

# Summary of Recommendations for the California Citizens Redistricting Commission on Community Outreach and Engagement

## I. Outreach, Mobilization and Community Engagement

Outreach, mobilization, and engagement of traditionally underrepresented communities will require the participation of a multitude of stakeholders to reach the diverse communities in our state. A critical role for the Commission is to build partnerships with and strengthen the network of nonprofit organizations and public institutions (e.g. K-12 school districts, colleges/universities, public libraries, etc.), together with other key stakeholders (ethnic media, labor, business, etc.), as well as trusted messengers, who have a track record of engaging and mobilizing communities.

### Build partnerships with and create a network of community stakeholders:

- Identify and engage with regional and statewide networks and organizations to help the Commission further identify and become connected to local groups and organizations from a broad spectrum of sectors and COIs.
- Consult partners based on their expertise, community base, and/or geographic presence, on key issues, such as language and disability access, communications strategy, messaging for distinct communities, and other related matters.

### Help raise awareness about the importance of participation in the redistricting process:

- Direct your communications team to engage with diverse partners and their bases to inform the Commission's communication strategy, narrative, and messaging; disability, cultural and language competency; and overall accessibility to information. When accomplishing the foregoing, prioritize communities that face greater barriers to participation.
- Consult any language and accessibility working groups the Commission establishes, the signatories to the letter submitted on October 20, 2020 by Advancement Project California and NALEO Educational Fund on behalf of the network of 22 organizations, and other stakeholders and community groups.
- Participate in community-led events, meetings, webinars, as well as interviews with local and ethnic media, to educate community members about the redistricting process, share your personal stories, and answer questions.
- Have a strong social media presence that targets a diversity of audiences and specific regions.
- Create infographics and other informational material that can be easily accessible and shared through multiple channels and informed by input from community groups.

### Support local community groups' capacity to outreach and mobilize:

- Contribute to existing philanthropic funds for redistricting, specifically targeting community organizations rooted in harder-to-reach communities and communities that face disproportionate barriers to public participation

## **II. Overall Accessibility and Logistics for Hearings**

Fundamentally, to engage community members in the redistricting process and to provide them with a meaningful opportunity to be heard by the Commission, the hearings scheduled by the Commission should be accessible to community members, and community members should have the information they need for well-informed participation.

### **Hold robust hearings which focus on different areas throughout California:**

- Hold a robust number of hearings that focus on obtaining testimony on COIs throughout the state to help obtain perspectives from community members who are particularly knowledgeable about their regions or areas.
- Structure several of these meetings as smaller-scale 1-2 hour public meetings which create opportunities for community organizations, networks, and educational institutions that work with underrepresented communities to engage with at least a smaller group of Commissioners directly on their particular COIs. Examine the feasibility of having community partners host these meetings.
- Schedule multiple hearings in different areas of regions which will feature more complicated redistricting decisions, such as Los Angeles County. For these regions, also hold multiple hearings during each stage of the redistricting process.
- If these meetings are held virtually, devote individual meetings to specific regions of the state and ensure that agendas clearly inform the public of the region being discussed at these specific meetings. Consider whether at least one Commissioner who is familiar with the region of focus should preside over or take a leadership role at such meetings.

### **Hearing structure and procedures must enhance accessibility:**

- Offer the public diverse hearing days and times, such as a mix of weekday evenings and weekend hearing to allow community members with a variety of job and family commitments to participate. Weekday hearings during business hours should be used rarely, as they are least accessible.
- For in-person meetings, consult with community-based organizations about finding locations where community members will feel comfortable attending and providing testimony. All locations should be accessible by public transit and ADA-compliant. Buildings associated with law enforcement are not considered comfortable or safe locations for many communities and should be avoided. Examine the feasibility of locations which do not require ID for access.
- Strongly consider making a public space, that is accessible to individuals with disabilities, available to stream virtual meetings for those who may not have computers or internet access, particularly for regional meetings that they may be holding. This could be an opportunity to partner with local organizations or have space at a public library or school for this type of public streaming.
- For both in-person and virtual meetings, schedule meetings well in advance, and provide clear and specific information in related notices and agenda about the topics which will be covered in the meetings.
- For virtual meetings, improve the technology used for the public to provide comments during meetings by providing clearer instructions on how members in the public comment queue can let the Commission know they want to speak. After announcing the start of public comment, provide sufficient time for individuals to conduct whatever telephone operation is

required to indicate they want to speak. If and when the Commission changes the technology for obtaining public comment, provide clear instructions to members of the public about those changes.

- For meetings on COIs throughout the state, implement a system, such as an appointment or “window of time” schedule that will provide community members of the public some predictability about the time they will testify.
- For both virtual and in-person hearings, ensure that members of the public have the capability to share maps or other visuals in the meeting in “real time,” so that both the Commission and meeting participants can view these materials.

### **III. Accessibility for People with Disabilities**

There are over 4 million people with disabilities in California, making up over 10% of the California population. Prioritizing accessibility for people with disabilities is paramount throughout all written and online information, as well as throughout all public hearings, both in-person and online.

#### **Ensure full access to written and online information:**

- Provide advance meeting notice that asks attendees if they need reasonable accommodations (e.g., ASL interpreters, closed captioning, etc.) and designate a staff in advance that they can contact should they have questions.
- Include Word format for materials and documents that are emailed in advance to the public so that individuals who are blind, who have low vision, or who use screen reader technology can access them more readily.
- Make materials available in alternative formats such as large print or Braille, as requested.

