

STATE OF CALIFORNIA
CALIFORNIA STATE AUDITOR'S OFFICE (CSA)

In the Matter of
CITIZENS REDISTRICTING COMMISSION (CRC)
Applicant Review Panel (ARP) Public Meeting

TELEPHONIC

THURSDAY, APRIL 16, 2020

9:00 A.M.

Reported by:

Peter Petty

APPEARANCES

Members Present

Ryan Coe, Chair

Angela Dickison, Member

Ben Belnap, Member

Staff Present

Christopher Dawson, Panel Counsel

Shauna Pellman, Auditor Specialist II

Applicants

Elizabeth Ahlers

Russell Yee

Denisse Godoy

Christopher Castaneda

INDEX

	PAGE
Elizabeth Ahlers	4
Russell Yee	58
Denisse Godoy	129
Christopher Castaneda	189
Adjourn	254

1
2
3
4
5
6
7
8
9
10
11
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25

PROCEEDINGS

8:59

CHAIR COE: Okay, the time being 8:59 a.m., April 16th, I'll go ahead and call this meeting of the Applicant Review Panel back to order.

Before we get started here, I'd like to just give a few reminders for those in the room, and remotely, really. If you're on the meeting, please silence your cell phones and other devices while we're in session. For those in the room, if you need to take a call, please take out in the hallway. And, again, if there's an emergency, please follow the instructions of the State Auditor's Office Staff.

At this time, I'd like to welcome Ms. Elizabeth Ahlers for her interview.

Ms. Ahlers, can you hear us okay?

MS. AHLERS: Okay. Yes.

CHAIR COE: Okay. Great. Thank you. Welcome. Thank you for being here.

And I'd like to now take the time to turn the time over to Mr. Dawson for the five standard questions please.

MR. DAWSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

1 Ms. Ahlers, I'm going to ask you five
2 standard questions that the Applicant Review Panel
3 has requested each applicant respond to. Are you
4 ready?

5 MS. AHLERS: I am ready.

6 MR. DAWSON: First question: What skills
7 and attributes should all Commissioners possess?
8 What skills or competencies should the Commission
9 possess collectively? Of the skills, attributes,
10 and competencies that each Commissioner should
11 possess, which do you possess? In summary, how
12 will you contribute to the success of the
13 Commission?

14 MS. AHLERS: Okay. Collectively, I've got
15 this list. We need to work together, focus on
16 task, consider the good for all groups represented,
17 listen to people, evaluate information, weigh the
18 importance of that information, be organized and
19 efficient, cooperative, have an analytic mind set,
20 be impartial, objective, and, let's see, and
21 understand the priorities to satisfy the law.

22 Me, personally -- let's see, what are the
23 other things? -- as I was thinking about the big
24 picture of what the job would be, the task would
25 be, I see myself as having the strength of looking

1 at the big picture, seeing what needs to be done,
2 having a strategy, gathering resources, looking at
3 data, and setting up the timeline, keep things on
4 track to get the job done. So strategy,
5 priorities, timing, personality, and purposeful
6 listening. Hiring help to make sure that things
7 keep rolling on time and we don't get distracted by
8 things that we could hire others to do.

9 Patience is a big one that everyone needs,
10 and I've had to practice it a lot, so -- I've got
11 six kids. And the patience is listening to people,
12 listening to the experts, listening to the people
13 coming to hearings, listening to other
14 Commissioners, listening to their views and
15 personality. There's a different vocabulary,
16 lexicon, that other people use to understand what
17 they're saying from their heart, as well as the
18 technical part of it in the mind. So there's some
19 -- so all those things are involved in absorbing
20 the information and being able to make decisions
21 with it in a consensus way.

22 It was interesting researching the
23 Redistricting Commission in California because I
24 didn't realize that it was -- this is just -- this
25 would be the second Commission. So, really, all

1 the people that would be doing it, it's everybody's
2 first time. So working together is a big, big part
3 of it, project management, goals, and deadlines,
4 getting educated by the experts, assessing the
5 resources, and maybe dividing responsibilities,
6 especially with the pandemic interfering with
7 timelines and things being delayed. I know like
8 the census data is going to be delayed, so time is
9 going to be very important to get the districts
10 defined for the next election.

11 MR. DAWSON: Thank you.

12 MS. AHLERS: Um-hmm.

13 MR. DAWSON: Question two: Work on the
14 Commission requires members of different political
15 backgrounds to work together. Since the 2010
16 Commission was selected and formed, the American
17 political conversation has become increasingly
18 polarized, whether in the press, on social media,
19 and even in our own families.

20 What characteristics do you possess and
21 what characteristics should your fellow
22 Commissioners possess that will protect against
23 hyper-partisanship? What will you do to ensure
24 that the work of the Commission is not seen as
25 polarized or hyper-partisan and avoid perceptions

1 of political bias and conflict?

2 MS. AHLERS: Okay, here's another list.

3 We need honesty. And we need a goodwill
4 toward everyone that -- and I think a personal
5 characteristic is if you have a belief that people
6 are not all good or all bad and you give them --
7 and you listen to what they're feeling and what
8 they're thinking.

9 You need flexibility, a spirit of
10 cooperation and compromise. You need to see people
11 as people, not always as a preconceived category,
12 but people as people.

13 And to work, and then as a Commission, to
14 work as a team. And as a community, to also have
15 that teamwork idea that is not one group versus
16 another group. But we can have -- it's possible to
17 have advantages and on both interests.

18 And, let's see, what else did I put down?

19 Sometimes we can't please everyone. And
20 the job of the Commissioner might be one of those
21 thankless jobs where you can't make everybody happy
22 but you have to get the work done, but it could be
23 peaceable and effective and good for the whole,
24 good for the state.

25 Let's see, as far as like avoid -- did we

1 go to that part about avoid perceptions of
2 political bias?

3 MR. DAWSON: We -- the question was asked,
4 yes.

5 MS. AHLERS: Oh, okay, so I was thinking
6 the word perceptions, sometimes that can be a trap
7 because if you always worry about appearances,
8 sometimes you can't make the hard decisions.
9 Sometimes the substance of what you're actually
10 doing has to be more important than perceptions
11 because, like I said, you can't please everybody
12 but you try your best. And if you have that
13 goodwill and you have that genuine concern for the
14 interests of everybody, I think that can be
15 communicated and people can see, all right, well,
16 you did the best you could.

17 You need to focus on purpose, focus on the
18 purpose and, I think, not be distracted by, oh, no,
19 you know, I don't what to look like this or I don't
20 want to look like that, but just like listen and
21 say, yes, yes, yes, and, well, how about this?
22 Let's try this. This is a possibility. This is
23 another option and how do you feel about that?
24 Could that be acceptable? And, ultimately, it is
25 the 14 people that have to make the decision but

1 we're looking for the good of the whole for every
2 Californian. And so, let's see, so it's the good
3 of the whole over personal feelings or personal
4 agendas.

5 And I want to -- you know, I was
6 interested in this because it's an opportunity to
7 serve the state. I've done a lot of service
8 internationally. And for different circumstances,
9 I've decided, well, I think I'll put my energy into
10 here at home, California. California needs help
11 with good people, so --

12 MR. DAWSON: Thank you.

13 Question three: What is the greatest
14 problem the Commission could encounter and what
15 actions would you take to avoid or respond to this
16 problem?

17 MS. AHLERS: Well, as I was saying about
18 the census data being delayed, that may be the
19 biggest problem this time around if the federal
20 government, the Census Bureau, can't get data to
21 the states until summer of 2021, then that's a
22 really tight window before primaries of 2022;
23 right? So the time frame may be the biggest
24 problem.

25 And I still need education on all of the

1 pieces that would go into this project but I hear
2 that having the hearings and going to hear the
3 various regions of the state is a very important
4 component of the work and that takes a lot of time,
5 so that would have to be well coordinated and
6 thought through first.

7 And I'm not sure if you can start doing
8 the hearings before the census data comes out. I
9 don't know. But if it could be done, that would be
10 a way to help the process along. Otherwise,
11 everybody's just got to work really hard and work
12 together and be disciplined on that timeline.

13 MR. DAWSON: Thank you.

14 Question four: If you are selected you
15 will be one of 14 members of the Commission which
16 is charged with working together to create maps of
17 the new districts.

18 Please describe a situation where you had
19 to work collaboratively with others on a project to
20 achieve a common goal. Tell us the goal of the
21 project, what your role in the group was, and how
22 the group worked through any conflicts that arose?
23 What lessons would you take from this group
24 experience to the Commission, if selected?

25 MS. AHLERS: Okay. Projects. There's a

1 few of them that came to mind that were
2 interesting.

3 Well, I'm going to start with a project
4 down in Bolivia, South America. It was for a
5 construction of a home and community center. And
6 we had a team of people from California. I think
7 some of them were outside of California, too, but a
8 team of Americans. And we went down and it was all
9 like we brought the funds and we paid for it and we
10 worked alongside them. But when we got there, the
11 translator, who we were counting on to help us, was
12 stuck in another city for two weeks.

13 And so coordinating the work with my team,
14 who didn't speak Spanish, and their team that
15 didn't speak English, I became the bridge. And I
16 only had ten weeks of Spanish back in college but I
17 was a linguistics major and I can communicate, even
18 if I don't know the vocabulary, and sort of listen
19 to people's whole communication manner and
20 understand what needs to be done.

21 And so that was very -- it was very fun.
22 It was very stressful to be the bridge person, the
23 go-between. And I'm not a construction expert but
24 I didn't have to be the expert, but I could be the
25 person that brings in the cooperation and the

1 understanding so that the work could be done.

2 There was a children's component on that,
3 too, where we had no idea what the resources were,
4 we just had to make do with what we had and it was
5 fun.

6 Another incident that came to mind was,
7 oh, let's see, we were -- my husband and I were on
8 the board of another group that does international
9 work. And the people that started this are big
10 visionaries and they want to do so much good for
11 their countries but they don't have the
12 administration set for communication and the
13 bringing in the funds. They had some legal
14 structure.

15 And so, as a board member, I was
16 presenting this idea that I learned in the
17 leadership meeting that you can't have everybody be
18 the visionary. Somebody needs to be the one that
19 really enjoys being on a computer, and sending
20 emails, and somebody who has connections to
21 fundraisers.

22 So there was a little bit of conflict
23 there because they wanted me to do all of that but
24 those things aren't -- all of those things aren't
25 really my gifts, either, because I'm more of the

1 big visionary. So we worked out and I just kind of
2 like smoothed it over, like, okay, these people
3 have such good hearts, but they don't quite get
4 what I'm saying. And the reason why they're
5 struggling with finances so much is because they
6 don't quite get what I'm saying. But I had to kind
7 of let it go. And they're still surviving but I
8 can't invest a lot of time there because I want to
9 invest my time and energy in projects that are
10 really going to move forward.

11 Let's see, and then there was one more I
12 thought of. I went -- I was -- I didn't put this
13 in my application but I had started a business with
14 my brother and we were licensed. We went through a
15 state licensing. It was for like an assisted care
16 facility, so we went through state licensing and
17 certification. And we were looking for financing
18 because our dream was like to build from the ground
19 up, like state-of-the-art facility, beautiful, and
20 small scale, just small.

21 But I wanted to go to -- so I when to this
22 seminar on raising capital, raising capital for
23 small business. And it was a three-day thing in
24 Scottsdale. And what I noticed about myself was
25 that when they -- when it came time to do the group

1 presentation, this -- you had just like a Saturday
2 afternoon and then you present on Sunday and so you
3 have to, you know, do all your work on Saturday.
4 And they say, "Okay, find a group of eight to ten
5 people."

6 And I just stood there or I just sat there
7 and the people came to me and they were all of the
8 diverse giftedness that was necessary to get the
9 project and presentation done. And I thought, oh,
10 you know, that's so much fun. It's so easy because
11 I have the bridge-building gift, I guess. And so
12 even before Saturday afternoon, I already made
13 these relationships with the people who were the
14 experts. I wasn't the expert in any of that but
15 they were. But because they knew me, they all came
16 together, it came together, the presentation was
17 done, and I learned a lot and it was a fun
18 experience.

19 So that's about working collaboratively.

20 And common goals and -- so bringing it to
21 the Commission, bringing this experience to the
22 Commission, I'm a pragmatic visionary. I look at
23 the big picture. So in that raising capital
24 seminar, I looked at, okay, the presentation is
25 tomorrow and this is what needs to be in it. We

1 need this research, this research, this research,
2 and we need somebody to present. And it worked out
3 beautifully. But it's not that I do everything,
4 it's -- but I understand what needs to be done.

5 Okay.

6 MR. DAWSON: Thank you.

7 Question five: A considerable amount of
8 the Commission's work will involve meeting with
9 people from all over California who come from very
10 different backgrounds and a wide variety of
11 perspectives.

12 If you were selected as a Commissioner,
13 what skills and attributes will make you effective
14 at interacting with people from different
15 backgrounds and who have a variety of perspectives?
16 What experiences have you had that will help you be
17 effective at understanding and appreciating people
18 and communities of different backgrounds and who
19 have a variety of perspectives?

20 MS. AHLERS: Okay, perspectives,
21 backgrounds, effective interaction, well, I have a
22 lot of cross-cultural experience, linguistic
23 experience, as well as just listening to the
24 language of the heart.

25 I've been a teacher in various venues

1 where I design the curriculum and I customize it to
2 the students' needs because I can listen, I can see
3 them, I can watch, I can perceive what is
4 meaningful to them and how they learn. So those
5 are important interpersonal skills that I see would
6 be very valuable on the Commission, within the
7 Commission, and then without, with the public.

8 I've done international travel. And here
9 locally, since I've been staying more local, here,
10 in Montrose, it's very close -- Montrose is -- part
11 of Montrose is part of Glendale. And the Glendale-
12 Burbank area, there's a big Armenian population.
13 And I really have interact with my Armenian
14 community a lot. And then Pasadena is not too far
15 away. Pasadena is very diverse. There's a lot of
16 everybody over there.

17 And then I taught, when I taught at Valley
18 College in the San Fernando Valley, the evening
19 classes, they -- we had up to 17 different
20 languages in there. And so that was really fun to
21 teach that class because if you teach an all-
22 Armenian class, it's really hard to get them to not
23 speak Armenian and practice their English. But
24 when there's 17 languages, you know, nobody can
25 talk to each other unless they have a common

1 language. And the purpose of the class was to
2 practice English, so I'd pair up, you know, someone
3 from Israel, someone from Persia, someone from --
4 there would be someone from Mexico and someone
5 that's Armenian, and 17 different places. So --
6 and they got bonded because it was conversation.
7 And when you have to work on understanding someone
8 in -- with a limited language ability, you really
9 put more of yourself out there to communicate, and
10 so there was bonding that happened.

11 And so that's what I've done here in
12 California with different backgrounds.

13 And then internationally, you know, it's
14 all different. It's all amazing. India, Nepal,
15 some -- well, we had -- well, we weren't really
16 planning on interacting with this group but we came
17 across some sex trafficking victims. And she
18 definitely didn't understand English and she was so
19 scared to talk to me. But there's something that
20 I've been given that people feel safe talking to
21 me.

22 And I'll always remember that incident, as
23 well as other ones in India where we were with
24 different schools. And all of the teachers were
25 Hindu. And we were doing some teacher training

1 things and they'd just come to me and cry. I was
2 like, "Oh, all you sweet people, you sweet people,
3 you're doing good for your children, you're doing
4 good for your country."

5 Okay, let's see, I think that's even a
6 little bit more than I had notes on.

7 Yeah, we went to see lepers in India, dear
8 people, and schools, teaching. All right.

9 MR. DAWSON: Thank you.

10 We will now go to questions from our
11 Panel. Each Panel member will have 20 minutes to
12 pose his or her questions and we'll start with the
13 Chair.

14 Mr. Coe?

15 CHAIR COE: I've got to make sure I get
16 myself off mute.

17 Thank you, Mr. Dawson.

18 Good morning again to you, Ms. Ahlers.
19 Thank you for taking the time to speak with us
20 today.

21 MS. AHLERS: Good morning, Mr. Coe.

22 CHAIR COE: In your first essay you
23 discussed how your family immigrated to the United
24 States and I'd like to hear a little bit more about
25 that.

1 Where, specifically, did your family
2 immigrant from and when did this occur?

3 MS. AHLERS: Well, it depends on the
4 branch of the family, so let's see.

5 My father's father came from Canton, which
6 is the southern part of China. He was a young boy,
7 so I think it was in the 1920s. And he came alone.
8 There were some cousins here. But from letters I
9 have read that my grandfather wrote, the cousins
10 didn't take good care of him. He ended up being a
11 houseboy, actually, for Robert Stack. And that's
12 like a family story but I don't know much about it.

13 And then -- but he worked really hard --
14 we don't even know like his exact day that he was
15 born -- but he worked really hard and got into UC
16 Berkeley as one of, you know, the few Asians in the
17 1930s there, and worked for the State of California
18 as a civil engineer. And he always wanted to go to
19 -- go back to China with his engineering skills and
20 rebuild his country. But because of the political
21 situation there, he was never able to go back. But
22 he did go to Taiwan and use -- he was sent by the
23 Army Corps of Engineers to help Taiwan build roads
24 and bridges. And, unfortunately, that's where he
25 died, but that's kind of, I guess, full circle.

1 And then my mother's father also came as a
2 boy to San Francisco. And he was alone, also, and
3 he came in a war situation. Maybe both of them, it
4 was war situation, because poor China had so many
5 wars. We have no family of his left because I
6 think that they didn't make it through the war.
7 But he was the oldest son, so he's
8 the -- in Chinese society, he's the priority, so
9 they put everything together to get him here. And
10 he worked really hard too. He had an uncle but was
11 mostly on his own. They did some farming around
12 Artesia. My mom remembers being on the farm.

13 So it was also my father's side that had
14 relatives in Fresno and they farmed Chinese
15 vegetables in Fresno. And I remember being a kid
16 up there and, you know, the freedom of a farm. But
17 it was -- they didn't speak any English. So, you
18 know, as a kid, you just, you sit there in the
19 living room and you have to be polite. And they
20 feed you. You know, you have to eat everything.
21 You don't know what it is. But I remember going
22 out and seeing their dried squashes that they dry
23 as sponges.

24 Let's see, my grandmother on my dad's
25 side, they go way back, roots in Bakersfield. And

1 because I know my great grandfather, I remember
2 going to his birthday party in Bakersfield. And
3 then we still -- they had like nine kids. And so
4 most of them are still in Bakersfield, so that's
5 why we still go up there. But my grandmother came
6 down when she was 17. She came down to L.A. She
7 came to a party and never went back, but she worked
8 hard. She was -- it was probably Depression time
9 and she sent money back to Bakersfield. And so we
10 go up there for birthdays and holidays. My dad
11 spent whole summers up there.

12 My mom's mom, some of -- they had -- I
13 think they originally came into San Francisco.
14 There was the San Francisco Earthquake. They got
15 super scared and ran down to L.A. And so that's
16 how her part of the family got to L.A. They had 14
17 kids, and so they had one house for the boys and
18 one house for the girls. And they owned a
19 restaurant. And then they did okay until the Crash
20 and the Depression and they lost the restaurant but
21 by that time the kids could work. And they did a
22 lot of farming down here, too, when it was farming.

23 So those are -- that's some of my family
24 history.

25 CHAIR COE: Thank you for sharing that.

1 Is there anything you learned from, it
2 sounds like, mostly your grandparents that
3 immigrated? Is there anything that you learned
4 from your grandparents in their experience as
5 immigrants that you think would be beneficial
6 perspective to have on this Commission?

7 MS. AHLERS: Well, of course. Well, one
8 thing is that I can't speak Chinese, although I
9 studied it in college and I've been to China
10 several times and I can kind of make do, but
11 because I'm good at language. But I wasn't taught
12 to speak it at home because in my grandparents'
13 generation, it was -- I guess it wasn't the cool
14 thing to speak Chinese. And so they would speak
15 Chinese at home but they'd tell the -- they'd tell
16 my parents' generation, "When you go to school, you
17 only speak English," and so my dad can't speak
18 Chinese. He can still understand it but he doesn't
19 speak it. And the same with my mom. And so, since
20 they couldn't speak it, I couldn't hear it.

21 And so, I don't know, if I -- maybe that's
22 part of why I became a linguist, because I wish I
23 could have spoken Chinese.

24 So there's -- but that is a generational
25 and a cultural thing too. And I think, you know,

1 we should not be ashamed of your language that
2 you're born with or the language of your heritage.
3 But there's also -- it's also very challenging and
4 hard to adapt to new language and communicate your
5 heart and your ideas in another language.
6 Sometimes, you know, you might be able to translate
7 with Google Translator, but it's very hard to
8 communicate the deeper meanings and what's in the
9 heart.

10 So listening to people all over California
11 and their concerns, that's -- a lot of it is
12 language communication.

13 CHAIR COE: Thank you.

14 I'd like to move on to something you wrote
15 in your impartiality essay. And in that essay, you
16 wrote, "The exercise of impartiality requires an
17 objectivity that necessarily separates oneself from
18 personal agendas for the benefit of the community."

19 So I'm wondering if you can give us a
20 specific example of a time where you did this, set
21 aside personal agendas to make an impartial
22 decision that benefitted a greater whole?

23 MS. AHLERS: Um-hmm. Let's see. Well, I
24 put in there my everyday practice, it's really just
25 part of my lifestyle to separate myself from

1 personal agenda for the benefit of the whole. It
2 can go from, you know, from the small scale here in
3 the house during quarantine where I've got -- I
4 have five of my six children in here. And this is
5 my attic because, you know, we all kind of need our
6 space, and they're doing online studies and things.
7 And so -- but, you know, it's just an everyday
8 practice on a small scale at home. And if you do
9 it on an individual basis every day, it becomes a
10 natural thing when you deal with people outside.

11 Let's see if I can give an example of
12 something bigger.

13 Well, on all of my travel trips, of
14 course, I mean the whole principle is that I'm more
15 concerned with the poor of the world than I am with
16 my own comfort because Bolivia is a struggling
17 place, you know? You go walk on the streets and
18 your feet get dirty. So, you know, I don't want to
19 like take the same shoes that I would wear to this
20 interview, although I'm not wearing shoes for this
21 interview. But there's sacrifices. You know,
22 there's sleeping situations. There's bug issues.
23 There's life and death issues when you go to places
24 like -- that I've been to. And -- but you love the
25 people. You love the people and you see that

1 there's something good that be done there.

2 And it's the same as a teacher. You know,
3 you don't teach for money. You don't teach for
4 fame. You don't teach for ego. It's really
5 because you want to invest in precious people of
6 the next generation. So it's just a lifestyle.

7 CHAIR COE: Thank you.

8 I'd like to ask you about some social
9 media posts. I think that, as you're aware, the
10 background check that was conducted on all
11 accidents, I think you were informed --

12 MS. AHLERS: Yeah.

13 CHAIR COE: -- it flagged some social
14 media posts or shared some re-posts in this case.

15 And since social media is a form of
16 personal expressions, I'd like to ask you about
17 some of these now and give you an opportunity to
18 provide some of your thoughts on that.

19 MS. AHLERS: Yes. Thank you. I got an
20 email last night about that. And I, you know, I
21 must admit that I lost some sleep over it. But
22 let's see if I can -- let's see. What? Let's see,
23 you were saying -- oh, I had a question.

24 So who is it that picks out the screen
25 shots to put on the application?

1 CHAIR COE: Mr. Dawson, did you want to
2 provide a little background on --

3 MR. DAWSON: Sure.

4 CHAIR COE: -- the background check --

5 MR. DAWSON: Yes.

6 CHAIR COE: -- about that?

7 MR. DAWSON: Of course, Mr. Coe.

8 Ms. Ahlers, as part of the background
9 check the CSA, the State Auditor's Office, engaged
10 in a review of all applicants' social media, and
11 that's all publicly available things. And where
12 there was an indication that it might be of interest
13 and use to the Applicant Review Panel, that was
14 highlighted and provided to them.

15 MS. AHLERS: Okay. So it wasn't
16 necessarily Mr. Coe that was disturbed by it.

17 Well, I thought it was very interesting,
18 the three things that were picked out. Well, none
19 of them, I really put much commentary to but the
20 content of it was very interesting.

21 One is, it's a Black man interviewing an
22 Asian man about LGBTQ issues and education. And my
23 personal interest in the story was about the
24 education. So the reason why I was losing sleep
25 over this last night was because I felt like, well,

1 somebody's making assumptions about me. Somebody
2 is making judgments about my innocent posts. I
3 mean, what -- it's a Black man, an Asian man, an
4 LGBTQ issue, and about state education. And so my
5 own insecurities, like what are people thinking
6 about me?

7 But anyway, my motivation in that interest
8 was -- is the education part because I think
9 there's -- there was a Black man and Asian man and
10 they were discussing two different points of view
11 on curriculum for our California schools. And so
12 it's really a point of view.

13 And the whole -- so much of the emphasis
14 on this Redistricting Commission is really to have
15 an open mind and to listen to different points of
16 view. And so I was listening to two different
17 points of view by my interest in this video. And I
18 felt that the points, that both sides had very
19 valid points to consider when you think about the
20 curriculum first, school children statewide. And I
21 think that the concern in that particular time was
22 like, I think it was a year ago, over a year ago,
23 was the age of the children.

24 And so if you guys have children, you know
25 that at a certain age, there's issues that they

1 don't need to be stressed out about. You know,
2 when it comes to sexual orientation and even just,
3 you know, who you are in your gender and dating, I
4 mean, when I was a teenager, just any kind of
5 dating is so stressful. And as a parent, I have to
6 consider, that's very stressful for children.

7 And as a teacher you see, you know,
8 children get stressed out -- oh, my gosh, I've got
9 a math test on Friday or, oh, I have to write a
10 paper and it's due, I can't go play with my friends
11 -- you know, that's the kind of stress that
12 children should have is their -- I have a math
13 test, I can't go play because I have to write this
14 paper. But I felt -- I had to consider, is this
15 the stress that we need to put on our children? So
16 it was just like listening to different points of
17 view.

18 And then there was that -- and then the
19 next one was about a Muslim woman. And I don't
20 remember the whole thing but it stands out in my
21 mind that she was a disputer in a peaceful meeting.
22 And so it was -- at the time because it was over a
23 year ago, that was sort of like one of the issues
24 going on was peaceful Muslims.

25 And so I have nothing against Muslims. My

1 -- I grew up next door to Muslims. We went to each
2 other's birthday parties. And when my dad was out
3 of work for a year and he was really stressed out,
4 our neighbor got him a job. They're still
5 neighbors and always love those people.

6 And when I got married 30 year ago, we
7 lived in a little two-apartment duplex. And the
8 people upstairs were from Lebanon and they wore the
9 whole -- the wife wore the whole thing. And I was
10 newly married, and they had kids and she was a
11 stay-at-home mom, and so she taught me how to cook.
12 We all learned how to make hummus from scratch. And
13 they slaughtered this lamb in the driveway and had
14 this big party and they were like, you know,
15 turning it on the spit all day. It smelled so
16 good. And they were just such sweet, sweet
17 friends. And the only thing that bothered me about
18 them was that he smoked a lot and the smoke went
19 through their apartment into my clothes closet.
20 But that's not something I'm going to make an issue
21 about.

22 And so, you know, I have nothing against
23 LGBTQ people because my neighbor -- I wrote that in
24 my essay -- my neighbor, we get along great. And
25 he takes care of my kids and my kids take care of

1 their dogs. During the quarantine, there's like no
2 flour in the stores and my daughter had her 18th
3 birthday. And so I said, "Neighbor, do you have
4 any flour? We need to make cupcakes." You know,
5 we have a great relationship.

6 So these videos have nothing to do with
7 that. I'm all about love. I'm all about accepting
8 people and getting along and building bridges.

9 The third video was about a little
10 disabled girl. Okay, so we've got a Black man --

11 MS. PELLMAN: Two minutes remaining.

12 MS. AHLERS: Okay. So we've got Black
13 man, Asian man, LGBTQ, disabled, Muslim.

14 Okay, so the disabled girl, I think it was
15 on like Oprah and it's a good, happy, feel-good
16 story. So I just like to share good stories. And,
17 you know, maybe the person that I was re-posting
18 from, you know, had another name. But the only
19 thing I put on there was like this is a good story.

20 So I'm sorry if, you know, somebody didn't
21 like it, but I felt like, well, somebody doesn't
22 know me and somebody -- so, anyway, thank you for
23 asking, Mr. Coe, so I could get -- I have a chance
24 to explain.

25 CHAIR COE: You're welcome.

1 I'm sorry, Madam Secretary, did you say
2 that there was under two minutes to go?

3 MS. PELLMAN: Yes. Now there is one
4 minute, nine seconds.

5 CHAIR COE: Okay. In the interest of
6 time, Ms. Ahlers, so I don't go overtime, I think
7 I'm going to yield the rest of my time and turn the
8 time over to Ms. Dickison for her questions.

9 PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Thank you, Mr.
10 Coe.

11 Good morning, Ms. Ahlers.

12 MS. AHLERS: Good morning, Ms. Dickison.

13 PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: So you talked
14 about, in your diversity essay, you discussed it
15 today, teaching the class of students that spoke 17
16 different languages.

17 MS. AHLERS: Um-hmm.

18 PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: In your essay, you
19 went on to say that you, "had wonderful discussions
20 about their perspectives and opinions on politics,
21 economics, immigration, et cetera."

22 Can you share with us what you've learned
23 from your students in those classes about their
24 needs, their thoughts, and their desires, and what
25 they were looking for in representation?

1 MS. AHLERS: Um-hmm. Yes. Well, my
2 motivation into teaching these classes was really
3 because I love the students. The population of
4 students that immigrate to California, and they are
5 first generation, and they are looking for English
6 -- help to speak English, they have a personality
7 that is different from -- well, like, let's see,
8 what is my train of thought? They're just -- I
9 don't know. I just find them so sweet and so
10 genuine and so authentic. And they're here because
11 they are looking -- they're looking for relief from
12 war in other countries, or they're looking for
13 relief from the suffering and struggles of poverty,
14 or they're looking for relief from political
15 pressures where they
16 don't -- they're not able to get the education and
17 the dream because they're in a certain restricted -
18 - class. You know, I just have to say that.

19 But -- and so they come here to California
20 with this expectation of having it different from
21 where they were. And they're looking -- and so
22 they have this very hopeful faces. This was --
23 this particular class was the evening class because
24 these people worked all day. And then they'd come
25 and were dedicated to staying in my class until

1 11:00 at night. And they were the ones that were
2 the most fun to work with. The daytime students
3 sometimes were young, were younger, and they would
4 -- they already could speak pretty fluently. And
5 they were just trying to get through their credits
6 to get a degree; right?

