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

THURSDAY, APRIL 2, 2020

8:59 A.M.

Reported by:
Peter Petty
APPEARANCES

Members Present

Ben Belnap, Chair
Ryan Coe, Vice Chair (Present via Zoom)
Angela Dickison, Panel Member (Present via Zoom)

Staff Present

Christopher Dawson, Panel Counsel
Shauna Pellman, Auditor Specialist II (Present via Zoom)

APPLICANTS: (Present via Zoom)

Pedro Toledo
Dorothy Hines
Jeff Comerchero
Anthony Leadholm
6. Applicant Interviews:

   Pedro Toledo                  4
   Dorothy Hines                 55
   Jeff Comerchero               99
   Anthony Leadholm              155

   Adjournment                   210
CHAIR BELNAP: It being 8:59 I’m going to call this meeting out of recess.

Ms. Dickison, can you hear us?

PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Yes, I can.

CHAIR BELNAP: Mr. Coe?

VICE CHAIR COE: I can hear you fine, Mr. Belnap.

CHAIR BELNAP: Madam Secretary?

MS. PELLMAN: Yes, I can hear you, thanks.

CHAIR BELNAP: Court reporter?

He tested okay. All right thank you.

And the ASL? Yeah.

I want to remind everyone in the room to -- and I guess those that are conferencing in to silence all cell phones and other devices. In case of an emergency, follow CSA staffs’ directions. And restrooms are in the hallway.

I want to welcome Mr. Pedro Toledo to this interview. Can you hear us, Mr. Toledo?

MR. TOLEDO: Yes, I can hear you.

CHAIR BELNAP: Okay. We’re going to start with the standard questions. I’ll turn the time over to Mr. Dawson.

MR. DAWSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Toledo, I’m going to ask you five standard questions that the Panel has requested each applicant
address. Are you ready, sir?

MR. TOLEDO: I’m ready.

MR. DAWSON: First question. What skills and attributes should all Commissioners possess?
What skills or competencies should the Commission possess collectively?

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

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

MR. TOLEDO: So, the ideal Commissioner possess the legally required skills and attributes which of course are and include relevant analytical skills, ability to be impartial, and an appreciation for California’s diverse demographics and geography.

Additionally, the ideal Commissioner would also possess integrity, which is critical for developing and keeping trust, which is a trait that I possess and has helped me to succeed in positions of trust.

Commissioners must have empathy to different points of view and people from diverse communities. My work with under-served communities throughout Northern California and beyond has helped me to gain a deep respect and appreciation for people with different backgrounds, and with diverse lived experiences.
Commissioners must also have the ability to effectively navigate conflict and be able to work effectively in team settings. In my role as Chief Administrative Officer for one of the largest nonprofit organizations in my region, I’ve learned when to lead, when to follow, and I work well with colleagues, staff, consultants, community leaders, community members, government leaders.

The ability to set aside one’s beliefs, one’s agenda to protect the integrity of the Commission or the work of the Commission is also critical.

Analytical skills, both qualitative and quantitative are important. And I have expertise in taking complex concepts and simplifying them for others. I’m comfortable with interpreting legal and regulatory rules, and concepts. I’m detail oriented, cautious, and utilize data to make decisions.

I’m also committed to excellence and have the ability to prioritize performing the work with excellence, and getting work done in accordance with high standards, and diligence, accuracy, and high quality.

I have good communication skills and the ability to present at hearings, which I’ve done throughout my career. Also, additionally, transparency, conscientiousness, thoughtfulness, sincerity, those are all
skills and attributes that I possess.

Furthermore, I believe that the ideal Commissioner will have to dedicate the time and prioritize the work of the Commission among other -- many other competing responsibilities, such as personal, family, work, and community responsibilities.

Over the last two years I’ve had--I’ve been challenged with unexpected family, work, and community responsibility, yet I’ve demonstrated an ability to overcome these challenges and be able to overcome goals expected of me.

While working full time as Chief Administrative Officer for my organization, and overseeing the Community Health Centers in Southern Sonoma County, I also enrolled in the master’s in healthcare administration.

And during this time a close relative developed a terminal illness and I also helped lead the organization through two wildfires, and now a public health emergency. Even in these challenging times and with competing pressures, I’ve been able to complete the work expected of me in all areas of my life. And to accomplish this I’ve had to plan very carefully, to organize my work, manage my busy schedule, prioritize, and be able to balance -- to be able to balance my personal, my family, school and community commitments.
I have learned to delegate more and to focus on what’s important. People expect me to lead, communicate, to be on time, to show up and to participate. And being present and in the moment when in class, or when with colleagues, or family, or at community meetings that’s really important, being able to be in the moment.

Also, I’ve learned to take time for myself when I need it, which has helped me to successfully navigate and balance loads of responsibility.

