



May 5, 2020

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Mr. Arturo Vargas

†deceased

Applicant Review Panel  
c/o California State Auditor's Office  
621 Capitol Mall, Suite 1200  
Sacramento, California, 95814

Dear Applicant Review Panel:

On behalf of the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO) Educational Fund, I would like to thank the Applicant Review Panel (ARP) and the Auditor's Office staff for the commitment and dedication during the health pandemic in completing the interview process with the 120 applicants for the 2020 Citizens Redistricting Commission (Commission). We also greatly appreciate the ARP's willingness to institute remote interviewing practices to ensure that all applicants could be interviewed in a safe environment. As the ARP continues to narrow the pool of 120 applicants to 60, I urge the ARP to comply with requirements in the Voter's First Act that highlight the need for a selection process designed to produce a Commission that reflects California's diversity.

NALEO Educational Fund is the nation's leading nonprofit organization that facilitates the full participation of Latinos in the American political process, from citizenship to public service. Our Board members include Republicans, Democrats, and Independents. NALEO Educational Fund has actively promoted policies to ensure that Latinos can fully participate in the redistricting process, and that the resulting maps provide Latinos with fair opportunities for political representation.

As we have previously highlighted, the Voter's First Act has several provisions recognizing the importance of the Commission reflecting California's diverse population, including a provision in the California Constitution requiring that the Commission's selection process be designed to produce a Commission that is "reasonably representative of this State's diversity." Section 8252(a)(1) of the Government Code requires the State Auditor to initiate an application process in a manner that "promotes a diverse and qualified applicant pool." In Section 8252(d) of the Government Code, when creating the three subpools of 20 applicants from which the Commissioners will be ultimately chosen, the ARP must create the pools on the bases of certain applicant qualifications, including an "appreciation for California's diverse demographics and geography." Finally, under Section 8252(g) of the Government Code, when the initial eight Commissioners choose the final six from the applicant pool, the six must be chosen "to ensure the Commission reflects this state's diversity, including, but not limited to, racial, ethnic, geographic, and gender diversity."

As the ARP continues to the next phase in selecting the 60 most qualified applicants, I urge the ARP to comply with the requirements in the Voter's First Act with respect to the demographic diversity of both the overall applicant pool and political affiliation subpools, including the representation of Latinos in these pools. Latinos are California's largest and fastest growing population group accounting for nearly 40% of the state's population. It is critical that there be significant Latino representation in all three groups that comprise the Commission, and then the subsequently empaneled Commission, to truly reflect full Latino diversity.

According to data we have received from the State Auditor's office as of April 30, 2020, the overall pool of applicants is 18% Latino. There are significant disparities with respect to the Latino share of each subpool, with Latinos comprising 25% of the Democrats, 13% of the Republicans, and 15% of the applicants not affiliated with either of the major political parties. In contrast, according to U.S. Census American Community Survey data (2018 1-year estimates), Latinos comprise 30% of California's voting age citizens.

According to data from the state's voter files, as of April 1, 2020 Latinos comprise 27% of the California's registered voters - they are 32% of the state's Democrats, 15% of the state's Republicans, and 28% of those not affiliated with either political party. Thus, by any measure, Latinos are underrepresented in the applicant pool and political affiliation subpools.

Moreover, when considering geographic diversity, we urge the ARP to ensure that there is fair representation of the state's most populous regions, and to consider the impact that achieving geographic diversity has on ethnic diversity. For example, more than half (56 percent) of the state's population lives in the regions characterized by the State Auditor's office as "Southern Coastal" or "Inland Empire." The share of the state's Latino population living in these regions is even higher - 65 percent, or nearly two-thirds. Thus, if there is underrepresentation of applicants in these two regions, it is likely to negatively affect Latino representation as well.

In light of the foregoing, we urge the ARP to carefully assess the impact of its actions in narrowing the pool to 60 applicants on the demographic and geographic diversity of the pool that is ultimately selected. After each major step it takes in narrowing the pool of applicants, it must assess the impact of its choices on the overall ethnic composition of the applicant pool, the composition of each subpool, and the fair representation of the state's geographic regions before it makes its final decisions. Considering the disparities between Latino representation in the subpools, it should pay particular attention to the impact of its choices on each individual subpool.

A Commission which reflects the ethnic and geographic diversity of California's population will help ensure that qualified Latino civic leaders can share their expertise on the Commission, and help ensure that the redistricting process is fair to Latinos and other underrepresented Californians. In addition, a diverse Commission helps build the confidence of all Californians in the work of the Commission. It is for these reasons the Voter's First Act requires an applicant selection process that will produce a diverse Commission, and we believe the ARP recognizes this important goal. Thus, we urge the ARP to thoughtfully implement the recommendations set forth in this letter as the selection process moves forward.

Please contact Ms. Rosalind Gold, Chief Public Policy Officer, at [rgold@naleo.org](mailto:rgold@naleo.org) if you have any questions about this letter, and thank you for your attention to the issues we have raised.

Sincerely,



Arturo Vargas  
Chief Executive Officer

NALEO  
Educational Fund