7 But the evening classes, these were people
8 that worked all day and they wanted to learn all
9 night because they knew, okay, if I have better
10 communication skills, then I could try for this
11 other job. And then that will, really, that will
12 help me move into, you know, my own apartment
13 instead of, you know, staying with others, you
14 know, three families or something, or I could
15 contribute. And so they're always -- and they're
16 always thinking about their families.

17 Maybe they -- so I had -- I did have
18 lovely discussions because they were older adults
19 from 20 to 60 years old and so they had real-life
20 experiences and real interest in life here. And so
21 they would ask the serious questions. You know,
22 sometimes teenagers, they're not yet, you know, at
23 a serious level of interest on heavy issues but
24 adults are. And so we'd practice our English on
25 some very interesting topics.

1 PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Thank you.

2 So you have a degree in -- two degrees in
3 linguistics.

4 So think about the skills you've learned
5 in linguistics and the work you've done with, say,
6 in this class, how can you apply that to outreach
7 and to communicating with communities of interest
8 throughout the state in the various regions?

9 MS. AHLERS: Um-hmm. Well, I think it
10 comes -- it just comes kind of naturally to me.
11 I'm thinking of examples.

12 This is just like kind of an out-there
13 example. For a while, my kids were doing
14 background acting because we're close to the
15 studios. And so parents just have to sit in an
16 area and wait. And so I would take it like, okay,
17 this is my time to read a book or something. But
18 it's something, I don't know, it's something that I
19 was given that people would just come and sit by me
20 and talk of, you know, of all backgrounds because,
21 you know, in movies these days, they try to have
22 very diverse kids represented in the scene, and so
23 all the parents are very diverse. And we just
24 started talking. And they would just gather around
25 me.

1 And even another example of just, I don't
2 know, how my life is, I get -- just two weeks
3 ago -- well, before quarantine, it was almost
4 quarantine, like you're supposed to be careful but
5 it wasn't a strict quarantine, I got a knock on the
6 door. And I was like, "Oh, hello."

7 And this guy says, "I just -- I like your
8 house and I just -- I felt like I should just come
9 knock on the door." And he came by like -- he's
10 like, "I'm just walking in the neighborhood." He
11 came by like three times.

12 And when it got to be strict quarantine, I
13 was like, "Well, I'm sorry, Greg, I can't let you
14 in."

15 But it ends up this guy's homeless. I
16 mean, he didn't tell me that much. But when it was
17 cold and rainy, I had to ask him, "You know, Greg,
18 you know, do you need like an umbrella? Where are
19 you going? Do you have a dry place?"

20 And it's very easy for me to talk to
21 people, whatever their background and whatever
22 their needs are, but I don't always do the
23 outreaching. They just kind of come to me
24 sometimes. But it comes naturally.

25 PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Thank you.

1 So one of the things the Commission is
2 going to need to do is be able to identify
3 communities of interest in the various regions in
4 the state of California.

5 So what methods do you think the
6 Commission could take to identify those communities
7 of interest, say up in the far north or Central
8 Valley or inland --

9 MS. AHLERS: Um-hmm.

10 PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: -- coastal?

11 MS. AHLERS: Um-hmm. Well, a lot of those
12 are very obvious. Now there's the -- so there's
13 the farming community and they have needs for their
14 growing their food. And up north there are -- and
15 farther east is forestry area, more agriculture,
16 small business, mountain areas, and just that
17 horrible -- was it Perris? -- Paradise, that
18 horrible fire we had. You know, they
19 have -- they've got concerns now over there in
20 rebuilding.

21 Down in San Diego, I was talking to a
22 friend and I was asking her, "What are your
23 concerns in your community these days around San
24 Diego?"

25 And she said, "Well, homelessness." And

1 then she said, "Now with this COVID-19, we're
2 realizing that transportation is something that we
3 need to reconsider because if we were all to move into
4 a tight community, like apartment buildings
5 downtown, and all use public transportation and
6 trains, we might end up being like New York where
7 the contagious part, the contagious problem, is
8 much greater than it has been. And so maybe
9 instead of trains, we need to build more lanes on
10 the highways and people can keep commuting in their
11 individual cars and it might be safer that way."

12 So that was a very different idea.

13 And then, of course, there's the big
14 cities, L.A. There's so many communities of
15 interest just over there in Pasadena or, you know,
16 Downtown L.A., which my daughter teaches eighth
17 grade in Downtown L.A. and they have very different
18 needs, especially during quarantine and trying to
19 teach the students online where their houses aren't
20 equipped with all the wi-fi that's necessary to do
21 their schoolwork. And even if the school district
22 provides the wi-fi, the families are afraid to let
23 the Spectrum people come into their home and they
24 don't actually want video of their home because
25 their situation,

1 they -- and they're -- they feel very vulnerable.

2 And so there's -- let's see, what else is
3 there?

4 There's Napa Valley. And San Francisco.
5 Desert areas. I've got friends with a watermelon
6 farm in Lancaster. They're having trouble. I
7 haven't kept up this past year. But thank God the
8 drought is over.

9 Okay, I'm not hearing you, Ms. Dickison.

10 PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: I apologize.

11 MS. AHLERS: Okay, ma'am.

12 PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: You talked a
13 little bit about working internationally in Bolivia
14 and India and China.

15 What motivates you to go to other
16 countries and try to improve the quality of life
17 for others?

18 MS. AHLERS: Love. And, also, knowledge.
19 I think a lot of people that live here, they don't
20 realize how destitute some people are in other
21 countries. We have our homeless. We have our
22 poverty. We have our opiate crisis and we have our
23 issues, and that's why I want to serve California.

24 But it's worse in other countries. And it
25 breaks my heart. And if I have the means to help,

1 and if I can, and if I have the connections, I'm
2 that bridge builder again, if I have the
3 connections and, you know, I tell people I've got
4 this project, you know, what could you contribute,
5 it helps.

6 So even in India, when we would have some
7 small-scale conferences, teaching, we would provide
8 the lunchtime and the dinnertime. And they would
9 have to -- they'd have to fund their own
10 transportation to come to the site where the
11 convention was, our little conference, but we would
12 provide the food for them while they're there. And
13 we may have been able to help them out with their
14 transportation to get back to their villages.

15 And when I saw them, you know, they
16 would -- we'd have like a buffet of Indian food
17 because it would be cooked there on site and it
18 would be their own style of food, and we were
19 supposed to eat that, too, but a lot of times, they
20 were just like enjoying the food so much, I'd just
21 go without, you know?

22 And I came home and people said, "Oh, how
23 did you lose weight?"

24 And I'm like, "I don't know." And then I
25 thought about it, like, oh, I was just in India.

1 So I just can't stand seeing people
2 suffer.

3 PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Thank you.

4 On the Commission, what parts of the role
5 do you think you would enjoy the most and what
6 parts do you think you might not enjoy as much?

7 MS. AHLERS: Okay, the parts, well, you
8 probably can guess what I would enjoy the most
9 because I've talked about all these things I enjoy.

10 The parts that I'm willing to do but
11 wouldn't be as much fun would be, oh, like keeping
12 track of hours of service or, you know, like -- or
13 making phone calls or -- I've done a lot of event
14 planning but I don't think I really want to do a
15 lot of that anymore but -- so -- but I can do it.

16 I actually might -- I actually like map
17 work. My daughter is a geography major and so she
18 had -- she was showing me her software that -- I
19 said, "Oh, can you make a map of this, a map of
20 that?"

21 And she goes, "Well, Mom, we need the
22 data."

23 And I'm like, "Uh-huh., don't have the
24 data yet."

25 But, you know, I like statistics. My

1 husband's an accountant. He was the math major.
2 I'm a language person. So I usually leave some of
3 the accounting to him but I can do it. You know,
4 I'm not sure all that's required on the job. I
5 think, yeah, I read that you can hire staff to do a
6 lot of administration work. But I think I've done
7 administration work, I can do it, but I would have
8 more fun interacting with the community.

9 PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Okay. Thank you.

10 Mr. Coe, I have no additional questions at
11 this point.

12 CHAIR COE: Okay. Thank you, Ms.
13 Dickison.

14 Mr. Belnap, the time is yours.

15 PANEL MEMBER BELNAP: Good morning, Ms.
16 Ahlers. Thank you for being with us.

17 MS. AHLERS: Good morning.

18 PANEL MEMBER BELNAP: All but one of my
19 questions has already been asked or answered, so
20 I'll go ahead and I'll lead with that question, and
21 then I do want to return to the social media.

22 What I'd like you to do is walk us through
23 an example of an analysis that you've performed in
24 your work career or your volunteer service.

25 MS. AHLERS: Um-hmm. Well, the strictest

1 analysis would have been while I was in graduate
2 school because certain parts of linguistics are
3 very statistical. And so I took a specific
4 statistics class.

5 Yeah, I became a teacher kind of by
6 default. My original desire was actually to go
7 live overseas, and in some remote area where they
8 can't read, or they might not even have their
9 written language. And so I was trained as a
10 linguist to gather data.

11 So say like if I were in Papua New Guinea
12 and they have like thousands of languages because
13 people -- maybe not now, they probably all have
14 cell phones now. But at that time they would be
15 separated in little villages. And so you'd go
16 visit the village and you say, okay, this, this,
17 what is this, and they give you a word. And you
18 can write it down phonetically, even if they don't
19 have an alphabet. So you're gathering data on
20 vocabulary and you're gathering data on how they --
21 and you observe, how do they use that? Because you
22 could have, you know, three different words for one
23 object or maybe it's one word for three different
24 objects. So you have to look at how things are
25 used, so that takes an analysis. And then -- and

1 you document it.

2 And then you start and you practice it,
3 and then you start speaking it, and you notice how
4 the words are put together, and patterns. So a lot
5 of analysis is data, and then it's patterns. So
6 you say, okay, well, I see this pattern, so their
7 language is not a subject-verb language. Their
8 language is a verb-subject language.

9 So data, observation of patterns, and then
10 you look at what do you do with these patterns?
11 And you write a dictionary, you write a grammar
12 book, and then you teach them how to read.

13 So there's an end to it. The end to that
14 long process is that the people are benefitted.

15 PANEL MEMBER BELNAP: All right. Thank
16 you.

17 So Mr. Coe already talked to you about --
18 or gave you a question about the social media
19 posts. But I had a few other questions that I
20 wanted to carry on from where that discussion
21 ended.

22 You said that whoever flagged these posts
23 obviously doesn't know me as a person, and that's
24 certainly true. Those who flagged and did that
25 analysis didn't know you as a person. And I think

1 one thing we've gotten from you today from your
2 statements, but also from your examples, is that
3 you love people and you want to serve people.

4 That's clear.

5 But in regards to your other thought of,
6 you know, you couldn't see how anyone could have
7 any concern regarding the posts, and I'll tell you,
8 I don't have concerns about all of them, but the
9 one that I'd like you to turn to, and then I want
10 to get your thoughts on, is the one where it says -
11 - it's February 2nd, 2019. The picture of the
12 woman holding the microphone, "That says we have 8
13 million Muslims in this country."

14 So what I want to ask you is are you
15 familiar with the content provider, ACT for
16 America? Are you familiar with that organization?

17 MS. AHLERS: What is it? ACT? A-C-To?

18 PANEL MEMBER BELNAP: Yeah. ACT for
19 America.

20 MS. AHLERS: ACT for America?

21 PANEL MEMBER BELNAP: They're the ones
22 that put together this video that you put on your
23 social media post.

24 MS. AHLERS: No, I'm afraid not. I might
25 have looked it up at the time but --

1 PANEL MEMBER BELNAP: Okay.

2 MS. AHLERS: -- I don't know.

3 PANEL MEMBER BELNAP: So according to
4 Southern Poverty Law Center, and also the Anti-
5 Defamation League, this is an anti-Muslim group.
6 And, also, part of your post has a link that would
7 allow someone to join their movement.

8 MS. AHLERS: Um-hmm.

9 PANEL MEMBER BELNAP: So do you see how
10 that would be a concern to other Commission members
11 who might be Muslim or the concerns of the Muslim
12 community if you were a Commissioner?

13 MS. AHLERS: Would it be that it looks
14 like I'm recruiting people for an unfriendly
15 organization?

16 PANEL MEMBER BELNAP: Could look that way,
17 yes.

18 MS. AHLERS: Or were you getting at -- so,
19 okay, so this ACT for America is a group that is
20 anti-Muslim?

21 PANEL MEMBER BELNAP: Yes.

22 MS. AHLERS: Okay. So if I post that, it
23 looks like I'm anti-Muslim?

24 PANEL MEMBER BELNAP: One, if they don't
25 know you as a person, and many don't, many citizens

1 of California, if you were a Commissioner, wouldn't
2 know you personally.

3 MS. AHLERS: Um-hmm.

4 PANEL MEMBER BELNAP: They wouldn't have
5 this opportunity to have this dialogue. That's the
6 concern behind that particular post. And, again,
7 I'm not concerned with the other posts you were
8 talking about. But that one in particular was
9 where my concern was.

10 MS. AHLERS: Well, I thank you. Thank you
11 for pointing that out to me. And this is exactly
12 what it is to see different points of view and then
13 to say, oh, I didn't realize that that's how it's
14 perceived. And I guess -- well, I definitely won't
15 do that again. I'll have to remember to that put
16 on my list with ACT for America, no, no. Okay.

17 PANEL MEMBER BELNAP: So that leads to my
18 last question regarding the social media, is if you
19 were selected as a Commissioner, how would you
20 modify your social media activity?

21 MS. AHLERS: Well, that's one, definitely.
22 Well, I try to be very positive and I try to put
23 things on of -- well, okay, that one with the
24 Muslim lady, I think the issue for me there was
25 that she was a phony. It wasn't that she was

1 Muslim, but that if she was saying she is a
2 peaceful Muslim and she's disrupting a peaceful
3 meeting, she's a phony. And so I guess I shouldn't
4 have posted that.

5 But sometimes I just feel like, you know,
6 it's so important that people be authentic. And, I
7 mean, if she was a Christian and she was behaving
8 disruptively, I would call that out too. But I try
9 to call things out carefully and sensitively. And
10 I don't know. I guess you can go stalk me and see
11 if there's -- if I need to change in other ways. I
12 just posted my daughter's 18 birthday in quarantine
13 with the cupcakes we made from the neighbor's
14 flour.

15 PANEL MEMBER BELNAP: Sorry. I'm sure the
16 birthdays would be just fine. And, no, we don't
17 want to stalk you.

18 What the Commissioners would need to
19 decide is what their social media policy is --

20 MS. AHLERS: Um-hmm.

21 PANEL MEMBER BELNAP: -- and, I would
22 assume, limit some political activity to avoid
23 situations like this that could come across badly.

24 MS. AHLERS: I really appreciate that. I,
25 really, I thank you.

1 PANEL MEMBER BELNAP: Okay. I don't have
2 any further questions, Mr. Chair.

3 CHAIR COE: Okay, Mr. Dawson, the time is
4 yours.

5 MR. DAWSON: Thank you, Mr. Coe.

6 Good morning again, Ms. Ahlers.

7 MS. AHLERS: Good morning.

8 MR. DAWSON: I wanted to follow up on a
9 couple of things I noticed in your application.

10 In your -- where you listed your
11 employment history, you note that you were at
12 Glendale Community College, Los Angeles Valley
13 College, and UCLA. But I noticed that the dates
14 were all the same, 1991 to 1994. You did those
15 concurrently?

16 MS. AHLERS: Yes, because within the
17 community college system, at least here in
18 California, it's very hard to get a full-time
19 position. And so I had to work some hours here, so
20 I did daytime at Glendale Community College,
21 nighttime at Valley College, summers at UCLA, so
22 that's why it was concurrent.

23 MR. DAWSON: I see. So you talked about
24 your work with your ESL classes. Were all these --
25 was this ESL or was this also like undergraduate

1 level English-speaking/English classes?

2 MS. AHLERS: Um-hmm. They were all in the
3 Department of ESL. I'm not sure what they called
4 it then. But the student population is very
5 different in the daytime and at night, as I
6 explained earlier. So daytime students were of
7 typical college age, you know, more like out of
8 high school. And so they had been to the local
9 high school and were very fluent in English but
10 they weren't able to pass their placement exams at
11 a higher level, so they were put in my class.

12 MR. DAWSON: I see. Thank you.

13 In the letters of recommendation that you
14 provided, I'm looking at the one from Ms. Deanna
15 Gee, she notes your participation in the local
16 Republican Party meetings. And then, also, Mr.
17 Blanco notes that you were the Secretary and
18 Legislative Chair?

19 MS. AHLERS: Yes, sort of by default also.
20 So this is -- so it was -- I wasn't very up to
21 what's going on in politics until 2016 when
22 everything was very political. And so I went to
23 the neighborhood Republican Club because --
24 actually, I didn't know it was -- well, it wasn't -
25 - I got an email. So I got an email and it said,

1 before our election, we're having a special
2 speaker. And so I said, okay, election is coming
3 up, I want to get informed, so I went. And these
4 ladies in L.A. Crescenta, they're like in their
5 eighties and nineties. They're so, so sweet. They
6 have been serving this community so many years.
7 And for some reason -- you know, so it's really
8 like their social club.

9 But whoever was their secretary, she just
10 stopped coming, so I just sort of filled in. But I
11 was never like installed as secretary. I was just
12 kind of helping out.

13 And then their legislative chair, that was
14 by default, too, because she said, "Well, the club
15 in Pasadena, my counterpart over there, she did
16 this job until she died. And I think it's time for
17 me to stop so I can just enjoy."

18 So I said, "Well, okay, I'm not sure, you
19 know, all that you do, but you can train me." And
20 it's been a learning experience --

21 MR. DAWSON: Thank you.

22 MS. AHLERS: -- which I appreciate.

23 MR. DAWSON: This position is volunteer,
24 not paid?

25 MS. AHLERS: Yes.

1 MR. DAWSON: Okay.

2 MS. AHLERS: Yes. It's just a
3 neighborhood club.

4 MR. DAWSON: I see. And --

5 MS. AHLERS: And they do things for the
6 veterans and the do things for foster children.
7 And we fund raise and participate in the Glendale
8 Car Show on Brand Boulevard.

9 MR. DAWSON: So my question is about your
10 participation at the state level. And it -- this
11 letter of recommendation where Ms. Gee notes that
12 you had represented the group at the state
13 convention in Sacramento, was that as an elected
14 delegate?

15 MS. AHLERS: Oh, no.

16 MR. DAWSON: Okay.

17 MS. AHLERS: No.

18 MR. DAWSON: Okay. That answers my
19 question there.

20 In your response to standard question
21 three, you noted that there was a potential problem
22 that -- with the census data caused by COVID-19.
23 And I think you talked about the timeliness of it.
24 But do you also have concerns about whether it will
25 be complete?

1 MS. AHLERS: Whether the census data will
2 be complete?

3 MR. DAWSON: Meaning that -- will the
4 pandemic --

5 MS. AHLERS: Oh.

6 MR. DAWSON: -- cause any problems in
7 making sure that everyone is counted?

8 MS. AHLERS: Well, nobody knows anything,
9 you know? It's very -- we don't know how long we
10 need to be careful. We don't know how careful we
11 have to be, so I don't know if I'm the one to say.
12 But I always feel that there's always got to be a
13 way. There's always got to be a way and you could
14 figure out a way. And if things fall apart more,
15 you know, God forbid, it's not the end of the
16 world. You know, adjust. The world can adjust.
17 You know, people have survived. We can survive.

18 And this has put -- the census and
19 redistricting, elections, that's part of our normal
20 life. And we go on as best we can. We all
21 sacrifice what we can to go back to normalcy but
22 even better than normal. Because I think after
23 this reset, we can evaluate, okay, what are the
24 real essentials? And make sure that that's
25 covered.

1 MR. DAWSON: I see. So thinking about
2 your work, you talked about your ESL work, you've
3 mentioned a class that had 17 languages other than
4 English, your familiarity with the new immigrant
5 community. Historically, new -- recent immigrants
6 have been among the groups that have been
7 undercounted. And I was wondering if you had any
8 thoughts about whether the COVID-19 situation would
9 make that undercount of recent immigrants worse?

10 MS. AHLERS: Oh, I see. I see. I see.
11 Uh-huh. Would this COVID-19 situation make the
12 undercounted worse? Well, people are undercounted
13 if they can't be found. People are undercounted if
14 they don't want to participate. Well, if they can't
15 be found due to COVID-19, that's just, well, that's
16 a possibility.

17 I know that health -- going into find
18 health care is difficult for people. And if you
19 are going to be a statistic in getting a treatment,
20 because they're counting all of the incidences of
21 having the virus and the incidences of death,
22 right, hopefully, also, the incidences of recovery,
23 so then they would be put into a statistical
24 database somewhere and their information would be
25 in there. And that would be uncomfortable for some

1 people.

2 I'm still having a hard time grasping like
3 how it connects with the sense about being lost,
4 undercounted.

5 MR. DAWSON: All right. Thank you.

6 MS. AHLERS: But --

7 MR. DAWSON: Thank you.

8 MS. AHLERS: -- I'm sorry.

9 MR. DAWSON: No, no. That's quite all
10 right.

11 I have no further questions, Mr. Chair.

12 CHAIR COE: Thank you, Mr. Dawson.

13 Ms. Dickison, do you have any follow-up
14 questions?

15 PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: I do not have any
16 follow-up questions.

17 CHAIR COE: Mr. Belnap, any follow-up
18 questions?

19 PANEL MEMBER BELNAP: I have none.

20 CHAIR COE: Okay. Counsel, I also have no
21 follow-up questions.

22 MR. DAWSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

23 Ms. Ahlers, with the time remaining --
24 and, Madam Secretary, how much time is remaining?

25 MS. PELLMAN: Twelve minutes remaining.

1 MR. DAWSON: Thank you.

2 Ms. Ahlers, with the 12 minutes remaining,
3 I'd like to offer you the opportunity to make a
4 closing statement to the Panel, if you wish?

5 MS. AHLERS: I do wish. Let's see. I'm
6 just going to look at my notes and see. Education.
7 Statistics.

8 Well, in a general statement, I've really
9 enjoyed studying what the Redistricting Commission
10 is all about, getting the big picture, as well as
11 looking at what I saw. I looked at the 2011 Final
12 Report. And as I was looking through there I saw,
13 oh, this Article 2 is very important. This Article
14 5 is very important, although I hear it's not so
15 applicable to California right now. And, let's
16 see, I had to learn the terms of Voting Rights Act,
17 that was 1965, and then vote -- and then the 2008
18 one had a name of Voter -- I'm sorry. But anyway,
19 I was learning a lot. And I really enjoyed all the
20 learning.

21 And I really appreciate this opportunity
22 to interview with you. I've been looking forward
23 to it. And I'm in a stage of my life where my
24 youngest is 13 years old and it's becoming like I'm
25 looking at, I guess, a transition. And so if I

1 were to serve on the Commission, it's a good time
2 of transition for me because it's not like I'm -- I
3 have to step away from a set career for a few
4 months or a few years. So it's fun for me to
5 learn.

6 And then -- so it's been a great
7 opportunity. I heard about the -- I guess I first
8 heard about the Commission from -- my kids were
9 babysitting for some neighbors and they said, "Oh,
10 you should apply." And I thought, well, I'll look
11 into it. Okay. And they said, "Oh, it only takes
12 ten minutes to apply." So I was like, oh, okay,
13 I've got ten minutes.

14 And then I got the email that, oh, you can
15 have a supplemental application. And then I'm
16 like, oh, well, good, I -- you know, my first one
17 went through. And I'm like, oh, okay, I've got to
18 get into my writing mode. And so -- but it's been
19 an interesting process and I've learned a lot.

20 And I would love to serve on the
21 Commission. I would learn a lot. And I know that
22 I would do a good job. I would work really hard.
23 And as everyone on the Commission, it would be
24 their first time doing it, we'd be learning
25 together. And I've watched some of the interviews.

1 Since I got one of the last slots, you know, I had
2 -- there was time for me to watch other interviews.
3 And all of the people that I was able to watch, not
4 all of them but the ones I saw, so, so smart, so
5 interesting, and I would love to work with them.

6 And I thank all of you on the Panel, and
7 Mr. Dawson, for your service to our state and
8 listening to weeks and weeks of interviews. And
9 I've enjoyed it. Thank you very much.

10 CHAIR COE: Okay. Thank you, Ms. Ahlers.
11 Thank you for taking the time to speak with us this
12 morning.

13 Our next interview is scheduled for 10:45
14 a.m., so we will be in recess until 10:44.

15 (Thereupon the Panel recessed 10:22 a.m.)

16 (Whereupon the Panel reconvened at 10:44 a.m.)

17 CHAIR COE: Okay, the time being 10:44
18 a.m., I'd like to call this meeting back to order.

19 At this time, I'd like to welcome Russell
20 Yee for his interview this morning.

21 Dr. Yee, can you hear us okay?

22 DR. YEE: I can. Thank you.

23 CHAIR COE: Great. Thank you. Welcome
24 and thank you for being here this morning.

25 I'd like to turn over to Mr. Dawson for

1 the five standard questions please.

2 MR. DAWSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

3 Dr. Yee, I am going to ask you five
4 standard questions that the Panel has requested
5 each applicant respond to. Are you ready, sir?

6 DR. YEE: Yes, I am.

7 MR. DAWSON:

8 First question: What skills and attributes
9 should all Commissioners possess? What skills or
10 competencies should the Commission possess
11 collectively? Of the skills, attributes, and
12 competencies that each Commissioner should possess,
13 which do you possess? In summary, how will you
14 contribute to the success of the Commission?

15 DR. YEE: Good morning everyone. And
16 thank you for persevering under this difficult
17 circumstances.

18 I think the 2020 Commission will
19 definitely need the qualities that the Panel has
20 focused on its materials. Those are impartiality,
21 analytical ability, and an appreciation for
22 California's diversity.

23 As I've researched the work of the 2010
24 Commission and have been so impressed by their
25 success and what they were able to achieve,

1 certainly, they used excellent teamwork. I was
2 very impressed by how they used rotating Chairs and
3 so forth. They had good use of technical skills,
4 not necessarily the Commission itself but the
5 consultants and contractors and people they used,
6 and the mappers. They made a good use of those
7 resources and were able to interpret it to use
8 their results.

9 But it seems to me what was most important
10 to the success of the 2010 Commission and what will
11 be most important to the success of the 2020
12 Commission is perseverance, perseverance to the
13 goal. The 2010 Commission really faced significant
14 obstacles and challenges at just about every step
15 of its work and they persevered, and especially at
16 the end when the timeline became seemingly
17 impossible, they burned the midnight oil and were
18 able to deliver the four maps in time, and those
19 maps have stood the test of time.

20 So when it comes to my own possible
21 contributions to the 2020 Commission, I'd like to
22 mention five.

23 The first one that I can mention is
24 contributing to that perseverance that will be
25 needed, perseverance to the goal.

1 And if I'm selected, I can promise that I
2 will give the Commission, the 2020 Commission, my
3 100 percent full-time attention. I'll be able to
4 put my teaching work aside for the full year that
5 the main work will be done. And I intend to attend
6 100 percent of the Commission meetings. I believe
7 the 2010 Commission had about 34 public input
8 meetings and about 70 business meetings then. I
9 will be prepared, ready, willing, and able to
10 attend 100 percent of those. One of the 2010
11 Commissioners described the work as "all consuming,
12 all consuming," which sounds very daunting but I'm
13 ready for that.

14 I've been in any number of meetings over
15 the years. And I've decided that meetings are
16 physical work. They're not aerobic, unfortunately,
17 but they are physical effort. And this Commission
18 will certainly have its share of meetings and I'm
19 up to that.

20 As it happens, I was actually scheduled to
21 run the Boston Marathon in four days, which has now
22 been postponed. But marathon running is a big part
23 of my life. It's taught me a lot about
24 perseverance, mental and physical perseverance.
25 And I certainly intend to apply those lessons to

1 the work of this Commission if I'm chosen.

2 In all my years of education and work,
3 I've learned that while skills and talents are
4 important, nothing can substitute for perseverance.
5 And so that's the first quality, I think, the
6 Commission will need.

7 The second quality is impartiality. And I
8 think I'll be saying about that as I respond to the
9 second question but I'll mention here that aspiring
10 to this Commission is by far the most political
11 thing I've ever done and -- other than voting. And
12 so this -- I find that I was motivated by this
13 opportunity, precisely because it's nonpartisan,
14 precisely because it's fundamentally, you know,
15 emphatically nonpartisan.

16 And by being on this Commission, I would
17 have an opportunity to be on everyone's side. I'd
18 be on everyone's side. And the nonpartisan nature
19 of this Commission is like its superpower. And I'm
20 really attracted by that and really drawn to that,
21 so impartiality.

22 The third quality I can bring to the
23 Commission is analytical ability and just my
24 scholarly skills and instincts and research and
25 analysis and presentation and summary. The 2010

1 Commission had to do a lot of learning and, you
2 know, learning about the Voting Rights Act and so
3 forth. And I am certainly ready and interested and
4 motivated to do that. I love gathering evidence
5 and making lists and writing down pros and cons and
6 writing reports even. All of that really motivates
7 me. I'm always looking for the best way to say
8 things clearly and find the best ways to express
9 things.

10 I've discovered on the U.S. Census
11 website, there's an online academy. And I've been
12 studying, some of my shelter-in-place time, working
13 through the modules there on the U.S. Census Online
14 Academy and learning about how to use their system.

15 I also bring to the analytical ability, I
16 think I can also bring historical perspective. So
17 I'm a History Docent at the Oakland Museum of
18 California. And I think a lot of the Commission's
19 work, especially around communities of interest,
20 will involve trying to understand those
21 communities, including, you know, how they got the
22 way they are and why they are the way they are, and
23 that will involve some historical perspective. And
24 I think I can bring that aspect of analytical
25 ability to the Commission's work. So that's

1 analytical ability.

2 The fourth thing I think I can bring is an
3 appreciation for California's diversity. I'll be
4 responding to more about that, I think, in a later
5 question. But I can just mention here that I've
6 spent my whole life here in Oakland. And, you
7 know, it's -- Oakland has not had a majority race
8 since 1980. And so I've spent most of my life in a
9 very multi-cultural, multi-racial setting. And I
10 went to all public schools. And I continue to
11 circulate in racially and economically mixed
12 settings. And so, for me, diversity is a given.

