Reaching Low-Propensity Voters in California's November 2020 Elections

Recommendations from focus group research and community partner engagement

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CONTENTS

PROJECT OVERVIEW

For the 2020 November elections, the state of California will offer several ways to vote. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Governor and the Legislature have decreed that all registered voters will receive a ballot in the mail, which they can return by mail, at a ballot drop box, or at an in-person voting site. In-person voting options will also be available. Many counties will offer consolidated voting sites for the first-time, some counties will offer their standard polling places, and other counties will offer vote centers as they have previously under the Voter's Choice Act. The state and counties are currently developing a set of safety requirements for voting sites, including guidelines for maintaining physical distance and wearing personal protective equipment (PPE) like a mask or face shield. As of July 31, 2020, the Secretary of State has issued guidance, but county elections officials have yet to reveal the exact procedures and requirements for voting safely in each county.

Whatever changes are implemented to the administration of California elections this November, habitual voters and those voters most targeted by campaigns are likely to stay up-to-date and continue casting their ballots. By contrast, first-time voters and low-propensity voters may be confused or deterred by the complex and changing environment, or otherwise unprepared to participate. Outreach materials and activities should adjust in response.

In partnership with California Common Cause and a community advisory group composed of non-profit organizations conducting civic engagement and GOTV work in a diverse set of California communities, the Center for Social Innovation (CSI-UCR) at University of California, Riverside designed and implemented an accelerated focus group research project to probe awareness of voting options, voting option preferences, and reactions to existing voter messaging materials.

Our aim is threefold. First, we want to gauge the extent to which first-time and low-propensity voters may need targeted outreach to explain the options for voting in the November 2020 elections, and develop insights into how best to reach them. In addition, we want to share the findings we collect with state and local election officials charged with crafting voter outreach and informational materials to be distributed in the summer and fall of 2020. Finally, we want to provide California's nonprofit civic engagement and GOTV sector with helpful guidance and voter messaging tips.

California Common Cause and CSI-UCR coordinated focus groups with community advisory groups who work closely with low-propensity voters from the following groups: Spanish-speakers, Tagalog-speakers, Mandarin-

speakers, Korean-speakers, Vietnamese-speakers, Hmong-speakers, and English-speaking youth, many of whom were first-generation voters. Participants ranged in age and represented most major metropolitan areas across California, with greatest concentrations in the Bay Area, Los Angeles, Central California, and the Inland Empire.

METHODOLOGY

In this report we highlight impressions and insights from three sources. The first and primary source of insight is from seven focus group conversations. The second source is information collected from the screener survey that we used to identify and recruit potential participants. The screener survey included questions regarding past electoral experience, voter status, and preferences for election-related information sources. Finally, we also elevate the observations offered by community experts and staff from community advisory groups. Unless otherwise noted, the findings in this report are derived from the focus group sessions. Information gleaned the screener survey or comments offered by our community advisory group will be called out for specific mention.

A distinguishing feature of the focus groups in this project was collaboration with stakeholders, a high priority for all project partners. The team from California Common Cause invited community groups to partner on the project, hosted meetings with elections officials to identify how our project might inform their outreach efforts and voter education materials, and led planning and coordination of the focus groups. The team from CSI-UCR developed the focus group instrument, hosted train-the-trainer sessions to share best practices for facilitating focus groups, and provided guidance on conducting sessions remotely using Zoom. In addition, elections officials provided feedback on our plans for focus group discussions and provided us with outreach and information material to test with focus group participants.

As part of the effort to customize each focus group, the CSI-UCR team developed and shared email templates for recruiting participants, primers for using Zoom written in layperson terms, and focus group guides, each of which was developed, tailored, and translated in consultation with community advisory groups. Other than differences by language and custom selection of voter outreach material presented to each group, each session followed the same protocol and structure.

With technology and stand-by support from CSI-UCR, culture and language experts from separate community advisory groups conducted and facilitated focus groups in Korean, Vietnamese, Hmong, and Tagalog. Community advisory groups and scholars at CSI-UCR coordinated and implemented the remaining three focus groups, in English, Spanish, and Mandarin. In some cases, the facilitators of in-language focus groups engaged in code-switching, meaning that they made use of both in-language and English-language prompts to achieve more effective and culturally competent conversations. The youth-targeted focus group was implemented entirely in English and co-facilitated by our youngest scholar at CSI-UCR.

With respect to the strengths and limitations of our research, qualitative methods such as participatory research design and focus groups produce findings that privileges community voices and provides for the richness of stakeholder and resident engagement to emerge. In addition, focus groups allow for concentrated attention among participants who respond to particular topics and provide feedback on sample materials in an intimate and interactive setting that allows for ideas to surface that might not otherwise emerge in individual interview settings. At the same time, our focus group participants may not be representative of all low-propensity voters in California, or even representative of their respective ethnic or age demographic groups, because they were not randomly selected from a roster of such residents. In addition, the relatively small sample sizes of these focus group sessions means that any counts, percentages, or impressions we report herein to quote, describe, or interpret participant statements are not adequate for constructing scientific statistical inferences about the attitudes or behaviors of low-propensity and first-time voters. Finally, a note on terminology: We use the term Latino in a gender-neutral manner, and in line with preferences of the vast majority of U.S. residents of Hispanic origin. We acknowledge that a significant number of residents may prefer other terms such as Latino/a, Chicano/a, Latin@, and Latinx.

KEY FINDINGS

1. Participants are motivated to vote in November by a desire for change, a sense of civic duty, feeling an obligation to vote to support their community, and knowing that elections shape policy that directly impacts them, their friends, and family.

2. Targeted outreach efforts are crucial to reaching first-time and low-propensity voters because trusted and preferred sources of information vary considerably by group and age.

3. Participants from in-language focus groups indicate greater interest in receiving voter outreach messages from trusted sources, like the organizations that

helped to recruit them to participate in the focus group, and their ethnic group radio, television, and print media.

4. The choice and utilization of social media platforms vary significantly by age and race/ethnicity.

5. Across all groups hesitancy to vote in-person is elevated in 2020. There is greater enthusiasm for vote-by-mail and ballot drop-off.

6. In describing the process of learning about candidate choices and ballot propositions, participants signal interest in casting an early vote, in some cases in order to avoid long lines at vote centers, and in others to simply mail in or drop off a ballot in advance because it is convenient for their schedule

7. COVID-19 tops concerns and prompts questions related to voting in-person. Participants expressed strong preferences for clear, strict, and enforced public health rules for voting in-person.

8. Language assistance and help explaining the ballot are the primary reason for wanting to vote in-person. A related concern is whether services typically available for in-person voting, such as language assistance and other forms of accessibility, will be provided in the context of COVID-19.

9. Participants in the Chinese, Hmong, and Vietnamese focus groups were the least aware of the plan for all registered voters in California to receive mail-in ballots this fall.

10. For a fair number of low-propensity voters, vote-by-mail means filling out a ballot at home or work and then taking it to a drop-off location or voting site.

11. Clarifying information reduces concerns about mail-in and drop-off voting. Voters feel reassured that their ballot will be counted and not lost in transit after seeing outreach videos that explain how elections officials will verify ballots, follow up with voters if they have questions, and explain that a tracking service is available to confirm ballot receipt and count.

12. Participants want to know where drop-off boxes are located, and have an appetite for clear and easy-to-understand instructions for voting by mail.

13. Participants respond most positively towards materials with simple graphics, few words, and straightforward explanations about voting options. Videos with dubbed translations are well received, and described as informative, though less motivating.

14. Across all groups the most common suggestion for modifying outreach materials is to broaden

TABLE 1: SUMMARY OF FOCUS GROUP INTERVIEWS CONDUCTED

LANGUAGE	COMMUNITY ADVISORY GROUP(S)	PARTICIPANTS	AGE RANGE	GEOGRAPHY	DATE
English	Alianza Coachella Valley & Youth Mentoring Action Network	16	17-25	Inland Empire	July 13
Hmong	Hmong Innovating Politics	8	26-56	Fresno	July 12
Korean	Korean Resource Center	16	33-65	LA	July 9
Spanish	Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles (CHIRLA)	10	27-63	Bay Area/ Central/ SoCal	July 9
Tagalog	Filipino Advocates for Justice	9	18-62	Bay Area/ NorCal	July 9
Vietnamese	Orange County	18	18-78	OC/LA	July 8
Mandarin	Chinese for Affirmative Action	13	35-55	LA/Bay Area	July 7

demographic and cultural representation. In addition to preferring to see people "who look like me," participants asked for scenarios that more closely resemble their day-to-day life experience. For example, friends gathering in a public park, a family sharing information about key election-related dates in a living room, or someone filling out a ballot at a kitchen table, are relatable scenarios for voters across a wide range of socioeconomic status and cultural backgrounds.

15. Experts who staff our community advisory groups encourage election officials to coordinate with them to craft outreach materials in-language, including details on candidates and ballot propositions. Direct translations can be "wordy" and risk losing sincerity and accuracy, particularly when election jargon in English language does not have a direct translation in other languages.

MOTIVATIONS TO VOTE IN 2020

What motivates first-time and low-propensity voters to vote? The most common response from participants across groups is some version of wanting their voices heard and a desire for policy change. Other top reasons why participants want to vote include a sense of civic duty and responsibility, as well as the opportunity to be represented by a government that will have their best interest in mind when crafting policy.

Low-propensity voters and first-time voters express eagerness to learn more about elections and how government functions, and curiosity regarding how civic engagement translates into change. Participants who self-identify as immigrants, in particular, link a willingness to learn more about government to wanting change and hoping for improvement in their community.

