethnic groups. There were many confrontations and struggles over territories that each of the different communities perceived as theirs but after several exchanges of ideas and community testimony that rivalry in some cases morphed into collaboration and support for each other. For more information about City of San Diego redistricting, visit: <http://www.sandiego.gov/redistricting/>.



County of San Diego: Representatives from the NLRC were present at a public input hearing for the County of San Diego held at the Civic Center in San Marcos on April 27, 2011. Similar to the hearings hosted at the city level, the County of San Diego Redistricting Advisory Committee began by providing an overview of the process, its purpose, key demographics and terms, and opportunities for public involvement. Strikingly different however was the number of community members in attendance; only close to a dozen of citizens showed up to render their testimony and minority representatives were largely missing with the exception of NLRC staff, no other Latinos were present.

On August 22, 2011 NLRC redistricting coordinator encouraged other staff and student interns to support ACLU's action alert and independently send letters to the San Diego County Board of Representatives describing the community profile of Latinos in North County. The majority of Latinos expressed an interest in having Escondido remain with the rest of the Highway 78 corridor in order to protect Latino voting power in North County.

State of California: on May 13, 2011 NLRC staff gave testimony before the California Citizens Redistricting Commission focusing on the challenges Latinos face being part of the process and providing a community profile of Latinos in North County. On June 20, 2011 NLRC attended the post-map hearing public input that took place in San Diego. Overall, residents along the 78 corridor expressed their concerns and proposed changes in the district that were more likely to benefit their communities. The community was very vocal on their desire to create a district uniting the cities of Oceanside, Vista, San Marcos, and Escondido. The final map adopted by the commission did not reflect the residents' petition; these four cities were grouped into two different state districts.

Networking and Collaboration

Coalition building to coalesce political power

NLRC participated in networking and coalition-building efforts with multi-ethnic and multi-racial organizations to build grassroots political power.

San Diego Latino Redistricting Committee: On April 6, 2011 NLRC was invited to participate in a meeting organized by Empower San Diego with the purpose of convening several organizations from the county to inquire about their interest of being part of a Latino Redistricting Committee. The goal was to form a working group interested in preserving and building Latino voting power in the San Diego region. NLRC agreed to be part of it and continued attending meetings as time permitted in addition to following all communication and exchange of information that took place between members via email. NLRC supported activities organized by the committee and participated to the extent possible given that many of the activities required direct lobbying which limited the center's ability to take a more active role.

Foundation for Change Strategy Meetings: NLRC staff participated in strategy



meetings to design a community engagement plan. On April 29, 2011, redistricting grantees were welcomed and introduced to each other. An overview of grant commitment and purpose was provided and the initial redistricting survey to be administered by grantees was revised to incorporate some of the feedback received from grantees.

On June 15, 2011 Executive Director of Foundation for Change attended a strategy meeting hosted by Empower San Diego to provide an update on the state redistricting process and planned work of statewide organizations to tackle some of the issues that have arise by the process in reaction o the first set of maps released by the State Commission.

On July 15, 2011 NLRC participated in a breakfast briefing with friends of the Foundation for Change (donors/allies/grantees/friends) to review the 2nd draft Commission Maps, table talk with each table featuring a Foundation for Change grantee who shared about work on redistricting, and most importantly to highlight lessons learned and share recommendations for input to Commission.

Networking and collaboration across community organizations proved effective in helping to negotiate and mediate community conflicts and misunderstandings. Being part of the redistricting grassroots network was especially helpful informative for new efforts emerging in North County. This was the first time a Latino-focused redistricting effort was carried out in North County. Hence, lessons learned will inform future political efforts.

New Research

Creating new knowledge and understanding

NLRC lead a research project to further investigate levels of awareness and engagement in redistricting process.

Research Review: NLRC completed a review of current research on redistricting. A summary of the research review is included in this report.

Redistricting Survey: NLRC conducted a survey to assess general knowledge related to redistricting among community leaders and identify levels of participation in redistricting processes. On May 10, 2011 NLRC sent an email inviting local community leaders and educators with a long history of working with community residents and engaging residents and organizations to promote community well-being in North San Diego County to participate in a brief online survey as part of a county-wide effort to explore community awareness and engagement with political redistricting. The purpose of the survey was to assess the level of familiarity with redistricting and to gage the level of engagement in local, county, state, and federal redistricting processes in North San Diego County. Survey results are presented in the last section of this report. A summary of findings is included in this report.