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

What characteristics do you possess, and what characteristics should your fellow Commissioners possess, that will protect against hyperpartisanship?

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

MR. TOLEDO: My work with leading community health clinics in a rural geographical service area requires me to work with and serve people from diverse backgrounds, including diverse political backgrounds.
While political polarization as permeated many aspects of our lives, it’s important to continue to work towards common solutions and that’s what I try to do in my work. I’m not affiliated with a specific political party and the reason for that is I genuinely believe all political perspectives have something to offer. And perhaps this has to do with my training in cultural anthropology, which helps me to appreciate and respect other people’s unique experiences, their perspectives and their backgrounds.

To protect against hyperpartisanship I believe Commissioners must seek to understand and to listen to diverse perspectives of their fellow Commissioners and of the public, and others. This will show respect for diverse perspectives, they’ll trust, develop a commitment to want to hear and listen from diverse voices.

And I think Commissioners should have genuine curiosity and a desire to genuinely engage with others in an authentic manner, which I believe builds trust and demonstrates that they’re opening to understanding and learning from different people and different perspectives.

Additionally, Commissioners must behave professionally among themselves, with staff, with the public, in all aspects of their life. They should avoid being perceived as rude and communicate -- and be able to
communicate effectively with each other and in public. Disagreements occur and when they do, Commissioners should strive to disagree in a respectful and professional manner.

I possess all of these characteristics. And the specific plans that I would have to protect against claims of hyperpartisanship on the Commission would be to engage and leverage trusted community organizations, and community leaders from diverse communities, and with diverse perspectives from across California to be able to build trust with hard-to-reach populations.

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

MR. TOLEDO: I believe the biggest or the greatest problem for the Commission would be perhaps a successful challenge to redrawing of the lines. The independent Redistricting Commission was established by citizens of California through the proposition process which is, of course, a direct form -- a form of direct democracy. And the voters took the redistricting process away from politicians to prevent situations where elected officials chose their voters, rather than having the voters choose their representatives.

And the citizens of California, I believe, expect
their votes to matter in choosing their representatives, and they want people who are responsible, representatives who are responsible and accountable to the needs of their communities. The Commission is thus charged with ensuring the principle of one person one vote.

And for the courts to overturn redistricting, the Commission’s maps would result in a loss of trust in our electoral process, citizens feeling that their voice and votes don’t matter, and resulting probably in disengagement that would hurt our democracy.

Additionally, any redrawing of the line that’s done at the courts may not involve -- may result in the perception that those lines are drawn in a partisan and not an independent process.

Regardless, I think in order to avoid legal challenge and in order to ensure that the work of the Commission is accepted by the public and by the -- by everyone, we must follow the laws that govern redistricting, and follow the principle of one person, one vote. We must genuinely and meaningfully engage communities and listen to the voices of Californians when identifying communities of interest.

This will ensure further engagement in our democracy and uplifting of communities, instead of disengagement.
In all decisions Commissioners, I believe, had to seek adequate legal counsel, and evaluate risks, and ensure that their decisions are supported by appropriate documentation and appropriate opinion. And to support such occurrence, I would work tirelessly to ensure that the Commission follows the principle of one person, one vote, that it works to ensure that there’s adequate documentation and support for decisions, and ensure that our democracy is protected.

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

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

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

MR. TOLEDO: Well, after the Affordable Care Act was passed, various years ago, I served as the Chair of the Board for Sonoma County’s children -- well, Community Health Initiative, which was comprised of community leaders, government leaders, as well as healthcare and
social service organizations representatives from across Sonoma County, which is a large and diverse county.

And the goal of the group was to develop and implement a strategy to outreach to and enroll all eligible uninsured people in health coverage, and connect those individuals -- if they didn’t have a source of trusted care, to connect them with a source of trusted care.

And my primary role as Chair was that of helping to facilitate consensus building and resolving conflict when it arose. And how we worked through conflict to achieve consensus on developing the strategy was that we developed a common understanding of the problem and then a shared vision for change. And we did this by gathering and analyzing data, all of the data that was available to us, whether it was from the Census, whether it was our public health department, from the eligibility department. And we used that data to inform our understanding of the problem.

And we developed a good understanding of where the uninsured were located, which helped us to develop a shared vision.

Conflicts arose when crafting strategies to actually address the problem, to actually go out and as we tailored our strategies for outreach and enrollment. But consistent and open communication helped us to work through the conflict and to build trust with the different members
on the committee that ultimately made the decision.

And of course we held many meetings. We heard, listened to each other’s perspective, learned from the experts in the community, the community members, from -- you know, we received guidance from all over. And reviewed all that data, discussed, disagreed, and had those difficult conversations.