13 And I think the work of the Commission,
14 you know, part of that will be going to places that
15 actually aren't very diverse and that's part of
16 California's diversity too. So that will be a
17 little more of a stretch for me but that's part of
18 California as well.

19 Lastly, I think I can bring my love for
20 California. I love our state. And I love that
21 five generations of my family have been here in
22 California and three of them, three of those
23 generations, are native-born Californians.

24 I love being a History Docent at the
25 Oakland Museum of California. Here's my docent

1 badge. And I love telling California's story over
2 and over. I never get tired of telling
3 California's story to our visitors and guests.

4 I'm really proud that we Californians have
5 proven that nonpartisan citizen redistricting can
6 work. And we now offer that as a model to other
7 states, even though, you know, we're the most
8 populous and most complex state in many ways and,
9 yet, we showed that it can work.

10 Last month, I served as an election poll
11 worker in the primary, the March primary election.
12 And I was so proud of how California really bends
13 over backwards to help people vote. And, you know,
14 we allow for same-day registration. We allow for
15 permanent mail-in ballots, and so on and so forth.
16 And I was very proud of our state and how we
17 approached that.

18 And so with all of that, and with
19 redistricting, you know, nonpartisan citizen
20 redistricting, I want to help California lead the
21 nation in advancing voting rights and political
22 equality through nonpartisan redistricting.

23 And if I'm chosen for this Commission, I
24 very much think of it as a ten-year commitment, not
25 just a one-year commitment. And I very much would

1 look forward to, even after the mapping is done,
2 look forward to representing the Commission and
3 sharing its work for the rest of the decade.

4 So, in summary, I believe I can contribute
5 to the Commission's success with perseverance,
6 impartiality, analytical ability, and appreciation
7 for California's diversity, and my love for
8 California.

9 MR. DAWSON: Thank you.

10 Question two: Work on the Commission
11 requires members of different political backgrounds
12 to work together. Since the 2010 Commission was
13 selected and formed, the American political
14 conversation has become increasingly polarized,
15 whether in the press, on social media, and even in
16 our own families.

17 What characteristics do you possess and
18 what characteristics should your fellow
19 Commissioners possess that will protect against
20 hyper-partisanship? What will you do to ensure
21 that the work of the Commission is not seen as
22 polarized or hyper-partisan and avoid perceptions
23 of political bias and conflict?

24 DR. YEE: Thank you, Mr. Dawson.

25 Yes, so I'll start off by saying, I have

1 been very personally directly affected by this
2 hyper-partisanship and all these political debates.
3 And I know that they're a huge challenge and that
4 there are no easy answers.

5 One of the areas where I've been affected
6 is at my church. And it's a church that happens to
7 attract people from a wide range of backgrounds,
8 political persuasions, and temperaments. And so at
9 that church, I was the church board chairperson,
10 the board chairperson, from 2015 to 2019. And so
11 that was during the years of the 2016 election and
12 all the drama and rancor over that, Black Lives
13 Matter protests, further protests around
14 immigration and what was happening on our borders,
15 our own Oakland debates over homelessness and
16 housing and so forth, so a lot of drama in our
17 church and a lot of strong feelings, a lot of
18 division.

19 And so as church board chairperson, my
20 challenge and my goal was to promote what I called
21 a diverse unity. I didn't think we all had to agree
22 but we all had to, as I put it, stay uncomfortable
23 together. That was my goal and my conviction.

24 At one point, I was called upon to write
25 an open letter to the church and I did. And in

1 that letter, I included a picture of a mobile,
2 which I brought a copy of it. So here's one of the
3 Alexander Calder mobiles in the National Gallery of
4 Art. And the point I made with that illustration
5 was that we're all like pieces on the mobile that
6 have to stay balanced. And we all need each other.
7 And no matter how strong our feelings, one side or
8 the other, only by being together, being willing to
9 be uncomfortable together, could we grow together.
10 And to this day, some years later, some people
11 still will refer to the mobile letter at our
12 church.

13 So I feel very deeply and personally that
14 need for balance. I think I've earned a reputation
15 as being fair minded and even tempered and
16 inclusive.

17 When it comes to the Commission itself,
18 here's -- I think I could think of five ways that
19 it can promote that kind of balance and avoid
20 hyper-partisanship and perceptions of bias
21 conflict.

22 The first way, I think, certainly to speak
23 and act in a consistently nonpartisan fashion. I
24 think about my experience last month as a poll
25 worker. And, of course, that was a primary

1 election, so there were different ballots depending
2 on one's party. And as a poll worker, you greet a
3 voter, and you have to find out which ballot they
4 want and you get that ballot for them. And my
5 goal, as I did that, was that no voter should be
6 able to tell, you know, my own party or leanings.
7 You know, what I said, even very subtle tones of
8 voice, should not give anybody any indication what
9 party I was registered as.

10 And that would be my goal for the
11 Commission. In its public hearings and public
12 meetings, we should not give the public -- it
13 should be pretty hard, maybe even impossible, for
14 anyone just listening to our discussions to guess
15 what our political affiliations are. That would be
16 my goal. We should all come across as representing
17 all of California in doing nonpartisan work. So
18 that would be my first thought for the Commission.

19 My second thought is to follow open
20 meeting laws by the letter and by the spirit. I
21 guess that's the Bagley-Keene Act. And I know that
22 can be frustrating.

23 I remember serving on a jury some years
24 ago. It was a nine-week trial and we were
25 instructed not to discuss the evidence at all, you

1 know, for nine weeks, even among ourselves, which
2 was really hard. But we did that, and there were
3 good reasons for that, and I kept to those rules.

4 As well, I think we'd need to be very
5 disciplined in all social media. Of course, not
6 post anything about the Commission's work, but
7 also, and especially because this is an election
8 year, to not post anything that will come across as
9 partisan because somebody will find out and find
10 out that we're on the Commission and that would
11 reflect poorly on the Commission, so we need self-
12 discipline about that. So that's my second
13 thought.

14 Third thought, as we schedule public
15 meetings, public input meetings, of course, we'll
16 need to be clearly representative of the state as
17 far as we can, we can't go everywhere, but to have
18 a clear balance in different regions and different,
19 you know, rural, suburban, urban, different
20 communities and interests and so forth.

21 Fourth thing, I think, in meetings, to do
22 a lot of excellent listening. You know, we're
23 there to listen. We're there to understand. We're
24 not there to debate, not there to air our own
25 opinions, and so to listen. To always assume

1 positive intent from those who are presenting. To
2 really look for the values behind what they're
3 saying and try to appreciate those values and go
4 with that kind of attitude.

5 Lastly, I think even physical settings
6 convey a sense of partiality or impartiality. I
7 think one of the suggestions from the 2020
8 Commission was to have mixed -- to mix the seating
9 of the Commissioners at each meeting so there's no
10 patterns, you know? It's not like congress, you
11 know, with an aisle in between this side and that
12 side and all that, but to mix the seating.

13 And also, in terms of physical settings, I
14 find I pay a lot of attention to things like
15 lighting and sound and, you know, projected
16 material and so forth. And I think as we go to
17 different parts of the state, you know, to really
18 treat each meeting -- to do our very best job at
19 each meeting of a conveying the setting is, you
20 know, worth our full effort, that we're doing a
21 good job, even in the hosting of the meeting and
22 the physical setting of the meeting, and show that
23 we are treating all the different settings equally.

24 So those are some of the ways I think the
25 Commission can avoid hyper-partisanship and

1 perceptions of bias and conflict.

2 MR. DAWSON: Thank you.

3 MS. PELLMAN: We have --

4 MR. DAWSON: Madam Secretary --

5 MS. PELLMAN: Yes. We have 13 minutes, 35
6 seconds remaining.

7 MR. DAWSON: Thank you.

8 Question three: What is the greatest
9 problem the Commission could encounter and what
10 actions would you take to avoid or respond to this
11 problem?

12 DR. YEE: Well, suddenly, you know, COVID-
13 19 is probably going to be a huge issue for this
14 Commission. And, you know, we're going to have to
15 do a lot more video meetings. And I think the
16 outreach to get public input, we'll very probably
17 have to rely a lot more on online input, so that's
18 going to be a new challenge for this Commission.

19 There's also just the tightness of the
20 deadlines that the 2010 Commission faced. And
21 their advice to this Commission was to really start
22 early, you know, do the hiring of staff early, get
23 consultants on early, do the Voting Rights Act
24 training early, and so forth.

25 I did notice this week, just on Monday,

1 there is a possibility that the census data for
2 redistricting will be delayed. The Secretary of
3 Commerce has asked for a 120-day delay. And so
4 that would put the data release to the end of July.
5 And the maps are currently due in August. So, you
6 know, I don't know if the legislature will have to
7 do something about that but we'll certainly have to
8 keep track of that.

9 I think there's also a question of
10 funding. Will funding be adequate? I think the
11 2010 Commission enjoyed a large grant from the
12 James Irvine Foundation and that was almost a
13 quarter of its budget. So I don't know if that
14 grant is going to be available this time. And with
15 the pandemic, as well, how state tax revenues are
16 affecting the funding of this Commission. So those
17 are all issues that we'll have to face.

18 MR. DAWSON: Thank you.

19 Question four: If you are selected you
20 will be one of 14 members of the Commission which
21 is charged with working together to create maps of
22 the new districts.

23 Please describe a situation where you had
24 to work collaboratively with others on a project to
25 achieve a common goal. Tell us the goal of the

1 project, what your role in the group was, and how
2 the group worked through any conflicts that arose?
3 What lessons would you take from this group
4 experience to the Commission, if selected?

5 DR. YEE: So I'd like to tell you about my
6 experience at one of my former churches, not the
7 one I'm at currently but a former church, where I
8 was the pastor. And that church was a startup. And
9 early in its life, we decided we wanted to
10 affiliate with a larger church body, a
11 denomination. And it would be sort of like if you
12 had a community service organization that had been
13 going for a while and decided it really wanted to
14 affiliate with a larger body. And so we looked
15 into Kiwanis and Rotary and Lions Club and so forth
16 to, you know, try to decide on larger organizations
17 to become a part of. So that's the position we
18 were in.

19 It was a big challenge because the members
20 of the church had come from different backgrounds,
21 so some Presbyterians, some Baptists, and so forth
22 and they had strong feelings about that. So there
23 was not guarantee at the beginning of the process
24 that we were going to be able to agree on anything.
25 And even if we did agree, it was not -- I was

1 pretty sure we would lose at least some people
2 because of just the nature of the decision.

3 So we took a full year to work through the
4 process. We had a lot of meetings, a lot of
5 discussions, did a lot of research into our
6 options. Went through kind of predictable stages
7 of a community process where people test the
8 waters, they say things, they find out we don't all
9 agree. At some point you feel stuck and you have
10 persevere through that.

11 And in the end, we were able to do a lot
12 of learning together, a lot of growing together,
13 and at the end we took a vote of the whole
14 membership and we did make a decision. It was
15 actually not the choice that I had originally
16 supported, so my own mind had been changed by the
17 process. And most amazingly to me, we actually
18 didn't lose anyone. So that was just quite an
19 inspiring experience.

20 So some lessons for the Commission, I
21 think you have to not fear differences of opinion.
22 And you have to be willing to sit with them and
23 work with them and persevere through them.

24 I think people really notice how you treat
25 others. And so in a community input meeting, let's

1 say, people really notice if your tone of voice,
2 whether you're giving people plenty of time to
3 share, things like that, I think the Commission
4 would need to, you know, really surprise people
5 with kindness and openness and patience and
6 generosity and the ability to listen,
7 approachability, you know?

8 I learned that people's minds can change.
9 My mind changed. And that people's first answer is
10 not necessarily the last answer. I learned that
11 people's values behind their choices, you know, are
12 actually what are driving their choices. And
13 sometimes if you can get those values, understand
14 them, and be creative about ways to honor those
15 values, that may involve different choices, and
16 that counts for a lot.

17 I also learned that feeling heard and
18 understood is more important than winning. So even
19 if some people had voted no to our decision at the
20 church, I think that would have been okay as long
21 as they felt heard and understood. That's more
22 important than everyone getting their way. And so
23 I think on the Commission, that would certainly be
24 the case as well.

25 MR. DAWSON: Thank you.

1 Question five: A considerable amount of
2 the Commission's work will involve meeting with
3 people from all over California who come from very
4 different backgrounds and a wide variety of
5 perspectives.

6 If you were selected as a Commissioner,
7 what skills and attributes will make you effective
8 at interacting with people from different
9 backgrounds and who have a variety of perspectives?
10 What experiences have you had that will help you be
11 effective at understanding and appreciating people
12 and communities of different backgrounds and who
13 have a variety of perspectives?

14 DR. YEE: So as I mentioned earlier, as an
15 Oakland native, I guess diversity is a norm for me.
16 And, you know, everywhere I go in the course of the
17 day, normally, you know, not right now, I'm
18 encountering people of different races, languages,
19 cultures, and so on and so forth.

20 My teaching and writing have included
21 quite a bit of attention to matters of culture and
22 cultural understanding, cultural expression,
23 cultural identify. I have especially focused on
24 Asian American identity and culture, as well as
25 Southeast Asian American identity and culture. You

1 know, the fact that this week is actually Cambodian
2 New Year this week is part of the landscape of my
3 life.

4 As an Asian American, I have a particular
5 awareness of immigrant stories and generational
6 differences and changes, immigrant populations.
7 You know, California is one-quarter foreign-born
8 today and, you know, the highest in the nation, the
9 highest percentage. And so that world of people
10 from elsewhere and their kids and grandkids, that's
11 a normal part of life for me. That's familiar
12 territory for me.

13 As a racial minority, I have an awareness
14 of settings and, you know, majority versus minority
15 cultures, and stepping into a setting who, you
16 know, treats that setting as belonging to them
17 versus those who feel like outsiders, those you
18 have to invite in versus those who come in assuming
19 that they're included, and so forth.

20 I can mention that my postgraduate degrees
21 came from two very different institutions, master's
22 degree from Dallas Theological Seminary and a
23 doctoral degree from the Graduate Theological Union
24 in Berkeley. And together, those two would cover
25 an extremely wide range of religious and cultural

1 and political spectrum constituencies in Christian
2 circles, you know, far right to far left. And I've
3 circulated in those circles, that whole range, and
4 have connections in that whole range. So that's
5 part of my background.

6 Being at my current church definitely puts
7 me outside my comfort zone and there's a range of
8 political and, you know, temperaments there,
9 political opinions, and temperaments there,
10 socioeconomic range. I'm actually one of the older
11 members there now, so the generational differences
12 and so forth.

13 I have traveled quite a bit throughout
14 California my whole life. My honeymoon, 33 years
15 ago, was actually a road trip in California. One
16 of my daughters just finished up her college degree
17 in Southern Cal, so I've spent a lot of time down
18 there, as well as doing some teaching in Southern
19 Cal myself, and other work there.

20 I can also mention, as a runner, you know,
21 everywhere I go, I like to run. My wife and I were
22 just in Hollister earlier this year and did some
23 running there. And when you run, you see things up
24 close that you don't see, you know, when you're
25 driving through a place. And certainly, if we have

1 or were able to have onsite meetings with this
2 Commission and public input meetings, any overnight
3 meetings, overnight travel I'll do to any of those
4 meetings, I certainly look forward to running in
5 those places and seeing those communities up close,
6 you know, not only for the pleasure of it, but also
7 as part of my research to those communities.

8 Some other things specifically for the
9 Commission, I think it counts a lot when you go to
10 a place to show active interest in that place. Do
11 your homework. Find out the background of the
12 place. If it's a small town, find out, you know,
13 the mascot of the high school there and things like
14 that. And find out what the current issues are and
15 come prepared.

16 Coming into a community, know the
17 community organizations that are there, you know,
18 connect with the leaders of those organizations
19 before you get there and get their endorsement and
20 participation, if possible.

21 Then just do a lot of outreach to those
22 communities. Invite. Invite again. Invite five,
23 ten different ways, you know? And because
24 everyone's different and people circulate in
25 different circles. They take in information in

1 different ways and make different assumptions. So
2 the Commission will definitely need to do that.
3 And so try to reach as many different communities
4 of interest and different people and perspectives
5 as possible.

6 MR. DAWSON: Thank you.

7 We'll now go to Panel questions. Each
8 Panel member will have 20 minutes to ask his or her
9 question. We'll start with the Chair.

10 Mr. Coe?

11 CHAIR COE: Thank you, Mr. Dawson.

12 Once again, good morning to you, Dr. Yee.
13 Thank you for taking the time to speak with us
14 today.

15 I wanted to ask you about your role as a
16 History Docent at the Oakland Museum of California.
17 You've talked about it a couple of times this
18 morning. I wonder if you give us a little bit more
19 information about your duties in this role?

20 DR. YEE: Yes. Thank you, Mr. Coe.

21 So we do -- the main duty is leading
22 tours. And the bread and butter is school group
23 tours, fourth grade tours, and I love it. Fourth
24 grade is a great age. Kids are curious, you know?
25 They can absorb quite a bit but they're still --

1 they're not teenagers yet, you know?

2 So -- and so we -- the Oakland Museum of
3 California, so there's two museums dedicated to
4 California. As a state, one is the California
5 Museum in Sacramento. And the other is the Oakland
6 Museum of California. So we have three galleries
7 at our museum, Art of California, The Natural
8 Science of California, and then The History of
9 California.

10 So I'm a Docent in the History Gallery.
11 And we lead these tours. And, you know, we get
12 school groups from all over the Greater Bay Area,
13 all different towns and school districts, you know,
14 all different socioeconomics. But I love, most of
15 all, the groups that include kids from immigrant
16 families. And you can have a group, a tour group
17 of, you know, seven kids who are from seven
18 different, you know, whose families are from seven
19 different countries. And it's just spectacular and
20 amazing and beautiful and I love that.

21 And some of these kids, it's their very
22 first experience of any museum, you know, anywhere.
23 And I get to be -- I have the honor, you know, of
24 introducing them to that experience.

25 At the Oakland Museum, one of our tag

1 lines is, "The Museum of You," which is a little
2 cheesy. But its -- you know, the idea is that
3 every Californian is part of the California story.
4 And that's part of what we try to convey to the
5 school kids, is this is their story. This is not
6 somebody else's story. This is their story. And
7 all the different parts of it, the good parts, the
8 not-so-good parts, that's all part of their story.
9 And it's an unfolding story they get to continue
10 helping to tell.

11 So those are some of our duties.

12 CHAIR COE: Now what's your favorite
13 subject to speak in public about in your role?

14 DR. YEE: Favorite subject? Certainly,
15 Native American backgrounds and present Native
16 American life which, of course, is a very mixed
17 story and a very heartbreaking story in a lot of
18 ways. But our museum has done a particularly good
19 job of that, portraying that.

20 The very first thing you see as you enter
21 the History Gallery is a display of an Ohlone tule
22 reed boat. And the caption over the boat is, and
23 the caption for the first section of the History
24 Gallery is, "Before the other people came. Before
25 the other people came," and, you know, and of

1 course, you know, starting off with the Native
2 American story, so I like to start off there. We
3 have a video there of some local Ohlone Native
4 Americans welcoming guests to the gallery,
5 welcoming them to the displays, and so I love to
6 start there.

7 Of course, we do a lot with the Gold Rush
8 and try to explain that to kids and the complexity
9 of it and just the drama of it and how it changed
10 California.

11 Other parts of our history, I love taking
12 them up to the present and showing them how it
13 connects with the past and how even gold is still
14 very much a part of our life here in California,
15 and the high-tech industry and how it's used in
16 industrial processes.

17 I also like just impressing on them that
18 people keep coming to California, right, and with
19 aspirations, with dreams, hopes of a better life
20 for themselves and their families, and that we're
21 all connected in those ways.

22 CHAIR COE: Thank you for sharing that
23 perspective.

24 I want to talk about your impartiality
25 essay for a moment.

1 DR. YEE: Um-hmm.

2 CHAIR COE: In that essay, you write that
3 you have had "endless opportunities to practice
4 listening to different sides, speaking your own
5 convictions, and coming to decisions, even with
6 imperfect and incomplete data." And as we've
7 talked about a delay in census or, maybe, some
8 issues with census data as a result of the
9 pandemic, making decisions with imperfect and
10 incomplete data seems to be a pertinent topic. But
11 my question to you is kind of a double question.

12 And I'm wondering if you can give us an
13 example of a time where you had to set aside your
14 personal beliefs or your preferences in order to
15 make a difficult decision with imperfect of
16 incomplete data? And the second part to that
17 question is as part of the decision making, for
18 that example that you're going to give us, what
19 process did you employ to ensure that you made the
20 best decisions possible with the data that's
21 available?

22 DR. YEE: Sure. Thank you. Wow.

23 For sure, the example I gave of the
24 denominational decision at my former church. That
25 was an example of making a decision, you know? And

1 we took a whole year. We got lots of data. But,
2 of course, there's always more to get and, at some
3 point, you just have to make a decision, and so we
4 did that.

5 Another example, a little more recent,
6 might be so at my current church, a decision we
7 faced came when -- so we -- as it happens, at our
8 church site, we're a block away from a halfway
9 house. It's a facility where folks who are newly
10 on parole can spend some time living as they get
11 reentry experience into jobs and so forth. And at
12 one point a few years ago, some of the men at the
13 reentry facility starting coming to our church.
14 And so these are paroled lifers, folks who had had
15 life sentences but had earned parole. And so they
16 were now out and coming to our church.

17 And we had to admit that we had no
18 experience with this in the past at the church.
19 And so we had to make a decision how to respond to
20 their presence and how to, you know, how to include
21 them, and whether or not to invite them into small
22 fellowship groups that we had the church, and so
23 forth? It was right around the time we had our
24 church retreat, going off to a spot in the redwoods
25 and spending a weekend together, you know, and

1 would we make that special effort to include these
2 parolees?

3 And, you know, we did research, talked to
4 people, but we had to make a pretty quick decision,
5 you know, just because of the timeline. And so,
6 partly, what informed our decision was just face-
7 to-face discussions. And so we let -- we had --
8 you know, we met with some of these men and had
9 them educate us about their lives and the
10 difference between short-timers and lifers and what
11 it takes to earn parole, and all the supervision
12 that their lives were under currently, and so
13 forth. That was all news to us.

14 And as we weighed that information, you
15 know, in the time we had we didn't find out
16 everything we wanted to or needed to but we made
17 the call in the end, okay, we will embrace this
18 group. We will treat them like everyone else. We
19 will not have any special rules for them, you know?
20 And in the end, you know, and this included hosting
21 some of these men in my own home and for regular
22 meetings, and we made that decision and it's
23 actually worked out well. So that's an example.

24 I don't know, maybe that will do for now.

25 CHAIR COE: Okay. Thank you.

1 I want to talk about something you
2 mentioned in your appreciation for diversity essay
3 that you sent to us. In that, you discuss your
4 seminary teachings and how, in those teachings, you
5 challenge assumptions some students have about the
6 normativity of the majority culture and/or being
7 the uniformity of any given minority culture.

8 So I'm curious, how do you challenge your
9 students to think about this and what, generally,
10 are the results?

11 DR. YEE: Excellent question. So, you
12 know, a lot of it has to do with people who --
13 students who think of the majority culture as just
14 the norm. And it's kind of -- you know, as I put
15 it, you know, it's the way we use the term ethnic
16 often. Ethnic churches, for instance, the term is
17 often used in church circles. And, basically,
18 that's a reference to racial minority churches.
19 Those are ethnic churches. But the implication is
20 that a majority culture church doesn't have an
21 ethnicity which, of course, is not true. All
22 churches have particular cultures, they have
23 particular sensibilities about time and so forth.
24 So one way I try to bring up the subject is by
25 pointing out all the things that a majority culture

1 might do that are, you know, culturally specific
2 and not just universal.

3 So, for instance, how do generations
4 interact? In the majority culture, and especially
5 here in the Bay Area, a lot of it from kind of the
6 influence of Silicon Valley. You know, we have a
7 very non-hierarchical culture --

8 CHAIR COE: Um-hmm.

9 DR. YEE: -- people on a first-name basis.
10 It would not be unusual for, you know, young people
11 to call adults by their first name and so forth.
12 Whereas, in other cultures, of course, you would
13 use a title. You would never call a grandparent,
14 you know, or a parent by a first name and so on.
15 So, you know, just pointing out some of those
16 differences in sensibilities and how specific they
17 are and trying to open people's eyes to how, you
18 know, how particular different aspects of the
19 majority culture are.

20 And so it's generally well received. As
21 people come to understand, you know, people who are
22 in, you know, a ministry career aspirations, you
23 know, they want to understand people and they want
24 to reach out and learn. And so it's generally well
25 received that way but, certainly, still some

1 resistance or a sense that, you know, the majority
2 culture is somehow, you know, privileged or better,
3 you know, or special in a way that should, you
4 know, I don't know, keep it in some kind of
5 privileged position, so just challenging those
6 assumptions.

7 At the same time, you know, not to make
8 all cultures relative, you know, I think American
9 culture has particular qualities that make it --
10 you know, our commitment to equality and free
11 speech and liberty, I mean, those are particular
12 things and special things.

13 So I think, for instance, you know, in
14 community input meetings, as we reach out to
15 communities that may not be used to going to
16 community meetings and speaking up in public, you
17 know, part of being American and being in a mixture
18 of cultures is teaching each other, challenging
19 each other how to grow into that, you know, that
20 bi-culturality and so, you know, to encourage a
21 community member that has never spoken up at a
22 public meeting before to do so, you know, and
23 explain why it's a good idea and explain how it's
24 safe, and so on and so forth. So it goes both
25 ways.

1 CHAIR COE: Thank you.

2 From your experiences in that role or in
3 any other role where you've worked with diverse
4 groups of people with a variety of backgrounds,
5 what have you learned about the needs and desires
6 and preferences of the diverse groups of people
7 that you've met that you think would make you an
8 effective representative for the diverse population
9 of California on this Commission?

10 DR. YEE: Sure. I think the first thing I
11 would bring in that regard is just a sensibility
12 and a sensitivity to who thinks they belong and who
13 doesn't, you know, who would think of a meeting, an
14 official meeting, as somewhere they, you know, they
15 have a right to speak up and they're going to speak
16 up there versus someone who has to be specially
17 invited to come or to comment, you know, someone
18 who would think of that as somebody else's
19 business.

20 I think of some of the Southeast Asian
21 American people I've worked with, and especially
22 those who came out of wartime situations, you know,
23 in Southeast Asia and how some of the really
24 negative experiences they've had with officials and
25 governments in settings where they came from, you

1 know, predisposed them to not, you know, to not
2 want to speak up, you know, not want to share their
3 name, not want to comment publicly. And so being
4 sensitive to things like that.

5 I think generationally, too, being at my
6 church, being one of the older members there, I
7 keep having to challenge myself to understand how
8 the world looks different for different
9 generations. And so, for myself, I think growing
10 up, you know, as the tail end of the baby boom, you
11 know, I grew up trusting institutions, you know,
12 trusting officials, trusting the police, you know?
13 And the younger generation has grown up in a very
14 different world.

15 And so I think in reaching out, especially
16 to the younger generation, and understanding that
17 they may start with an assumption of distrust, you
18 know, and so I would have -- you know, our job
19 would be to go in and earn their trust, by
20 understanding, trying to understand their
21 particular issues and understand their doubts and
22 questions, and to go in understanding that, you
23 know, they're not -- they don't come in predisposed
24 to just believe in the system and believe in the
25 work that we're doing.

1 So those are some of the things I would
2 do.

3 CHAIR COE: Thank you very much.

4 Similar question but in regards to
5 geographic diversity, and people in different
6 regions of the state may have different concerns
7 depending on where they live, the things that are
8 facing them and the challenges.

9 I know you said you were born in the Bay
10 Area and still live in the Bay Area. So I'm
11 curious to hear about your experiences in other
12 regions of the state and what you've learned from
13 the people in those regions about their
14 perspectives and preferences that you think would
15 make you an effective representative for them on
16 this Commission?

17 DR. YEE: Sure. Yeah, so I am -- you
18 know, my parents were born in Oakland, I was born
19 in Oakland, so a lot of deep roots here. But, as I
20 mentioned, I have spent quite a bit of time in
21 Southern California with relatives down there.
22 I've done some teaching down there. I've been part
23 of a nonprofit down there, based down there, and so
24 quite a bit of time in Southern Cal.

25 I also have visited, you know, almost the

1 whole state. I haven't been to the far northeast.
2 And somehow, I haven't made it to Death Valley, but
3 through of the rest of the state, I've traveled and
4 enjoyed. You know, I just enjoy so much traveling
5 all throughout our state, our beautiful state.

6 Certainly the urban versus suburban versus
7 rural differences are very clear, small towns, you
8 know, versus big cities, the Central Valley, all
9 the agriculture there, as well as the big cities
10 there, you know? Fresno is bigger than Oakland.
11 And the issues of concern there, immigration
12 patterns, you know?

13 Different majority-minority communities
14 all of state, all our various issues.
15 Homelessness, of course, in the big cities, in
16 parts of the big cities. And yet, you know, here
17 in Oakland, we're right over the hill from some of
18 the suburbs in Contra Costa County and all the
19 issues around housing density, housing development,
20 just heavy debates going on over things like that.

21 Our traditional debates over water, you
22 know, continue to go on.

23 I think, too, of course, every place,
24 every community has its own particular identity and
25 pride and not wanting to lump, you know, all of

1 Southern California with L.A., of course, you know,
2 the Inland Empire, the whole Riverside area, which
3 is one of the fastest growing areas in California,
4 and every distinct community has it's own stories
5 on history, the things they're proud of, issues
6 they're working through are things to appreciate.

7 So, yeah, just wanting to learn more about
8 that. Really looking forward, if I'm selected, to
9 spending time all over the state and learning more
10 about those --

11 MS. PELLMAN: We have two minutes
12 remaining.

13 DR. YEE: -- those parts of the state.

14 CHAIR COE: Okay. Thank you, Madam
15 Secretary.

16 And thank you, Dr. Yee. I think in the
17 interest of time, I'll ask one more question really
18 quickly.

19 If you were to be appointed to the role of
20 Commissioner, which aspects of that role do you
21 think that you will enjoy the most and, conversely,
22 which aspects of that role do you think might cause
23 you to struggle a little bit?

24 DR. YEE: Sure. This is a little abstract
25 but I think what I would enjoy the most, actually,

1 and truthfully, is being part of something that's
2 such a great idea. I just love the idea of the
3 Commission and, you know, the risky proposition
4 that it was, you know, back in 2008 and the fact
5 that it's been done once now so well and is a model
6 for the nation. I just love that, so I would
7 really enjoy that.

