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From: Adam Librot [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, December 14, 2010 2:31 AM
To: Voters First Act
Subject: Concerns about Maria Blanco - conflicts of interest, LA residence, public comments

To the Current 8 Members of the Citizens Redistricting Commission:

I have closely followed the Citizens Redistricting process since I moved to California at the beginning of the year. I felt it was the most important item on the ballot this past November 2, and after a very close vote in 2008 for Prop 11, it was an extremely gratifying experience to see Prop 20 win decisively, while Prop 27 was soundly defeated. I truly appreciate all the time and effort you will commit to the process of giving the citizens of California a greater voice in government.

However, after reviewing the slate of 6 additional proposed members to the Commission, I have significant concerns about the inclusion of Maria Blanco.

CONFLICTS OF INTEREST:

While Blanco has had an apparently successful career in her chosen field, and she may be a pleasant person to spend time with, she has taken clear sides in the prior California redistricting, with her extensive work at MALDEF, in a leadership role. California is very diverse – ethnically, geographically, culturally, economically, etc – and the people on the Commission should represent that diversity, but once on the Commission, the members are charged with being impartial towards all Californians. Even in the absolute best case that Blanco is able to set aside the focus of much of her career, the resulting districts will be much more susceptible to legal challenges due this conflict. Blanco's Voting Rights Act experience may be a positive in another context, but with other legal minds on the Commission, and many brilliant and high achieving individuals, I do not consider this experience to add significant value to the Commission, as there will likely be plenty of outside support to ensure compliance.

I contrasted Blanco with Gabino T Aguirre, the other Democrat on the proposed slate, and a Latino, who has an extensive background of executive and leadership roles in which he had to balance the interests of many different parties, and make decisions that affected people's lives, but only after careful deliberation and fact-finding. In Blanco's career positions, first the decisions were made, and then the fact-finding began. While I do not intend to impugn the quality or legitimacy of her past work in any way, it is hardly impartial, and rises to the level of conflict of interest, since she was significantly involved with the last redistricting.

LA CITY RESIDENCE:

Much has been made about Blanco being the sole resident of the City of Los Angeles. But her resume indicates that she's been a resident of northern California for at least the past 20 years. Legal residency may be a technical prerequisite for someone running for office, but when it comes to legitimately representing a population, that involves actually living in a community, driving its streets, interacting with its citizens, following the local news, and becoming involved with local charities, businesses, organizations, and schools. That cannot be achieved simply by changing one's address. The Prop 11 law sets a minimum of 5 years of California voter registration to be eligible for the Commission. Surely, a 5 year consideration should be applied when assessing geographical diversity of the members. Also, most, if not all, of the positive public comments were from individuals working and living in northern California, which is a strong indicator of Blanco's community ties. I do not believe Blanco can

legitimately claim to represent the people of the City of Los Angeles, LA County, or even Southern California.

PUBLIC COMMENTS:

It is true that Blanco has received many positive public comments, but upon further examination, they all repeat similar points, with such consistency, that it's unclear how much of each comment truly came from the author, and how much was directly solicited.

Again, I contrasted the public comments for Blanco and for Aguirre. Those for Aguirre were uniquely written, and each spoke about Aguirre through the eyes, heart, and personal observations of the author. The public comments for Blanco repeated the same three points, spelled out in Eli Aramburo's comment, to the glaring exclusion of anything else – Voter Rights Act, Latina, and Los Angeles resident. In fact, most every public comment in the flurry made from December 6 through 9 put focus on those 3 points, especially the LA residency. Antonia Hernandez wrote a letter of recommendation on March 26, 2010, and then submitted a similar public comment on December 7, 2010. They were virtually identical, except Hernandez inserted the repeated three points into the more recent public comment – Voting Rights Act, Latina, Los Angeles resident.

While some authors were clearly more eloquent in writing style than others, when reading all of Blanco's positive comments in succession, they appeared at least partially manufactured. Blanco's supplemental information clearly indicates Voting Rights Act experience, and her initial application indicates she is Latina. How many public commenters would conclude, on their own, that her newfound residency in LA is a prime qualification? Very few, if any. The public comments tended to key off these items and general overviews of Blanco's resume, which had all previously been established, instead of establishing unique and revealing viewpoints on the applicant.

I thank you for taking further public comments after the slate was announced, and hope that you take my comments into consideration when determining the final slate.

Adam Librot

