



ADVANCEMENT
PROJECT
CALIFORNIA



California

Common Cause

Reaching Community

Thoughts from Advocates

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Our Agenda Today

1. Overview of the Nonprofit/Advocacy Landscape
2. Our Approach to Communities of Interest
3. Reimagining Your Engagement With Community
4. Recommendations for Education, Outreach, and Engagement



Overview of the Nonprofit/Advocacy Landscape

Who is Advancement Project CA?

- Advancement Project California is a racial justice civil rights organization with over 20 years of expertise in policy research and advocacy.
- We work to **transform public systems** and **shift investments** to create a **more racially equitable California**.
 - We work alongside community partners to research and advocate for policies that prioritize and meet the needs of low-income people of color.
- Created ReDrawCA, a web-based tool to draw COIs maps to empower residents to participate in the 2011 redistricting process.
- We convene and provide research and data support to the Redistricting Alliance.
- Focused on capacity building, community empowerment, and advocacy.

Who is California Common Cause?

- We are dedicated to **building a democracy that includes everyone**
 - Specialists in redistricting reform, voting rights, money in politics reform, government transparency, lobbying reform, etc.
- **Helped create the CA Citizens Redistricting Commission**
 - Major supporter (and architect) of Prop 11 (2008) and Prop 20 (2010)
 - Held conferences, created website/materials to introduce the first CRC to California
 - Provided early infrastructure to the first CRC
- Now convene an inclusive redistricting coalition space (more later)
- Focused on process -- accessibility, transparency, independence
- National redistricting experts working to take CA model to other states

Who Are Our Networks?

- **Redistricting CA Collaborative**
 - Umbrella space that includes representatives from the Redistricting Alliance and the Unity Mapping Group, as well as others
- **Redistricting Alliance**
 - Coalition of fifteen regional and statewide organizations working to empower low-income communities of color to participate in the redistricting process
- **Unity Mapping Group**
 - Long-time redistricting experts with legal and mapping capacity

- AAPIs for Civic Empowerment Ed'n Fund
- Advancement Project California
- Alliance San Diego
- Asian Americans Advancing Justice - Asian Law Caucus
- Asian Americans Advancing Justice - Los Angeles
- Black Census and Redistricting Hub
- California Common Cause
- California League of Conservation Voters
- California Native Vote Project
- Central Coast Alliance United for Sustainable Economy (CAUSE)
- Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights (CHIRLA)
- Council on American-Islamic Relations - Los Angeles (CAIR - Los Angeles)
- Disability Rights California
- Dolores Huerta Foundation
- Inland Empire United
- League of Women Voters of California
- Mexican American Legal Defense & Educational Fund (MALDEF)
- Mi Familia Vota Education Fund
- National Association of Latino & Appointed Elected Officials (NALEO) Educational Fund
- Orange County Civic Engagement Table
- PICO California
- Power California

Who Do We Represent?

Communities that experience barriers to all forms of democratic participation, including but not limited to redistricting.

- Communities of color (Asian American and Pacific Islander, Black, Latinx, Middle Eastern and North African [MENA], Native American/AIAN)
- Immigrants & refugees
- Low-income communities
- Muslim and other faith-based communities
- People with disabilities
- Women
- Youth



What Are Our Values and Priorities?

- **More equitable democracies**, at the state and local level
- Uplifting the voices of communities that have historically been left out or locked out of power and participation
- Collaboration and consensus-building
- Ensure the redistricting process retains integrity and includes everyone
- Support legally compliant maps, with respect to the Voting Rights Act and other laws, and that respect communities of interests as much as possible.

Why Do We Need a More Equitable CA Democracy?

[Unequal Voices, Part I](#) (2016)

- Racial and other disparities are bad in voting, and even worse in other forms of political participation, such as contacting public officials, attending gov't meetings, and engaging in protest and consumer activism.
- Fewer than 1 in 10 Blacks, and only about 1 in 20 Asian Americans and Latinxs, had contact with their public officials to express their opinions, compared to nearly one in six Whites.
- Education, income, and homeownership play significant roles in explaining these disparities, but racial gaps remain even after accounting for socioeconomic factors.