But ultimately, we were all patient with one another and respectful with one another and all had the shared vision of getting all of these people enrolled into coverage and improving their health status as our end -- that was our goal. And so, in doing that we all trusted one another.

And I think what also helped us was that we developed a data-driven and objective decision making process, where we used the data as -- all of our decisions were based on data and were data driven. And by focusing and analyzing the data, we were able to more easily work through some of the conflicts and achieve consensus.

In terms of lessons that I’d take from the group experience, I think it’s important to take the time to listen to everyone’s perspectives. Everyone comes from different experience, different knowledge, different and sometimes incomplete information. But together our knowledge -- you know, together we’re able to build a
shared understanding once we understand and we listen to people’s perspectives to come up with a shared understanding. And that, of course, creates trust.

And it’s important to create a safe space for people and colleagues to express their perspectives, their ideas, and their concerns.

Second, I think a data-driven, objective decision making process helps to diffuse conflicts occasionally, and also in making sound decisions.

And lastly, I would just add that it’s critical to have consistent and open communication, and be respectful with one another, since we all process information and data differently, and are looking at it from different perspectives and such.

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

If you are selected as a Commissioner, what skills and attributes will make you effective at interacting with people from different backgrounds and who have a variety of perspectives?

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

MR. TOLEDO: Well, working with community health centers over the last 20 years I’ve had the opportunity to meet with and learn from people from different backgrounds, ethnicities, agendas, perspectives, life experiences. Because every community health center is really focused on their particular community. So, when you learn about one community health center, you’re really learning about that one community health center. Every health center is responding to the unique needs of their population, of their service areas, of their community.

And my genuine curiosity about people from different backgrounds I think has helped me to be effective at engaging and developing relationships with diverse people and diverse perspectives. And in my travels across the state and also in my work to help expand health coverage for under-served individuals, and also to expand the access to health care individuals I’ve had the opportunity to work with and learn from other community leaders, from— with individuals, with consumers, business leaders, government leaders and I’ve been able to communicate effectively with them, and develop trust with individuals that I’ve worked with.

And also, just in those travels I’ve made lots of
friends. I have family who live all over California. Colleagues from community health centers all over the state. And I’ve had the opportunity to learn about what’s important to them and their community, their hopes, their desires, their dreams and those of the people they serve, as well as the things that they want to improve, change or -- and I think this experience allows me to appreciate and understand the people of different backgrounds and with different perspectives, and positions me to do the work of the Commission.

MR. DAWSON: Thank you. At this point we’ll go to Panel questions. Each Panel Member will have 20 minutes to ask his or her questions. We will start with the Chair, Mr. Belnap.

CHAIR BELNAP: All right, thank you. Thank you, Mr. Toledo for being with us this morning.

MR. TOLEDO: Thank you.

CHAIR BELNAP: Five years after obtaining a bachelor’s and master’s degree from Stanford you obtained a law degree from Cornell. Why did you go to law school?

MR. TOLEDO: That’s a great question. I went to law school because, you know, coming from an immigrant family the choices that were given to me were to become a doctor -- so, I had three paths that I can take. One was to become a doctor, which I don’t like blood so that wasn’t
going to work for me. The other was law, a lawyer, or a teacher.

And so, those were the career paths that my parents knew that they felt were appropriate for their male child. And so, of those three options, law just seemed like the most appropriate one for me. And I thoroughly enjoyed it. It was a great experience, an opportunity to learn the law. And it was an exercise in just learning the rules, and the law, which has helped me throughout my career.

(Whereupon the court reporter interrupts the proceeding to announce a technical difficult, and asks the speaker to recapitulate the last 20 seconds of his response.)

MR. TOLEDO: I forgot where I left off, sorry.

CHAIR BELNAP: So, Mr. Toledo, you were answering why law school?

MR. TOLEDO: Yeah, so I went to law school because I had three options in my community, and with my family, and those were to either become a doctor, a lawyer, or a teacher. Those were the options that my family, in my particular experience, you know, that were open to me.

And so, of those three I chose the legal profession and went to law school, and had a great experience and learned a lot that -- and have -- you know,
and ultimately decided to move into the healthcare space, but still use many of the concepts, administrative law concepts in my daily work. Especially in overseeing compliance work at the health center.

CHAIR BELNAP: Okay, thank you. So, I take it that you do not consider yourself to be a lawyer, that’s not your profession?

MR. TOLEDO: I consider myself to be an administrative -- a healthcare administrator.

CHAIR BELNAP: Okay. So, you indicated in your application that while on the Board of California Children’s Health Initiatives you were able to set aside your personal views to make fair and equitable decisions. Please describe what that organization is and give us an example of a time when you had to set aside your personal views to make a decision?