One demographic distinction to note is that young voters are more direct to state that their primary motivation for November is to vote out of office a high-profile incumbent. Also, first-time young voters describe voting as one strategy among many that influence decision-making processes, that in turn, impact their lives directly. They see voting as part of a broader set of civic engagement behaviors and methods to exert power that translates into change for their community. By contrast, across several focus group sessions, older participants described their view of voting in terms of civic duty or a privilege. Among elders who describe voting in terms of power, several explain this view as a recent shift from their prior view that it was enough to "work hard, and live rightly." In response to circumstances over the last year or so related to the COVID-19 pandemic, protests calling attention to racial injustices, and the economic

"What motivates people to vote is to seek change, and people want to see change in the community." - *18 years old, man, Inland Empire, youth focus group*

"Voto porque otros no pueden votar." "I vote because others can't." - *47 years old, woman, Los Angeles, Spanish language focus group*

"I think voting is a duty for citizens." – *51 years old, woman, Irvine, Mandarin language focus group*

downturn, they now say, "voting seems more important than ever."

TRUSTED MESSENGERS AND INFORMATION SOURCES

A common thread across several focus groups is a strong preference for trusted messengers.

Participants list ethnic media outlets on television, radio, and print as important and trusted sources of recent census and voting-related outreach and information. However, they also pay attention and acknowledge receiving information via English outlets. "Word of mouth" was mentioned as a key source of information most prominently by Chinese, Hmong, and Vietnamese participants. In addition, first-time and low-propensity voters in several focus groups indicate that materials from official elections offices are a key source of information pertaining to election procedures, rules, and deadlines.

Many focus group participants cite social media platforms as sources of election information. Older participants most frequently mention Facebook and WhatsApp, while youth favor SnapChat, Instagram, and TikTok. Chinese-language participants use WeChat most, while Latinos point to Facebook, WhatsApp, and text messages as top ways they receive political information. Korean participants ask that KakaoTalk not be used to disseminate voting-related information out of concern that voting is personal and messaging feels inappropriate when originating outside of members-only chat groups.

Less prevalent, though strongly expressed, are calls to build trust in government. Participants in two different non-English language focus groups state that members

in their community are wary that their personal identifying information will be shared, presumably with authorities or officials whose objectives fall outside the scope of standard electoral processes.

Probing matters of trust further, community experts facilitating the Vietnamese language focus group note that who delivers the message in voter outreach material is just as important as the content of the message. Participants in the rest of the focus groups echo this observation regarding the importance of trusted messengers.

> "Coming from a family that doesn't want to vote or are scared, scared for their background info to be shared, like taxes, we need more reassurance in our community to understand it's okay to vote." - *18 years old, Alameda, woman, Tagalog/English focus group*
>
> "... in my Vietnamese community, ... people will follow a person from that community. ...instead of asking "What kind of information channel should we use?," we should ask "Who should we use to share this information?" Overall, the important question is: who will be the spokesperson?" - *31 years old, Garden Grove, Vietnamese language focus group*

VIEWS ON THREE VOTING OPTIONS IN NOVEMBER 2020

In general, voters in the focus groups indicate elevated interest and enthusiasm for dropping off their ballot or submitting their ballot by mail in 2020. People say that mail-in and drop-off methods are attractive because they are convenient and save time. In the context of COVID-19, participants also describe mail-in and drop-off options as a safer way to vote. The main concern surrounding ballot drop-off is knowing where boxes are located and feeling confident that a ballot has been correctly signed and marked. Common worries about voting by mail concern whether the ballot will actually be delivered and counted.

Voters cite COVID-19 as the top reason for their hesitancy to vote in-person. However, there is some interest in voting in-person so long as it is safe to do so with respect to COVID-19. Immigrants and the elderly voice the highest interest and intention to vote in-person.

Among those expressing interest in in-person voting, the primary motivation is to access assistance with language translation and ask clarifying questions about propositions on the ballot. For example, one elder male participant in our Chinese (Mandarin language) focus group, says, "I found volunteers who work at the voter center very diligent and helpful." Yet, participants said they worry whether and how language assistance, accessibility, and other helpful services typically available to support in-person voting will be provided in the context of COVID-19. Another reason people want to vote in-person is because they feel reassured that their vote will be counted.

For a fair number of low-propensity voters, particularly for monolingual, non-English speaking voters, the phrase "vote-by-mail" also means filling out a ballot at home or work and then taking to a drop-off location or voting site.

Clarifying information, like descriptions seen in video outreach material from Orange County, Los Angeles County, and the California Secretary of State, reduces concerns about mail-in and drop-off voting. Participants want to know where drop-off boxes are located, and whether their jurisdiction will have drop boxes. Most participants say they want clear and easy-to-understand instructions for voting by mail. Participants like the idea of a tracking and verification system for mail-in ballots. This increases trust in voting by mail. Specifically, participants appreciate protocols for ensuring their ballots will not become lost in transit and will arrive in time to be counted.

Another aspect about voting participants across several sessions underscore is the flexibility to vote in advance of Election Day. The benefit of voting early surfaces most prominently in conversations about voting by mail or submitting a ballot to a drop box. We hear participants hint strongly about their intentions to vote early when they describe their preference to take time to learn about candidates and ballot propositions, as well as when they declare a strong preference for receiving voter manuals and reminders in advance so that if they have questions they can turn to friends, family, and trusted organizations for clarification and guidance. In addition, recalling past voting experiences, several voters describe feeling keen to avoid long lines and ensure they can receive assistance as a major motivation for voting early in-person. In the context of managing virus exposure, the focus group participants

> "Because of COVID-19 happening right now, I will be voting through mail, not in person." - *32 years old, woman, Fresno, Hmong language focus group*

> "Drop box itself is a very good idea. Especially when you are leaving in the morning to start your day, you can just drop your ballot on the way saving time, very useful!" - *52 years old, man, Los Angeles, Korean language focus group*
>
> "I found those volunteers who work at the voter center very diligent and helpful." - *Elder, man, San Francisco, Chinese focus group*

who signal concern about safety and maintain some interest in voting in-person, are the most likely to want information about the option to vote early.

Among those who mention voter fraud the worry is mainly that their ballots will not arrive on time or ever, and therefore may not be counted. We heard no evidence that voter fraud is understood in terms of ballot stuffing or people who are unauthorized to vote casting a ballot.

Participants in the Chinese, Hmong, and Vietnamese focus groups were the least aware of the plan for all registered voters in California to receive mail-in ballots this fall. Worth underscoring here is that participants from these groups state "word-of-mouth" is a key source of information and learning about elections and voting.

RESPONSE TO VOTE MESSAGES

We customized each session in terms of the voter outreach materials and messages that we presented for feedback. However, material shared from local county registrar offices did not necessarily correspond to where each participant resides because several of our focus group sessions were composed of voters from multiple counties. We relied heaviest on the materials provided by election officials who responded to our invitation to coordinate with our research teams. In particular we thank Orange, San Bernardino, Napa, and Fresno Counties, which all sent several samples of past voter outreach and information materials, including postcards, voter manuals, and short videos detailing various aspects of and options for voting.

Below, we start by summarizing participant reactions in terms of general praise, critiques, and suggestions for future material. Following that we list each outreach and information piece individually accompanied by more targeted feedback, including direct quotes from participants. Please note that the amount of reactions we collected varied across focus group sessions, with some groups offering more commentary than others. In some focus group sessions, our participants chose not to share

details about themselves like their age or geographic location. When available we attribute quotes using basic demographic information, and for participants who did not disclose such details, we present direct quotes without a descriptive attribution. We also insert, where relevant, observations from staff and experts from community advisory groups who observed the focus groups.

(A) SUMMARY

General Praise

Participants gravitate towards material with clean graphics to convey key information. Across sessions, first-time and low-propensity voters appreciated that computer animated videos contained few words and large images to describe the three options for voting. Several remarked on how they understood clearly the range of services available at vote centers based on the symbols used (i.e. accessibility logo, question mark, bus stop sign, etc.).

Compared to older outreach materials the newer videos and postcards are easier to understand and feel more exciting, particularly the videos using computer animation.

Videos pack a lot of details and the translations almost perfectly follow the presentation of key information and behavior of voters depicted in video. This is especially appreciated where videos show English language text and in-language voice-over narration -- like that seen in computer animated videos from CA Secretary of State, Fresno County, Los Angeles County, and Orange County.

General Critique

First-time and low-propensity voters want material that is simple and easy-to-understand. Some remark that the videos are too fast.

Across sessions several participants request broader demographic representation in the live videos that show a person completing a ballot, or dropping it off, or entering a vote center. Voters want to see people who look like them.

In addition to saying they saw too few "people who look like me," several focus group participants elaborated that they also did not relate to some features of the backgrounds and scenarios depicted, like those showing professionals in an office setting or driving newer model cars.

Missing from videos that highlight voting from home is whether drop-off locations will be available in their neighborhood or community. Focus group participants

want more information about the location of drop-off boxes, and some wanted to better understand the distinction between submitting by mail and drop-off.

Suggestions for Developing the Next Round of Election Outreach Material

Consider including known leaders and trusted messengers from community anchor organizations in videos.

Take care that in direct translations the voice-over narration matches with the presentation of key information throughout the video.