8 Also, I'd really enjoy just learning about
9 our state more and more stories about life all over
10 our state.

11 Something challenging? I think the open
12 meeting laws, you know, I respect them, I
13 understand them, the need for them. And I
14 certainly would intend to keep to them, the letter,
15 and the spirit. But I know that they can be
16 frustrating, as well, to have discussions.

17 I remember being on a jury some years ago
18 where we couldn't discuss -- I think I mentioned
19 this -- we couldn't discuss the case, you know, for
20 nine weeks and it was just really difficult. Here
21 it's a different situation. But having to have all
22 discussions in open, not being able to have private
23 conversations that might offer themselves, I think,
24 will be frustrating.

25 I'd also find it very frustrating if there

1 were any disunity on the Commission. Anyone who
2 wasn't, you know, a team player, any, you know,
3 division that way, that would be very frustrating
4 for me as well.

5 CHAIR COE: Okay. Thank you, Dr. Yee.

6 I think we're about out of time, so I will
7 go ahead and turn the time over to Ms. Dickison for
8 her questions.

9 Ms. Dickison?

10 DR. YEE: Thank you, Mr. Coe.

11 PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Thank you, Mr.
12 Coe.

13 Good morning, Dr. Yee.

14 DR. YEE: Good morning.

15 PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: So you just talked
16 about one of the things that would frustrate you
17 was if there was disunity among the Commissioners.

18 What are some of the things the
19 Commissioners can do early on to build a team and
20 an atmosphere of collaboration?

21 DR. YEE: Right. So it's a little tricky
22 because, of course, you have the eight that will be
23 initially selected by lottery. I think the former
24 Commission called those the luckies. And those
25 luckies will pick six more, which will be the

1 chosen, as they called them. And so right from the
2 start you'll have a division that will need to be
3 overcome. And I think one of the things that we'll
4 need to do is make those selections of the final
5 six as early as possible, as early as, you know,
6 can be done well, and so not have any -- have a
7 minimum of experiences that only the eight will
8 have that the six will not have and really try to
9 have the whole Commission, all 14 experience, you
10 know, the formative early going of the Commission.

11 So I think one of the issues that the
12 former Commission experienced was some of the
13 Voting Rights Act training that happened before the
14 final six were selected. You know, in retrospect,
15 that was not ideal. So to do that.

16 I think, certainly, to socialize, you
17 know, even outside of the official meetings. You
18 know, just who you chat with, who you sit down for
19 a meal with, and to really mix that up. And maybe
20 make a very intentional, you know, minimize project
21 of that as a Commission. I think, you know, when
22 personal relationships can be cultivated, it adds a
23 lot to, you know, motivation and willingness to do
24 something, not only for the sake of the Commission
25 and the sake of our duties, but for the sake of the

1 personal relationships that can develop on the
2 Commission and the personal, you know, loyalties to
3 the whole Commission, all the Commissioners, that
4 can develop.

5 So those are the things, some of the
6 things, I think would be included early on.

7 PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Thank you.

8 So I wanted to touch on your diversity
9 essay. You talked about you teach a class about
10 Oakland.

11 DR. YEE: Yes.

12 PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: And you said you
13 "delight in replacing simplistic ideas about
14 Oakland with a wide appreciation for Oakland's vast
15 diversity."

16 What motivates you to educate about that
17 and that changing that perspective?

18 DR. YEE: Sure. I love teaching that
19 class. Actually, behind me, you see the plaque,
20 Oakland, and its iconic oak tree. That's actually
21 -- it was a student project. A student made that
22 for me, and I love it, from that class.

23 What motivates me? I guess at two levels.

24 One is just personally, you know, I love
25 my city, the same way I love California. And I

1 want it to be understood. I want it to -- I want
2 to correct incorrect ideas about it, you know? I
3 want to -- I want people to be able to learn from
4 it.

5 I want people to visit it. You know, the
6 college where I teach that class is St. Mary's
7 College of California, which is in Moraga, you
8 know, right over the hill, right through the
9 Caldecott Tunnel from Oakland. And so my feeling
10 is that these students are going to spend four
11 years there at St. Mary's College and they should
12 get to know the largest city they will spend those
13 four years next to and, you know, so that they'll
14 be invited, feel that, you know, as part of their
15 college experience, spend time in Oakland and learn
16 from Oakland and, you know, get a better education
17 because of that time in and next to Oakland. And
18 then I hope it will expand their imagination as
19 they think about their futures and their
20 opportunities.

21 And the motto of St. Mary's is, "Come to
22 learn, go to serve," you know? And so, of course,
23 Oakland, like all big cities, has an especially
24 wide range of opportunities to serve, you know, if
25 you think about nonprofit careers, you think about

1 volunteer opportunities that these students may
2 pursue. And so that motivates me a lot.

3 But a lot of it is just because I love
4 stories, and I love diversity, and I love history,
5 and I love teaching about those. In my class
6 evaluations, one of the feedback items I frequently
7 get is simply that the professor is very
8 enthusiastic. It makes coming to class more
9 motivating. And that's a very genuine enthusiasm
10 and so I love to share that and it motivates me to
11 teach the class.

12 PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Thank you.

13 You've talked, also, about being a runner.
14 What have you learned from running outside of
15 Oakland in visiting in those communities that will
16 assist the Commission in reaching out to
17 communities in the various regions of California?

18 DR. YEE: Right. So I think, you know,
19 when you run you just have a very granular sense of
20 a place because you see it, you know, right up
21 close. You know, you're not just whizzing by in a
22 car. And so you see houses and front yards and
23 people's, you know, cars and what's on their front
24 porches. And you see, also, the condition of
25 public works. And you get very intimately

1 acquainted with the condition of the roads,
2 sidewalks. You can tell, you know, instantly
3 whether a setting is pedestrian friendly.

4 You see places in town that are thriving.
5 You see places in town that will be fading away.
6 You read signs. You read plaques. I love finding
7 history plaques and reading them, you know,
8 learning the story of places.

9 You also get an intimate sense of
10 geography and boundaries, you know? And you can
11 really feel viscerally how it feels like to cross a
12 freeway, you know, to cross a train track, and how
13 the neighborhood changes.

14 You also notice a lot of landmarks, you
15 know, the schools, the churches, city hall,
16 businesses, you know, businesses that are thriving,
17 businesses that are not, and so forth.

18 And so I think that sensitivity, that
19 sensibility, that perceptiveness about a community
20 that you really can't get just from numbers, or
21 from reading a report, hopefully can help the
22 Commission in its work.

23 PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Thank you.

24 So in the class you teach about Oakland,
25 you talk about looking or using historical census

1 figures. And then you also talk about enjoying
2 geography trivia.

3 So have you done any work or any trivia
4 where you've combined those two, census data and
5 maps or geography?

6 DR. YEE: I have not combined census data
7 and maps and geography professionally. But
8 certainly in the teaching for the Oakland class,
9 you know, we look at maps. And I show different,
10 you know, patterns of housing. And, you know, it's
11 just, it's a golden age for maps and data and you
12 can -- there are maps available where you can show,
13 you know, the race of every voter in a city and you
14 can, you know, analyze that and discuss that, and
15 so I do that in class.

16 Other ways? Just out of curiosity, I
17 suppose, just, you know, as kind of a hobbyist
18 level, looking at cities, looking at California,
19 and learning. And then most recently, working
20 through some of those U.S. Census Online Academy
21 modules and learning how to use their system to
22 analyze maps and data, so --

23 PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: So given your joy
24 of geographic trivia, you also talked about some of
25 the boundary lines --

1 DR. YEE: Sure.

2 PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: -- in your essay.

3 Would a district that was shaped oddly
4 give you concern? Why or why not?

5 DR. YEE: Indeed. So an oddly shaped
6 district, of course, the question is: What is
7 oddly? And I've read some of the discussions and
8 essays and reports that have tried to, you know,
9 define oddness.

10 And, you know, I think the Commission will
11 be bound by the six constitutional criteria, range
12 criteria, you know, population, Voting Rights Act,
13 communities of interest, contiguity, and then
14 fifth, you know, which is pretty low down the list,
15 is compactness. So I think the language is that,
16 you know, there should not be pockets of population
17 farther out included to the exclusion of pockets of
18 population that are farther in. So, you know, but
19 that is a consideration, that is a criterion, that
20 will be in tension sometimes with communities of
21 interest; right?

22 So would it bother me aesthetically? Of
23 course, you know, one can -- you know, there seems
24 to be a human propensity to like tidiness and
25 symmetricalness. On the hand, in terms of the

1 constitutional redistricting criteria, oddness is
2 not a criteria. So it's just balancing the
3 criterion of compactness with all the other
4 criteria.

5 So, basically, no, not in and of itself,
6 not oddness in and of itself. Of course,
7 gerrymandering, there's a whole long history of
8 gerrymandering. Oddness isn't part of that, you
9 know, under that, you know, I know it when I see it
10 kind of criterion. And so, you know, there's some
11 of that, but not inherently, no.

12 PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Thank you.

13 You mentioned communities of interest
14 being one of the criterion. That is on the same
15 level with cities, counties, and neighborhoods.

16 DR. YEE: Yes.

17 PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: What can the
18 Commission do to ensure that when it's weighing
19 those different things, when they come in conflict
20 with each other, that they're making the right
21 decisions?

22 DR. YEE: I think that's, you know, that's
23 an excellent question. That's probably going to be
24 the \$64,000 question for the Commission.
25 Communities of interest, I think, of the six

1 criterion -- criteria, that's probably going to be
2 the most challenging one because it's the most
3 fuzzy one.

4 So on one hand, you have clear existing
5 boundaries, you know, city, county boundaries. You
6 have natural, you know, features, lakes, rivers,
7 the bay here in the Bay Area, and so forth. But
8 when it comes to some of the other considerations,
9 economic activity, and historic voting patterns,
10 you know, those are going to be difficult, and so
11 it's going to take a lot of research.

12 How to make the right decision? I don't
13 think, you know, I don't think it's going to be a
14 question of right or wrong so much as a question of
15 better or worse because there's going to be lots of
16 options.

17 I think I would be guided a lot by -- I
18 mean, the first thing I would do, probably, for any
19 given decision is look at the 2010 Commission's
20 work and look at the discussions they had, look at
21 the considerations that they lined up, weigh those,
22 you know, see if they still hold the same weight,
23 make adjustments where populations have changed,
24 you know, and then try to make a good decision.

25 I like the phrase, let's see, it was in

1 the -- so part of the language for the Voting
2 Rights Act section 2, talks about the "totality of
3 circumstances," I think it's the jingle's
4 preconditions, "totality of circumstances," and I
5 like that phrase. And I think for communities of
6 interest, that's part of the challenge will be to
7 try to take in the totality of circumstances and to
8 make a better decision, a good decision, you know,
9 not the only right decision because I don't think
10 there will be an only right one or only right
11 decision.

12 PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Thank you.

13 What do you see as your role the
14 Commission, should you be selected?

15 DR. YEE: My role on the Commission, as I
16 mentioned, number one, to show up, you know, and my
17 intention to show up to 100 percent of the
18 Commission meetings, and even to be available if
19 extra, you know, extra trips or extra duties become
20 necessary. I intend to be available for that.

21 I intend to be an excellent listener. I
22 take notes as I listen and I love to summarize
23 what's been said. I see my role as trying to
24 clearly state, you know, what's been said and try
25 to clearly summarize what's been said, summarize

1 arguments, point out things that may not have been
2 -- things that might have been missing.

3 I see my role as trying to steer the
4 Commission back to its goal if we get distracted.
5 You know, the goal is to have these public input
6 meetings, to hear from the public, and then to draw
7 these four maps on time using the six ranked
8 criteria. That's the goal. And there's lots of
9 other interesting things we can be doing, lots of
10 other things to be discussing, but to steer the
11 Commission back to that.

12 I'd certainly just try to contribute to
13 the Commission's good judgment when it comes to
14 hiring and directing staff and consultants. You
15 know, that's going to be a lot of the work, so to
16 try to add to those discussions, be an asset to
17 those discussions.

18 And, as well, simply to, you know, to
19 enjoy the experience, to the enjoyment of the
20 experience, and to find ways for the Commission to
21 enjoy each other's work and company and, you know,
22 to make it a positive year for everyone. I want to
23 contribute to that.

24 PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Thank you.

25 You mentioned early on, earlier in our

1 discussion, that one of the things you would like
2 to see is that the six Commissioners be selected
3 early in the process.

4 If you were selected as one of the first
5 eight, what would you look for in those six
6 individuals?

7 DR. YEE: Right. So, you know, right off
8 I would look for trying to fill any obvious gaps in
9 the range of Commissioners, so especially for
10 geography, urban, rural, suburban, men and women,
11 so, you know, try to fill those gaps, racial
12 backgrounds, try to fill those gaps.

13 I would look for, you know, the qualities
14 you've emphasized, impartiality and analytical
15 ability, appreciation for diversity.

16 I'd look for a team player. Look for
17 someone who's motivated and available to do the
18 work necessary.

19 Technical skills, of course, those are
20 valuable. You know, I just, I can't get over that
21 the 2010 Commission was fortunate to have Vince
22 Barbera [sic], you know, a former U.S. Census
23 Director, two-time Census Director. I think he was
24 actually picked in the lottery. If he had been
25 available for one of the six, the chosen six, I

1 think he would have been a very, very attractive
2 candidate to bring that kind of background to the
3 work.

4 But, certainly, you know, legal
5 background, data background, mapping background,
6 community work backgrounds, to look for how those
7 might add to the Commission.

8 PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Thank you.

9 MS. PELLMAN: We have 2 minutes, 50
10 seconds remaining.

11 PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Okay. Thank you.

12 Mr. Coe, I don't have any further
13 questions at this point.

14 CHAIR COE: Thank you, Ms. Dickison.

15 We'll go ahead and turn the time over to
16 Mr. Belnap.

17 DR. YEE: Thank you, Ms. Dickison.

18 PANEL MEMBER BELNAP: Good morning, Dr.
19 Yee.

20 DR. YEE: Mr. Belnap.

21 PANEL MEMBER BELNAP: I want to start my
22 questions with just going way back to the early
23 '80s.

24 You studied nutrition. And, well, you
25 graduated with a Bachelor's in Nutrition in Food

1 Science from UC Berkeley.

2 Why did you go into that degree and what
3 was your intention in terms of career in that area?

4 DR. YEE: Wow, way back. Thank you, Mr.
5 Belnap. It is throwback Thursday, isn't it?

6 At the time, I didn't have a clear idea at
7 all of a direction professionally. I was among a
8 lot of high school peers who were interested in
9 science professions or medicine, perhaps, careers
10 like that, and so that seemed interesting to me. I
11 had a personal friend who had -- a few years older
12 -- who had done an nutrition program at UC
13 Berkeley. And at the time, it just seemed to me
14 that, you know, no matter what else I did in life,
15 nutrition would be part of my life, you know, part
16 of the world, something worth understanding. And
17 so I went into that, you know, maybe with some pre-
18 medical thoughts and it was worthwhile. I had a
19 good experience in it.

20 But I did discover later that even though
21 it was able to do the science, and science is very
22 interesting and I'm glad I did that, I'm especially
23 glad now because, as it happens, my wife is a
24 physician. And so having that science background
25 helps me understand her work and the things that

1 she does better. But I found, actually, that my
2 interest and my temperament and personality
3 actually was more towards things like writing, and
4 things like history, and things like culture, and
5 narratives, and things like that.

6 And so I would chalk it all up to
7 youthfulness and some influences in my life and the
8 availability of the program at Berkeley, just kind
9 of the sense that this is something worth knowing
10 about, and that's what motivated me at the time.

11 PANEL MEMBER BELNAP: Okay. Thank you.

12 I know you graduated with a Master's in
13 Old Testament from the Dallas Theological Seminary.

14 DR. YEE: Um-hmm.

15 PANEL MEMBER BELNAP: Does that mean --
16 and the number of years attended was four. Does
17 that mean you lived in Texas for those four years?

18 DR. YEE: I did. I lived in Dallas, Texas
19 for those four years. And, you know, it's the
20 south, my first time in the south. It's Bible
21 Belt. It's a very different place, you know?

22 And I remember early in my time there,
23 opening up the Dallas Morning News, and at that
24 time President Reagan was in Office, and there it
25 was, a pro President Reagan editorial in the Dallas

1 Morning News. You know, I don't think I had ever
2 seen that in the papers around here. So a very
3 different part of the world. I came to love the
4 people there and love the southern hospitality and
5 the sense of family there. I really enjoyed that.
6 But also came to, you know, appreciate California
7 all the more and realized that what we have here is
8 very special, you know, not to be taken for
9 granted, the diversity, the natural beauty.

10 Certainly, the Asian presence here in
11 California goes much farther back, much further
12 back, and it's much more diverse than what I
13 experienced there in Dallas. So, yeah, it was very
14 eye opening, good experience, but also glad to be
15 back here in California.

16 PANEL MEMBER BELNAP: So before entering
17 the seminary, at some point you must have decided,
18 too, that going into being a pastor was where your
19 life was headed. Can you tell us about that
20 decision?

21 DR. YEE: Sure. Part of that was -- so
22 I've mentioned before, I'm, you know, I'm drawn to
23 gaps. You know, what's missing? What needs to be
24 done that isn't being done.

25 And part of my decision to go to seminary

1 in the first place was actually not professional.
2 The church I was at, at the time, the church my
3 family attended and that I grew up in, we had a
4 pastor at the time who encouraged young people
5 there to, you know, as they got their college
6 degrees and, perhaps, graduate degrees, that in
7 that mix that they include some higher education in
8 religion, you know, in matters of faith. And his
9 reasoning was, you know, you're going to get all
10 educated in all these other parts of your life.
11 You should, you know, have some education in this
12 part of your life, as well, you know, no matter
13 what profession you're in.

14 It's similar to, I think, some of the, you
15 know, centuries ago, the origins of some of the Ivy
16 League colleges, Harvard and so forth, you know,
17 that all had, you know, such training, you know, in
18 religion as part of their curricula for all of
19 their students because to be educated, to be part
20 of a community, you know, that's part of what you
21 should know about.

22 So that's what initially voted me. It
23 wasn't, initially, a professional decision. But as
24 I progressed in my seminary career, I came to
25 realize that there was a gap in church leadership

1 among Asian Americans. You know, the majority of
2 Asian American churches in America are still
3 pastored by overseas-born, you know, first-
4 generation immigrant leaders, even though, for
5 instance, for Chinese, you know, we've been here
6 over 150 years and, yet, the majority of Chinese
7 America pastors are first generation, not America-
8 born, pastors. And there's a huge gap because, of
9 course, once the first generation has arrived,
10 every generation after that is American, is born
11 here, so a huge gap.

12 And I saw that gap and it weighed on me.
13 And so that's when I decided to help try to fill
14 that gap and make it not only an experience of
15 enriching my life but as a professional direction
16 as well.

17 PANEL MEMBER BELNAP: All right. Thank
18 you.

19 So after getting a certificate in Anglican
20 Studies, it looks like from your employment
21 history, you became a pastor at New Life Christian
22 Fellowship for ten years.

23 DR. YEE: That's right.

24 PANEL MEMBER BELNAP: So -- and you were
25 also later a pastor at another church. So that's

1 leads to my next question.

2 How has your experience as a pastor
3 increased your understanding and appreciation for
4 California's diversity?

5 DR. YEE: Yes. So, you know, as a pastor,
6 you circulate in church circles and you talk to
7 people about their spiritual lives and commitments
8 and community involvement in their churches, and so
9 that whole world. And as I mentioned before, for
10 me, it's a wide world, more conservatism, more
11 liberal, different, you know, different churches
12 all over. It helps me to understand those parts of
13 people's live.

14 You know, when I look out at Oakland,
15 Oakland has a very diverse religious landscape, you
16 know? I love being -- where I live is, actually,
17 right down the hill from our -- there's a Greek
18 Orthodox -- a large Greek Orthodox Church right
19 next to a Latter Day Saints temple, right down the
20 street from a newer Ethiopian Orthodox Church. You
21 know, we have all our historically Black churches
22 in Oakland, main line churches, Evangelical
23 churches, immigrant churches. And, you know, that
24 whole world is familiar to me and, you know, I
25 circulate in those circles. And I understand

1 people and their attachments and commitments to
2 those settings. And, of course, other religions as
3 well. So in Oakland, you know, we have somewhat
4 newer Buddhist temples and some mosques and so
5 forth.

6 So I think just understanding that part of
7 people's lives, certainly the more conservative
8 parts of the state, Central Valley and so forth,
9 the large churches and the roles that they play in
10 their communities, their communities of interest,
11 is familiar territory to me and something that I
12 think, if someone from the public who is part of a
13 setting like that, you know, wanted to share, they
14 find, in me, someone who could understand and
15 respond to their interests and their concerns, you
16 know, with some skill and personal background.

17 PANEL MEMBER BELNAP: Okay. Thank you.

18 So you ended your time as pastor in 2001
19 and then became an associate pastor in 2007, so
20 there's a six-year gap there that I want to ask
21 about. The first ten years is a long time. Maybe
22 your service was up?

23 But why did you end -- why did you stop
24 being the pastor in 2001 for the New Life Christian
25 Fellowship?

1 DR. YEE: Sure. So New Life, by the way,
2 that was the church where we made that big
3 denominational decision that I talked about
4 earlier.

5 Even -- so during those ten years I was at
6 New Life, I was not full-time there. I was
7 actually teaching as well. So after my doctorate
8 studies, I wanted to be mostly pastoring and
9 then -- but also teaching, and so I was teaching
10 that whole time during those ten years.

11 In the course of those ten years, I
12 learned more about myself and learned more about
13 pastoring and teaching and realized that my gifts
14 were actually more towards teaching than pastoring.
15 I think in my life, the way I'm wired, kind of the
16 more structured nature of teaching fit me better.
17 And I had better energy for that and more skill. I
18 was actually able to be more pastoral as a
19 professor, I found.

20 And so near the end of those ten years at
21 New Life, as I looked at the church, they actually
22 wanted me to stay on but it seemed to me that my
23 gifts and interests were not what they needed most
24 for going to the next step. They needed a different
25 leader, somebody, perhaps, with a different skill

1 set than I had. And so that's why I wrapped it up
2 there. I turned to mostly teaching.

3 My later associate pastor position was at
4 the church I'm at now. And I was on staff for a
5 few years when they were younger and smaller, and
6 so -- but still mostly teaching at that time.

7 So I haven't been doing just one thing all
8 those years, some, you know, on paid staff at
9 churches, doing lots of volunteer things, as well
10 as teaching.

11 PANEL MEMBER BELNAP: Now tell me more
12 about the teaching. I don't know if I see that in
13 front of me. Where were you teaching?

14 DR. YEE: So, you know, as it happens,
15 right now in American higher education, it's hard
16 to believe but the majority of classes are taught
17 by what's called contingent faculty. Contingent
18 faculty are either graduate students or faculty
19 that are not tenure track who are hired to teach a
20 class. And so that's been my role, mostly, mostly
21 in adjunct and in associate appointments.

22 And so teaching in recent years, my main
23 appointment was at Fuller Theological Seminary,
24 which is based in Pasadena, it's actually the
25 largest Protestant seminary in the world, and

1 teaching in-person classes, and then more recently
2 teaching mostly online classes. So teaching there,
3 as well as other schools.

4 I did some teaching for a small seminary
5 in Southern California, and then other settings, so
6 --

7 PANEL MEMBER BELNAP: And what were the
8 subjects that you teach or taught?

9 DR. YEE: So at the seminaries, I've
10 taught mostly what's called Pastoral Ministry, so
11 that's the work of pastoring, other than preaching,
12 and so a lot of pastoral care, leadership, building
13 teams. My particular interest is in Christian
14 worship, and so that's the history of that, the
15 cultural nature of it, how it's developed over
16 time, the theology of it, of course, and so I like
17 teaching in those areas. And I find what motivates
18 me most is actually the cultural teaching and
19 trying to help students appreciate it more, have
20 more tools for thinking about it, talking about it,
21 helping.

22 So right now, I'm actually involved with
23 the Asian American Center at Fuller Theological
24 Seminary. And I find a lot of my work there helps
25 students kind of find their own voice and think

1 about their own stories and, you know, what does it
2 mean to pastor or be in ministry in Asian American
3 settings? How does it work trying to integrate
4 themselves to the majority culture? And questions
5 like that.

6 So that's something about my teaching.

7 PANEL MEMBER BELNAP: Thank you.

8 Madam Secretary, can I get a time check?

9 MS. PELLMAN: Yes. Six minutes, fifteen
10 seconds remaining.

11 PANEL MEMBER BELNAP: Okay.

12 Now I'd like you to walk us through an
13 example of a complex analysis you've performed in
14 either your work or academic experience.

15 DR. YEE: Conflict? Is that a conflict
16 analysis?

17 PANEL MEMBER BELNAP: No, a complex.

18 DR. YEE: Complex analysis? Wow. I
19 suppose my mind immediately goes to my doctoral
20 research, the research of my doctoral program,
21 which was sociolinguistic analysis of different
22 approaches to Christian worship, so looking at
23 Sunday worship and examining the difference between
24 settings that are liturgical, so they have service
25 books they -- I guess you could get all the script,

1 you know, for the service, written prayers,
2 comparing that with all the traditions that don't
3 use written liturgies, that are more extemporaneous
4 in their approach to their worship.

5 And so this was a sociolinguistic
6 analysis. And I used various models, including one
7 called diglossia, looking at different ways that
8 settings use language. And so I had to look at
9 lots of different language, samples and critiques
10 of those and analyses of those, and come up with a
11 theory of the nature of the use of language in such
12 settings and how formal and informal language
13 relate to each other in those settings. So that
14 was a big project.

15 Data analysis, complex analysis, I do
16 think of my running. It's an incredibly
17 quantitative process. Marathon racing and
18 training, there's all these sources of advice and
19 plans and you have to analyze them. You have to do
20 a lot of quantitative work, as well as qualitative
21 work, and look at evidence, you know, not just take
22 things at face value, compare things, talk to
23 people, decide on a plan, execute that plan,
24 evaluate it. And so doing that for myself and
25 doing that with others, a lot of complex analysis.

1 PANEL MEMBER BELNAP: So, Madam Secretary,
2 how much time do I have?

3 MS. PELLMAN: Three minutes, fifty
4 seconds, 5-0.

5 PANEL MEMBER BELNAP: So I want to come
6 back to the linguistic analysis that you performed

7 DR. YEE: Um-hmm.

8 PANEL MEMBER BELNAP: Where did you get
9 your information about the various forms of worship
10 and the language used?

11 DR. YEE: It's a very tricky matter
12 because for the liturgical traditions, of course,
13 we have written, published, authorized liturgies
14 and so you have these, you know, these published
15 sources, you know, on paper that you can analyze.
16 And then, of course, you go into their settings and
17 you actually listen and look at those settings.

18 For the extemporaneous traditions, it's
19 much trickier. So, of course, you visit them. You
20 look at transcripts. You talk to people. You ask
21 them how they approach -- you talk to worship
22 leaders and ask them how they approached deciding
23 what they're going to say. And so you collect data
24 that way and try to analyze it was best you can.
25 But that was definitely a challenge.

1 PANEL MEMBER BELNAP: Okay. Thank you.

2 I have no further questions.

3 DR. YEE: Thank you, Mr. Belnap.

4 CHAIR COE: Thank you, Mr. Belnap.

5 Mr. Dawson?

6 MR. DAWSON: Thank you, Mr. Coe.

7 Good morning -- well, it's now afternoon,
8 Dr. Yee.

9 DR. YEE: Yeah.

10 MR. DAWSON: Just a couple of follow-up
11 questions.

12 In your response to standard question one,
13 you mentioned that you were -- had dived into the
14 Online Academy of the Census.

15 DR. YEE: Yes.

16 MR. DAWSON: Is that intended to help
17 users of census data?

18 DR. YEE: That's correct. So the U.S.
19 Census, it's a little messy right now because
20 they're actually transitioning from their older
21 platform, which is American Fact Finder, to a newer
22 platform, which is at data.census.gov. So it's,
23 yeah, it's for the general public, as well as for
24 any specialists or professionals, to just learn how
25 to navigate census data and make good use of it,

1 and so, you know, helpful videos and tutorials for
2 how to do that.

3 MR. DAWSON: Thank you.

4 It's kind of a broad question. What can
5 the history of Oakland teach us about the history
6 of California generally and how would that be --
7 how would that perspective be useful to the
8 Commission?

9 DR. YEE: Wow. Oh, my goodness. You
10 know, I think what the starting point is, is
11 realizing that every place has an incredibly
12 complex and, you know, multifaceted story behind
13 it, really.

14 One of the very first things I always
15 start with in my Oakland class is a unit on
16 dispelling the idea of a single story. You cannot
17 explain anyplace with a single story. And it's not
18 that those single stories are not true necessarily.
19 The trouble is that they don't tell the whole
20 story; right?

21 So right now one of the big debates in
22 Oakland and a lot of our big cities involves
23 gentrification, right, and housing debates. And
24 you could say, well, this is the whole story of
25 Oakland right now, it's, you know, newcomers with

1 money displacing long-time residents with less
2 money, you know? And that is part of our story.
3 But that's, you know, just one fraction of our
4 story.

5 So I think Oakland and its history,
6 immigration, changes, dramatic changes, you know,
7 historically, Oakland actually was a very
8 conservative town and it changed a lot. It's
9 changed, you know, dramatically two or three times
10 in its history.

11 So just an appreciation for the complexity
12 of places and stories, as well as, you know, Native
13 American backgrounds and presence and the
14 importance of all those things apply to the state
15 as a whole as well.

16 MR. DAWSON: All right. Thank you.

17 I have no further follow-ups.

18 DR. YEE: Thank you, Mr. Dawson.

19 CHAIR COE: Ms. Dickison, any follow-up
20 questions?

21 PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: I have no follow-
22 up questions.

23 CHAIR COE: Mr. Belnap?

24 PANEL MEMBER BELNAP: No further follow-up
25 questions.

1 CHAIR COE: Mr. Dawson, I don't have any
2 further follow-up questions either.

3 MR. DAWSON: Thank you.

4 Madam Secretary, how much time is
5 remaining in the 90 minutes?

6 MS. PELLMAN: Four minutes, five seconds
7 remaining.

8 MR. DAWSON: All right. Thank you.

9 Dr. Yee, with the time remaining, I'd like
10 to give you the opportunity to make a closing --
11 make some closing remarks to the Panel, if you
12 wish?