NORTH COUNTY REDISTRICTING 2011 SURVEY FINDINGS

NLRC conducted an online survey between May 11 and June 14, 2011. An invitation to participate was sent via email to self-identified community leaders and educators in North San Diego County with extensive experience working with Latinos and immigrants in communities throughout North County. The survey was available both in English and Spanish. There were a total 61 respondents; 56 respondents completed in English and 5 respondents completed in Spanish. The survey included 22 questions regarding respondents' demographic information, level of knowledge of redistricting, and level of civic engagement.

Demographics

Study respondents were predominantly Latino (56.9%) with other ethnic groups represented as follows: Whites (27.6%), Asian or Pacific Islander (1.7%), other race (10.3%), and bi-racial (3.4%). Approximately 67.2% of respondents were females, and more than 90% of the respondents had, at least, an undergraduate degree (63.8%). Participants were of all age groups: 12.1% (19-24 year old), 20.7% (25-34 year old), 19% (35-44 year old), 41.4% (45-64 year old), and 6.9% (65 or older). The average mean annual household income was reported at about \$75,000. Seemingly, traditionally marginalized social groups such as racial minorities and females with higher education were more likely to be interested in this issue. English is the dominant language spoken at home among the study respondents (50.8%). However, about 40% of the respondents mentioned that they communicate in bilingual formats (English and Spanish, and English and other language). Most respondents belong to either academia (47.7%) or non-profit organizations (36.8%), and more than half of the respondents reside in North San Diego County.

Level of Engagement and Knowledge

The level of knowledge and engagement was low among study respondents; the mean score of the self-report current knowledge of redistricting was 4.53 (on a scale: 0=no knowledge; 10=experts). There was only one respondent who had ever participated in a past redistricting cycle, and only six respondents (10.2%) knew that there was a Redistricting Assistance Site in San Diego. Among those who knew about the Redistricting Assistance site in San Diego, only two respondents had ever visited this site, and their satisfaction with the Assistance Site was below average (3.78 on a scale: 1=not satisfied at all; 11=very satisfied).

The overall level of respondents' engagement with both county/city level commission and state level commission was not as high as expected. More than half (52.5%) of the study respondents answered that they did not know anything about the county/city level commission, and similarly 52.5% answered that they did not know anything about the state level commission. However, about one third of the respondents had followed the county/city level commission (36.1%) and the state level commission (37.7%) in the news or online; about 10% have talked with others in their communities about both county/city level (11.5%) and state level (9.8%) commissions. Very few respondents demonstrated a higher level of engagement. Only one respondent had drawn maps or listed geographic locations for both county/city and state level commissions, and two respondents had prepared testimony or comments to submit for both.



Similarly, the mean score of respondents' level of political engagement was 4.85 (on a scale; 0=not at all; 10=highly engaged), indicating a moderate level of engagement. The major reasons why these respondents had politically participated vary: approximately 28.2% of the respondents did it for personal interest, 18.4% for community representation, another 18.4 % to learn more whereas only 13.2% participated for work-related reasons and 21.2% for other reasons.

Among those who have been active and interested in the current redistricting process, we can conclude that they are equally interested in the work of City Council Member, County Supervisor, State Assembly Representative, State Senator and U.S. Representative. The mean score (on a scale: 0=not at all: 10=very closely) of respondents' level of the interest in the work of the above politicians ranged from 5.57 to 5.10, showing a moderate level of interest in their work. Moreover, 44.1% of our respondents answered that in the current redistricting cycle they do not have any particular preference to care most; they care about the following subjects all equally: City Council, County Board of Supervisors, State Assembly, U.S. Congress and U.S. Senate. Only 15.3% answered that, in the current redistricting, they care about City Council the most and another 15.3% reported that they care about the U.S. Congress. In the meantime, 4.9% did not care about any of these subjects in the current Redistricting.

In addition to the descriptive statistics shown above, it is important to analyze the additional comments that respondents made at the end of this survey to further examine the issues surrounding the current redistricting process and relatively low level of knowledge and political engagement. After reviewing these comments, it became apparent that respondents felt that there needs to be more outreach and more support sites throughout San Diego County. A lot of respondents expressed an interest in redistricting, but admitted having little knowledge on the topic. Some respondents suggested increasing redistricting outreach activities. A respondent commented that "I have not seen enough outreach in our community," another respondent stated that; "[a]s for the North County community, there should of been something at CSUSM." It is also important to consider the fact that some respondents are aware or believe that minorities, particularly Latinos, need to participate more. A respondent stated that:

"Redistricting is vital for the country. However, it affects the minority communities the most. If the minority communities are not involved in this process we loss out big. Thanks for all what you do to engage the Latino communities."

