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From: LAWSON_BRIAN [REDACTED]

Sent: Monday, January 24, 2011 11:04 PM

To: Commission, Prop11

Subject: public comment on effective public outreach

Dear Voters First Act at the Secretary of State's Office:

Attached is a public comment about public outreach which I hope staff will distribute to the commissioners.

I also hope staff will find this public comment useful.

Thank you,

-- Brian

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Prepared January 24, 2011 for the January 26, 2011 meeting

TO: California Redistricting Commission Members and Staff
FROM: Brian Lawson

RE: Making Outreach Effective

1. Outreach with a Purpose

Your deliberations have centered on setting up outreach hearings. This is important, but at least as important is that you deliberate on how you will make use of the information collected during outreach. If you have a clear plan for what you will do with the information you receive during outreach you will be able to plan effective hearings.

2. Avoid Crocodile Tears

During her public comment at the first meeting of the first 8 commissioners Kathay Feng described the frustration some groups experienced because they felt that, in the final analysis, some testimony was not taken seriously.

“... what was interesting was that there were a lot of people who were testifying before the assembly and senate committees for the first time and they had never gone before a public body to stand in front of a podium to talk about anything, let alone the importance of their communities. And, in some cases, their testimony was so moving and personal that the Committee members elected to sit through hearings day in and day out actually had tears in their eyes about, you know, how important it was to try to respect these communities. I will just say that part of the reason why we eventually moved to a place where we thought that it was important to have a more transparent process was because, after several months of public hearings, those committees went behind closed doors and essentially negotiated the lines between Legislators and, in many instances, not always, but in many instances there were lines that were moved, and ones where the public never had any chance to provide input into.” (transcript 11/30/10, pp. 78-79)

So, the question is, how do you make sure that testimony given two or three month in the past is taken seriously when it comes time to drawing maps?

3. Look at Previous Hearings

- (a) If you look at the previous hearings (especially 2001, transcripts are currently available on the Senate and Assembly redistricting committee websites) think about how you could incorporate that type of information into drawing a map. By looking at the transcripts you can see the types of things people are going to say. The question is, how would that information be used to draw a map? In 2001 it seemed that the focus was on drawing maps to protect incumbents and then justifying the districts after the fact. You want to reverse that process. You want to collect the same information, but this time you actually want to use that information to draw maps.

- (b) It is possible, though, that if you look over the transcripts and the testimony does not look useful, then you may need to do more preparation to focus the hearings in a way to get useful information.
- (c) Karin Mac Donald from the SWDB is one of *the* experts on receiving public comment on redistricting. Ask her about this.

4. Use Technology rather than React to Technology

- (a) Even if you hold 50 hearings (which is probably very ambitious) if you sketch out the numbers you can estimate that the largest number of comments are likely to come via the internet.
- (b) Being as expansive as possible, imagine each hearing goes for 4 hours, which is 240 minutes. The absolute maximum number of comments you could receive would be $240/3 = 80$. Most likely with introductions, breaks, group 15 minute presentations and so on, it would probably be half that, say, 40 comments per hearing. This would give you a total of 2,000 (50×40) comments.
- (c) Technology has changed dramatically since the last redistricting cycle ten years ago. One dramatic change is how the average person uses technology. For example I received a notice from the Franchise Tax Board telling me that I will not receive a hard copy instruction booklet or tax form for filling out my taxes. The FTB assumes that the web will suffice. If the FTB can do it, the CRC better expect a tsunami of internet comments, many more than the maximum possible face-to-face comments (2,000). Make sure the consultant you hire has a 2010 outreach plan, not a 2000 outreach plan.
- (d) From the internet you will probably receive ten's of thousands of comments, most likely hundred's of thousands of comments. If commenting could be done through an automated form on the webpage (rather than requiring people to send in e-mails) you might get a couple million comments, which would be a noticeable percentage of the voters in California (about 10 million people voted in the 11/2/10 election).
- (e) Then the task becomes, how do you make the best use of those comments? Most likely you will need some sort of automated coding system — or even better, allow people, when they send in their comments to code their own comments.
- (f) If you work out your coding system beforehand (VRA group, city, county, local community of interest, local neighborhood and various other categories) and then let people make their selections you might be able to use these comments effectively (rather than seeing them as an avalanche of information to discourage and hide from).