13 DR. YEE: I do wish. Thank you.

14 Thank you all for persevering in this very
15 impressive and long process of the selection phase
16 of the Redistricting Commission. I'm just really
17 inspired by your work and by this process. And I
18 have full confidence that whoever, eventually, ends
19 up on the Commission, the 14, the lucky and the
20 chosen, that they will do excellent work. And, you
21 know, of course, I would love to be part of that
22 work. But if I'm not, I will have full confidence
23 in the work of the Commission.

24 As I think about the work of the 2010
25 Commission, and maybe even further back, the 2008

1 proposition that led to this Commission, it's hard
2 to remember just how unlikely it all was, you know?
3 I think the good work of the 2010 Commission makes
4 it seem inevitable but it was not inevitable. It
5 was not even likely. And I'm just thrilled to be a
6 part of a state where we pulled this off, you know?
7 We pulled it off well once and I would like to help
8 it pull it off well again.

9 And as I look, as I read the news every
10 day, as I'm really heartbroken over the
11 polarization in our nation, the heavy debates, and
12 some of the discouraging developments around voting
13 rights, you know, being a poll worker last month
14 and seeing up close and personal what the low voter
15 turnout that is typical, sadly, for us looks like,
16 you know, as I was at the precinct there just being
17 kind of heartbroken about that low voter turnout,
18 all the debates about the electoral college and
19 sort forth, in the midst of all that we have this
20 success of California citizen nonpartisan
21 redistricting as a lot and as a positive
22 development to our recent history.

23 And so I would love, I would love, love,
24 love to be part of this important work.

25 And so I just thank you, Mr. Coe, Mr.

1 Belnap, and Ms. Dickison, Mr. Dawson, the staff
2 there, interpreters, the secretary, the video, our
3 video friend, everybody, thank you so much for your
4 time. Please be safe and thank you.

5 CHAIR COE: Thank you, Dr. Yee, for taking
6 the time to speak with us this morning and
7 afternoon a little bit.

8 Our next interview is scheduled for 1:15,
9 so we will go into recess until 1:14.

10 (Thereupon the Panel recessed at 12:13 p.m.)

11 (Whereupon the Panel reconvened at 1:14 p.m.)

12 CHAIR COE: The time being 1:14 p.m., I'd
13 like to call this meeting out of recess, back to
14 order.

15 At this time, I'd like to welcome Ms.
16 Denisse Godoy for her interview.

17 I hope I said your name right?

18 MS. GODOY: You did.

19 CHAIR COE: Great. So, obviously, you're
20 here. Okay. Welcome. Thank you for being here.

21 I'd like to turn the time over to Mr.
22 Dawson to ask the five standard questions please.

23 MR. DAWSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

24 Ms. Godoy, I'm going to ask you five
25 standard questions that the Panel has requested

1 that each panelists -- each applicant respond to.
2 Are you ready?

3 MS. GODOY: I am.

4 MR. DAWSON: First question: What skills
5 and attributes should all Commissioners possess?
6 What skills or competencies should the Commission
7 possess collectively? Of the skills, attributes,
8 and competencies that each Commissioner should
9 possess, which do you possess? In summary, how
10 will you contribute to the success of the
11 Commission?

12 MS. GODOY: Good afternoon everyone. I'd
13 like to thank everyone for their time this
14 afternoon.

15 First and foremost, I believe that the
16 Commission must represent the state of California.
17 It must be diverse. It must be diverse in
18 geographic, in gender, in age, and economic, and
19 ethnically speaking.

20 And as an immigrant from Mexico, myself,
21 that has lived both in Northern and Southern
22 California, I believe I can bring this diverse
23 perspective to the Commission.

24 The next attribute I think that the
25 Commission and all Commissioners should possess is

1 impartiality. We must be able to set our personal
2 views aside. The Commission is mandated to draw
3 fair lines that are free of political interests.
4 And this requires a level of impartiality at all
5 levels of the Commission, from the Commission staff
6 to the Commissioners themselves during all stages
7 of the process.

8 And, you know, this became clear to me
9 because I've worked in commissions before. I've
10 worked as a Junior Legal Advisor for Commissioner
11 Peterman at the California State Commission. And
12 during my time working with her, it was very
13 important that we conducted the office in a way
14 that was impartiality, as we were serving the State
15 of California and the people of California. And a
16 tool that Commissioner Peterman held close to her
17 was sticking to the Commission's mission. If all
18 of our decisions are made in a way that is mindful
19 of the Commission's decisions, we will be able to
20 free ourselves from partisanship.

21 You know, I also believe that the
22 Commissioners and the Commission as a whole needs
23 to be transparent. It needs to be transparent
24 because, quite frankly, it is mandated. The people
25 of California wanted a transparent process during

1 the redistricting process. And, therefore, I do
2 believe that as a whole the Commission has to be
3 transparent. And each individual Commissioner must
4 be transparent. We have to, you know, explain our
5 decisions. And we have to take notes. We have to
6 do everything in the public eyes. This will help
7 us avoid lawsuits and defend ourselves in the eyes
8 of lawsuits, to be quite honest.

9 And, again, you know, my time working in
10 government agencies, with being a Junior Advisor
11 with Commission Peterman's office, and also
12 interning in an international government agency in
13 the Philippines, really, really instilled the value
14 of being transparent, taking notes, and leaving a
15 paper trail.

16 I think that the next attribute that we
17 should bring is, also, we need to be inquisitive.
18 We are fact finders. And as fact finders, you
19 know, our task is to identify communities of
20 interest. And, you know, I believe that as fact
21 finders, you know, our task is to identify
22 communities of interest. And, you know, I believe
23 that my undergraduate degree training as a
24 historian has naturally instilled this fact-finding
25 curiosity in me which has translated in my current

1 work as a trial attorney. I'm a fact finder by
2 trait.

3 I also believe that the Commission has to
4 be competent, and Commissioners have to be
5 competent, and the Commission staff have to be
6 competent. What I mean by competent is there needs
7 to be the analytical skills and there needs to be
8 the ability to articulate and communicate
9 effectively.

10 We need to have the analytical skills as
11 Commissioners, just to be able to shift through
12 dense material. We're going to be facing a lot of
13 data in different forms. And we need to be able to
14 analyze, comprehend the data, and apply it in
15 drawing the districts.

16 And I also think that we need to be
17 articulate in the sense that we need to be able to
18 explain our decisions, and we need to be able to
19 articulate our thought process and ask questions.
20 If we cannot articulate our questions, we will not
21 be able to effectively be fact finders.

22 And again, you know, as a trial attorney,
23 I have a clear understanding of legal principles
24 that govern complex frameworks and how to apply
25 facts to those principles.

1 I also am an effective communicator. As a
2 litigator, I present trials before judges and I
3 have to be able to articulate my framing of the
4 case, my understanding of the case law. And, also,
5 I have to be able to communicate to my clients and
6 other staff the strategies and just the whole -- my
7 understandings of the case. And I think that
8 requires a very -- to be a very effective
9 communicator.

10 I also think that the Commission needs to
11 be forward thinking. We need to be visionaries as
12 Commissioners. We need to envision how California
13 will look in ten years from now as our work will
14 cover the next coming ten years. We need to be
15 able to envision how the demographics will change
16 and how the -- that will affect the different
17 regions and the districts to come.

18 And I believe that my experience
19 participating in the 2011 redistricting process
20 brings me this unique framework which I can
21 envision how a county will be affected in the years
22 to come. We did it in Riverside County when I
23 participated. And I do believe that it required us
24 to be forward thinking as our maps that we proposed
25 -- I proposed them through LULAC, this nonpartisan

1 organization that I cofounded in Riverside. And
2 they were eventually adopted to create the 41st
3 Congressional District by the State of California,
4 which is currently the district that I preside in.

5 So in summary, I think that my unique
6 perspective as being an immigrant from Mexico, who
7 has assimilated to the United States, who
8 has -- was raised in Southern California, educated
9 in Northern California, and is familiar with the
10 Central Valley as I have family there, besides
11 there, combined with the skills and attributes that
12 I have and the experience I have in the
13 redistricting process, will allow me to bring great
14 contributions to this Commission from those
15 perspectives.

16 MR. DAWSON: Thank you.

17 Question two: Work on the Commission
18 requires members of different political backgrounds
19 to work together. Since the 2010 Commission was
20 selected and formed, the American political
21 conversation has become increasingly polarized,
22 whether in the press, on social media, and even in
23 our own families.

24 What characteristics do you possess and
25 what characteristics should your fellow

1 Commissioners possess that will protect against
2 hyper-partisanship? What will you do to ensure
3 that the work of the Commission is not seen as
4 polarized or hyper-partisan and avoid perceptions
5 of political bias and conflict?

6 MS. GODOY: First and foremost, I think
7 that the characteristics that each Commissioner,
8 and I believe, I possess is there needs to be a
9 commitment to upholding the mission of the
10 Commission. The mission statement needs to be our
11 guiding post. I believe that if we stay true to
12 the mission statement, we can use it as a tool to
13 purposely appear impartial. We'll be staying true
14 to the mission, which means that we will not be
15 looking at political -- we're only -- at political
16 influences or anything like that because our
17 decisions will be made staying true to the mission.

18 I also think that we need to be
19 transparent. Transparency is key in this process.
20 Transparency will safeguard the confidence the
21 public will have in our process because they will
22 understand that, as a Commission, we genuinely
23 acted in a way that was true to the mission. And
24 if we're transparent throughout the whole process,
25 at every stage of the process, it will reinforce

1 that public confidence in us.

2 Now there's things that we could do as
3 Commissioners so that we don't seem polarizing and
4 avoid perceptions of political bias. And I think
5 that one of those things is that we have to act,
6 consciously act, and make decisions, staying true
7 to the mission. I believe that if we are guided by
8 that, we will prevail, we will successfully
9 prevail, and we'll prevail against legal
10 challenges, and we'll prevail against hard
11 challenges that we will face.

12 I also think that, personally, I will be
13 withholding from speaking my views. I will be
14 withholding myself at every level, at a personal
15 level and a public level, from stating any
16 opinions. I think the focus here needs to be a
17 fact-finding mission. We need to ask questions and
18 listen to answers.

19 MR. DAWSON: Question three: What is the
20 greatest problem the Commission could encounter and
21 what actions would you take to avoid or respond to
22 this problem?

23 MS. GODOY: well, I think that given the
24 current state that we're in and the public health
25 crisis, the number one problem we're going to face

1 is having the timely availability of the census
2 data. The Census has pushed its deadline forward
3 and they're not going to have the data available
4 until, prospectively, like a month before the
5 Commission has to present the maps, the final maps.
6 And this is going to greatly effect the way that
7 the Commission is structured, the way that we're
8 going to do our things, and the needs that we're
9 going to have.

10 We might have to face the situation where
11 we may have to ask the legislature to extend our
12 deadline. We're going to have to find creative
13 ways to be able to meet this deadline, given the
14 fact that we're not going to have the data
15 available to -- at an early stage of the process.

16 I also think that partisan gamesmanship of
17 the process can be an issue that we're going to
18 face. You know, there's going to be a lot of
19 political interest groups and lobbyists and special
20 interest groups who have been watching this
21 process. And, you know, they've had -- they now
22 know what this process is like, given the 2011.
23 And they now know the kind of things that -- the
24 changes in the districts and the changes that can
25 occur. And I think that they will be strategizing

1 in clever ways in their attempt to try to
2 manipulate the process.

3 And then one more thing is going to be
4 digestion of data. We're going to be flooded with
5 a lot of data coming from different sources.
6 There's going to be hard data coming from the
7 statistical -- the census and other statistical
8 datas. Then there's going to be public comments.
9 And we're going to have to decipher all of this in
10 a way that we can use in our decision making.

11 And I think that that's one of the
12 troubles that the last Commission encountered and
13 noted, was that they had so much public input that
14 they didn't have the time or the capacity,
15 possibility, to organize all of that data in a way
16 that they could use it in creating the districts.

17 So I think that those are going to be big
18 things that we're going to have to deal with at a
19 Commission as a whole. And I think that there's
20 ways that we can definitely, you know, work with
21 everybody on the Commission staff to improve on the
22 process that was before and see where we can
23 improve the digestion of data and prepare ourselves
24 for possible partisan gamesmanship.

25 MR. DAWSON: Question four: If you are

1 selected you will be one of 14 members of the
2 Commission which is charged with working together
3 to create maps of the new districts.

4 Please describe a situation where you had
5 to work collaboratively with others on a project to
6 achieve a common goal. Tell us the goal of the
7 project, what your role in the group was, and how
8 the group worked through any conflicts that arose?
9 What lessons would you take from this group
10 experience to the Commission, if selected?

11 MS. GODOY: As I mentioned earlier, I
12 participated in the 2011 redistricting process.

13 In 2010, I cofounded a nonpartisan
14 community organization in Riverside County that's
15 called LULAC of Riverside. And one of our first
16 projects that we looked at was redistricting. It
17 was, given that it was the first time that the
18 Citizens Commission was able to establish
19 districts, it was the first opportunity that the
20 County of Riverside had in -- that ever had to draw
21 their own district lines and be able to be unified
22 as a district. Because, prior to that, Riverside
23 County was historically divided into three
24 different districts, which it had nothing in common
25 with. Essentially, the votes of the Riverside

1 County community residents were diluted in these
2 other districts.

3 So my organization, we are very -- we
4 focus on promoting and defending voting rights. We
5 want to promote and enhance the voter demographics
6 in our community. And we also want to ensure that
7 those votes get counted in a meaningful manner. So
8 we undertook the redistricting project. We were
9 able to get the software that we needed through the
10 UC Irvine network. At the time, UC Irvine was
11 providing different groups access to the software,
12 the mapping software. So not only did we partner
13 with them but we also went around and partnered
14 with the other local community organizations. We
15 wanted to create a uniform front that was backed by
16 the community leaders, the community, and the
17 community itself.

18 So as part of my personal role is I was
19 tasked with collecting public input and going to
20 different organizations to not only ask for their
21 input but to also ask for their collaboration.
22 This was very interesting because a lot of people
23 had different opinions about which part of the
24 community was to stay in tact and which part of the
25 community had to stay in the neighboring districts.

1 So as I went around collecting this data,
2 what I was -- the data that I was collecting is I
3 was collecting public comments. I was canvassing,
4 just asking people, you know, "What do you guys
5 feel, like your communities are connected, or which
6 communities in Riverside County do you shop in, do
7 your children go to school," and just to try to
8 find communities of interest through their
9 political interests of their livelihood, economic
10 interests.

11 The I would also go to the community
12 organizations to ask them about what they felt,
13 given their experience working in our community,
14 were the communities of interest?

15 And the greatest problem that arose during
16 this process was drawing the maps in a mindful way
17 in which communities that were really bound with
18 the Riverside County weren't left out. And the
19 difficult choices were made when you had
20 unincorporated areas of the county that were at the
21 outskirts. And, initially, geographically
22 speaking, they may appear like they belong more in
23 our district.

24 However, once you look at the data, where
25 they're working, where they're shopping, where, you

1 know, what the infrastructure is that they're
2 using, the roads they frequent, it turned out to be
3 the neighboring data -- the neighboring district
4 that was more of a community of interest for them,
5 that was more like their community.

6 And there was great debate. There was
7 passionate debate about this. Nobody wants to be
8 left out. Nobody wanted to be pushed out.
9 However, we have constraints. We had population
10 constraints. We had all of the nesting
11 constraints. We had different constraints which we
12 had to make compromise with. And the way that the
13 group, the network that we created, approached this
14 was we turned to the data. We turned to the data
15 to let the data guide us. And that's how we
16 resolved the issue of which communities were
17 outside of the bounds of the districts that we
18 wanted to create.

19 And I think that, you know, what I took
20 away from this experience was that, first, you have
21 to be critical of unintended consequences. You
22 have to look at not only, you know, the consequence
23 that our actions or our groupings is going to have
24 in our community, but also the neighboring
25 communities and how that's going to effect, you

1 know, the boundary lines.

2 And then I also think that it is very
3 important to be inquisitive, to be inquisitive and
4 to really look past appearances and really, really
5 take an in-depth look and understanding of where
6 these people were living their lives, how they were
7 living their lives, and what kind of experiences
8 they were sharing together as a community.

9 I definitely think that those are the big
10 takeaways.

11 MR. DAWSON: Thank you.

12 Question five: A considerable amount of
13 the Commission's work will involve meeting with
14 people from all over California who come from very
15 different backgrounds and a wide variety of
16 perspectives.

17 If you were selected as a Commissioner,
18 what skills and attributes will make you effective
19 at interacting with people from different
20 backgrounds and who have a variety of perspectives?
21 What experiences have you had that will help you be
22 effective at understanding and appreciating people
23 and communities of different backgrounds and who
24 have a variety of perspectives?

25 MS. GODOY: I think that the skills and

1 attributes that make me effective at interacting
2 with people with different backgrounds and a
3 variety of perspectives is going to be my ability
4 to not only communicate effectively but adapt my
5 communication, my communication given my audience.
6 So by that I mean I'm not going to use the same
7 tone or language when I'm speaking to a
8 professional-class member of our society as I am
9 when I'm speaking to an indigenous immigrant from
10 Guatemala who doesn't speak Spanish or English.

11 So those are the type of ranges of
12 communication, that my communication skills allow
13 me to adapt to this range of situations.

14 I also think that my natural curiosity to
15 understand other people, which may be driven by my
16 empathy, I'm very empathetic, and I think that when
17 those two are combined I have a natural curiosity
18 just to understand people's perspectives, why they
19 think the way that they think. You know, what life
20 experiences have led them to be that way and to
21 express themselves in the manners that they do?

22 You know, I very much understand that a
23 lot of life is about context. And being able to
24 really understand the context behind people's
25 actions is something that I'm just naturally

1 curious about.

2 And I also think that the fact that I have
3 a diverse perspective very much allows me to engage
4 and interact with people from different
5 communities, you know?

6 I, you know, as an immigrant, and as an
7 immigration law attorney, I engage with people from
8 all walks of life. You know, I engage people that
9 are from various ethnicities from different
10 countries around, from different -- that have
11 different culture, different gender, gender
12 identities, just a wide range of people that I
13 encounter. And I think all of that helps add to my
14 diverse perspective. And it enhances my ability to
15 be able to communicate and interact with people
16 from all walks of life.

17 And, you know, I think that the
18 experiences, I've been touching upon that, is
19 throughout my life, I have immersed myself in
20 different societies at different stages in my life.
21 As a child, you know, I had to assimilate in
22 California. My parents, we immigrated. My family
23 immigrated to Southern California in the early
24 '90s. And I had to -- you know, that was my first
25 instance of having exposure to different cultures.

1 You know, I didn't have the language skills. I
2 didn't understand a lot of things and then, you
3 know, assimilating through that.

4 Then I, also, in undergrad, I spent a
5 semester abroad living in Brazil. So, again, I
6 immersed myself in and different society. I did
7 not speak Portuguese. And even though Spanish is
8 very similar to Portuguese, it's not close enough.
9 And I think, you know, just those aspects of living
10 amongst different people and different societies
11 has really instilled an appreciation for that.

12 And then, you know, back in the states, I
13 also, like I said, I was raised in Southern
14 California. I went to law school in San Francisco
15 and Northern California. Throughout my life, I
16 also spent time in the Central Valley. I have
17 family that resides in Salinas, California, and in
18 Fresno, California. And growing up, we visited the
19 area all the time, a few times a year, to say the
20 least.

21 So I think that all of this gives me -- I
22 have -- I've been exposed to people from all walks
23 of life, you know, like I said, at every stage.
24 And I think that all of that really, really has
25 brought an appreciation for that.

1 Thank you.

2 MR. DAWSON: We'll now go to Panel
3 questions. Each Panel member will have 20 minutes
4 to ask his or her questions. We'll start with the
5 Chair.

6 Mr. Coe?

7 CHAIR COE: Thank you, Mr. Dawson.

8 Once again, good afternoon to you, Ms.
9 Godoy. Thank you for taking the time to speak with
10 us today.

11 You mentioned a couple of times this
12 afternoon already your LULAC of Riverside that you
13 helped cofound. And I'd like to know a little bit
14 more about the organization, how you came to
15 cofound it and motivated you to do so?

16 MS. GODOY: Okay. So in 2010, I graduated
17 from undergrad, from UC Riverside, and I was
18 looking for a project to become involved in.

19 I have always been very passionate about
20 politics and, particularly, about voter rights.
21 It's just been something that throughout my studies
22 in history just really highlighted and stood out to
23 me the importance of curtailing the integrity of
24 the institution for a democracy. You know, if we
25 don't have a strong voting system, you know, that

1 in itself puts in peril our democracy.

2 So at local level, we -- I really wanted
3 to get involved in voter turnouts and voter
4 education. There was a great lack of voter
5 education, particularly in the Latino community,
6 which was -- even though it was the majority of the
7 population, it was greatly neglected as a community
8 in Riverside.

9 So I started to scout out different
10 organizations in the area to see if one of them,
11 you know, interested me and was working on the type
12 of projects that I was interested in working. And
13 within those interactions, I came across -- he is a
14 seasoned -- there's this couple that are like
15 legendary community organizers in Riverside County,
16 everybody knows who they are, Gilberto and Yolanda
17 Esquivel. They have been organizing in that
18 community for over 30 years.

19 Well, we met at an event. And they
20 reached out to me because they were interested in
21 the same things that I was interested in but we
22 didn't have an organization to work under that. So
23 they reached out to other community leaders and we
24 all got together to cofound this, the LULAC of
25 Riverside. And our mission was, essentially, to

1 educate the public, promote and protect voting
2 rights.

3 So a part of that, a lot of what we did is
4 we brought in a lot of -- we started bringing in
5 political forums and started creating spaces for
6 these types of events to take place, educational
7 events for the community. And we also started
8 partnering with translators who would translate in
9 Spanish to the public, the meetings, and not only
10 the meetings but we also held candidate forums and
11 debates. We also held voter education forums in
12 which we were --
13 gave -- provided education on the propositions.
14 And we also wanted to participate in the
15 redistricting process because we wanted to un-
16 gerrymander our district. Our district was
17 historically un-gerrymandered. And I think as --
18 we all, collectively, were really passionate about
19 that.

20 CHAIR COE: And did you have a specific
21 role within the organization or, as a cofounder,
22 were you kind of involved in everything?

23 MS. GODOY: Well, I shifted my role in
24 different places. I was Secretary. And then I was
25 Community Outreach Chair. So, you know, initially,

1 as a cofounder, we were trying to recruit members.
2 So we all had to do everything. We all had to kind
3 of pick up, you know, we all had to pick up the
4 phones. We all had to be note takers. But once we
5 started establishing ourselves and we had more
6 members and we had higher membership, more
7 consistent, then I started stepping out of some
8 roles and just stepped into the board.

9 CHAIR COE: I'd like to talk a little bit
10 out LULAC's involvement in the local redistricting
11 effort in Riverside that you mentioned earlier.
12 You said that was one of the first projects after
13 founding the organization that it went through.
14 And you mentioned, with the maps, you presented a
15 set of maps to the Redistricting Commission that
16 were ultimately adopted.

17 Were they, these maps that you presented,
18 were they adopted in their entirety?

19 MS. GODOY: Yes.

20 CHAIR COE: They were? How did that come
21 about? Were you directly involved in drawing the
22 lines of these maps?

23 MS. GODOY: I was. I was. So I was
24 involved in many phases of this process. I was in
25 the drawing room when were, you know, fiddling

1 around with the maps and the software. And we, you
2 know, we also had used the Commission's.

3 So pretty much what we did is we took the
4 proposed -- the draft commission's maps and we
5 built upon those. We built upon those in ways that
6 we felt would strengthen the communities. So we
7 adapted those maps.

8 And then after we adapted those maps, we
9 presented them to other community leaders in our
10 network to, you know, make sure everybody was
11 onboard and, you know, to get feedback on it.

12 And I'm very proud to say that our maps
13 were adopted in their entirety and it changed
14 everything about our district.

15 CHAIR COE: And in terms of the data that
16 was going into those maps, you guys used census
17 data during that; is that right?

18 MS. GODOY: Yes. Yes. So we had to use
19 the census data, you know, because the census data
20 is what it gives us the population mass. And like,
21 you know, that gives us our framework on how to
22 approach it and how to do it.

23 But then we also had to go in and use soft
24 data collected to kind of -- to take a further look
25 at the data, you know, to complete the picture that

1 we weren't seeing because the data only tells you
2 so much. There's other things that you need to see
3 in order to be able to confirm that the data is
4 accurate. You know, such as those things as like
5 you turn around and you look at, you know,
6 infrastructure in the community. What roads are
7 shared by these communities? You know, where are
8 these people spending their money? Where are they
9 shopping? What grocery stores are they going to?
10 What malls are they going to? And in a social
11 aspect, along with the roads, you know, access to
12 an education for their children, and their
13 experience, and things like that

14 CHAIR COE: So why do you think that the
15 maps that LULAC presented were so well received by
16 the commission down there?

17 MS. GODOY: I think it's because we backed
18 it up with the data. You know, we filled in the
19 holes where there was holes and we built our case
20 upon that. And we really stuck to the facts. And
21 I think that that really helped the commission see
22 a clear image of our community.

23 CHAIR COE: Okay. Thank you.

24 I want to switch gears a little bit and
25 talk about something you said in your impartiality

1 essay I'd like to ask you a question about. And in
2 that essay, you say, "To be impartial means to
3 objectively evaluate information in order to reach
4 an equitable outcome for all parties affected by
5 the decision regardless of personal views and
6 interests."

7 And I'm wondering if, aside from the
8 redistricting effort that we just spoke about, can
9 you provide us with an example of a different time
10 in which you had to set aside your personal views
11 and interests in order to make a difficult
12 impartial decision?

13 MS. GODOY: Sure. So I think that a clear
14 example of this can be driven from the time that I
15 spend working as a Junior Legal Advisory to
16 Commissioner Peterman's office. The work that I
17 was assigned with was I was to evaluate utilities
18 requests for rate increase for their clients. And
19 one of these requests affected me because I'm a
20 consumer and it affected my area, it turned out.
21 So I don't want my rates to increase. No one wants
22 their rates to increase. I think that that's just
23 natural.

24 However, I had to set my personal views
25 aside because there was -- it was a greater cause.

1 I had to uphold and stay true to the mission of the
2 commission. And I had to be objective with my
3 analysis in their request.

4 Ultimately, I had to objectively look at
5 the request and see. The way that the requests
6 work is, you know, the utility companies will try
7 to present their case to why they need it, what
8 infrastructure projects they need, things like
9 that. So I had to, you know, keep that in mind.
10 It's a business they're providing. They're
11 providing services and they need money for these
12 services to reach their customers.

13 So I think that approaching it from an
14 elevated mind, I was able to reach a decision that
15 was equitable. Ultimately, I recommended the rate
16 increase but I, you know, I think I adjusted the
17 amount that I recommended to the commissioner for
18 approval.

19 CHAIR COE: Okay. Thank you.

20 Switching topics again, this time to a
21 topic of communities of interest, you've mentioned
22 or you spoke about it a little bit already in terms
23 of your work with LULAC on the 2010-11
24 redistricting effort in Riverside. And one of the
25 things that you probably noticed in your

1 involvement there was that some communities are
2 easier to identify than others and some of them are
3 more hidden, less engaged, harder to identify.

4 And my question is: Is the input of as
5 many community members as possible is vitally
6 important for the work of redistricting commissions
7 everywhere, but specifically, and obviously, this
8 one as well, but how would you go about trying to
9 identify communities without kind of inadvertently
10 overlooking some of those communities of interest
11 that are maybe less obvious and harder to find?

12 MS. GODOY: I definitely think that we
13 need to look at the data. We have to be guided by
14 the data. But we also need to reach out to --
15 well, we would want to get community leaders
16 involved in the process. The community leaders are
17 the best ones to tell us and to be able to point
18 the community into the right direction in regards
19 to being able to identify the communities of
20 interest that are harder to reach.

21 I also think that if there is a media
22 campaign that's inviting these communities to come
23 and speak with us, that would really help reach
24 them and they would help us identify them quite
25 possibly.

1 Like, for example, the Latino community,
2 if we can get into their networks, Univision,
3 Telemundo, and promote and invite them to become
4 part of the process, that will help us gather the
5 data that we need to identify these communities.
6 But we have to be data driven. And we have to look
7 at the data to be able to identify them and kind
8 of, also, look at like, you know, what
9 infrastructures are they sharing? Where are the
10 infrastructures going to? What kind of economy is
11 there? I think there's a lot of different aspects
12 to look at to be able to identify these.

13 CHAIR COE: So some communities that you
14 end up identifying, you may identify them, they may
15 be there, they may acknowledge themselves as a
16 community, but they may not feel, necessarily,
17 comfortable engaging in the process, engaging with
18 government. There may be a variety of reasons why
19 some communities don't feel comfortable coming
20 forward and sharing their perspectives.

21 How would you, as a Commissioner, try to
22 make some of these communities feel more
23 comfortable to come forward and share their
24 perspectives to better inform this Commission?

25 MS. GODOY: I think that we would have to

1 go into their community to invite them to
2 participate in the process. And what I mean by
3 that is going to the places of worship to invite
4 them to participate in the process, going to
5 different areas and connecting with different
6 community leaders that will help us invite people
7 to become part of the process and feel comfortable.
8 If they see Commissioners who look like them and
9 speak their language, I believe that that will be
10 more inviting for them to come and become part of
11 the process.

12 CHAIR COE: Okay. Thank you.

13 MS. PELLMAN: There are 6 minutes, 35
14 seconds remaining.

15 CHAIR COE: Thank you.

16 I'd like to get two more questions in, Ms.
17 Godoy, is we have time.

18 The first one I'd like to ask, go back to
19 something you said in your response to standard
20 question number one. Specifically, you said, one
21 of the things the Commission will need to be as a
22 whole will need to be forward thinking, that these
23 maps are going to last ten years, and that the
24 Commission needs to be forward thinking when
25 they're creating these maps that are going to last

1 to account for potential demographic changes over
2 time.

3 We only have a little bit of time but, in
4 a nutshell, can you expand on what you mean by
5 that? What type of forward thinking would you like
6 to see the Commission go through?

7 MS. GODOY: Well, I definitely think that
8 the Commission needs to look at patterns. What
9 patterns have we been seeing of movement with
10 communities because -- and growth? There's been
11 communities that have grown. And there's been a
12 lot of growth throughout California but it's been
13 disproportionate. So once we sit down and start
14 looking at the data, we'll start seeing how the
15 growth has taken place and where it's taken place,
16 which communities have lost population, which ones
17 have gained.