As this respondent argues, encouraging racial minority communities such as Latino communities may be one of the key factors to consider. As most respondents in this survey were highly educated, there is a need to establish more appropriate and effective means of creating links between this group of community leaders and educators with other marginalized populations in the area in order to boost the political participation of minorities and underrepresented groups.



REDISTRICTING RESEARCH REVIEW: AN ELITE BATTLE FOR POLITICAL POWER

An Overview of Redistricting

Census data offers a wealth of information that helps us understand the demographic characteristics of the population living in the United States. Every decade a new portrait is painted but far more than capturing demographic changes and trends, census data is instrumental in giving a political voice to the numerous minorities around the country. Achieving an accurate census count is of utmost importance not only for the allocation of federal resources for each state but also to guide the distribution of political power at all levels of government through a process called redistricting. No other political process is more dependent on census data than redistricting. Every ten years, population figures from the census are used to redraw political lines so that each district is equal in population size guaranteeing equal representation for all as mandated by the U.S. Supreme Court in the 1960's. The ultimate goal of redistricting is to comply with the rule "one person, one vote." Individual states have the authority to decide their own redistricting process but must abide by federal guidelines that apply to drawing electoral districts. The effects of redistricting are dependent on goals of those drawing the lines ultimately determining the political power and influence that is given to voters across districts. Where the lines are drawn will have a direct impact on candidates running for elections, whether or not voters will be able to choose a representative of their choice, and elected officials' responsiveness to their constituents needs (NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc., Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund, & Asian American Justice Center, 2010).

Primarily, redistricting has been accomplished around geography yet a more recent trend points that a balance is often sought between physical proximity and interests defined by group membership, communities of interest (Ergun, Deason, Borgida, & Charles, 2008). It is well documented that voters who have information readily accessible to them are more prone to politically participate due to a minimal effort required on their part to make an educated decision. Not surprisingly, elections that are heavily reported in the media tend to have the highest turn out; familiarity is key for incumbent success. Literature on the topic encourage for redistricting plans not to change dramatically from one cycle to the next, for according to experts, these changes are at the voter's expense as redrawn voters are much less likely to recognize their incumbent and this lack of information deters many voters from participating in House elections. A recent study showed that redrawn voters were half as likely to know the name of their incumbent and as a result less likely to participate in House elections in comparison to voters who remained in the same district. This is not to say that redrawing a district is a negative occurrence as other research claims that a shift in constituency enhances political responsiveness due to increased competition that renders more meaningful choices for voters. Advocates, however, are cautioned to recognize some of the trade-offs involved in redistricting as more education efforts will be necessary to offset some of these shortcomings (Hayes & McKee, 2009).



The Voting Rights Act

The Voting Rights Act was passed by Congress and signed by President Lyndon Johnson in 1965. This federal law was created to ban discriminatory practices and procedures that had been used by states in the past to discriminate against minorities (e.g., poll taxes, grandfather clauses, and literacy tests). It prohibits states from imposing any “voting qualification or prerequisite to voting, or standard, practice, or procedure... to deny or abridge the right of any citizen of the United States to vote on account of race or color.” During the first decades of its implementation, the Voting Rights Act helped to successfully increase the registration numbers of minority voters; however, it did little to augment the number of office-holding candidates (Ergun, Deason, Borgida, & Charles, 2008). Fortunately, over time there has been an exponential increase in the number of federal and state legislators elected thanks to protections guaranteed under the act (Klarner, 2007). It offers a mechanism to prevent abuses committed against minorities denying them the right to exercise an effective vote from reoccurring. Some parts of the act are permanent while others are required to be renewed every so often. Section 2 and Section 5 are two sections of the Voting Rights Act that are of significant importance for redistricting (Levitt & Wood, 2010).

- ❖ *Section 2 (permanent)*: protects minority voters from practices and procedures that deprive them of an effective vote because of their race, color or membership in a particular language minority group.
- ❖ *Section 5 (renewed in 2006)*: targets states, towns or counties with an egregious history of discrimination against minority voters. It requires these jurisdictions to seek preapproval of any voting change from the Department of Justice or the United States District Court of the District of Columbia before it can be implemented, a process known as preclearance.

