

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

In the Matter of:

2020 CITIZENS REDISTRICTING COMMISSION (CRC)  
Applicant Review Panel (ARP) Public Meeting

621 Capitol Mall, 10th Floor  
Sacramento, California 95814  
& Remote by Zoom

TUESDAY, APRIL 21, 2020

1:00 P.M.

Reported by:  
Peter Petty

## APPEARANCES

Members Present (\*Present via Zoom)

Ben Belnap, Chair

\*Ryan Coe, Vice Chair

\*Angela Dickison, Panel Member

Staff Present (\*Present via Zoom)

Christopher Dawson, Counsel

\*Shauna Pellman, Auditor Specialist II

Applicants (\*Present via Zoom)

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## 1 PROCEEDINGS

2 8:59 a.m.

3 CHAIR BELNAP: It being 8:59 a.m., we'll  
4 get started and call this meeting out of recess.

5 For those in the room, and also for those  
6 that are participating remotely, I want to remind  
7 you to silence all cell phones and other electronic  
8 devices.

9 For those in the room, the restrooms are  
10 out here in the hallway. Follow CSA staff  
11 instruction in case of an emergency.

12 I want to welcome Alicia Fernandez to her  
13 interview today.

14 And we'll going to turn the time over to  
15 Mr. Dawson for the standard five questions.

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

17 Ms. Fernandez, I'm going to ask you five  
18 standard questions that the Applicant Review Panel  
19 has requested that each applicant respond to. Are  
20 you ready?

21 MS. FERNANDEZ: Yes.

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

9 MS. FERNANDEZ: Okay. Thank you. In  
10 terms of the skills and attributes that all  
11 Commissioners should possess the first one would be  
12 to be a good listener. I think a big majority of  
13 what we'll be doing is listening to -- is to listen  
14 from the community members in terms of what their  
15 values, hopes for their communities are.

16 Also, a major skill would be to be open,  
17 open to differing opinions. We have to realize  
18 that we're just one of millions of people in  
19 California and everyone has differing opinions, we  
20 come from different backgrounds, so we have to open  
21 to that. We have to open to what their positions  
22 are, what their values are.

1           And we also have to empathetic to  
2 their -- they're very passionate about their  
3 opinions, their wants, their desires, their goals.  
4 And we need to ensure equity, as well, not -- I  
5 mean equality but also equity.

6           Also, the Commissioners should have an  
7 analytical capacity. I don't want to say  
8 background because I would hope that everybody  
9 does. But you will be reviewing different data,  
10 maps, numbers from the census, whatever other data  
11 you gain.

12           And, also, you need to be resourceful, to  
13 not only rely on the information you get but, in  
14 today's world with technology, we're able to  
15 actually reach out to other states to see how they  
16 do things. We're able to get other information.  
17 So we just need to be resourceful. Not only that,  
18 also resourceful with people that we know and  
19 people that we may not know but will get to know if  
20 we just reach out and become better informed.

21           We also need to be leaders, leaders at  
22 times, and sometimes not leaders. We need to know

1 when we need to lead and when we need to let others  
2 lead.

3           Also, we need to be team players.

4 Obviously, we're a group of 14. We can't all be  
5 the leaders. We'll all part of a team. We're 1 of  
6 14. And we're all there to serve each other, not  
7 one person to serve -- not 13 to serve 1.

8           Communication. We need to be good  
9 communicators, both verbally and in writing. I'm  
10 assuming we'll be writing some documents at the end  
11 of this.

12           And we also need to be unemotional. We all  
13 come with different values, as I mentioned, and we  
14 need to be open to that. We need to not hold so  
15 strong to whatever. If our opinions do differ then  
16 our opinions differ. It doesn't mean that it's  
17 good or bad, it just means that it's different. So  
18 we just need to be unemotional.

19           What would also be helpful is to have  
20 interviewing skills. We'll be asking lots of  
21 questions, I'm hoping, so we need to be able to  
22 attempt to develop rapport when we can, use

1 different investigative skills if you can. I've  
2 been an Investigator for many years. And with  
3 that, you approach each interview differently based  
4 on the person, based on the information that you  
5 have, and you just need to know how -- which method  
6 to use.

7           The capacities that are -- you also need  
8 to be able to learn, not think that you know it  
9 all. We don't all know it all. We don't even know  
10 close to it all, so we just need to be able to  
11 learn, take in new information, be able to  
12 interpret that information.

13           Oh, organizational skills. You definitely  
14 need organizational skills. We'll be, as I  
15 mentioned earlier, we'll be reviewing lots of  
16 documents. And we need to make sure that we're on  
17 task, that we have all the information that we  
18 need. And, obviously, it needs to be organized in  
19 some way because then that leads to better  
20 communication as well.

21           And integrity. We do need to be honest  
22 people. We need to move forward in the best



1 interests of all, not just of myself, but we need  
2 to be honest about it.

3           And one thing that I like is I hope that  
4 all of us can at least laugh once in a while.  
5 Let's not take ourselves so seriously but this is a  
6 serious venture. But we also need to be able to  
7 maybe sit back once in a while and just reflect.

8           And in terms of -- the other part of the  
9 question was, let's see -- which skills do I  
10 possess well? Well, of course, I possess all of  
11 them. I'm not going to tell you any skills and  
12 attributes that I wouldn't possess. But I don't  
13 say that lightly. As my application has shown, as  
14 I mentioned earlier, I've been -- or as I mentioned  
15 in my application, as well as earlier, I've been an  
16 Auditor, so -- and many of you are auditors, as  
17 well, so as you know, you have to read education --  
18 well, for me I had to read Education Code, Penal  
19 Code, Government Code sections. And from there,  
20 you develop your audit plan or your investigative  
21 plan. You collect your evidence, your resources.

1           And then if you're an Auditor, you  
2 actually go out and you actually audit the specific  
3 program area. And from there, you're talking with  
4 people, you're learning processes. You're trying  
5 to understand what their internal controls are. As  
6 an Investigator, we're out there collecting  
7 evidence, be it video recordings, be it  
8 surveillance, be it documentation that's at the  
9 facilities. And then, after that, you conduct your  
10 interviews.

11           And as I mentioned earlier, being able to  
12 interview and adjust your style to whoever you're  
13 interviewing is very important. Sometimes you have  
14 to be the soft person and just talk lightly and  
15 just kind of let them tell their story. Other  
16 times, you just have to present them with the facts  
17 and it's more of a here's what we have and let them  
18 respond. So you really just need to be able to  
19 determine what type of approach you're going to  
20 use.

21           And in terms of being a good listener,  
22 that's what we do. As an Investigator, as an

1 Auditor, you do need to listen because, again, we  
2 don't know it all.

3           And I feel just, also, my background as a  
4 School Board member for the last 13, 14 years, I  
5 can't remember, that's a group of seven, all of us  
6 from different areas coming together for the common  
7 goal of our students. And, fortunately, we've been  
8 rather successful. We have all educated each other  
9 on our different communities. We've been open to  
10 that which has been a benefit to not only the board  
11 but also the students that we serve.

12           So in terms of -- that's how I feel that  
13 my skills and my experience and my attributes will  
14 contribute to this Commission.

15           MR. DAWSON: Thank you.

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

1           What characteristics do you possess and  
2 what characteristics should your fellow  
3 Commissioners possess that will protect against  
4 hyperpartisanship? What will you do to ensure that  
5 the work of the Commission is not seen as polarized  
6 or hyperpartisan and avoid perceptions of political  
7 bias and conflict?

8           MS. FERNANDEZ: In terms of the  
9 characteristics that I possess, which I feel all  
10 Commissioners should also possess in order to  
11 protect against the hyperpartisanship, is we need  
12 to be open. We need to be able to take in new  
13 information.

14           And we need to be respectful of one  
15 another. We need to also be professional and leave  
16 our biases at home.  
17 We all have biases. And if someone says they don't  
18 have biases, well, I guess I'd have to question  
19 their integrity. But we have to acknowledge that.  
20 And with that -- and it's okay because we have our  
21 biases. That's -- it's based on our families, our  
22 environment, our experiences. But what we need to

1 do is we need to also -- we need to recognize that  
2 that's the first step, and then we also need to be  
3 able to set that aside and be open to what we --  
4 the 14 Commissioners have to say, as well as what  
5 the public has to say.

6           It's amazing, when you actually sit back  
7 and listen and really try to take everything in,  
8 that at some point in time you think that you're  
9 educating someone on whatever the topic may be but,  
10 at the end of the day if you listen, they're  
11 actually educating themselves. That's, in my  
12 opinion, that's what we really need to be as  
13 commissioners, is we really need to be open and not  
14 come with any preset plans or opinions or whatever  
15 we think the end game is going to be. We don't  
16 know what the end game is going to -- well, we know  
17 what the end game is going to be, is redrawing the  
18 district lines. But we need to listen.

19           And that's, as I mentioned earlier, number  
20 one. I do listen. That has been a part of my --  
21 the jobs that I've held, is having to listen, and  
22 having to take input from others. And I actually

1 enjoy that. I actually enjoy listening to  
2 different opinions because I only know what I know.  
3 And I only know what I know based on my  
4 experiences. And listening to others and their  
5 experiences is beneficial, not only to me but to  
6 everyone, and respecting that.

7           And in terms of what I would ensure that  
8 it's not seen as polarized, again, I would be open,  
9 I would hope. I mean, you are bringing 14  
10 strangers together, so there's going to take some  
11 time for everyone to get to know each other and  
12 respect each other. But I would hope, at some  
13 point in time, we will all respect each other, get  
14 along. And then when we do make decisions we're  
15 making decisions as a united front, not as a  
16 Democrat or Republican or a different party, it's  
17 as the Commission, a nonpartisan Commission is how  
18 I would see it. Because the last thing you want to  
19 do is to have some of the Commissioners go against  
20 whatever the ultimate decision is.

21           So granted, is that a Pollyanna approach?

22 Yes, it is a Pollyanna approach. Is that

1 realistic? Maybe it's not realistic but that's  
2 what I'm hoping for. I'm hoping that we can all  
3 get to a point where we can all respect each  
4 other's values, opinions, and decisions, that we  
5 support them all. Is it going to be 100 percent  
6 support? Probably not. But I just hope at the end  
7 of the day, we do.

8           And I'm just going to bring up that we did  
9 recently redraw the district lines for our school  
10 district. Excuse me. And we're made up of five  
11 rural communities, farming communities. And they  
12 brought forward the census data, obviously, and  
13 they brought forward the maps. And I wasn't -- I  
14 didn't -- I wasn't in agreement with the initial  
15 way they had drawn the plans. So we asked them to  
16 go back because some of the areas, rural areas,  
17 weren't being represented as we felt they should  
18 be, so they went back.

19           And during that time I also researched  
20 some Education Code to ensure that we were doing  
21 the right -- we were following the correct process.  
22 And at the end of the day, they came back with

1 other plans that I felt that were more appropriate  
2 and represented our communities better, and the  
3 rest of the board did as well. It's a member of  
4 seven. And at the end of the day, did I completely  
5 agree with how they were drawn? No, I did not. But  
6 at the end of the day, did I support? Yes, because  
7 that's what our responsibility is per the Education  
8 Code, and also what was best for the students.

9           So, again, being able to put your own  
10 values and your own wants aside for the betterment  
11 of everyone is what our role is. So that's how I'm  
12 hoping that we will be able to work together and  
13 not have any biases or conflict at the end. But,  
14 you know, we may have conflict but that's something  
15 that happens in any group setting.

16           MR. DAWSON: Thank-you. Question three:  
17 What is the greatest problem the Commission could  
18 encounter and what actions would you take to avoid  
19 or respond to this problem?

20           MS. FERNANDEZ: It was kind of interesting  
21 because, coming from a law enforcement background,



1 my initial thought was being threatened. So I  
2 actually have two. I hope that's okay.

3           One of them would be threatened. Because  
4 what I've seen, not only from the people I  
5 interview but from communities, and you see it in  
6 the media, and you see it firsthand, is that, as I  
7 mentioned earlier, people are very passionate.  
8 They're very passionate about what they feel, their  
9 culture, their community. And if they feel that  
10 that's threatened, they may also threaten you as a  
11 result of that. And being in law enforcement, I  
12 don't take threats lightly. There is a process for  
13 that. You contact your local law enforcement  
14 agency and ask them to conduct a threat assessment.  
15 I'm hoping it doesn't get to that point. But, you  
16 know, we do need to prepare for that. And we  
17 shouldn't just shrug it off if someone makes a  
18 threatening comment. I think we need to take it  
19 seriously. But, actually -- so that's one of them.

20           And the other thing is conflict, if  
21 there's conflict amongst the Commissioners, the  
22 members. And with that, I addressed that in number

1 two, is hopefully -- I mean, the main thing with  
2 conflict is you have to address it. And many  
3 people, I see it where I work, I'm sure you have  
4 all seen it where you work, is they don't like to  
5 address conflict. But that's the one thing you  
6 need to do right away is address the conflict, try  
7 to bring the parties together. If it's two people,  
8 four people, whatever the case may be, try to  
9 understand where the conflict resides and try to  
10 help them work through it because the last thing  
11 you want is for there to be conflict among the 14  
12 because we are on -- I don't remember the timelines  
13 but I know it's pretty strict timelines. And we  
14 don't have time to get derailed for too long.

15           So in terms of actions I would take, what  
16 actions I would take to respond, is I would work  
17 with those that have conflict. And the conflict  
18 could be with me as well. So if it's with me, as  
19 well, then I need to sit back and I need to do some  
20 self-reflection. And I need to determine, why am I  
21 having such a big issue with whatever the -- either

1 the Commissioner, the other Commissioner, or  
2 whatever the issue is?

3           And then I also need to be a good  
4 listener, which is what I mentioned in the first  
5 one, is I really need to sit back and listen  
6 because, again, I don't know it all. And they will  
7 -- they, obviously, have differing opinions. And  
8 it's not to say that it's a wrong opinion, it just  
9 means it's a different opinion. I need to be able  
10 to take that in, be open to that, and then realize,  
11 at the end of the day, we have a goal. And so  
12 what's the best process to take to get to that  
13 goal? And that is to resolve whatever conflicts we  
14 have internally.

15           I think that's it. I think just  
16 understanding what our mandate is and what our time  
17 frames are and just continue to move towards that  
18 effort and resolve any conflicts that we have.

19           MR. DAWSON: Thank you.

20           Question four: If you are selected you  
21 will be one of 14 members of the Commission which

1 is charged with working together to create maps of  
2 the new districts.

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

10           MS. FERNANDEZ: I think in terms of the  
11 experience, one of the projects that I worked on  
12 when I worked at CalPERS I was on the Investment,  
13 Accounting, and Reconciliation Project Team. I was  
14 the team leader, so I worked directly for the  
15 project managers. I had a project manager that was  
16 on the information technology side, and then one  
17 that was on the business side.

18           And so what this project was as CalPERS,  
19 public employment -- the Public Employees'  
20 Retirement System, they were -- they had never had  
21 a reconciliation system, a system that reconciled  
22 their investments to their accounting, to their

1 custodial bank, which was external, then to their  
2 accounting. So for me, as a CalPERS member, that  
3 was very important to be able to reconcile that  
4 information. So we never had it. And they made a  
5 decision to implement a system. And with that, as  
6 part of the project team, I had to work with our  
7 external stakeholders, which were our custodian  
8 bank.

9           And then we also hired a consultant, a  
10 consultant that was actually going to implement the  
11 system. And, by meaning implement, they  
12 had -- it was a package that we were, you know,  
13 buying from a company but we had to implement it  
14 into our CalPERS infrastructure, which had to go  
15 into our I.T. area, which also had to have access  
16 to Investment Operations, as well as our Fiscal  
17 Services Division which actually did the accounting  
18 piece of it. And, again, this is something new  
19 that we had never -- that had never been  
20 established.

21           So with that, it was challenging because  
22 we -- those were five different groups that we had

1 to work with to try to make this happen. And we  
2 did have tight timelines. We had a year to  
3 implement it with the budget.

4           And in terms of what we did is we -- every  
5 area, the Investment Office, Fiscal Services, the  
6 I.T. as well, their contractors, they all  
7 identified users that would be part of our team.  
8 And so those users for the -- they have their  
9 regular work assignment, plus they also had -- they  
10 were on this project which, as you can imagine, can  
11 be challenging because their main focus was either  
12 investments or it was I.T. area or it was doing the  
13 accounting for the rest of the agency.

14           So with that, in terms of some of the  
15 issues that arose were their dedication to the  
16 project. And so what would happen, as a team  
17 leader, if there were conflicts or there were  
18 issues that needed to be addressed, I would be the  
19 one to address them initially with those at the  
20 lowest level, if possible, which is how I've always  
21 tried to work. And then we also had weekly  
22 meetings that had -- where we met with all of the

1 team members. And then, also, had a timeline. It  
2 was a strict timeline. It was like by week. So --  
3 and at that point, when we would meet we'd come up  
4 -- there would be a list of issues that we had. So  
5 at that point, we would address the issues in terms  
6 of, okay, who's responsible for addressing it?  
7 And, also, listening to what the issues were.

8           And like I said, there were conflicts, so  
9 -- but at the end of the day, it was successful.  
10 It was actually -- at that point, CalPERS, I think,  
11 had six different projects at the same time and we  
12 were the only project that came in on time. And we  
13 were the only project that came in under budget  
14 which, if you've ever worked for the state, coming  
15 in under budget is quite an accomplishment. And at  
16 the end the users did buy into it. And they did  
17 see that it was going to be beneficial for them.  
18 It did make their life a little bit easier.

19           But going through the process it was  
20 painful because change is hard for many people.  
21 And when you're trying to do both jobs, you're  
22 trying to be on the project and, also, your normal

1 work, we had to be sensitive to that as the Project  
2 Management Team, which we, you know, we tried to be  
3 as much as we could but we also had time frames.  
4 So just continually reaching out and ensuring they  
5 had the resources they needed in terms of moving  
6 forward.

7           Then, also, towards the end, ensuring that  
8 the consultant had transferred all of the  
9 information to our staff, be it I.T., Accounting or  
10 the Investment Office, that they were properly  
11 trained and they felt empowered that they were  
12 going to be able to implement this successfully and  
13 they could work through it. It actually ended up  
14 working well.

15           In terms of what lessons I would take from  
16 this group is to remain focused. And to -- we know  
17 what our timeline is, so just continue to maintain  
18 that timeline. And like I said, if there's  
19 conflicts, definitely work through those as soon as  
20 possible. Don't let those drag because the longer  
21 you let them drag and you don't address them the



1 bigger they become. It's easier to solve when  
2 they're not as big.

3           And so that's what I would take. I would  
4 just take the going back and just listening and  
5 appreciating what we're all trying to do,  
6 appreciating that we do have a common goal, and  
7 then just, you know, reminding everyone to sit  
8 back, take a deep breath, and remember this is our  
9 goal and it's nothing personal, it's just this is  
10 what our mandate is.

11           And I think that's it's. I think you just  
12 -- with the Commissioners, with the 14 of us, we  
13 just really need to take time to learn about each  
14 other and understand our positions and respect  
15 that, respect that information but then move  
16 forward with the common goal.

17           MR. DAWSON: Thank you.

18           Question five: A considerable amount of  
19 the Commission's work will involve meeting with  
20 people from all over California who come from very  
21 different backgrounds and a wide variety of  
22 perspectives.

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

9           MS. FERNANDEZ: Okay. First of all, I am  
10 first generation, so not only am I culturally an  
11 American, I'm also culturally Mexican, which I  
12 think is the best of both worlds. But, also, being  
13 in that position, sometimes you also feel like you  
14 don't belong because you're kind of in this middle  
15 ground. You're not to the left. You're not to the  
16 right. You're just kind of in the middle  
17 somewhere.

18           And I feel that, for me, that has been  
19 very helpful to be empathetic to others that have  
20 come to this country and that are -- have different  
21 cultures, different experiences, because it is  
22 important to me. And I feel that because it's

1 important to me, I know it's important to them, so  
2 I do, I respect that. And, actually, I welcome and  
3 I'm open to learning new cultures, new ways, new  
4 experiences. I think it just makes me a better  
5 person. It makes me better informed.

6           Oops. I just kind of lost my train of  
7 thought for a second but I'll get back on my train  
8 of thought.

9           And ensuring -- so -- and not only -- and  
10 I'm just talking about cultural differences. I  
11 mean, we have geographical differences. We -- it's  
12 every type of difference that you could think of.  
13 But at the end of the day, we go back to listening  
14 and appreciating each other's differences.

15           And in terms of, what was it, experiences  
16 you've had? Okay, so the experiences I've had.

17           So I've talked about being a special  
18 agent. And as a Special Agent, also as an Auditor,  
19 you have -- you collect all this information, all  
20 this evidence prior to interviewing your witnesses.  
21 And we call them witnesses and subjects, so -- as a  
22 Special Agent.

1           So there has been numerous times when I  
2 have gone in, I have my information, I have my  
3 evidence, I have my documentation, and I think I  
4 know what the answer is going to be or I think I  
5 know this person is guilty or not guilty, whatever  
6 the case may be. But so many times I've gone into  
7 the interview and they've actually educated me  
8 because I haven't taken into consideration the  
9 human aspect of it, their experiences, what their  
10 mindset was of why they did what they did. Does it  
11 explain it? If it explains it, does it make it  
12 right? Sometimes it does make it right. Sometimes  
13 it doesn't make it right.

14           But at the end of the day, just having the  
15 experience as an agent just leads me to believe, no  
16 matter how much evidence I have, sometimes when you  
17 go into that interview, it can just be kind of  
18 blown out of the window because they're able to  
19 justify it and explain their reasoning for doing a  
20 certain action. And like I said, it may be it may  
21 still be incorrect or misconduct, as we see it, or  
22 it might be justified.

1           And then, also, the other thing, when I  
2 ran for School Board, as I mentioned earlier, it's  
3 five small communities, farming communities, and  
4 when I ran against the incumbent, it was a true  
5 grassroots effort where we actually got the  
6 electoral rolls and we actually went out to every  
7 home and we knocked on their doors. And we -- you  
8 know, for me, it was probably one of the best  
9 experiences, which it's probably one of the hardest  
10 experiences but it was also one of the best  
11 experiences because, you know, in my mind, I  
12 thought, oh, we're all farming communities, we  
13 should all have the same goals, positions,  
14 interests. But, boy, I was so wrong.

15           I actually appreciated getting to know  
16 people from other communities. And you would  
17 think, these are small communities, I should have  
18 already known them. I don't know them. I tend to  
19 go towards the big city where the other communities  
20 are away from the big city.

21           So when I was -- when we were walking the  
22 districts, as we said it, as we would say it, when

1 we were walking the districts, you know, we felt we  
2 were educating them on, you know, this  
3 is -- this is what we need for the district, this  
4 is blah, blah, blah. And at the end of the day,  
5 they ended up educating us in terms of what their  
6 wants were, what their opinions were. And at the  
7 end of the day, we had more in common in terms of  
8 what we wanted for our students and for our  
9 community.

10           So in a sense, even the small communities,  
11 small farming communities where you wouldn't think  
12 there's much diversity, there really is much --  
13 there really is diversity. It can be diversity  
14 just from one street to the next street and it's  
15 just being aware of that and being open to that.  
16 And I feel that the experience I've had, I have had  
17 I my life, has opened me up to the diversity and  
18 being able to be open and appreciate the diverse  
19 individuals that we have in this state.

20           MR. DAWSON: Thank you.

1           We'll now go to Panel questions. Each  
2 Panel member will have 20 minutes to ask his or her  
3 questions. We'll start with the chair.

4           Mr. Belnap?

5           CHAIR BELNAP: Good morning, Ms.  
6 Fernandez.

7           MS. FERNANDEZ: Good morning.

8           CHAIR BELNAP: For a combined total of 14  
9 years, you've worked at either the Inspector  
10 General or with the Department of Corrections in an  
11 investigatory role, how have you exercised  
12 impartiality in these roles?

13           MS. FERNANDEZ: In terms, specifically,  
14 I'll talk about as a Special Agent. As a Special  
15 Agent, our investigation and investigative reports  
16 are unbiased. And so what that means is that we  
17 don't form an opinion. What we do is we collect  
18 the information, we collect our evidence, we  
19 collect -- (clears throat) excuse me -- we collect  
20 our evidence, our documentation. I've already  
21 talked about surveillance or whatever, getting  
22 police reports, so we collect all of our evidence.

1 And then we start interviewing the witnesses.  
2 Obviously, we already have allegations ahead of  
3 time, so that's what we're investigating are the  
4 allegations that have been vetted through our  
5 Central Intake Unit.

6 And with that, we go into our interviews  
7 with the witnesses. And from that, we either  
8 interview more witnesses, or then we go to the  
9 subject. And when we interview the subject,  
10 obviously, we have all the information that we've  
11 collected so far. And at that point, we don't make  
12 our decision that the person is guilty or not  
13 guilty. What we do is we confront them with the  
14 information that we have. We confront them with  
15 the allegation that we have.

16 And that's -- and then from there, you  
17 know, obviously, we have follow-up questions and  
18 whatever else triggers from that. If there more  
19 information that the subjects have brought forward,  
20 then at that point in time, after the interview,  
21 then we go back and we research that information.



1           So what we attempt to do and what I hope  
2 we do is we provide a well-balanced report that has  
3 all the information that we have. And if, like I  
4 mentioned, if the subject brings up additional  
5 information, we also research that and we draft our  
6 investigation report. And as I mentioned earlier,  
7 we did not draw opinions. We provide that  
8 information and report and we submit it to the  
9 hiring authority.

10           And so the hiring authority, at that  
11 point, they are the ones that are the decision  
12 makers in terms of whether or not allegations are  
13 sustained or not sustained. And they also work  
14 with the -- (clear throat) excuse me -- they also  
15 work with a vertical advocate which is an attorney  
16 for our office. And we also work with the  
17 attorneys in our office, the vertical advocates, as  
18 well, and we also work with the Office of Inspector  
19 General. And they also have an attorney,  
20 sometimes, on our cases.

21           And so we ensure that the information that  
22 we have is complete, it is unbiased, but it is what

1 it is. I mean, when I say unbiased, is I didn't  
2 come up with that information. I  
3 didn't -- I wasn't the one that initially -- that  
4 created it. I just gather what was available at  
5 the time.

6 And so that's how I ensure that -- I think  
7 you said unbiased; correct?

8 CHAIR BELNAP: I said impartial but  
9 it's --

10 MS. FERNANDEZ: Impartial. I'm sorry.  
11 Impartial, yes.

12 And for the Office of -- Inspector  
13 General's Office, you asked for that, too; correct?

14 CHAIR BELNAP: It's fine. I think the --

15 MS. FERNANDEZ: oh.

16 CHAIR BELNAP: -- process is similar.

17 What I want you to go into now is if you  
18 could describe a particular experience at either  
19 places, in an investigative role, where you had to  
20 set aside your personal views to conduct an  
21 investigation in a fair and impartial manner?

1 MS. FERNANDEZ: I can't go into specific  
2 details. I'm sure you can appreciate that because  
3 they are investigations. So I'll go more in  
4 generalities if that's okay? Hopefully, that's  
5 fine.

6 CHAIR BELNAP: Yes. Okay.

7 MS. FERNANDEZ: Okay. I think for me, the  
8 ones where it was more challenging, it would be  
9 more challenging for me to set aside my personal  
10 opinions, is more when you get into the Equal  
11 Employment Opportunity area where we have quite a  
12 few investigations that are in that realm, and more  
13 of the sexual harassment side of it. So that's  
14 challenging to interview someone if you have all of  
15 this information and it appears that the subject is  
16 -- has done this, conducted himself  
17 inappropriately.

18 And it is -- it can be difficult to go  
19 into an interview and interview someone, knowing  
20 that they've done this to a female or a male,  
21 either way, but I have been able to do that. I go  
22 in there and I just, okay, so what's -- here's the

1 information you have, and I don't -- and I'm not  
2 accusatory towards them. I just, I want them to  
3 explain their position. I ask them questions.  
4 They give me their responses.

5           And I don't show emotion. I just -- I ask  
6 follow-up questions. So, actually, I don't think I  
7 show emotion. I shouldn't say that for sure but I  
8 don't believe I show emotions or bias in terms of  
9 whether or not I feel they have committed the  
10 misconduct or not. I treat them with respect,  
11 which everyone deserves regardless of what they may  
12 or may not have done. I allow them to provide  
13 whatever information they can. If they have other  
14 witnesses, if they have -- often times, they do  
15 have information to the contrary in terms of what's  
16 been alleged. So, of course, after that, I do go  
17 research that as well. And I may interview other  
18 people, as appropriate, to discount or to show that  
19 a point of -- to validate their position.

20           So I'm thinking that's probably the one  
21 area where it would probably be the most difficult  
22 for me to set aside by biases. But, again, at the

1 end of the day my position is to come in and  
2 present an impartial report, and that's what I do.

3 CHAIR BELNAP: All right. Thank you.

4 So in your discussion today, you talked  
5 about how we all have biases and we need to be  
6 aware of them. And you just talked about one where  
7 you have difficulty --

8 MS. FERNANDEZ: I have biases, not  
9 difficulty.

10 CHAIR BELNAP: Right. A bias against  
11 people who sexually harass. I think most of us  
12 share that view as a bias.

13 What other biases do you feel like you  
14 have? And what have you done or what would you do  
15 to make sure they don't affect the work of the  
16 Commission?

17 MS. FERNANDEZ: Oh, my goodness, that's a  
18 good question, so I'm trying to think of what other  
19 biases. I'm sure I have many. I'm just kind of at  
20 a -- you stumped me right now but I'll get to it.  
21 Let me think. Biases?

1           Probably, I'll give you this, because I  
2 grew up poor, so probably my bias growing up was  
3 that everyone that had money, I mean, they had it  
4 all, they controlled everything, they were -- I  
5 mean, I just had my own opinions of people with  
6 money and the advantages they have. But as I  
7 became educated, I went to school, went to college,  
8 got to know people, more people that were in the  
9 higher socioeconomic arena than me, I realized  
10 that, no, they don't have it made, they have  
11 problems, too, everything's not solved. They have  
12 issues just like us. And there's many, many, many,  
13 many great attributes that we all have.

14           And so I think maybe that was kind of like  
15 an eye-opening thing was, you know, we have to --  
16 it's easy to make preconceived -- oh, my gosh, I  
17 just -- it's easy to -- oh, gosh, I just kind of --  
18 generalities, it's easy to make generalities about  
19 people.

20           And like I mentioned earlier, when I  
21 was -- when I walked the school districts and I got  
22 to know people, then I realized that, yes, we all

1 are different and we do have our biases, and I did  
2 have my bias against those that had money, but at  
3 the end of the day they were unjustified because I  
4 really needed to -- and hopefully that's what I've  
5 learned, is that I really need to get to know  
6 people before I make decisions about whether or not  
7 I'm going to like them or not like them or how I'm  
8 going to classify them.

9 CHAIR BELNAP: All right. Thank you.

10 So where did you grow up? And how did  
11 your upbringing affect the way you view the world?

12 MS. FERNANDEZ: So where I come -- so  
13 where I grew up was in -- I lived in a small  
14 farming community outside of Sacramento,  
15 California. My dad was a farmworker. So, as you  
16 can imagine, I'm one of eight children, number  
17 seven. And to say we were poor is probably being  
18 generous. So we, obviously, did come up in a  
19 disadvantage in terms of income.

20 But, to be honest with you, I was actually  
21 talking to my son the other day and I said, "You  
22 know what? I didn't even realize how poor we were

1 until I went to college. And then I realized how  
2 poor we were because I was blessed." I mean, it is  
3 a small farming community and we do have -- you  
4 know, there is this big disparate between the  
5 farmworkers and then the farmers, obviously, but I  
6 can honestly say I don't remember -- and maybe I  
7 was just blind to it -- but I don't remember there  
8 like being treated differently because of that, so  
9 I think I was blessed where I had a good group of  
10 friends, a good mixture of people. And I think  
11 that's what I've learned, is that just because  
12 we're different doesn't mean we can't get along and  
13 we can't find common ground.

