

From: Michelle Romero [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, January 11, 2011 3:44 PM
To: Commission, Prop11
Cc: Tunua Thrash; [REDACTED]
Subject: Public Comment to Citizens Redistricting Commission

Please accept the attached letter of public comment for the Citizens Redistricting Commission.

Thank you,

Michelle Romero
Claiming Our Democracy Fellow
The Greenlining Institute



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January 11, 2011

Citizens Redistricting Commission
c/o California Secretary of State
1500 11th St, Sacramento, CA, 95814
Via email to: votersfirstact@sos.ca.gov

Subject: Public Comment Concerning Staffing & Community Outreach Decisions

Dear Commissioners:

On Wednesday, January 12, 2011, the California Citizens Redistricting Commission will consider two important items that will lay the foundation for its work for the coming months; this includes a staffing plan and a community outreach plan.

Staffing Plan

In the final months leading to the final selection of all 14 Commissioners, the California Secretary of State's office stepped into a self-appointed roll of determining staff positions, creating job descriptions, and circulating the job announcement among traditional employment networks. We can all appreciate that the work of the inaugural and newly minted Commission is robust and highly integrated, however, Greenlining believes that the *first* key role of the Commission is to determine the best structure of the Redistricting California organization, this includes what positions need to be created and their duties.

The influence of another California department without the confirmed authority of the Commission may erode the public's confidence that the 14 Commissioners are in fact leading the plan for an independent redistricting process. Furthermore, we would expect that the Commission draw from the lessons learned during the recruitment and selection process of the commissioners themselves, and would take all affirmative action to circulate the staff job announcements in such a way that would facilitate the recruitment of California's best and brightest policy/legal/administrative professional and executive leaders, including those of ethnic and minority background.

We would urge the Commission to consider the following:

- Is the staffing structure currently outlined by the Secretary of State optimal? Are there positions and/or a structure assembled by other Redistricting Commissions that might be beneficial in California?
- Truly embarking on an affirmative effort to identify the best and brightest candidates, going beyond traditional outlets and networks. This is likely to require the retention of a minority-focused executive search firm with extensive networks throughout the state.

Community Outreach Plan

The collection of community input, to be utilized in the final analysis of maps drawn, is a principal data source that can be achieved from none other than a well conceived and thoughtful community outreach plan.

Greenlining has served as an ongoing partner of the Bureau of State Auditors (BSA) in the wide-spread and grassroots recruitment of diverse Californian's to serve on the Commission. Going forward, Greenlining will continue its efforts to educate California's public, in particular its minority and low-income communities about redistricting, *what it is and why it is important*. Having hosted more than 50 community meetings in diverse rural and metro centers during the public outreach season, Greenlining, like many of its peer partner organizations have unique and tested experiences with statewide public outreach. We look forward to working with the Citizens Commission and assisting in its efforts to solicit public comment and gather community members at public hearings.

Our partnership with the BSA allowed for frank discussions about the missteps of the Agency that are now lessons learned. We would not want to repeat (a) the under utilization of resources of organizations like Greenlining to get the message out about Redistricting, (b) the under utilization of ethnic media resources (print, TV, radio, internet) to reach diverse audiences, (c) the under utilization of local cultural/community resources (churches, community centers, minority small businesses, ethnic chamber organizations) as host sites of community outreach activities.

We would urge the Commission to consider:

- Retaining the expertise of a community and public outreach team that understands that California does not need a "one size fits all" public outreach strategy, and that the implementation of a "one size fits all" strategy would be a disservice to the many Californians that voted for a process under Prop 11 that would take into account the unique voices within and among California's diverse communities.

You, the newly seated California Citizens Redistricting Commission have the opportunity to ensure that the two critical aspects of your work mentioned above, uphold the principals of (1) selection from among the best and (2) hearing from the most. We sincerely hope that you will consider our recommendations that may assist you in achieving these principals. Please do not hesitate to contact us if we can serve as a resource: 510-926-4016.

Highest regards,



Orson Aguilar
Executive Director



Tunua Thrash
Program Director