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March 31<sup>st</sup>, 2022

The Honorable Phil Ting  
Chair, Assembly Budget Committee  
1021 O St., Ste. 8230  
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Nancy Skinner  
Chair, Senate Budget & Fiscal Review  
Committee  
1021 O St., Ste. 8630  
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Wendy Carrillo  
Chair, Assembly Budget Subcommittee No. 4  
1021 O St.  
Ste. 5730  
Sacramento, CA 95814

The Honorable Sydney Kamlager  
Chair, Senate Budget Subcommittee No. 4  
1021 O St.  
Ste. 6510  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Re: Budget Request for 2022-2023: Funding for Voter Education and Outreach

Dear Chairpersons Ting, Skinner, Carrillo and Kamlager:

The undersigned legislators respectfully request that the Senate and Assembly Budget Committees appropriate \$85 million this year for voter education and outreach and commit to additional funding for the following two budget years, to ensure that all eligible California voters have full and equal access to the ballot for the 2022 and 2024 elections. This funding is necessary to address continuing gaps in voter registration and participation for youth, Latino, Black, and Asian and Pacific Islander voters.

Despite California's national leadership in passing policies designed to remove impediments to voting, and a historically high voter turnout in the November 2020 election,<sup>1</sup> disparities in participation among youth and voters of color have persisted, and in some cases grew, compared to our older, non-Hispanic white population.<sup>2</sup> Continued patterns of underrepresentation of youth, people of color, and low-income people in the electorate stem from the historic disenfranchisement of these same groups.

The goals of California's election reforms, to achieve a more representative democracy, cannot be realized unless there is widespread public awareness of the opportunities to participate in democracy. Our most recent innovation, to mail a ballot to every active, registered voter,<sup>3</sup> is a case in point. The new law is important to expand voter access, but if it is not accompanied by a

robust voter education and outreach program then it will not solve the continuing age and racial participation gap and will carry the risk of unintentional disenfranchisement for communities of color, youth, language minorities, people with disabilities, people with low incomes, and those who are unhoused, housing insecure, or geographically mobile. A recent report from the Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC)<sup>4</sup> suggested that election officials should work to target underrepresented groups in primary elections, as part of implementing reforms, to avoid unintentionally expanding turnout gaps in low-turnout contests. The report also found that consolidating voting locations expanded turnout gaps for African Americans and Latinos and suggested “that election officials should make efforts to help mitigate or even counter negative effects from consolidation.”

The targeted outreach suggested by the PPIC report is an essential component to successful implementation of California’s election reforms more generally. **An appropriation of \$85 million annually for three years is necessary to inform voters about the full range of their voting options, to maximize turnout, to ensure that all eligible ballots will be counted, to combat the suppressive impact of election mis- and disinformation, and ultimately, to build a more representative electorate.** This funding is needed to support county voter education and outreach, so elections officials and trusted local messengers can update voters on local procedures, as well as a coordinated statewide voter education and outreach campaign led by the Secretary of State’s office.

As part of the \$85 million appropriation, California’s 58 county elections offices will receive \$2 per voter to fund outreach through approaches such as mailings, social media, ethnic and local media, and contracts with community-based organizations. Counties will use these funds to address significant knowledge gaps among the electorate. According to a study by the Center for Inclusive Democracy, over a quarter of eligible voters in 2020 stated that they did not know or were unsure about where to find information about in-person voting locations.<sup>5</sup> This is particularly troubling since about a third of Californians said their preferred way to cast their ballot in 2020 was in person, with greater percentages of youth, Black, and voters with a disability preferring to vote in person. Counties are well-positioned, especially when working in collaboration with trusted local messengers, to reach voters. The study found that voters typically turn to county elections offices’ materials, as well as families and friends, to find election information.<sup>6</sup>

Supported by this outreach funding, counties will provide voters with information about mail ballots, early and in-person voting opportunities, accessible voting options, how to access in-language materials and assistance, and how to remedy voting-related problems. The funds will also help ensure voters who need assistance to vote from home because of a disability or language barrier have the information they need to vote from home, along with a simple way to request assistance. Along with informational mailings and/or the voter information guide, counties will provide returnable postcards to voters for voters to request translated ballots or accessible ballots by mail.

Counties will be encouraged to partner and contract with community-based organizations (CBOs), who are trusted messengers for key communities. Collaborating with CBOs can strengthen elections offices’ ability to reach infrequent voters and hard-to-reach communities.

There are many precedents for state-funded outreach campaigns to raise public awareness among California’s hard-to-reach communities. For example, the state appropriated \$187.2 million for [Census outreach activities](#) targeting hard-to-count households, [grants were awarded](#) to CBOs for education and outreach activities to raise awareness of the Golden State Stimulus (GSS) and the California Earned Income Tax Credit (CalEITC), the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) administers [public awareness campaigns](#) on testing and vaccination, and the Department of Social Services (DSS) conducts [multilingual public outreach activities](#) to increase participation in human services programs like CalFresh.<sup>7</sup>

The Secretary of State will carry out a statewide voter education campaign to complement the efforts of county elections officials. The statewide campaign will help ensure voters have the information they need to participate in elections, help combat mis- and disinformation, and provide consistent messaging about voter registration, procedures for voting by mail, in-person voting opportunities, available language assistance, accessible voting, and conditional voter registration and voting. Consistent statewide messaging can help ensure voters not only understand the range of voting options available to them but are set up to successfully participate. Voting from home can carry its own challenges and will be new to some voters. In the November 2020 election over 80,000 (0.5 percent) vote-by-mail ballots were rejected primarily because of a mismatched or missing signature or for being late. These numbers were higher for Latinos, young voters, first-time voters, and previous polling place voters.<sup>8</sup> The Secretary of State will convene a task force to provide advice on implementation of the campaign and will report to the legislature following the 2022 and 2024 general elections.