14 Okay, what was your question again?

15 CHAIR BELNAP: Oh, you've answered it.

16 MS. FERNANDEZ: Did I? Okay.

17 CHAIR BELNAP: You currently live in  
18 Clarksburg. Is that the same town you were  
19 referring to where you grew up?

20 MS. FERNANDEZ: I'm sorry. What did --

21 CHAIR BELNAP: Where, what town  
22 specifically, did you grow up in?



1 MS. FERNANDEZ: Oh, so I grew up,  
2 initially, my first few years was in Courtland,  
3 California, which is on the Delta, and then  
4 Clarksburg, which is where I currently live. I did  
5 actually -- I moved away for a while and then I  
6 came back.

7 CHAIR BELNAP: Okay.

8 MS. FERNANDEZ: I like the small town.

9 CHAIR BELNAP: That's leads to my next  
10 question, is have you lived in or worked in other  
11 regions of California??

12 MS. FERNANDEZ: No, I haven't. I mean,  
13 I've worked in other regions in terms of as an  
14 Auditor, I traveled throughout the state to  
15 different school districts. As an Investigator  
16 with -- as a Deputy Inspector General and, also, as  
17 a Special Agent, I traveled to different parts of  
18 California to the different correctional  
19 facilities.

20 But in terms of actually living somewhere  
21 else permanently, it's mainly been in the

1 Sacramento area, Sacramento/Elk Grove/Delta  
2 community. Is that what you're asking?

3 CHAIR BELNAP: Yeah. In your work travels  
4 --

5 MS. FERNANDEZ: Um-hmm.

6 CHAIR BELNAP: -- do you feel like they  
7 were extensive enough and you stayed there long  
8 enough that you got a good sense of the areas you  
9 were in or were they mostly focused, get the  
10 investigation done, and get back home?

11 MS. FERNANDEZ: I would say they were,  
12 probably, mainly focused on, you know, get the job  
13 done. But I will say in all of -- like in most of  
14 my jobs, I actually did get to know the personnel,  
15 the staff that worked there, when I would talk to  
16 them about their processes, especially with  
17 auditing, because you really need to know the  
18 internal controls and the processes. And I do feel  
19 I went out of my way to get to know what their  
20 processes were. And I actually provided  
21 information on how they could improve those

1 internal control processes because I didn't want  
2 anything to be a surprise at the end.

3           But in terms of getting to know them, I  
4 mean, I feel I did. Like I mentioned earlier, I  
5 mean, I could travel throughout the whole state, I  
6 would think, and at the end of the day, we're all  
7 just -- we're all trying to get to the same place,  
8 which means, you know, trying to do our jobs.  
9 We're trying to do our jobs the best we can. We  
10 all have, obviously, families that we have to feed,  
11 even if it is just ourselves, so we do have --  
12 there's so many more commonalities than  
13 differences, I believe. Because at the end of the  
14 day, we do have survival instincts, we do have  
15 values and morals. It could be at different  
16 ranges. But if we try hard enough, we can find  
17 commonalities with most people.

18           CHAIR BELNAP: All right. Thank you. You  
19 answered one of my questions. I was going to ask  
20 you how being a School Board of Trustee has  
21 increased your appreciation for California's

1 diversity, but I feel like you've answered that  
2 today in your testimony.

3           What I want to give you is an opportunity  
4 to discuss any other volunteer work experience that  
5 increased your appreciation for California's  
6 diversity?

7           MS. FERNANDEZ: Any volunteer? Well, the  
8 volunteer that I do is being on the board member,  
9 obviously -- being on the Board, obviously.

10           And then, other than that, my focus has  
11 been on education when I do volunteer. I do  
12 volunteer at the schools. I hope to start doing  
13 that a little bit more often now. But I probably  
14 did that for about a good eight years. And my  
15 favorite was going into kindergarten classes and  
16 reading to children that -- reading and math to  
17 children that did not speak English. So it was,  
18 actually, probably one of the most rewarding  
19 experiences because by the start of the school  
20 year, they don't know English, any English at all,  
21 and by the end of the year, they know English.

1 They're singing, they're talking, everything's  
2 English to them.

3           So for me, it was just like so rewarding  
4 to just see the difference one year can make -- not  
5 even one year, eight months can make, and just  
6 providing the one-on-one attention that people  
7 need, so that's been very rewarding. And like I  
8 said, most of the English learners were  
9 socioeconomically disadvantaged.

10           And then other volunteer, I volunteered as  
11 a soccer coach for -- in Rancho Cordova, so it's an  
12 area that also is not -- is low socioeconomically,  
13 so that was actually kind of fun. It was getting  
14 to know, I think it was six girls, that I knew two  
15 of them from before but I didn't know four of them,  
16 and just their diverse backgrounds in terms of,  
17 again, they're just trying to make -- they're, I  
18 guess they're at the point where, I believe, I was  
19 early on in my childhood, where they're just trying  
20 to make ends meet.

21           So in my -- so my volunteer has mainly  
22 been focused on areas that they need volunteers

1 versus excess of volunteers, and only because I  
2 really do like and enjoy meeting other cultures,  
3 other diversities, other ethnic groups. I'm open  
4 to that and I actually enjoy it. It makes me a  
5 better person.

6 CHAIR BELNAP: All right. Thank you.

7 Madam Secretary, time check?

8 MS. PELLMAN: Yes. Four minutes, four  
9 seconds remaining.

10 CHAIR BELNAP: All right. Thank you.

11 Can you walk us through an investigation  
12 or other analysis you've performed that you believe  
13 demonstrate the strength of your analytical skills?

14 MS. FERNANDEZ: Can it be a special  
15 project, not necessarily an investigation? Would  
16 that work?

17 CHAIR BELNAP: Yes.

18 MS. FERNANDEZ: Okay. Actually, it did  
19 end up to be an investigation.

20 So there was -- our Prison Law Office --  
21 (clear throat) excuse me -- had conducted a review  
22 of High Desert State Prison in Susanville. And

1 they issued this report that had over 70 findings.  
2 And I was -- they tasked me for resolving those 70  
3 findings.

4           So with that is, in terms of my analytic  
5 skills, I had to develop -- I didn't have to, I  
6 developed a spreadsheet. I had to -- actually,  
7 initially what I had to do was review the report.  
8 And then I had to decipher the 70 allegations that  
9 were in there. And so with that, I developed a  
10 spreadsheet that I used to track every allegation.  
11 And with the allegation, I would also identify if  
12 there was a subject that was identified, if there  
13 were any witnesses identified, who the complainant  
14 was, whose responsibility it would be to follow up.

15           And so with that, weekly I worked with --  
16 well, actually, daily I would work with the  
17 institution because they were mainly the ones that  
18 had to conduct inquiry works. And so every inquiry  
19 that they conducted on each different allegation, I  
20 had to -- I actually went there and I reviewed it  
21 to ensure that it was complete, that they had done  
22 a thorough job. And, if needed, we would open up

1 investigations. And with that, I would also follow  
2 the investigations to make sure that they were done  
3 appropriately.

4           And then from there I would track to see  
5 where those -- once the investigations were sent  
6 back to the Hiring Authority to see if discipline  
7 was issued. And then, also with that, I had to  
8 work, like I mentioned, with -- I had to work with  
9 High Desert State Prison, I had to work with my own  
10 management, because this was the first type of this  
11 report that we had received. And then, also, I  
12 worked with our internal investigators or special  
13 agents. And I also worked -- we hired an external  
14 consultant that was independent, so I worked with  
15 them too. And with the external consultant and  
16 myself, we had to come to consensus in terms of  
17 when each allegation was resolved.

18           So at the end of our -- it was a long  
19 process. It took us about nine months, I believe,  
20 eight months. But at the end of the process the  
21 external contractor was satisfied, which meant the



1 prison law office was satisfied. Our agency was  
2 satisfied.

3           So, for me, that kind of exemplifies my, I  
4 believe you said, analytical and being able to  
5 interpret information, and then look at law, also,  
6 and then look at our own operations manuals, our  
7 different -- because some of the alleged misconduct  
8 was not misconduct because if you look at the  
9 policies and procedures, which I had to, too, they  
10 were within policy, so that was part of it too.

11           So, for me, I think that just shows all  
12 the different resources I had to use in order to  
13 resolve these 70 allegations. And at the same  
14 time, I was still doing my other regular  
15 assignment, so I was continuing to process  
16 investigations also.

17           CHAIR BELNAP: All right. Thank you.

18           MS. FERNANDEZ: Thank you.

19           CHAIR BELNAP: I have no further questions  
20 at this time.

21           I'll turn the time over to Mr. Coe.

1           VICE CHAIR COE: Okay. Thank you, Mr.  
2 Chair.

3           Good morning, Ms. Fernandez. Thank you  
4 for taking the time to speak with us today.

5           MS. FERNANDEZ: Thank you.

6           VICE CHAIR COE: I just want to apologize.  
7 I don't know if you guys can hear noise. Somebody  
8 is, apparently, jackhammering concrete outside my  
9 house. I've lived here for over a decade and  
10 that's literally never happened. And, of course,  
11 now that I'm trying to conduct this meeting here,  
12 somebody's jackhammering concrete outside and  
13 making a lot of noise, so hopefully that doesn't  
14 come across to everybody else.

15           Ms. Fernandez, I'd like to start with  
16 asking you about some of your volunteer roles in  
17 describing your application. And most of those  
18 appear to be geared towards working with young  
19 people in some capacity. And I'd like to know what  
20 motivates you to focus your volunteer work on the  
21 youth of your community?

1 MS. FERNANDEZ: Because -- that's an  
2 interesting question because I've actually thought  
3 of that myself too. And it's like, why do I  
4 concentrate so much on the youth?

5 I think because -- and if you'll look on  
6 my application, I've worked for the Department of  
7 Corrections and office of internal -- Office of  
8 Inspector General probably 17-plus years, so I see  
9 what the end effect is in terms of institutions and  
10 inmates and parolees. And I honestly feel that the  
11 children are a key, are a key to have our -- so  
12 that our -- so they don't end up in our  
13 institutions or facilities.

14 And I feel that I've been blessed. I have  
15 the resources that I can help the children and,  
16 maybe, a little bit of a mentor for them, to let  
17 them know, hey, I was a farmworker's daughter as  
18 well. I mean, I was -- English is my second  
19 language. And for me, I feel that they need more  
20 mentors, hopefully that are positive and that will  
21 support their aspirations of either, you know,  
22 continuing on to college or to go into a trade

1 school or whatever the case may be. But when  
2 you're struggling, when you're poor, often times,  
3 education is not your priority, nor should it be,  
4 because you're trying to just put food on the  
5 table.

6           And so for me to concentrate on the youth,  
7 I just, I think that's the key. That's the key to,  
8 hopefully, them making better decisions in the  
9 future. And if they -- and it's actually kind of  
10 neat because I did coach volleyball, and so now  
11 it's kind of fun to see that some of the girls that  
12 I coached are coming back to be coaches as well.  
13 So it's nice to see them give back as well.  
14 That's why I concentrate on the youth.

15           VICE CHAIR COE: Thank you.

16           I'd like to talk about your impartiality  
17 essay for a moment. And in that essay, you  
18 mentioned having changed your position a few times  
19 after listening to the input of others. And I'm  
20 wondering if you could give us a specific example  
21 of a time where you changed your position after  
22 gathering additional input?

1 MS. FERNANDEZ: Probably -- I'm going to  
2 get some (indiscernible). Probably, when I talked  
3 about -- when I talked earlier about the school  
4 district, when we redrew, we recently redrew the  
5 district boundaries, our district doesn't have to  
6 do that because we vote at-large, so you don't have  
7 to have district -- you don't have to redraw your  
8 district boundaries every ten years. And I just, I  
9 actually continued to fight that because there was  
10 a community member that kept asking us to do it,  
11 asking us to do it, and I felt, and the rest of the  
12 board also felt, that we weren't being fair across  
13 the district.

14 And it was recently where somebody really  
15 sat down and explained why they felt it should be  
16 and gave me more insight as to what their positions  
17 were. And at that point, that's when I decided  
18 that, yeah, you know, you're right, we do need to  
19 redraw the boundaries to be more reflective of our  
20 population, our census numbers. And so I guess  
21 that was probably one of the major times when my --

1 when I've changed my decision and my mindset to do  
2 something different that I wasn't set to do.

3 VICE CHAIR COE: Thank you.

4 I'd like to -- it's a nice segue into the  
5 other question I wanted to ask you about your  
6 service on the School Board where they recently  
7 redrew the School Board Trustee districts. And I'd  
8 like you to talk more specifically about what your  
9 role was in that. And were the Trustees drawing  
10 their own boundaries? How was that working?

11 MS. FERNANDEZ: Oh, no. Okay, so once we  
12 made a -- well, let me see. So once we made a  
13 decision and voted, you know, in open forum, that  
14 we agreed to move forward with this, then we  
15 consulted with, oh, goodness, I think it's our  
16 County Office of Education, I can't remember,  
17 excuse me. But they're the ones that, actually,  
18 they took our information, our census information,  
19 as well as our district boundary overall and how  
20 the census split up, and they're the ones that came  
21 forward and they presented, initially, three  
22 different scenarios. They would show what our

1 current district boundaries are and then two other  
2 -- no, three other options. And at that point,  
3 when they initially came in with the three other  
4 options, I was not happy with how they had drawn a  
5 couple of those.

6 So they actually went back and they came  
7 up with a couple of other options. And at the end  
8 of the day, we unanimously voted for the one that I  
9 felt was more reflective of the communities, so  
10 that each community could maintain its own trustee.

11 VICE CHAIR COE: Was community input  
12 gathered and considered during this effort?

13 MS. FERNANDEZ: All of our meetings are  
14 open. And I actually don't remember receiving any  
15 community input. But, again, our meeting agendas  
16 are posted 72 hours prior to the meetings.  
17 Everyone, anyone and everyone, is open to come to  
18 our meetings. And you do have to understand that  
19 it is a rural area. It's, I mean, it's probably  
20 over 50 miles. And each community, probably my  
21 community, maybe has 1,000 residents, I'm not sure.

1 So rarely do we receive -- do we have community  
2 members attend our meetings.

3 VICE CHAIR COE: I see. And to get a  
4 little bit more technical, what data was used for  
5 this process, and was there any use of mapping  
6 softwares?

7 MS. FERNANDEZ: I'm not sure if there were  
8 mapping softwares because, again, we're not the  
9 ones that actually created the boundary lines.

10 In terms of the data that was used, it was  
11 the census data, so this would have been the census  
12 data for 2010 because, obviously, 2020 hadn't been  
13 -- hasn't been done yet. So we used the census  
14 data and, also, obviously, the mapping, the map of  
15 the district in terms of how that population was  
16 distributed amongst the districts.

17 And like I mentioned, there are seven  
18 trustees. So then divided those -- that area into  
19 seven to try to come up -- I think they tried to  
20 make every trustee area, approximately, maybe 2,000  
21 residents, something like that.

22 VICE CHAIR COE: Okay. Thank you.



1           Changing subjects a little bit to your  
2 essay on appreciation for California's diversity.  
3 You said in there, and I think you mentioned  
4 something similar earlier during the interview, but  
5 in the essay you said, "I know how difficult it is  
6 to feel as if you belong." And I'm wondering if  
7 you can expand on that a little bit?

8           MS. FERNANDEZ: What was it, "I know how  
9 difficult it is" --

10          VICE CHAIR COE: "To feel as if you  
11 belong."

12          MS. FERNANDEZ: That was a long time ago.  
13 Let me try to remember. I'm kidding.

14          So I believe what I'm referring to is it's  
15 difficult if you already feel -- like I mentioned  
16 earlier, English is my second language. So if you  
17 already feel that you're different, then it is hard  
18 to feel like you belong. And part of that, too, is  
19 people want to belong. So in getting from -- excuse  
20 me, I probably need water -- in getting from point  
21 A to point B, you probably need another step, you  
22 probably need a point C, so it's important. I

1 think it's important for most people to feel like  
2 they belong.

3           And when you tie this into the -- what  
4 we're going to be tasked with here is not only  
5 feeling that you belong but hearing that you're  
6 being heard and that you're being understood. And  
7 that's probably how it ties into being on the  
8 Commission is I do know that people want to be  
9 heard, and people are unique, and people  
10 culturally, and different religiously and  
11 socioeconomically, they want to be heard, they want  
12 to be represented.

13           And I believe that's what I'm -- what I  
14 was trying to say. I'd have to read the whole  
15 thing to see in the context of, you know, what that  
16 one phrase came out of, but I think that's just  
17 wanting to belong. And I think that's important  
18 with this Commission, is people want to feel that  
19 they were heard, and maybe that will increase their  
20 participation in the future with future elections.

21           VICE CHAIR COE: Okay. Thank you.

1 MS. FERNANDEZ: Did that answer your  
2 question?

3 VICE CHAIR COE: No, it did. And,  
4 actually, you covered a follow-up question that I  
5 was going to ask you afterwards and we already got  
6 that one covered, as well, so thank you.

7 So I want to talk about communities of  
8 interest for a moment. And one of the biggest  
9 tasks that the Commission is going to have to go  
10 through is to identify communities of interest all  
11 across the state. And some of those communities  
12 may be easier to identify than others. They're  
13 more engaged. They're more obvious in one way or  
14 another. And some of them might be harder to find.  
15 They're less engaged or they don't normally want to  
16 be found for a variety of reasons.

17 As a Commissioner, how would you go about  
18 identifying communities of interest, particularly  
19 paying close attention to kind of inadvertently  
20 overlooking some of those harder-to-find  
21 communities?

1 MS. FERNANDEZ: Oh, my goodness, that's a  
2 good question. I'm pretty sure we can't do  
3 grassroots, like I did with the district when I ran  
4 for district, going door to door.

5 But, actually, if you go to some of the --  
6 we were just talking about this recently -- if you  
7 go to some of the churches. You know, churches are  
8 also community areas. There could be different  
9 organizations or different groups. We could try  
10 that as well. I mean, as I mentioned earlier,  
11 having the internet access, I mean, you can Google  
12 everything, anything now, not in the old days when  
13 you had to actually do door to door.

14 But I would -- and like you mentioned,  
15 also, there are some people that just want to be  
16 engaged or don't have the time to be engaged and  
17 you have to respect that as well. You can't impose  
18 yourself too much because then that works opposite  
19 of what you're trying -- what your goal is trying  
20 to be.

21 But I would just try to reach out. If

1 I -- if we know -- oh, also, your law enforcement  
2 agencies, that's a good source in terms of  
3 different areas that may not be as represented or  
4 as engaged. So at that point in time, you can work  
5 with law enforcement or with church or with  
6 different groups. And more than likely, they would  
7 be the pulse and they could tell you, hey, talk to  
8 this person. You know, they're well -- they're  
9 kind of who everyone looks up to. So maybe doing a  
10 little bit more effort of trying to just not go to  
11 the obvious, that's what you mentioned earlier, and  
12 I'm not afraid to do that. I mean, I did that when  
13 I ran for the School Board. I actually went door  
14 to door and actually did door to door, as well as  
15 mail, postal campaign. And now you have the  
16 internet access too. So I would try to engage  
17 something like that.

18           And we actually just recently did  
19 something with the School Board where we're trying  
20 to decide whether or not we're going to move  
21 forward with a bond and -- the bond measure. And  
22 we hired a firm that actually went out and did

1 calls for us, had a questionnaire that they went  
2 through, and just randomly made calls, telephone  
3 calls, both cellular phone, land lines, and also  
4 via the internet. So that's another option that we  
5 could do as well.

6           It's whatever -- and that's a good point,  
7 and we see that in the school, too, is like you  
8 always have the same people that volunteer to do  
9 this or that, give opinions on this, which aren't  
10 the majority. It's just maybe, you know, a handful  
11 of people and they're kind of trying to make the --  
12 trying to make the decisions for all. And, as you  
13 pointed out, that's not appropriate.

14           So, you know, definitely try to engage  
15 more, either telephone, you know, seek out law  
16 enforcement, as well, or some other community  
17 organizations, even sports related. Youth sports,  
18 everybody gets -- not everybody. A lot of people  
19 get their kids into sports, so that's probably  
20 another area you could go to also. But just try to  
21 think outside the box.

1           VICE CHAIR COE: So in that work, you  
2 might encounter some communities that are concerned  
3 about engaging, not necessarily that they're  
4 against it, they might like to but they have  
5 concerns for one reason or another in getting  
6 involved with government bodies or with engaging  
7 and providing their perspectives or their concerns.

8           But since input from as many communities  
9 as possible is important for the Commission to do  
10 its work, how could the Commission make some of  
11 those communities feel more comfortable coming  
12 forward and sharing their perspectives?

13           MS. FERNANDEZ: I think trying to  
14 develop -- like I mentioned earlier, even those  
15 communities, they do have spokespeople. So  
16 try -- my initial instinct would be to try to  
17 develop a rapport with whoever those spokespeople  
18 are. And really try to educate them and explain to  
19 them what this is in terms of how it can help them  
20 in the future.

21           I mean, you see a lot of the commercials  
22 now on the census and how that's going to help with

1 the schools, but it can be the same type of  
2 marketing and information sharing that we could do,  
3 is to just, again, go back, listen, listen to what  
4 the spokespeople have to say, and try to adjust to  
5 that and try to figure out how you can break that  
6 barrier and earn their trust.

7           And that's really what we want to try to  
8 do is earn their trust. And that doesn't mean 14  
9 of us go and maybe just one or two of us go so it's  
10 not so overwhelming to them. So just try to find  
11 out through your other sources, you know, what's  
12 really driving them? What can we bring to the  
13 table that will, hopefully, help them understand  
14 that we really do want them to be engaged, we  
15 really do want to know what they want and what  
16 their, you know, values are, what their goals are?  
17 So that's kind of how I would approach it.

18           VICE CHAIR COE: Thank you.

19           If you were to be appointed to the  
20 role -- the Commission, which aspects of that role  
21 of Commissioner do you think you would enjoy the  
22 most and, conversely, which aspects of the role of



1 Commissioner do you think might cause you to  
2 struggle a little bit?

3 MS. PELLMAN: A quick time check. We have  
4 3 minutes, 50 seconds remaining.

5 VICE CHAIR COE: Thank you.

6 MS. FERNANDEZ: The role of the  
7 Commissioner? I'm sorry. Do I answer that or I  
8 don't answer that?

9 VICE CHAIR COE: No, you can. The  
10 Secretary was just letting us know we have just  
11 under four minutes left before we have to pass on  
12 the time --

13 MS. FERNANDEZ: Oh.

14 VICE CHAIR COE: -- to the other person.

15 So did you hear the question or do you  
16 need me to repeat it?

17 MS. FERNANDEZ: Okay. And so just so I  
18 understand, in terms of the roles of the  
19 Commissioner? You're kind of going in and out, so  
20 I just want to make sure that I did hear you.

1           VICE CHAIR COE: Okay. I'll repeat the  
2 question. Hopefully, I come through clearer this  
3 time.

4           So the question was: If you were to be  
5 appointed, which aspects of the role of  
6 Commissioner do you think you would enjoy the most  
7 and, conversely, which aspects do you think might  
8 cause you to struggle a little bit?

9           MS. FERNANDEZ: The roles of the  
10 Commissioner? Now if I had that in front of me,  
11 that would be great.

12           So I think the analytical side of it, I  
13 think, would probably be my positive side. I'm  
14 very resourceful and very analytically minded.  
15 Gosh, I'm kind of a data nerd, so that part, I  
16 would probably be very comfortable with.

17           In terms of what I wouldn't be comfortable  
18 with, I'm just trying to think right now. I'm  
19 actually not sure, you know, which role I would not  
20 be comfortable with because I think that many of  
21 the roles that the Commissioner has I've had, also,  
22 on the School Board. So I'm trying to think of on

1 the School Board, what have been the most  
2 difficult? I mean, the School Board is different  
3 because we've had to make budget cuts. So,  
4 obviously, those were the most difficult for me to  
5 make because I never like to cut anything in  
6 schools but it was necessary at the time.

7 So I actually don't -- I can't think of  
8 what role I would not be as comfortable with right  
9 now.

10 VICE CHAIR COE: Okay.

11 Mr. Chair, no further questions at this  
12 time.

13 CHAIR BELNAP: Thank you, Mr. Coe.

14 We'll turn the time over to Ms. Dickison.

15 PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Thank you, Mr.  
16 Belnap.

17 Good morning, Ms. Fernandez. Thank you  
18 for meeting with us today.

19 MS. FERNANDEZ: Thank you.

20 PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: So many of my  
21 questions have been asked but in your response to  
22 question two, you may have touched on this already,

1 but you stated that we all have our biases and need  
2 to recognize that and set that aside.

3           So what are your biases and what will you  
4 do to ensure those biases don't affect your  
5 decisions as a Commissioner, should you be  
6 selected?

7           MS. FERNANDEZ: Okay. In terms of the  
8 biases, oh, let's see. I think my -- probably a  
9 bias that I would have, and I mentioned it earlier,  
10 I think, with Mr. Coe is how you normally have the  
11 same people coming to board meetings and giving  
12 opinions. And after about like the third or fourth  
13 time, you kind of become numb to that and you tend  
14 to exclude it, or you could.

15           And so I think with me, I just have to be  
16 very, very cognizant of not dismissing anyone in  
17 terms of what their opinion or what their  
18 conversation and what they want to communicate to  
19 us. And I think that's -- it's probably just not  
20 dismissing what someone has to say because, for  
21 them, it is true and something that they believe.

1           And I just have to continue to remind  
2 myself of that, that it's just like me, I speak  
3 what I feel emotional about, what I value, what's  
4 important to me. And it would be the same with  
5 being a Commissioner, is you have to be open to  
6 that. You have to listen. You have to take them  
7 all equally, everyone's comments equally.

8           PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Thank you.

9           So one of the things the last Commission  
10 noted was there were instances in which they felt  
11 that people were presenting themselves as members  
12 of community or they were speaking on behalf of  
13 members of the community when, actually, they may  
14 have had ulterior motive of political bias.

15           With your background in investigations,  
16 what skill set do you have that you think would  
17 help the Commission in identifying this and how  
18 would you handle these types of things?

19           MS. FERNANDEZ: Okay. In that, we get  
20 that too. I mean, like you said, as a Special  
21 Agent, and also being on the district, is we have -

1 - on the Board is we have members coming up saying,  
2 "Many people feel this way."

3           And so what I've done in the past, and  
4 what I do, also, as an Investigator is, again, I  
5 welcome what their position is, I welcome the  
6 information they have -- (clears throat) excuse me  
7 -- but at the end of the day, it's just one person  
8 giving their opinion, and that's what I try to  
9 remind myself of.

10           And, also, in terms of whatever they are  
11 presenting, be it as a Special Agent or be it on  
12 the School Board, I go back and I research that.  
13 And I do as much investigative-type work as I can  
14 to, one, understand that person better if they are  
15 someone that maybe does have -- like you said,  
16 maybe even politically is -- has a different  
17 political position or whatever the case may be, I  
18 go back and try to learn as much as I can about  
19 that person and maybe what their past practice has  
20 been.

21           And as an Agent, that's (indiscernible) or  
22 a witness in, I went back and validated that

1 information. And, again, at the end of the day if  
2 it's one person coming forward with their  
3 information and, yes, they often -- or not often,  
4 sometimes they do come forward and they try to  
5 appear that they are representing the community.  
6 But, again, unless the community is there with  
7 them, then it's one person, one opinion, and go  
8 back and do as much validation and research as you  
9 can on their positions.

10 PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Thank you.

11 So you're the Trustee of the School Board.  
12 And you talked about running a grassroots campaign  
13 for that.

14 When you were running that campaign, what  
15 did you learn about the communities in your area  
16 and their needs that you may not have already  
17 known?

18 MS. FERNANDEZ: What's interesting, well,  
19 one of them was at the end of the day, we did have  
20 the same goals. We did want our kids to be  
21 educated. We did want our kids to have the best

1 facilities, the best teachers, be equitable. That,  
2 I guess, I assumed.

3           But I think what I learned most of that  
4 was the area I represent is on the north end. And  
5 on the south end is, like I mentioned earlier,  
6 probably 30 miles away, something like that. And  
7 it was actually interesting because we always felt  
8 on the north end -- and on the south end is where  
9 the district office is located. And so on the  
10 north end, we always felt that the south end  
11 schools were getting all of the resources and they  
12 got everything they wanted and, you know, all of  
13 the programs and sports and different types of  
14 classes, and had the better teachers, all of that.  
15 And then when I went to actually walk that area,  
16 they felt that the north area was the one that had  
17 the best school, the best program, the best  
18 services, everything.

19           So I think what I learned is that, because  
20 no one's talking to each other, if that's a good  
21 way to put it, they all -- you're operating in a  
22 silo. You're operating just in your own little



1 area and you're not realizing that you're all  
2 feeling the same way. And I think that's probably  
3 what I learned, was that at the district, we really  
4 didn't do a very good job of communicating with all  
5 of our areas.

6           And one thing that was changed when I got  
7 on the School Board is, before, all of the Board  
8 meetings were held at one end of the district and  
9 then -- so what we did is we started holding the  
10 meetings at the different schools. So now the  
11 district meetings are being rotated to the  
12 different sites and we actually have a few more  
13 community members come. But we also  
14 realized -- or I realized how important  
15 communication is, and listening. I mean, you  
16 really need to hear what they're saying.

17           And just by moving the district meetings  
18 to different communities, that was a way of  
19 communication of not only us communicating out to  
20 the public in our communities but, also, for the  
21 community members to come forward with any concerns  
22 they have, because we always have an open forum, a

1 public comment period, and they can also comment  
2 during the different agenda items.

3           So I think that's probably like the thing  
4 that I found most interesting is that each end felt  
5 like the other end was the golden child and they  
6 felt like the stepchild. So now we do a better job  
7 of communicating, being very more transparent on  
8 our decisions, more vocal in communicating that out  
9 to our community areas.

10           PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Thank you.

11           So you've talked a little bit about the  
12 experiences of when the school district went  
13 through the redistricting process. What did --  
14 what I -- what did you learn during that process  
15 that you think will assist with the work of the  
16 Commission, should you be selected?

17           MS. FERNANDEZ: (Clears throat). Excuse  
18 me.

19           I think what I learned more -- most  
20 through that process was that it is important for  
21 every -- to draw the boundaries so that you do have  
22 areas that are either communities that are

1 represented, that are inclusive and representative  
2 of themselves.

3 I also learned through that process that  
4 it doesn't have to be equally divided in terms of  
5 2,000, 2,000, 2,000, 2,000. It can be drawn  
6 differently based on how -- you know, based on  
7 maybe the identities of certain communities or  
8 whatever the case may be.

9 So I learned those two things, which  
10 before I thought it has to be just equally drawn  
11 within a few -- you know, a couple hundred numbers.  
12 But I learned that it is important to ensure that  
13 each community or area, if possible, can be  
14 represented singly. And then, also, that you can -  
15 - you do have flexibility in how those boundaries  
16 are drawn.

17 PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Thank you.

18 If you're selected as one of the first  
19 eight Commissioners, which are selected randomly,  
20 you would be tasked with selecting the next six.  
21 What would you be looking for in those individuals?

1 MS. FERNANDEZ: Oh, my goodness. Well, I  
2 think what I would look at first is, if I'm, you  
3 know, one of the eight, I would see what the eight  
4 of us are, hopefully have a chance to meet the  
5 eight. I'm hoping I will. And then to see what  
6 our skill sets are and what, maybe, our strengths  
7 are.