Minority Representation

Redistricting plans must closely adhere to Section 2 to avoid the dilution of minority vote. Vote dilution commonly takes place when those drawing the lines produce districts that divide minorities into several districts to weaken their political power of choosing a candidate of their choice, a practice known as *cracking*, or by *packing* which places minorities into a small number of districts compressing their voting power. The Voting Rights Act has been successful at guaranteeing the formation of majority-minority districts where more than 50 percent of voters are from the same racial or ethnic minority. Majority-minority districts are characterized by giving minority citizens an advantage of electing a candidate of their choice by giving the opportunity to all vote together so that their candidate, who may or may not be a member of a racial or ethnic minority group, will have a high chance of winning (Levitt & Wood, 2010). Additionally, data has shown that states that must comply with Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act are estimated to have more majority-minority seats than states that are not subject to it (Barabas & Jerit, 2004). In California there are four counties covered by Section 5: Kings, Merced, Monterrey, and Yuba County (NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc., Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund, & Asian American Justice Center, 2010). Residing in a majority-minority district is beneficial for the political engagement of its residents; they are more likely to turn out to vote given that electing a candidate of their choice gives minority voters a sense of empowerment and increases the likelihood they will become involved in other civic activities (Barreto, Segura, & Woods, 2004). Nonetheless, there is much work to be done. In the case of Latinos, candidates are not on



par with other non-Latino opponents, political parties have not cultivated Latino politicians to advance them to a position where they can compete against their opponents (Blake, 2011).

Redistricting Criteria

Although each state has the autonomy to set its own redistricting guidelines, all states traditionally follow two principles when redistricting: contiguity and compactness. Contiguity is a term used to describe a geographically contiguous district where all parts of the district are attached to each other; compactness refers to the overall shape of the district. In addition to contiguity and compactness, another well respected traditional principle of redistricting is the respect for political subdivisions of states like counties, towns or wards, and respect for communities defined by shared interests (Levitt & Wood, 2010). A community of interest is defined as a contiguous population which shares common social and economic interests that should be included within a single district for purposes of its effective and fair representation. These principles are key in preventing the creation of political gerrymander districts that divide a geographical area into electoral districts of irregular shape to give one political party an unfair advantage by diluting the opposition's voting strength (NAACP Legal Defense and Educational Fund, Inc., Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund, & Asian American Justice Center, 2010).

Aside from federal statutes, states commonly adopt other rules in its state constitution to delineate the redistricting process. In California, the Voters First Act lays out the criteria to be followed when drawing districts:

- ✓ Districts must be of equal population to comply with the U.S. Constitution.
- ✓ Districts must comply with the Voting Rights Act to ensure that minorities have an equal opportunity to elect representatives of their choice.
- ✓ Districts must be contiguous so that all parts of the district are connected to each other.
- ✓ Districts must respect the boundaries of cities, counties, neighborhoods and communities of interest, and minimize their division, to the extent possible.
- ✓ Districts should be geographically compact, that is, have a fairly regular shape.
- ✓ Where practicable each Senate District should be comprised of two complete and adjacent Assembly Districts and Board of Equalization districts shall be composed of 10 complete and adjacent State Senate Districts.
- ✓ Districts shall not be drawn to favor or discriminate against an incumbent, candidate, or political party (Guide to Participation, 2011).

California Citizens Redistricting Commission

States primarily use one of two methods to redistrict: the legislative process or a



specially appointed commission. Most states opt to delegate the authority of redistricting to the state legislature and a few others appoint an independent commission, as is the case in California. In the past decades, California has alternated between these two methods. In the 1970s and 1990s, redistricting was performed by a panel of judges, whereas in the 1960s, 1980s, and 2000s the state legislature drew the district lines. Researchers maintain that redistricting is a political game for power where incumbents and parties work tactically to develop plans that are most favorable to them and their interests (McDonald, 2004). Individual districts are typically categorized as being “safe” or “swing” districts for a party or politician. A safe district is one where a candidate has solid support and can be easily (re)elected; in a swing district, however, it is hard to predict the election winner (Williams, 1995). Experts have articulated that when districts are drawn by commissions, the districts become more competitive and the voting behavior of Democrat and Republican legislators becomes more moderate. Likewise, polarization in the legislature is more likely to occur when legislators are in charge of redrawing district boundaries (Grainger, 2010). During the last redistricting cycle in California, districts were drawn in a way that put practically every member of congress safe from a challenge (Walker, 2011). Aware of these issues, voters in 2008 and 2010 passed Proposition 11 (Voters First Act) and Proposition 20 (Voters First Act for Congress), respectively. The propositions gave authority to a commission called the California Citizen Redistricting Commission to draw the maps of 53 congressional districts, 40 State Senate districts, 80 State Assembly districts, and 4 Board of Equalization districts.

