

February 8, 2011

The Greenlining Institute

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<http://www.greenlining.org>

Citizens Redistricting Commission  
c/o California Secretary of State

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**Subject: A Broad and Diverse Community Outreach Plan**

Dear Commissioners,

It was a pleasure to watch your proceedings via the livestream feed on Friday, January 29<sup>th</sup> as the commission began discussing its plan to engage Californians in the 2011 redistricting process. As you may know, the Greenlining Institute is taking steps to ensure that California's communities of color are engaged in the process. As part of our efforts, we will be hosting a series of educational and interactive workshops in 7 key regions across the state: Sacramento, Stockton, Bay Area, Fresno, Bakersfield, Inland Empire, Los Angeles County, and San Diego. We see ourselves as facilitating a process where low-income and minority community members can gain relevant and accessible information about redistricting and be empowered to participate in the process. We will be helping prepare folks who wish to testify, to present public testimony to the commission and engage them in a conversation about their "communities of interest."

Given our "on the ground" perspective, we felt compelled to offer some suggestions for how to best engage the public during your outreach phases. We strongly urge you to consider the following:

- **Utilize the RedistrictingCA Alliance** – As Karin MacDonald mentioned to you during Friday's meeting, the alliance is a coalition of organizations working to engage Californian's in the redistricting process. The work of many of our organizations dates back several redistricting cycles. For the 2011 cycle, we have been involved at least since 2009 when many of our groups, including Greenlining partnered with the Bureau of State Auditor's office to recruit candidates to apply for the commission. The diverse communities and regions that we reach, as well as the experience we have in relaying the complex concept of redistricting to the general public is an asset the commission should consider utilizing. Any resources the commission may choose to allocate to these groups could further expand the scope of our work and avoid unnecessary costs (both monetary and time) to the commission in having to duplicate outreach efforts.
- **Utilize Ethnic and Local Media** – In addition to the traditional local and mainstream news outlets, it is necessary for the commission to also advertise public meetings in ethnic media outlets which are often the primary news source for communities of color. This may require purchasing ad space. In

addition, these notices should be posted in languages other than English to the extent that it is practicable to reaching a particular community.

- **Hold Maximum Number of Public Hearings/Outreach Meetings later in the process**– At one point, the commission considered holding 50 initial outreach meetings and far less meetings during the second round of hearings. Greenlining strongly advises against this strategy. It would make much more sense for the commission to hold the maximum meetings possible during and after the line-drawing process, when there is the most at stake and when communities will more readily be able to identify whether a proposal or line drawn would fairly represent their community or not and the reasons for that. Greenlining would like to see the Commission holding meetings in both centrally located places where the population is very large, as well as less centrally located places where line-drawing is a high-stakes issue for that community. For instance, at one point during the commission’s discussions, it was suggested that a meeting could be held in either Fresno or Bakersfield, with the issue being which location was more centrally located. From our perspective, public outreach meetings should be held in both locations; a two-hour drive could pose a great obstacle to participation.
- **Provide Adequate Notice of Outreach Meetings** – In order to maximize participation and hold true to the values and principles of the Bagley-Keene act, we would expect the commission to provide adequate notice of all future outreach meetings. For instance, revising the Claremont meeting’s agenda to include a paragraph about how the commission “may” hold its first public outreach meeting on “either Saturday or Sunday” to be determined the Friday before, would not be considered adequate notice. While we understand the time constraints and bureaucratic processes the commission must abide by while conducting its work, it is not acceptable to ask the community to essentially be on hold and ready to respond at a moment’s notice, which would mean clearing their calendar for the entirety of both of those days just in case the commission holds an outreach meeting. Please make every effort to not only notify, but publicize all outreach meetings in a more professional manner that would allow for a truly broad and diverse group of interested Californians to attend.

We hope that this will be the first letter in an on-going dialogue about how to reach California’s communities and ensure that all are fairly represented in line-drawing. If there is anything that Greenlining can do for you, please do not hesitate to contact us at [REDACTED] or [REDACTED]

We look forward to meeting you soon.

Sincerely,



Orson Aguilar  
Executive Director

Michelle Romero  
Redistricting Fellow