MR. TOLEDO: Sure. So, that organization represents the community health initiatives across the State of California and different communities have Children’s Health Initiatives, community health initiatives, and those initiatives are focused on enrolling people into health coverage.

So, for example, Sacramento has community health initiatives, Sonoma County does, Napa does. And actually, communities throughout the state do. And at the state
level for the California Community Health Initiative, they’re striving to ensure that we all have the resources, and they advocate for and with the regional association.

In terms of being on that board, of course, you know, coming from Sonoma County and coming from a rural area, and representing that area one has an agenda. But when you’re on the board, and in my case I was on the executive board, you have to put the interests of the whole organization, the California Community Health Initiative before those of your own individual interests. And that means putting aside your agenda and doing what’s right for the organization, an organization that you’re on the board for.

And an example would be in, you know, determining how resources were used. You know, being able to -- you know, there’s some formulas that may have helped rural areas a little bit more, or urban areas, but really looking at the data and putting, you know, our -- my self-interests aside and ensuring that the resources were used to enroll the maximum number of uninsured individuals as opposed to other formulas that may have helped my area more. Right. Because ultimately we were -- our goal was to enroll as many people as possible into coverage.

CHAIR BELNAP: All right, thank you. Throughout your career you’ve worked to ensure that medically under-
served communities have access to healthcare. I’d like you to describe an example of your efforts and how they’ve increased your understanding and appreciation of California’s diverse population.

MR. TOLEDO: Yeah. So, in doing -- every health center has to do -- every community health clinic, federally-qualified health center has to do a needs assessment. And that’s a requirement of a community health center. And as part of that needs assessment you’re looking at the needs of the community. You’re looking at the demographics of your community, the health disparities, but also, because 51 percent of your board minimum has to be patients, these organizations are led by the patients, the consumers themselves, and are responsive to the needs of the community. That’s what ensures that.

So, working with the leadership of these organizations has brought me very close to the patients, of which I used to be a patient of a community health center. I grew up in -- growing up, a community health center served as my medical home, and the place where I got healthcare. And I’ve served on boards of community health centers. I’ve been elected onto boards of community health centers by patients.

But the biggest community health center in Northern California, right after undergraduate, and my
undergraduate education, and that’s actually what propelled me to move me from law to community health centers. That experience on the board for Clinica La Raza in Oakland, and being able to -- and having been elected by the patients, a very democratic process, to represent the consumer needs. I, myself was a consumer. And to represent those needs on the board.

CHAIR BELNAP: Okay, thank you. I’d like to read a portion of your application --

MR. TOLEDO: Sure.

CHAIR BELNAP: -- a few sentences, and then ask you to provide an example. This is in your analytical section of your application. You said: Much of my work in healthcare involves analysis of complex data. Often this work requires me to conduct regression analysis and other statistical tools to improve health outcomes and access to care in a cost-effective manner.

I’ll stop there. Can you walk us through an example of complex analysis that you’ve performed?

MR. TOLEDO: Yeah, there’s various. There’s—oh I think healthcare is very data driven. It has to be. Especially, I mean our organization, which serves about -- we provide about 200,000 visits a year, about a $60 million budget at this point. You’re working to leverage your resources. And so, we have all sorts of -- we’re data
rich. We have electronic medical records that capture all sorts of information.

So, what we’ve been working towards is the triple A concept in healthcare, and that’s reducing costs, improving the patient experience, and also improving health outcomes, ultimately. So, one of the areas where we’ve been focusing is on diabetes. And so, we’re able to look, we’re able to pull all of the data for all of our diabetic patients and then, using our statistical analysis we’re able to actually, at this point, identify individuals who are at risk for certain conditions.

And so, when you look through the data, you analyze that data, you’re able to come up with -- in our case we’re able to come up with -- well, one example would be, well, we were able to go through the list using our analyses and identify the individuals who are at risk of having a heart attack or a stroke in the next -- over the next five years or so.

And so, what we do is we -- when you identify those individuals who, through your algorithms are able -- you’ve identified that potentially have a health event, then you’re able to target interventions for that person. And we have evidence-based interventions for that group that we can -- that we would, of course, recall them in, bring them in, provide appropriate treatment. And that’s
how we’re able to reduce health disparity by ensuring that that’s done across all of our patients, not just those who have insurance, but all of our patients.

CHAIR BELNAP: And in this work how much have you used maps or prepared maps for others to use?

MR. TOLEDO: The usage of maps we do for hot-spotting. So, for example, and that’s a terminology we use, identifying clusters. So, we map our patients, where do they live. And then, we also overlap condition and patients who are -- who have sugar levels that are too high, that are potentially -- potentially dangerous. And being able to see if there’s clusters of patients. Or, not just that, but also Hep C, or HIV, or other types of issues so that we can identify if there’s something in the geographical environment that’s helped -- that’s causing some of this or that’s contributing to these issues, or if we can design interventions that are more effective.