The commission is formed by 14 members from different ethnicities and geographic locations in the state and includes five Democrats, five Republicans, and four declined to State. The initial requirements to be considered an applicant are to must have voted in two of the last three statewide general elections and must not have changed political party affiliation within the last five years. It was reported that few minorities (less than 25 percent) applied for the redistricting commission and even fewer met these minimum requirements (Adelman, 2010). The process for selecting the 14 members of the Commission consisted of reviewing applications from interested parties submitted online and inviting qualified applicants to submit a supplemental application containing additional information about their qualifications. Three independent auditors from the Bureau of State Audits reviewed the applications and selected 120 of the most qualified applicants to be interviewed in Sacramento. These applicants were divided into three subgroups: 40 Democrats, 40 Republicans, and 40 who were neither Democrats nor Republicans. Then the pool of applicants was reduced to 60, again with 3 subgroups equal in number. Those 60 names were sent to both houses of the Legislature where 24 applicants were removed by the leaders. On November 8, 2010, the State Auditor randomly selected the name of 3 Democrats, 3 Republicans, and 2 declined to State. Subsequently, on December 15, 2010, the first 8 selected the final 6 commissioners. The Commission will serve for a period of 10 years; however, most of the work has already been performed when they submitted the approved maps of the new districts on August 15, 2011 (Guide to Participation, 2011).

The task of the commission is to ensure a transparent process that guarantees fair representation and a true democracy at work by drawing districts that reflect the best interests of the people and not that of incumbent political parties. In an effort to do so, the Commission relied on the thousands of testimonies collected from citizens during a series of Public Input Hearings hosted throughout the state to help the commissioners draw the new districts. One of the main objectives of this activity was to learn about the



different communities of interest that exist such information is not available in databases. In addition, this venue provided a rich exchange of information and knowledge among citizens and the commissioners who used this information to evaluate voter's input and to draw district boundaries in a responsible manner. Citizens were also able to participate through the Commission's website as well as via Twitter and Facebook. There were also Redistricting Assistance Sites set up to through various counties to help citizens use special software and facilitate the tools necessary in mapping their community.

The deadline for the Commission to approve final district lines was August 15, 2011. The commission issued a final report explaining the basis for maps and demonstrating compliance with set criteria. The report is available on the Commission's website at WeDrawTheLines.ca.gov. In order to approve and adopt the final district maps for congressional and state districts, the Commission needed the affirmative votes of 3 of its 5 Democratic Commissioners, 3 of its 5 Republican Commissioners, and 3 of its 4 Decline to State Commissioners. Once a map is adopted, the Voting Rights Act provides that any legal challenges to the district maps are directed to the California Supreme Court for review. This provision was written to expedite any legal challenges straight to the state's highest court so a decision could be made on the maps in time for the June 2012 elections (Guide to Participation, 2011).

COMMUNITY REACTION TO CALIFORNIA REDISTRICTING MAPS OF 2011

As anticipated, when the final district maps were released an immediate discontent was shown by various groups who expressed their intention of taking legal action to modify the maps to better represent their respective groups. An example is Latino organizations like the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF) who feel that redrawn districts do not give Latinos more political power, at least not in proportion to their population growth over the last decade. Similarly, the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO) stated that the new Senate maps reduce the number of districts where Latinos can elect candidates of their choice. According to the NALEO's Senior Policy Director, this map could regress Latino political progress made in California (Nittle, 2011; Llenas, 2011; & Ross, 2011). Groups could challenge the maps by referendum which requires the collection of signatures to put them on the 2012 ballot. If a referendum qualifies, the state Supreme Court would adopt temporary maps for the 2012 elections or it could simply decree that the commission's maps be used for 2012 while voters make a final decision or ultimately it could create its own maps. Opponents could also file a suit directly arguing that the Commission's map violate federal and state laws on redistricting (Walters, 2011). The Republican Party is trying to qualify a ballot referendum to overturn the new districts since according to the party districts were drawn improperly to favor Democrats. The districts created by the commission could give Democrats two-thirds control in the state Senate. The Republican Party needs to collect 504,760 valid signatures in 90 days and raise approximately \$3 million to support their effort (Cadelago, 2011; Lin & Williams, 2011; & Ross, 2011). To view a copy of the final certified maps, visit the California Citizens Redistricting Commission at <http://wedrawthelines.ca.gov/maps-final-draft-assembly-districts.html>.