8 And then in terms of selecting the next  
9 six, I would like to select six that could bring  
10 something, some other strong skills sets into the  
11 group, if that makes sense, so that collaboratively  
12 we have a strong Commission where we have a  
13 breadth, you know, a breadth of different skills  
14 and knowledge and abilities.

15 Because, you know, having 14 of the same  
16 type of people isn't necessarily good because you  
17 really need to have -- you need to have an array of  
18 the different tasks, because we can't all be  
19 experts in everything because, at certain points in  
20 time, some of us will be leaders, but then we'll  
21 step back and not be leaders because that's not my

1 area of expertise, so somebody else could step up  
2 to that.

3           So that's probably what I would look --  
4 the six that would complement our team, not  
5 necessarily overlap it in terms of what we already  
6 have with our skills and abilities, but that would  
7 complement and just make us a stronger, well  
8 diverse group of Commissioners.

9           PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Thank you.

10           You've talked a couple of times about  
11 people needing to be leaders, and also knowing when  
12 to step back and let someone else --

13           MS. FERNANDEZ: Um-hmm.

14           PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: -- be the leader.  
15 What can --

16           MS. FERNANDEZ: Yes.

17           PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: -- the Commission  
18 do early on to build that team atmosphere where  
19 they know when -- when each person knows when they  
20 need to step out?

21           MS. FERNANDEZ: Can you repeat that just  
22 one more time? I'm sorry. It kind of cut out for

1 a little. I'm sorry, my internet connection is  
2 probably not the best, so I apologize for that.

3 PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: That's okay.

4 What can the Commissioners do early on to  
5 build that team atmosphere in which each of the  
6 Commissioners knows or understands when maybe they  
7 should step back or maybe they should be in the  
8 lead?

9 MS. FERNANDEZ: Okay. So I think as  
10 Commissioners early on, I think we really do need  
11 to get know each other. We need to get to know our  
12 backgrounds. We need to get to know our strengths  
13 and our weaknesses.

14 As I do now on the School Board, I'm just  
15 going to give you an example, is there's seven of  
16 us. And, fiscally, that's really kind of my area,  
17 so everyone kind of looks to me to make sure, do  
18 the numbers look good, is everything good?

19 But then when it comes to the contract  
20 side of it, another Board member, that's his  
21 strength, so I definitely step back at that point  
22 and he's the one that's going to really dive into

1 that to make, you know, make sure that all the  
2 questions are asked and we're going in that  
3 direction appropriately.

4           And then there's another one that's an  
5 expert in the construction side of it. So at that  
6 point in time, we -- the rest of us step back and  
7 let them ask the questions, not that we don't have  
8 questions also, but they definitely speak the lingo  
9 and have more expertise in that area.

10           So that's what I would feel, as the 14  
11 Commissioners, we're all going to have strengths.  
12 But there's also going to be areas where we're not  
13 as strong as in terms of what I would consider an  
14 expert. And at that point in time, we have to  
15 trust each other and we have to have respect for  
16 each other. That is, for example, they're going to  
17 say, okay, Alicia, you take  
18 the -- if it's a fiscal, you know, why don't you  
19 lead that effort. They have to trust in that  
20 person, that they're going to come through and do  
21 their due diligence to ensure that that area is  
22 covered. So at that point in time, I'll step up.

1 Not to say everybody steps back because everybody  
2 still have the opportunity to ask questions, to  
3 look into it.

4           But I think it's just more of getting to  
5 know each other and having the trust and respect  
6 for each other that that is your area of expertise  
7 and, yeah, you know, you can take the lead on that  
8 one. Because we can't all be leaders. One, it's  
9 exhausting. And, two, if you're all leaders, it  
10 can be very hard to move forward.

11           So we just all have to have the same --  
12 not the same minds. We have to have the mindset  
13 that we won't know it all. There's going to be  
14 some areas where just may not be as comfortable as  
15 we would like in terms of whatever we're analyzing  
16 or going into, and it's okay. It's okay because  
17 there's 14 of us and we can support each other.  
18 And we just have different roles at different times  
19 and it's fluid. And that's what we need to  
20 understand, that it's always fluid and it's  
21 changing. It could be changing from one minute to  
22 the next.



1           So my goal would be to -- for us to meet  
2 and get to know each other and get to know our  
3 backgrounds first in terms of what we all bring to  
4 the table and what has been successful in the past  
5 for all of us, what we've learned, and then just,  
6 like I said, just respect each other.

7           PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Thank you very  
8 much.

9           Mr. Belnap, I don't have any further  
10 questions at this point.

11          CHAIR BELNAP: Okay. Thank you.

12          We'll turn the time over to Mr. Dawson.

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

14          Good morning, Ms. Fernandez. Thanks for  
15 being here.

16          MS. FERNANDEZ: Thank you.

17          MR. DAWSON: I was going through your  
18 application. And, you know, as you know, the  
19 supplemental application is quite lengthy and  
20 requires each applicant to list out, you know, all  
21 their relationships to determine whether or not  
22 there's a conflict of interest, and a name jumped

1 out at me. You list as a sibling a Margarita  
2 Fernandez.

3 MS. FERNANDEZ: I do list that as a  
4 sibling.

5 MR. DAWSON: Is this the same Margarita  
6 Fernandez who is an employee of the California  
7 State Auditor's Office?

8 MS. FERNANDEZ: Yes, it is.

9 MR. DAWSON: All right. Thank you.

10 MS. FERNANDEZ: Yes. I shouldn't say it.  
11 Don't tell her I said it.

12 MR. DAWSON: I just, I think this might be  
13 news to the Panel. But just in the interest of,  
14 you know, full transparency and fairness, I wanted  
15 to say on the record that, of course, this is not a  
16 disqualifying relationship. You absolutely have --  
17 should be on the Panel if you're qualified and it  
18 shouldn't influence the decision of the Panel one  
19 way or the other, so thank you for that.

20 MS. FERNANDEZ: Um-hmm.

21 MR. DAWSON: If I could move on to the  
22 question -- you talked about your service on the

1 school district. It's the River Delta Unified  
2 School District?

3 MS. FERNANDEZ: Yes.

4 MR. DAWSON: And that comprises several  
5 different cities and towns; correct?

6 MS. FERNANDEZ: Yes, cities, towns, and  
7 three counties.

8 MR. DAWSON: Three counties?

9 MS. FERNANDEZ: Three different counties.

10 MR. DAWSON: Okay.

11 MS. FERNANDEZ: Yes. Um-hmm.

12 MR. DAWSON: That's a bit unusual; isn't  
13 it?

14 MS. FERNANDEZ: Yes, very unusual.

15 MR. DAWSON: And it's mostly -- is it  
16 mostly rural kids?

17 MS. FERNANDEZ: Yes, it is. They're all  
18 farming communities on the Delta.

19 MR. DAWSON: Do you think, as a Delta  
20 resident --

21 MS. FERNANDEZ: Um-hmm.

1 MR. DAWSON: -- the Delta is, obviously, a  
2 very important part of California, but do you think  
3 it tends to be overlooked by the coastal  
4 communities and Sacramento?

5 MS. FERNANDEZ: Oh. Tend to be  
6 overlooked? I would say it may be overlooked just  
7 because of the pure numbers of it. I mean, when  
8 you're talking about there's 2,000 students in our  
9 district versus Sacramento City Unified has, I  
10 can't remember how many children they have but they  
11 have, probably, over 20,000. Elk Grove has over  
12 40,000, I believe, something like that.

13 And to be honest with you, in terms of  
14 politics, the school district is probably as far as  
15 I've gotten. I haven't really gotten into the --  
16 outside of my community because it's challenged.  
17 It's kept me busy enough just trying to ensure that  
18 our kids are educated and it's equitable amongst  
19 all of our students.

20 But I can see where it could be overlooked  
21 because it is, numbers-wise, and that's what  
22 appears to dictate is numbers, numbers-wise, we're

1 not that many. But collectively, if you look up  
2 and down the state with different farmers,  
3 collectively, we are. So I feel in that sense they  
4 are represented on the farming side of it because  
5 they do collaborate statewide.

6 MR. DAWSON: Thank you.

7 So the three counties are Sacramento,  
8 Yolo, and Solano; is that right?

9 MS. FERNANDEZ: Yes.

10 MR. DAWSON: So I don't know if you looked  
11 at the composition of the 2010 Commission, but the  
12 farthest north that any Commissioner represented --  
13 county represented was Yolo.

14 Assuming you were selected for the 2020  
15 and, again, Yolo County was the farthest north,  
16 would you be looking to fill representation from a  
17 farther north county than Yolo?

18 MS. FERNANDEZ: Oh, would I -- can you  
19 like reword that? Because --

20 MR. DAWSON: Well, so Ms. Dickison asked  
21 you about if you were on the first eight and

1 looking for representation that you would find for  
2 the next six --

3 MS. FERNANDEZ: Uh-huh.

4 MR. DAWSON: -- would the geographic  
5 diversity of representing the northern part of  
6 California be part of that consideration?

7 MS. FERNANDEZ: Oh, like if -- for the  
8 next six, I'd be looking for that? I guess I'm not  
9 understanding your question.

10 If Yolo County, if I'm going to be the  
11 Yolo County and, theoretically, I'm representing  
12 the rest of the northern state; is that correct?

13 MR. DAWSON: Well, my question was just  
14 more general about the importance of representing  
15 all of California. And is it sufficient that  
16 someone from Yolo County represent all of Northern  
17 California?

18 MS. FERNANDEZ: If that's going to be my  
19 role, and at that point I better start doing some  
20 traveling because, in my opinion, it would be  
21 important for me to go visit those communities that  
22 are north of me. I have gone to some of them.

1 Unfortunately, it's been where prisons are located.  
2 But I would make more of an effort to make sure  
3 that I either went out to visit more of the  
4 northern communities, or even online or, you know,  
5 whatever I could do to try to find out what their  
6 wants and desires and goals are. Because if I'm  
7 going to represent the north, then I've got to make  
8 sure that I talk to and get as much information as  
9 I can, so I can be educated in that area.

10 MR. DAWSON: All right.

11 MS. FERNANDEZ: Because I'm not going to  
12 just talk about me. I'm not going to just talk  
13 about my community. It needs to be all.

14 MR. DAWSON: All right. Thank you.

15 Mr. Chair, I have no further questions, if  
16 the Panel has any further questions?

17 CHAIR BELNAP: Mr. Coe, do you have any  
18 follow-up questions?

19 VICE CHAIR COE: No follow-up questions.

20 CHAIR BELNAP: Ms. Dickison?

21 PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: I don't have any  
22 follow-up questions.

1 CHAIR BELNAP: I don't have any follow-up  
2 questions either.

3 And I want to affirm something that our  
4 Legal Counsel said. We've received no  
5 communication from Margarita or anybody about your  
6 application. And that was the first time I ever  
7 heard of that. So we've evaluated your application  
8 and we will evaluate your interview completely free  
9 of any communication from your sister or anyone  
10 about that. So that is the first time we heard of  
11 it.

12 Thank you.

13 MR. DAWSON: Madam Secretary, how much  
14 time is remaining?

15 MS. PELLMAN: Yes. Two minutes, five  
16 seconds remaining.

17 MR. DAWSON: All right. Thank you.

18 Ms. Fernandez, with the time remaining,  
19 I'd like to offer you the opportunity to make a  
20 closing statement to the Panel, if you wish?

21 MS. FERNANDEZ: I'm sorry. To what?



1 MR. DAWSON: Oh. If you would like to  
2 make a closing statement or --

3 MS. FERNANDEZ: Oh.

4 MR. DAWSON: -- remarks to the Panel?

5 MS. FERNANDEZ: Okay. I just want to make  
6 one comment because you brought up Margarita. She  
7 did not even know I applied. So, I mean, this is  
8 something that I've kind of just kept to myself.  
9 Really, it's just a handful of people that know  
10 that I'm applying for this, the three people that I  
11 asked for letters of reference, and my immediate  
12 family, that's pretty much it. So I just want to -  
13 - when I do things, I kind of do them solo in terms  
14 of it's something for me personally. The less  
15 people that know, I think for me, is the better, so  
16 I just wanted to throw that out there.

17 Also, I just want to thank you for this  
18 opportunity. I know these are challenging times  
19 for all of us. And I appreciate you continuing to  
20 hold the interviews and move forward with this  
21 process. I realize that we are under tight time  
22 frames and you need to get through this process.

1 But I appreciate allowing this process to go  
2 through and continue. And I understand that it's  
3 such a difficult job for you.

4 And, hopefully, what I've presented today,  
5 as well as in my application, has shown you that I  
6 would make -- I would be a good addition to the  
7 Commission.

8 CHAIR BELNAP: Okay. Thank you. I  
9 appreciate you being with us this morning.

10 We're going to go into recess now and be  
11 back at 10:44 a.m.

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10:44

CHAIR BELNAP: All right, the time being 10:44 a.m., we're going to call this meeting out of recess.

I want to welcome Sonia Melara to her interview. And we'll turn the time over to Mr. Dawson for the standard five questions.

MR. DAWSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

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

MS. MELARA: Yes.

MR. DAWSON: First question: What skills and attributes should all Commissioners possess?

1 What skills or competencies should the Commission  
2 possess collectively? Of the skills, attributes,  
3 and competencies that each Commissioner should  
4 possess, which do you possess? In summary, how  
5 will you contribute to the success of the  
6 Commission?

7 MS. MELARA: Well, I think one of the  
8 major attributes that anyone should have while  
9 being on this Commission is the ability to listen,  
10 to listen and to know how to make decisions, both  
11 individually and collectively. And by that I mean  
12 that you need to bring in all of the information  
13 that is presented to you and weigh that with and  
14 against any input from the public.

15 But the most important part, obviously, is  
16 to be able to work together because everyone brings  
17 different expertise, different ways of  
18 communication, and also in different ways to  
19 evaluate how things should proceed. And, for me,  
20 it is always an issue of making sure that we're all  
21 on the same plate, if you must, to make sure that,  
22 when making those decisions, we're making them on

1 sound -- based on sound information and on  
2 information that is going to be for the good of the  
3 majority of the public.

4 MR. DAWSON: Question two: Work on the  
5 Commission requires members of different political  
6 backgrounds to work together. Since the 2010  
7 Commission was selected and formed, the American  
8 political conversation has become increasingly  
9 polarized, whether in the press, on social media,  
10 and even in our own families.

11 What characteristics do you possess and  
12 what characteristics should your fellow  
13 Commissioners possess that will protect against  
14 hyperpartisanship? What will you do to ensure that  
15 the work of the Commission is not seen as polarized  
16 or hyperpartisan and avoid perceptions of political  
17 bias and conflict?

18 MS. MELARA: Well, you know, most of all I  
19 think part of why things have gotten so heated up  
20 in the last few years is because people are not  
21 necessarily listening to each other.

1           I am -- you know, I happen to be of one  
2 party affiliation but that doesn't mean that I  
3 don't speak or want to hear from the other people  
4 who have other different ideas than I do  
5 politically.

6           I teach. And when I teach -- in fact, I'm  
7 teaching a policy class right now. And when I  
8 teach, one of the things I ask my students is to be  
9 able to review what is being said in favor or  
10 against specific policies and to ensure that when  
11 we pass policies, that we're able to ensure that  
12 there are no unintended consequences for any  
13 specific parts of the population.

14           So I am, I think, in San Francisco, I'm  
15 considered a moderate. But, you know, if you know  
16 the politics in San Francisco, you would know that  
17 being a moderate is still being rather progressive  
18 but not necessarily to the extent of excluding  
19 others in the political process. And I agree, I  
20 believe in sitting and having a very healthy  
21 conversation with people who disagree with my  
22 points of view.

1           So, I mean, you know, being able to be on  
2 the Commission and being able to work together is  
3 the most important part. And so you need to be  
4 able to listen to each other.

5           MR. DAWSON: Thank you.

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

10          MS. MELARA: Well, coming -- I think the  
11 biggest problem is the politics, is making -- you  
12 know, is how do you make sure that people work  
13 together based in -- and base their decisions on  
14 the sound information that is being presented, both  
15 by staff, by the experts, instead of listening to  
16 their elected officials. Because, you know,  
17 obviously, politics have, you know, have a  
18 different twist to whatever this Commission wants  
19 to achieve, often times. And so what you need to do  
20 is making sure that when you're working together as  
21 a Commission that you speak as one voice and every

1 decision is based on sound and factual information,  
2 not necessarily on somebody's political needs.

3 MR. DAWSON: Question four: If you are  
4 selected you will be one of 14 members of the  
5 Commission which is charged with working together  
6 to create maps of the new districts.

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

14 MS. MELARA: Well, I think a major  
15 conflict that I recently worked on from -- for 2014  
16 to 2018, I served on the San Francisco Police  
17 Commission where I was an active member of  
18 implementing policies that were based on  
19 recommendations from the Department of Justice.  
20 And some of those policies were not necessarily  
21 things that the public -- you know, again, I go  
22 back to my own experience here in the city where



1 you have polarizing opinions about how to implement  
2 a policy.

3           And one of the big ones was the use of  
4 body cameras for police officers. And the fact  
5 that these folks, they -- you know, there were  
6 people who were for and against it. And those that  
7 were for were more in terms of ensuring the police  
8 officers were watched every single minute and when  
9 they were going to use the camera, et cetera. And  
10 those that were against it, obviously, they didn't  
11 think that police officers should have cameras and  
12 we should trust them.

13           So the question was, you know, how do we  
14 bring all of this, all of these different pieces  
15 and opinions, and put them into a policy that made  
16 sense for everyone, that was a safety for the  
17 public, safe for the police officers, and ensuring  
18 that what we were implementing was something that  
19 we're going to be looking at and examining every --  
20 as much as we could to ensure that it was moving  
21 forward in a direction that it was intended.

1           So it was very contentious times. Every  
2 single policy we tried to implement, every policy  
3 that we tried to implement in regards to this, to  
4 the recommendations by the Department of Justice,  
5 were policies that were not necessarily very easy  
6 to create because people have very emotional issues  
7 related to the police.

8           So it is -- you know, I believe that that  
9 probably - you know, I put it in my writing when I  
10 sent it to you because it was a time when, I mean,  
11 I was used to going to Commission meetings every  
12 week, let's say, for two hours, three times a week.  
13 And that whole dialogue turned into three to five  
14 hours every single week, if not twice a week. And  
15 so it was contentious. And you had to sit there  
16 and really listen, really listen to those emotions  
17 that were coming through so that you didn't think,  
18 well, this person, you know, is just crazy. No,  
19 you can't do that. You need to figure out where  
20 people are coming from in order to understand what  
21 they -- how they want to make sure things,  
22 policies, apply to them.

1 MR. DAWSON: Thank you.

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

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

15 MS. MELARA: Well, I think that just about  
16 every job I've had -- and because living in San  
17 Francisco, you can't, you know, you can't walk out  
18 of your house without seeing people who don't look  
19 like you or don't live like you. So I have -- you  
20 know, in the years I've been involved, both  
21 civically and in my teaching experience, all of it,  
22 you know, I believe that diversity is what makes us

1 strong. And that diversity means anything that  
2 makes a person different. It has nothing to do  
3 with color. Well, it has something to do with  
4 color, language, and other factors. But, in fact,  
5 culture is very individual.

6 I mean, I cannot think that two people are  
7 alike. Every person has their own culture. So  
8 while I may make and every -- all of us might make  
9 generalizations about certain populations, the  
10 reality is, is every individual is different. And  
11 we need to ensure that we treat every individual  
12 with that -- with equity and that respect that  
13 every person requires, regardless of the  
14 differences they bring to the table.

15 MR. DAWSON: Thank you.

16 We will now go to Panel questions. Each  
17 Panel member will have 20 minutes to ask his or her  
18 questions. And we'll start with the Chair.

19 Mr. Belnap?

20 CHAIR BELNAP: Good morning, Ms. Melara.  
21 Good to have you with us.

22 MS. MELARA: Thank you.

1 CHAIR BELNAP: For over 16 years, you have  
2 been Executive Director of Rally Family Visitation  
3 Services.

4 MS. MELARA: Right.

5 CHAIR BELNAP: Can you summarize what that  
6 organization does?

7 MS. MELARA: We are a nonprofit  
8 organization -- actually, we're within a hospital.  
9 Saint Francis Memorial Hospital adopted this  
10 program, you know, 25 years ago. And it is  
11 specifically a program that provides supervised  
12 visitation services to families referred by the  
13 Family Courts in the Bay Area. And these are cases  
14 wherein 80 to 90 percent of the cases, there has  
15 been domestic violence.

16 And so these are parents who need to visit  
17 -- the non-custodial parent needs to visit with the  
18 child. But our role is to stay in a very  
19 objective, neutral way, just to report to the court  
20 what happens during those visits. And we make no  
21 assessments and no recommendations to the court in  
22 order for the court to make its own judgment.

1 CHAIR BELNAP: All right. Thank you.

2 In your application you state that your  
3 organization has developed a reputation for  
4 impartial delivery of service. How has your  
5 organization developed that reputation?

6 MS. MELARA: Well, we're one of the  
7 oldest, if not the oldest in California. And part  
8 -- and we're actually the -- we get a grant from  
9 the Judicial Council of California. We're -- and  
10 we're been getting it since 1998. And we are  
11 always recommended for new people who want to come  
12 who want to be trained in the field to be -- to  
13 call us and be able to learn from us how to conduct  
14 these services because it is not an easy thing to  
15 do when it comes to the safety of those people  
16 involved, as well as being neutral and impartial in  
17 providing the services so that, you know, we don't  
18 take sides with the non-custodial or the custodial  
19 parent. They wish that we would. They get angry  
20 at us, actually, for not doing it. But the fact is  
21 that we have very, very clear standards, very clear  
22 guidelines for our services. And they have been

1 used to develop the standards of practice in  
2 California, which are now -- it's the 5.20  
3 Standards under the Family Code.

4 CHAIR BELNAP: All right. Thank you.  
5 You have a master's degree in social work.

6 MS. MELARA: Right.

7 CHAIR BELNAP: And you teach social work  
8 courses at a university level.

9 So what I'd like you to answer is how is  
10 the discipline of social work relevant to the work  
11 of the Commission?

12 MS. MELARA: Well, very much so. I think  
13 that ethical standards, being compassionate, being  
14 able to follow a code of ethics is very much in  
15 line with what this Commission needs to do. You  
16 know, you can't be -- you cannot work on a  
17 Commission or any role there. You need to deal  
18 with the public without having compassion for those  
19 who cannot be heard.

20 And, you know, again, I said it in my  
21 writing, that often times the people that come to  
22 speak before commissions and boards are those

1 people who have the time and have the luxury to do  
2 that. The average person doesn't have that.

3 And so whenever you are thinking of making  
4 decisions, you need to think about who is not in  
5 the room.

6 It is extremely important, from my  
7 perspective as a Social Worker, to ensure that  
8 those that are voices that are not heard are heard  
9 in some way.

10 So it is -- and being ethical, also, is  
11 extremely important. And ethical, for me, means  
12 taking everybody's ideas and input into  
13 consideration in order to ensure that I make a  
14 sound decision. I cannot, you know, say, well,  
15 these people, it's not like they're saying the  
16 right thing but, you know, I can ignore these.

17 So it is more -- it is an important thing  
18 for me to live every day as an ethical person and a  
19 compassionate person. So that's part of my  
20 training, although my training, by the way is  
21 predominantly in a macro practice. I've done more  
22 administration in planning than I have on a one-to-



1 one basis because I've always wanted to make  
2 changes in the world, so that's my role.

3 CHAIR BELNAP: All right. Thank you.

4 MS. MELARA: Um-hmm.

5 CHAIR BELNAP: How were you selected to be  
6 on the 2012 Redistricting Task Force in San  
7 Francisco?

8 MS. MELARA: How was I selected? Well,  
9 Mayor Lee, who was, for years, a good friend, and  
10 also, he and I met in the community, doing work,  
11 doing community work. He is a lawyer at a  
12 nonprofit legal organization. And I, doing a  
13 variety of things, always kept, you know, kept on  
14 asking me if I could do things.

15 And then when he became mayor, he asked,  
16 you know, whether I would be willing to serve on  
17 the commission. And, of course, I had never served  
18 on a commission like this. Prior to that, I had  
19 served on the Parking and Traffic Commission, on  
20 Immigrant Rights Commission. And so that's -- he --  
21 -- oh, I think at that time, I was also serving on  
22 the Health Commission for the city. And so he,

1 basically, went around and asked different people.  
2 I was one of those he thought that would be -- I  
3 guess would have the skills to sit in such a Task  
4 Force.

5           And, you know, I think only one or two  
6 people from the commission -- from the Task Force  
7 were -- had served on a previous task force. So,  
8 you know, with their skills and their information  
9 they knew from prior experience, we were able to  
10 work really well together and move forward. We had  
11 very little, if any, I don't remember any,  
12 actually, disagreement, major disagreements. We,  
13 you know, we might have worked, well, why don't we  
14 put this, you know, this district or this, you  
15 know, this neighborhood closer to this or that  
16 because of how they feel about their neighborhood.

17           But other than that, it was really -- I  
18 think it was a pleasure serving and being --  
19 although it was excruciating while we were going  
20 through it because it was a lot of meetings, too,  
21 you know? It wasn't easy. And so I thoroughly  
22 enjoyed it.

1 CHAIR BELNAP: And how many people were on  
2 the Task Force?

3 MS. MELARA: Seven.

4 CHAIR BELNAP: Seven. And roughly  
5 speaking, you don't need to remember the exact  
6 number, but how many public meetings did you have?

7 MS. MELARA: We had at least 14 public  
8 meetings, and 14 because we have 7 districts. So  
9 we met in every district twice. And then we also  
10 met at city hall for several meetings and I would  
11 say at least ten meetings, just to give people from  
12 throughout the city the opportunity to come to  
13 another meeting again, and also to debate on the  
14 shape of our maps.

15 CHAIR BELNAP: All right. Thank you.  
16 What lessons did you take away from this  
17 experience? And what lessons, it could be the  
18 same, would benefit your time on the Commission if  
19 you were selected?

20 MS. MELARA: Well, you know, one of the  
21 things that was really funny I thought was that  
22 people get so attached to certain icons in their

1 community, certain places in their community, that,  
2 you know, you can talk to them about maps, and you  
3 can talk to them about populations spreads, and how  
4 the law says we are supposed to finalize a map but,  
5 you know, you would have people coming to the  
6 meeting and saying, "You know what, now my voter  
7 line is going to be on this side of the street, and  
8 my church is across the street," or, you know, "my  
9 -- the soccer field is on the -- in the other  
10 district." And I'm going, wait a minute, you're  
11 still -- you can still go to the soccer field.

12           So it was more -- you know, it was less  
13 about politics, I guess, in San Francisco and more  
14 attachment to their neighborhood, who was living in  
15 their neighborhood, who was -- who they felt close  
16 to. And so in some cases, it was, you know, we  
17 went along with certain things as long as it did  
18 not affect, drastically, the population standards  
19 that we were supposed to follow.

20           CHAIR BELNAP: Thank you.

21           So still staying on the Redistricting Task  
22 Force --

1 MS. MELARA: Yeah.

2 CHAIR BELNAP: -- subject, do you feel  
3 like there was a time in your service on that Task  
4 Force where you had to set aside your personal  
5 beliefs to come to an agreement about where the  
6 district lines should be drawn?

7 MS. MELARA: Absolutely. Absolutely.  
8 I -- you know, when I'm talking about these funny  
9 things happening, you know, those were the ones  
10 where, you know, I said in my mind, my god, you  
11 know, my god, lady, you can still go to church at  
12 the same -- you know, across the street.

13 But, you know, in some cases, for  
14 instance, we found one of the major pieces where we  
15 -- I, you know, I went along with it but it didn't  
16 make sense to me, was that there was a voter line  
17 where the Japanese community works better with the  
18 African American community in one district. And  
19 then -- but the line was moving towards Pacific  
20 Heights, I think it's Pacific Heights, and so  
21 members of the Japanese community came and said,  
22 "We would rather be in this particular district."

1 And so -- and that meant when it comes to a  
2 district, obviously, there are the people that get  
3 elected in that district, the people who they can  
4 work with better in that district.

5           And Presidio Heights -- it's not Pacific  
6 Heights -- Presidio Heights happens to be more of a  
7 wealthy neighborhood and an upper-class  
8 neighborhood. And so they didn't feel -- they  
9 wanted to move a little bit further to the other  
10 side. So we had to make some adjustments in the  
11 total map to be able to accommodate them. But the  
12 fact was that we still came back with a map that  
13 had the right population.

14           And to me, it's like, yeah, you know, I'll  
15 put away -- I'll put aside my own personal thinking  
16 as long as we follow the rules. So that, yes, you  
17 know, I can.

18           CHAIR BELNAP: All right. Thank you.

19           Madam Secretary, time check?

20           MS. PELLMAN: Yes. Seven minutes, thirty  
21 seconds remaining.

22           CHAIR BELNAP: All right. Thank you.

1           How did you come to serve on the San  
2 Francisco Police Commission?

3           MS. MELARA: That was another -- another  
4 Mayor Lee appointment. Excuse me. He called me in  
5 one day. I had never expressed any interest in  
6 serving on the Police Commission. And he called me  
7 in and he, basically, asked me, "How would you feel  
8 sitting on the Police Commission?" And he says,  
9 "The two reasons that I think you should be on it,"  
10 he says, "you're not a lawyer, and you are a  
11 community person, and you're a Social Worker."

12           But at the same time, which I don't think  
13 is in my application, I had served in the military  
14 for four years, the Reserves, the Naval Reserve,  
15 and so I had an understanding of how police  
16 departments operate in terms of the hierarchy of  
17 police departments and how, basically, they operate  
18 in general. So I was -- I had respect for that  
19 but, at the same time, I had the skills to be a  
20 Social Worker looking at it from a very macro  
21 practice level in my way of being able to make  
22 decisions on the Commission.

1           And, obviously, he had already seen me  
2 work on the Health Commission, the Immigrant Rights  
3 Commission, and, of course, on the Task Force by  
4 that time. And so, you know, he wanted someone who  
5 didn't necessarily get into arguments all the time  
6 with everybody. And then this Commission, being  
7 that he knew was going to be very contentious, that  
8 I could handle it.

9           So I -- that's how I -- it was, you know,  
10 it was something that I didn't ask for but, once I  
11 went there, I was able to work with everyone.

12           CHAIR BELNAP: All right. Thank you.

13           What was the time frame for your service  
14 in the Naval Reserves?

15           MS. MELARA: Oh, god, now I -- you know,  
16 you're asking that, you're asking my age. I think  
17 I did it between '74 and '78, something -- sometime  
18 around there. I'd have to look at my certificate.

19           CHAIR BELNAP: That's okay. It was in the  
20 '70s? Okay.

21           MS. MELARA: Yes, it was in the '70s.



1 CHAIR BELNAP: All right. Thank you. I  
2 don't have any further questions at this time.

3 I'm going to turn the time over to Mr.  
4 Coe.

5 VICE CHAIR COE: Thank you, Mr. Chair.  
6 Good morning to you, Ms. Melara. Thank  
7 you for taking the time to speak with us today.

8 MS. MELARA: Sure.

9 VICE CHAIR COE: In your application, you  
10 describe your involvement with several  
11 organizations, such as Hispanics Organized for  
12 Political Equity, United Democrat Club, La Casa de  
13 las Madres, Coastal Senior Services, among others.  
14 That's a lot of -- well, it's just a sample of  
15 those.

16 But if you could briefly describe the  
17 roles that you've had with these organizations and  
18 what motivated you to work for them or volunteer  
19 with them?

20 MS. MELARA: Okay. I'm going to take the  
21 women's organizations as a whole because I've been  
22 involved in women's issues since my 20s, actually,

1 late teens, early 20s. I'm one of the founders of  
2 La Casa de las Madres in San Francisco, which is  
3 the shelter for battered women in San Francisco.  
4 It was the first one we had started in California,  
5 second in the country. And that was -- we started  
6 that place in 1976.