18 But then we will also have to try to
19 envision the California of tomorrow. Okay, so we
20 saw this influx of population here. We have to be
21 creative in the way that we can try to predict as
22 much as we can in an accurate way how the
23 demographics will change within the -- in the next
24 ten years.

25 CHAIR COE: Thank you.

1 My last question is: If you were to be
2 appointed to the Commission, which aspects of that
3 role do you think that you would enjoy the most
4 and, conversely, which aspects of that role do you
5 think might struggle with a little bit?

6 MS. GODOY: I think that the aspect that I
7 would enjoy the most of the Commission would be
8 getting to know the people of California. I think
9 that I -- it would bring me great pleasure just to
10 go around, up and down the state, and just really
11 get an in-depth understanding and interactions with
12 California and their different communities.

13 Though I'm an immigrant, California is the
14 state that has seen me grow. It's the state where
15 I've obtained all my education. It is my home. So
16 I think that I would really enjoy just interacting
17 with Californians throughout the whole state.

18 The things I think I would struggle with
19 the most is going to be the decisions that we're
20 going to have to make in regards to drawing the
21 maps, drawing the maps in an equitable manner that
22 stays true the mission and upholds legal
23 challenges. There's going to be tough decisions to
24 be made. Communities are going to have to be
25 shifted. And we're also going to have to decide if

1 we're going to adjust the census data and adjust
2 other data to -- so that it reflects a more
3 accurate picture of what we think California is.

4 So I think those are going to be the tough
5 decisions that we're definitely going to struggle
6 with personally and, I think, as a Commission.

7 CHAIR COE: Okay. Thank you. Thank you,
8 Ms. Godoy.

9 I have no further questions, so I'm going
10 to turn the time over to Ms. Dickison.

11 MS. GODOY: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

12 PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Good afternoon,
13 Ms. Godoy. Thank you for meeting with us today.
14 So some of my questions were answered as we were
15 going along.

16 But just building on something you just
17 talked about was that the Commission needs to be
18 able to ensure that its decisions will uphold legal
19 scrutiny.

20 So what steps can the Commission take to
21 ensure that its decisions uphold legal scrutiny?

22 MS. GODOY: Well, I definitely think that
23 we need to take a look at our predecessors. They
24 have an established a good framework for us as all
25 of the legal challenges that were faced by their

1 maps were -- ultimately, the Commission prevailed
2 in defending.

3 I think that a big takeaway from that was
4 transparency. It's just having transparency at
5 every process of -- at every part of the process,
6 at every stage, and, personally, the Commissioners
7 being transparent.

8 I also think that note taking saves the
9 day. And that allowed the Commission to defend its
10 decision in court and defend its choices.

11 You know, we need to definitely, also,
12 make decisions, mission-driven. If we stick to the
13 mission, we will prevail in court. That is true of
14 our predecessors. That's a lesson to be learned
15 from them.

16 PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Thank you.

17 You also talked about that the Commission
18 is going to be facing a lot of data in different
19 forms.

20 Based on what you did in Riverside and
21 what you know about the last Commission, what forms
22 of data do you think the Commission is going to be
23 looking at? Is there new data, new forms of data
24 that could be coming it that it's going to have to
25 contend with as well?

1 MS. GODOY: I definitely think that
2 there's going to be new form of data. But the type
3 of data that the Commission was looking at is
4 primarily we have hard data, which is census data,
5 statistical data, geographical data. This is all
6 dense material.

7 And then, additional, we're going to have
8 to be dealing with all of the public comments.
9 That's also a different form of data that we're
10 going to be analyzing. The way that we digest this
11 data, though, really needs to be planned out so
12 that we could be effective in digesting and using
13 this data.

14 So there's statistical data and then
15 there's soft data that's obtained from places like
16 public comments and of that sort.

17 PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Speaking of public
18 comments, something that the last Commissioner
19 noted was there were instances in which they felt
20 that some of the public comments were coming from
21 people that presented themselves as representing a
22 community but may have had partisan motives.

23 What can the Commission do to try and
24 notice those instances so that the communities of
25 interest are actually getting the most attention?

1 MS. GODOY: I definitely think that, you
2 know, that's going to be our tough task, is being
3 able to identify these type of issues. It's a
4 gamesmanship, essentially. And I think that a tool
5 that will allow us to identify this is really
6 comparing the data that we're receiving and what
7 the community is telling us in comparison with, you
8 know, what these other people are presenting that
9 might have personal interests. If that's steering
10 away far from what we're consistently hearing and
11 the kind of input that we're consistently hearing,
12 I think that that, in itself, shines a light on
13 that person and their motives.

14 So it would be comparing comments that
15 we're receiving, the majority to the minority. Or
16 I also think that when we see these people speak in
17 public, based on my experience, it becomes clear
18 which ones are community members and it becomes
19 clear which ones maybe have ulterior interests.
20 We're going to have to be intuitive about this but
21 we're going to have to take all of those queues
22 into consideration when identifying it.

23 PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Thank you.

24 So you talked about when the work that was
25 done on the last redistricting in Riverside, for

1 the Riverside area, about making those hard
2 decisions about communities that were kind of on
3 the edge of Riverside County. So in the
4 priorities, counties, cities, neighborhoods, and
5 communities of interest are all in the same
6 priority.

7 So with that in mind, how -- what
8 should -- what factors should the Commission take
9 into consideration as they're trying to determine
10 where to draw the lines when those things come in
11 conflict with one another?

12 MS. GODOY: I think that that's when we
13 have to turn to see where these residents of these
14 communities, where do they live their life? What
15 infrastructure and what roads are they using?
16 Where are they spending their money? What shopping
17 centers are they going to? What shopping stores
18 are they going to?

19 In Riverside, for example, there's
20 outskirts communities who are part of Riverside
21 County. However, once you looked at these other
22 factors, it appeared that they had more interest
23 with the neighboring district and communities
24 because that's where they did their shopping,
25 that's where they sent their children to school,

1 those are the roads that they frequent when they
2 went to work. You have to turn and look at those
3 type of things.

4 PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Thank you.

5 So in Riverside County, you're a resident.
6 And did you just know that based on being a
7 resident or were there steps that were taken to
8 determine that information?

9 MS. GODOY: Actually, that was not clear
10 to me until I underwent this process.

11 As part of my work in collecting data, I
12 had to analyze where the outskirts residents, where
13 those communities were -- what I did was I just, I
14 did that approach. I analyzed, where are they
15 shopping? What's the closest shopping centers to
16 them? Where are they spending their money? Where
17 -- what roads and infrastructures are they using,
18 you know? In regards to infrastructure, I mean
19 like what medical hospitals do they go to? Which,
20 in their community, you know, which schools are
21 their children attending? Things like that.

22 I think looking at those things help
23 reveal a clear image of where these people are
24 really living their lives.

25 PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: So did you use

1 maps to kind of figure that information? Because
2 when you're looking at --

3 MS. GODOY: Yeah.

4 PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: -- the state as a
5 whole, you're going to be looking at areas where
6 you're not familiar with --

7 MS. GODOY: Yes, we did. We did use maps.
8 We used maps to kind of see these areas. So we
9 would look at the region and then we would use
10 Google Maps to highlight around us the shopping
11 centers and things like that in regards to these
12 communities. So once you start populating the maps
13 to show you those type of things and those -- the
14 infrastructure around it, you could start seeing a
15 clear image.

16 PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Thank you.

17 So you already talked with Mr. Coe about
18 it a little bit. But when the Commission is
19 looking to find communities of interest, where are
20 some of the places they should look to try and
21 determine where those are, especially those ones
22 that are hard to reach or maybe that a lot of
23 people don't know about?

24 MS. GODOY: I think that we need to turn
25 to the communities themselves. I believe that the

1 communities themselves are better prepared to
2 highlight these things to us.

3 We have to, you know, we have to turn to
4 maps. And then once, you know, we see the
5 geographical locations, we really have to zoom in,
6 into seeing what's going on in those counties and
7 those regions. We could use the census data to
8 really help us guide us as well. It's, really,
9 it's a data-guided process to be able to identify
10 those.

11 PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Thank you.

12 What steps can the Commission take early
13 on to unite itself as a team, and so that as they
14 go into the work and the work gets more difficult,
15 they are ready to collaborate well?

16 MS. GODOY: I definitely think that the
17 Commission has to undertake team-building events.
18 And we really have to do a lot of team building in
19 the offset so that we gain confidence in ourselves,
20 in each other, and in the Commission. And if we
21 gain confidence in each other, we will be able and
22 better equipped difficult moments in the Commission
23 that will arise, whether it's in private or in
24 public.

25 PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: What do you --

1 what role do you believe you would fit well in on
2 the Commission?

3 MS. GODOY: I think that, given my
4 experience, I think that I would fit well with
5 public speaking and reaching out to the community.
6 And I also think that I would be of use in our
7 attempts to identify communities of interest.
8 Given that I have experience doing this in my own
9 community, I do believe that it would be of great
10 use.

11 PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: So we can see from
12 your resume that you've been involved in protecting
13 voting rights. And so what motivated you to go
14 into that line of work?

15 MS. GODOY: I think that it's -- what
16 motivated me to go into that line of work was being
17 part of a disenfranchised community growing up.
18 You know, as an immigrant, there was many instances
19 where I sites of injustice, just due to
20 discrimination. And I grew to hate that side of
21 injustice.

22 And then once I got into college and, you
23 know, obtained an education around this context of
24 rights, democracy, and voting, I grew really
25 passionate about it. I'm really passionate about

1 living in a democratic society. And I think that
2 it is our duty as citizens to defend and uphold our
3 right to vote. And I think my passion for all of
4 that just really led me into this line of work.

5 PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Thank you.

6 Do you think there's a role for advocacy
7 on the Commission?

8 MS. GODOY: There's no role for advocacy.
9 However, we have to -- we do have to, you know,
10 keep in mind that our mission is to bring a voice
11 to disenfranchised communities. That's part of our
12 mission. So we have to stay true to the mission
13 statement. Though it may appear as advocacy, it
14 should not be advocacy. We're fact finders. We're
15 not advocates.

16 PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Thank you.

17 So the first eight Commissioners are
18 selected randomly. And then they are tasked with
19 selecting the next six.

20 If you were one of the first eight, what
21 would you be looking for in those other six
22 individuals?

23 MS. GODOY: Well, first, I would take a
24 look at what we have, who are the first eight? You
25 know, I think my decision would be bound by

1 ensuring that there's diversity in the Commission.
2 So by diversity, I mean diversity at every level,
3 gender diversity, geographic diversity, age
4 diversity, ethnic diversity. So I would definitely
5 take a close look at what we have.

6 I also think that we need diversity in
7 analytical skills. We don't only need lawyers but
8 we also need data analysts and, you know, and such
9 to be able to carry our mission out.

10 So I would look at all of those criterias
11 and see what we need to fit the holes. You know,
12 do we have too many people from one region? Do we
13 have too many people with, you know, a certain
14 analytical skill? And I would look to diversify
15 that. So I would be looking into what is needed to
16 be able to push that mission forward.

17 PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Thank you.

18 MS. PELLMAN: We have 4 minutes, 30
19 seconds remaining.

20 PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Okay. Thank you.

21 It looks like all my questions I had
22 prepared have been answered. I have no further
23 questions at this moment.

24 MS. GODOY: Thank you very much.

25 PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Thank you.

1 CHAIR COE: Okay. Thank you, Ms.
2 Dickison.

3 Mr. Belnap, the time is yours.

4 PANEL MEMBER BELNAP: Good afternoon, Ms.
5 Godoy. Thank you for being with us.

6 I want to talk to you about your efforts
7 to create and present district maps before the 2010
8 Redistricting Commission.

9 And my first question is: Did the
10 Commission hold, prior to putting out initial
11 proposed maps, did they hold outreach meetings in
12 Riverside County that either you or representatives
13 of LULAC attended?

14 MS. GODOY: They did hold meetings. They
15 actually held meetings in Ontario in two different
16 locations. They held two meetings prior to
17 presenting the draft maps. And me, along with
18 other members of my organization and community
19 group leaders, we attended those meetings.

20 PANEL MEMBER BELNAP: And at those
21 meetings did you indicate to the Commission that
22 you had a community of interest in Riverside
23 County? Did you give them an indication of what
24 that geographical boundary would be?

25 MS. GODOY: We did. We did during the

1 public comment.

2 PANEL MEMBER BELNAP: Were you or LULAC
3 disappointed by the initial maps the Commission
4 proposed related to Riverside County?

5 MS. GODOY: We were not disappointed,
6 actually, because for the first time ever we were
7 presented with a map that kept our county together.
8 We were un-gerrymandered.

9 However, we did feel that there was
10 communities that were included that weren't
11 necessarily communities of interest and we could
12 have included other communities of interest. So we
13 tweaked the maps to reflect those changes.

14 PANEL MEMBER BELNAP: Okay. Tell me about
15 the amount of time that LULAC had between the
16 Commission's proposed maps and your ability to
17 submit a revised map to the Commission?

18 MS. GODOY: Oh, it was a quick turnaround
19 time. I think it was like -- it could have been,
20 at the most, a month, month-and-a-half.

21 PANEL MEMBER BELNAP: Okay. So that
22 process, if the census gets pushed back and the
23 timeline that the Commission has gets impacted,
24 gets squeezed, that portion of time between the
25 initial map and any revised maps might get squeezed

1 as well.

2 What are your thoughts on that occurring
3 and is there a case, a strong case, against
4 allowing that to happen?

5 MS. GODOY: I think that there's more than
6 a strong chance of that to happen. The current
7 state that we're in, the pushback of the
8 availability of the census data, you know, it's
9 going to have a tremendous effect. And the -- and
10 our timing? You know, we're working against the
11 clock. This is a race against our statutory
12 deadline. So it's going to affect every aspect of
13 the process in one way or another. And I think
14 that there's a strong argument against that,
15 possibly trying to get legislators to maybe extend
16 the deadline or something. Because if we don't get
17 those communities' input, we're not going to be
18 able to draw the best and accurate picture of
19 districts in California. And getting the public
20 involved is one of the missions of the Commission.

21 You know, California wanted to be part of
22 this process. Californians wanted to be part of
23 this process. If we shorten the amount of time that
24 we give them to be part of this process it's going
25 to hamper their ability and the effectiveness of

1 their participation in the process.

2 PANEL MEMBER BELNAP: So if you were on
3 the Commission and you were given the option of,
4 basically, truncating the back end of the
5 Commission's -- the previous Commission's process
6 where they allowed communities to look at the
7 proposed maps and offer revised maps versus
8 requesting an extension from the legislature, which
9 one would you be pushing for?

10 MS. GODOY: Requesting an extension from
11 the legislator.

12 PANEL MEMBER BELNAP: Okay. Thank you.

13 I'd like to hear more about the impact
14 that you feel this new district in Riverside County
15 has had on the residents of that area?

16 MS. GODOY: Well, it has had a profound
17 impact in the community and the residents of the
18 community. It has brought the community back into
19 the political realm, into being politically active
20 in a way that it effectuates their lives.

21 So prior to this, you know, like I said
22 before, Riverside County was broken up into three
23 different districts. It was never -- it never had
24 representation from the county. It never had a
25 representative from Riverside. There was three

1 representatives from different areas, whether it
2 was the San Diego County area or the Coachella
3 Valley area or the Temecula area. Those were the
4 subdivisions; right? Orange County as well.

5 So once we -- the area was un-
6 gerrymandered and Riverside County as a whole was
7 considered a district, we -- the following election
8 an elected official that lived in Riverside that
9 was born and raised in Riverside became our
10 candidate and was elected to congress.

11 Now what I do want to say is, most
12 notably, Riverside County is a diverse community,
13 from -- we have people from all walks of lives, all
14 ethnicities. We're a melting pot. And prior to
15 the new maps being implemented, Riverside County
16 was represented by conservative candidates that did
17 not represent their interests.

18 So push forward, you know, so
19 historically, Riverside County was a considered a
20 conservative county, just because it always had
21 conservative representatives. However, the county
22 was not conservative. The population was not
23 conservative. And that proved to be true once the
24 maps were established in the 2011 in the following
25 election cycle because Riverside County elected the

1 first openly gay Asian Pacific American man to
2 congress. The residents didn't change. The
3 demographic didn't. There wasn't a big shift in
4 change. What changed was the way the votes were
5 counted.

6 So it had a lasting impact. And now we
7 have a representative who is in our -- who is
8 representing our district and is actually holding
9 community educational events, who has -- who's
10 visible in our district. Before, we didn't have
11 that. Politicians had Riverside County forgotten.
12 We were the backdrop.

13 Now we have a politician who goes around
14 to all of the different neighborhoods and regions.
15 You know, he's not only in Riverside. He goes to
16 Moreno Valley. He goes to Norco Valley. He goes
17 to all of these different places and he reaches out
18 to different members of the community. He'll go to
19 the senior citizen centers. He'll -- you know, we
20 just have -- we have a political presence. And he
21 pushes and fights for things that are important for
22 our citizens.

23 PANEL MEMBER BELNAP: All right. Thank
24 you.

25 So I want to ask now about your academic

1 and employment career.

2 You studied history; is that right? I
3 don't have it in front of me.

4 MS. GODOY: That is correct, in undergrad.

5 PANEL MEMBER BELNAP: Was it always your
6 intention in studying history to go into law school
7 or did you make that decision at some point?

8 MS. GODOY: Well, I think I made the
9 decision to become an attorney when I was in high
10 school. You know, that decision was, I think it
11 was made due to my past experiences and me wanting
12 to provide services that my community needed and
13 bring, you know, representation to my community, to
14 the immigrant community.

15 So I had always had a natural curiosity
16 and love for history. I have a passion for
17 understanding why things are the way that they are.
18 And I've always been like that since I could
19 remember. So history was a natural choice for me
20 because it would also allow me to hone in on the
21 analytical skills that I would need moving forward
22 to law school.

23 PANEL MEMBER BELNAP: All right. Thank
24 you.

25 And then I think after law school there's

1 a number of different career paths an attorney can
2 take.

3 Why did you decide to become a trial
4 attorney?

5 MS. GODOY: I decided to become a trial
6 attorney because I wanted to, essentially, I wanted
7 to represent my community and bring a voice to the
8 voiceless. That's actually the reason why I'm an
9 immigration deportation defense attorney. And I
10 specialize in representing people from different
11 ethnic backgrounds, indigenous women, women who
12 come fleeing from domestic violence, unaccompanied
13 youth, and members of the LGBTQ community from all
14 around the world. And what I -- what this allows
15 me to do is to represent the most disenfranchised
16 members of our society. And, to be quite honest
17 with you, that's the reason why I went to law
18 school.

19 PANEL MEMBER BELNAP: All right. Thank
20 you.

21 So as a trial attorney, I'd like you to
22 talk about a success that you've had that you're
23 proud of, again, as a trial attorney, and also a
24 failure that you've learned from.

25 MS. GODOY: I think that a success that I

1 had -- that I've had as a trial attorney is going
2 to have to -- well, I'll talk of a recent one.

3 So, you know, recently, I tried a case
4 where it was an indigenous client. And, to be
5 quite honest with you, the government was giving a
6 lot of pushback. I was not even sure myself that I
7 was going to win. But I was, you know, determined
8 to put my best effort into it and go in as if I was
9 going to win.

10 After a grueling trial, you know, I
11 succeeded in persuading the judge and persuading
12 opposing counsel. And, you know, to my surprise, I
13 won the case.

14 And I think what really made it a
15 particular success was what my client said to the
16 court. After the judge granted her case, my client
17 took a few minutes to direct herself to the court.
18 My client doesn't speak Spanish, doesn't speak
19 English, she only speaks her dialect, but there was
20 interpreters. And my client thanked me for
21 representing her and bringing dignity to her and
22 ensuring that she was treated with dignity.

23 That is one of my best successes, is
24 empowering people.

25 Now a failure, they come. They come. And

1 I think that one particular failure that stood to
2 me was -- it was an undocumented youth case that I
3 was presenting before the court. And some facts
4 came out during trial that I was unaware of. And,
5 you know, due to that, I was unprepared to deal
6 with it, with the issues that came that stemmed
7 from the facts that came out. And, you know, I was
8 defeated that day in court. And it was a tough
9 defeat because, you know, I took it personally.

10 You know, as a trial attorney, well, I'm
11 very passionate about what I do because what I do
12 has very severe consequences for my clients if I
13 fail, you know? Many of my clients face death
14 threats if they return to their countries. They
15 face really grim situations, so the stakes are
16 high.

17 So I, you know, in analyzing on how, you
18 know, how did I fail my client, because I felt like
19 I failed my client, but in retrospect, I didn't
20 fail my client. You know, my client failed to tell
21 me those facts. And I think moving forward in the
22 future, I learned to be more inquisitive, to ask
23 more questions, to, you know, and to repeat the
24 questions that are asked to ensure that nothing
25 else comes to light.

1 PANEL MEMBER BELNAP: All right. Thank
2 you.

3 Madam Secretary, time check?

4 MS. PELLMAN: Yes. Six minutes, ten
5 seconds remaining.

6 PANEL MEMBER BELNAP: Okay.

7 How familiar do you feel you are with the
8 legal criteria associated with the Commission's
9 work?

10 MS. GODOY: I do believe I'm fairly
11 familiar with it, you know, given that I've had to
12 analyze it in the past. And I've also, you know,
13 have followed up with my analysis of it, with exit
14 reports and different studies that were conducted.
15 So I do believe that have a well-rounded initial
16 understanding of it that could definitely be
17 developed, you know, with simple training.

18 PANEL MEMBER BELNAP: All right. Thank
19 you.

20 So one more question, it's more of a
21 curiosity and I just can't help myself, but is
22 there a story behind the painting that is behind
23 you?

24 MS. GODOY: There is, actually. So this
25 painting, my sister is an artist, Stephanie Godoy

1 Art. You can find her at Instagram.com. I have to
2 plug her in now that you asked.

3 Well, she actually painted this painting
4 and it's called Poderosa (phonetic), which means
5 powerful woman. And it was her tribute to all of
6 the powerful woman that she's encountered in life
7 and that have influenced her. So, you know, I have
8 the privilege of -- well, I don't know if I own it
9 but it's mine.

10 PANEL MEMBER BELNAP: Is it you?

11 MS. GODOY: Does it look like me?

12 PANEL MEMBER BELNAP: Well, it's abstract,
13 but, yes.

14 MS. GODOY: No, it's not.

15 PANEL MEMBER BELNAP: All right. Thank
16 you. No further questions.

17 MS. GODOY: Thank you.

18 CHAIR COE: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Belnap.
19 Mr. Dawson?

20 MR. DAWSON: Thank you, Mr. Coe.

21 Good afternoon again, Ms. Godoy. I just
22 wanted to fill in a couple of details.

23 Your B.A. was in history at UC Riverside.
24 Did you write a senior thesis?

25 MS. GODOY: I did.

1 MR. DAWSON: And what was it on?

2 MS. GODOY: It was on Chicano history
3 through the eyes of music.

4 MR. DAWSON: Was it focused on California?

5 MS. GODOY: It was.

6 MR. DAWSON: And what did you learn that
7 informs your understanding of California history,
8 particularly through the eyes of Mexican American
9 immigrants?

10 MS. GODOY: That it's very much influenced
11 and intertwined because, you know, Mexican -- well,
12 Mexicans were here in California before we became
13 Mexican Americans. And I think that that history
14 in itself, you know, propels us to where we
15 currently are, where Latinos are a big portion of
16 the demographics and Mexican Americans making a big
17 chunk of it.

18 MR. DAWSON: Thank you.

19 I wanted to return to one of your
20 responses and I think it was in the standard
21 questions about -- and then you discussed it with
22 one of the panelists, too, about the possibility of
23 the lateness of the census data. But I was
24 wondering if you also had concerns about the
25 completeness of the census data?

1 MS. GODOY: Yes. Absolutely, because
2 they're now being rushed --

3 MR. DAWSON: Are there --

4 MS. GODOY: -- you know?

5 MR. DAWSON: -- are there particular
6 communities that you see are more likely to be
7 undercounted, just generally, but also maybe that
8 being exacerbated by the COVID-19 situation?

9 MS. GODOY: I do. I think that rural
10 communities and, quite honest, I also think that
11 the immigrant community, there's going to be a
12 great chill effect, not only because of the COVID-
13 19 crisis, but also because of the political
14 hostility that we're facing right now, that the
15 immigrant community is facing. And a lot of
16 immigrants are, quite frankly, fearful.

17 MR. DAWSON: I see. All right. I think
18 those were my only follow-ups.

19 Mr. Coe, I have no more.

20 CHAIR COE: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Dawson.

21 Ms. Dickison, do you have any follow-up
22 questions?

23 PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: I do not.

24 CHAIR COE: Mr. Belnap?

25 PANEL MEMBER BELNAP: No further

1 questions.

2 CHAIR COE: Okay, Mr. Dawson, I also have
3 no further questions.

4 MR. DAWSON: All right. Thank you.

5 Madam Secretary, how much time is left in
6 the 90 minutes?

7 MS. PELLMAN: We have 12 minutes, 45
8 seconds remaining.

9 MR. DAWSON: All right. Thank you.

10 Ms. Godoy, with the time remaining, I'd
11 like to offer you the opportunity to make some
12 closing remarks to the Panel, if you wish?

13 MS. GODOY: Thank you, Mr. Dawson.

14 First and foremost, I would like to thank
15 the Panel and all of the staff that's working
16 behind the scenes to ensure that this process is
17 not only transparent but that we're also moving
18 forward with it, given the circumstances.

19 I want to commend the Panelists for the
20 display of transparency and integrity and
21 impartiality that they have conducted during this
22 whole process. It definitely provides the incoming
23 Commission a framework to look at on how we should
24 conduct ourselves.

25 Now, California population has grown

1 considerably since the last census but it has not
2 grown evenly in terms of demographics. The
3 Commission will be tasked with discovery where this
4 unevenness lies in. A true and accurate picture of
5 California that needs to be identified after the
6 release of census data is something that is now
7 compromised by the fact that the census data will
8 not be available to us at an earlier date. And in
9 addition to all of these challenges we will be
10 facing, the Commission will also be tasked with
11 being able to develop accurate maps that are
12 defensible in court.

13 So the Commissioners will have to have the
14 skills necessary to accomplish this enormous task,
15 to rise up to the challenge of our times. And
16 we've already covered the skill sets that I'll be
17 bringing to the table. And I know that you've
18 interviewed a lot of other great applicants who
19 have great skill sets as well. But one
20 distinguishing factor, however, is how those skill
21 sets were acquired.

22 As a deportation defense trial attorney, I
23 interact with human beings day in and day out. I
24 have a close and personal contact with every
25 variety of human beings imaginable in terms of age,

1 gender, gender identification, sexual orientation,
2 race, ethnicity, education, and economic status,
3 and language skills. I listen to people's needs to
4 find ways to address those needs. That often means
5 acting as a mediator to bring multiple people of
6 opposing interests into agreement. The client has
7 one goal, while the judge has a different goal, and
8 the Department of Homeland Security has a different
9 goal. Everybody has a different agenda. You know,
10 if I'm successful in mediating, then we can
11 establish grounds for agreements and avoid going to
12 trial.

13 Those same forms of process is not
14 accomplished by civil or appellant lawyers, or
15 lawyers who clerk for judges. They're also not
16 accomplished by other professionals who work
17 serving a more professional class.

18 Most importantly, in my practice, I
19 represent the voice of the disenfranchised who,
20 traditionally, have little to no say in society. I
21 champion those who exist in hidden communities and
22 have no one else to speak for them. I have
23 presented their voices to be heard before the
24 Government of the United States. I empower the
25 minority voice. And I believe the empowerment

1 principle is the same whether you accomplish it in
2 the courtroom or at the ballot box.

3 Thank you.

4 CHAIR COE: Okay. Thank you very much,
5 Ms. Godoy, for being here with us this afternoon.

6 Our next interview is scheduled for 3:00
7 p.m., so we will go into recess until 2:59 p.m.

8 (Thereupon the Panel recessed at 2:36 p.m.)

9 (Whereupon the Panel reconvened at 2:59 p.m.)

10 CHAIR COE: Okay, the time being 2:59
11 p.m., I'd like to call this meeting back to order.

12 And at this time, I'd like to welcome
13 Mr. Christopher Castaneda for his interview.

14 Mr. Castaneda, can you hear us okay?

15 MR. CASTANEDA: Yes. Yes, I can, so --

16 CHAIR COE: Fantastic. Thank you for
17 being here this afternoon.

18 I'm going to turn the time over to Mr.
19 Dawson to ask the five standard questions please.

20 MR. DAWSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

21 Mr. Castaneda, I am going to read you five
22 standard questions that the Panel has requested
23 each applicant respond to. Are you ready?

24 MR. CASTANEDA: Yes. Yes, I am.

25 MR. DAWSON: First question: What skills

1 and attributes should all Commissioners possess?
2 What skills or competencies should the Commission
3 possess collectively? Of the skills, attributes,
4 and competencies that each Commissioner should
5 possess, which do you possess? In summary, how
6 will you contribute to the success of the
7 Commission?

8 MR. CASTANEDA: Well, to begin, for the
9 skills and competencies for the Commissioner. So I
10 put them in five larger categories, which I'll go
11 ahead and narrow down to give the specifics of
12 each.

13 First is analytical. I believe the
14 Commission collectively should have some knowledge
15 or skills regarding data analytics and also be --
16 or be data aware, have critical thinking skills,
17 and have some degree of research skills.

18 The second category is in communications.
19 I believe the Commission collectively should be
20 able to listen, to present its ideas and its
21 information, and to engage.

22 The third category is a sense of service,
23 and this is also to a sense of service to
24 communities. I include impartiality, respect for
25 all viewpoints, attune to the diversity and

1 different ideas of diversity, as well as also have
2 a sense of community served, all forms of
3 community, say local, regional, in-group, outside
4 group or so, and a commitment to the mission of the
5 Commission.

6 The fourth category is in collaboration,
7 that the Commission collectively should be able to
8 collaborate internally, be able to work amongst
9 themselves, as well as, also, external with
10 external partners and vendors and other staff. And
11 have some degree of project management skills and
12 an ability to delegate.

13 And the last category I see is a legal
14 awareness or legal knowledge, an awareness of the
15 legal issues, aware of legal standards, we well as,
16 also, an appreciation of an interest in law, though
17 not necessarily specifically a formal legal
18 background.

19 Of the skills and attributes which -- that
20 I possess, well, I have varying degrees of those
21 five categories or so.