Additionally, the use of--I use maps for health professional shortages, so enabled to -- in order to try to leverage federal funding for loaner payment programs for our physicians, our nurse practitioners, and other healthcare providers. So, we’re able to map the disparities in physician shortages in our community, in rural communities, and able to use that data to secure additional funding for loaner payment assistance for our
physicians and other providers.

And also, for developing needs assessments. Our needs assessment is -- and the creation of our service area, which we adjust every three years, is created through mapping software. We use UDS Mapper, which is a GIS software that actually I do, where we take all of our patients, figure out where they’re coming from, plot it into the map, and then identify our appropriate service area, where we’re going to target our interventions.

CHAIR BELNAP: Okay, thank you.

MR. TOLEDO: For further purposes, yeah.

CHAIR BELNAP: Got it. Thank you. I have no further questions. I’m going to turn the time over to Mr. Coe.

VICE CHAIR COE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Good morning, Mr. Toledo. Thank you for having the time to speak with us today.

MR. TOLEDO: Good morning.

VICE CHAIR COE: So, you are the Chief Administrative Officer of Petaluma Healthcare, Incorporated, is that right?

MR. TOLEDO: That’s correct.

VICE CHAIR COE: So, in your application you also discuss, I think this is another organization, called community health centers, which has a patient-led board of
directors that you referred to earlier.

Help me understand how your organization, Petaluma Healthcare, is related to community health centers?

MR. TOLEDO: Well, community health centers is just a generic term for community health clinics. So, we are a community health center.

VICE CHAIR COE: Okay. But community health centers has a board of directors, so it’s some organization that oversees various local community health centers, like Petaluma?

MR. TOLEDO: Community health centers have -- all community health centers have patient-led boards.

VICE CHAIR COE: I see, so community health centers isn’t a separate organization, it is just a generic term for centers like Petaluma Healthcare, or Health Center, and your health center has a patient-led board of directors?

MR. TOLEDO: That’s right.

VICE CHAIR COE: Okay, understood. With a patient-led board of directors like you have in place at your organization, which as you write, “Ensures that executives like you are overseen by the people who receive medical and dental services at their facilities.” In short, you report directly to the people that you
Do you think that your experience working from this perspective will make you an especially effective Commissioner?

MR. TOLEDO: I think so. And I think it’s, you know, getting -- having people whose vested interests is -- who are from the community, who know their community, who -- community health centers actually started during the war on poverty in the civil rights movement. And the concept, unlike other healthcare organizations, where you might have significant medical expertise driving the decisions, medical leaders being on the board, physicians and such on the boards of community health centers, on the boards of healthcare organizations, we’re actually restricted. Only 10 percent of our board can be -- individuals on the board can derive their income from healthcare. And that’s because Congress at the time believed in the importance of having community members determine their healthcare needs, and not the healthcare community.

That it was actually the healthcare, the patients that knew best about the interventions that they might need, about their issues, about their unique circumstances. And that’s continued until today. Community health centers are still led by patients as opposed to being led by physicians and other medical organizations.
That doesn’t mean that we don’t use evidence-based treatments. We do, we’re required to do so. But in terms of when it comes to where we open up sites, the services that we provide, our hours of operation, the needs of the community, those things come from our patients. And our patients tell us, tell management. And, of course, we provide them with the data, and the needs assessment, and others, but they provide us with the qualitative, their lived experience and other information that helps us to collaboratively make decisions for the community.

VICE CHAIR COE: Thank you. I want to discuss information in your essay on impartiality, which I think Mr. Belnap touched on earlier. You discussed your time on the Board for California Children’s Health Initiative.

And, well, I think along a similar sense that Mr. Belnap quoted earlier, where you say that while on the board you made efforts to hear diverse voices from across the state in order to make fair and equitable decisions.

My question is in what form did you gather this input and hear these voices? Was it public meetings, was it emails, or surveys, or other some type of communication? How were you gathering this information?

MR. TOLEDO: So, we had monthly meetings, as well as subcommittees, and executive committee meetings. And oftentimes I think the tension, especially in healthcare
and other arenas is oftentimes real -- there’s oftentimes tension between rural and urban communities, a perceived tension because of resource allocation. And so, those are the things that we had to be very careful with, that I was very careful with and worked very hard to ensure that I put my agendas, my issues aside for the betterment of the entire organization’s position and that’s for -- an that’s the California Children’s Health Initiative, and they’re now called the California Community Health Initiative because they’re beyond children.

But making sure that they were positioning the organization for further funding, for further opportunities that may come down through the federal government process. And so, just ensuring that we did was best for the organization and whether that was in our subcommittee meetings, or our executive meetings, or our regularly monthly meetings with the membership, those were things that we all strove to do. We all strove to do what was best for the population of California.