On print materials, include visuals and symbols in lieu of text where possible, e.g. a timeline or calendar that marks key dates, maps that pin locations of drop-off boxes throughout a county.
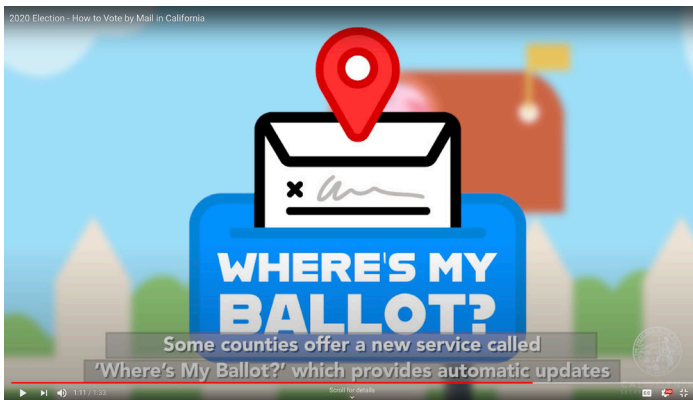
Show scenarios and settings in video outreach material that working-class voters can relate to and can imagine as closer to their own lived experience.

(B) REACTIONS TO SPECIFIC MATERIAL

Video Message #1

Title: "2020 Election - How to Vote by Mail in California"

Office: California Secretary of State

Tagalog/English language focus group

For this video from the California Secretary of State, participants in the Tagalog/English language focus group state that this video communicates the convenience of voting by mail. Several participants also note that their concerns about whether their ballot will be delivered and counted in the final tally are put to rest by the section with the explanation regarding ballot verification and ballot tracking. Below are some observations from the Filipino community expert who facilitated the focus group that convey this theme of voter reassurance in voting by mail that the video generates.

- After watching the video, one of the participants remarked that her worries of having her vote not being counted or getting lost in the mail are alleviated. Another participant shares that they are happy to see there is a way to track where their vote is and if it got counted.

- Many echoed that this video would reach more people if it was in Tagalog.

- A young person points out that the video is visual learner-friendly because what's shown on the screen matches the instructions. Knowing that there is a way to track the mail-in ballot is a plus.

- The video was not motivating but gave participants an idea on how the process works. Others agree the video is more informational than motivating.

Korean language focus group

Participants in the Korean language focus group viewed this California Secretary of State video in English language. Our community advisory partners note that may explain why several participants feel like the message was too fast and why they want to see a Korean language version of the video. Other comments highlight that the information covered in the video is useful, particular for first-time voters. Below are a selection of direct quotes from participants in the Korean language group that capture the themes of utility and effectiveness from this video.

- "For the first-time voters, this would be very helpful, in Korean language."

  - 52 years old, woman, Orange County

- "It was in English, also it went too fast, I couldn't grasp everything… but step by step information for first-timers would be helpful."

  - 48 years old, woman, Los Angeles

- "Either in English or Korean, it is very nice to have the videos, educational ads were not good before, never very catchy & kinda boring but this time is better."

  -35 years old, woman, Los Angeles

- "English and Korean videos, very nice to hear the one in Korean!"

  – 53 years old, Woman, Los Angeles

- "Massive advertisements (or PSA's) for our community would motivate and demystify the process of voting. The video makes the Vote By Mail look quite easy."

  - 49 years old, Woman, Los Angeles

- "This sort of information should be all over the Korean mass media communications. Koreans watch TV, and listen to radio. Newspapers too."

  - 52 years old, woman, Orange County

Video Message #2:

Title: "New Vote by Mail in Los Angeles County"

Office: Los Angeles County

Tagalog/English language focus group

Participants in the Tagalog/English language focus group describe this video as information dense. One participant points out that the video is fast-paced, though they immediately state that it has good information and is nice to hear in Tagalog. Another participant concedes that there is a need to repeat watching it and for them it is "not a hassle" repeating it. Below are some direct quotes from low-propensity and first-time voters from the Filipino community that illustrate additional reactions to this video

- "[This video] is nice to hear in Tagalog."

- "It has good information."

- "It is encouraging for mail voting."

- "The animation helped a lot with putting the words together, since the pacing is fast. If repeated and iterated in several channels, it can be effective."
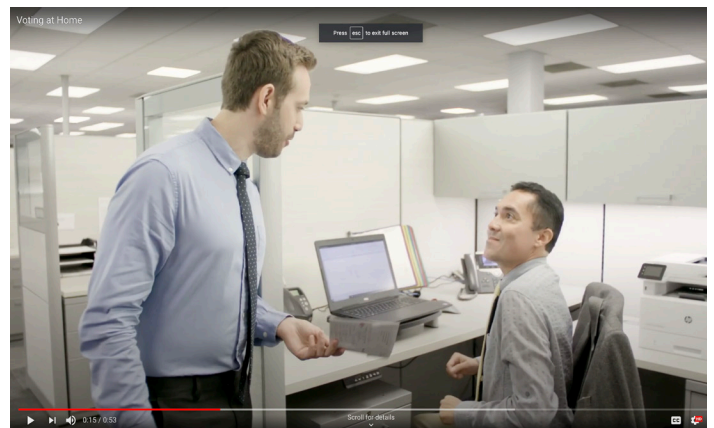
Spanish language focus group

In response to this video from Los Angeles County, presented with Spanish language voice-over narration, Latino focus group participants say the explanation for voting by mail is simple and easy to understand. One participant wants the video slowed down: "The pace of information is quick. It's fine, and simple, but it does go fast." Here are three additional comments from participants that articulate reactions.

- "My first-time voting, honestly, I didn't know exactly how to do it or where to get information. This message is easy to understand."

- "Did it mention the other options for voting? It would be a good idea to add more information about the other options for voting."

- "I wonder if you can vote online. Is that an option?"

Video Message #3:

Title: "Voting at Home"

Office: Orange County

Spanish language focus group

Participants in the Spanish language focus group viewed the version with Spanish voice-over narration. Latino participants underscore a desire for broader representation; they want people in the video who look like them, and they request settings and scenarios of day-to-day life that are relatable to people from a wide range of socio-economic status and cultural backgrounds. Here are three selected comments from participants that articulate the theme of demographic and cultural representation in the reactions.

- "Show a diverse set of voters dropping off their ballot so that the message is clear that a diverse set of voters participate."

- "Show different races of voters to motivate more people to vote."

- "Show people from humble backgrounds in the videos and not just upper-class social settings."

- In the context of comments about the convenience of drop boxes, one respondent suggests adding a clip of "someone driving up to the box and dropping off their ballot. That would show it is possible to vote safer."

Korean language focus group

Our community partners who facilitated the Korean language focus group shared the English language version of this video in their session. In general, there was a great deal of enthusiasm for drop boxes. Participants spent considerable time discussing the convenience of voting by drop box. They also share concerns that the drop box method may challenge voters without access to candidate and proposition material in their language.

- "DROP BOX itself is a very good idea, especially when you are leaving in the morning to start your day, you can just drop your ballot on the way saving time, very useful!"

  - Man, 52 years old, Los Angeles

- "Informational video was good, was very short, and loved the idea of a drop box, you can use it regardless of time of the day/night, maybe this will incentivize others to vote early. I also want to participate in this process."

  -Woman, 49 years old, Los Angeles

- "I didn't know what that big box was when I first encountered a drop box but once I realized it was for dropping ballots for voting, I thought it great that this physical thing is reminding us all of upcoming elections. More such displays could motivate more people to vote, and its presence helps community members to grow accustomed to elections, making it an everyday thing so voters grow comfortable with the act of voting."

  -Man, 59 years old, Orange County

- "When I had no interest in elections before, I never knew when the election day was. When I saw the Drop Box across from the Arirang Market, in the city of Fullerton, it was impressively big, you can't miss it, what a genial idea, I thought."

  - Man, 59 years old, Orange County

- "Although I have not seen one yet, it is pretty clear through the video the Drop Boxes could be motivating more people to vote."

  -Woman, 58 years old, Orange County

Critiques

- "Drop Box, a very good idea, it is convenient, easy to use. I have voted by mail before but due my language skills, it makes it hard to understand policies, or what the candidates stand for. I vote based on candidates' responses. More info on them should be offered in language."

  - Man, 50 years old, Los Angeles

- "More detailed instructions for new voters, assuming it is their first-time voting seem to be appropriate."

  - Woman, 52 years old, Los Angeles

- "I really wish for Korean language materials to be offered along with English, it would be very nice to watch the video in Korean."

  - Woman, 53 year old, Los Angeles

- "Maybe because I am a first-time voter, it is not that easy to follow or understand how to vote. Is it only at OC, are they also in LA County? Locations for those, where are they? Please offer a map with their locations, publicize in Radio Korea, newspapers."

  - Woman, 49 years old, Los Angeles County

- "The PSA presented was easy enough to watch but how do you actually fill those questions in the ballots? Need more step-by-step instructions for first-time voters. The video was too fast for me, couldn't grasp everything, plus, was only presented in English language. YouTube video was great, but we need TV ads as well as other media outlets."

  - Woman, 48 years old, Los Angeles

Youth/English language focus group

Participants in the Youth focus group saw the English language version and the bulk of their reactions focus on wanting more demographic and cultural representation. For one participant, the message could make clearer how different voting methods are distinct.

- "I think it's targeting a specific demographic. It's not representing all people. It's not very inclusive, so that's not video targeting my specific audience. Also, the concern of the ballots in these boxes, they can get damaged or broken into."

  – Woman, 18 year old, Fontana

- "To have people that look like me. I'm a young Black girl. Just to see people who have been in the voter suppression would hit my subconscious a little bit more that I maybe haven't thought about."

  – Woman, 22 years old, Inland Empire

- "I'm a Latina, if you were to show this to my community, they wouldn't be inspired by it. So maybe inclusive different types of races and people."

  - Woman, 18 years old, Coachella

- "I wish they were to explain why they are implementing the boxes, and what the difference is going to one of these boxes and putting your vote by mail in a mailbox, which is basically the same thing."