#### **Ensure accessibility to in-person and online public hearings:**

- Clearly state the meeting agenda up-front and let attendees know what they can expect, including time frame.
- Ask anyone speaking to say their name every time they speak so that the captioner, ASL interpreter and sign language interpreters for other languages/countries, and attendees with disabilities alike know who is talking.
- Ensure that anyone speaking speaks clearly and at a normal pace and create pauses during and between activities so that captioners and ASL and all other sign language interpreters can keep up and/or catch up.
- Use plain language when presenting and be mindful of jargon, acronyms, and assumed knowledge.
- Describe visual content that is presented so that anyone with a visual or cognitive disability as well as anyone that may be dialing in can fully understand the presentation.
- *For in-person hearings, in particular:*
  - Ensure that the event or meeting space is fully accessible before booking the location.
  - In advance of meetings, obtain any needed accommodations that were requested by individuals with disabilities and take the appropriate time and funding needed to secure them into account when planning meetings.

- o In addition, prior to the event, consider which spaces that individuals using scooter, power chair and wheelchair can easily access.
- *For online hearings, in particular:*
  - o Offer the option for individuals with disabilities, or to those who may not have a computer or internet, to dial-in by phone.
  - o Before the meeting starts, explain any accessible features (i.e., clicking on “cc” button to get closed captioning) or any other features related to the meeting that will be used (e.g., mute, hand raising, chat, etc.).
  - o Provide any computer shortcuts that may be helpful for those who do not use a mouse due to their disability that can be sent out before the meeting.
  - o During the hearing, make sure speakers are muted when not speaking and take turns speaking, so as not to speak over one another.
  - o Make sure the service you’re using to host the virtual event is compatible with assistive technology like screen readers.

#### **IV. Language Access**

California is one of the most linguistically diverse states in our nation. Federal and state law set forth a broad range of requirements to protect the ability of its citizens to participate in the electoral process even if they are not fully fluent in English. For the Commission to have the best possible information about COIs and related issues, it is critical that residents be able to understand and participate in the Commission’s activities even if they have limited English proficiency (“LEP”).

#### **Translation of information provided by the Commission:**

- Translate all key information the Commission provides into at least the top 12 languages other than English that are spoken in California. This information includes notices of hearings, agendas, the website the Commission maintains, and similar types of information and materials. The top 12 languages are Spanish, Chinese (simplified and traditional), Vietnamese, Tagalog, Korean, Armenian, Farsi, Arabic, Russian, Japanese, Punjabi, and Khmer.
- Translate key educational and outreach materials, as well as hearing transcripts into additional languages; release translated transcripts in a timely manner. In determining these additional languages, the Commission should engage in ongoing consultation with stakeholders.
- Consider establishing a Language Access Advisory Committee (“LAAC”) to assist the Commission in identifying language needs.

#### **Use of translators for information and the translation process:**

- Use professional translators for Commission information and post the information in a timely manner.
- Obtain community review of translated educational and outreach materials before distributing them and provide stipends for community members or organizations who assist with review. County LAAC’s may also be a translation resource.

### **Use of “plain language” for information provided by the Commission:**

- Use best practices for “plain language” in Commission information and materials.

### **Interpreter services at hearings:**

- Provide interpreters at all hearings for the top 12 languages, and work with community-based organizations to help determine the most effective way to provide those services.
- For regionally focused hearings, provide interpreters for all languages which would be required under Section 14201 of California’s Election Code for the relevant county the hearing is focused on. In addition, provide interpreters for any languages that have more than 1,500 LEP speakers in the region.
- Examine the feasibility of securing video conferencing services which incorporate a translation option, so that participants can opt into specific channels to hear live translations of all of the meeting proceedings. For virtual hearings, consider scheduling some hearings specifically in some additional languages.
- Permit community members to use their own interpreters, such as family members.
- Where community members need interpreters during hearings, extend the time limit on comments to permit additional time for interpretation.

### **Translation of written comments:**

- Permit the submission of written comments in any language and arrange for expedited translation of the comments.

## **V. Initial mapping and compilation of COI information**

The ability of community members to clearly understand what the Commission is doing and provide meaningful input to the Commission is very much dependent on how the Commission compiles information about COIs and how it ensures its maps comply with the VRA.

### **Provide initial mapping, visualizations and sketching of districts:**

- Provide “real-time” visualizations by the mapping consultant during the mapping process.
- When drawing commences, start by “sketching” districts which are mandated by the VRA, and use these initial contours as building blocks for the ultimate maps.

### **Further develop the Statewide Database’s COI tool:**

- Ensure that the Statewide Database continues to coordinate closely on the development of the COI tool with community groups who will be mobilizing community members to provide COI testimony.
- Ensure the Statewide Database continues to examine the accessibility of the COI tool to persons with disabilities, and LEP residents. Ensure the COI tool is translated into all languages spoken by more than 3% of Californians and/or more than 3% of any county.
- Ensure the Statewide Database continues to provide a broad group of stakeholders with an opportunity to “beta test” the COI tool and provide feedback on it. Obtain feedback on issues such as what prompts most effectively lead residents to identify their COIs and provide accurate information; the value of using plain language in the tool; and ensuring

that the language and the format of the tool allows community members to easily understand and access it.

- Ensure that the COI tool is not the sole manner in which members of the public can submit testimony on or drawings of COIs. Ensure that members of the public can submit COI testimony and drawings in a wide variety of ways, including directly e-mailing testimony, or providing a hard-copy version through regular mail, or through phone calls with designated staff who can help receive the input. The Commission should explore all the different ways, both low-tech and high-tech, that would afford the widest community input.