VICE CHAIR COE: Thank you. In your essays and in some of the discussion you’ve had this morning you talked about working with or working for, or on behalf of various diverse people in your local region. So, from your interactions with the people that you’ve met and represented, what have you learned about their needs, and
desires, and preferences that would make you an effective representative for them on this Commission?

MR. TOLEDO: Well, I think what I’ve learned is everyone is unique. Everyone has diverse perspectives and it’s important to understand where people are coming from, to be respectful, and the importance of gaining trust from individuals.

And you do that by meaningfully trying to understand where they’re coming from by taking the time, and having genuine curiosity about what their issues, what they care about which may not necessarily be the things that I care about, but it’s what they care about. And having genuine curiosity about that and understand that folks are coming with their specific lived experiences, their perspectives, their--and come to these conclusions because of their lived experience, and appreciating that, and respecting that, and understanding that, you know, there’s diversity within all communities. And people are not monolithic, right, they’re very diverse and they have unique perspectives.

And it’s really trying to understand what those are. And in my case it’s been -- I’ve been interested in trying to widen the circle of opportunity for everybody, and trying to see how we reach commonalities, focusing on the things that we share in common. And those are the
things that -- by focusing on those things, focusing on the
things that we share in common helps to be able to further
discussions and build common trust, and move conversations
forward.

VICE CHAIR COE: Thank you. A similar question,
but in regards to people in different areas of the state.
So, areas outside your local region, Petaluma, Sonoma
County, what experiences have you had outside your local
region working with people in different regions. Let’s say
in different areas of the state that may have different
regional-based concerns and perspectives, what have you
learned about those folks that would make you an effective
representative for them on this Commission?

MR. TOLEDO: Sure. And so, I’ve been working
with community health centers. I’ve traveled all over the
state. And even, as I mentioned earlier, even in my
personal travel. But, you know, just, well, I consider
Sonoma County to be somewhat rural. You know, I’ve
traveled and worked with, very closely with the community
health centers in Humboldt, and Lemoore, and Shasta County
where it’s a lot more rural than we are.

And I’ve learned that while we’re -- that we have
some similarities, there’s also -- and there’s common
issues that we all advocate for. But they also have very
unique issues to which -- that are impacting the health of
their population and they care about things -- they might be similar, but they care about very specific things to their community. And they have different levels of need, whether it’s something as simple as maybe not having specialists, and having -- and not having enough hospital beds, or not having sufficient access to specialty services. Just the challenges of living in rural areas and being able to get and access healthcare. And so, in different regions it’s very different. And just the lived experience is very different.

But also, you know, having come from a -- you know, my father was a farmworker and I have had the opportunity to travel across the Central Valley, as well, and looking at -- and the issues in the Central Valley are very different than they are in Humboldt, or Sonoma or, you know, a more rural area, a more urban area like Oakland, or San Francisco, or Los Angeles.

And so, but the people’s perspectives, what they care about, the opportunities that they want for their kids, the engagement in their local government, and wanting to be - wanting to have a voice, that’s something that I think all communities want. And they want to be heard, they want to be respected, and they want to be -- and, ultimately, they want accountability from their representatives and they want for the betterment of their
community, and the betterment of the health status of their community.

CHAIR BELNAP: And with the theme of communities, I wanted to discuss communities of interest briefly. So, on top of the Census information, some of the most important information that the Commission is going to have to consider is identifying and understanding different communities throughout the state. And some of those communities are easier to find, they’re more obvious, they’re more engaged. Some are harder to locate.

And earlier you mentioned needing to reach out to trusted community organizations to try and find communities that might be harder to locate. I’m wondering if you can expand about that a little bit more, talk about maybe some strategies that you could see the Commission employing to identify communities of interest, with a special interest on inadvertently overlooking some of these hard to identify communities.

MR. TOLEDO: I think that trusted community organizations have access to individuals. So, when we were working to enroll people into health insurance, and that was, if I remember correctly it was over 20,000 people in Sonoma County that were uninsured, and we were converting to trying to get enrolled into health coverage.

We turned to trusted organizations. For people
who are homeless, there are the homeless organizations, the advocacy groups, the shelters, or the faith-based organizations who provided some of these social services for them. And worked through them and with them to be able to access some of the harder to reach populations. Or, you know, for farmworkers and/or individuals who -- without status, we worked through other organizations. Some of the immigration organizations, but also farmworker organizations, et cetera. And also, faith-based organizations.

In terms of hard to reach populations for, you know, whether it’s homeless individuals, people with limited English proficiency, or immigrant populations, different ethnic groups or others, I think there are trusted individuals and/or organizations that can help -- that can help with gaining access to the community and gaining trust with that community so that they can -- so that, essentially, we can provide services or a voice for them, or give them an opportunity to share their voice, rather.