7           So with La Casa, I have had a long history  
8 of being involved with them. I was a volunteer  
9 most of the time at the beginning. And over time,  
10 I've gone back and forth and, basically, have only  
11 been a supporter of the organization. So it's  
12 mostly money, giving them money, or being able to  
13 advocate for something that they are working on.

14           The overtime, obviously, as I get older,  
15 I'm also more involved with seniors, senior issues.  
16 It happened to be that last year, I was asked to be  
17 on the Board of the Metta Fund. The Metta Fund is  
18 a foundation in San Francisco that has been  
19 providing grants over the years to health issues in  
20 San Francisco. But in -- last year, they began to  
21 look at how they shifted their focus onto seniors.  
22 And so they've begun to look at senior isolation,

1 senior nutrition, and all of those issues that are  
2 affecting seniors in our society.

3           So when I -- they asked me to join, I had  
4 just left the Board of On Lok, which is a senior  
5 organization in the city.

6           I just happened to like being on good  
7 boards, on large boards. I'm not on a  
8 board right now, except for the Metta Fund. And so  
9 it is -- you know, and now I'm looking at how  
10 women's issues, also, are affected in the elderly  
11 population.

12           So, yeah, that's how I became involved.  
13 It's something that it is part of, I think, part of  
14 my training as a Social Worker, but mostly because  
15 I like to do good stuff in the community.

16           VICE CHAIR COE: Okay. Thank you.

17           If I could talk a little bit more, I know  
18 Mr. Belnap was talking about your time on the San  
19 Francisco Redistricting Task Force, I'd like to ask  
20 a little bit more about some of the technical  
21 information?

1           Was it the census data that was used as  
2 part of that effort?

3           MS. MELARA: Correct.

4           VICE CHAIR COE: And did you -- was it at  
5 all part of your role to do any data analysis  
6 involving that census data?

7           MS. MELARA: It was a collective. It's  
8 collective. It was collective work. So, yes,  
9 individually, we had to come to the Commission  
10 prepared with our own information based on the  
11 information that was provided by the staff -- it  
12 was consultants. We had consultants at the time  
13 who were hired specifically to do this. And they  
14 would provide us with all the technical  
15 information. We would decipher it and then come to  
16 the Commission to discuss.

17           VICE CHAIR COE: Did the consultant work  
18 also include mapping software or did you personally  
19 every use any of the mapping softwares in that?

20           MS. MELARA: I didn't. The consultants  
21 did. And they did all of the presentations.

22           VICE CHAIR COE: I see. Okay.

1 MS. MELARA: Yes.

2 VICE CHAIR COE: And so it was more of  
3 they provided you with a final product and you,  
4 members of the Task Force, would kind of digest the  
5 results of that?

6 MS. MELARA: Correct. Um-hmm.

7 VICE CHAIR COE: And were you -- were  
8 members of the Task Force providing any feedback in  
9 terms of if you wanted to move a line or something  
10 like that, was that a process you were involved in,  
11 or did they make all of the proposals for you?

12 MS. MELARA: They made proposals but we  
13 were the ones who accepted those proposals. So we  
14 were -- we came up -- came back with potential  
15 ideas as to how to move, you know, the lines to  
16 make sure that we were implementing what we thought  
17 was good for the community.

18 VICE CHAIR COE: Okay. Thank you.

19 In your role -- on the Redistricting Task  
20 Force, and also on the San Francisco Police  
21 Commission, you mention in your impartiality essay  
22 both those roles involving public hearings to

1 gather community input. And then you had to mix  
2 that kind of softer data, the public testimony,  
3 with the harder data, like demographic data or laws  
4 and regulations, in order to make a sound,  
5 impartiality decision.

6 How did you go about mixing these two very  
7 different types of information in order to make  
8 sound decisions in the best interest of the people  
9 you were representing?

10 MS. MELARA: Well, in some cases, it was  
11 easy, some cases, it was very tough, okay, because  
12 again, you know, you get into this little minutia  
13 of I want my park in my district. And so the  
14 question is: Can you give people what they want if  
15 we meet the standards of the law? So that is the  
16 question. And if the other district didn't mind  
17 it, didn't think it was such a great deal, you  
18 know, there may be a compromise.

19 So the issue is not, you know, I'm not in  
20 any way saying this is an easy decision. This is  
21 constantly looking at what's on the table legally

1 and what is on the table for what people want. Can  
2 that be accommodated within that standard?

3 VICE CHAIR COE: I see. Okay. Thank you.

4 So I want to ask a similar question that  
5 Mr. Belnap asked but he asked for an example of a  
6 time you had to set aside your preference and make  
7 a decision in the context of the Redistricting Task  
8 Force. I would like to ask that same question but  
9 outside of the Redistricting Task Force, an example  
10 of a time you had to make a difficult impartial  
11 decision where you had to set aside your self  
12 interests?

13 MS. MELARA: Well, I mean, again, I go  
14 back to the Police Commission, okay? The Police  
15 Commission, one of the last issues that I became  
16 involved in was the use of Tasers, okay, the use of  
17 Tasers at the Police Department. And I have read  
18 all the data that was available where it told me  
19 that the data shows there are more people being  
20 killed by guns than by Tasers. And if we gave what  
21 potentially could give police officers Tasers,  
22 instead of relying on guns, that we might have some

1 -- we may have a way to reduce the number of police  
2 officer-involved shooting.

3           And I put the, you know, I put the  
4 proposal on the table. And let me tell you, it was  
5 excruciating because I believe that it was the  
6 right thing to do but they -- and we passed it at  
7 the Commission level. But the part between putting  
8 the proposal on the table -- I mean the time  
9 between putting the proposal on the table and  
10 passing it, there were two, you know, 5:00 to 2  
11 o'clock meetings where the public came and  
12 screamed at us. I was concerned about my safety  
13 and, you know, and the safety of my family because  
14 there were very strong feelings about it.

15           So I am -- you know, if I believe in  
16 something I'm going to go forward with it. You  
17 know, and as a Social Worker, I believe that I need  
18 to balance the needs of the entire community in  
19 order to make things happen.

20           Okay, so that's -- yeah, that was a  
21 difficult one.

22           VICE CHAIR COE: Okay. Thank you.



1           So in your essays, and a little bit this  
2 morning, you've talked about your opportunity to  
3 meet or interact or work with diverse groups of  
4 people with a variety of backgrounds.

5           From your interactions with the people  
6 you've met, what have you learned about needs or  
7 desires or preferences of this diverse group of  
8 people that would make you an effective  
9 representative for the diverse population of  
10 California on this Commission?

11           MS. MELARA: Well, I think that the basic  
12 belief I have is that we all want the best for  
13 ourselves, for the community, and for others. I  
14 really don't think that people do things out of  
15 meanness. I think people are thinking mostly about  
16 how can I make this better, this a better place to  
17 be, this world a better place under my standards.

18           So the question is recognizing that,  
19 recognizing that people are doing their best and  
20 want the best for their community and their family.  
21 And so regardless of their culture, regardless of  
22 their background, we need to respect that, respect

1 every single individual that comes with a diverse  
2 point of view.

3 VICE CHAIR COE: Thank you.

4 I have a similar question but instead of  
5 cultural diversity, more geographic diversity, and  
6 I'd like you to talk a little bit about your  
7 experiences in other regions of the state, outside  
8 of San Francisco area, what you may have learned  
9 from the different people and the different regions  
10 and about their different concerns and perspectives  
11 that would make you an effective representative for  
12 them on this Commission.

13 MS. MELARA: Well, you know, one of the  
14 things, I've worked with several, at least three or  
15 four, statewide organizations where I meet with  
16 people from different areas. But one of the things  
17 that I recognize is that you have -- that people,  
18 depending on what their involvement is, they're  
19 also, you know, not necessarily very different.  
20 But when you go into the rural communities, for  
21 instance, there are major differences. There are  
22 different needs. And so people tend to have, you

1 know, a more conservative view of where they live  
2 and their political participation.

3           So that's one thing I have recognized when  
4 I -- you know, I did a yellow -- I was involved  
5 with company that produced Yellow Page Directories  
6 in my younger years. And, of course, most people  
7 don't know what Yellow Pages are. But we produced  
8 them in various languages around the state. And  
9 one of the things that it was very clear is that we  
10 had to approach our businesses, the people we were  
11 selling advertising to, we had to approach our  
12 businesses very differently, Central Valley, for  
13 instance, as we would in Northern California or the  
14 southwest.

15           So it is, you know, people bring different  
16 cultural uniqueness. And so it was -- it's -- you  
17 know, everybody has their own needs. And what I  
18 learned was that, definitely, people in rural areas  
19 tend to have completely different needs than those  
20 of us in the more urban areas.

21           VICE CHAIR COE: Thank you.

1           I'd like to talk a little bit about  
2 communities of interest. And one of the biggest  
3 tasks in front of the Commission is going to be  
4 identifying communities of interest all across the  
5 state. And some of those communities may be easier  
6 to find than others. Some of them are very engaged  
7 and are eager to come forward and identify  
8 themselves or share their perspectives. And others  
9 are less so and they're harder to identify, or  
10 they're more hidden, or less engaged.

11           So as a Commissioner, how would you go  
12 about identifying communities of interest, paying  
13 particular attention to avoiding kind of  
14 inadvertently overlooking some of those communities  
15 that are harder to find?

16           MS. MELARA: Well, you know, I think one  
17 of the most important things is how we can  
18 strategize around communication strategies, and  
19 letting the community know that we're there. In  
20 communities -- you know, and they -- and in this  
21 state, they have to be done in different languages,

1 different approaches, making sure that people know  
2 that we are there to listen to them.

3 I, you know, and of course, I don't know  
4 how much budget there is or how -- whether this has  
5 been done in the past, but I would want to meet in  
6 various sectors of our state to ensure that we're  
7 reaching out to a wide range of people and ensuring  
8 that we can put the word out that the Commission is  
9 meeting and that they -- and that we're asking for  
10 people's input.

11 So a communication strategy is extremely  
12 important, and in various languages.

13 VICE CHAIR COE: I see. Thank you.

14 So for those communities that you may  
15 encounter, some of them may not feel comfortable  
16 coming forward to share their perspectives with  
17 the Commission or who are generally a little  
18 apprehensive in engaging government bodies for --

19 MS. MELARA: Exactly.

20 VICE CHAIR COE: -- for a variety of  
21 reasons --

22 MS. MELARA: Right. Um-hmm.

1           VICE CHAIR COE:  -- but their input counts  
2 just as much and is just as important in getting as  
3 many -- as much input as possible.  That is very  
4 important for the Commission to do its work.

5           So how could the Commission make some of  
6 these communities feel more comfortable to come  
7 forward and share their perspectives.

8           MS. PELLMAN:  And quick time check.

9           MS. MELARA:  Well --

10          MS. PELLMAN:  We have 3 minutes, 45  
11 seconds remaining.

12          MS. MELARA:  I think that each one of us  
13 on the Commission has the responsibility to  
14 identify who those communities are and to ensure  
15 that, you know, if either one or two or three of  
16 us, I mean, without violating Sunshine or the Brown  
17 Act or whatever act we're going to be under, making  
18 sure that we reach out to specific communities, at  
19 the very least to let them know that we're there  
20 and that they should not be afraid to come forward  
21 and participate.

1           So I think it's each person on the  
2 Commission that has a responsibility to let the  
3 public know that we exist. So that would -- you  
4 know, that's the -- that's one of the things in  
5 ensuring that we bring to the table organizational  
6 alliances that we can put -- give to the staff and  
7 say, list here, you know, contact this  
8 organization. They will contact others and they  
9 will ensure that these people come to the table.

10           VICE CHAIR COE: Thank you. One last  
11 question, really quick, before we run out of time.

12           If you were to be appointed to the  
13 Commission, which aspects of that role do you think  
14 you will enjoy the most and, conversely, which  
15 aspects of that role do you think you might  
16 struggle with a little bit?

17           MS. MELARA: Oh, boy. You know, I think  
18 the whole process could be very enjoyable. It  
19 could be, you know, painful at times, depending on  
20 how many hours we're going to be in the meeting,  
21 but that's part of the task.

1           So in terms of being able to participate  
2 in making sure that we hear the voices from people  
3 throughout California, and we implement a  
4 redistricting map that works for 99.9 percent of  
5 the population, would be great.

6           VICE CHAIR COE: And is there anything in  
7 terms of the role that you think you might struggle  
8 with?

9           MS. MELARA: I can't think of any. I  
10 mean, I'm sure there are but, at this point, I  
11 can't think of any one. I was on the Task Force.  
12 The -- you know, being hungry during meetings  
13 sometimes but that was about it. That was about  
14 it. So that was -- but, you know, it's part of the  
15 course.

16           VICE CHAIR COE: Okay. Thank you, Ms.  
17 Melara. I think we're --

18           MS. MELARA: Yes.

19           VICE CHAIR COE: -- getting close to being  
20 out of time.

21           So, Mr. Chair, no further questions.

22           CHAIR BELNAP: Okay. Thank you, Mr. Coe.



1           Ms. Dickison, we'll turn the time over to  
2 you.

3           PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Thank you, Mr.  
4 Belnap.

5           Thank you, Ms. Melara --

6           MS. MELARA: Yes.

7           PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: -- for meeting  
8 with us today.

9           So I noted, when I looked at your  
10 application, that you participated in a lot of  
11 boards and commissions. You were, as we talked  
12 about, you on the Redistricting Task Force, the  
13 Parking and Traffic Commission Board, the Immigrant  
14 Rights Commission, and both California and San  
15 Francisco Hispanic Chambers of Commerce. (Coughs.)  
16 Excuse me.

17           What motivates you to participate in all  
18 of these different boards and commissions?

19           MS. MELARA: Well, you know, partly is  
20 networking. As I -- you know, throughout my life,  
21 one of the things that I have done pretty well is  
22 network with a variety of individuals and, you

1 know, across, you know, across belief lines. You  
2 know, like when I was in business with the Yellow  
3 Pages, like I had indicated before, one of the  
4 things that I did was I joined business  
5 organizations. I was the head -- I was the  
6 Northern California head of the San Francisco  
7 Hispanic -- of the California Hispanic Chambers of  
8 Commerce.

9           I was -- I joined -- I was asked to join  
10 the Chamber of Commerce which, you know, tends to  
11 be probably -- for a lot of people, it may look  
12 like the conservative arm of businesses in San  
13 Francisco. And I found it to be really enriching  
14 and really a great experience.

15           So I always have -- I have very seldom  
16 said no when something was offered to me. And I  
17 consider your (indiscernible) as something that I  
18 can learn from.

19           So it's that. It's, I mean, it's the  
20 networking piece is extremely important. The  
21 learning piece about those organizations are  
22 extremely important. And, you know, I always tell

1 my students that you're not going to find your next  
2 job by going to Craigslist. You're going to find  
3 it through people that know you because that, you  
4 know, that generally are the people who can say the  
5 qualities that you bring to the table. And I think  
6 that that has been my life experience, either  
7 professionally or civically.

8           PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: What qualities do  
9 you think you bring to the table that encourages  
10 people to seek you out for these types of roles?

11           MS. MELARA: Well, I have to go back to  
12 the fact that I listen. In fact, I was just asked  
13 to join a coalition here in San Francisco to look  
14 at the pandemic coming back to opening up the city  
15 to people being able to be out there. And so --  
16 and I asked, because I said, "Why do you want me on  
17 this?" And it consists of a very unique group of  
18 people that brings together decision makers in the  
19 city. And I was told, "It's because, you know, you  
20 seem to hear other people out, and then you have  
21 great ideas," but, you know, I don't know what  
22 those ideas are.

1           But it was -- it is very refreshing that,  
2 you know, I don't necessarily have to seek out  
3 these opportunities, they come to me. In fact,  
4 this is the only thing I've ever applied for  
5 because I have served on the Task Force and I  
6 thought this would be a great thing to do.

7           But, no, generally, it is people who have  
8 known me already and that's, you know -- you know,  
9 I think it is because I listen a lot and then give  
10 my opinion when there is an opportunity, when there  
11 is enough information so I can give the opinion.

12           PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Thank you.

13           In your diversity essay, you talk about,  
14 as a Social Worker, you were using that code of  
15 ethics to guide your principles about diversity and  
16 looking and focusing at the well-being of the  
17 individual in a social context and the well-being  
18 of society, and that when you're looking at  
19 factors, you have to take into consideration  
20 society as a whole.

1           Thinking about that, what did you learn  
2 about communities? And how did you -- how does  
3 that demonstrate your appreciation for diversity?

4           MS. MELARA: Well, often times, people  
5 decide that someone is different because of the way  
6 they look or the way -- or how much money they  
7 have, or the house they live in. People make all  
8 kinds of assumptions.

9           And one of the things that I tell people  
10 is that, especially, you know, right today, and  
11 this is something I tell my students, that in this  
12 pandemic, is that everybody's hurting alike. And I  
13 don't think that money or status, color, or  
14 anything puts you -- makes you any different, other  
15 than the fact, obviously, the people who don't have  
16 healthcare may be suffering more because of their  
17 lack of healthcare but, rather, most of us,  
18 everyone, has something that they're hurting about.

19           And so we cannot separate people just  
20 because of who they are, how much money they have,  
21 or where they live. And so I am -- I keep that in  
22 mind all the time. The fact is that in order to

1 look at the individual's needs, we also need to  
2 look at the needs of the entire society so that we  
3 can understand how that person's needs fits in or  
4 are able to be resolved through our society, so --

5 PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Thank you.

6 So you talk about, also, your ability to  
7 build consensus and work within groups when making  
8 decisions.

9 What steps can the Commission take early  
10 on to build a strong team so that when the  
11 decisions get more difficult, they can present a  
12 united front?

13 MS. MELARA: I think that I think one of  
14 the biggest assistants we had or biggest of the  
15 great things that happened to our Task Force when  
16 we were -- when we did it was that the person who  
17 was elected the chair had done this before. And  
18 then he was able to bring us together and was very  
19 skilled at bringing consensus and being able to  
20 work with everyone. I remember him very well.

21 And I think that that's probably one of  
22 the best things that can happen to a group.

1 Because if the head of the organization or the head  
2 of that task force or commission is all over the  
3 map, and not really looking as to how we can bring  
4 this particular thought together with these people,  
5 then we're lost. So I believe that the leadership  
6 -- that leadership will work, will very beneficial  
7 -- will be very beneficial.

8 But on the second part, each one in the  
9 organization, and you have to develop specific  
10 rules to ensure that the process follows specific  
11 rules of conversation.

12 You know, one of the things, that when I  
13 joined the Police Commission, I found that the  
14 Police Commission, itself, was not following, like  
15 Robert's Rules of Order. And so every  
16 (indiscernible) and start talking about what they  
17 thought should happen.

18 And so I said, "You know, in order for us  
19 to have a conversation, we have to have an orderly  
20 conversation so that we can hear each other. And  
21 we need to put these procedures in place."

1           And so we began to look at our own  
2 procedures. We began to look at how we would be  
3 talking to each other and to the public. Because,  
4 you know, in the public, they come and talk and  
5 then Commissioners decide that they're going to say  
6 something back to the member of the public when, in  
7 reality, the rule says that you're not supposed to  
8 do that, that you're supposed to speak as one  
9 voice. And so the -- it became much easier to talk  
10 once we began to follow those rules and those  
11 procedures.

12           So, you know, those two things, making  
13 sure that the leadership is good and fair, and then  
14 the other is to ensure that everybody, everyone  
15 understands the same rules.

16           PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Thank you.

17           So if you were selected as one of the  
18 first eight Commissioners, who are selected  
19 randomly, you would be tasked with selecting the  
20 next six Commissioners to round off the Commission.  
21 What would you be looking for in those individuals?



1 MS. MELARA: Well, I would be looking for  
2 the same exact things that I believe are important  
3 for this Commission, and that is people who can  
4 make sound judgment on good information that is  
5 presented.

6 And, you know, and also that can be  
7 impartial, can be neutral, show some respect for  
8 diversity. You know, I mean, I'd be looking at the  
9 same -- at those factors, ensuring that they don't  
10 bring with them, you know, heavy political, already  
11 set up, you know, concepts that may prevent them  
12 from making sound decisions.

13 PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: What would you  
14 like to see the Commission ultimately accomplish?

15 MS. MELARA: Come up with a map that looks  
16 like California and that it represents, equitably,  
17 every community.

18 PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Alrighty.

19 Mr. Belnap, I don't have any further  
20 questions at this point.

21 CHAIR BELNAP: Okay. Thank you.

22 PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Thank you.

1 CHAIR BELNAP: We'll turn the time over to  
2 Mr. Dawson.

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

4 Good morning again, Ms. Melara. Thank you  
5 for being here.

6 MS. MELARA: Good morning.

7 MR. DAWSON: One thing that caught my ear  
8 that you'd said, on one of these commissions, that  
9 Mayor Lee mentioned that one of the reasons he  
10 wanted to ask you to be on a commission was that  
11 you are not a lawyer. And --

12 MS. MELARA: Yeah.

13 MR. DAWSON: -- was that --

14 MS. MELARA: No offense to lawyers.

15 MR. DAWSON: And, no, no, not at all.

16 Do you think that he was saying that there  
17 could be too many lawyers, that, maybe, that their  
18 legal perspective might get in the way, that you  
19 might be able to offer some fresh perspective?

20 MS. MELARA: No. I -- yeah, I think,  
21 well, it was a combination of all of those. We did  
22 -- the Commission did have a majority of lawyers.

1 And we only had, at the time, which is funny  
2 because now the mayor has suggested an appointment  
3 of two more lawyers, but we were -- we had one  
4 person who came from a community side, working with  
5 youth. And so the -- so I think what he was trying  
6 to do was balance a little bit better bringing  
7 community thoughts and inputs.

8           At the same time, obviously, one of, I  
9 mean, one of the great things, one of the things  
10 about this Commission, is that you're pretty much  
11 required to be aware and informed on the laws of  
12 the Police Department and Human Resources because,  
13 you know, although the public thought that, you  
14 know, if this police officer did X and he had done  
15 Y before, he should be fired. And they would be  
16 all over the map and all over us because we hadn't  
17 fired someone. And so I understood why the legal  
18 expertise were extremely important on that  
19 Commission, which were not on other commissions  
20 that I had sat.

21           So -- but I think for Mayor Lee, it was  
22 predominantly because he wanted to have a balance

1 of thought. And, of course, you know, like I said  
2 before, he also knew that I had served in the  
3 military, so understood, you know, the issues  
4 about, you know, the militarization issue in the  
5 police department. So I don't know that he didn't  
6 like me. I think he -- after me, he appointed  
7 another lawyer.

8 MR. DAWSON: You talked about your time on  
9 the Redistricting Commission. And I thought I also  
10 heard you say that you were on a Transportation and  
11 Parking Commission?

12 MS. MELARA: Yes.

13 MR. DAWSON: And was that before the  
14 Redistricting Commission?

15 MS. MELARA: Yes. Yes. Actually, that  
16 was my very first Commission that I served on in  
17 the City and County of San Francisco. It doesn't  
18 exist anymore. Now it's the Metropolitan  
19 Transportation Commission. But it was the, yeah,  
20 the Parking and Traffic Commission, which another  
21 contentious issue, yes.

1           But did you -- do you think that maybe  
2 that experience of thinking about how people  
3 transport themselves, how they get to work, how  
4 they get home, did that give you any perspective  
5 that you thought was useful in the Redistricting  
6 Commission?

7           MS. MELARA: Absolutely. You know, one of  
8 the things, in fact, it was interesting because the  
9 person, one of the people who used to come before  
10 the Parking and Traffic Commission to complain  
11 about buses, became one of the members of the Task  
12 Force. And one of the things was that he was very  
13 pro public transportation, pro bicycling, pro -- it  
14 was very anti-cars.

15           And, of course, I was on the other, you  
16 know, on the other side sometimes because I -- you  
17 know, as a woman, as someone who might have had to  
18 transport people, the last thing, you know, I'm  
19 thinking, women are able to do is, if they have  
20 children, for instance, they're not going to try to  
21 put three kids on a bicycle. This is more of a  
22 single-person, single human being, trying to get

1 from one place to another. But in a lot of cases,  
2 parent with kids can't do that. Or if you're going  
3 out at night, you know, you're not going to go out  
4 in the bus. So those were my thoughts.

5 And, of course, this person, this man,  
6 kept on coming back and back and back, just  
7 pounding us as to why we were building more parking  
8 structures, because we were creating more needs for  
9 cars, and blah, blah, blah.

10 And then we came back to the Redistricting  
11 Task Force and we were working together. And it  
12 was funny. We used to laugh because he was then on  
13 the other side of the podium and, you know, and  
14 looking at how people came to you with ideas that  
15 you particularly were thinking, oh, let me think  
16 about this one, you know?

17 So, yeah, I mean, those were very, very  
18 similar, both because people have their own  
19 thinking about why something should be instituted.

20 MR. DAWSON: Well, I was thinking, I mean,  
21 you had talked about how one of your experiences in  
22 the Redistricting Commission was there was a

1 district that, I think, was largely Japanese  
2 American and African American --

3 MS. MELARA: Um-hmm.

4 MR. DAWSON: -- because we tend to think  
5 of communities of interest as, often times, being  
6 delineated by ethnic or cultural or linguistic  
7 factors, but transportation or economic factors can  
8 be one as well.

9 So I was wondering if you thought that  
10 that's a perspective that you would bring to the  
11 statewide Commission?

12 MS. MELARA: Absolutely. Absolutely,  
13 because that's -- you know, if you were looking at  
14 a district that, as a district that is already  
15 very, you know, a district that tends to work  
16 together, you, you know, you want to do as much as  
17 possible to keep it alike. You don't want to  
18 destroy the culture of that district, you know?

19 So that's -- yeah, I mean, I think that as  
20 much as possible, as long as you follow the, you  
21 know, the spirit of the law, you need to be aware  
22 of those factors.

1 MR. DAWSON: All right. Thank you.

2 I have just one more question and it had  
3 to do with the use of census data.

4 As you know, there are certain groups of  
5 folks who traditionally have been undercounted, or  
6 they've been subject to an undercount, and they  
7 include recent immigrants, often undocumented  
8 immigrants, and the homeless.

9 MS. MELARA: Correct.

10 MR. DAWSON: And I was wondering if you  
11 had any insight, based on your work in the local  
12 San Francisco Redistricting Commission, trying to  
13 account for undercounts of certain groups like  
14 that?

15 MS. MELARA: Well, you know, in San  
16 Francisco, we know of specific communities where  
17 that is the case. So the issue was to make sure  
18 that when we worked with the staff, our  
19 consultants, that we were asking those questions,  
20 okay? You know, we were asking the questions of to  
21 what extent, you know, is there a possibility of  
22 undercounting here? What data have you reached out



1 to for those districts that compensates for the  
2 potential loss of people who had not -- who are not  
3 counted in the census?

4           So I would want to see that. I wanted  
5 them to tell me if they have taken into  
6 consideration the potential undercount in certain  
7 areas of the state. And so, you know, obviously, I  
8 can't go do it myself but I would expect that  
9 people that are working with the Commission have  
10 some knowledge and experience in ensuring that we  
11 try to compensate for what's undercounted.

12           MR. DAWSON: Thank you.

13           I have no further questions.

14           CHAIR BELNAP: I have no further  
15 questions.

16           Mr. Coe, do you have any follow-up  
17 questions?

18           VICE CHAIR COE: No follow-up questions,  
19 Mr. Chair.

20           CHAIR BELNAP: Ms. Dickison?

21           PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: No follow-up  
22 questions.

1 CHAIR BELNAP: Thank you.

2 MR. DAWSON: Madam Secretary, how much  
3 time is remaining in the 90 minutes?

4 MS. PELLMAN: Twenty minutes, twenty-five  
5 seconds.

6 MR. DAWSON: All right. Thank you.

7 Ms. Melara, with the time remaining, I'd  
8 like to offer you the opportunity to make a closing  
9 statement or remarks to the Panel, if you wish?

10 MS. MELARA: Well, I think you've asked  
11 the very important questions that the members of  
12 this task force need to answer and be aware of when  
13 serving on this -- on the Commission.

14 I am -- you know, I think that at the top  
15 of the list, I bring the ability to have done this  
16 before. And, obviously, in a smaller scale basis  
17 with San Francisco. But one of the things that San  
18 Francisco offers that probably no other place has  
19 is that you may have one proposal and have 20  
20 opinions for or against because that's the way  
21 politics work in San Francisco. It is a very

1 contentious city. Right now, we're living through  
2 it.

3           You know, we have a mayor who's a little  
4 bit, supposedly, more conservative, whatever that  
5 means. And then you have a board of supervisors  
6 who is -- calls itself progressive that is  
7 sometimes not in favor of some of the proposals the  
8 mayor puts out.

9           And so this place goes up and down all the  
10 time. And no matter where you go you always have  
11 that -- those polarities.

12           I do bring, you know, my experience to the  
13 table. And I also bring my years of teaching, which  
14 means it makes me someone that, sometimes, I want  
15 to also teach those around me when I serve on  
16 commissions, on boards and commissions. And,  
17 specifically, I want to have some order. I believe  
18 in order. I believe that people need to follow  
19 certain standards. And, therefore, you have to, in  
20 order to be able to communicate, you have to set  
21 the ground rules. If you don't have ground rules,  
22 you are not able to communicate. And so I do that

1 with my students and I do that with everyone that I  
2 particularly -- I'm in contact with.

3 I have the time. I have the luxury,  
4 actually, of working in a place that is open seven  
5 days a week. And, in fact, I work seven days a  
6 week from home now because of the virus, but I'm  
7 not full-time. Do that about 75 percent of the  
8 time. And then I teach (indiscernible) and, you  
9 know, mine are evenings sometimes, or one in the  
10 morning. But so I have a very flexible schedule  
11 so, you know, my time is -- I can schedule it any  
12 way I want. And I'm appreciative of that,  
13 especially now that we have to stay home.

14 So that's me. I have no other  
15 responsibilities. You didn't ask me about family  
16 but, you know, yes, I am married. I have a bird.  
17 That is the only child I have. And she's very  
18 noisy. And, in fact, she is being -- right now,  
19 she's with my husband so she will not make any  
20 noise and scream when she hears me talk.

21 So that's my life. And so I love what I  
22 do everywhere. And so, you know, I'm available.

1 CHAIR BELNAP: All right. Thank you for  
2 being with us.

3 We are now going to go into recess and  
4 we'll be back at 1:14 p.m.

5 (Thereupon the Panel recessed at 11:58 a.m.)

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

7 CHAIR BELNAP: All right, the time being 1:14 p.m., we are  
8 going to come back out of recess and welcome Ms. Phyllis  
9 Brown Smith to her interview. And we're going to turn the  
10 time over to Mr. Dawson for the standard five questions.

11 MS. BROWN SMITH: Oh, okay.

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

13 MR. DAWSON: Ms. Smith, I'm going to ask you five  
14 standard questions that the Applicant Review Panel has  
15 requested that each applicant respond to. Are you ready to  
16 start?

17 MS. BROWN SMITH: Yeah.

18 MR. DAWSON: First question. What skills and  
19 attributes should all Commissioners possess?

20 What skills or competencies should the Commission  
21 possess collectively?

22 Of the skills, attributes, and competencies that  
23 each Commissioner should possess, which do you possess?

1           In summary, how will you contribute to the  
2 success of the Commission?

3           MS. BROWN SMITH: Well, for the first part what  
4 skills or competencies should a Commission possess  
5 collectively?

6           I believe that all the Commission members should  
7 have basic computer skills, good interpersonal skills and  
8 excellent communication skills both written and spoken.  
9 Everyone should be able to work independently. Also taking  
10 some initiative and be able to present their work and  
11 explain how they arrived at their conclusions. Know how to  
12 listen and communicate constructively. And often offer  
13 constructive options and solutions. Absorb a lot of  
14 different ideas and be able to break them down to a  
15 manageable workload or a number. Know who to give that  
16 particular job to. And know how to be a team.