  – Man, 25 years old, Los Angeles

Video Message #4:

Title: "Ballot Drop Boxes - Tiếng Việt"

Office: Orange County

Vietnamese focus group

This video was selected by our community advisory group OCAPICA to collect feedback on outreach emphasizing drop boxes. Similar to Orange County's other video, "Voting at Home," this message highlights how drop boxes work and emphasizes their convenience. While participants appreciate that the video is succinct and direct in describing the option to drop off a ballot at a drop box, several still want information about the locations of drop boxes. Another notes that they want information about how to fill out a ballot to accompany this video. Also, the video leaves participants with a sense that the process of submitting a ballot by drop box is trustworthy.

- "That video was really easy to follow. It was succinct and wasn't very long. If there was a video for all the different ways to vote, whether mail or using those [drop-off] boxes or at a vote center, then that would be one way to inform the Vietnamese community."

  - Woman, 23 years old, Stanton

- "[The video] helps people trust the boxes more than just seeing boxes anywhere. If there was the exact address for me to go there, then I would feel more secure."

  - Woman, 50 years old, Garden Grove

Video Message #5:

Title: "Introducing Orange County's Vote Centers - 中文"

Office: Orange County

Chinese (Mandarin language) focus group

This video was selected by our community advisory group Chinese for Affirmative Action in consultation with our in-house expert at CSI-UCR. Most participants indicate that the content is well-translated and they understand the message. A couple of participants say the videos show places that they are familiar with and voting sites where they have voted before. Others say they still find the voting process confusing. Several participants say they want clarification about the voting process, which indicates that the video didn't address all their concerns about voting this November. Below are some additional quotes from participants reacting to this video.

- "It is not clear to me whether there will be fewer voting locations than before."

  – Woman with 3 years voting experience

- "Is there an option to vote online just like the Census 2020?"

  - Woman, San Francisco

- "Is it true that after voting by mail would I receive a confirmation letter?"

  – Woman, newly naturalized citizen

Video Message #6:

Title: "Mail it. Drop it. Visit."

Office: Fresno County

Hmong language focus group

This video from Fresno County features the "Mail it. Drop it." slogan and was selected by our community advisory group Hmong Innovating Politics to share with focus group participants. Participants suggest adding a hotline number at the end of the video so that elders who are uncomfortable accessing information online can follow up by phone. Building on the theme of the importance of trusted messengers, several participants also request that a representative from a local Hmong community organization appear on the video to offer assistance if voters have questions. Some focus group participants felt the information in the video was too tightly packed in.

Video Message #7:

Title: "My Vote Don't Count"

Artist: Social Media influencer and musician Yellopain

Youth/English language focus group
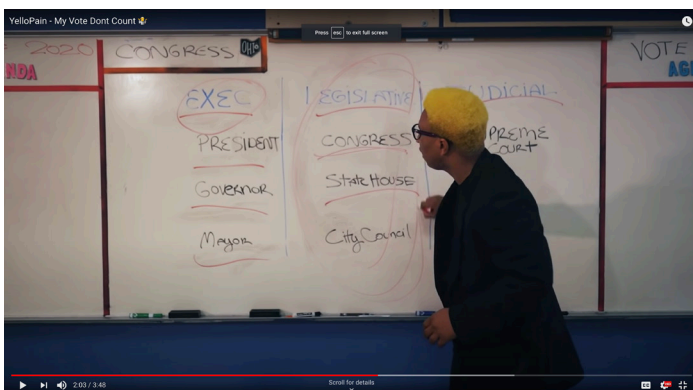
For the youth focus group we shared a segment of a voter outreach message crafted by a social media influencer named Yellopain. The video features Yellopain

rapping a description of the three branches of government and their respective executive, legislative, and judicial responsibilities. The message highlights the connection between individual-level civic engagement, representation in government, and policy output. The video is both educational and a call to action.

Participants in our youth focus group say this video is motivating and that it inspires them to participate in civic engagement. They report that the content is rich in information and also underscores the importance of voting for local officials. Several participants note that they are familiar with the video as it appears in separate, shorter pieces on TikTok, a platform that is popular among youth voters.

- "I think it was cool that it was on TikTok. It's a new platform that is really popular and you will probably get the younger audience and the new generation of voters that are turning 18, 19 and 20. And since there is a lot of kids on there it gives them hope for voting in the future."

- "TikTok really catches my eye when I was watching, and since it was in a musical type of way because it caught my attention cause it kept me thinking about it. I think it was helpful in teaching basic information that it's about us and voting for local officials, not just presidential."

- "I found it really interesting ... TikTok is mainly used by teenagers which impacts their way of viewing things, not just political but other things that are happening in the world."

- "I think this video is motivational because it says it starts with "US" so we can make the change."

- "I'm not sure how this video would go with people above my age range. Also, I love how they talk about local elections because I have to hold myself accountable being active in local elections."

Print Material #1:

Description: Fresno County VCA fliers - Hmong translation and English

Materials available here: https://www.co.fresno.ca.us/departments/county-clerk-registrar-of-voters/vca-education-and-outreach-toolkit

Hmong language focus group

Focus group facilitators describe reactions to the print material from Fresno County as follows. Participants say the fliers need to have less text, more visuals and infographics, and more symbols. Examples include a

VOTE FRESNO COUNTY
MORE DAYS. MORE WAYS.
votefresnocounty.com

Pib nyob rau thaum Lub Peb Hlis Ntuj Xyoo 2020 ua qib xub thawj, nws muaj ib txoj hauv kev tshiab los xaiv tsa hauv Lub Nroog Fresno. Nyeem kom paub ntau ntxiv txog cov kev xaiv tshiab yooj yim uas muaj rau cov neeg xaiv tsa hauv qab no.

XA NWS MUS.

Txhua cov neeg xaiv tsa hauv Lub Nroog Fresno yuav tau txais ib daim npav xaiv tsa raws kev xa ntawv nyob rau cov lim piam ua ntej kev xaiv tsa, yog li ntawd koj tsis tas yuav tau thov daim npav xaiv tsa raws kev xa ntawv yam meej tseeb txhij txhua. Koj tuaj yeem xa koj daim npav xaiv tsa tuaj yam tus nqi xa dawb xwb.

MUAB NWS TSO RAU.

Xa tsa nyob rau thaum ntxov yam muab koj daim npav pov rau hauv lub thawv! Koj yuav muaj lub hwm tsam yooj yim dua los xaiv tsa nyob rau hnub thiab lub sij hawm uas raug raws koj lub ciaj teev tseg.

MUS SAIB.

Koj tuaj yeem rau npe los xaiv tsa, hloov koj qhov chaw nyob, hloov koj tog neeg nom tswv los sis txais ib daim npav xaiv tsa los hloov chaw nyob rau ntawm txhua Lub Chaw Pov Npav, tab txawv yog nyob rau Hnub Xaiv Tsa.

Txhawm rau kuaj xyuas koj li kev rau npe ua tus neeg xaiv tsa thiab nyeem kom paub ntau ntxiv txog cov kev ua raws Tsab Cai Hais Txog Tus Neeg Pov Npav Txoj Kev Xaiv hauv Lub Nroog Fresno, suav nrog cov kev xav thauj mus los dawb, ntau hom ntaub ntawv pab thiab cov hauv kev ADA, mus saib hauv tus vev xaib hauv qab no.
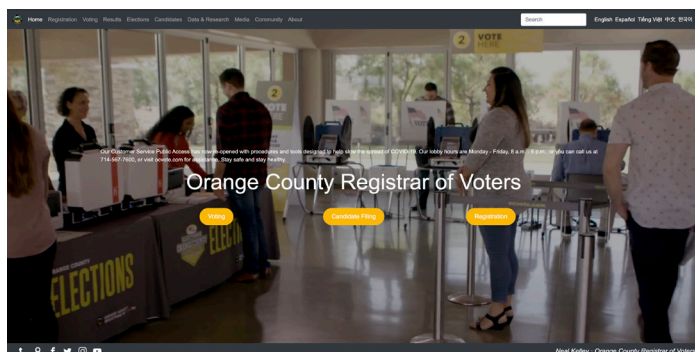
votefresnocounty.com

SUAV NQIS ZUJ ZUS MUS RAU HNUB XAIV TSA

Txhua lub sij hawm
· Kuaj xyuas koj li kev rau npe ua tus neeg xaiv tsa hauv tus vev xaib yam meej tseeb txhij txhua ces koj thiaj tau txais daim npav xaiv tsa raws kev xa ntawv.

29 hnub ua ntej
· Cov npav xaiv tsa raws kev xa ntawv uas raug xa rau txhua tus neeg xaiv tsa uas tau rau npe hauv Lub Nroog Fresno, thiab koj tuaj yeem xa koj daim npav xaiv tsa rov qab yam tsis suav nqi tau txhua lub sij hawm yog tias muaj lub cim xa ntawv nyob lo rau los sis xa ua ntej Hnub Xaiv Tsa.
· Koj tuaj yeem muab pov rau hauv txhua lub ntawm 33 lub thawv pov npav uas muaj kev ruaj ntseg yam yooj yim uas muaj nyob raws Lub Nroog Fresno nyob rau thaum lub caij Hnub Xaiv Tsa.

10 hnub ua ntej
· Kaum Lub Chaw Pov Npav yuav qhib nyob rau ntawm cov chaw raws Lub Nroog Fresno nyob rau thaum lub caij Hnub Xaiv Tsa

PEB hnub ua ntej
· 50 Lub Chaw Pov Npav yuav qhib nyob rau ntawm cov chaw raws Lub Nroog Fresno nyob rau thaum lub caij Hnub Xaiv Tsa.