VICE CHAIR COE: So, similar line -- or a similar topic, the same topic, some communities and you may have experienced this in your work, they’re less engaged and they don’t necessarily feel comfortable coming forward to provide or to speak opinions, or to engage government
entities for a variety of reasons. But since input of communities, as many communities as can possibly found and engaged, since input from these communities is so important to the work of the Commission how do you think you could go about making some of these communities that are concerned, or are not comfortable engaging, how would you go about making them feel comfortable in order to provide their perspectives to better inform the Commission?

MS. PELLMAN: We have three minutes, 30 seconds remaining.

VICE CHAIR COE: Thank you.

MR. TOLEDO: For, you know, in working with the Covered California and I served on the marketing committee. I can’t remember the exact title for the commission -- the committee for the Covered California group. But one of the strategies we taught was to really meet people where they live, work and play. So, using the trusted organizations, but also going to the populations themselves. Learning enough to be able to know where they were, and what they were -- you know, the types of places where we can find them. So, going to them, rather than them coming to us.

And so, that was what we needed to do to effectively outreach to them and to bring them in. And, ultimately, through our research we identified that it would take about seven touches to be able to get them to
actually participate with us and initiate the process of looking at health insurance options, and potentially enrolling.

And so, that’s the strategy we used both locally and at the state level was to go to the people where they were and try to develop a relationship with them, whether through the organizations and using, leveraging community-based organizations, like community health centers, faith-based organizations or others, or directly. And in some cases both.

VICE CHAIR COE: Okay, thank you. Mr. Chair, I don’t believe I have any -- enough time to ask another question, so I’ll go ahead and yield my time for questioning.

CHAIR BELNAP: All right, thank you. The time is now yours, Ms. Dickison.

PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Thank you. Good morning Mr. Toledo, can you hear me okay?

MR. TOLEDO: Yes, I can. thank you.

PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Okay. So, you’ve answered a lot of my questions and I may ask something you’ve already answered because of a few connectivity issues I’ve had. So, please excuse me if I do.

So, in your essay on impartiality, you acknowledged that not everyone’s going to be happy about
the lines once they’re drawn, but the people need to have assurance the districts were drawn fairly with appropriate criteria, were thoughtfully and legally evaluated.

What can the Commission do to give people this type of assurance that the lines were drawn fairly, even if they’re not happy with them?

MR. TOLEDO: I think the most important thing that the Commission can do is get as many voices and perspectives about the lines, and meaningfully evaluate those perspectives, that information, that data, and take it seriously. Take the voices of the citizens of California, who created the Commission, seriously. Use that and be able to explain in a transparent manner why decisions were made the way that they were made. And I think that goes a long way to address some of those issues.

I think oftentimes people want to be heard and when they’re not heard that’s when there’s distrust, and the perception of not being heard. And so, hearing people and being able to address the issues, and taking that into consideration, even if it doesn’t always change the end results may help to diffuse the perception of lack of impartiality, you know, at least the concept that these lines were drawn in an impartial manner, an objective manner. That the data was taken, it was reviewed, and it was analyzed.
MR. TOLEDO: Hello?

PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Okay, I disappeared for a minute, I do believe.

MR. TOLEDO: I saw a little gap. Did you get my answer, though?

PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: I did. I did. You were just wrapping up when I paused for a moment.

You also talk about visiting under-represented populations from urban and rural settings. What did you learn about the needs of people and how those can differ based on geography?

MR. TOLEDO: I mean I’ve been -- I’ve traveled not just throughout California, but also, you know, the world, and I’ve been fortunate and very lucky to be able to travel.

And I mean, I think there’s this perception that for some reason if you’re poor you may not, or if you are diverse, or if you live differently than maybe, you know -- if you don’t value certain things that mainstream America does that there’s something wrong or unusual.

And I think what I’ve learned is that, you know, people want very similar things. They want good education for their kids. They want the opportunity to be able to excel, to do well, good education, safe places to live. They want access to, you know, good paying jobs and,
ultimately, the ability to live and contribute to society. I generally believe that whether it’s, you know, farmworker communities in the Central Valley or, you know, community-immigrant communities in Los Angeles, or any communities across the state that there is shared commonality and shared values that we all want.

And also, very unique experiences because of where we live and the opportunities that are actually there in the geographical areas where we might live. And, you know, just where do you live determines -- I mean the research shows that where you live determines your health status, too. Right, the schooling, the employment opportunity, the -- I’m sorry, did I lose you?

Did I lose --

CHAIR BELNAP: Ms. Dickison, are you there?

MS. PELLMAN: Shall I stop the clock?