This funding is essential to avoid widening California’s already significant age and racial participation gaps, to ensure that all eligible Californians, regardless of their background or experience, are fully and reliably informed about their voting options and opportunities, and to build an electorate that is truly representative of all Californians.

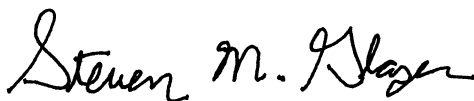
Sincerely,



CECILIA AGUIAR-CURRY  
Assemblymember, 4<sup>th</sup> District



MIKE FONG  
Assemblymember, 49<sup>th</sup> District



STEVEN GLAZER  
Chair, Senate Elections Committee  
Senator, 7<sup>th</sup> District



ISAAC BRYAN  
Chair, Assembly Elections Committee  
Assemblymember, 54<sup>th</sup> District



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Assemblymember, 51<sup>st</sup> District



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Assemblymember, 74<sup>th</sup> District



MIGUEL SANTIAGO  
Assemblymember, 53<sup>rd</sup> District



EDUARDO GARCIA  
Assemblymember, 56<sup>th</sup> District



MIA BONTA  
Assemblymember, 18<sup>th</sup> District



JOSH NEWMAN  
Senator, 29<sup>th</sup> District



JOSH BECKER  
Senator, 13<sup>th</sup> District



TOM UMBERG  
Senator, 34<sup>th</sup> District

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<sup>1</sup> Press Release, Secretary of State Alex Padilla Certifies Record Setting General Election Results ([bit.ly/SoSDec2020PressRelease](https://bit.ly/SoSDec2020PressRelease)).

<sup>2</sup> U.S. Census Bureau (2020). Voting and Registration in the Election of November 2020, Table 4b. Retrieved at [census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/voting-and-registration/p20-585.html](https://www.census.gov/data/tables/time-series/demo/voting-and-registration/p20-585.html). See also: Romero, Mindy S., Center for Inclusive Democracy, USC Sol Price School of Public Policy, The Experience of Black Voters In California: 2020 General Election and Beyond, December 2021 ([bit.ly/BlackVoterExperience](https://bit.ly/BlackVoterExperience)); Romero, Mindy S., Center for Inclusive Democracy, USC Sol Price School of Public Policy, Voter Registration in California: 2020 General Election, December 2021 ([bit.ly/CIDReportVoterReg2020](https://bit.ly/CIDReportVoterReg2020)); Romero, Mindy S., Center for Inclusive Democracy, USC Sol Price School of Public Policy, November 2020 General Election: Latino and Asian-American Vote ([bit.ly/USCPriceReportNov2020](https://bit.ly/USCPriceReportNov2020)); Romero, Mindy S., Center for Inclusive Democracy, USC Sol Price School of Public Policy, California's Youth Vote: November 2020 Election ([bit.ly/USCPriceYouthNov2020](https://bit.ly/USCPriceYouthNov2020)).

<sup>3</sup> AB 37 (Berman 2021).

<sup>4</sup> McGhee, Eric, Paluch, Jennifer, and Romero, Mindy. [Equity in Voter Turnout after Pandemic Election Policy Changes](#). (PPIC, March 2022)

<sup>5</sup> Romero, Mindy S., Center for Inclusive Democracy, USC Sol Price School of Public Policy, Voter Messaging in the Time of COVID-19, Study Report ([bit.ly/CIDVoterMessaging2020](https://bit.ly/CIDVoterMessaging2020)), at 7.

<sup>6</sup> *Id.* at 9.

<sup>7</sup> Legislative Analyst's Office, Budget and Policy Post, March 8, 2018, The 2018-19 Budget Census Outreach, [lao.ca.gov/Publications/Report/3780](https://lao.ca.gov/Publications/Report/3780); California Health and Human Services Agency, Department of Community Services And Development, Notice of Funding Availability 2021 California Earned Income Tax Credit Plus Education and Outreach Grant, [csd.ca.gov/Shared%20Documents/2021-CalEITC-Plus-NOFA-ADA.pdf](https://csd.ca.gov/Shared%20Documents/2021-CalEITC-Plus-NOFA-ADA.pdf); California Coronavirus Covid-19 Response Toolkit [toolkit.covid19.ca.gov/partners/](https://toolkit.covid19.ca.gov/partners/); CalFresh Outreach [cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/calfresh-outreach](https://cdss.ca.gov/inforesources/calfresh-outreach).

<sup>8</sup> Romero, Mindy S., Center for Inclusive Democracy, USC Price School of Public Policy, California's Changing Electorate: A 2020 Post Election Analysis of Voting Behavior (August 2021) ([bit.ly/CACChangingElectorate](https://bit.ly/CACChangingElectorate)); Alexander, Kim and Romero, Mindy S., California Voter Foundation, Improving California's Vote-by-Mail Process by Reducing Ballot Rejection: A Three-County Study (September 2020) ([calvoter.org/rejectedballots](https://calvoter.org/rejectedballots)).