Those who speak up are not representative of California's population.

Barriers to Engagement

- **Lack of civic knowledge**
 - Understanding federal, state, local processes; why it is important to participate; etc.
- **Lack of civic skills**
 - How to engage with public officials, write letters, provide public comment, etc.
- **Lack of political efficacy/confidence**
 - “I don’t know enough”
 - “It’s so hard to follow, so why bother”
 - “My voice doesn’t matter”
 - “The system is rigged anyway”
 - Intimidation caused by the setting, the process, the vocabulary, etc.



Barriers to Engagement (continued)

- **Economic hardships**
 - Lack of time, money, transportation, child care, access to the technology.
- **Lack of language & disability accessibility**
- **Insufficient outreach, lack of civic infrastructure and political mobilization**



How We Work Together

- Dozens of nonprofit organizations, representing different perspectives, communities, and geographic areas
- Collaborative and consensus-driven approach, where possible, but disagreements and tensions are inevitable (and sometimes healthy!)
- Attentive to process & outcome: whenever we send you a joint letter it reflects hours of thoughtful discussion (and even negotiation) to align our interests and advocacy
- Engage in various workgroups

Break for Questions (15 min)

Our Approach to Communities of Interest

How We Define COI - Caveats!

- Our answers are **informed by** the dialogues we have had with all of our colleagues, but **may not be endorsed by** every single partner organization
- Different partners think differently on this!
 - E.g. “With very few restrictions, we rely on communities to define themselves.”



How We Define COI - Advancement Project CA

- We take guidance from how community members define their communities.
- These COIs can be geographic based, but they don't have to be constrained by physical boundaries, such as freeways.
- We uplift COIs that **connect with who people are** (e.g., Vietnamese immigrants) and **what they value** (e.g., education, not incarceration) and/or **what their issues/circumstances are** (e.g., immigrant rights, impacted by gentrification, etc.).

How We Define COI - California Common Cause

- Resist an easy or simple definition of COI!
- Neighborhoods, networks, communities, and groups that share identities, interests, cultures, histories, languages, and/or values. Elements/examples:
 - **Shared race/ethnicity, cultural identity, faith, or language**
 - E.g. The historic Filipino community in Stockton
 - E.g. The Caldean community in El Cajon
 - **Shared interests** in schools, housing, crime, transit, health conditions, land use, environmental conditions, and/or other issues
 - E.g. Parents of the Fremont Union High School District
 - E.g. Community members impacted by the Chevron refineries in Richmond
 - E.g. Northern CA communities using same wildfire responses systems

How We Define COI - California Common Cause

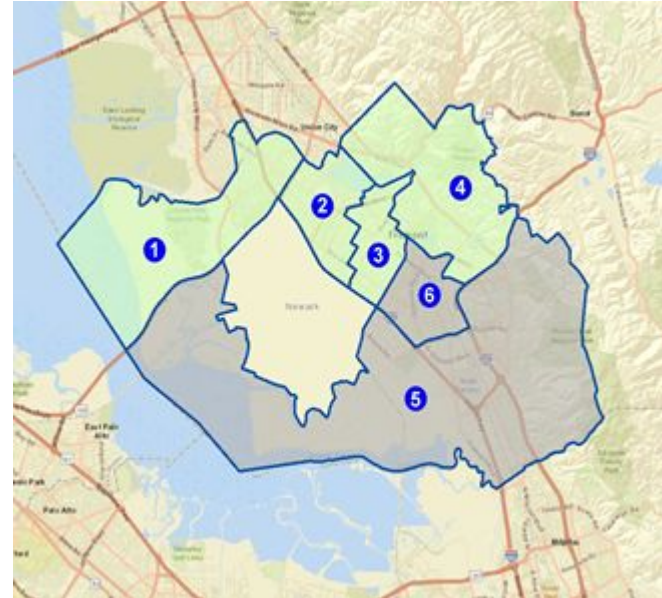
- Neighborhoods, networks, communities, and groups that share identities, interests, cultures, histories, languages, and/or values. Elements/examples:
 - **Similar socio-economic status**, including but not limited to income, home-ownership, and education levels
 - E.g. The historically lower-income eastside of San Jose
 - **Common social, business, and civic networks**, including shared use of community centers, religious institutions, parks, and business districts
 - E.g. Koreatown in Los Angeles
 - E.g. The queer community in San Diego's Hillcrest neighborhood
 - **Regions or parts of town** that are bound by natural and man-made features, including streets, highways, canals, streams, hills, mountains, etc.
 - E.g. The southwestern corner of Chula Vista, bound to the west by the coast, to the east by Highway 805, to the north by the downtown area, and to the south by the city's border