17           If you something specific, like I know -- I've  
18 been doing taxes for 22 years. So if something came up  
19 where taxes was involved I would offer my knowledge in how  
20 to arrive at information. Also be able to give information  
21 about that in a manner that people can understand as  
22 opposed to using a lot of technical language.

23           Learn new skills. Follow the rules and  
24 regulations even if you don't agree with them and you don't  
25 like them. You have to know how to ask for help and how to

1 give help. You have to know how to research and who to go  
2 to for answers or who to ask that could lead you to that  
3 person. Not get offended if your ideas aren't used. Know  
4 how to use a lot of different -- or keep track of a lot of  
5 different tasks and keep them all on schedule.

6           Public speaking is probably a good talent to  
7 have, or skill. Also being able to make a decision and be  
8 willing to be responsible for it. I think those are  
9 important. And also know when if you did make the wrong  
10 decision or it didn't work out the way you hoped, you would  
11 be able to initiate corrective actions and make sure that  
12 those actions are taken. Those are some things that I  
13 think that are -- would be good to know.

14           For me, I don't think that I would have thought  
15 of things that I'm not capable of. But one of the things  
16 that I forgot to put on there was I thought maybe somebody  
17 with computer-aided drafting wouldn't be a bad idea to  
18 have. But I don't have that skill, so that's one I don't  
19 have. I do have rusty computer skills as far as Excel,  
20 PowerPoint, those kind of things. So the ones that I  
21 possess, I'm pretty sure I possess all the ones I mentioned  
22 in Question 1A.

23           You also have to know when to end a conversation,  
24 say, "Let's revisit this tomorrow when everybody's calmer."  
25 In addition to that I have the ability to bring people back

1 to the subject that's being discussed, because people tend  
2 to wander. And sometimes you need someone that's going to  
3 say, "Okay, well that's all great, but let's get back to  
4 Subject A or B," or "We want to discuss Subject C." So  
5 that's a good thing to be able to know how to get people to  
6 maybe bring up that subject later when it's time for that  
7 particular subject.

8           How I would contribute to the success of the  
9 Commission? Question 1C, I do work very well with smaller  
10 groups. I'm not someone that would be able to convince 200  
11 or 400 people to follow me, but I could certainly talk  
12 easily to groups of 20 to 30.

13           I'm also that person that if I see a job and I  
14 can do it I will. And if I can't, I will find someone that  
15 can either instruct me or will take over the task from  
16 where I've been at. I think my work at the Welfare  
17 Department and doing taxes gave me many skills that would  
18 contribute to the success. I do have an excellent memory  
19 and like to keep things organized. I use a lot of ticklers  
20 and calendar systems in different ways to organize my work  
21 that I can -- so I can get back to it when I need to. I  
22 also believe that the success of the team is my success,  
23 because I have always been part of a team that we already  
24 had specific things we needed to get done.



1           I do have the ability to see most issues from  
2 multiple perspectives. I do kind of believe most people  
3 are right down the middle as far as you know -- yes, people  
4 deserve a hand up, but not always a handout. There should  
5 be something in the middle. And I have a good ability to  
6 keep people calm as far as when they start to go off the  
7 rails a little bit, bringing them down a couple of notches,  
8 so that way we can get something accomplished or move on  
9 from whatever it was that made them unhappy; that they felt  
10 that they needed to.

11           And I'm good at keeping track of where I get my  
12 resources from as far as notetaking and keeping track of  
13 who told me what and what was discussed in meetings, things  
14 like that.

15           MR. DAWSON: Thank you. Question 2. Work on the  
16 Commission requires members of different political  
17 backgrounds to work together. Since the 2010 Commission  
18 was selected and formed, the American political  
19 conversation has become increasingly polarized, whether in  
20 the press, on social media, and even in our own families.  
21 What characteristics do you possess -- and what  
22 characteristics should your fellow Commissioners possess --  
23 that will protect against hyperpartisanship?

1           What will you do to ensure that the work of the  
2 Commission is not seen as polarized or hyperpartisan, and  
3 avoid perceptions of political bias and conflict?

4           MS. BROWN SMITH: I think it's going to be  
5 important that all the Commission members are able to leave  
6 any of their political biases at the door as far as when  
7 they're working on Commission information. Again, I do  
8 believe most people are a lot closer to the middle than  
9 politicians and media would have us believe. But that's my  
10 personal opinion. Most of my friends are pretty close to  
11 the middle on what they believe in should go on with the  
12 country.

13           You have to be able to maintain your calm,  
14 because you are going to have people that are going to get  
15 upset. You are going to have people who are going to be  
16 frustrated with what you're saying. So if you can maintain  
17 your calm and equanimity and bring them back to some  
18 semblance of that, that would be really great.

19           It's going to be important that all of the  
20 committee members have a good grasp of the English  
21 language, simply because if the regulations and rules are  
22 anything like tax code or welfare code, it gets pretty  
23 convoluted. And you need to be able to follow those  
24 instructions and implement them the way they were meant to  
25 be instead of the way you think they were meant to be, so.

1           But I think being able to listen to people and  
2 hear what they say. And if they are upset with you say,  
3 "You know I understand why you're upset. And this is why I  
4 think you're upset, or why you're not going with that  
5 particular point of view. You know, if that's not right  
6 let me know and tell me -- calmly please -- what it is that  
7 you're -- well, where I'm wrong so that way I understand  
8 where you're coming from." And then hopefully you can meet  
9 at some middle ground. I think that's all that I have for  
10 that one.

11           MR. DAWSON: Thank you. Question 3. What is the  
12 greatest problem the Commission could encounter, and what  
13 actions would you take to avoid or respond to this problem?

14           MS. BROWN SMITH: Oh, I thought we were on 2B.  
15 (Indiscernible.)

16           MR. DAWSON: Oh, I'm sorry, did you want to  
17 finish up?

18           MS. BROWN SMITH: Oh, I'm sorry. Let's see, I  
19 mentioned keeping records. And well, for that particular  
20 question I didn't say -- I did write down that we should  
21 make sure that adequate records are kept, notes are kept so  
22 they can be presented. I don't know how a paper trail, so  
23 to speak, works these days as far as keeping track of  
24 everything. I know that a lot of it is going to be on the

1 computer. But everybody should know where to go to get  
2 that if necessary.

3           And sometimes you just have to remind people this  
4 is the goal, and this is what the team is supposed to be  
5 accomplishing, as opposed to whatever it is that they've  
6 gone off the deep end about. And obviously there's always  
7 going to be people who think that the process is unfair,  
8 and they're not being heard. And it's important that they  
9 are allowed to say that and feel that as long as you can  
10 get back to the business at hand.

11           Okay, now I'm done.

12           MR. DAWSON: Okay, thank you.

13           Question 3. What is the greatest problem the  
14 Commission could encounter, and what actions would you take  
15 to avoid or respond to this problem?

16           MS. BROWN SMITH: So I read the last Commission's  
17 report. And when I saw it was 65 days, I was like, "Oh my  
18 goodness." But the last 30 pages, I think, were all how  
19 they divided up the districts. But I was kind of struck by  
20 the amount of input that they received from citizens, from  
21 different committees, from different organizations. I  
22 think the mail alone they received 20,000 pieces of mail  
23 over however long they worked on that.

24           I'm not even sure when it starts, I think I read  
25 January, about the public portion. So I think that just

1 the sheer amount of information that's going to be -- need  
2 to be reviewed can be overwhelming. I think that's going  
3 to be a huge one that can lead to a feeling of oh my gosh,  
4 I just can't do this. It's going be too much. And then  
5 people tend to put it aside and then it doesn't get done.

6           And as far as alleviating that, again people have  
7 specific skills that they can use to help other people work  
8 with that. It's a matter of getting everything down to  
9 bite-size pieces so you know where to start what you're  
10 looking for. And if you know what you're looking for then  
11 you can say, "Okay, so these are all the counties, these  
12 are all the people that live in them, this number, this  
13 many, minority this, minority that." And then you can start  
14 taking those numbers and putting them the way they need to  
15 fit into the puzzle that's the state.

16           And it's important that people feel that they're  
17 being listened to. And when you're giving someone  
18 construction, when you're giving some feedback, that it's  
19 not an attack on them personally. That's very important  
20 too, because especially in these hyperpartisan times  
21 everyone takes so many things so personally. And you don't  
22 know what's going to set somebody off because you don't  
23 really know them. Especially if we're all going to be  
24 communicating like this, so there's that.

1           So probably some kind of shared calendar or  
2 shared workspace. That's another -- I know there are  
3 several different kinds out there -- I only know about  
4 Google -- would help alleviate some of that feeling of  
5 inertia, some of that feeling of this is too much for me to  
6 do. And obviously knowing what everybody's skills and  
7 strengths are, so you know who to contact for information  
8 and help with something would certainly be helpful. Okay.  
9 that's all I've got for that one too.

10           MR. DAWSON: Thank you. Question 4. If you are  
11 selected, you will be one of 14 members of the Commission,  
12 which is charged with working together to create maps of  
13 the new districts. Please describe a situation where you  
14 had to work collaboratively with others on a project to  
15 achieve a common goal.

16           Tell us the goal of the project, what your role  
17 in the group was, and how the group worked through any  
18 conflicts that arose.

19           What lessons would you take from this group  
20 experience to the Commission if selected?

21           MS. BROWN SMITH: So that was actually the  
22 toughest question for me, because as a welfare worker I was  
23 on a group where the FRC, which is the Family Resource  
24 Centers, doing that once a month. And part of my role was  
25 to bring back information from my district in ways that we

1 had been working on some of the issues that they were  
2 having with other staffing, particular programs or anything  
3 like that. So there weren't a whole lot of conflicts on  
4 that one, but I did need to go talk to all of the  
5 supervisors in the district. And then go back to the Super  
6 -- to the District Manager and say, "Okay these are the  
7 things that everyone is having an issue with. And can I  
8 take it back to the committee?"

9           But the one that I remember the most was when  
10 Medi-Cal expanded in the mid-2000s. I was working with the  
11 Fraud Integrity Unit of the Overpayment Section of Health  
12 and Human Services. I was doing overpayments for Medi-Cal.  
13 And we went from receiving, I was a supervisor, we went  
14 from receiving maybe 450 to 500 pieces of paper which were  
15 representing cases that we had to review on a quarterly  
16 basis and contact clients, to receiving almost 3,000 per  
17 person because Medi-Cal exploded. And everything is based  
18 on Social Security numbers, all the information that we  
19 got.

20           So I had to create a committee with my staff, the  
21 Department of Health Services staff and my boss basically  
22 saying, "How are we going to do this if you're not going to  
23 get us any staff?" So my role was to figure out who knew  
24 what. And so we could come up with a solution that  
25 everyone liked.

1           The main conflict with that was my boss, who had  
2 never actually administered the Medi-Cal program. She was  
3 very not understanding why we didn't have the capability to  
4 review 5,000 cases each person, because there was a lot of  
5 follow-up work to that. So I had to -- one of the ways I  
6 helped alleviate that was before I presented what our final  
7 solution was, was to try to think of where she would come  
8 from as far as why she wouldn't be able to think that.  
9 Because she made it clear from the beginning that she  
10 didn't really see what the issue was.

11           Unfortunately Medi-Cal was a lot of manual  
12 entries whereas cash and food stamps, a lot of their  
13 overpayment processes were computerized. So Medi-Cal was -  
14 - because there was, I think at the time there were over 90  
15 programs and each one of them have to be evaluated if that  
16 person potentially qualified for them. So yeah, I had to  
17 create some PowerPoints and spreadsheets and all kinds of  
18 things of where we used to be, what our staffing was. So I  
19 think my greatest skill is in being able to get the  
20 information and break it down so other people can  
21 understand it.

22           As far as other conflicts, I'm not really a  
23 conflict person so I usually try to, again, listen and then  
24 say, "You know Mr. So-and-so, Ms., So-and-so saying this."  
25 And sometimes that helps, sometimes it doesn't. But I



1 always feel like if you can anticipate what the other side  
2 is seeing and what they're thinking, then maybe you can  
3 bring them information, so you have answers for them when  
4 they bring up those issues.

5           And then of course I don't know if this counts  
6 but or not, but I was a Girl Scout leader for a few years.  
7 And the big thing with that was that the parents really  
8 kind of thought of it as a babysitting service. So getting  
9 them to participate and find out what their skills were,  
10 what they were able to do as far as helping the girls  
11 participate and feel proud, that was the biggest conflict  
12 that me and my co-leader had. So that was a matter of  
13 bringing them to the idea that their children would be  
14 proud of them, and the other girls would be fascinated by  
15 somebody who -- these were all Navy people, so works on the  
16 submarine and the sonar department, you know, that kind of  
17 stuff. Okay, I think that's all I have for that too.

18           MR. DAWSON: Thank you. Question 5.

19           MS. BROWN SMITH: Question 5.

20           MR. DAWSON: A considerable amount of the  
21 Commission's work will involve meeting with people from all  
22 over California who come from very different backgrounds  
23 and a wide variety of perspectives.

24           If you are selected as a Commissioner, what  
25 skills and attributes will make you effective at

1 interacting with people from different backgrounds and who  
2 have a variety of perspectives?

3           What experiences have you had that will help you  
4 be effective at understanding and appreciating people and  
5 communities of different backgrounds and who have a variety  
6 of perspectives?

7           MS. BROWN SMITH: Okay, so for Part A, again  
8 being fair, listening to other people, giving them back  
9 their idea and clarifying what they're trying to say. And  
10 I know people are talking about common sense, but everyone  
11 has different backgrounds so when you're talking about  
12 common sense you know, even my sister and I aren't that  
13 common, don't have a lot in common. For me, knowing what I  
14 know and sharing effectively. And knowing what other  
15 people know and how to get it in a manner that I can  
16 understand and it's not so technical, would be great too.

17           Sometimes you have to know when to lead and when  
18 to follow. I'm very good at taking those complex rules and  
19 regulations and putting them into a manner that not only I  
20 can understand, but that other people can understand  
21 because everybody has different ways of learning and  
22 different ways of organizing stuff, so it's very important  
23 that you get it to - because I can organize it for me, but  
24 if you don't understand what I did it's not going to do any  
25 good. So if it's at least cohesive and coherent I would

1 be able to follow what you're doing. As opposed to someone  
2 alphabetizing something by who's taking everything that  
3 starts with an A and sticking it in the pile. That's not a  
4 lot of help for most people. I usually can give  
5 instructions pretty clearly. And I do know when it's time  
6 for me to not lead.

7           As far as the experiences I've had, I kind to  
8 feel like all of my work experience since I was -- I  
9 started with the Welfare Department when I was 28, I'm 58  
10 now, so I did 22 years with the Welfare Department. I  
11 worked with people from every social economic background,  
12 probably on the middle class to lower side.

13           You know, when the economy went down in the early  
14 '90s we had people in there who had never, ever applied for  
15 welfare, never thought that they would. And they were  
16 completely lost. There's a lot of rules and regulations  
17 and many of them don't make sense to a lot of people,  
18 because they don't know what they need or why they're  
19 there. So it's a matter of walking them through this  
20 system. There are people who would come in and they knew  
21 the rules better than what I did, because they'd been on  
22 welfare for so long. So none of that, the number -- I  
23 couldn't tell you which race or ethnicity or religious  
24 background I haven't seen, because I was in Intake for five

1 years. And then I moved over to the Fraud Integrity  
2 Section.

3 Tax professionals too, you don't know who's going  
4 to come in and sit with you. You don't know if they're  
5 going to bring their pet support rat. You don't know --  
6 yeah, seriously, she had to. You don't know, so you have  
7 to not only adjust what you think, because you might think  
8 -- You know, I'm going to be honest with you, I had a nun  
9 that came in and she was lying to me, but she had all the  
10 right answers. Or I should say I was 90 percent sure she  
11 was lying to me, but she had all the right answers. I had  
12 do the tax return the way that her answers came up with it.

13 Like I said, same with the Welfare Department.  
14 There were times when people were -- I knew they weren't  
15 being truthful, but because they were following the rules  
16 and regulations I had to abide by those rules and  
17 regulations. Even if after asking them 10 questions they  
18 had the right answers I had to do it whether I agreed with  
19 it or not. I think that's very important, because we all  
20 do get caught up in that, "I don't like that. I'm not going  
21 to do it" mindset sometimes.

22 Then yeah, same thing as the tax professional. I  
23 think as both an eligibility worker and a tax professional  
24 dealing with all the rules and regulations and the things  
25 that they encompass were being able to either explain them

1 to you in a way that you would understand or anyone in a  
2 way that they would understand. Because usually I can talk  
3 to someone for a few minutes and kind of get a grasp of  
4 what their grasp of the English language is. So I think  
5 most of my professional life has been almost kind of  
6 preparing me to work with a lot of people.

7 Plus when I go to -- my husband's from the  
8 Midwest. So when we drive across country and especially  
9 when we get to his small town in mid-Missouri and his other  
10 small town in mid-Kansas, there aren't a lot of people of  
11 color there. There's not a lot of other languages spoken  
12 there. And I see them in town, but I don't see them in the  
13 police force, I don't see them in the fire department, I  
14 don't see them running small businesses. I don't see them  
15 a lot.

16 So what we have here, especially I think in San  
17 Diego, where I have a neighbor who is Somali, a Filipino,  
18 one is Lithuanian and across the way I have two black  
19 families. And then there's some white families on the  
20 other side of the street. It's like we're always in the  
21 middle of it so we don't even see it until we go somewhere  
22 where it's not as prevalent. I shouldn't say accepted, but  
23 it's just not there. So you notice it because of where we  
24 do come. I mean, even our -- a lot of people that are  
25 running for office here are minorities. So I think that my

1 appreciation of the diversity even in my own family,  
2 because my father is African American, my mom is Puerto  
3 Rican and my daughter's father is Jewish. And my husband -  
4 - both of my husbands are white. so even in our own  
5 families we are a lot more integrated then a lot of other  
6 places too.

7           And then when I worked at the Welfare Department  
8 also I was transferred to the CMS Department, which is  
9 County Medical Services. And the people talk about the  
10 moms that are on welfare. But the people, the adults who  
11 applied for County Medical Services were a whole other  
12 animal who really, really believed that they didn't have to  
13 present the information that their worker needed.

14           So it was up to me, I would say at least three  
15 times a day, I would have to go and talk to a client and  
16 say, "Yes your worker needs this because" -- I'm trying to  
17 get them calm and that to understand that -- "we're not  
18 asking for your pay stubs for three months because we're  
19 nosy, we're asking for it because that's the rules."  
20 County Medical Services is adult medical for people who  
21 have health insurance in San Diego. So if you had an  
22 accident you could apply, and they would pick up most of  
23 the cost of that. But they didn't want to do all of that  
24 because they felt, "I pay my taxes. Why should I have to

1 give you my pay information? You should just pay it for  
2 me." So, excuse me, I think that's all I have for that.

3 MR. DAWSON: All right, thank you.

4 We'll now go to panel questions. Each panel  
5 member --

6 MS. BROWN SMITH: Okay.

7 MR. DAWSON: -- will have 20 minutes to ask his or  
8 her questions. And we'll start with the Chair, Mr. Belnap.

9 MS. BROWN SMITH: Okay.

10 CHAIR BELNAP: Good afternoon, Ms. Smith.

11 MS. BROWN SMITH: Hi.

12 CHAIR BELNAP: From reading your application I  
13 can see that you worked in fraud --

14 MS. BROWN SMITH: Uh-huh.

15 CHAIR BELNAP: -- investigating fraud for a  
16 number of years. Please describe a fraud you were able to  
17 uncover and walk us through how you discovered the fraud  
18 and what you did, what data you used to prove its existence  
19 and quantify its impact.

20 MS. BROWN SMITH: So when, let's see, I was there  
21 for 15 years. So what we did is we would receive a print-  
22 out from the state. And it would have a Social Security  
23 number and a job, so it was pretty well mapped out of what  
24 we had to do. So we'd contact the clients, we have to get  
25 all their information for a couple of three years, which

1 you know -- and we had to keep track of how we, when we  
2 contacted them because we had to give them a certain amount  
3 of time. So a lot of times there would be two or three  
4 years-worth of pay stubs. Or two or three -- when people  
5 used to keep them - there would be bank statements, there's  
6 birth certificates. And you had to follow the rules,  
7 because in Medi-Cal you're supposed to report your new job  
8 or loss of job within a certain amount of time. But if  
9 there's not enough time before the end of the month you  
10 have to void that following month. So like it's -- today's  
11 April 21st. If I got a new job tomorrow and I was on Medi-  
12 Cal I would have to report it within 10 days. But because  
13 there's not enough time to cover May, May would be void as  
14 an overpayment.

15           So basically we got all the information and we  
16 had to break it down. And then we would have to write a  
17 summary to the Medi-Cal investigators for the Department of  
18 Health Care Services. And what that would say is, "This is  
19 why I think they committed fraud. These are my reasons.  
20 Here is my evidence." And give them also the rules and  
21 regulations as to why I believe that they had committed  
22 some kind of fraud. Because the end the end user of that  
23 report is going to be a jury possibly, who has no idea what  
24 Medi-Cal is about or the myriad of programs that are



1 involved with that. So it was very set out what we had to  
2 do.

3           But you had to be able to figure out which  
4 programs, because -- I don't if you know anything about  
5 Medi-Cal, but there's programs for children; there's like  
6 five different programs from birth to nineteen. So  
7 sometimes you had families that had children in all of  
8 those groups and a pregnant mom. So all of that had to be  
9 taken into account, it had to all be explained hopefully in  
10 less than two pages. So there was that one.

11           And the one that I actually went to court for was  
12 a gentleman who moved his aunt from Riverside to -- I'm  
13 sorry, from Hollywood to San Diego. And when the report  
14 came that she had received this huge payment of like  
15 \$400,000 because that was based on her Social Security  
16 number and it had to be reported to the IRS, we had to go  
17 back and evaluate at what point he had to have told us that  
18 he was moving her here and selling her home. And then why  
19 he didn't use the proceeds from her home to pay for her  
20 care, because she was on state Medi-Cal. So that one we  
21 actually went to court for and had to explain to the jury  
22 again that the regulations state, and they sign for that,  
23 that you have to tell when you sell something like that.  
24 At one point you weren't even supposed to talk about the  
25 jewelry you wear. It's yeah, that's costume. So again

1 it's all very laid out, but you had to be able to at least  
2 look at it and know what the rules and regulations were so  
3 that way you would know where the potential fraud was  
4 coming from, if there was any. Does that answer the  
5 question for you?

6 CHAIR BELNAP: Yes.

7 MS. BROWN SMITH: Okay.

8 CHAIR BELNAP: Just a little bit of background  
9 that I'm probably missing is you would get these leads or  
10 these requests for you to follow up from the Department of  
11 Health Care Services. Is that what I'm assuming?

12 MS. BROWN SMITH: Yes.

13 CHAIR BELNAP: All right.

14 MS. BROWN SMITH: So the Department of Health  
15 Care Services, I can't remember what it's called now but  
16 there's a quarterly report, there's a bi-yearly report and  
17 there's a yearly report. And you had to look at so let's  
18 say it's your case. I would say, "Oh Mr. Belnap, I see  
19 that you worked at Lockheed Martin for May, June, July.  
20 You know, I need those pay stubs so I could evaluate that."  
21 And there was always a matter of we started with letters,  
22 we answered phone calls and did emails -- well we couldn't  
23 email the clients but we did do a lot of phone work, a  
24 lot of looking at old cases, looking at old information.

1 And every time the regulations changed sometimes we had to  
2 go back and evaluate those old regulations too.

3 CHAIR BELNAP: All right, thank you. You've  
4 already talked about your experience as an eligibility  
5 worker and how you dealt with clients from all different  
6 walks of life. Can you describe a particular experience as  
7 an eligibility worker that increased your understanding of  
8 and appreciation for California's diversity?

9 MS. BROWN SMITH: Well, I remember the homeless  
10 man came in when I had first started. He was a very tall  
11 black man and to me it was obvious that he had just been  
12 down on his luck. He was extremely embarrassed that he was  
13 kind of smelly. And he wouldn't look at me until I told  
14 him, "You know, I understand. My family is black, we've  
15 been down on our luck."

16 I don't know if I have any specific experiences,  
17 because you know we were seeing six clients a day. And I  
18 worked in the South Bay here, which was a lot of Mexican  
19 families. There were a lot of families. There was I  
20 remember one lady was in labor when she was in my office.  
21 It's just not only the people that were coming through the  
22 door but the people that I worked with. Because I think  
23 when I was in the South Bay, we like 13 languages  
24 represented in our office.

1           So we all have our own biases. We all have our  
2 own way of looking at people. And I think if you can get  
3 past your initial thought of whatever that you think that  
4 person might be, that's where you're going to start meeting  
5 them as a human being. So I don't know that I can come up  
6 with any specific thing. I remember him because I remember  
7 how embarrassed he was and I really, really felt bad for  
8 him. But he followed all the rules, he got his aid. We  
9 had Russians, we had Somalis, we had Mexican, I mean, it  
10 didn't matter. I think the only person I probably didn't  
11 see was somebody that was Eskimo. I think that's the only  
12 race I didn't see in my offices. Same when I was at the  
13 Overpayment Department in Fraud Integrity. We had -- when  
14 I was a supervisor I had a lady from Germany, one who was  
15 Austrian, I had an African American, I had a Mexican lady  
16 and I had a white lady. So it's just hard to say that  
17 there was one specific instance that made me appreciate the  
18 diversity in California.

19           CHAIR BELNAP: Okay, thank you. I want to talk  
20 to you about your time as a tax professional. Are you  
21 still helping with people's taxes or are you done with  
22 that?

23           MS. BROWN SMITH: Well, I'm done with it for now.  
24 We did close our offices on March 30th. And H&R Block only  
25 kept about 30 out of the -- well my district only kept

1 about 30 out of the 200 people that worked for them. So I  
2 was not chosen to work through the extended season. I mean  
3 I still do taxes as far as -- I'm still taking the classes.  
4 I'm assuming that I'll be doing it next year, so yeah.

5 CHAIR BELNAP: Okay.

6 MS. BROWN SMITH: You've got a question about  
7 taxes?

8 CHAIR BELNAP: Yes, I do.

9 MS. BROWN SMITH: Okay.

10 CHAIR BELNAP: So I'd like you to describe an  
11 accomplishment from your time as a tax professional, a  
12 problem you solved or a person you helped that you're proud  
13 of. And also I'd like you to talk about a mistake that you  
14 have made and what you learned from it.

15 MS. BROWN SMITH: So becoming an enrolled agent,  
16 which is a designation by the IRS where basically you go to  
17 get tests, you demonstrate your knowledge and you have to  
18 do updates, you have to follow ethics rules. That was a  
19 pretty proud moment.

20 So we get a lot of married couples in, especially  
21 when they first get married, and they want to file  
22 separate. And a lot of times it's not advantageous to  
23 them, but their friends have told them things. I would say  
24 that I guess now that I bring it up, my proudest moments  
25 are when I can convince someone that maybe their friends

1 don't know what they're talking about when it comes to  
2 taxes, because they have a lot of misinformation. And  
3 taxes are like fingerprints. It doesn't matter, you can  
4 have the same job as somebody and make the same money, your  
5 taxes aren't going to be the same as them. So I guess that  
6 would be more of a collective promise, that I'm able to get  
7 people to see how the rules and regulations are supposed to  
8 work instead what they want them to be or what they think  
9 they should be or what their friends told them they should  
10 be.

11           And as far as I make mistakes all the time. And  
12 as soon as I figure out that I did it I try to correct it.  
13 And then I call the client and say, "Hey I'm really sorry,  
14 I need you to come back in. I made this mistake. And you  
15 need to come in and either" -- usually they have to mail an  
16 amendment in if there was a mistake. If it was something  
17 small a lot of times they don't. But either way I learned  
18 a long time ago it was just better to face the music right  
19 away than to just let it keep going until you get to the  
20 end, because that's going to be a lot more pain in the long  
21 run.

22           I'll give you one example. Last year I sent my  
23 boss a text that I meant for somebody else. And it was  
24 complaining about him and I will admit it. Because he was  
25 very proud of his two master's and he just kept hitting us

1 over the head with him. And it was as soon as I discovered  
2 that I had sent it to him I thought, "Oh my God. Oh what am  
3 I going to do? Maybe I can just go home." I didn't, I  
4 went over to his desk and I said, "I'm really sorry. I  
5 sent this to you by accident. But I was extremely  
6 frustrated with your -- " the actions that were described  
7 in the text, which was basically him standing on his chair,  
8 looking over the cubicle and yelling at people to answer  
9 the phone. So it's like -- and then I told him why I was  
10 frustrated, because if he had time to get on his chair and  
11 yell at us he had time to answer the phone. I believe in  
12 facing the music right away. I will take the  
13 responsibility for my actions, I'll make a decision if  
14 nobody else will, and I will own up to it, because usually  
15 it can be fixed.

16 CHAIR BELNAP: All right, thank you.

17 MS. BROWN SMITH: Uh-huh.

18 CHAIR BELNAP: I don't have any further questions  
19 at this time. I'll turn the time over to Mr. Coe.

20 MS. BROWN SMITH: Okay. Thank you.

21 VICE CHAIR COE: Thank you Mr. Chair. Good  
22 afternoon Ms. Smith. Thank you for taking the time to  
23 speak with us today.

24 And in your application you describe some  
25 volunteer roles that you've had over the years.

1 MS. BROWN SMITH: Uh-huh

2 VICE CHAIR COE: Including being a Girl Scout  
3 troop leader as you mentioned earlier, being a docent at  
4 the Cabrillo National Monument.

5 MS. BROWN SMITH: Uh-huh.

6 VICE CHAIR COE: And also delivering for Meals on  
7 Wheels. And I'd like you to give us a little bit of an  
8 idea why you choose those particular volunteer roles.

9 MS. BROWN SMITH: Oh, mostly because those are  
10 kind of the only ones I found.

11 VICE CHAIR COE: Well why did you choose those?

12 MS. BROWN SMITH: Oh, why I chose them instead of  
13 why I chose putting in the application?

14 Well, my daughter wanted to be a Girl Scout. And  
15 the troop that we were at, my husband had at the time had  
16 been transferred to Hawaii. And the troop had been  
17 disbanded because there weren't enough girls interested.  
18 So oh no, I'm sorry, they had been disbanded because there  
19 wasn't anyone who wanted to be a leader. So I was like, "  
20 All right I have a job. If someone will be my co-leader I  
21 will be your leader." I did it because my daughter wanted  
22 to and there were enough girls that wanted to. You had to  
23 have a minimum of five. And nobody else would do it. And  
24 it was something that I was capable of doing and if I had  
25 help with it. Like at first I was going to make the phone



1 calls all day long, the stay-at-home mom, I was more than  
2 happy to do that. So I chose to be a Girl Scout leader and  
3 it was a lot of fun. There were little kids at the age of  
4 five and six, who were really a delight. So that's why I  
5 chose being a leader.

6 I did the Cabrillo National Monument, because I  
7 love the tide pools out here in San Diego. And at the time  
8 I was not only -- I was working, I had just gone through a  
9 divorce. And my daughter is eight or nine years old and  
10 she was a pill. So I looked at that four hours a week as  
11 my time to relax, connect with nature a little bit, talk to  
12 people that I didn't know that I was never going to see  
13 again, because that gives you a little more freedom to tell  
14 them things, and meet people from all over the world. We  
15 had people from Japan, and there was one Navy guy who  
16 worked on the -- they have a funky little base up there, I  
17 don't know if you've ever been out to Cabrillo, they have  
18 this base that has these giant antennas. He worked out  
19 there. And every Friday afternoon I would see him out  
20 there about 3:00 o'clock smoking a cigarette. And it was  
21 like we would just kind of wave at each other and that was  
22 it. And so it was just my time. And I remember one lady  
23 from Iowa, she had never seen the ocean and she was just so  
24 thrilled. She was like 89 years old and had never seen the

1 ocean. And that was her one dream in life was to see the  
2 ocean.