HNUB XAIV TSA
· Cov npav xaiv tsa raws kev xa ntawv yuav tsum raug lo cim xa nyob rau los sis ua ntej Hnub Xaiv Tsa

VOTE FRESNO COUNTY
MORE DAYS. MORE WAYS.
votefresnocounty.com **votefresnocounty.com**

calendar or timeline. One participant suggests including graphics that are more culturally relevant. As for the translation to Hmong language, participants comment that the text is too lengthy and wordy, and that they won't take time to read it. Finally, the flier did not inspire or motivate the participants to vote. One of the participants says that she felt this flyer is for someone who is already 'motivated' to vote.

Print Material #2:

Description: Orange County Website

https://ocvote.com/

Neal Kelley · Orange County Registrar of Voters

Vietnamese language focus group

Our community expert partners from OCAPICA instructed participants to browse the OCVote website prior to the focus group. In general, participants like that the OCVote website shows all the locations where people can vote. One participate shares her observation about the design of the website as follows:

- "The website is divided into parts. I think that's a good feature when it's divided like that, like how to vote by voting center or how to vote by mail, and it has a link I can click and it shows me all the locations I could go to vote."

  - Woman, 30 years old, Buena Park

- One aspect of the website that caught participants' attention is the translation of voter guide materials *(images next page)*. Specifically, for all materials that are "how-to" materials, participants want more guidance and help related to following procedures correctly. To this point one participant comments:

"More illustrations are better. This guide is easy to understand, and if there were more illustrations telling me that I should sign the envelope, if there was an illustration for me to know where to sign, what the

ORANGE COUNTY REGISTRAR OF VOTERS

Đánh dấu, dán kín, và ký tên trên phong bì của quý vị

1. Đánh dấu phiếu bầu của quý vị
• Làm theo hướng dẫn trên phiếu bầu.

2. Dán kín phong bì của quý vị
• Kiểm tra rằng quý vị đã hoàn trả phong bì có tên của mình trên đó.
• Đặt phiếu bầu của quý vị trong phong bì và dán kín phong bì.

3. Ký tên trên phong bì
• Đề ngày và ký tên của quý vị ở phía sau phong bì bằng bút mực.
• Viết bằng chữ in tên và địa chỉ cư ngụ của quý vị.

4. Các lựa chọn gửi trả lá phiếu của quý vị
• Gửi qua bưu điện phiếu bầu của quý vị trong phong bì đã được trả bưu phí kèm theo.
• Bỏ phiếu của quý vị vào bất kỳ Thùng Đựng Phiếu Bầu nào ở Thành Phố Santa Ana (Để biết các địa điểm của Thùng Đựng Phiếu Bầu, vui lòng truy cập ocvote.com/dropbox).

Thông tin quan trọng bổ sung!
• Nếu quý vị có sai sót xin gọi 714-567-7600 trước Ngày Bầu Cử.
• Phiếu bầu của quý vị phải được đóng dấu bưu chính vào hoặc trước Ngày Bầu Cử và được nhận không trễ hơn 3 ngày sau cuộc bầu cử.
• Các cử tri có thể yêu cầu tài liệu bầu cử được biên dịch và tài liệu bầu cử có định dạng dễ dàng sử dụng. Để biết thêm thông tin, vui lòng gọi số 714-567-7600.

OC **BALLOT** *EXPRESS*
Theo dõi lá phiếu từ lúc bắt đầu cho đến khi kết thúc tại ocvote.com/track

Sau khi gửi trả phiếu bầu của quý vị - chúng tôi gửi tặng quý vị một nhãn dán "Tôi Đã Bầu"!

Neal Kelley, Giám Đốc Sở Ghi Danh Quận Orange | 1300 S. Grand Ave., Bldg. C, Santa Ana CA 92705 | 714-567-7600

Cách thức đánh dấu phiếu bầu-bằng-thư của quý vị và giữ bí mật lá phiếu.

ballot looks like after I sign it, then I'd know whether I did it right or not."

- Woman, 23 years old, Stanton

Mobilization Phrases or Slogans:

We focused our efforts on showing images and videos to the participants of the focus groups. However, if time permitted, we also shared different mobilizing phrases or slogans. We did not receive the same amount of feedback for these phrases as we did for the video content. This might be because participants were already fatigued after the hour of discussion. Despite these challenges, we did receive some valuable feedback from the following focus groups: Hmong, Spanish, and Tagalog. Below are the major insights gained from our participants.

Spanish language focus group

"Mas dias, mas formas para votar"

This phrase was confusing to first-time and low-propensity voting Latinos. Some believed this meant they had more time to think about the election because of the pandemic -- more days ("mas dias") meant more time to think about who to select with their vote. Others inferred that it meant they would have more days to cast their vote and more ways to do so. Participants did not seem sure though, when discussing; it was more of a guess than an assertion.

Hmong language focus group

The Hmong focus group participants reviewed multiple messages, including the following:

"We Rise Together"

"People Power Starts Here"

"Our Voice. Our Vote."

"Strengths in Numbers"

Participants say that the phrases "We Rise Together," "People Power Starts Here," and "Our Voice. Our Vote" are empowering. They state that each of those made them want to vote. One participant appreciates the directness of "Our Voice. Our Vote" because it mentions voting and is therefore more directly related to voting. They feel the phrase "Strength in Numbers" is less mobilizing.

Korean language focus group

"Be Heard November 3rd"

Facilitators shared San Bernardino county's phrase "Be Heard November 3rd" to Korean focus group participants in English and translated in language. It did not generate much conversation or a strong reaction from participants.

Tagalog/English language focus group

"More days. More ways."

Among younger participants in the Tagalog/English language focus group the phrase "More days. More ways," serves as a reminder that voting is open and we should "take the opportunity [to vote]." Elder participants describe the phrase as vague and open to interpretation. Still others say it provides some encouragement to vote.

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS FROM FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS

Towards the end of each focus group session we asked participants, "What kinds of resources or assistance do you need to help you vote in 2020?" There were a number of concerns from the participants of the focus groups, some specific to the context of COVID-19. Others asked more general questions about deadlines, procedures, and "how-to"s of voting.

Participants of all groups reiterate concern with the trustworthiness of information and the security of their ballot. While these issues were highlighted previously, here we note them again as respondents were adamant that their communities required trusted messengers to deliver factual information.

Some focus group participants say that it is much more important to them that the information they receive about elections look official, not trendy or flashy. They maintain that the source of information is more important than aesthetics. Some explain that social messaging groups would not be a good delivery system. However, most participants signal that they like the messaging from social media platforms, like YouTube, and for the youth, TikTok and Snapchat. Elders in particular emphasize a desire for official-looking materials that they now they can trust.

Another common complaint is the lack of language accessibility in materials.

Below, we offer quotes to highlight in participants' own voices some of the specific needs they identified to help them vote in November 2020.

YOUTH/ENGLISH LANGUAGE FOCUS GROUP

Our community partner organizations Alianza Coachella Valley and Youth Mentoring Action Network mentioned the importance of creating a voting atmosphere that is inviting to first-time voters. The participants themselves place the act of voting in a context of a broader civic engagement portfolio that is necessary to achieve desired change for their communities. Young voters also worry that their ballots may not be counted if lost in transit or mail services fail to deliver on time to be included in the final tally. Across all the focus group sessions, the youth participants are the most critical of existing voter outreach material, particularly with respect to the degree of inclusivity across a range of demographics including gender, socio-economic status, race, ethnicity, and ability. Community experts who are staff at Alianza Coachella Valley call for including youth within the voting process:

• *"Intergenerational messaging is key. Creating messaging around voting rights and empowerment will give people an opportunity to see themselves as agents of change."*

A key recommendation from the focus group is incorporating youth in voter messaging. Youth Mentoring Action Network mentioned the benefit of incorporating the youth:

• *"Youth are incredibly creative and tech-savvy. Young creatives especially are involved in building their brands and social media following on a daily basis. If you want to reach young voters, you have to employ young people who are already doing the work of building communities."*

HMONG LANGUAGE FOCUS GROUP

A key necessity for the Hmong community is the availability of professional translators. Community experts who are staff at Hmong Innovating Politics share that many Hmong community members are not fully proficient at reading English or Hmong. Participants describe those who wish to vote as reliant on either family members to help translate instructions, or on other community members who may not feel qualified to do the work. See below how one participant describes the issue:

• *"One time I went to the vote center to go vote. There was another voter who needed my language assistance assisting them with their ballot because they know I was Hmong, but I am not an assigned interpreter at the vote center. Although I did help them in the end, I wish there was an actual hired Hmong interpreter at the vote center to help the people who are in need of language assistance and not me who came by to vote. I can only provide my basic interpreting skill in translating the ballot. There are some ballot terms I do not know and wish there is a professional interpreter to help right then and there to give the proper guidance."*

KOREAN LANGUAGE FOCUS GROUP

In the Korean focus group, participants asked for much more assistance in voting than they feel they've gotten

previously. They stated that they need information in their language and that the information needs to be simplified. In the context of a conversation about official voter manuals and guidelines without in-language translations of content detailing candidate and ballot proposition information, one participant seemed to be particularly perplexed at the prospect of voting, stating the following:

• *"How am I supposed to pick a candidate?" "Who should I vote for?"*

In addition to simplified material, participants also highlighted the importance of community leadership in disseminating the information. This could mean ethnic media and celebrities, but a participant also shared the importance of religious leadership. They shared the following:

