

Public Comment Form

For this form to be accepted by the Bureau of State Audits, the last page of the form must be signed by the person providing the comment.

Today's Date: Dec. 6, 2010

INFORMATION ABOUT APPLICANT

Name of applicant about whom the comment relates (use a separate form for each applicant about whom you are providing public comment): Maria Blanco

Please provide specific facts, based on your personal knowledge, relating to the applicant's eligibility or qualifications to serve as a commission member (which may include specific facts regarding the accuracy of statements made or information submitted by the applicant during the application process). Attach additional pages, if needed:

I write in support of Maria Blanco's appointment as one of the six additional members of the Citizens Redistricting Commission. A professor of History and Social Science at Caltech, I've written two books and numerous articles about minority voting rights and discrimination. Since 1979, I've testified or consulted in over 30 federal and state voting rights cases, including challenges to the last two statewide California redistricting plans – in 1992 for the California Democratic congressional delegation and in 2002, for MALDEF.

I was concerned long before Proposition 11 passed that any redistricting commission would reduce the power of minorities, particularly Latinos, over this basic allocation of power, and that the plans a commission adopted would result in a retrogression of the ability of Latino voters to elect candidates of their choice, which would violate the Voting Rights Act.

The results of the first, lottery round of appointments to the Commission have heightened my concern: Latinos were under-represented compared to their proportion of California's population, and massively under-represented, compared to the power over redistricting that they would have held as the central players in the dominant political party in the state legislature, if the legislature had continued to draw the lines. The only effective way to begin to rectify this representational inequity is to name to the Commission a person who by training, experience, and previous activities has demonstrated that she will make every effort to insure that the interests of Latino voters will be protected throughout the Commission's deliberations and in its final plans. That person is Maria Blanco.

Redistricting requires a set of difficult trade-offs, guided by state and federal law, particularly the intricate and controversial court decisions under the Voting Rights Act. Ms. Blanco, through her legal work for MALDEF, her involvement in the 2001 California redistricting, and her executive directorship of the Earl Warren Center at Berkeley, has demonstrated the knowledge and abilities to lead the discussion of those trade-offs. She will not have to defer to the Commission's counsel in interpreting the Voting Rights Act; she could write the briefs, as she did in 2002. She also has the technical skills to keep up with the consultants who will draw the maps in detail and the force of personality to hold her own with the impressive people already named to the Commission.

INFORMATION ABOUT YOU

Name: J. Morgan Kousser _____

E-mail Address: [REDACTED] _____

Mailing Address: [REDACTED] _____

Home Address (if different from above): [REDACTED] _____

How you know the applicant named above: I read her brief in Cano v. Davis and I may have met her at a conference and _____

Daytime Telephone No.: [REDACTED] _____

Additional Telephone No.: [REDACTED] _____