22 And the first area is analytical. I have
23 a strong technical background as an I.T.
24 professional. And I have experience with mapping
25 and with data, specifically ArcGIS or just GIS,

1 Google Maps, as well as also working with open data
2 from Los Angeles County. And I have, also,
3 analytical and am research orientated-- skills and
4 research orientated.

5 So my sense of service is that I'm
6 committed to those communities that I serve
7 directly, whether work related, in my neighborhood,
8 or in any of the groups that I've worked with or
9 volunteered with. I'm aware of varying types of
10 diversity among varying communities, whether it's
11 racial, economic, language, access to resources,
12 cultural, education, location, age.

13 I'm also impartial. I'm open to all
14 views. For example, I work with staff
15 representation at my employer, as well as, also, I
16 have worked with controversial topics involving my
17 technological work, such as the Boycott Divestment
18 and Sanctions Movement.

19 So in the communications area, I actively
20 listen and engage with those that I work and serve,
21 as well as, also, I develop and maintain open and
22 two-ways channels, both verbally and nonverbally.

23 My collaboration methods are I prefer to
24 work in teams or in groups, or within departments,
25 or with joint departments. I also manage and

1 delegate projects that I am given -- or, excuse me,
2 I manage and delegate projects that I lead. And
3 then I also work with projects that I've been
4 given.

5 And the last area is, of course, for
6 legal. I do feel I have a sense of legal standards
7 where appropriate. And these provide some framework
8 of the work that I do if it is related.

9 So how -- in summary, though, I feel that
10 I will add technical expertise, add different
11 viewpoints and opinions, and add value to different
12 ideas and definitions of what diversity is and what
13 community is. I feel that my non-formal legal and
14 non-formal policy background brings different
15 perspectives and is an asset. And I feel that I am
16 committed to the mission of the Commission.

17 MR. DAWSON: Thank you.

18 Question two: Work on the Commission
19 requires members of different political backgrounds
20 to work together. Since the 2010 Commission was
21 selected and formed, the American political
22 conversation has become increasingly polarized,
23 whether in the press, on social media, and even in
24 our own families.

25 What characteristics do you possess and

1 what characteristics should your fellow
2 Commissioners possess that will protect against
3 hyper-partisanship? What will you do to ensure
4 that the work of the Commission is not seen as
5 polarized or hyper-partisan and avoid perceptions
6 of political bias and conflict?

7 MR. CASTANEDA: Thank you.

8 The characteristics that I possess, and
9 for characteristics that my fellow Commissioners
10 should possess, are in, I feel, in one key area in
11 terms of communication.

12 For me, my communication style is open. I
13 engage. And I feel I'm detached from the issues.
14 And I'm also dedicated to listen.

15 On the Commission side, the Commission, as
16 well, must be dedicated to communication to ensure
17 that the process is open. And this is not just
18 including the Bagley-Keene Act. And I feel that
19 the communication on the Commission demonstrates
20 its engagement, it demonstrates its mission and
21 goals of the Panel or of the Commission Panel, as
22 well as, also, demonstrates impartiality and the
23 Commission's commitment to its own goal.

24 As far as for what I would do to -- how I
25 would ensure it, as far as to make sure that

1 there's seen as little or no polarization or hyper-
2 partisanship, is I will advocate and emphasize
3 openness. I will advocate and also emphasize
4 engagement. And where appropriate, I will seek
5 nonpartisan partnerships with outside or external
6 groups and I will look for collaborative solutions.

7 MR. DAWSON: Question three: What is the
8 greatest problem the Commission could encounter and
9 what actions would you take to avoid or respond to
10 this problem?

11 MR. CASTANEDA: Okay. Thank you.

12 I feel there's many potential problems.
13 But the greatest I problem is, I feel, is the
14 question of the legitimacy or the confidence in the
15 Commission. And I feel that this may be, could be
16 based on if there's a lack of confidence in the
17 census results, although I acknowledge the census
18 may not be perfect in the best of times. I also
19 feel that a question could be raised if there is a
20 lack of Commission communication and engagement of
21 the Commission.

22 I also feel if there's perceived -- excuse
23 me -- perceived bipartisanship, as well as, also,
24 if there's any perceptions of significant mistrust.

25 I feel that the actions that I would take

1 to address some of these issues are in a couple of
2 areas or so. But one specifically is the advocate
3 to increase communication or so. This would be
4 full outreach and engagement to build partnerships
5 or so. And also, if need be, partnerships with
6 community-based organizations or other nonpartisan
7 groups or so.

8 I feel that we need to prove impartiality,
9 and also to develop ways to communicate and present
10 information or so, so I believe the targeting of
11 communities or groups that under-served or
12 unrepresented.

13 So -- and I believe that the
14 Commission -- or my action would be on the
15 Commission would be to pursue early public
16 education or so. And I feel this was also a
17 concern in 2010 Commission. This would be media
18 campaigns or other partnerships or so.

19 In addition, I feel that more, if
20 possible, in-person presentations and hearings will
21 be made in the rural area, in the north mountain
22 areas, desert areas again or so. And I feel that
23 the focus on communication could be counter any
24 manipulation and any misinformation or so.
25 Although I do acknowledge that there are

1 constraints, especially about time and about money.

2 So -- and lastly is, aside from
3 communication, is the data or the census data
4 issues or so. Although the census could be called
5 into question, I feel that there are gaps that can
6 be filled with data from exterior sources, other
7 sources of data, wherever it's applicable or where
8 legal.

9 MR. DAWSON: Question four: If you are
10 selected you will be one of 14 members of the
11 Commission which is charged with working together
12 to create maps of the new districts.

13 Please describe a situation where you had
14 to work collaboratively with others on a project to
15 achieve a common goal. Tell us the goal of the
16 project, what your role in the group was, and how
17 the group worked through any conflicts that arose?
18 What lessons would you take from this group
19 experience to the Commission, if selected?

20 MR. CASTANEDA: Thank you.

21 I believe the COVID-19 pandemic presented
22 a unique challenge in higher education, the area
23 where I currently work in. And as the Educational
24 Technologist at Pitzer College, I was one of the
25 principles in the transition of the entire college

1 from in-person classes to online using Zoom, and
2 also in conjunction with other online resources or
3 so. We have to transition all courses, about 200
4 courses or so, involving about 100 faculty and
5 about a little over 1,000 students or so.

6 I was previously the manager and
7 administrator of the existing Zoom service, though
8 it was only a fraction of the users as it currently
9 is. However, with this transition, we had to scale
10 up quickly and drastically.

11 I was then tasked to begin investigating
12 and starting this transition. I collaborated on
13 the research and the purchase of upgrading the
14 service for the college. And then I was the lead in
15 demonstrating and showcasing the service, training,
16 administering the system, and supporting Zoom as
17 another resource or so. And this was both in-
18 person while were able to, and then online
19 afterwards or so. And most of this is what I still
20 currently do.

21 But in this transition or so we noticed a
22 couple of problems and issues that we encountered
23 along the way and we addressed them as quickly as
24 possible.

25 For one, there was an issue on how to

1 communicate, how and to what to communicate? We
2 coordinated with the student offices and the Dean
3 of Faculties office for how to distribute
4 information, as well as, also, within our
5 department, we centralized communication for -- in
6 order to centralize where and how you would contact
7 for tech support, as well as, also, internal
8 communication within the department.

9 Another issue was how to deal with those
10 that did not have technology or had little
11 knowledge or comfort with technology. We provided
12 technology, such as computers and laptops and hot
13 spots, where we could to end users or to the users,
14 the students and faculty. And we approached those
15 who had a little -- had gaps in their knowledge or
16 so or were hesitant, where we were beginning to do
17 one-on-one sessions with them. So oddly that we
18 found the teachers are not always the best students
19 or so, so we tried to overcome that issue.

20 And the last area is the access to
21 resources and best practices for ourselves or so.
22 Because we're a consortium, we had to coordinate
23 and negotiate with other colleges or so about how
24 to get various services and software or so. And we
25 tried to centralize the best practices from

1 teaching into single areas, either the websites or
2 within our main learning management systems or so,
3 so that faculty could add the content themselves so
4 they can go in and distribute it to other faculty
5 members or so. So we reached out to them in order
6 to have them assist us in compiling this
7 information or so.

8 This process did give a lot of lessons or
9 so, some that were new, and some that reinforced
10 the existing beliefs of mine.

11 One was the importance of -- to
12 collaborate and to delegate or so. Also, we needed
13 to make sure that we define the immediate and long-
14 term goals. We found the importance of maintaining
15 and developing ways to communicate rapidly and
16 communicate information as accurate as possible,
17 and to make complex ideas and language, and
18 teaching methodologies or so, to communicate those
19 in simple terms or so, not -- I don't say,
20 necessarily, to dumb down but to bring them to
21 relatable levels or so, I feel, to create common
22 meanings and definitions so that everyone could
23 equally understand and everyone is on the same
24 page, if you will.

25 We found the importance of connecting to

1 one on one and, also, in groups. This seemed to
2 increase the users knowledge, as well as, also, the
3 confidence that they had in using the technology
4 themselves, as well as, also, the confidence in us
5 as far as for the I.T. Department or so.

6 I found that I had to learn quickly and
7 embrace some unknown and uncertain issues or so.
8 And I feel that this could be applied to the
9 Commission because it seems that much needs to be
10 done with the Commission in a fairly limited amount
11 of time and budget.

12 MR. DAWSON: Question five: A considerable
13 amount of the Commission's work will involve
14 meeting with people from all over California who
15 come from very different backgrounds and a wide
16 variety of perspectives.

17 If you were selected as a Commissioner,
18 what skills and attributes will make you effective
19 at interacting with people from different
20 backgrounds and who have a variety of perspectives?
21 What experiences have you had that will help you be
22 effective at understanding and appreciating people
23 and communities of different backgrounds and who
24 have a variety of perspectives?

25 MR. CASTANEDA: Thank you.

1 For the skills and attributes that would
2 make me effective, I feel that my work, I have
3 worked in technology for more than 20 years or so.
4 So even though it's in technology, my focus has
5 always been on the individual or so. I determine
6 the type of language that will be used as the
7 bridge or the basis of the communication or so. I
8 translate technical into nontechnical, being aware
9 of my audience or who the audience is, whether it's
10 age issues or in the audiences of significant age
11 or age is a factor, their experience, what their
12 experiences are, professionally, personally or so,
13 as much as I could be aware, what is their
14 education background, and any other things that
15 might come into play.

16 So I always try to engage people on their
17 level or so, whether presenting new material to new
18 college student, training a group of I.T.
19 professionals in something technical, tutoring
20 college students in political science, which I've
21 also worked as a tutor, and demonstrating how to
22 use Zoom to college professors or so. I feel that
23 all of this requires a basic understanding on who
24 I'm trying to connect to. I know how to read a
25 room. I know how -- when to listen and, also, when

1 to speak. And I feel I have a lot of patience.

2 But I also have to acknowledge what I
3 don't know. I'm not a lawyer. However, I feel that
4 I appreciate the law. I'm not a data scientist,
5 but I analyze, I can analyze and have analyzed
6 data, and I've created maps based on that, so --
7 nor am a public analyst but I have interest in
8 policy, such as election redistricting. So I feel
9 that these positions that I have are assets. And I
10 can communicate the things that I know or
11 collaborate with those who definitely know what I
12 do not.

13 So as far as experiences or so, being from
14 Southern California has brought me in contact with
15 many different types of individuals or so. So
16 Southern California, not necessarily just Los
17 Angeles or so, because I feel it is a -- this area
18 is a microcosm of the world and, also, specifically
19 of the state. But it is only a glimpse and it is
20 not a substitute or so. But in this awareness I
21 feel I have is it offers many ideas of what is
22 different, what our identities are, as well as,
23 also, where the inequalities may lay.

24 Professionally, I feel that my early
25 technology career -- in my early technology career,

1 so I traveled throughout the region, met with and
2 worked with many different types of people, many
3 different types of groups, different cultures,
4 different languages, countries of origin,
5 ethnicities or so, and also at many different
6 locations or so, some disadvantaged areas,
7 industrial areas, the kind of more wealthy areas or
8 so.

9 I feel that these experiences -- or with
10 these experiences, I began to understand their
11 priorities. I could try to connect as best as
12 possible and where appropriate to their employees,
13 and also connect to the communities when I was
14 there or so.

15 In my work in education, my work at
16 Pasadena City College specifically, I tutored and
17 closely worked with all types of students. And
18 these are varying degree, all types of cultures or
19 so from in that school, different languages, ESL
20 students, again, different ethnic and countries of
21 origins, international students, and all degrees of
22 ages or so. And I feel that I became more aware of
23 educational and economic differences in these, in
24 that community, if you will.

25 My work at Pitzer College, though, is I

1 have worked closely with a smaller population but
2 also more intimately with, you know, faculty, more
3 than 100 faculty, more than 1,000 students or so,
4 and about, roughly, 250 staff members or so. And,
5 again, I feel it's very different than the
6 community college level or so, however, not, you
7 know, not any more or less important or so. And I
8 feel that awareness also highlighted educational
9 and economic difference or so, but on a different
10 scale.

11 At Pitzer, I worked -- I have worked in
12 staff representation in their governance system, so
13 -- which involves all staff, all faculty, and all
14 students or so. And I've advocated and worked with
15 staff, all service staff, and as well as, also, all
16 office staff.

17 Personally, traveling around the state and
18 Los Angeles or so, I, you know, I feel that it is
19 representative to some degree or so. And I feel
20 that I have brought my ideas out, as well as, also,
21 brought ideas into me. And those, I think,
22 experiences are similar to my professional
23 experience or so where I learned that every person
24 has a story.

25 I've volunteered with many different types

1 of groups, senior citizen computer clubs, day labor
2 centers or so, and after school programs.

3 And my personal education, I think, also
4 is an asset because I feel I'm a nontraditional
5 student. I received my bachelor's degree much
6 later in life. And I was, you know, was already an
7 existing working professional. And I believe that
8 also has lessons about diversity and differences in
9 people or so.

10 I feel that these kinds of experiences as
11 a whole, you know, help me realize and know people
12 better, and also the communities that they are --
13 or they are from, as well as also how to define
14 communities or so, again, race, economics, and all
15 kinds of other attributes or so. And I think these
16 combinations have given me more insight into people
17 and understanding of them, perspectives,
18 understanding their perspectives, their priorities.
19 Also, it does seem to make suggestions about how
20 people live or you can kind of glean some, perhaps,
21 even possible correlations from that or so.

22 However, I do acknowledge that it is not complete.

23 So this has also made me question my own
24 assumptions and biases or so. And I will not begin
25 to suggest that I know every struggle and every

1 experience of every person that I have met.

2 MR. DAWSON: Thank you.

3 We'll now to go Panel questions. Each
4 Panel member will have 20 minutes to ask his or her
5 questions. We'll start with the Chair.

6 Mr. Coe?

7 CHAIR COE: Thank you, Mr. Dawson.

8 Mr. Castaneda, good afternoon again to
9 you. Thank you for --

10 MR. CASTANEDA: Good afternoon.

11 CHAIR COE: -- taking the time to speak
12 with us.

13 I want to talk about something you
14 mentioned in your application. You talk about your
15 membership in the organization called Nonprofit
16 Technology Network.

17 MR. CASTANEDA: Yes.

18 CHAIR COE: I'd like to know what your
19 role was with this organization and what kinds of
20 solutions for nonprofits the organization helps
21 with?

22 MR. CASTANEDA: It was more of a -- my
23 role was more of a member as opposed to actually
24 anything more active in their organization or so.
25 And I found that it was a place where I can learn

1 technological techniques and apply them to
2 nonprofits or so, or at least just get kind of like
3 more of an awareness and educational background in
4 working with, you know, connections of nonprofits
5 in technology or so, so like more of a hub for
6 knowledge. So it was much more kind of like
7 research and looking up information area as opposed
8 to any kind of like leadership role or anything to
9 that regard, so --

10 CHAIR COE: I see. In one of your letters
11 of recommendation, I think it may have been related
12 to this, but I'm not 100 percent positive. But one
13 of your letters of recommendation spoke about video
14 streaming as kind of a specialty of yours. And
15 considering that we're doing this interview like
16 this, and considering the state of the world, that
17 the pandemic may be overlapping the work of the
18 Commission, do you think that you have a specific
19 skill set in that regard that could be really
20 beneficial to the work of this Commission?

21 MR. CASTANEDA: Yes. Thank you. Yes.
22 Actually, I haven't really thought too much about
23 that in this context. Yes. I think the whole
24 transition to online learning or so or, again,
25 learning online or so has really added more

1 emphasis to that. So, I mean, that was technology
2 I've been working with for several years or so. I
3 mean, I kind of bill it as kind of like streaming,
4 a built-in streaming service into our network and
5 our learning programs and whatnot or so.

6 And I was, at the beginning when it was --
7 we, essentially, were provided the basic system or
8 so from one of our sister colleges or so, brought
9 it in-house and I installed it, customized it,
10 implemented it, selected computer, pretty much
11 developed the entire -- integrated it from the
12 ground up or so. And I also worked with the A.V.
13 Department and the gentleman that makes reference
14 to that in the -- in my application or so. And he
15 and I kind of worked on that, added to it, and
16 expanded its use. I forget. It was several years
17 ago, we first implemented it, and now we're working
18 on the newer version of that, which is supposed to
19 be, you know, bigger, better, faster kind of thing
20 or so.

21 And it really served a wide variety.
22 Before it was only mainly for our media studies or
23 focused in for our Media Studies Department. But
24 it's expanded on to, I mean, across all majors. I
25 think even the math department or some of the math

1 instructors or professors use it.

2 So I feel that that has been one of my
3 babies, if you will, or so because I have really
4 pushed it and developed it, promoted it, and
5 working on very technical aspects about integrating
6 it into our system, both the previous and the
7 upgrade which will -- may come about. We were
8 interrupted with everything about -- so --

9 CHAIR COE: And with the state of the
10 pandemic and the social distancing that's
11 occurring, and there's just the possibility that
12 the Commission may have to do different forms of
13 outreach, maybe using platforms like you just
14 talked about or like we're using now, do you think
15 that you would have -- you would be -- that would
16 be kind of a role or a skill set you could provide
17 if that had to occur?

18 MR. CASTANEDA: Yes, I believe so. I
19 mean, I was the go-to person for Zoom before
20 everybody went to Zoom in our location -- and our
21 institution or so. And I think we've been rolling
22 it out. I've been working with large groups in our
23 community or so about using it. So I feel that my
24 expertise has grown. There's things of it, like
25 live streaming, that I'd like to look into, and

1 closed captioning, and all kinds of other
2 integrations of other services and components or
3 so. But I feel that that is something that I've
4 rapidly had to work with more and more. And it's
5 something that I could do more and more into the
6 future in this context or so, so --

7 CHAIR COE: Thank you.

8 I'd like to move something that you
9 discussed in your analytical skills essay for a
10 moment. In that essay, you discussed making a map
11 with the Los Angeles County crime data. And I'd
12 like to hear more about this. I have a few
13 questions but I'd like to start with who was the
14 intended audience and what was this map intended to
15 do for them?

16 MR. CASTANEDA: Okay. The map was my
17 master's keystone or so, keystone project or so, in
18 my grad program at USC, because I was looking to
19 data and open data and government data and whatnot.
20 It, at least, was in kind of like a beta or alpha-
21 beta form or so. And the target was the general
22 public, where people can go in, put in a zip code,
23 and various crimes or some kind of criminal
24 activity or so that's been reported would appear on
25 the screen and give some kind of basic location

1 based on the latitude and longitude or so. So I
2 ended up getting open data from L.A. County or so,
3 importing it into this system or so, and then it
4 made it like using Google Maps with a custom
5 interface or so with Google Maps, you know, layered
6 beneath it or so, so --

7 CHAIR COE: So this is an interactive tool
8 then --

9 MR. CASTANEDA: Yes.

10 CHAIR COE: -- that they can use?

11 MR. CASTANEDA: Yes, so --

12 CHAIR COE: Was it interactive beyond just
13 putting in their zip code? Were there other things
14 they could do with the map interactively?

15 MR. CASTANEDA: Because this was kind of
16 like a proof of concept beta version, I didn't get
17 into more advanced where you could just, you know,
18 designate a place randomly or so and it would show
19 you something around that. But it was more zip-
20 code based or so as opposed to completely available
21 where you can pick random points at any point. And
22 it was also localized only to L.A. County, so it
23 wouldn't go into any other areas that -- outside of
24 the county, so --

25 CHAIR COE: Have you ever worked with

1 census data in this way, either on this particular
2 project or on a different one?

3 MR. CASTANEDA: I've worked with some
4 census data in my work at Pitzer College. I've
5 supported students in some of our programs who have
6 used the GIS software or so, which I was
7 responsible for installing and maintaining and
8 supporting or so. So I have assisted students with
9 census data, not as in-depth as I would have liked
10 then, but we have something that we touched up and
11 worked with or so.

12 CHAIR COE: Thank you.

13 So switching gears a little bit to your
14 impartiality essay. In that essay, you wrote that
15 you, "may encounter viewpoints that I have not
16 considered previously. I will approach those as
17 equitably as all other views."

18 Can you give me a specific example of a
19 time where you encountered a viewpoint that you had
20 not considered?

21 MR. CASTANEDA: The example, I think, that
22 I had said in the first five questions or so as far
23 as the Boycott Divest Movement or so, and I was
24 asked -- tasked to support and develop and set up a
25 website for a faculty who was looking into this in

1 conjunction with some issues that were coming up on
2 campus or so. And though I was kind of aware of
3 the issue, this kind of brought it more front and
4 center as far as to me. And I was asked to
5 implement and work with technology that worked with
6 this issue in order -- and was kind of out there to
7 get support from the faculty, in his rationale or
8 so, and get students recruited into that or so.

9 So I think that would give you an example
10 of something that I didn't necessarily know too
11 much about or in depth and kind of brought it more
12 into my hands, if you will, or so because the
13 system, their website, was specifically for that
14 and they wanted it -- you know, they wanted support
15 for that, you know, Google Searches, they wanted it
16 indexed or so, so there was a more technical aspect
17 to it but -- that I was asked to provide, so --

18 CHAIR COE: Have you ever changed your
19 mind about a course of action or a decision after
20 receiving additional input?

21 MR. CASTANEDA: I believe that I have in
22 this example. I don't necessarily -- I mean, it
23 may have been either my personal thoughts or
24 opinions or viewpoints on things, but nothing that
25 actually changed a course of action in that respect

1 as far as that website respect.

2 I'm -- I want to say, yes, but a clear
3 example doesn't necessarily come to mind. But I
4 don't -- I feel that I -- there would be no way for
5 me, you know, as -- since I feel that I am fair and
6 impartial as much as possible, that I am not -- I
7 would never say that, oh, my beliefs are set in
8 stone or so because I feel that there's, you know,
9 there's issues out there or people or ideas or so
10 that I have my own perceived notions and
11 assumptions or so. And somebody tells me different
12 and I'm like, oh, okay, that was something that I
13 had never considered or so.

14 So, unfortunately, I -- a specific example
15 does not come to mind, so --

16 CHAIR COE: Okay. Thank you.

17 I wanted to go back to the responses of
18 standard question four. I wasn't clear on the
19 conflict, if there was one, where conflict occurred
20 amongst the team you were working on. Could you
21 clarify where the conflict was on that example?

22 MR. CASTANEDA: In what -- was there a
23 specific or --

24 CHAIR COE: You were giving an example
25 about a time you worked in a team. And I wasn't

1 clear on whether or not there was conflict within
2 that team in the example you were providing.

3 MR. CASTANEDA: I guess in terms of
4 conflict, I think was conflict of the issue. And
5 let me, I guess, explain a little bit as far as for
6 some disagreement within ourselves about the course
7 of action or so.

8 I mean, we're a department of about
9 roughly 20 or a little less than 20 or so. So
10 sometimes consensus is not necessarily always the
11 easiest thing to do or so. And even though that
12 there's, you know, hierarchy and leadership in it
13 or so, but I think there was still issues about how
14 to -- we had to work and get consensus about how to
15 do certain things or so. You know, one would be
16 like, say, communication or so. How do we
17 communicate? And we have to either defer or kind
18 of negotiate or so which is the best way to go?
19 And either give the reason, give the rationale, and
20 come to some kind of agreement or so, so --

21 CHAIR COE: Okay. Thank you.

22 So one of the biggest tasks that's going
23 to be in front of this Commission is identifying
24 communities of interest all across the state. And
25 some communities are more obvious. They're easier

1 to identify. They're more engaged. And some are
2 less so and they're harder to identify.

3 As a Commissioner, how would you go about
4 identifying communities of interest across the
5 state? Specifically, how could you avoid kind of
6 inadvertently overlooking some of these communities
7 that are harder to find?

8 MR. CASTANEDA: I think one step would be
9 to form partnerships with community-based
10 organizations or, say, neighborhood councils, who
11 might have a better idea of who is in their
12 community or, you know, who their constituents may
13 be or so.

14 You know, for example or so, you know,
15 I've attended city councils in my area as far as
16 where I live in Los Angeles or so. And many of
17 them kind of bring up issues as far as who is in
18 the community and specific services or programs or
19 so that target them. And that, I think, would be a
20 good starting point as far as who is in there
21 because, especially, if I may have an awareness
22 that there's people out there or, you know, an
23 awareness of unknown groups to me, but I think
24 connecting with people who are already there, who
25 are the ground and seeing, okay, who is in your

1 community, who should we be talking to or so, or
2 addressing, or considering in some of these things,
3 I think that would be a first step or so, or one
4 step or so is to make those kinds of connections or
5 so. Or if there's any state-based organizations or
6 so that are representative, either by a culture or
7 someone's religion or some kind of ethnographic
8 background or socioeconomic identity or so, that we
9 should consider or so.

10 So I think by reaching out to partnerships
11 or so, reaching out in that way, I think we'll get
12 at least an idea or who is a group that's not
13 representative or under-representative that the
14 Commission should be aware of or so. So that would
15 be one way.

16 CHAIR COE: Thank you.

17 Same topic on communities of interest.
18 And some of those communities are -- even once
19 they're identified, they may not feel entirely
20 comfortable coming forward and they're less
21 comfortable engaging in efforts like this or
22 engaging with the government, and that could be for
23 a lot of different reasons.

24 But since the input of -- from as many
25 communities as possible is so important to the work

1 of this Commission, how could the Commission make
2 those communities feel comfortable to come forward
3 and share their perspectives and better inform the
4 Commission?

5 MR. CASTANEDA: I feel that my emphasis
6 and, perhaps, overemphasis in communication, I
7 think, is key in this regard or so. I think in
8 order to communicate that the Commission is there
9 for the individuals and for everyone in the state,
10 not just necessarily citizens but everyone, all
11 Californians or so. And I think that it would be a
12 really concerted effort in order to have public
13 education, whether a media campaign or certain
14 information to put out there, in order to call that
15 this is a group that is out there. They're open.
16 They're listening.

17 Partnerships, like I have mentioned, as
18 well, or even in terms of connecting with media
19 groups, whether potentially either radio stations
20 or on social media or so, in order to kind of
21 really push out the message that the Commission is
22 there, what is its goal, what is its purpose, and
23 that it is open or so.

24 CHAIR COE: Thank you.

25 MS. PELLMAN: We have 5 minutes, 23

1 seconds remaining.

2 CHAIR COE: Thank you, Madam Secretary.

3 Mr. Castaneda, if you were to be appointed
4 to the role of Commissioner, which aspects of that
5 role do you think you will enjoy the most and,
6 conversely, which aspects of that role do you think
7 you might, perhaps, struggle with a little bit?

8 MR. CASTANEDA: I think in terms of what I
9 would enjoy the most is the connection with people.
10 I do try and even inadvertently connect with people
11 when I go out and wherever it is that I go or so.
12 You know, people approach me and we strike up
13 conversations or so.

14 I think connecting with groups, both
15 wherever I happen to work with, whether, if I'm,
16 say, potentially chosen or so, in Southern
17 California or further south along the borders,
18 state lines or so, up in the north central or so, I
19 think kind of wherever in terms of connecting with
20 people and learning more about who the people --
21 who are these people in California or so? So I
22 think that would be -- is the most appealing.

23 So, and also, I think another appealing
24 thing is to be involved in the process of the state
25 and the policies and what makes the state work.

1 So on the flip side, though, I think
2 things that I would struggle with is more of the
3 specific process and any kind of bureaucratic
4 processes or so. Because I do not have a specific
5 legal or governmental background or so, I think
6 that is where I would have to play catchup on the
7 most or so and learn as quickly as possible. So I
8 feel that that would be a very challenging thing,
9 to make sure that I don't -- I'm not in the error,
10 or if there's something else different I need to do
11 in a specific process in order to have the
12 Commission work, so -- and whatever kind of
13 specifics that the Commission needs to do, so --

14 CHAIR COE: Thank you, Mr. Castaneda.

15 At this time, I don't have any additional
16 questions, so I'm going to go ahead and turn the
17 time over --

18 MR. CASTANEDA: Okay.

19 CHAIR COE: -- to Ms. Dickison.

20 MR. CASTANEDA: Thank you, Mr. Coe.

21 PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Thank you, Mr.
22 Coe.

23 Good afternoon, Mr. Castaneda.

24 MR. CASTANEDA: Yeah. Good afternoon.

25 PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Good afternoon.

1 So one of the things you mentioned in your
2 response to question five was that you question
3 your own biases.

4 Could you tell us what your biases are and
5 how you ensure that -- or how you would ensure that
6 they would not affect your decisions as a
7 Commissioner if you were selected?

8 MR. CASTANEDA: Well, I think my bias or
9 people's biases may change or so. I mean, I say
10 that, you know, I acknowledge my biases and they
11 may change from, you know, from maybe how I felt
12 about a group or people or situation when I was
13 younger as opposed to now and, perhaps, even from,
14 you know, five years from now or so. And whether
15 if it is something personal or, you know, people
16 with hair. Oh, my gosh, you know, people with hair
17 are such and such and such or, you know, people in
18 any kind of way or so. So granted, you know, I
19 have little of that or so but -- and that may not
20 change.

21 But I think in terms of one must need to
22 acknowledge that there is bias and, you know, that
23 I have a bias, and not in such wide array with
24 everything or so but that I may be slightly biased
25 or unconscious biased to something, to someone,

1 because of something that had happened, you know,
2 usually, I would say, minor or so. Say a public
3 transportation, somebody says something and, oh,
4 you know, that person's -- oh, you know, how
5 typical, X, Y, Z or so.

6 But I think at acknowledging that would at
7 least help me understand that, okay, I do have
8 bias. And also that in acknowledging it, that I
9 will not let it be a barrier to something that I
10 need to work with, either working with people,
11 volunteering, or potentially working with the
12 Commission or so. I think that's the key thing.