• *"Churches have membership, and their members listen to their leadership. Involving church pastors to participate early on, could definitely increase the registration numbers. Have them invite you to a special voter registration day. Pastors/Ministers have a lot of power, they should make it mandatory for their congregants, LOL."*

SPANISH LANGUAGE FOCUS GROUP

Overwhelmingly, the Spanish focus group was concerned with accessible information on propositions and other voting material. Some participants felt that they didn't know who they were voting for and decided to just guess instead of leaving the choice blank. For example, one participant shared her first-time voting experience:

• *"When I went to vote, I would have liked to have more information because I got there and it was my first-time and I saw a sheet that I think was the list of propositions and to tell you the truth, I didn't know what to do because there were so many and I didn't feel well-informed about what those propositions were about or who they benefited. There are some elections that have propositions, and positions for multiple offices and that time, I did not have all the information. The truth is I voted what I thought best because I didn't know and I didn't want to leave it just like that."*

TAGALOG/ENGLISH LANGUAGE FOCUS GROUP

Along similar lines as other focus groups, the Tagalog focus group expressed wanting more credible and accessible information in regards to propositions. Here, however, there were also concerns on the security of their ballot and how vote-by-mail might affect whether

their vote is counted. The need for a trusted messenger was much more evident. Like other groups, the Tagalog focus group had COVID-19 present in their minds. One participant voiced this most succinctly:

• *"I would suggest not to require people to go to voting centers for elderly and for more accessible voting resources."*

VIETNAMESE LANGUAGE FOCUS GROUP

In the Vietnamese focus group, the majority of the community members are concerned about how they are getting their information. They expressed the need for more in-language materials that can be widely distributed through the community. They are worried about where information comes from and whether it is from "trustworthy, official" sources. The community is more focused on who information is coming from than what the information says. It not only has to be someone from the community, but also someone who is vetted by the community. They further recommended "official-looking" messaging from community leaders and election officials, as opposed to things that are just "trendy." Many individuals also have their own TV and radio idols that they follow and listen to.

While drop-off boxes were appreciated for their ease, many participants were worried about fraudulent boxes, and group members said that they hoped that elections officials and local leaders would ensure that the locations and appearances of ballot drop-off boxes are clearly and widely communicated in-language to mitigate this concern. Additionally, it is not widely known that everyone voting in November will be sent a vote-by-mail ballot.

CHINESE (MANDARIN LANGUAGE) FOCUS GROUP

The Mandarin focus group was much more concerned with practical matters, like voting times, parking, and where voting sites will be.

• *"The voting site does not allow voters to park on the Election Day. It took me more than 30 minutes to find a street parking in Pasadena before entering the voting site."*

They, too, were also concerned about how mail in ballots would affect the way their vote is counted.

• *"If I vote once via mail and then vote in person, how does my vote get counted?"*

Community members appeared to want more information on practical and logistical matters pertaining to voting, as well as clearer information on how votes are counted.

INSIGHTS FROM COMMUNITY PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

From focus group debriefing sessions and reports shared by staff of community partner organizations who observed or facilitated focus groups, we gathered lessons learned and key insights from community experts. The notes collected in this section are divided into two parts: one set of insights and recommendations directed towards peer community organizations and another set that engages election officials.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

Recommendation #1: Keep emphasizing the importance of community leaders and organizations as trusted messengers .

Community organizations have the ability to make connections with community members and build the trust that is necessary to motivate them to become frequent voters and to explain the logistics of how/when to vote. Community organizations should continue to embrace their image as trusted messengers and continue the practices that allow that connection with community members to grow.

Recommendation #2: Collaborate with ethnic media -- create synergy with other trusted messengers.

Community members pay close attention to ethnic media given that they rely on such channels to receive their daily information. Communication and continuous opportunities to collaborate with ethnic media would more effectively assist community organizations to further the message that they are trying to convey.

Recommendation #3: When creating your own material, stick with simple, clean graphics that are easy to understand for visual learners.

Community members have busy lives and process a large amount of information on a daily basis. Community organizations should make an effort to create material that is quick and easy to process but at the same time is able to convey the message effectively around the importance of voting.

Recommendation #4: Prepare information regarding impact of specific policies—our communities want to know this.

Due to the seemingly unlimited amount of information on the numerous potential policies to consider during elections, sometimes it can become overwhelming for a voter to grasp the full scope. At the same time, focus group participants repeatedly said they want to know more about what they are voting on. Community

organizations have an opportunity to create material that is tailored in both substance and tone/language to what community members need. Community members would most likely trust such information more than what is found on the Internet or from other sources.

Recommendation #5: We encourage you to convene remote meetings with your communities—now more than ever, our community wants to connect and be heard.

Remote meetings (similar to our focus groups) are an avenue that could be utilized by community groups in order to reach and educate community members on voting, and to learn more about the specific needs of their community members as we near November 2020. It would also serve as an opportunity for community members to ask any questions and get answers in a fast and efficient manner.

ADDITIONAL INSIGHTS FOR COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS ENGAGING FIRST-TIME AND LOW-PROPENSITY VOTERS

Community members emphasize the importance of clear and simple information. They also stress the importance of culturally accurate translations over direct translations. For this, among all groups who offer recommendations, the community groups highlight the importance of community experts and leaders collaborating with elections officials to make sure that messages are translated correctly. For example, while "more days, more ways" makes intuitive sense in English, direct translations convey vague or unfamiliar meaning in other languages. When thinking about "Vote Safely" messages in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, this phrase also translates poorly in other languages; and, if translated literally may risk signaling something different than intended for the purposes of health-related matters.

If social messaging groups are used, community groups recommend that they be in a nonpartisan tone or in nonpartisan groups. However, the emphasis should be on trusted messengers here too. Overall, questions of accessibility were highlighted by community partners and there was a need for infrastructure that made collaboration and information sharing easier. Some of the information required was basic, like how to vote or get information on propositions, but crucial in getting the vote out and sustaining it for years to come.

Additional notes from the Korean language focus group

- Do voter registration drives. Many community members are already U.S. citizens, however, they are not currently registered.

- In creating in language materials, make it simple, to reach most people to vote.

- Simple direct instructions only and instructions for first-time voters should also be included.

- Between TV and other visual promotional materials, TV ads are favored.

- Prepare informational materials regarding specific policies that impact the community.

- Zoom meetings generate conversations. When participants feel their voices/opinions are important to inform elected officials, their engagement is visible. For many of them, they have waited years before being able to exercise the right to vote. Zoom-type of gatherings can inform the community about elections in November and could be a very good tool for increasing voter turnout.

- If you decide to engage your communities remotely through a platform like Zoom, do a couple of practice runs for facilitation, with time check.

- A community based organization, like Korean Resource Center, for example, or other nonprofits should take the lead and educate the Korean community about the impact of policies that matter for our communities.

- In our focus group, participants actually had an opportunity to discuss personal concerns, fears, and their motivation to vote this year. Each person's knowledge, opinion was asked, and through this group process participants' interest in this November elections spiked.

Additional notes from the Chinese (Mandarin language) focus group

- The outreach message should be distributed in common WeChat chat groups (prefer non-partisan groups).

- Start outreach messages with a trusted messenger such as an active member in the community or a member of a nonpartisan community organization.

- Many participants prefer less wordy mailed materials and more simplified messages.

- Respondents want unbiased and easy-to-understand translation/interpretation of policies on the ballot via community organizations.

- Additional notes from the Hmong language focus group

- Cross-collaboration with other organizations who are doing similar work on shared messaging and important deadlines to the community.

- Host virtual vote parties. For example, like a 28-year-old man from Fresno County stated, "I would like for us to have voting parties where community members can come and talk about voting like what we are doing right now."

- Outreach should be culturally responsive. The members in the Hmong community like to build an established connection before working with each other or providing information, and like to build trust before receiving information from an information source. An established information source is ethic mainstream media such as Hmong TV and radio stations. As a 56-year-old man from Fresno County stated: "I watch the TV channels such as Hmong TV and Hmong USA to know about ongoing issues and radio channels to help me complete my ballot and voting information."

Additional notes from the Vietnamese language focus group

- This community is more likely to listen to speakers that the community is familiar with. Whether information is correct or not, the community is more reliant on the trustworthiness of the speaker. Furthermore, many Vietnamese idols may have hidden controversial backgrounds that the younger demographic is not aware of. This may cause intergenerational splits in the community rather than a unification.

- There should be a screening of potential speakers with individuals who are attuned with the community beforehand. Additionally, this community is more likely to notice important materials sent in the mail and in the media if it is "official" looking. Anything trendy would be thrown out or dismissed.

Additional notes from the Youth/English language focus group

- Engage youth to curate, support, and deliver messaging. Create opportunities for engagement within the organization, that create opportunities for growth; volunteer to stipend opportunities that could ultimately lead to a new staff.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ELECTION OFFICIALS FROM COMMUNITY PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS

There were three sets of recommendations for election officials drawn from across our community experts with whom we partnered. Several of those recommendations relate to themes of care in language translation, the importance of trusted messengers, and investing in first-

time voter assistance and education. We offer brief summaries of each of these themes and, following that, share the details of the recommendations as stated by the community experts themselves.

For language, the community partner organizations stressed the importance of simple language and emphasized cultural translations in lieu of direct and literal translations. There were unanimous calls for in-language materials and visual representations in visual media. Simple language would help keep the interest of potential voters, as well as make the message and information resonate and stay with community members. Language, however, had to be culturally tailored in order for it to be understood.

