

From: Astrid Garcia [REDACTED]
Sent: Thursday, January 27, 2011 3:07 PM
To: Commission, Prop11
Subject: Letter for California Citizens Redistricting Commission.

Please see attached for a letter from Arturo Vargas, Executive Director to the Commissioners regarding selection of the final commissioner.

Astrid Garcia
Redistricting and State Policy Manager

NALEO Educational Fund
1122 W. Washington Blvd., 3rd. Floor
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The NALEO Educational Fund is the leading nonprofit organization that facilitates full Latino participation in the American political process, from citizenship to public service.

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January 27, 2011

California Citizens Redistricting Commission
Office of the California Secretary of State
1500 11th Street
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Selection of new commissioner

Dear California Citizens Redistricting Commission:

Congratulations on completing your first month as California's first Citizens Redistricting Commission. We greatly appreciate the thoughtful and collaborative manner in which you have approached this work. This letter provides the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO) Educational Fund's comments regarding the review you are conducting to select a new commissioner that will replace former Commissioner Elaine Kuo. The NALEO Educational Fund is the leading nonprofit nonpartisan organization that facilitates full Latino participation in the American political process, from citizenship to public service. Our Board and constituency are comprised of Democrats, Republicans, and individuals not affiliated with either of those parties.

The current members of the California Citizens Redistricting Commission bring an impressive set of qualifications to the table. To enhance the success of the Commission, we recommend that the new Commissioner's qualifications further strengthen the skills you possess. One of the highest priority criteria for the maps developed by the Commission is compliance with the federal Voting Rights Act of 1965 (VRA), which ensures that underrepresented communities have a fair opportunity to choose their elected leaders. Thus, understanding how the VRA applies to redistricting, and how to ensure VRA compliance in a state as diverse as California is critical for the work of the Commission. Although the Commission will have legal counsel to assist it in interpreting VRA legal requirements, members of the Commission must also be able to effectively integrate demographic and voting data, the testimony provided by members of the public, and information about the civic geography of California when determining VRA compliance. This is one of the reasons that the qualifications for Commissioners set forth in §60805(a) of the regulations governing Commissioner selection defines "Appreciation for California's diverse demographics and geography" as encompassing an understanding of the relationship between diversity and opportunities for fair political representation.

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Thus, we specifically recommend that the new commissioner have previous redistricting experience, strong knowledge of the VRA and a demonstrated ability to working with multiethnic communities. The Commission faces a large task and limited time. A candidate that possesses these skills can quickly navigate the complexity of redistricting, help ensure that maps meet VRA requirements, and address issues that arise from California's rich diversity. By adding an individual with these skills, the Commission will be even stronger and better able to achieve a successful redistricting process.

The work of the California Citizens Redistricting Commission will determine the future of California's democracy. We wish you great success as you select the final Commissioner and draw the maps that will define our state. If you have any additional questions regarding this letter, please do not hesitate to contact Astrid Garcia, Redistricting and State Policy Manager at [REDACTED]

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Arturo Vargas', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Arturo Vargas
Executive Director