13 So I don't feel I am discriminatory but I
14 feel that, you know, I would probably have bias to
15 something or someone because of something. And I
16 know those were necessarily kind of vague or so.
17 But I think because it's so nuanced and so
18 individualized, it's hard to say that, you know, I
19 am biased against a particular person because I
20 don't feel like I am biased to people in general,
21 perhaps of what they do, maybe what they say,
22 perhaps even what they look like, like say dress
23 style of things of this sort. You know, oh,
24 teenagers, oh, you know, they're all a bunch of
25 this and that or so. I mean, I think that is

1 something kind of natural but I think that it is a
2 bias.

3 So -- but I think the important thing is
4 to make sure that those are not barriers for me
5 getting the work done or they're not a barrier for
6 me connecting to people or groups or preventing me
7 from doing something.

8 PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Thank you.

9 You also stated that you have an
10 understanding of what diversity means other than
11 ethnic and racial. Can you kind of expand on that
12 idea for us?

13 MR. CASTANEDA: Sure. I think in terms of
14 diversity is very -- I think we give or we should,
15 perhaps, allow that there is more diversity and
16 types of diversity than we, perhaps, acknowledge or
17 so outside of race and things of this sort. So
18 I'll give you an example.

19 In some of my research or so as a student,
20 you know, I was researching what they call the
21 digital divide or so. The language has changed but
22 I think it is still an issue that people do not
23 have -- certain groups and certain locations do not
24 have access to technology. And there are -- you
25 can maybe get generalizations. Perhaps,

1 potentially, there will be dangerous assumptions or
2 correlations with what type of people that those
3 are, usually in rural areas, typically, usually in
4 more poor areas or so. In those areas, they also
5 make us suggest what type of people those are.
6 Either their socioeconomic background or certain
7 ethnic groups or racial groups or so.

8 So I think that technology uses a bridge
9 in order to give an example that there are certain
10 groups of people that do not have -- that have --
11 that do not have or are without. And the fact that
12 they are not in a city or they're not in certain
13 locations or so makes suggestions thus far as,
14 okay, what are the other criteria that they could
15 be in?

16 So I think that is one way that I have
17 gained a different aspect to it.

18 In addition, I think that since my work in
19 technology, and especially early on or so, since I
20 was, you know, what, about 19, 20 years old or so
21 and getting a lot of responsibility at an early age
22 or so, it kind of gave me where I had to work in
23 different communities or so and see people where
24 they lived, where they worked or so. And I was, you
25 know, I would say pretty naive at the time and have

1 a greater awareness of all of these people. And
2 this was all just within Southern California, I
3 mean, not just L.A. County but in the region or so.
4 So I'm out there working with people, with them
5 directly or so, and it is a lot of differences that
6 I felt at an early age or so. And I think that
7 gave me an appreciation for, okay, there are a lot
8 of these differences, other than what I'm -- that I
9 grew up or that I experienced in a day in, day out
10 on a personal level at home or amongst my friends
11 or so, so --

12 PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: But with that in
13 mind, what do you think are some of the things that
14 may affect someone's preference when they're
15 looking for representation? And how could that
16 change based on where someone's located in
17 different regions of the state?

18 MR. CASTANEDA: I feel that people's
19 preferences may start with one that is like them or
20 kind of in-group/out-group or so. And I feel that
21 there may be -- those looking for representation
22 may look for then someone that represents themselves
23 first, maybe even physically or so, or perhaps
24 their gender, or something like that or so. So I
25 feel that that is one thing that is -- that would

1 occur.

2 So -- and then to -- though I think there
3 are potential pitfalls with that or so because
4 whether, say, in the Commission or in any kind of
5 groups, not every group is representative of where,
6 necessarily, they're from or so. So such as
7 myself, I'm a -- you know, there are a lot -- you
8 know, being Mexican American or so, I mean, that it
9 not uncommon in Southern California or so. So do I
10 look, I think, automatically to people that I, at
11 least initially, for representation or for guidance
12 or somewhere, I would probably say that is a
13 potential bias of mine or so, especially because of
14 my background, my personal background, education,
15 linguistic, and whatnot or so. So I think people
16 will gravitate to that.

17 But I think if there is true diversity and
18 true representation, say, I'll give you an example,
19 as in the Commission or so, I think people may be a
20 little bit more open to, okay, the Commission is
21 not -- may necessarily have someone exactly like me
22 or they're saying an Asian person or an African
23 American or any other kind of Indian or Native
24 American or indigenous, you know, peoples or
25 variations. But I think if there is more

1 diversity, then there will be at least more
2 potential to be, okay, an acknowledgment that this
3 is good or good enough (indiscernible).

4 PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: So you talked
5 about the different people you've interacted with,
6 mostly in Southern California and whatnot.

7 What have you learned from just the
8 different -- the diversity you've seen in Southern
9 California that would enable you to represent the
10 people in the far northern part of California?

11 MR. CASTANEDA: I feel that because I am -
12 - I feel that I'm more aware of the diversity here
13 than perhaps I once was and at least try to be
14 attuned to it as possible or so I think at least
15 gives me the opportunity to be able to connect with
16 those who have not been connected to or haven't
17 been spoken to or connected to or so.

18 So I think I -- a good deal of my
19 knowledge and awareness of diversity comes from
20 Southern California or so, but I think in my
21 travels throughout the state have also given me
22 ideas of the central aspect of California and some
23 of those issues or so in terms of, I don't want to
24 say type of people, but typical groups that may be
25 prone to be there, rural issues versus urban issues

1 or so. And I think those would at least give me
2 some tools in order to connect to the communities
3 that are at the northern border or so which may
4 have different concerns or so.

5 But at least I'm, hopefully, more aware
6 that they have concerns that I need to attune to as
7 opposed to, okay, you know, Southern California is
8 my only reference point so that's all that I will
9 see, as opposed to, okay, I do have many
10 experiences from here but I also have experiences
11 in different areas or so. But I'm also open to
12 experiences that, say, people of the north or
13 mountains or desert areas have because I have at
14 least some ability to be open to it and to consider
15 different viewpoints and perspectives or so, so at
16 least allow me to provide a possible avenue to
17 connect or to engage.

18 PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Thank you.

19 So you mentioned earlier in response to
20 question one, or it may have been something that
21 came back to that, that you prefer to work on
22 teams. And in some of your public comments,
23 there's comments about you being a team player and
24 working well with others.

25 Given that, what steps do you think the

1 Commission can take early on to build itself as a
2 team so that as the work gets going it's more
3 collaborative?

4 MR. CASTANEDA: I think, hopefully, the
5 members of the Commission would be attune to
6 collaboration, to being collaborative by default.
7 There are more technological ways in order for
8 Commissioners to potentially connect. I mean, we
9 have Zoom, we have other things or so, so I think
10 there's at least not a technological barrier or so.

11 But I think in terms of if Commissioners
12 could be attuned to work with one another or so,
13 I'm sure, I would imagine, that there is some work
14 done in isolation or so. But at least if it is
15 collaborative, one, it's open and there's an
16 exchange and free-flowing of ideas between, you
17 know, all potentially 14 of them or so. And I
18 think that would be one way.

19 And, also, in reading the 2010 report, I
20 know that they had, perhaps jokingly, referred to
21 the chosen versus the lucky ones or so. And I hope
22 that's not necessarily an actually divide that will
23 persist as far as those, the eight versus the six,
24 or anything of that sort or so but, you know, at
25 least further down or in the work.

1 And, of course, I guess, it seems to have
2 to happen rapidly because there is short time in
3 terms of to work, really, together and hopefully
4 understand that they're all, regardless of how they
5 were chosen, regarding of whether there are other
6 issues that may define each of these groups, that
7 they're all Commissioners or so. And they're all
8 chosen in some manner or another but they're
9 Californians and they have a greater responsibility
10 than any potential individual divides or so.

11 So I think those are some areas that could
12 be looked at or could be addressed. And,
13 hopefully, there's team building exercises, for
14 whatever those are worth or so, but at least some
15 kind of commonality where we can kind of get
16 together and connect or so, at least somewhat maybe
17 socially or personally or so, before really getting
18 into the thick of things with as far as the nature
19 of the work, so --

20 PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Thank you.

21 Given the current situation with COVID-19,
22 the census data, most likely, is going to come
23 later than it was originally expected, which could
24 shorten the timeline that the Commissioners have to
25 do their work. And given your technology

1 background, are there things the Commission can do
2 early on before they get the census data that can
3 give them a leg up in getting the work done?

4 MR. CASTANEDA: I think there's probably
5 datasets and there's -- there should be data that's
6 out there, nothing comes specifically to mind,
7 unfortunately, at the moment, but in terms of
8 demographic data that will at least give an idea.
9 I mean, there's voting data. There's, you know,
10 data that shows about where and how people voted in
11 some kind of geo-coded or, you know, geographic
12 areas that show about voting patterns. And at
13 least -- pardon me -- it will at least suggest in
14 terms of things to look at or demographic area or
15 so.

16 So, I mean, even though the census is
17 only ten years, I've seen other data that kind of
18 give an idea of where people are and who people are
19 or so. And that would at least provide an initial
20 step to say, okay, these are potentials of areas
21 either to look at to concern or so in waiting for
22 the census data to come or so.

23 I feel that, you know, it seems like the
24 census data, yes, is the default and the authority
25 data-wise, but there seems to be a need to look

1 elsewhere so to be the supplemental, fill in the
2 gaps, like I've said, or at least provide a
3 different perspective, or to perhaps confirm what
4 the census data offered. So there may be a need
5 to, perhaps, switch that, so go to, you know, the
6 secondary source first, and then use the census
7 data, hopefully, in order to confirm one's ideas,
8 plans, and the examination of the various districts
9 and where the potential lines may or may not be or
10 may change.

11 PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Thank you.

12 What role do you feel like you would fill
13 in the Commission?

14 MR. CASTANEDA: I think in terms of my
15 technical ability will at least provide that
16 natural role or so. And I think that would be, I
17 don't want to say a given, but probably more likely
18 than not or so. Though I feel that because I don't
19 have, again, formal -- I'm not a lawyer. I'm not a
20 college professor. I'm not. A lot of--what it
21 seems to be many of the applicants are have very,
22 you know, similar backgrounds or so, legal or, you
23 know, policy and things of this sort of stuff. I
24 think I can also provide the newbie perspective or
25 so because I'm kind of -- I may have assumptions,

1 and hopefully I don't necessarily adhere to them,
2 but I don't necessarily have an existing
3 background, so my frame of reference is different.

4 Also, my slate is clean, so I think that
5 provides a great, unique opportunity to say, okay,
6 yes, the, you know, the lawyer may say X, Y, Z or
7 so, but what about this from a nonlegal standpoint
8 or from a non-policy standpoint or a non-activist
9 standpoint or so? I think it presents a very
10 unique ability, in conjunction with my technology
11 experience, so --

12 PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Thank you.

13 Madam Secretary --

14 MS. PELLMAN: We have --

15 PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Oh.

16 MS. PELLMAN: -- we have five minutes
17 remaining.

18 PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Okay. Thank you.

19 So you've already talked about the
20 understanding between the eight and the six. So
21 the first eight are chosen randomly and then they
22 are tasked with choosing the next six to round out
23 the Commission.

24 If you're one of the first eight, what
25 would you be looking for in those other six

1 individuals?

2 MR. CASTANEDA: I think a good start --
3 oh, thank you. I think a good starting point would
4 be where are areas that need to be looked at or so.
5 And I think in terms of are there skill sets that
6 need to be looked at or considered or so?

7 Say for -- if, by chance, a lawyer is not
8 chosen, does that then need to be considered? And
9 I would say, potentially, yes, I mean, not
10 necessarily knowing the makeup or so, but I think
11 that would be an example or so, or if there's a
12 data scientist that's available or so.

13 You know, I feel I have a data background
14 or some awareness of it but I'm not -- is a data
15 scientist in the mix? Or if there's other types of
16 policy orientated or someone from, also, from a
17 geographic area or so from the state? If, by
18 chance, many people are chosen randomly that are
19 from a specific area, what about areas that have
20 not been selected or so? And is it really in the
21 case where, say, someone from the north or from the
22 northeast part of the state or so, there's no
23 representation, okay, well, that perhaps is
24 something that needs to be really considered. And
25 are there qualified candidates that are from that

1 area that could represent that area?

2 Or if there is, say, a gender divide, if
3 there's more men than women or potentially
4 nonbinary or things of this sort, then I think
5 those are also some things to consider because
6 those would add -- I think, potentially, add a very
7 different viewpoint that really would need to be
8 considered.

9 PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Thank you very
10 much.

11 Mr. Coe, I have no additional questions
12 right now.

13 MR. CASTANEDA: Okay. Thank you, Ms.
14 Dickison.

15 PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Thank you.

16 CHAIR COE: Thank you, Ms. Dickison.

17 Mr. Belnap, the time is now yours.

18 PANEL MEMBER BELNAP: Good afternoon, Mr.
19 Castaneda.

20 MR. CASTANEDA: Good afternoon.

21 PANEL MEMBER BELNAP: I see here in your
22 application that you're from Los Angeles, that you
23 live there now.

24 MR. CASTANEDA: Yes.

25 PANEL MEMBER BELNAP: Where did you grow

1 up?

2 MR. CASTANEDA: If you're familiar with
3 L.A. County, I grew up in the area called the San
4 Gabriel Valley, which is not really the valley that
5 everybody talks about which is further east from
6 where I live now, so --

7 PANEL MEMBER BELNAP: That would -- you
8 said that was part of Los Angeles County though?

9 MR. CASTANEDA: Yes, yes, so --

10 PANEL MEMBER BELNAP: Have you lived
11 or -- yeah, yeah. Have you lived in any other
12 parts of California?

13 MR. CASTANEDA: Lived? No. It's been all
14 primarily in L.A. County or so, though it has been
15 on the eastern side, as well as, also, right on the
16 border between L.A. County and San Bernardino
17 County, but all in L.A. County, so --

18 PANEL MEMBER BELNAP: All right. Thank
19 you.

20 In your essay on appreciation for
21 diversity, you indicated that early in your
22 technology career you traveled a lot, that you
23 visited many different towns and cities in Southern
24 California.

25 Can you describe an experience you had in

1 these travels that increased your understanding of
2 and appreciation for California's diversity?

3 MR. CASTANEDA: Well, I think one that
4 comes to example, though I think there's a few or
5 so, that I was -- had to do some work in the
6 southern aspect of the City of Los Angeles or so in
7 the area kind of like near what would be Watts, if
8 you're familiar with that area or so. And at least
9 at the time, though I think still, unfortunately,
10 now it is a very economically depressed area or so,
11 and predominantly African American, though I think
12 less so now.

13 And going there, I think, at an early age,
14 working professionally or so, kind of gave me
15 awareness of other parts of the city that was very
16 different from where I worked at the time, which
17 was in Glendale, and also where I lived, which was
18 in the San Gabriel Valley area or so. And I think
19 that was kind of like the real idea of, okay, you
20 know, there's people out here and there's cities
21 and buildings or so that are still -- seem to be
22 have suffered burnout from, you know, the '60s or
23 so, from when the Watts Riots that haven't
24 necessarily fully recovered. And I think that
25 provides one aspect.

1 And on the flip side, I end up working in
2 what we call the San Fernando -- or the Valley, or
3 the San Fernando Valley area. And that was also
4 quite different because it kept me more in contact
5 with Middle Eastern cultures and much more
6 different experiences or so than what I
7 traditionally had known from back home.

8 So I think it really gives me -- or really
9 kind of shook me in a way as far as the different
10 areas of the city and how vastly different they can
11 be, like physically and economically, as well as,
12 also, different cultures and the completely miles
13 and miles away that is completely different
14 linguistic, cultural in every respect or so. So I
15 think these kind of gave me very distinct -- and
16 there's been
17 others -- but gave me very interesting insight
18 into, albeit it limited, as far as what is in this
19 -- you know, what I have encountered in where I
20 live, so --

21 PANEL MEMBER BELNAP: Thank you.

22 So I believe you graduated in 2017 with a
23 master's degree from USC in Communication
24 Management.

25 MR. CASTANEDA: Yes.

1 PANEL MEMBER BELNAP: So you already
2 talked about how you obtained a bachelor's later in
3 life and your master's degree was after that.

4 So can you tell us about you decided to
5 pursue that program? And then what did you gain
6 from that study?

7 MR. CASTANEDA: Okay. The why -- thank
8 you.

9 The why is what that -- the Communications
10 Management Program or so, and I don't want to come
11 off like I'm selling the program because, you know,
12 there were good and there were not-so-good aspects
13 to it, but I think that looking at the curriculum,
14 looking at the instructors, the type of classes or
15 so, really struck an interest to me because it
16 talked -- my focus was really on technology and
17 communications management, not necessarily
18 marketing, not necessarily P.R. aspect, but in
19 terms of how information is -- how we communicate
20 as people in groups and businesses or so. So a lot
21 of my classes were tailored toward technology, the
22 political economics of the internet, international
23 development involving technology, and things of
24 this sort. So there was a major technological
25 component, as well as, also, how to use that

1 technology with people and how to communicate and
2 disseminate and accept and consume information or
3 so.

4 What drew me to that -- excuse me. Well,
5 so then I graduated in 2017 or so, so I felt that I
6 could use that in education because I feel that
7 even though I work in education, but I work in
8 technology, that I educate, I communicate either
9 ideas, concepts, how to use technology in these
10 kinds of ways or so, so I think I was able to kind
11 of continue on that line as far as communicating
12 information, ideas, and how to use technology to,
13 you know, a pretty sizeable population, even though
14 it was rather, you know, small and intimate or so,
15 but I think significant enough that I was able to
16 kind of continue along that kind of work or so,
17 show faculty and students how to use technology,
18 how to use it in the classrooms or so, kind of a
19 much more new and innovative ways or so, as opposed
20 to if I potentially had taken any other course work
21 in something else or not at all, so --

22 PANEL MEMBER BELNAP: Thank you.

23 I think I might have just heard the answer
24 to this question but I'll ask it anyways.

25 MR. CASTANEDA: Okay. Please.

1 PANEL MEMBER BELNAP: What do you enjoy
2 most about be an Educational Technologist?

3 MR. CASTANEDA: I think in terms of, even
4 though the technologist is the title or so, and it
5 is targeted to education or so, but I think I have
6 -- I seem to have a natural affinity for technology
7 or so. And I don't want to say anything unhealthy
8 or a fetish or anything of this sort or so where
9 I'm on my phone constantly or so, but perhaps,
10 potentially, I am or so.

11 But I feel that at a young age when I
12 started into my technology career, you know, when I
13 was, what, 18, 19 years old, I had, I think, an
14 easy connection on how to use it, how to -- what to
15 use it for, as well as, also, how to show people to
16 use it. So -- but I feel that that provided me a
17 basis of -- to advocate, to work with technology,
18 and kind of in various ways or so.

19 It is being -- I feel like I am a
20 generalist in a way. I am not necessarily specific
21 where, you know, I only work with cell phones, so
22 I'm not a cell phone or a mobile engineer, or a
23 software developer who only creates websites or so.
24 Those are fine. But I feel like this position
25 affords me much more greater, wider breadth and

1 depth or so because it gives me an opportunity to
2 do a lot more with it than, perhaps, my previous
3 positions that I have worked with in some of my
4 other areas or so that were a little bit more
5 focused but, potentially, maybe a little more
6 limited, so --

7 PANEL MEMBER BELNAP: All right. Thank
8 you.

9 So the flip side of that question, what do
10 you not enjoy as much or find frustrating in your
11 current role as an Educational Technologist?

12 MR. CASTANEDA: Well, I think in terms
13 of -- that in terms of access to certain resources
14 and funding, I mean, you know, Pitzer College is
15 not -- it's not USC or is not a very large, you
16 know, 10, 20, 30-plus thousand university or so, so
17 that is not necessarily news. So I think there are
18 constraints because of limited resources about what
19 I can get my hands on or what I have access to. So
20 I think I tend to drift to what I can get my hands
21 on personally or things that are free or cheap or
22 so. So I think there is that limit where I don't
23 have access to unlimited funds in order to look and
24 explore everything that I have ever wanted.

25 So -- but I think on the flip side, that

1 might actually be a benefit because it is kind of
2 the bootstrap or so. I have to focus on what is
3 tangible, what is realistic, and what can I
4 actually do realistically-wise, as opposed to wish
5 and pray for the technology gods to give me a bunch
6 of money so that I can do whatever it is that I
7 want? So --

8 PANEL MEMBER BELNAP: All right. Thank
9 you.

10 Mr. Chair, I have no further questions at
11 this time.

12 CHAIR COE: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Belnap.

13 Mr. Dawson, the time is yours.

14 MR. DAWSON: Thank you, Mr. Coe.

15 Mr. Castaneda, I wanted to follow up on
16 your response just now to Mr. Belnap's question
17 because I noticed that in your essay on
18 impartiality, you talked about how you were on a
19 committee where you wanted to continue funding for
20 online training resources but you voted against due
21 to budget limitations. So was this a case where
22 that was going to negatively affect the resources
23 that were going to be available to you?

24 MR. CASTANEDA: Yes, actually. So we had
25 an instance where -- and I was on that staff

1 committee or so to get our -- to bring the
2 Lynda.com or LinkedIn Learning is what it may be
3 called now or so, into campus and integrated in
4 within our systems and our websites or so. And it
5 will provide training, online training, for staff,
6 faculty, and students and so. And I was elated.
7 Like this is the best thing every. I can learn all
8 these things and everybody else can learn all these
9 things, too, or so.

10 And we were very happy. I was happy to be
11 part of that and had it integrated and worked to
12 get it integrated and work with various teachers
13 and administrators or so about how to really
14 disseminate this.

15 But, you know, we had found that the
16 numbers didn't -- just the usage numbers did not
17 justify the continuation. It was an expensive
18 product. And, you know, I ran the numbers. I was
19 one of the principal. I could download the usage
20 reports and analyze the data so -- and get an idea,
21 okay, as great as this -- I felt that this was, it
22 wasn't widely used. We tried information
23 campaigns. We tried to really promote or so but it
24 just -- our community just didn't necessarily feel
25 that it was as useful or so.

1 So then we had to look back and say, okay,
2 can we justify the cost of it. And, ultimately, we
3 decided that, no. I mean, it would take too much
4 of our budget and we could use that for something
5 else or something maybe a little bit more small
6 scale or so, even though it would impact some of
7 the things that I had done. And it would also
8 impact something that I really advocated and want
9 people to use really -- wanted them to really use
10 it but we could just not justify its continuation
11 or so, so I found it was disappointing but it was
12 something that we had to do, regardless of my own
13 personal feelings. And I did say, okay, I agree,
14 let's not continue this thing, even though I was
15 rather disappointed,
16 so --

17 MR. DAWSON: Do you think under the --
18 under these circumstances, you might want to
19 revisit that?

20 MR. CASTANEDA: I have found avenues. And
21 we had looked for alternatives that weren't as
22 good. And, unfortunately, with the time
23 constraints, we have not looked at that again. But
24 I think that is something to really consider as my
25 institution, as many others or so, look to see

1 about what the future lies in terms of learning and
2 whatnot or so. And -- because now it is owned by
3 Microsoft, they may have some, perhaps, either
4 discounts or there may be a little more of a
5 negotiation or so in order to maybe drop the price
6 or make it a bit more affordable.

7 Or I think because, since we tried it and
8 used it, I think there's things that we can
9 consider getting partnerships because we are a
10 consortium and joining, okay, you know, all the
11 other schools, ourselves, we all get collectively
12 on this, maybe look into a some discount or a new
13 approach or so that would allow that to be
14 revisited and, hopefully, maybe reconsidered,
15 so --

16 MR. DAWSON: Okay. Thank you.

17 I wanted to go back to your response to
18 standard question two which is about the hyper-
19 partisanship. And I noticed that you mentioned
20 having an open process and not just the letter of
21 Bagley-Keene. I took that to mean that you were
22 saying that maybe a commitment to the process
23 itself could protect against hyper-partisanship.
24 Did I understand that correctly? And, if so, could
25 you expand on that?

1 MR. CASTANEDA: I guess in terms of to
2 demonstrate that the Commission is dedicated to the
3 process. I think it's one thing to say it but then
4 you have -- pardon me - if I'm not pronouncing--
5 that the Bagley-Keene Act or so, I think, requires
6 openness, and had regulations in terms of open
7 hearings and openness in terms of such as, you
8 know, these meetings or so.

9 But I think there's, also, whether is that
10 enough, or there are things that are additional
11 that could be outwardly said or demonstrated or so
12 that could say, okay, we are really fully open well
13 and beyond what we're required to do or so.

14 So I think that is kind of what is what I
15 emphasize in terms of communication. And I think
16 the emphasis on that could alleviate some other
17 issues or so and can demonstrate, okay, we are not
18 just committed but more committed or so, or very
19 committed to the mission and redistricting and
20 attempting to connect and listen from all of these
21 people or so. So I feel that's kind of why I put
22 the emphasis on it that is potential, whether to go
23 beyond what is required and do much more than what
24 is required, so --

25 MR. DAWSON: Okay. Thank you.

1 MR. CASTANEDA: Sure.

2 MR. DAWSON: So we tend to describe the
3 Commission as nonpartisan but that's not really
4 true. It is partisan. It's a balance of partisan
5 groups. There will be five Republicans, five
6 Democrats, and four non-affiliated folks. You are
7 registered and an NPP, no party preference.

8 MR. CASTANEDA: Correct.

9 MR. DAWSON: Do you feel that the non-
10 affiliated members have a particular role to play
11 in this structure?

12 MR. CASTANEDA: I think by, perhaps, by
13 default, yes. I mean, I don't necessarily, you
14 know, have a card for either, you know, either
15 Democrat or Republican or so. And I think by
16 choosing this role or this, you know, this
17 designation or so, I think, gives us me, and
18 potentially anyone, other Commissioners or so the
19 ability to cross both sides or so or to kind of be
20 a little bit more independent or so. Of course,
21 that does not necessarily prevent one in the
22 nonpartisan or non-party preference or so to side
23 with one group or another or so. I think at least
24 it's a first step and it sends a signal that, okay,
25 you know, I am -- or the Commissioner with -- as

1 party preference or so is neither. And it would be
2 at least the middle person or so to say go with one
3 way or another that is something that is a divide
4 or so.

5 So I think it is very useful. And,
6 hopefully, there is a balance in some way that the
7 Commission does reflect both formerly Republican,
8 formerly Democrat and this other position.

9 MR. DAWSON: Okay. Thank you.

10 You talked a bit about the different forms
11 of diversity. You know, there are ethnic,
12 economic, and also geographic. That's one of the
13 things that in the previous Commission, 2010, the
14 furthest north that any Commissioner represented
15 was Yolo County, which is just west of here.

16 If the 2020 Commission had no
17 representation north of Sacramento, would that be a
18 struggle? Would that be a weakness?

19 MR. CASTANEDA: I think it probably may be
20 that, you know, based on who the representation was
21 of the previous time may be something to, perhaps,
22 potentially consider. But I think, especially if
23 that is -- if it found that that group is overly
24 unrepresentative or continuously under-
25 representative or not necessarily considered, I

1 think that is a potential weakness or so, that if
2 there's no one in the Commission that directly
3 reflects that.

4 I think it could be overcome by my
5 emphasis of communication and outreach or so, that
6 if the Commission does not represent a certain
7 area, especially up in the northern border or so,
8 then perhaps there should be more meetings, more
9 in-person events, more hearings or so to say, okay,
10 the Commission doesn't reflect that personally
11 within its members but at least there's more
12 emphasis, there's more time. There's, perhaps,
13 more communication, more outreach, more engagement
14 in that area or so. And I would hope that would at
15 least provide some kind of bridge in order to make
16 up from the membership or so. So, I mean, I know
17 with 14 people, you can't necessarily represent
18 everything and everyone or so but at least provide
19 avenues, especially to emphasize communication that
20 would hopefully bridge those discrepancies.

21 MR. DAWSON: All right. Thank you. Just
22 a second.

23 MR. CASTANEDA: No problem.

24 MR. DAWSON: I think that you may have
25 answered all my questions. Yeah. So thank you,

1 Mr. Castaneda.

2 Mr. Chair, I have no further questions.

3 MR. CASTANEDA: Thank you.

4 CHAIR COE: Thank you, Mr. Dawson.

5 Ms. Dickison, any follow-up questions?

6 PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: I do not have any
7 follow-up questions.

8 CHAIR COE: Mr. Belnap?

9 PANEL MEMBER BELNAP: I do not have any
10 follow-up questions either.

11 CHAIR COE: Okay, Mr. Dawson, I don't have
12 any follow-up questions.

13 MR. DAWSON: All right. Thank you.

14 Madam Secretary, how much time is
15 remaining in the 90 minutes?

16 MS. PELLMAN: Sixteen minutes, forty
17 seconds.

18 MR. DAWSON: All right. Thank you.

19 Mr. Castaneda, with the time remaining,
20 I'd like to offer you the opportunity to make a
21 closing statement or remarks to the Panel, if you
22 wish?

23 MR. CASTANEDA: Okay. Thank you.

24 I wish to thank you all for this
25 opportunity to speak with all of you today

1 regarding an, obviously, very important task or so.
2 I feel that this Commission has been a model or is
3 a model for other citizen groups, I think
4 specifically, I believe, Michigan or so, and other
5 citizen redistricting initiatives throughout the
6 country. And I hope that it continues, that
7 California continues to be a model.

8 I have learned a lot about my state and in
9 this process or so. I feel that I can make a
10 valuable contribution to the Commission if I was
11 fortunate enough to be chosen based on what I have
12 presented for you today, and by bringing very
13 different perspectives and viewpoints about
14 diversity, about communities of the state and of my
15 locality, as well as, also, bringing different
16 skills, bringing skill sets and experiences to the
17 Commission. I feel that that would be, also, an
18 added benefit or so.

19 So I wish to thank you all very much for
20 your time. And, also, special thanks to all the
21 supporting staff who have made this possible.

22 CHAIR COE: Okay. Thank you, Mr.
23 Castaneda, for speaking with us this afternoon.

24 Our next interview isn't scheduled until
25 9:00 a.m. on Monday, April 20th, so we will be in

1 recess until 8:59 a.m. on Monday, April 20th.

2 (Thereupon the Panel recessed at 4:14 p.m.)

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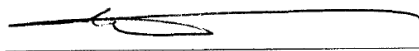
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PETER PETTY
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MARTHA L. NELSON, CERT**367