3           So as far as Meals on Wheels I did that for a  
4 couple of Thanksgivings with my girlfriend because she  
5 wanted to do it, but she didn't want to do it by herself.  
6 And they don't recommend you do it by yourself anyway. And  
7 I enjoyed it the first year talking to people, you know  
8 seeing them. And frankly, on Thanksgiving a lot of  
9 families take their families out. But it was nice to  
10 connect with people that sometimes don't see anybody else  
11 during the week other than the people that bring their  
12 food.

13           VICE CHAIR COE: Thank you. I'd like to talk  
14 about something that you wrote in your impartiality essay.  
15 And in that essay you describe impartiality as,  
16 "Disregarding your personal feelings, beliefs and thoughts  
17 of a subject, person or a thing in applying the rules,  
18 regulations, established guidelines and any applicable  
19 discipline equally as they were written in all cases."

20           So in the work of the Commission there's a  
21 certain part of the job which will be numerous, hard facts  
22 and laws and regulations and census data, etcetera, that  
23 will need to be applied. But the work of the Commission  
24 also involves applying opinions and perspectives of the  
25 communities of California. So how do you ensure that

1 you're taking into account other people's thoughts and  
2 opinions along with the rules, regulations and established  
3 guidelines that you were writing about in your essay?

4 MS. BROWN SMITH: Well, I think you have to --  
5 sometimes you have to read what they're writing two or  
6 three times to get the gist of it. You can ask for  
7 clarification if you're speaking with them. And sometimes  
8 their opinions will give you a new way to look at something  
9 too. So there's a lot of different ways that opinions can  
10 be incorporated, but you know I mean as long as they  
11 understand that there are these rules and regulations. And  
12 that you're going to do your best to take their opinion  
13 into consideration. Because sometimes we all want what we  
14 want and unfortunately we can't all have it.

15 As far as I don't know, I mean you have to make  
16 sure that people know that they're heard. You have to make  
17 sure they know that they're heard. If somebody's opinion  
18 is going to influence something you have to make sure that  
19 it doesn't influence it unduly as far as which way you're  
20 going to go on that. It's always best if you can to try to  
21 keep things away from that. So like if I listen to your  
22 opinion and then say -- I'm sorry, I forgot what your name  
23 is. Mr. --

24 VICE CHAIR COE: Coe.

1 MS. BROWN SMITH: -- "Mr. Coe, you know, that's  
2 great. And this part of your opinion does apply to this.  
3 And we'll take that into consideration regarding that. But  
4 as far as some of your other opinions, they're not really  
5 part of what this particular Commission is about." And  
6 maybe give them the resources to contact that person or  
7 that Commission or committee or tax board or whatever it  
8 is.

9 VICE CHAIR COE: Okay, thank you. Sticking with  
10 the having impartiality from the moment I'd like, if you  
11 could, to provide an example of a time where you had to  
12 make a difficult, impartial decision that involved setting  
13 aside your preferences or self-interests.

14 MS. BROWN SMITH: Well when I became a supervisor  
15 I basically took over my unit. And what I found out was  
16 that one of the people in the unit had filed a grievance  
17 against me as a co-worker. And no one had told me. So  
18 basically as soon as I started as her supervisor she became  
19 convinced that I was out to get her. Even though I did not  
20 know about it probably until about a month after, because  
21 it like, "Gee Marie, what's going on? Why are you so angry  
22 at me all the time?" And then she told me.

23 So when she failed to do her job and meet the  
24 minimum requirements that we were required for that job,  
25 which was basically turning in a minimum number of enrolled

1 payment cases a month, I had to really go forward to my  
2 supervisor. And I already had, "This is what we require.  
3 This is what she's been doing. I've counseled her, I've  
4 disciplined her," which was like a letter. "I followed all  
5 of the steps."

6           And after that she took me to the union to file  
7 another grievance because she really felt that I was  
8 picking on her even though -- I remember she had a loose-  
9 leaf binder with every single note I'd ever given her. And  
10 she went through every single note and told me, told us  
11 everything that she thought was unfair, which was  
12 everything that I had already been giving everybody else  
13 too. And so when you find out someone has a grievance  
14 against you, especially when you didn't know about it you  
15 get very, very tense. You have to maintain, especially as  
16 her supervisor I had to maintain my calm and my composure,  
17 at least until I got home. And so that way they couldn't  
18 say that I was being unfair to her.

19           So it was very laborious, that whole thing about  
20 one person taking up 90 percent of the supervisor's time  
21 was her. I spent 90 percent of my time looking things up,  
22 getting the rules, talking to Personnel. But I mean I felt  
23 very hurt that no one had told me as the supervisor coming  
24 to take over her. And I did bring that up with my bosses,

1 "How could you let me come to her as a supervisor and not  
2 telling me that she already had this grievance against me?"

3           So to me if you're going to take on something  
4 like this Commission you have to be able to say, "Okay,  
5 okay you're upset. I know you are. I'm not sure why you  
6 feel I'm being particularly harsh on you. You know, if you  
7 can tell me then at least you have something to counter  
8 that with." And you can say, "Okay, so a) No, here's where  
9 this applies, b) this where this applies." You just have  
10 to maintain your calm and your composure, at least in front  
11 of that person as far as being impartial.

12           And I know unfortunately we're all going to get  
13 upset about something. And we need to again not let our  
14 personal feelings come into it, because there really isn't  
15 a lot of place for that in a lot of things that deal with  
16 the government. There really shouldn't be anyway, so there  
17 you go.

18           VICE CHAIR COE: Okay, thank you. So switching  
19 topics --

20           MS. BROWN SMITH: Okay.

21           VICE CHAIR COE: -- to the essay on appreciation  
22 for diversity the first sentence of your appreciation for  
23 diversity essay said, "This was the hardest question for  
24 me." Why was it the hardest question for you to answer?

1 MS. BROWN SMITH: Part of it I think is because  
2 the people in my life are so diverse. I feel like I told  
3 the other gentleman there are so many different people and  
4 ethnicities and languages and food, and just walking down  
5 my street there's people from all over, and their ethnic  
6 wear.

7 And so it was hard to put it into words on what  
8 it means to me, until I started thinking about when me and  
9 my husband started driving across country. And as you  
10 drive across country you see fewer and fewer minorities.  
11 As a matter of fact, every single time we drive to go to  
12 his family in Missouri my sister tells me to be careful  
13 driving through Arizona. And it's like, "Well, I don't  
14 think that -- like I really don't think like that as far as  
15 I have brown skin, someone is out to get me," but she does.

16 So that's why it was hard for me because I've  
17 never really -- I mean, I grew up in New York and it's  
18 everywhere. SO we took in a train from our home in the  
19 projects to a school in the Bronx because we were part of  
20 an integration. And then we took the train home. So to me  
21 the diversity is everywhere already, and I've never really  
22 considered that much about it.

23 When I traveled, when I lived in Hawaii they  
24 thought I was Hawaiian. I go up into South Bay they think  
25 I'm Mexican. Most people around here would think that I was

1 Mexican as opposed to being half-black, half-Puerto Rican  
2 just because of the way I look. So I never really think  
3 about diversity on a day-to-day basis, so that's why it was  
4 hard for me to put it into words

5 VICE CHAIR COE: Thank you.

6 In that same essay you go on to describe having  
7 met or worked with diverse groups of people. You talked  
8 about it a little bit today as well. From your  
9 interactions with the people of various backgrounds that  
10 you've met, what is it you've learned from them about their  
11 needs or their desires or their preferences that you think  
12 would make you an effective representative for the highly  
13 diverse population of California?

14 MS. BROWN SMITH: So one of the things that I've  
15 learned, and I've had to deal with, is some cultures just  
16 speak loudly. And I don't come from a loud background.  
17 I'm not a loud person. And to me when someone is speaking  
18 loudly it's an argument, they're getting ready throw a  
19 punch. So for me learning to take a step back and go,  
20 "Okay, let me see if that's just part of their culture or  
21 if they're really angry at me," there's that. Some people  
22 are more they like to stand closer to you.

23 I worked with the lady from Vietnam and she used  
24 to tap me on the arm all the time. And I finally turned to  
25 her and said, "Nancy, what are you doing? And why are you



1 hitting me?" She goes, "I'm not hitting you." And I had  
2 to explain her for three years that to me it felt like she  
3 was hitting me and that I was not happy with it. But I  
4 didn't threaten her I just explained to her. And every  
5 year after the first two weeks or so she would stop. And  
6 she doesn't do it anymore. But usually every year for  
7 those first three years that I worked with her she did the  
8 same thing.

9           And it was finally, "Nancy, what don't you get?"  
10 So you know sometimes it's more a question of they don't  
11 want to shake hands, or they do want to shake hands, or  
12 they are huggers. For me it's always like if someone will  
13 look at you and tell you what they need then you're more  
14 able to help them even if they are doing it loudly.

15           I'll be honest, the only people that I really  
16 can't stand to work with are the ones that lie to me or  
17 that I feel are lying to me, because you kind of tell.  
18 Especially when you worked with the Welfare Department for  
19 20 years you kind of get the skills to learn when somebody  
20 is not being quite truthful with you. But again you have  
21 to put that aside because people are going to lie. So I  
22 don't know if that answered your question or not.

23           VICE CHAIR COE: Yeah, it did. Thank you.

24           I have a similar question, but more along the  
25 lines of geographic diversity in different regions across

1 the state. And that people like in different places may  
2 have different concerns based on where they live. So if  
3 you could talk a little bit about your interactions with  
4 people in different parts of the state, different regions  
5 of the state and what you think you've learned from them  
6 that would make you an effective representative for the  
7 people of California on this Commission.

8 MS. BROWN SMITH: Well, to be honest I really  
9 haven't traveled that much throughout California. I've  
10 been out to Borrego, I've been to Disneyland, San  
11 Francesco, L.A. So as an adult other than really during my  
12 professional world with the County I haven't really dealt  
13 that much with other people in California. I really don't  
14 like leaving San Diego for my own reasons.

15 But as far as other places I mean I know people  
16 in the desert like their openness and their space and they  
17 like having their -- they're very conscious of their water  
18 usage. L.A. it's traffic and crowdedness. But for the  
19 most part like I said I'll be honest I just haven't really  
20 traveled that much throughout California. But I know that  
21 each region has its own thing. There's one country:  
22 there's the deserts, the mountains, and they all want to  
23 keep their own personal piece of heaven the way they want  
24 to keep it. So sometimes it's going to be a question of

1 making sure they understand why things need to be done and  
2 how it's going to benefit them, if it is. But yeah.

3 VICE CHAIR COE: Thank you.

4 Madam Secretary, a quick time check please,

5 MS. PELLMAN: Yes, 3 minutes, 45 seconds.

6 VICE CHAIR COE: Thank you.

7 Ms. Smith if you were to be appointed to the  
8 Commission which aspects of the role of Commissioner do you  
9 think that you would enjoy the most? And conversely, which  
10 aspects of the role of Commissioner do you think might  
11 cause you to struggle a little bit?

12 MS. BROWN SMITH: I always felt that in another  
13 life where I want to maybe to work a little harder and be a  
14 little bit crazier, I would've been a lawyer. However as a  
15 paralegal I really did -- as a paralegal and as a Fraud  
16 Integrity with Overpayments -- I really did enjoy digging  
17 through the information, putting it together in a cohesive  
18 way that other people could understand. I mean, I really  
19 enjoyed making it the way, so that way it was  
20 understandable to you if I gave you a Medi-Cal overpayment  
21 that you would understand what it was. You know, getting  
22 all of the information because you start with this giant  
23 pile. And you have to somehow get it in a way that's going  
24 to make sense and it's going to be chronological and follow  
25 logically along.

1           Conversely I'm not crazy about meetings. I  
2 really feel that there are a lot of time-wasting in them  
3 just because people don't want to listen to other people.  
4 But other than that I think that would probably be it.  
5 Sometimes personalities, or you don't want to deal with  
6 somebody, but you have to. So conversely I can't. But yet  
7 I'm not really exactly sure how it all works in meetings or  
8 Zoom meetings or you have to go to places to meet people.  
9 I like to drive so that wouldn't be a problem. But I would  
10 say as far as unproductive meetings, that's what I would go  
11 with as what I'm not looking forward to.

12           VICE CHAIR COE: Okay, thank you Ms. Smith.

13           Mr. Chair, no further questions this time.

14           CHAIR BELNAP: Okay. Thank you. We'll turn the  
15 time over to Ms. Dickison.

16           PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Thank you Mr. Belnap.

17           Good afternoon Ms. Smith. Thank you so much for  
18 meeting with us today.

19           You mentioned being a paralegal. What time frame  
20 was that?

21           MS. BROWN SMITH: I got my degree in 2007. And I  
22 got my first job as a paralegal with an independent  
23 attorney in 2012 -- 2012 I believe it was, yeah. Because  
24 when I originally I had thought I would transition over to  
25 paralegal in the County, because there was no career path

1 for me from supervisor where I was to anywhere else. I  
2 mean it basically cut off at supervisor. And I thought,  
3 "Well paralegal I can -- there's several steps and then  
4 there's senior paralegal and all that." But it turned out  
5 that they didn't pay anywhere near what I was already  
6 making so I waited until I left the County in 2011. And  
7 then the next year after tax season I went ahead and  
8 started as a paralegal with Lorenda Stern.

9 PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Okay. Thank you. And  
10 that was a law firm?

11 MS. BROWN SMITH: Yeah, she was the Law Offices  
12 of Lorenda Stern, she was an independent lawyer. I also  
13 worked with Gretel Smith doing things. She was a lot -- go  
14 ahead.

15 PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: What kind of cases did  
16 she handle?

17 MS. BROWN SMITH: She had some immigration, she  
18 had family law, she had some criminal, she had a -- was it  
19 fraud? No, I think it was she had like an assault-and-  
20 battery one though at one point.

21 PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Thank you.

22 And so she wrote you a letter of recommendation,  
23 correct?

24 MS. BROWN SMITH: Yes.

25 PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Okay.

1           One of the things she said in her letter of  
2 recommendation was that you were competent, compassionate,  
3 and comfortable in dealing with CEOs as you were at dealing  
4 with asylum seekers. And that you worked with a diverse  
5 group of individuals. And were always motivated to ensure  
6 the interests of all people were fairly represented. What  
7 can you tell us about what you learned from working with  
8 these various individuals as a paralegal that would give  
9 you insight into maybe the concerns of different  
10 communities within California?

11           MS. BROWN SMITH: So obviously when people go to  
12 a lawyer their stress level is pretty ramped up. So one of  
13 the things that I was able to bring over from working with  
14 the Welfare Department was the ability to I guess calm them  
15 down and get the information from them that I needed to  
16 help them so Lorenda could help them. Because they all  
17 want to tell you their whole story and you have to give  
18 them time to do that. I usually try to cut them off after  
19 about seven minutes, because by then they're already  
20 starting to wind down. And then you've got the nuggets of  
21 what it is that's actually going on. As far as -- I'm  
22 sorry, I forgot the second part of your question.

23           PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: How will the work that  
24 you did with these different individuals, how could that

1 give you insight into the various concerns of communities  
2 within California?

3 MS. BROWN SMITH: So yeah, again, you have to  
4 listen to what their concerns are and try to boil it down  
5 to what it is as far as what the Commission's job is. And  
6 let them know, "You're concerned about your well water, but  
7 maybe this new district line isn't going to interfere with  
8 that." As far as -- I don't even know why I came up with  
9 well water.

10 So yeah, for me it's always been -- after about  
11 six months in the Welfare Department you either learn that  
12 you're not going to, you can't take it personal, because  
13 they don't know you. They know it's not your fault, but you  
14 are the most convenient person to vent to. So sometimes  
15 you just have to let people vent and then you just have to  
16 bring them back to what it is that you need from them, what  
17 it is that they want, because they're going to give you  
18 this whole big balloon full of stuff that they want. And  
19 really, it's just the string that they really want.  
20 They're going to say, "I want all of these things," but  
21 they just want the string to hang on to the balloon with.

22 PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: So based on your  
23 interactions and what you learned about individuals in your  
24 various roles as a paralegal, as an eligibility worker and  
25 as a tax worker or a tax preparer, what types of concern

1 may bind communities together? And how can those maybe  
2 identify those communities as a community of interest for  
3 the purposes of redistricting?

4 MS. BROWN SMITH: Things that would bind a  
5 community together would probably be my first thought is  
6 crime and trying to alleviate that, education, having clean  
7 water, having access to medical services. There's whether  
8 they're privately or public, Medi-Cal or doctors that take  
9 Medi-Cal, that kind of thing.

10 Also, I think right now we're going through a  
11 time when so many people are applying for services they  
12 never thought they would need or ever thought about  
13 applying for. I'm not exactly sure if like the  
14 Unemployment Department falls under any of the  
15 Commissioning rules, but knowing who to contact to maybe  
16 get some help would certainly be something.

17 So we can contact the Mayor directly here for  
18 help with potholes. He created a task force for that and  
19 it's called "We get it done" app. And you just go on there  
20 and tell them and they come in and fill in the pothole.

21 So sometimes you have to know where to refer  
22 people to. Sometimes again what they want might not be  
23 part of what the Commission is tasked to do as far as  
24 drawing the lines around, "We can't give you both police  
25 stations, we can only give you one police station that's in



1 that district. We can only give you one fire department,  
2 because you are so densely populated that you make up your  
3 own district. And therefore you know it's a huger  
4 geographical area where you can't have both the fire  
5 departments that are within two miles," that type of a  
6 thing.

7           That's another thing. That's where -- because  
8 I've been thinking about it. I was looking at the lines  
9 and then going, "Oh my God, how did they ever do this in  
10 the first place?" The lines for all the districts and  
11 stuff, because I tried to look at the maps, but I was  
12 looking at it on my iPad and it wasn't very big, so.

13           PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Based on the concerns  
14 that these communities may have, how can those concerns or  
15 where someone's located, maybe influence what they're  
16 looking for in representation in their government?

17           MS. BROWN SMITH: Based on what their concerns  
18 and their record, well I feel like National City here is  
19 one of our poorer neighborhoods. But La Jolla is five  
20 miles away, eight miles away. Those people are probably  
21 going to be looking for two different things. The people  
22 in one area would probably be looking for more  
23 representation and help getting like the potholes or fire  
24 department or better police response time than the people  
25 who live in La Jolla. They would probably be more of

1 they'd want to keep the status quo the way it is because  
2 they like their lifestyle. So sometimes you can't keep it,  
3 and you have to explain to them why.

4           So as far as drawing the lines I know that it's  
5 important that you get as much diversity in each district  
6 as possible if you can. I mean we have a lot of minorities  
7 that live in Chula Vista and National City. So they might  
8 be better represented down there than the Caucasian  
9 backgrounds, just because it's cheaper to live down there  
10 and that's where they congregate more. As far as people in  
11 La Jolla or Rancho Santa Fe, they want to be able to keep  
12 their wide-open spaces, so they have the illusion of better  
13 privacy and better access to services. So they probably  
14 wouldn't be quite as willing to have a district line go  
15 through the middle of their neighborhood if it came down to  
16 that.

17           PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Thank you.

18           MS. BROWN SMITH: Uh-huh.

19           PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: And when it comes to  
20 Question 3 you talked about being struck by the amount of  
21 input that the last Commission received. And you had also  
22 I think it was earlier talked about organizational skills.  
23 Can you walk us through how you would maybe organize  
24 documentation in a way that Commissioners could easily find

1 what they were looking for and analyze that information for  
2 drawing the lines?

3 MS. BROWN SMITH: So my understanding is the idea  
4 would be to have equal number of citizens represented for  
5 each district. So first I think you would have to -- what  
6 do we have, like was it 80 districts I saw? There were a  
7 lot of districts -- first we'd have to get the numbers of  
8 districts, put in the number of each of the people that  
9 live in there and then figure out how to divide that up.

10 As far as are you talking about like having a  
11 shared drive that we could use to get the information from  
12 each other? But I think that that's something that would  
13 work, because I know like I mentioned Google earlier, I  
14 know that they have a lot of shared apps or programs that  
15 can be used by multiple people. So it would be a question  
16 of getting, everyone would have to agree on what the  
17 folders would be called and keeping track of what's in  
18 there, possibly chronologically, if it needs to be by race  
19 we could do it by that way. You could certainly have each  
20 counties' numbers for each of those things in there.  
21 Probably some kind of spreadsheets would help.

22 As far as analyzing I think I'll be honest, I am  
23 a paper-and-pencil pusher. I prefer to have five different  
24 piles that I know what's in there than looking at five

1 different folders on my screen. But everybody learns and  
2 remembers differently.

3 So I think it's just a question of everyone  
4 agreeing how it should be handled and who's going to  
5 analyze what as far as whatever analytics need to be done  
6 for it.

7 PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Thank you. I'm just  
8 looking at my notes. A lot of my questions got answered  
9 earlier.

10 MS. BROWN SMITH: Oh, okay, good. I'm going to  
11 go open my door, because the heater just kicked on and I'm  
12 already hot. (Off mic colloquy.) All right I'm back.  
13 Thank you.

14 PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Thank you. So if you're  
15 selected as one of the first eight commissioners, which are  
16 selected randomly, you would be tasked with selecting the  
17 next six to round out the Commission.

18 MS. BROWN SMITH: Uh-huh.

19 PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: What would you be Looking  
20 for in those individuals?

21 MS. BROWN SMITH: I would be looking for the  
22 people who had maybe had not just one job in their life,  
23 like had always been a mechanic for so long or something  
24 but if they also had other life experiences like the fall  
25 coach or a chef, worked for the Boys and Girls Club.

1 Certainly people that seem to demonstrate in their  
2 applications and in their interviews that they were team  
3 players, that they were able to take constructive  
4 solutions, and that they were kind of calm people as far as  
5 not getting upset if they weren't -- if their idea wasn't  
6 being used. I would look for someone who had done a  
7 variety of things, works with a variety of people, whether  
8 it be through volunteer work or their professional jobs.

9           Sometimes certain professions tend to like to  
10 override everyone, like doctors think they know everything.  
11 So it's a question of what their life experiences have  
12 maybe taught them as far as being part of the team, because  
13 being part of a team you might have a leader. But  
14 sometimes that leader needs to step aside, because they  
15 don't know that. They don't know that information or they  
16 don't know where to get it. And sometimes you need to  
17 temporarily be a leader. Or temporarily be the follower.  
18 So that's something that I would definitely look for.

19           I think it's important that they be able to learn  
20 new things. So trying to teach my mom how to -- she wanted  
21 to get an iPhone and we told her no because trying to teach  
22 her how to use it from going from her Google -- she's 83  
23 years old -- to an iPhone would probably make us all  
24 crazy. So sometimes you need to say, "I can't learn that."  
25 But these are the people that would need to learn to know,

1 to do new things because I'm sure that the some of the  
2 programs that are used are a little bit more convoluted  
3 then what we play Angry Birds on. So that's what I would  
4 look for in my co-Commission members would be people who  
5 knew how to be part of a team and weren't afraid to say, "I  
6 need help," or "I don't understand. Can you explain this  
7 to me?" Because that's part of -- I mean obviously no  
8 one's ever done it, or at least nobody on this Commission  
9 would have ever done it before.

10 So we're all going to have to help each other as  
11 far as what we know and what we don't know. Because what  
12 you know, I don't know. And you may not know the things  
13 that I know. So that's why we have a mechanic because I'm  
14 not going to fix my car and I'm not going to clean my own  
15 teeth. So sometimes you need that expert who's going to  
16 help with that information and be willing to share it. So  
17 some people like to take it and just keep it because they  
18 don't want anyone else to share their thunder. But we need  
19 people who are going to share their knowledge.

20 So that's what I would look for: someone who is  
21 going to be willing to do that and learn new stuff and  
22 remember hopefully, or at least keep track of their notes.

23 PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Well, thank you so much.

24 Mr. Belnap, I don't have any further questions at  
25 this point.

1 CHAIR BELNAP: All right, thank you.

2 Mr. Dawson, I'll put the time over to you.

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

4 Thank you again, Ms. Smith, for being with us  
5 this afternoon. Let me just follow up a bit on the  
6 discussion you were having with Ms. Dickison. So as you  
7 should probably know the Commission will have 14 members.

8 MS. BROWN SMITH: Uh-huh.

9 MR. DAWSON: And it is, will be comprised of five  
10 Republicans, five Democrats, and four non-affiliated folks.  
11 And it's intended, the overall makeup is intended to be  
12 reflective of California's diversity. Now you're from San  
13 Diego County. Would you be looking for geographic balance?  
14 And what would that look like, assuming that you were  
15 appointed to the Commission?

16 MS. BROWN SMITH: Geographic. Well I know part  
17 of the issue with California is that the federal government  
18 and the state government own so much of it. So there's  
19 probably going to be instances where maybe yes -- I think I  
20 would be looking for geographical balance as far as what  
21 California owns and where, how many people live in that  
22 area. So like if Miramar covers from Tierrasanta up to La  
23 Jolla, so there might be part of the district that would be  
24 in Tierrasanta and part of it might be up there in the Mira  
25 Mesa-La Jolla area because that's the only way to do the

1 geographical lines and get the same square mileage or even  
2 the same population.

3 MR. DAWSON: Well, let me put the question  
4 another way: Would the Commission be successful if it had  
5 14 members who all lived in San Diego County?

6 MS. BROWN SMITH: I don't see why it wouldn't.  
7 It might be a little bit more difficult to get to the  
8 northern parts of the state to do a -- oh, I see what  
9 you're asking. You're asking the people on the Commission,  
10 I thought you were talking about the whole process. Oh  
11 yeah, I --

12 MR. DAWSON: No, I meant the 14 Commissioners.

13 MS. BROWN SMITH: Okay. So I don't know if I  
14 didn't hear that or I didn't understand it. Yes, it would  
15 be best if the 14 Commissioners came from different  
16 regions. That would be the best thing.

17 MR. DAWSON: So let me put the question another  
18 way: Could the Commission be successful if it did not  
19 include anyone from San Diego County?

20 MS. BROWN SMITH: I'm sure it could. I mean  
21 Orange County is right there, Riverside. You know I think  
22 San Diego does have its own issues as far as the as the  
23 being right there by Tijuana, with the border right there  
24 and the ocean and all of the military installations that  
25 are here. So that could be a concern. But there's no



1 reason why it couldn't be successful without a member from  
2 any other county. Maybe L.A., L.A. would probably need at  
3 least one member.

4 MR. DAWSON: Let's say that there was a  
5 Commission member from here in Sacramento County who had  
6 never been to San Diego County. What should that  
7 Commissioner know about San Diego County that would be  
8 important in the work of the Commission?

9 MS. BROWN SMITH: They should know I always kind  
10 of felt like being in San Diego, and this is part of my own  
11 personal bias, we're kind of in a little bit of a bubble  
12 down here. A lot of things that affect L.A. which is  
13 really less than two hours away don't affect us. On the  
14 other hand, a lot of people that live here work in L.A. or  
15 Orange County. So even though it's we're kind of insulated  
16 in a lot of ways from a lot of things that happen in the  
17 rest of the state, I don't know if it's we're still just  
18 considered a bedroom community of Los Angeles or what. But  
19 I feel like it's important to know that the people in San  
20 Diego are. I think we're pretty open-minded and pretty  
21 fair for the most part. Obviously, you have people who  
22 aren't going to be.

23 I was telling one of my husband's relatives who  
24 was complaining about California as a whole that, "Yeah,  
25 but in San Diego, when the earth protestors came in 2000 or

1 2002 they had like 30 people, because people wanted to go  
2 to the beach. They didn't want to protest." So that was  
3 just my way of telling him we're a little bit different  
4 than the rest of the state, because we do have a little bit  
5 -- I feel like we have a more relaxed frame of mind for a  
6 lot of things as far as a lot of the like partisanship that  
7 goes on out there. I mean, I think San Diego is mostly a  
8 Republican County, or used to be. Now I think it's mostly  
9 Democrat.

10           So I wanted to ask though -- oh, I mean I'll let  
11 you finish your questions. Go ahead

12           MR. DAWSON: Oh, okay. Thank you.

13           Madam Secretary, how much time is left in the 90  
14 minutes?

15           MS. PELLMAN: 12 minutes, 50 seconds

16           MR. DAWSON: All right. Thank you.

17           I'll just have one more follow-up.

18           MS. PELLMAN: Okay.

19           MR. DAWSON: You mentioned that you had read the  
20 report of the 2010 Commission and noted the huge amount of  
21 public input. I think you mentioned the correspondence.  
22 But a big part of that was also public meetings.

23           MS. BROWN SMITH: Yeah.

24           MR. DAWSON: In the report the 2010 Commission  
25 mentioned that some folks might have come to public

1 meetings holding themselves out as members of the local  
2 committee, but they may have had partisan backing. They  
3 weren't who they really said they were.

4 MS. BROWN SMITH: Uh-huh.

5 MR. DAWSON: As a Fraud and Integrity  
6 investigator and supervisor do you think that you have a  
7 particular insight into reading people?

8 MS. BROWN SMITH: I think I have an insight into  
9 when people aren't being 100 percent truthful. And if you  
10 can figure out what it is that they're not being truthful  
11 about you can maybe dig down a little bit better on that  
12 particular subject. And try to clarify something. Because  
13 I read that too and I thought, "Well that was kind of dirty  
14 pool to do that," when it's supposed to -- the idea is for  
15 it to be fair and impartial and work for the betterment of  
16 all Californians as far as just whatever, wherever they  
17 were coming from.

18 MR. DAWSON: All right. Thank you.

19 Mr. Chair, I have no further questions.

20 CHAIR BELNAP: All right, thank you.

21 Mr. Coe, do you have any further questions?

22 VICE CHAIR COE: I have no further questions, Mr.  
23 Chair.

24 CHAIR BELNAP: Ms. Dickison?

1 PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: I have no additional  
2 questions.

3 CHAIR BELNAP: All right, I don't have any  
4 further questions either.

5 MR. DAWSON: All right, thank you.

6 Madam Secretary, time check again once please.

7 MS. PELLMAN: Yes, 11 minutes, 15 seconds.

8 MR. DAWSON: All right, thank you.

9 Ms. Smith, with the time remaining would you like  
10 to give some closing remarks to the Panel?

11 MS. BROWN SMITH: Well, I didn't come up with  
12 anything, because I didn't know you were going to ask me.  
13 I don't know, I think I've kind of given you an idea of  
14 what, where I'm coming from. I really do my best to make  
15 sure that I'm not coming across as harsh or impersonal,  
16 while still trying to be a step removed from whatever that  
17 person's issues are.

18 As far as information, I'm really good at keeping  
19 track of it, knowing where it came from and keeping it  
20 organized. So I think I would be a good addition or I  
21 wouldn't have tried to get this far, as far as I have  
22 simply because I do have those abilities to calm people  
23 down, to keep track of what's going on, to stay on track as  
24 far as what the purpose of the -- whatever we're working on  
25 that day or that month or however long we have for whatever

1 project. And I'm really good at keeping that on track and  
2 making sure that everyone knows who they can go to.

3           So I feel like I'm a good person to be near the  
4 center so I can keep track of all of those different parts,  
5 because I know it's going to be a huge amount of  
6 information and there's going to be a lot of, especially in  
7 the beginning there's probably going to be a lot of, "Oh my  
8 God, what do we do with these? All this stuff?" Because I  
9 know the Census is going to create a lot of its own  
10 information. So that doesn't include the whole public  
11 meetings, mail, all of that stuff.