Trusted messengers were also a common theme and in particular the importance they play in getting the message to be accepted by low-propensity communities. Some organizations highlighted the challenges some low-propensity voters have in finding trusted sources of aid and information. The recommendations here were to invest in nonprofit organizations that would fill the role of educators, the use of celebrities and community leaders, and messaging on the appropriate social media platforms.

Finally, our community partner organizations reiterated the importance of spending more time educating and informing first-time voters. The needs of first-time voters are different from those who might be more familiar with the process of voting. While those who have voted before need reminders about deadlines and new ballot drop off locations, first-time voters may need more guidance with what is included in a California ballot and the types of things they'll be asked to vote for in November.

Additional comments from Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles (CHIRLA) - Latino/Spanish focus group

It's really important that Registrars and other officials use language that resonates with communities of color. Guidance from trusted organizations also needs to continue; several participants highlighted CHIRLA's work, and how they trust CHIRLA to provide them with voting information and information about any changes happening. There needs to be more investment in nonprofit organizations that work directly with communities of color, so that they can act as the trusted messenger for these communities.

Our recommendation would be to cautiously state VBM is a preferred option for those who might not be first-time voters among monolingual Spanish-speakers, while considering that vote-by-mail is understood as filling the ballot at home and not dropping it off at the voters' personal mailbox.

Additional comments from Filipino Advocates for Justice - Tagalog/Filipino focus group

Many Filipino voters would like to request having in-language (Tagalog, Ilokano) ballots and in-language assistance in voting sites. At least one suggests that officials "should not require elders to go to voting centers, and provide for more accessible voting resources."

Another participant who is a recent-high school graduate cites from her experience, "coming from a family that doesn't want to vote or are scared... scared for their background info to be shared, like taxes, we need more reassurance in our community to understand it's okay to vote." That same young person hopes for youth 18 and over to receive messaging that they should vote for their rights.

Most participants cite concerns about the logistics of voting, but one young adult shares her suggestion to implement a government-funded basic civic lessons program, like a Voting 101 for high-school youth. She sees this as an investment in the youth.

Additional comments from Korean Resource Center - Korean focus group

We collected two additional comments from participants that are relevant to elections officials. First, one participant from Los Angeles states, "Drop Boxes are great – but continue honoring our long standing USPS mailman and women of this country! Nothing wrong in handing your ballot directly to the mail person! How about drive thru voting system, to streamline the process even more!" Another participant, also from Los Angeles, asks, "How about online voting? Are we close to this option yet, will it ever be offered?"

From the staff at Korean resource center, we suggest the following:

- Massive advertising in Korean language

- Booklets in Korean language is a must

- Simple outreach language

- Instruction booklets – less thick, less verbose, simple instructions

- Include easy-to-understand instructions for first-time voters

- Have some short information on candidates

- Have informational materials in multiple mass media communication outlets: TV ads, radio, social media such as Instagram, Facebook, SMS, YouTube

- Engage early on in recruiting local leadership, nonprofits who can engage with the community to provide support and guidance

- Engage with faith leaders and use their connections and membership to augment efforts to increase voting, churches are places Koreans have for social gathering

- Do more Zoom events, more seminars, and community education

Additional comments from Chinese for Affirmative Action - Chinese/Mandarin focus group

Based on our observations of first-time and low-propensity voters in our focus group, many Chinese voters still need to be reminded of the three ways to vote this November. Also, inform voters which date they should expect a ballot in their mailbox, and where they can check information to confirm delivery. Finally, since many Chinese voters will be newly naturalized citizens, it is also important to inform them of the last day to register to vote-by-mail, last day to register to vote in-person, etc.

Additional comments from Hmong Innovating Politics - Hmong focus group

We invite elections officials to take into consideration the following as they craft their outreach materials:

- Creating more in-language instructional videos.

- The translated materials can be very wordy and can discourage community members from reading it. Oftentimes, local and state election officials tend to do a word to word direct translation (from English to Hmong) of outreach materials and we hope to see more content that is more culturally relevant such as including images or photos that represent the community/culture and messaging that appeals to our communities better.

- Create a mailer that has important dates; i.e. include a calendar.

- Have more interpreters available at voting sites especially in areas that have a large population of Hmong American voters.

- More cross collaboration work with local and trusted community organizations earlier on to streamline messaging and important dates. Reach out to these organizations earlier on to establish a working and transformative relationship.

- Provide a phone number for community members to call if they have any questions or need additional information or a connection to a local organization.

Additional comments from OCAPICA - Vietnamese focus group

This community feels that there is a lack of in-language materials, and because of this they feel that they are not as well-versed about the upcoming situation regarding vote-by-mail as they would like to be. They would like more local and state election officials to talk with community leaders to create more messaging on voting that would come directly out from the community leader to the community. There is also a need for more mass-circulated ethnic media clips on voter outreach.

Additional comments from YMAN/Alianza - Youth focus group

We think intergenerational messaging is key. Creating messaging around voting rights and empowerment will give young people an opportunity to see themselves as agents of change.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ELECTIONS OFFICIALS

Recommendation #1: Make safety protocols relating to COVID-19 clear and enforced. Participants elaborated that signage at voting sites and outreach materials should clearly and simply convey rules for using personal protective equipment.

Recommendation #2: Locate drop boxes in areas that are familiar and accessible to a broad set of the public. For example, place boxes near grocery stores, markets, clinics, and public buildings that receive high vehicle and pedestrian traffic. Also place in wide open areas where there will be less risk of vandalism.

Recommendation #3: Produce voter outreach and information material that is demographically representative, culturally relevant, and accessible. On the topic of voter outreach material, participants across multiple focus groups and community experts converge on the request for messaging and material to reflect their lived experiences. This request takes on two general forms. First, voters want to see people who look like them asking for assistance, and filling out and delivering their ballot. Second, they also want images, language, contexts, and scenarios with which they can relate.

Recommendation #4: Election officials charged with crafting election messages should do so in deep partnership with cultural experts from community advisory groups. Apart from the goal of tailoring messaging to fit the rich set of cultures represented in California's electorate, deliberate and planned coordination with community advisory groups may also position government officials to convey reassurance that voting is secure. Messages that community anchor organizations endorse and help to develop may be more likely to reach first-time and low-propensity voters.

Recommendation #5: Use simple visuals in voting and outreach materials. Participants respond favorably to messages that can be understood by looking at simple symbols, images, and graphics. Participants did not respond favorably to materials with a lot of text, even when that text was full of helpful information. At the same time, detailed information can be included to supplement simple visuals.

Recommendation #6: Convene similar efforts as the one producing this report to coordinate across levels of expertise and authority. One of the unique features of this project is the involvement of various stakeholders who support democratic participation: scholars, community experts, election officials, members of the public, and foundations. Each stakeholder group provided crucial support for accelerated research in response to a quickly-shifting electoral context. By drawing on a cross-section of experts, we are best positioned to produce lessons that can help California engage low-propensity voters.

OUR RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COMMUNITY ORGANIZATIONS

Recommendation #1: Continue reminding audiences, in your external-facing engagements and communications, about the importance of community anchors as trusted messengers in your community. Participants across multiple sessions identified specific organizations as key sources of information and trustworthy leaders on matters related to elections and voting.

Recommendation #2: Collaborate with ethnic media to create synergy with other trusted messengers. Another significant source of elections and voting information among low-propensity and first-time voters is ethnic media personalities and outlets. As multiple leaders engage in outreach and information drives, it may be more efficient and effective to coordinate messaging that adequately and appropriately addresses the general and group-specific needs of low-propensity voters.

Recommendation #3: Produce voter outreach and information materials using simple visuals, images, symbols, and graphics. Avoid text-heavy materials. After reviewing several outreach and information pieces that have already been used by elections officials, focus group participants maintained that material with easy-to-understand visuals resonates most with them as first-time and low-propensity voters.

Recommendation #4: Prepare information regarding the impact that specific policies are likely to have on your communities. As part of the conversations associated with what motivates voters to vote, focus group participants show a sophisticated awareness that election outcomes shape policy output. While many of the voters we spoke to readily share that they do not have a detailed understanding of specific candidates or ballot propositions, they also indicate an appetite for learning such details. Low-propensity voters want to know how voting impacts their community and need information they trust about what is on the ballot.

Recommendation #5: Convene focus groups similar to the ones producing this report with community members. One of the unanticipated benefits of conducting the focus groups with low-propensity and first-time voters is that participants expressed gratitude for linking with their peers and leaders in the community to discuss their views of elections and voting. Several of our community organization partners who led focus groups in-language point to the focus group session as a tool for information dissemination, as well as a platform for sustaining relationships with community members.

APPENDIX

FOCUS GROUP PROTOCOL

[TO BE READ TO PARTICIPANTS]

Welcome and thank you for volunteering to take part in this focus group. You have been asked to participate, as your point of view is important. I realize you are busy and I appreciate your time.

Everyone Introduce Themselves

Let me introduce myself. My name is [Insert Facilitator Name]. We represent the Center for Social Innovation at UC Riverside, Common Cause, the California Community Foundation, and [First Cut Partner]. Can each of you please introduce yourself by name, and share how you plan to vote in 2020.

Great, now that we have introduced ourselves, I want to point out three important features about zoom to keep in mind.

Zoom Overview:

Please mute yourself until you are ready to talk - [highlight mute button]

Please feel comfortable using the chat feature to ask a question or share a comment at any point during our conversation today - [highlight chat button]

For those of you joining by phone, please unmute yourself by pressing *6 on your phone - [highlight *6 to unmute when wishing to speak]

Overview for participants:

This focus group discussion is designed to assess your views and concerns as they relate to the different ways you can vote in the upcoming 2020 elections. Our meeting will take no more than 75 minutes or 1 hour and 15 minutes. As a reminder, we will record the focus group portion of our discussion so that we can be sure we have an accurate account of what you share with us today.