A Local Districting Example: City of Fremont

The City of Fremont's **Afghan community** -- a perfect example of CA's vibrant tapestry of cultures

- Too often ignored in local politics
- Found the power of its voice at districting hearings
 - Found the right community leaders
 - Gathered COI data in high-touch, low-tech ways
 - Trained speakers to give public testimony for the first time

California has a thousand equivalents to the Afghan community in Fremont!



Break for Questions (15 min)

Reimagining Your Engagement with Community

COVID

Reimagining Your Engagement with Community

Building community

- Tear down hierarchies
 - Break down the dynamic in which 14 commissioners sit at big dais, and community members walk up to a microphone and say their tiny piece in two minutes.
- We're in this together
 - "I'm Patricia Sinay...this is my story how I've been unseen/unheard...I want to hear your community's story...only together can we make fair districts maps so your community is seen and heard."



Reimagining Your Engagement with Community

Building community (continued)

- The power of story to talk about COIs
 - Who is part of your community...what's your community's story of shared struggles? Shared hopes for the future?
- Directly invite who you need to hear from the most
 - Name the people who feel most left out of our democracy. "We want to hear your story!"



Reimagining Your Engagement with Community

Physical and Online Hearings

- Make the hearings welcoming, friendly, accessible, comfortable, familiar
- Scheduled at times when people with work and family responsibilities can attend
- Co-host hearings with community organizations or partners
- Provide child care, refreshments (opportunity for local food vendors to sponsor), and interpretation/translation

Reimagining Your Engagement with Community

Physical and Online Hearings (continued)

- Ensure and announce accessibility
 - Provide language, ASL interpreters and other accommodations to ensure diverse Californians can participate.
- Infuse culture, music, and art
- Use accessible virtual meetings to create smaller spaces in which people can be in conversation with commissioners, build human to human connection, and have a more meaningful dialogue.

Break for Questions (15 min)

High-Level Recommendations for Education, Outreach, Engagement

Recommendations on Education and Outreach

Most important? **Take the time to figure it out.**

- Consult experts on civic engagement, in particular in communities facing the greater barriers to participation
- Consult experts on engaging the public on redistricting
- Consult experts on civic design
- Consult experts on language access and disability access

One easy step? **Partner with community-rooted organizations and local/ethnic media** -- entities that have been speaking to and working with community for years.

Recommendations on Education and Outreach



- All education, outreach, and hearings:
 - Easy-to-access and in plain language
 - Language access and disability access
- Provide a range of formats for the public to engage with you:
 - Low-tech and high-tech
 - Low-touch and high-touch
 - With and without assistance
 - Solo or in collaboration with CBOs

Detailed recommendations to come from our partners!

The Virtues of Moving Slowly

Because of certain practical realities....

- You were seated earlier than your predecessors, so more time available
- COVID = flux. When will census data be available? How will COVID impact community participation? We don't know yet

You have a beautiful opportunity.....

- To listen, deeply and broadly
- Take the time to build the most effective, most accessible, and most inclusive processes you can for engaging with the public

Thank You and Questions