12           But I do want to ask a question. Why 14 members,  
13 what if there's a tie?

14           MR. DAWSON: There are -- the membership of the  
15 Commission is set out in the Voters First Act --

16           MS. BROWN SMITH: Uh-huh.

17           MR. DAWSON: -- there are 14 members. But it will  
18 also provide for -- it requires a super-majority and it  
19 requires three votes from each sub-pool in order to -- for  
20 the members.

21           MS. BROWN SMITH: Okay. Okay, I think I did read  
22 that. Maybe I just didn't register it, because all was I  
23 kept thinking was, "It's even. What's going on?"

24           But I don't think I have any other --

25           MR. DAWSON: Any more questions or --

1 MS. BROWN SMITH: -- questions or comments or  
2 anything.

3 MR. DAWSON: Okay, thank you for your time.  
4 We're going to go into recess now. We'll be back at 2:59  
5 p.m.

6 MS. BROWN SMITH: Okay. I'm done right?

7 MR. DAWSON: Yes.

8 (Off the record at 2:39 p.m.)

9 (On the record at 2:59 p.m.)

10 CHAIR BELNAP: The time being 2:59, we're going  
11 to come out of recess. I want to welcome Ms. Pilar Diaz to  
12 her interview. And we're going to turn the time over to  
13 Mr. Dawson for the standard five questions.

14 MR. DAWSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Ms. Diaz, I'm  
15 going to ask you five standard questions that the Applicant  
16 Review Panel has requested each applicant respond to. Are  
17 you ready?

18 MS. DIAZ: Yes.

19 MR. DAWSON: First question. What skills and  
20 attributes should all Commissioners possess?

21 What skills or competencies should the Commission  
22 possess collectively? Of the skills, attributes, and  
23 competencies that each Commissioner should possess, which  
24 do you possess?

1           In summary, how will you contribute to the  
2 success of the Commission?

3           MS. DIAZ: Thank you so much. And thank you for  
4 the opportunity to be here. In really thinking about the  
5 attributes that all Commissioners should possess, I think  
6 about just the diversity of California and then also my  
7 experience in serving a Commission of a diverse city of the  
8 city of Los Angeles. The attributes that I think are  
9 important, first and foremost, is the ability to listen,  
10 having diverse views, knowing California's history  
11 including immigration history, experience working with  
12 different sectors, and last and most importantly,  
13 application of Census data.

14           The ability to listen is really important as with  
15 this particular Commission, as my experience with previous  
16 commissions is we hear from different communities with  
17 varying positions' opinions. It will be a lot. In the  
18 City Commission we heard a lot of different opinions on one  
19 park matter. There will be a lot of written comments,  
20 comments from the streets, and also at meetings. And I  
21 think it's really important to really figure out and be  
22 able to pick out the important issue.

23           And at the same time as part of this process in  
24 listening is having a thick skin and really separating the  
25 community's perspective and what they may be feeling to

1 yours. I've been in the position before where they have  
2 said things that are personal but knowing that that is not,  
3 that may not be the case, that's just they just need to  
4 express themselves in some way. So I think the ability to  
5 listen and really be able to block out the other things and  
6 pick out the issues is important.

7           Diversity of view is important as well, not just  
8 in being a part of certain ethnic groups like understanding  
9 the history of those different ethnic groups. In my  
10 current work with the U.S. Census Bureau my target  
11 population for outreach is Native Hawaiian Pacific  
12 Islanders. First in L.A. County, but in the work me and my  
13 other colleagues has now expanded to all of California. So  
14 in that work I really had an opportunity to learn about  
15 different Native Hawaiians, Pacific Islanders, Oceania  
16 communities. And it's not just one group where a lot of  
17 times it's still lumped in one group. The Tongans have  
18 different needs than the Samoans. The history of the  
19 Hawaiians is different than the other Pacific Islanders and  
20 the Fuegians.

21           And also understanding why certain groups are in  
22 certain places, for example the Fuegians in Sacramento, why  
23 they are there and why the Tongans are in Southern  
24 California. Understanding those really is important and



1 something that Commissioners should, if they don't know,  
2 want to learn. Which I think is also important.

3           And also beyond just the ethnic groups is having  
4 Commissioners who are not all homeowners, they may be  
5 renters. When I was on the City of L.A. Rec and Parks  
6 Commission, as someone who is a renter I know that I  
7 brought in a perspective that my other colleagues who were  
8 homeowners didn't bring, because I lived in my place and it  
9 didn't have access to parks, I didn't have a yard. So I  
10 think that brings a different perspective.

11           And then also Commissioners who may be single  
12 parents or parents. I think having those, that balance,  
13 would really make an impact because you do see it  
14 differently, the world differently.

15           And then also working with the front sectors.  
16 What I'm also bringing in is I've been in the nonprofit  
17 sector for many years, but I also have experience in local  
18 government as, again, City Commissioner and currently in  
19 federal government as a representative of the U.S. Census  
20 Bureau in these times. And while also nonprofit I worked  
21 as a director of corporate partnerships for a local after-  
22 school program. In that role I worked with large  
23 corporations, national corporations in their community  
24 engagement program in delivering services and partnering  
25 with nonprofits to benefit the community. So I understand

1 that you can't just see businesses or a certain demographic  
2 in one way. But within each there's another layer that we  
3 also need to understand and perhaps look a little bit more  
4 into.

5           And then last but not least I think it's really  
6 important, and just because I work for the U.S. Census  
7 Bureau, is to understand the data and what it means. In my  
8 current work I look at where our response rate is every  
9 day. Thankfully within California it's now over 50  
10 percent. But I also look at the response core in each  
11 census tract and understanding what is in that particular  
12 census tract. So one of the main things that we used to  
13 determine that is the Regional Outreach Area Map, ROAM.  
14 And we can see the result from the ACS, "American Community  
15 Survey," and really what is going on with that particular  
16 community, what are their limitations to responding, and  
17 then what can we do in order to get them to respond.

18           So for example in one city it may be the city is  
19 responding, but that's not necessary for all of the census  
20 tracts. So we have to look at who can we work with. So  
21 with this, also in this Commission like if there is some  
22 questions like, "Who could we work with in order to get  
23 them to respond?" So in some areas because they're  
24 broadband, which is an ACS data, the broadband service may  
25 not be as high. They may have limited Internet access,

1 then we know we have to work with the libraries, we know we  
2 have to partner more with the police station and other  
3 civic organizations or city services.

4           And then for some communities because, for  
5 example, for Native Hawaiian Pacific Islanders and then  
6 other groups that may not be in that -- the census may not  
7 provide the translation outside of the 12 languages -- then  
8 we work with the community organizations and businesses in  
9 order to connect with them, because they have their reach.  
10 So I think understanding what is available with the census  
11 data and how that relates to the community and how they  
12 might be responding is also an important skill and  
13 attribute for a Commissioner to expand.

14           When we get the data on March, maybe July of next  
15 year -- operational time limits may change -- when that  
16 data becomes available it's not just like what is there,  
17 but I think we also need to really think about what does  
18 this data mean? Where did this data come from? And what  
19 took place in getting this data?

20           So to summarize I think that my experience  
21 working with different organizations and understanding the  
22 needs of different communities and really not just what I  
23 know, but what I may need to know, will be an important  
24 asset to the Commission.

1           MR. DAWSON: Thank you. Question 2. Work on the  
2 Commission requires members of different political  
3 backgrounds to work together. Since the 2010 Commission  
4 was selected and formed, the American political  
5 conversation has become increasingly polarized, whether in  
6 the press, on social media, and even in our own families.

7           What characteristics do you possess -- and what  
8 characteristics should your fellow Commissioners possess --  
9 that will protect against hyperpartisanship?

10           What will you do to ensure that the work of the  
11 Commission is not seen as polarized or hyperpartisan, and  
12 avoid perceptions of political bias and conflict?

13           MS. DIAZ: So in my current work this is my daily  
14 experience in that, because there is a perception of  
15 hyperpartisanship, because there is a perception of who I  
16 represent. What I always go to is the mission. Why am I  
17 here and reminding people that for the census the purpose  
18 is to get a complete and accurate count? It's in the  
19 Constitution. It really is for funding power and for  
20 funding for a community. So I always go back to that. And  
21 that it's been around since before any of this, any of the  
22 hyperpartisanship that's going on right now.

23           And when I go and present to different groups,  
24 which until recently is two, three times a year I always  
25 have to explain this. Because there is a perception of

1 because I'm coming from federal government that I represent  
2 a certain view or perspective or that I am -- because of  
3 what has happened to them in the past, because of who has  
4 history in federal government, that there is a lot of  
5 mistrust. So I always go back to the purpose. And I think  
6 in order to protect hyperpartisanship within the Commission  
7 is always going back to the purpose of redistricting, fair  
8 and equitable, and really what the work is.

9           And what has truly helped me has been my  
10 experience with Rec and Parks Commission. I was very  
11 fortunate to have been with my fellow Commissioners and  
12 colleagues, that I learned so much. And I always go back  
13 to I could always learn, that we could always learn from  
14 each other. So in addition to just the work I think it's  
15 important the Commissioners get to know each other on a  
16 personal level, not too deep but enough that we know that  
17 we're representing the different groups, where we're coming  
18 from and that we're representing different groups. So we  
19 have a job, an important job that the state is counting us  
20 on.

21           And the most important thing is that it's not  
22 about us, that we're representing the unit. It's not about  
23 the law representing what I believe, it's not about another  
24 Commissioner representing what they believe, that we always  
25 talk as a unit, as a board. I've been a member of

1 different boards, rural organizations, local. I've been a  
2 founding board member of a few. And it's always the board,  
3 because that says a lot, because it's not that I'm on it.  
4 For me to speak what I believe, for them to speak what they  
5 believe, that is personal.

6           And I think what's the most important thing for  
7 the Commission, any Commission board, any organization is  
8 that you speak as a unit because you're stronger in  
9 numbers. And that's really what I have learned and what I  
10 would -- how I think hyperpartisanship could be protected  
11 is really encouraging and reminding people that as a  
12 Commission we are a unit and we are speaking on behalf of  
13 this unit that really represents the state.

14           MR. DAWSON: Thank you. Question 3. What is the  
15 greatest problem the Commission could encounter, and what  
16 actions would you take to avoid or respond to this problem?

17           MS. DIAZ: The greatest problem that the  
18 Commission could encounter and what keeps me up at night  
19 sometimes is availability of data. In looking at the 2010  
20 numbers I think there was a -- in 2010 it was 73 percent  
21 response rate, in 2000 it was 76 percent. So there is a  
22 decrease in 3 percent. Given that we are shelter in place  
23 right now I worry about the numbers and the response rates.

24           In my current role I am doing everything that I  
25 can to encourage communities to respond, not just Native

1 Hawaiian Pacific Islanders but I am part of a bigger team,  
2 an L.A. team, but then also a part of this national effort  
3 to make sure that we get a complete and accurate count. So  
4 I think my concern for the data is that given that we're  
5 "shelter in place," even though online response is  
6 available for some households it might not be as easy. For  
7 hard-to-count populations it's we were counting on our  
8 partners to have meetings and then have folks to encourage  
9 participation, have units, the response units. But right  
10 now it's on hold.

11           But saying that, it's I'm also hopeful because I  
12 do know that our partners are still working very hard  
13 having virtual meetings and encouraging people to respond.  
14 So for example in San Mateo County we have a partner up  
15 there, San Mateo Complete Count Committee, they are doing  
16 phone banking from afar. So I'm really hopeful that even  
17 with this that the data will be there. But I do have to be  
18 honest for me I worry about that. And I think what I can  
19 do and what the Commission can do is really encourage  
20 participation in the process. So again going back to the  
21 partners, the community partners that we have is if they  
22 are concerned about the data that their community was not  
23 counted, go back to them and have them speak so that they  
24 can at least provide input.

1           So my concern, because there is a lot of  
2 uncertainty right now is data. But I am hopeful because  
3 there have been extensions. And I think really for the  
4 Commissioners, is it could be in the back end where we work  
5 more with the community to get their public input.

6           MR. DAWSON: Thank you. Question 4. If you are  
7 selected, you will be one of fourteen members of the  
8 Commission which is charged with working together to create  
9 maps of the new districts. Please describe a situation  
10 where you had to work collaboratively with others on a  
11 project to achieve a common goal. Tell us the goal of the  
12 project, what your role in the group was, and how the group  
13 worked through any conflicts that arose. What lessons  
14 would you take from this group experience to the Commission  
15 if selected?

16           MS. DIAZ: Okay. So one of the examples that I  
17 have is I was director of an after-school program. It was  
18 part of a nonprofit that was a special project funded by  
19 the Mayor's Office. At the time I came in ten months into  
20 the program and the program did not have any enrollment.  
21 It has not been implemented, so the dollars were just  
22 sitting there and they could lose the dollars. So I was  
23 the director of the program and my role was to get the  
24 numbers that was included in the grant, manage the budget.



1 And in doing that I worked with the local schools, we had  
2 worked with existing programs.

3           One of the things that was also unfortunate about  
4 this project is it was in South L.A. in 2000, so there was  
5 a demographic shift. And then also I was at the time  
6 young. And then I was going to really public housing and  
7 new at it. So I was considered an outsider. So it was  
8 really important for me to really learn about the community  
9 and who the leaders are. And not just the elected  
10 officials, but who the parent groups are, where they are,  
11 who the parents who sit in front of the house who knows  
12 everybody, so that was really key. And then it was also  
13 working with the local middle school, which was at the time  
14 really a school that was identified with a lot -- having a  
15 lot of needs for juvenile delinquency needs and was heavily  
16 funded by different nonprofits as well as schools and  
17 cities. So there were a lot of things going on with that  
18 school in that particular area.

19           So how I cared about it and within really three  
20 months resolved it is really going to the local leaders and  
21 letting them know what I'd know and what I'm coming in with  
22 and what I don't know, and that I need their help. One of  
23 the things that I think is important is really to know that  
24 I don't know it all and we could always learn. So going to

1 them and asking, "What is going on? What is the need? And  
2 who is providing the services?"

3           So in that I worked with the Bridges Program, I  
4 worked with the middle school and identified where the gaps  
5 where. And at the time part of the gap was really like a  
6 history class about -- I did a history class once a week of  
7 African Americans. I mean it was simple, it was just once  
8 a week. But it made a difference in getting the school  
9 involved. And then with the Bridges Program there were  
10 some aspects that they couldn't do, they didn't have  
11 funding for, that my program did. So it was really  
12 collaborating with the organization. So the outcome of  
13 that was I actually got 110 percent enrollment, I exceeded  
14 enrollment expectation within three months.

15           And then my role became more as I guess a  
16 collaborator. And really I would identify the need and  
17 then the community did the outreach because they were part  
18 of the community, so it was really empowering the community  
19 to do, to go about what they need. And I was there to  
20 support, to get the funding for it, to really manage the  
21 program.

22           Another program that I want to mention is with  
23 the City of L.A. Rec and Parks Commission. Prior to my  
24 joining the board, being appointed in fall 2016 the  
25 Commission had approved the Golf Strategic Plan. This plan

1 was a collaboration of different groups: The Golf Advisory  
2 Committee, businesses and local community members. So they  
3 had approved it, but it needed to be implemented. And  
4 timing was perfect, because actually I golf. Not well, but  
5 I understand golf and the golf community. So I was tasked  
6 by a couple of my fellow Commissioners to move the Golf  
7 Plan. A big chunk of the Golf Plan was the RFPs for golf  
8 concessions for food and beverage, which is a good chunk  
9 because it's a revenue-generating program. So a lot of  
10 that was really working with the staff. My role was to  
11 make sure that the RFPs -- I was a Chair at the Task Force  
12 Concession (phonetic) to make sure that the RFPs were  
13 moving, that it was clean, they were answering the  
14 questions and that there was also room for public input.

15           Some of the challenges we ran into was for one of  
16 the restaurants that was being proposed, the Committee  
17 didn't feel like we reached out to them, that the staff  
18 reached out to them. The golfers, the senior golfers felt  
19 like the plan was difficult for them because they would  
20 lose the locker room and there were other issues. So we  
21 had to go back, so staff went back and talked to the  
22 community, did additional outreach. Their role was to make  
23 sure that there is also a formal setting where they could  
24 provide feedback. So we had more sessions in our golf --  
25 no I'm sorry, not golf, the Concessions Task Force.

1           And then I also, well, we invited the community.  
2 We had it, we agendized it, make sure that there's an  
3 opportunity for input. I also attended the Golf Advisory  
4 Committee meeting to listen in, to make sure that they know  
5 that the Commission really wants to get this moving. So a  
6 lot of us were like building trust.

7           And then the outcome of it is that we have three  
8 new Golf, Food and Beverage contracts. Previously they  
9 were month to month, but they were moved along. So the  
10 lesson for me in that in this is really making sure that to  
11 do the homework of what was done before, what has been done  
12 and then also kind of like having a space for the community  
13 to provide feedback.

14           I previously -- it's a sad story -- but I  
15 previously worked in college for the Colorado Attorney  
16 General's Office in Consumer Protection Division. And for  
17 three days a week after class I would just listen to  
18 consumer complaints. This was before there was online and  
19 it was really you call in and then I had to direct the  
20 complaint to the right agency. And a lot of the times it  
21 was really just the matter of the constituents, the  
22 taxpayers as they often reminded me, to be able to say to a  
23 government entity and be listened to.

24           So I think a lot of what I've learned in these  
25 situations where working collaboratively with a group, with

1 my fellow Commissioners and also staff to get the RFP  
2 completed, to work with the community in implementing a  
3 program in Watts where public housing, the school and the  
4 nonprofits involved, a lot of it is really empowering the  
5 community and making sure that there is an opportunity for  
6 them to give feedback. And those are the lessons learned.

7 MR. DAWSON: Thank you.

8 Time check, Madam Secretary.

9 MS. PELLMAN: Yes, we have 7 minutes, 12 seconds  
10 remaining.

11 MR. DAWSON: Thank you.

12 Question 5. A considerable amount of the  
13 Commission's work will involve meeting with people from all  
14 over California who come from very different backgrounds  
15 and a wide variety of perspectives. If you are selected as  
16 a Commissioner, what skills and attributes will make you  
17 effective at interacting with people from different  
18 backgrounds and who have a variety of perspectives?

19 What experiences have you had that will help you  
20 be effective at understanding and appreciating people and  
21 communities of different backgrounds and who have a variety  
22 of perspectives?

23 MS. DIAZ: Thank you. I always go back to my  
24 roots in California as a community organizer. I came here  
25 in college as an intern to work for the AFL-CIO in their

1 Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers Union campaign. So I have  
2 always worked with different communities in identifying  
3 like what the need is, providing resources and  
4 collaboration. So I've worked with unions, I've also been  
5 in funding roles for 11 years. I worked for an LA84  
6 Foundation. And it's a (indiscernible) 1984 Olympics. So  
7 we funded youth sports programs throughout Southern  
8 California from Santa Barbara County all the way to the  
9 border. I was in that role for 11 years. I've visited  
10 many different communities, which was the best part of that  
11 job and really why I was there for 11 years and absolutely  
12 love it.

13 I've been to Lompoc and got to know communities  
14 in Lompoc and really understand what the needs are and why  
15 a boxing program is so important for the youth in Lompoc.  
16 I've also been to Imperial County across Cleveland Forest,  
17 which a drive there in itself says a lot about California  
18 and the diversity in terrains and how just that the  
19 Cleveland mountains, it really divides like San Diego to  
20 Imperial County. And then to the resources that people in  
21 those communities will have.

22 And then really I've worked with different ethnic  
23 organizations, different ethnic groups in that. And in  
24 those roles it's really connecting the resources and  
25 understanding the needs. I studied African American

1 history in college and then worked in South L.A. and it was  
2 really what I've learned is what you learn in the books is  
3 something else. There's a lot more layers in different  
4 ethnic groups and then in different situations. In my last  
5 role I also worked with folks in public housing and created  
6 a plan in how do we build support for an after-school  
7 program in public housing? I think it's also --I also sat  
8 on the board of Blue Sky Center, an incorporated, Santa  
9 Barbara County.

10           And part of that what I've learned in that time  
11 is really the location. So the population -- like one of  
12 the examples I always give of the importance of Census data  
13 is how it matters, how it really impacts the day-to-day.  
14 So when I was on Blue Sky one of the things that they  
15 mentioned was they needed additional resources for fire.  
16 Because a couple of years ago there was a fire. And then  
17 they sat down at a community meeting and the utility  
18 company said, "We can't get it because there is not enough  
19 census data."

20           And really like understanding just where a  
21 community sits and how that impacts the resources that they  
22 get. They're new in Cuyama Valley. They are in the tip of  
23 Kern county, San Luis Obispo, but they're in unincorporated  
24 Santa Barbara County. So just being there really helped me  
25 appreciate not just the boundaries but then also how it

1 impacts resources. And they need it more now than ever in  
2 Central Valley. There, just the water, access to water,  
3 also in Cuyama access to water. The community doesn't have  
4 access to water; they get it from a local pistachio farmer.

5           So learning that and then even for my own. I  
6 love California. I didn't think I would be here this long,  
7 but I fell in love with the state. Sometimes I'll just  
8 drive by; I'll just drive up random places. So I went to  
9 Tehachapi and spent a weekend with Norbertine nuns. And I  
10 think just being there is such a unique environment. And  
11 the community is so unique that there's just a lot. And  
12 again, they have different needs and different resources.  
13 And it's in seeing that and then just also seeing the  
14 assets that the communities have it just makes me fall in  
15 love with the state even more.

16           And I think one of the other things too is where  
17 the state is now and versus 2010 has this I think  
18 drastically different compared to 2000 to 2010. Right now  
19 Silicon Valley has grown significantly.

20           In addition, we also have new economies such as  
21 cannabis. Whether or not we agree with it, it is part of  
22 the voters have passed it. And then how will we look at it  
23 as we draw the district lines, how will that fit in to  
24 where the schools are, where everything is. So I think



1 it's important to also appreciate that and not just in  
2 addition to the diversity of the different groups.

3           And then what I'm learning from my current work  
4 and other work has really been migration of different  
5 groups in different parts Of California. For the Pacific  
6 Islanders communities there is a migration to Central  
7 Valley as well as Inland Empire. For African American  
8 communities they are leaving L.A. for the northern part of  
9 L.A. County. So what does that mean as far as jobs and  
10 then resources? So I think that in addition to just really  
11 understanding the different ethnics, the different  
12 demographics, there are also the other things, the other  
13 diversity of California that also need to be considered.

14           And last but not least is how this is all  
15 impacted the first people. So when I was on the Rec and  
16 Parks Commission we approved a park. But then we had one  
17 of the tribes come in and they were like, "Hey, this is --  
18 we are also on this land." So we do this work --

19           MS. PELLMAN: We have 30 seconds remaining.

20           MS. DIAZ: Okay. So as we do this work I think  
21 it's really important to just really have an open mind and  
22 really think about not just the ethnic diversity of  
23 California, but really the wide range and then the  
24 different layers of diversity within those groups

1 MR. DAWSON: Thank you. We'll now go to Panel  
2 questions. Each panel member will have 20 minutes to ask  
3 his or her questions. And we'll start with the Chair, Mr.  
4 Belnap.

5 CHAIR BELNAP: Good afternoon, Ms. Diaz. You've  
6 already touched on your work with the Census Bureau. And I  
7 understand from your application that you're a Partnership  
8 Specialist.

9 MS. DIAZ: Yes.

10 CHAIR BELNAP: So can you talk more about what  
11 that role is. What do you do?

12 MS. DIAZ: So a Partnership Specialist with the  
13 Census Bureau, our role is to engage and encourage for a  
14 complete and accurate count. So on a daily basis it's  
15 really finding community partners who will support our  
16 efforts. Along that is we have metrics on the number of  
17 community partners that we have to reach on a monthly  
18 basis. So since I've started I have engaged more than 130  
19 partners. So the partners include a couple of unions,  
20 churches, schools, businesses, elected officials, front  
21 local, and then also on the state level, Congressional, we  
22 have a different partnership specialist that deals with  
23 that. And then what we do is we ask them to commit to help  
24 us engage their members.

1           And then the asks are different depending on the  
2 organization. So for a business it might be posting on  
3 social media, sending information in the ListServ about the  
4 Census. For one of my partners at South Bay Coast Councils  
5 of Government (phonetic) they're a joint power  
6 organization, so I would provide them with a little bit  
7 more information such as for I've done presentations,  
8 update them on where the response rate is. For the  
9 churches it's a little bit different so we might ask them  
10 what we ask them, if we could have MQAS, the mobile  
11 questionnaire systems.

12           So we ask them for different things to support  
13 the Census effort. And it's really working with them on a  
14 day-to-day basis and making sure that they're -- following  
15 up with them to make sure that they can still support our  
16 work and then get their members counted and get the word  
17 out. So the ask for different organizations vary, but it  
18 is really making sure that we engage those different  
19 organizations in various ways, from presentations to  
20 providing resources and yeah, presentations and providing  
21 resources.

22           CHAIR BELNAP: Okay. Thank you. Why did you  
23 want to get involved in this effort?

24           MS. DIAZ: I wanted to get involved in this  
25 effort because I have been very fortunate and privileged

1 and just really heartened by California. And I know that  
2 might sound corny but I really, prior to my starting my  
3 internship with the union I had never been to California,  
4 not Disneyland, not anywhere. It was like my first time in  
5 California was in Korea town and then the union hall. I  
6 mean, that was like my very first day.

7           So what I've learned is really just I saw the  
8 different communities, I saw how segregated some  
9 communities are, I saw the different resources. And since  
10 then I've been in positions where I've had a chance to meet  
11 and connect with people that can help make, distribute  
12 those resources more.

13           So in addition to 11 years with LA84 Foundation  
14 in grant making, I also had the privilege to work for The  
15 California Endowment for 3 years where I learned about the  
16 different health needs throughout California, the different  
17 communities. And we focused on the small community-based  
18 organizations with small budgets to really get -- I feel  
19 like I've just gotten to really get to know California,  
20 California communities and I want to give back.

21           And I feel like I have with my different  
22 experiences with working with corporations, unions, local  
23 government, and then so now representing federal government  
24 I have knowledge that could hopefully -- and some more  
25 collaboration. And then help communities out and help

1 shape the communities, because a lot will happen in the  
2 next 10 years. And now more than ever we will need to plan  
3 to rebuild and really reconstruct the state. And I think we  
4 have the resources right now. I'm very thankful that we  
5 have leadership from all levels and then all size coming  
6 together to bring it to the state. And I want to be part  
7 of that effort. And I feel like I have, I believe that I  
8 have the experience and the knowledge to bring that.

9 I'm open, I don't -- my mind can be changed, and  
10 I say that in a good way in that when I was in the Rec and  
11 Parks Commission, even though I'm "More parks," all the  
12 time I also know that there is a limitation to government  
13 and community with Quimby Ordinance and that with real  
14 estate how quickly some things can change, so I understand  
15 those things. So I think my understanding of how much  
16 government can do as well as limitations.

17 And then also my desire to really just work with  
18 the community and make sure that they are heard, and things  
19 are equitable is why I really -- and what I'm bringing is  
20 why I really want to be a part of this.

21 CHAIR BELNAP: All right, thank you. Something  
22 you said sparked a question in my mind. When did you come  
23 to California?

24 MS. DIAZ: I came to California in 1998.

25 CHAIR BELNAP: You came for --

1 MS. DIAZ: And I lived in San Francisco for a  
2 year.

3 CHAIR BELNAP: You came for a job that was here?

4 MS. DIAZ: Well, my initial was 1997. I did an  
5 internship with the Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers Union.  
6 And then in 1998 I lived in San Francisco. I went to law  
7 school for a year. I lived in the border of San Francisco  
8 and Daly City by Lake Merced, so living in San Francisco  
9 and also not being in San Francisco city was also another  
10 enlightening experience.

11 CHAIR BELNAP: So you went to law school for a  
12 year. What --

13 MS. DIAZ: Yes.

14 CHAIR BELNAP: -- did you find out it just wasn't  
15 for you? What's the story there?

16 MS. DIAZ: It was not for me. It was too  
17 difficult, it was not something that -- it just felt like  
18 it was what I should have been doing after I had finished  
19 my undergraduate, but it was not what I think I was meant  
20 to do. I tried a couple of different things. I actually  
21 even interned with EEOC, filed a complaint that was  
22 (indiscernible) but it wasn't for me.

23 So I did spend a couple of years trying to figure  
24 out what worked for me and how I can give back, because for  
25 me I think the bottom line is I wanted to work with the

1 community. At the time what I thought that meant was  
2 really becoming a lawyer and working for the public. But  
3 since then I've learned that there is other pathways, so  
4 even now I work in nonprofit but I've also been in  
5 government and a lot of different roles. So yeah.

6 CHAIR BELNAP: And you didn't just mention it,  
7 but I remember from your application that you received a --  
8 you obtained a Master's in Public Administration --

9 MS. DIAZ: Yes.

10 CHAIR BELNAP: -- from CSU Northridge.

11 MS. DIAZ: Yes.

12 CHAIR BELNAP: So you did it -- you ended up, I'm  
13 assuming, finding out that that discipline was more for you  
14 than law school.

15 MS. DIAZ: Yes. I like government and really  
16 trying to -- I like implementation, so I like figuring out  
17 where things fit in and then also implementation. And I  
18 think there's a power in that. I also want to note that at  
19 the same time that I was pursuing a Master's in Public  
20 Administration I was also working full-time at the  
21 California Endowment.

22 CHAIR BELNAP: Okay. Thank you. So I want to  
23 come back to the experience you had on the City Parks  
24 Commission. How did you get selected for that Commission?

1 MS. DIAZ: That was a mayoral appointment. I  
2 volunteered a lot for the city for different events for  
3 many years and I'm very involved in the community. And I  
4 was fortunate enough to be appointed by the mayor.

5 CHAIR BELNAP: All right, thank you. In your  
6 essay on impartiality you focused most of your narrative on  
7 your experiences as a City Parks Commissioner. However I  
8 wanted to give you an opportunity to discuss how you  
9 exercised impartiality in your grants making role for the  
10 various nonprofits that you've worked for. Can you talk  
11 about that?

12 MS. DIAZ: So, yes. So impartiality and grants  
13 making role, when I worked the LA84 Foundation we would  
14 receive many different applications. And everybody had a  
15 need there from the serving communities.

16 So the first level is really whether or not they  
17 met the criteria. But then along the same line is really  
18 trying to figure out if there is a need not just within the  
19 organization, but in the community. So for example there  
20 was a at the time (indiscernible). One of the grants that  
21 I can think of is like there was a community with no  
22 programming. And that community has a greater need even if  
23 their application might not be as strong because there is a  
24 void that needs to be filled in.



1           And a lot of times also what I saw on paper was  
2 very well-written versus what I see in person, which is why  
3 I went on many site visits throughout the state of Southern  
4 California; it was different. So I could read the best  
5 application that there is, but when I see the community  
6 it's like I understand a lot of the people who submitted  
7 the grants they're volunteers, they're parents, they're  
8 just trying to get something in, in hopes that they can  
9 get it for the community program.

10           So the way that I separated bias is really not  
11 just looking at what's in front of me but seeing the big  
12 picture. Because I could easily knock something out  
13 because something might be missing, but there's a reason  
14 why something might be missing. There is a reason they  
15 might not have said something. At the same time, sometimes  
16 it's also when something is not said, then I know I need to  
17 look as to why. And I think for me it's like really in  
18 grant-making and making sure that there is no bias it's  
19 looking at the proposal as a whole, in its entirety and not  
20 just checking off things, because I could again I could  
21 easily just check off, "This fits, this fits. Yeah, I  
22 believe this." But a lot of times it requires a different  
23 look, whether a conversation with an applicant or actually  
24 going to visit the program.

1           CHAIR BELNAP: All right, thank you. You touched  
2 briefly on the site visits that you engaged in. I'd like  
3 you to talk about a specific experience you had from these  
4 site visits that increased your understanding of and  
5 appreciation for California's diversity.