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR INCREASED COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

It is evident that although the redistricting process is an important political process which can greatly benefit from community input, it did not receive the level of attention it deserved from grassroots and civic leaders. Some practical steps can improve the process:

Implement a Coordinated Outreach and Education Campaign: Public input in map-drawing is highly desired but little guidance is made available for individuals who would like to get involved. For the most part, individuals were left the responsibility to educate themselves on the redistricting process and to monitor the progress and outcomes at all levels (i.e., state, county, and city). A difficult task, even more so for groups who have traditionally been disenfranchised from the political life. Unlike with the Census 2010 campaign, little resources were allocated to promote the participation of citizens in the redistricting process but most importantly to engage underrepresented groups. Missing from this redistricting cycle was a targeted attempt to bridge the visible information divide between minority groups and those who belong to the world of politics.

In the future, there needs to be a well designed education campaign to address some of challenges observed during the current and previous redistricting cycles (e.g., lack of knowledge, information, and minority community input). An effective strategy shown to yield positive results is that implemented during the Census campaign where grassroots and community organizations acted as a mediator to connect with hard-to-reach populations delivering a wealth of education, effectively explaining and engaging minority groups in the process, sharing resources, and forming a strong network of concerned people advocating for the same cause: give a voice to the often invisible members of our society. However, community organizations cannot do everything on their own; coordination must occur between academia, government agencies, media, and interested stakeholders in order to tackle this issue from all angles imaginable. This collaboration needs to take place years in advance to the next redistricting cycle to allow sufficient time for education and the creation of an infrastructure that would render meaningful participation from all citizens, independent of race or ethnicity.

Involve Youth: Youth are an important population subgroup in minority communities who are often overlooked in outreach efforts. Many policy analysts see the large percentage of minority youth as a deficit for these communities because according to them they lower the political power by not being able to vote yet. Instead of viewing youth as a shortfall, community organizations should take the opportunity to work with this population at an early age and invest in creating a future generation of civically engaged individuals who would arrive to the next redistricting cycle ready to make a real influence on the matter bringing along with them their parents and relatives all well informed on a process that until now has only effectively engaged a selected few.

Conduct Capacity Building Strategies: It is not enough to make technology tools accessible to citizens if no education has previously taken place. At least this is



the case of many minority members who do not count with the educational background required to run software programs, even when these are design to be user-friendly. There the importance of collaborating with community organizations that has the trust of the community to teach classes and conduct workshops in a culturally and linguistically appropriate way to successfully engage minorities. The topics for capacity building can range from something as simple as defining the purpose of redistricting to more complicated ones such as teaching computer skills that can aid in the search for information and operation on software to create visualizations that represent their community's interests. This could enable minority groups to make the best use of tools that were created thinking on the needs of middle class individuals who might already have access to an abundance of resources.

Increase research on the participatory effects of redistricting: Redistricting is a challenging problem. Its whole purpose is to guarantee equal political representation for all, yet it is felt as if the word all is subtracted from the equation and replaced by the word politician. This is evident even in the body of literature available on redistricting; very few studies focus on exploring the effects of redistricting on individual participation, minorities, or its impact on communities. The vast number of studies focuses on the implications for incumbents and political parties. More research needs to be conducted to inquiry about the meaning of redistricting for the citizens overall and minority groups. What are some of the factors contributing to low participation rates? What motivators encourage individuals to engage? In short, explore individual behavior.

Redistricting 2011 activities provided an opportunity to engage multiple stakeholders in political dialogue of critical importance in communities that have traditionally been excluded from political processes. It is our hope that lessons learned from this process will motivate community leaders to facilitate activities that promote greater civic engagement and political participation to keep democracy alive and deepen its value among residents who are disillusioned with vanishing democratic values.



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