Anonymity:

Despite being recorded I would like to assure you that the discussion will be anonymous. All recordings will be kept safely locked by password until we complete our reports, then they will be destroyed. The notes we take today and the reports we write will contain no information that will be linked to specific questions you ask or comments you offer. We want you to answer and comment as accurately and truthfully as possible. This is a safe space to share what is really on your mind about the elections and will help us encourage your family, friends, and community members to also vote. I and the other focus group participants would appreciate it if you would refrain from discussing the comments of other group members outside the focus group. If there are any questions or discussions that you do not wish to answer or participate in, you do not have to do so; however please try to answer and be as involved as possible.

Now I want to tell you how the session will be organized. Today we will discuss the following topics during our 75-minute focus group discussion:

- Awareness of different ways you can vote in the upcoming 2020 elections

- How and where can you find information about the upcoming 2020 elections

- Your worries and concerns about how to vote in the upcoming 2020 elections

- Any thoughts you have about the unique challenges, issues, or concerns you face in voting by mail, or in person, or dropping off at a ballot drop-off location

- And especially your recommendations for what would make it easier for you, and friends and family to vote by mail or what would be most helpful to understand the voting process.

Before we get started here are a few rules to remember for our conversation today:

- The most important rule is that only one person speaks at a time. There may be a temptation to jump in when someone is talking but please wait until they have finished.

- There are no right or wrong answers. We are interested in your personal views; so don't feel like you have to agree with anyone else. [Facilitator: please emphasize that this is a safe space to speak; feel free to bring up throughout the conversation]

- You do not have to speak in any particular order and I may call on you to keep our conversation moving.

- You may also use the chat function to share your thoughts

- We have a limited amount of time, so I might have to interrupt from time to time to keep things moving.

- Again, please talk one at a time and please do not have side conversations.

- Are there any questions? Do you fully understand everything said to you today?

- Well, we are ready to begin.

Warm up question

- What motivates you most to vote? What do you think motivates others the most?

Guiding question

- In the past, who have you typically turned to, in order to find out more about a polling location?

- How about in terms of voting by mail, or questions about important dates?

- [Facilitator: Please Probe: On source? Has that changed in recent elections in any way?]

[FACILITATOR: EXPLAIN THAT NEXT YOU WILL WATCH THE FIRST OF TWO SHORT VOTER MESSAGE VIDEOS TOGETHER. PLEASE INVITE PARTICIPANTS TO TAKE A SHORT 1 MINUTE BREAK AND STRETCH WHILE YOU LOAD THE VIDEO THAT YOU WILL SHARE.]

- What did you think of this video? Was the message clear? What about the translation into language -- did you understand what the narrator was explaining? Did you find the message motivating?

- I want to talk about using vote centers as one of the options many of you will have for voting in November . Vote centers were established in several counties in California but not all. Vote centers provide several language assistance and accessibility services, and replace the system of having many small polling locations. One convenience of vote centers is that you can vote in person or drop off at any vote center in your county, it doesn't have to be the one nearest to your home.

- It is okay if you have not heard about Vote Centers. Remember Vote Centers are new.

- If you have used a vote center in the past, in your experience, what do you wish you had known to ask about or ask for, prior to using a vote center?

- Now I want to ask about voting in person, another option for voting that you will have in November. What kinds of things do you worry about when it comes to voting in person this November? [Probes on health/ safety, long lines, childcare?]

- What do you think about voting in person before election day?

- Suppose you are required to wear a mask if you vote in person. Would that make you more or less likely to vote in person? If there is a requirement to wear a mask for voting in person, how would that change how you plan to vote in November?

[FACILITATOR: EXPLAIN THAT NEXT YOU WILL WATCH THE SECOND OF TWO SHORT VOTER MESSAGE VIDEOS TOGETHER. PLEASE INVITE PARTICIPANTS TO TAKE A SHORT 1 MINUTE BREAK AND STRETCH WHILE YOU LOAD THE VIDEO THAT YOU WILL SHARE.]

- What did you think of this video? Was the message clear? What about the translation into language -- did you understand what the narrator was explaining? Did you find the message motivating?

- When you hear this phrase "vote by mail" what do you think of?

[Facilitator: Please explain that vote by mail will be an option provided to all California voters for the 2020 elections in November, but it may not continue for everyone afterwards.]

- Tell me, what does Vote By Mail look like to you?

- [Inform about signature requirements, verification process] What kind of information would help make sure that community members (friends and family members) like you are aware of the requirements

- [Inform about different ways to return] What kind of information would help make sure that community members like you are aware about the different ways to turn in a mail ballot?

- What kinds of things do you worry about when it comes to voting by mail? [Probes about delays, ballot not counted for some reason, not trusting the mail service to get there safely / on time, ballot getting lost once it gets there]

- In the surveys you completed you shared which sources you use to receive information about voting, and where you most commonly see messages about voting. Tell us which sources of information, like social media or radio or television, or telephone calls, do you think your friends and family members would find most useful for learning about their options for voting in November?

Probe more on responses above. Ask, tell me more about why you think those sources would be useful for your friends and family.

- What kinds of resources or assistance do you need to help you vote in 2020?

[FACILITATOR: This is also where we probe on language translation and language assistance services.]

We are reaching the end of our time today. I want to give you one last chance to offer any thoughts or ask any

questions about concerns or challenges you anticipate for voting in November.

If there is nothing else, then we have reached the end of our time. Thank you again. I also want to let you know that what you share will be used to help craft future messages and outreach. This report will include data tables charts and summary findings explaining how people feel about voting and the different options. We will share this with each of you as well through the email you provided.

ABOUT THE RESEARCH TEAM

Dr. Francisco I. Pedraza is Director of the Civic Engagement Group at Center for Social Innovation. He is also the Director of the Politics of Race, Immigration, and Ethnicity Consortium, an interdisciplinary, academic research sharing and mentoring platform. He also holds faculty appointments in the Department of Political Science and School of Public Policy at the University of California, Riverside. Pedraza has published over twenty academic articles and book chapters focusing on civic engagement, political attitude formation, the intersection between immigrant policing and health, as well as the general political experience of immigrants and racial minorities in the United States. He received his Ph.D. in political science from the University of Washington, Seattle. More information at www.franciscoipedraza.com

Dr. Karthick Ramakrishnan is the founding director of the Center for Social Innovation, and professor of public policy and political science at the University of California, Riverside. He has published many articles and 7 books, including most recently, *Citizenship Reimagined* (Cambridge, 2020) and *Framing Immigrants* (Russell Sage, 2016). He has written dozens of opeds and has appeared in over 1,000 news stories. Ramakrishnan was recently named to the *Frederick Douglass 200* and is currently working on projects related to racial equity in philanthropy and regional development. He holds a BA in international relations from Brown University and a PhD in politics from Princeton.

In addition, Ramakrishnan serves on the Board of The California Endowment and the Association of Princeton Graduate Alumni, chairs the California Commission on APIA Affairs, and serves as director of the Inland Empire Census Complete Count Committee. Ramakrishnan directs the National Asian American Survey and is founder of AAPIData.com, which publishes demographic data and policy research on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders. More information at http://karthick.com

Paola Avendano draws on her experience as a Latina in LA. County and San Bernardino County to advance research and sustain university–community partnerships. As the External Affairs Associate of the Center for Social Innovation (CSI), Avendano oversees and supports a number of Census related efforts, including the Inland Empire Complete Count Committee. In addition to native Spanish and English language fluency, Avendano also leads business management and social media/website management projects at CSI. Avendano launched the weekly webinar and shared website that links CSI with Inland Empire Community Foundation and other non-profit stakeholders in the region as part of a coordinated response to COVID-19.

Maricruz Ariana Osorio, M.A. was born and raised in the Inland Empire. She is completing her doctoral degree in the department of Political Science at the University of California, Riverside where she focuses on political behavior of women and immigrants. She has published research on the connection between immigrant policing and health and has given multiple invited talks across the United States on immigrant political participation. Her work also focuses on political engagement of women and how the political context of individuals shapes their willingness to participate politically. Engaging in public intellectualism, she has also worked to diversify higher education with People of Color Also Know Stuff and written research on Latinx politics in various accessible platforms. More information here: mosorio.info.

Mai Nguyen Do works as a researcher for AAPI Data at the Center for Social Innovation and is a PhD student in political science at the University of California, Riverside. Her work focuses on Southeast Asian refugee communities, the deportation of Southeast Asian Americans, and Asian American politics more generally. She previously worked as a Research & Policy Associate for Courage California.

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Arleth Flores Aparicio is from Northern San Diego County and an undergraduate student at the University of California, Riverside. Within the School of Public Policy, her major tracks are Policy Institutions and Processes and Social/Cultural/Family Policy with a minor in Law and Society. She has participated in CA 49th congressional and delegate district campaigns, aiming to focus on the Latino community's voting efforts.

CSIUCR
CENTER FOR SOCIAL INNOVATION

The Center for Social Innovation provides a credible research voice that spurs civic leadership and policy innovation. The Center also integrates researchers, community organizations, and civic stakeholders in collaborative projects and long-term partnerships that produce meaningful change. Importantly, the Center seeks to shift away from a "problem" narrative to an "opportunity" narrative for marginalized communities and localities.

California
Common Cause

California Common Cause is dedicated to building a democracy that includes everyone. The organization works on voting rights, redistricting reform, government transparency, and money in politics to end structural inequities in our state and local democracies and to create governments at all levels that are responsive to and reflective of California's communities.

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