

From: Michelle Romero [REDACTED]  
Subject: Lack of Outreach

Message Body:  
05/02/11

Dear Citizens Redistricting Commission:

Congratulations on the immense work you have accomplished so far, particularly in terms of receiving community input and community of interest testimony. You must be tired, but the work you are doing is so important.

As you know, as the Redistricting Fellow at the Greenlining Institute, I have been traveling the state giving informational presentations and hands-on trainings on "Identifying Communities of Interest" and "Preparing to Testify" to help increase civic engagement and awareness of redistricting. Now that the hearings are well underway, I am constantly asked during these appearances, "Why didn't I hear about the hearing sooner? What is the Commission doing to raise awareness? Why wasn't there any notice in my local paper about the hearing?"

I believe these are valid comments and concerns that community members are raising.

Earlier this year, the Commission made a great effort to provide the dates and hearing locations several months in advance. However, posting a notice to a website most folks still don't know about, is not exactly "open and transparent." While there has been a great amount of participation from the public so far, I believe many more would jump at the chance to participate if they knew how to go about doing so and where to find the

information.

I am doing my best, as several RedistrictingCA Alliance organizations are, to educate the public. However, we were not contracted by the Commission to do this work, nor are our organizational goals necessarily in line with what the Commission's would be if it were to conduct its own public outreach. In fact, I believe several of the alliance organizations said as much during the presentations we gave to the Commission in Sacramento earlier this year.

Therefore, I would strongly urge the Commission to utilize its Communications Director to build relationships with local and ethnic media to publicize the hearings better. This might mean having to pay for an advertisement in a local paper, creating a PSA or radio announcement. It could also mean recruiting student volunteers to help canvas neighborhoods in advance of the hearings.

I understand the Commission is strained in terms of time and perhaps financial resources as well, but please consider the implications that a lack of communications or public outreach could have: the public may lose faith in the commission, you may be setting a dangerous precedent for future redistricting cycles if outreach is not a part of your process now, and the hard work you are putting in could be for not if at the end of the day, the public doesn't believe in it.

I have high hopes for this Commission and I only wish to alert you to some of these issues I am seeing on the ground and in communities. If there are ways we can work together to achieve a common goal, feel free to contact me at [micheller@greenlining.org](mailto:micheller@greenlining.org). Please take action now.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Michelle Romero  
Redistricting Fellow  
The Greenlining Institute

--