6           MS. DIAZ: The one that stands to mind was the  
7 one -- I can't think of the organization right now; it's  
8 the one in Imperial County. And it was for a program, so  
9 we had grant programs where if you applied for a certain  
10 amount you're almost automatically funded if you fit the  
11 criteria. And then there's also we needed to look at it a  
12 little bit more. So it was for a program, it was for a  
13 small dollar amount. I think it was for a \$5000 program,  
14 which in comparison to the other grants that we provided is  
15 not a lot. But it required a site visit.

16           So I went to this after-school program, it was  
17 another boxing program, in Imperial County. And again,  
18 going back to driving down the 405 to the 5 going through  
19 the Cleveland Forest and then across and then going to that  
20 particular community, and then for that one program, it  
21 really helped me understand just the resources that some  
22 communities don't have. But they're also rich in other  
23 resources such as just to have land, to have a lot of --  
24 they have the fields that most city programs don't.

1           So just thinking about some communities we might  
2 look at them and say, "They have nothing. Oh, they're  
3 underserved." But I think that's also having a bias  
4 because we're putting our own judgment, not really taking  
5 into consideration the assets that the community has. So I  
6 went into that site visit really thinking and seeing along  
7 the drive the affluence and the diversity of California  
8 through the 405 and the 5, and then going through the  
9 mountains. And then also, "Wow. I have to go see this  
10 program that could just be easily funded." But I still  
11 have to go see it because it's part of the process. And  
12 then just seeing just how much that program means to that  
13 community.

14           And then also just like how I had to check myself  
15 that I was making my own -- you know, I had my own bias  
16 that just because they're (indiscernible) small community  
17 that they might need something, but they also have a lot of  
18 other things.

19           CHAIR BELNAP: All right, thank you. So  
20 something you said there sparks something I remember from  
21 your application that I want to read to you and then ask  
22 you a question. This is in your impartiality essay. And  
23 you say, "All have biases. I have biases. Knowing this, I  
24 take steps to ensure that I take care to check my biases  
25 and not allow them to affect your decision-making to the

1 extent possible." So what biases do you feel like you have  
2 to keep in check?

3 MS. DIAZ: So I think part of it is privilege. I  
4 went for a walk this morning and I was, I saw I'm like,  
5 "Wow with the "shelter in place" we have to do something.  
6 You know, there's homeless people in the streets, there are  
7 the essential workers still working, the utility workers  
8 for there, the bus drivers for there." And I'm like, "We  
9 have to do something for them. Like what's their fate going  
10 to be like?" And then I walked to my home. And then in  
11 our Homeowners Association meeting the other day it was  
12 mentioned that there's this one street, which is actually  
13 where I live, there is a lot more people.

14 And then when I got up to my street there were  
15 more people not social distancing. So there's part of me  
16 that got a little mad like, "Why are they not following the  
17 rules?" And then I had to just check that privilege  
18 because I know I have the privilege to not social distance.  
19 I can work from home. I can do a lot. If I still lived  
20 where I lived three, four months ago it would be very  
21 difficult for me to avoid people as well. And I think  
22 this, the people I saw this morning, they were a family and  
23 then the kids were just playing around in the street. And  
24 perhaps they shouldn't be.

1           And I think that my bias is really remembering  
2 that the access that people have to resources. And that  
3 even though there are rules sometimes it's a little bit  
4 harder because they don't have access to a lot of things  
5 that I might have. And I think that really is broad, but I  
6 think it's one of the things that I am realizing more now  
7 is that I think there are certain laws in place right now.  
8 But I think that for some communities it is a little bit  
9 harder.

10           And then you had mentioned my application. So I  
11 think about what I wrote in my application for one of the  
12 projects where I had to check my bias, it was a park  
13 project. And it was a 9-acre park and they were building -  
14 - the proposal was to build another rec center there. And  
15 the park was going to have a rec center, it already has  
16 another rec center, it has bicycle courts and a lot of  
17 other things. So there's a lot of green space. So coming  
18 into that for me it's like parks, you know, parks all the  
19 time.

20           But then listening to the community and hearing  
21 about there is a need for a green space but also there's no  
22 recreation space in that community. So for me it was like  
23 I have access to a recreation place, I have access to the  
24 gym and other things whereas other communities I think they  
25 should have parks, but they don't want a park. They want a

1 rec center. So that's one of the biases that I think that  
2 I'm trying to be more aware of is that really having the  
3 privilege of having options.

4 CHAIR BELNAP: Okay, thank you.

5 MS. PELLMAN: Two minutes remaining.

6 CHAIR BELNAP: How many minutes? Sorry.

7 MS. PELLMAN: Two minutes.

8 CHAIR BELNAP: Oh, okay. I'll end my questions  
9 there and I'll turn the time over to Mr. Coe.

10 VICE CHAIR COE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Good  
11 afternoon, Ms. Diaz. Thank you for taking the time to  
12 speak with us today.

13 MS. DIAZ: Thanks.

14 VICE CHAIR COE: Your application, and in your  
15 conversation today, you've discussed several efforts you've  
16 been a part of and I'm going to list some of them here. So  
17 you have current involvement, at least according the  
18 application, with Blue Sky Center, Public Media Group of  
19 Southern California, API Community Council. And you've  
20 mentioned your work as a Commissioner on the L.A. Board of  
21 Recreation and Parks. And you also on top of those had  
22 previous involvement with Asian American Pacific Islanders  
23 in philanthropy, Emerging Practitioners in Philanthropy,  
24 and the Center Theater Group among others. So my question  
25 is you've been involved in a lot of things. When you go

1 about choosing what you're going to fill your time with in  
2 terms of volunteer efforts, how is it you go about choosing  
3 the efforts that you're involved in?

4 MS. DIAZ: Thank you. It's different now. The  
5 only organization that I am still a part of is the API  
6 Community Council because I moved residences. I am outside  
7 of L.A. city boundary, so I had to step down from the  
8 Commission. And then Blue Sky Center I also stepped down  
9 due to census work. And then also just to your question  
10 picking what organizations to be a part, I am the kind of  
11 person who gets excited about the community and giving  
12 back. And I think there are some things to me that's easy  
13 and I can easily give back. So before I joined a lot of  
14 different organizations and I also was not just a member,  
15 but involved. I chaired and I did a lot of projects within  
16 the organization in addition to my daytime job.

17 And the way that I choose is it's really where I  
18 think I am needed and where I can give back. So there are  
19 actually a couple organizations where I was a founding  
20 board member. And I joined those organizations because at  
21 the time I was probably one of the few folks whose --  
22 philanthropy, that is not where it is now. Right now  
23 there's schools in philanthropy, grant-making and a lot  
24 more conveners. So I felt like I could give back in order

1 to connect those new organizations to resources, and that's  
2 why I joined because I had something to give.

3           And then so a lot of times it's really whether or  
4 not I have something to give to the organization, I could  
5 be of use, and then time. But over time I was in a lot of  
6 different organizations that I did step down on quite a few  
7 a few years ago to make sure that the organizations that I  
8 was a member of I was focused and could give more time and  
9 commit more.

10           Now I am focused on work and really trying to  
11 identify which organization that I could be a part of,  
12 because I want to be part of it in a much bigger role.  
13 Similarly when I was appointed to the L.A. Rec and Parks  
14 Commission, I stepped down from a couple of different not  
15 boards, but really commitments, so that I can focus on  
16 that. Because I know that that is not just going to be one  
17 board, but it's also a lot of different things that will be  
18 involved with that. And I definitely because it was an  
19 important Commission I wanted to make sure that I had not  
20 just the time but the mental capacity and energy to put  
21 into that.

22           So I would say five years ago my answer would be  
23 I joined organizations where I could be of use. Where I am  
24 now is I would join an organization or two where I could  
25 really devote a lot of time that I want to give up, because



1 I also want to make sure that I have time for myself to  
2 make sure that I recover.

3 VICE CHAIR COE: Thank you. I wanted to talk  
4 about that passage that you wrote in your impartiality  
5 essay about biases. Mr. Belnap beat me to the punch on that  
6 one. But I'm going to take a little bit of a different  
7 approach on the question. And since you've already  
8 discussed your awareness of your own biases, and how you go  
9 about checking those, my question is going to be how would  
10 you handle a colleague or a member of a community that you  
11 were working on behalf of who maybe wasn't quite as aware  
12 of the internal biases that might be influencing them?

13 MS. DIAZ: That's a great question. And I have  
14 been there, so let me -- I actually, in my current role  
15 I've experienced that a lot. I think part of it is really  
16 talking to them more, not necessarily about the issue just  
17 yet but letting them get to know me as a person. Talking  
18 about the issue but in a different way, because a lot of  
19 times it's really it also helps to understand where they're  
20 coming from. Because I can't tell someone, "This is what  
21 you should believe. What you believe is wrong," like  
22 that's never going to happen. I think it's really a matter  
23 of like, "Why did they think that? What experiences have  
24 they had that they believe that?"

1           Because in my experience the reason people  
2 believe or feel the way that they do is because something  
3 happened. It's not an aggregate of -- it's not one thing,  
4 but an aggregation of a lot of different things that really  
5 made them feel something. Not just they saw it, but it  
6 affected them personally. So I think really getting on the  
7 personal but not getting too personal, but I meant getting,  
8 trying to understand where they're coming from and a little  
9 bit their history and not necessarily their life history  
10 but really trying to understand who they are and what  
11 helped shape them I think really has helped.

12           In the situation I was in, I wasn't part of the  
13 community and it was questioned why I was part of that  
14 community. And there was a lot of judgment made on me, why  
15 I was there. And then also that I have certain bias, that  
16 I'm not working for the community. So over time I got to  
17 know that person a little bit more. And then just really  
18 showed how what the purpose is. Why am I working for the  
19 census? Why am I working for, why Am I assigned to the  
20 native Hawaiian Pacific Islanders community? And then that  
21 I'm doing the work. So I think that learning more about my  
22 colleague and why, where they're coming from. And then  
23 showing them what I'm doing, that I'm doing the work. And  
24 then a constant reminder of what is the big mission?

1           And you know, "Pilar is not here for Pilar.  
2 Pilar is here because there is this big thing that we have  
3 to accomplish." So I think really focusing on what the  
4 goal is and really minimizing, understanding them and then  
5 minimizing the differences, and again focusing on the  
6 commonalities has really helped me.

7           VICE CHAIR COE: Thank you. Earlier in your  
8 interview and in your essays as well you talked about when  
9 gathering input from communities you've talked about the  
10 inability of some people to come to public meetings often,  
11 that are often held during the work day or in locations  
12 that are hard for some people to get to. And in your  
13 essays you said, "I need to ensure that there is a process  
14 for those who may not be able to attend, that they have an  
15 avenue for input, that their voices not get lost in the  
16 process."

17           And since this Commission is likely to experience  
18 similar struggles in gathering community input,  
19 particularly in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, what  
20 process can the Commission put in place to maximize public  
21 input for those who are unable to attend meetings in  
22 person?

23           MS. DIAZ: I think this is where working with  
24 local organizations, perhaps if there is in a certain area  
25 having a collaborative ensuring that certain organizations

1 that represent those community members are present. So for  
2 example, in Los Angeles for domestic workers, day laborers  
3 and other groups like that they usually -- there's an  
4 organization that works closely with them to help provide  
5 them with safety net services, to get information to them.  
6 So even if those community members can't attend, working  
7 with and hopefully having a collaborative group that allow  
8 for their representative organization to be there, I think  
9 would make a big difference.

10           What I saw with a lot of my Parks Commission  
11 meetings is there are a lot more individuals. So I think  
12 in this commission's work what would help is also working  
13 not just with individuals but trying to find, identify  
14 organizations in areas that we really need input from that  
15 we could work with just to make sure that they know about  
16 the meetings, that they can represent the group that they  
17 are working with.

18           VICE CHAIR COE: Thank you. I'm going to talk  
19 about your role with the Census Bureau, current role. You  
20 talked a little bit about it with Mr. Belnap, but in your  
21 essays you mentioned using the census's Response Outreach  
22 Area Mapper. Is that a kind of mapping software?

23           MS. DIAZ: Well, it's on the website on  
24 census.gov/roam. And it has the American Community Survey.  
25 And you can go to, you can type in an address and find out

1 the census track and then the ACS response, the most  
2 current ACS response rate available. So in doing my work  
3 it's really working with another thing that's available to  
4 the public right now, which is the live responses. It's  
5 updated at noon every day. And then really matching that  
6 and trying to see where the census tracks are and then how  
7 we can work with that community.

8 VICE CHAIR COE: So it specifically --

9 MS. DIAZ: The ROAM is -- (indiscernible)

10 VICE CHAIR COE: I'm sorry, go ahead.

11 MS. DIAZ: Oh, that's it.

12 VICE CHAIR COE: Okay, so the way that you used  
13 it personally is a way to figure out how the response rate  
14 is in a certain census track?

15 MS. DIAZ: I use it in add -- so right now the  
16 census rate is up, on the tracker. So it's on the website.  
17 How I use it is really going back to if there is a certain  
18 area with a low response rate I will go to that census  
19 track and then figure out what does that particular census  
20 track look like.

21 So for example in Carson there is a census track.  
22 There's a census track and then there's a low response  
23 rate. And then I will look at it like, "Okay, so was it  
24 income level?" I mean, it's all the stuff from I think our  
25 Mini Survey. "So it was income level. What's average

1 age?" And then I'd try to figure like, "How can we best  
2 work with that community? Who can we partner with? Like  
3 if they don't have Internet, okay we need to do more with  
4 the libraries. If they don't have, if there's a lot of  
5 kids under five, okay, we need to look at the  
6 preschoolers." So that's really in planning out my work  
7 it's really looking at using ROAM. And then now that the  
8 census response rate is up, using that together.

9 VICE CHAIR COE: Thank you. So one of the  
10 biggest tasks in front of the Commission is going to be  
11 identifying communities of interest all across the state.  
12 And we talked a lot about your experience in community  
13 outreach and in gathering community concern. And so my  
14 question on this one is some communities are easier to find  
15 than others. Some are less so. In your experience how or  
16 what kind of methods can the Commission employ to kind of  
17 avoid inadvertently overlooking communities that are harder  
18 to find in its work?

19 MS. DIAZ: I'm sorry, say the last part,  
20 "inadvertently avoiding?"

21 VICE CHAIR COE: Avoid inadvertently overlooking  
22 communities that are harder to find.

23 MS. DIAZ: I think part of that is really I feel  
24 like I'm in that situation right now with the population  
25 that I work with. It's a little bit trickier, because they

1 may not necessarily be part of an organization. So I think  
2 a lot of that is really knowing some historical aspect of  
3 why those certain communities are in California.

4           So when I started out my work with native  
5 Hawaiian Pacific Islander communities. I'm Filipino. I'm  
6 not native Hawaiian Pacific Islander. I know a little bit  
7 about the community, Asian American history, but really a  
8 lot of folks just kind of lump Asian American-Pacific  
9 Islander. And Pacific Islander is a whole different  
10 community. So in starting in my role it was looking at the  
11 history of the native Hawaiian Pacific Islanders in  
12 California and starting with that.

13           So I think to avoid inadvertently not reaching  
14 out to certain communities is really looking at the history  
15 of those communities and then following that. Because  
16 again in this role it was learning about that history and  
17 then following that path that okay, first they moved to  
18 Southern California because of sugar cane and then the  
19 airport. And then now they've migrated. Why did they  
20 migrate to Central Valley? Why did they go to the Inland  
21 Empire? They moved to Inland Empire because there were  
22 some things going on in the South Bay and then the  
23 churches. The churches moved. So in partnering with those  
24 groups it was like, "Okay, the churches, follow the  
25 churches." So I think having, really understanding the

1 history of groups in California, that's really helped me  
2 find the partners and find individuals who could help me  
3 get to the population.

4 VICE CHAIR COE: So in your experience, have you  
5 ever encountered communities that had concern about  
6 engaging? They didn't want to come forward with their  
7 perspectives. Some communities are more concerned about  
8 engaging with government for a variety of reasons, but  
9 since their input is so important to the work of this  
10 Commission if you were to encounter communities that were  
11 maybe a little hesitant about coming forward and sharing  
12 their perspectives, sharing their concerns and their  
13 thoughts, how could the Commission make them feel more  
14 comfortable to come forward and share their thoughts with  
15 the -- to better inform the Commission?

16 MS. PELLMAN: Time check, we have 4 minutes, 20  
17 seconds.

18 VICE CHAIR COE: Thank you

19 MS. DIAZ: It's going back to the trusted  
20 leaders. So for both the African American community,  
21 Latino community and Hawaiian Pacific Islander communities  
22 the churches have been invaluable in getting the response,  
23 in getting engagement. So it's going back to the trusted  
24 leaders of the community and having them speak to the



1 community, because they are the leaders, they know them.

2 And yeah.

3 VICE CHAIR COE: Okay, thank you. With that, we  
4 have a little bit of time remaining. I'd like to -- for  
5 one more question to you. If you were to be appointed to  
6 the Commission which aspects of that role do you think that  
7 you will enjoy the most? And conversely, which aspects do  
8 you think might cause you to struggle a little bit?

9 MS. DIAZ: I think what I will enjoy the most is  
10 really meeting Californians and seeing different  
11 communities. The state has continued to surprise me. I  
12 think I've seen it and then I'll go to a different area and  
13 there's just so much more to learn. People are moving here  
14 for a reason, there are opportunities that are here. So to  
15 hear from Californians, all their experiences and their  
16 input excites me, whether or not they are critical, or they  
17 want something done I think just hearing about their  
18 experience I'm excited about that.

19 I think the struggle will be the time and really,  
20 getting it done. There's going to be a lot of work to do.  
21 And how do we do it fairly, given the limited amount of  
22 time? And then making sure that it's like, "Did I do it  
23 right?" I will do my best, but I think just that, making  
24 sure that everybody, everyone is accounted for.

25 VICE CHAIR COE: Okay, thank you, Ms. Diaz.

1           Mr. Chair, I have no further questions at this  
2 time.

3           CHAIR BELNAP: Okay, we will turn the time over  
4 to Ms. Dickison.

5           PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Thank you, Mr. Belnap.

6           Thank you, Ms. Diaz, for meeting with us this  
7 afternoon. So some of my questions have been asked, but  
8 you talked about your role at the Census Bureau and you  
9 also talked about that it could be like coming to  
10 California. What are some of the steps that the Commission  
11 can take to still meet its deadlines, given the lateness of  
12 the data coming to California?

13           MS. DIAZ: So what can the Commission, what steps  
14 can the Commission take given the deadline? I think just  
15 doing --wow, that's a big question. I think just planning  
16 and doing as much beforehand. So I think the timeline was  
17 originally supposed to be March 31st, and it's now end of  
18 July. Though I will have to check on that because I am  
19 doing that from the top of my head.

20           I think just planning and if anything that I  
21 think can be done without data is starting the community  
22 meetings. If there are particular areas where there can be  
23 initial community meetings and then just gather  
24 information, I think that even without all the data having  
25 listening sessions I think that's something that can be

1 done because that will allow us to at least hear from the  
2 community on where they are at. It might not be data-  
3 specific, but they might be able to provide other input in  
4 what's going on. And then once the data is available and  
5 we can do more strategic action that involves data then we  
6 can do a follow-up.

7           PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: In your public Comments  
8 there were a couple that talked about your time as a  
9 Commissioner on the Los Angeles City Parks and Recreation  
10 Commission. One said that you understand the difficult  
11 decisions that citizen commissions are tasked with and  
12 proven that you can examine issues critically but fairly.  
13 And another said that you were a valuable Commissioner  
14 because of your knowledge, competency, commitment and  
15 positive attitude. What do you think motivated these  
16 individuals to post those public comments about you?

17           MS. DIAZ: I did share with them that I applied  
18 for the Commission. I am also very excited about the  
19 Commission. And when I was on the Rec and Parks Commission  
20 I think my fellow Commissioners as well as staff can attest  
21 that I enjoy it. So I enjoy what I learn, what I learned  
22 through it. And also some of the tough decisions that were  
23 made, that it was really nothing was ever personal. There  
24 were a couple of times where I wasn't on the same page as  
25 my fellow commissioners, but I really did listen. I listen

1 to the community on a couple of different occasions. I  
2 even changed my vote because of what I learned from the  
3 community and because of what I learned from the  
4 commissioners.

5 I also value staff input. As a commissioner I  
6 was privileged enough to be able to be in a position to  
7 make the decision for 400-plus parks in L.A. along with my  
8 other colleagues. But I'm not the one who does the daily  
9 work, I'm not the one who will be impacted with the work  
10 that I will, that they will have to do. I get a little bit  
11 involved sometimes because I really know my parks. I love  
12 parks, I love being in the community. So I think sometimes  
13 -- yeah, maybe okay, so that may be some bias where is if I  
14 know a community I get like, "Okay, let me just do another  
15 check." But I think for me that's really a passion.

16 But at the same time I am very open. Again, on  
17 one of the decisions that I voted for initially I wasn't  
18 for it, but the bigger picture is that we needed to give up  
19 the park space because we needed to build housing for the  
20 homeless. So that was one of the things or I think that  
21 the people who commented understood that I love parks, I  
22 value space. At the same time I also can understand when  
23 there is a need and when government really does have to  
24 step in and really take on the space because there's a much  
25 larger issue at hand. So I think what motivated them is

1 that they understand my work, my work ethic. And then  
2 really I hold myself to the highest moral standard, that if  
3 it's something that I can't do I will sit out. And I will  
4 acknowledge it.

5 PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Thank you. You talked  
6 about your work on this just both today and in your  
7 application. One minute.

8 (Pause to sort out audio issues.)

9 PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: You said your work on the  
10 census allowed you a better understanding of the different  
11 communities. Based on that work what have you learned  
12 about the communities and their concerns? On how those  
13 concerns might bind those communities into a community of  
14 interest?

15 MS. DIAZ: So what I have learned the  
16 communities? Their concerns and -- I'm sorry, I didn't  
17 hear the last part.

18 PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: And how those concerns  
19 may bind those communities into a community of interest.

20 MS. DIAZ: So what I have learned since I go to  
21 different communities it was seeing, really seeing the  
22 layers. I worked with different communities as previously  
23 was mentioned. I was with Asian American Pacific Islanders  
24 in Philanthropy. And in that work we included Pacific  
25 Islanders. But as I worked more deeply with Pacific

1 Islander communities it was really they were a whole  
2 different group.

3           So as I mentioned before it's like there are  
4 layers within the different communities. And then in  
5 Pacific Islanders' Oceania communities there are different  
6 needs. So the needs of the Tongans, the Samoans, and the  
7 Native Hawaiians are different, and it's not one specific  
8 Islander needs.

9           And then similarly with Asian American  
10 communities, it's not just Asian Americans of course and  
11 then it's not just Filipinos, but the history of how  
12 different Filipinos came to California, United States, have  
13 layers too. So some came in as professionals and some came  
14 in as farm workers. So I think in thinking about their  
15 needs it's really different and it's not just looking at  
16 one community. It's different pockets of different  
17 communities.

18           So the concern for different communities is just  
19 really being seen as one group. Again for one of the  
20 things I heard frequently with Native Hawaiian Pacific  
21 Islanders is getting lumped as one group. And then with  
22 the Asian American communities.

23           Similarly with the Latino communities, they are  
24 from different parts of Latin and South America. So it's  
25 really how they have different concerns. Their history in

1 the United States and now really the class where they are  
2 also matters.

3           And also with the African American communities  
4 that how they came to Los Angeles. I live in a community  
5 where it's mostly professionals. There are the engineers  
6 and there are the doctors. But where I live has a lot of  
7 history of it's actually used to be a white-only  
8 neighborhood. So understanding that and then where they're  
9 coming from is really important. So what I have learned is  
10 to look even deeper, and not just looking at one group as  
11 African American or Asian American, Pacific Islander, there  
12 are separating the group.

13           And it's a lot, it's a lot. But I think that's  
14 where it's kind of exciting because and really important  
15 because I'm learning about those worlds and where are those  
16 communities now and where their needs might be is what  
17 makes me again want to be a part of, one of this  
18 Commission.

19           And then I think in how to address the concerns  
20 of those that are hard to count, hard to reach communities  
21 it's again working with the organizations that work with  
22 them. So even though there are a lot of nonprofits there  
23 are also homeowners' associations, there are a lot of  
24 clubs. I mean, even on Facebook there is a club for  
25 everything. There are professional groups within

1 businesses. So a lot of banks they have their Asian  
2 American group, their Latino groups, their LGBTQ group.  
3 And then within cities there are commissions. So in L.A.  
4 County there are commissions for Native American Indians.  
5 So really stepping back and thinking about the different  
6 groups that could be involved is the exciting part. And  
7 then also working with those groups to understand the  
8 concerns.

9 PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: What about the needs of  
10 the communities in the rural areas or the far northern  
11 areas of California versus those in the coastal areas?

12 MS. DIAZ: So for the rural areas I was on a  
13 board that was in the rural area. So in reaching out to  
14 those populations I think going to governments is helpful.  
15 And there are some nonprofits who are working with those  
16 organizations. So for example, Blue Sky network is part of  
17 the network of rural funders network where they have  
18 collaborative and then meetings. And then this particular  
19 organization works with different areas.

20 In addition, I think another resource would be  
21 the funders. So there's Southern California Grantmakers,  
22 there's Northern California Grantmakers and working with  
23 those funders to find out who they're funding because they  
24 are throughout the state. So going back on my experience  
25 with the California Endowment they fund throughout the



1 state of California, they fund in rural areas for certain  
2 initiatives. So working with them and trying to identify  
3 where they are funding. I think in addition to government  
4 and nonprofits grant-makers are also invaluable. So in  
5 looking at where the dollars are, following the money and  
6 where those grant-making dollars are going because where  
7 they're going is where the need is. And the program  
8 officers of those foundations and other leaders also have  
9 their resources and have done like a deep dive into those  
10 communities.

11           When I was a program officer I had to do, I had  
12 to pull demographic information on certain communities and  
13 then too, when I write my summary and why a place should be  
14 funded. So I think there are additional resources that are  
15 available and other partners that can help identify rural  
16 population.

17           PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Thanks. So in your  
18 application it shows that you have been with The U.S.  
19 Census Bureau for four months. Is that correct? Or is that  
20 like annually?

21           MS. DIAZ: I've been with the Census Bureau since  
22 June 2019.

23           PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Okay. Okay, that was  
24 four months at that time. Okay, thank you.

1 MS. PELLMAN: We have 6 minutes, 12 seconds  
2 remaining.

3 PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Thank you.

4 If you were selected as one of the first eight  
5 commissioners who are selected randomly you would be tasked  
6 with selecting the next six. What would you be looking for  
7 within those individuals?

8 MS. DIAZ: What I would be looking for would be  
9 experience in different sectors. I think the panel has  
10 really looked at, has a lot of applicants who are  
11 qualified. But also the diversity of what they will be  
12 bringing in. So as I mentioned before I think it's  
13 important that they come from different sectors because I  
14 think a lot of us folks from nonprofit have things that we  
15 bring in. At the same time I think having someone from  
16 business will also balance that.

17 I think also age. There's wisdom in youth and  
18 elders. And I think that's really important. I've learned  
19 a lot. I like to think I'm in the middle. I've learned a  
20 lot from my elders and I've also learned a lot from folks  
21 who are younger than me, I mean a whole lot. So I think  
22 that's important to have that balance in age. I think  
23 those. When I think about the diversity and what can be  
24 brought in I think those are the two that tends to be  
25 forgotten. I think there are a lot of folks who are from

1 the community who have experience coming in. But I would  
2 like to see Commissioners in the business sector because  
3 they bring in a completely different perspective.

4 PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Given you're from  
5 Southern California, what about geographic diversity within  
6 the Commission?

7 MS. DIAZ: Yeah, I mean that's important too.  
8 And I read some of the notes as far as the Panel's thoughts  
9 on that. I do agree that it's important to have someone  
10 near the northern border as it is in the southern coastal,  
11 southern borders and coastal. So geographic diversity is  
12 important. But I also the reason I mentioned the other two  
13 is because I think in my experience in boards and other  
14 conversations is those are the two that sometimes get left  
15 behind at other demographic considerations.

16 PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: All right, thank you. I  
17 don't have any more questions at this point. Thank you  
18 very much.

19 CHAIR BELNAP: All right. Thank you.

20 We'll now turn the panel over to Mr. Dawson.

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

22 Ms. Diaz, I wanted to follow up a little bit  
23 about your work on the Recreation and Parks Commission.  
24 And I know we've talked about it a bit, so if I missed one

1 of the details, my apologies. You were first appointed in  
2 2016.

3 MS. DIAZ: Correct.

4 MR. DAWSON: Is that correct, and were you  
5 appointed by the mayor?

6 MS. DIAZ: I was appointed technically by the  
7 mayor, yes. But I went through the interview process with  
8 the mayoral staff.

9 MR. DAWSON: How long are the terms?

10 MS. DIAZ: They are five years I believe.

11 MR. DAWSON: Okay. And is it a paid position?

12 MS. DIAZ: No, it's not. There is a --

13 MR. DAWSON: Is it per diem?

14 MS. DIAZ: There is a waiver that we had to sign.

15 MR. DAWSON: I see. Okay. To follow up, do you  
16 have to fill out a Form 700?

17 MS. DIAZ: Yes. Yes.

18 MR. DAWSON: The decisions that the Commission  
19 makes, are they final decisions or are they recommendations  
20 to the City Council?

21 MS. DIAZ: They are recommended to the City  
22 Council.

23 MR. DAWSON: Oh, okay. If -- and I don't know  
24 enough about it to know if there is a conflict, but if you  
25 were appointed to the Commission and that role conflicted

1 with your role on the Recreation and Parks Commission,  
2 would you then be resigning that?

3 MS. DIAZ: I am no longer on the Rec and Parks  
4 Commission because I moved outside of the L.A. city  
5 boundary.

6 MR. DAWSON: Oh I see, I'm sorry. I  
7 misunderstood.

8 MS. DIAZ: Yeah, I just stepped down.

9 MR. DAWSON: Oh, okay. All right. Well thank  
10 you, that answers my question.

11 I did want to -- oh, I'm sorry, Madam Secretary,  
12 how much time is remaining?

13 MS. PELLMAN: 4 minutes, 50 seconds.

14 MR. DAWSON: Oh, all right. I think that that  
15 takes care of my questions then. Mr. Chair, if there were  
16 additional.

17 CHAIR BELNAP: I don't any further questions.  
18 Mr. Coe?

19 VICE CHAIR COE: I have no follow-up questions.

20 CHAIR BELNAP: Ms. Dickison?

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

23 MR. DAWSON: All right, thank you.

1           Ms. Diaz, with the time remaining I'd like to  
2 offer you the opportunity to make a closing statement to  
3 the panel if you wish.

4           MS. DIAZ: Thank you. Thank you again for the  
5 opportunity to be here and share a little bit more about my  
6 experience. I am very excited to just be here making it  
7 this far at this point.

8           I moved to California without the intention of  
9 staying but fell in love with the state and its diversity.  
10 I think that my experiences working with the Census Bureau,  
11 local, appointed in local government as well as nonprofits  
12 and working with corporations, I think I bring in a lot of  
13 experiences that will be beneficial to the Commission.

14           And I also think, I hope they saw from some of  
15 the public comments that in addition to my (Indiscernible)  
16 experience I am also a good person to have around. I  
17 collaborate, I respect people's work, I know that people  
18 work hard, I learn, I enjoy learning from others. And I  
19 hope that you were able to see that. And I just again want  
20 to thank you for this opportunity and your time.

21           CHAIR BELNAP: All right. And thank you for your  
22 time Ms. Diaz. Thank you for being with us this afternoon.

23           We're going to go into recess now and be back  
24 tomorrow at 8:59 a.m.

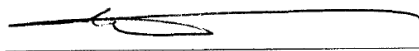
25                                 (Recess at 4:26 p.m.)

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