CHAIR BELNAP: Yes, let’s stop the clock momentarily.

MS. PELLMAN: Okay, I’ve done that.

(Pause)

CHAIR BELNAP: So, Mr. Toledo, we apologize. As you probably heard from Madam Secretary, we’ve stopped the clock.

MR. TOLEDO: No worries.

CHAIR BELNAP: So, we’ll just pick up when we get
Ms. Dickison back on the line.

MR. TOLEDO: No problem.

Mr. DAWSON: There she is, we have her back.

MS. PELLMAN: Okay, I’ll start the clock. We have 14 minutes and 14 seconds remaining for Ms. Dickison’s time.

CHAIR BELNAP: So, Ms. Dickison, can you let us know what your question was and what part of the answer you had heard, so Mr. Toledo knows where to pick up?

MS. PELLMAN: It looks like we’ve lost her again. I have not restarted the clock yet.

CHAIR BELNAP: Okay.

(Pause)

CHAIR BELNAP: So Mr. Toledo, while we get Ms. Dickison back on the line, we’re going to have Mr. Dawson ask his follow-up questions. That way, we’re making the most use of our time.

MR. TOLEDO: Okay.

CHAIR BELNAP: I’m going to turn the time over to Mr. Dawson.

MR. DAWSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair. And, yes, I’ll be happy to yield back my time to Ms. Dickison when we get her back.

I wanted to follow up on one of your responses to essay four, on your analytical skills. You mentioned that
you had experience testifying at legislative hearings for healthcare initiatives.

MR. TOLEDO: Uh-hum.

MR. DAWSON: Were these committee hearings on bills?

MR. TOLEDO: There have been committee -- there were committee hearings, yes, on bills, whether it’s for community health centers or some of the initiatives that we’ve undertaken over the past couple of years.

MR. DAWSON: And you came to testify at the request of the bill author, is that how that worked?

MR. TOLEDO: Generally, the bill author. Occasionally, through public testimony as well.

MR. DAWSON: I see, thank you.

MR. TOLEDO: Both here in California, but also in D.C.

PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Hello. Hi, this is Mrs. Dickison.

CHAIR BELNAP: So, Ms. Dickison, we can hear you. What we’ve done is we’ve had Mr. Dawson go ahead and start his questions. We’ll have him finish and then he’ll yield the time back to you.

PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Okay, that sounds perfect.

CHAIR BELNAP: Okay, thank you.
MR. DAWSON: Mr. Toledo, in your response to standard question four, you talked about using a data-driven process. What makes a process data driven and how would that be applicable to the Redistricting Commission?

MR. TOLEDO: Sure. So, for using data, what I believe what I’m -- and I can’t remember the exact wording in that section. But in terms of making data-driven decisions, it’s using the data that’s available, taking that, analyzing it and using it -- that the decision making process is informed by the data, but also the decisions are made using that data.

So, for example, in the case of the Commission I would say that the one person, one vote criteria, whether that be information from the Census, but also the electoral data provides information that is useful for determining -- that provides useful data points that can contribute towards the development of maps and the development of measures that help inform the Commission to be able to objectively make decisions, and inform the decisions of the Commission.

MR. DAWSON: So, that sounds to me like it assumes a certain level of sophistication from the Commissioners, would you say?

MR. TOLEDO: Well, I do think that there is some comfort with data and I think there’s -- whether it’s
analysis of the data, it does assume a level of comfort with analysis or being able to interpret, or at least being able to use data in a decision making process. Or, at least being able to be able to understand what the data means, and how it’s being used, and how it’s going to inform the decision making process.

And I think that’s all work that needs to be -- there has to be the shared understanding by the Commission on how the data is going to be used. And once there’s that shared understanding and then -- then, of course, yes, the Commissioners have to have a comfort with data.

MR. DAWSON: But it’s possible, then, that also it would require the Commission being able to -- or needing to rely on demographers, geographers, statisticians, lawyers?

MR. TOLEDO: Well, yes, and you need experts. Experts to contribute the data and --

MR. DAWSON: And would you -- are we hearing --

MR. TOLEDO: Taps.

MR. DAWSON: Mr. Toledo, are you hearing me?

MR. TOLEDO: I am hearing you.

MR. DAWSON: Oh, okay, great. Let me just, I just have one more. So, as the CAO of a healthcare center, you’re obviously dealing directly with the COVID-19 situation.
MR. TOLEDO: Yes.

MR. DAWSON: What concerns do you have about COVIC-19 affecting the redistricting process?

MR. TOLEDO: Sure, I have many concerns. We’re actually in the process of opening up an alternative care site for Sonoma County, planning for the surge. And my organization will be leading that effort for Sonoma County, in partnership with the county government.

And in terms of how it may affect the -- I mean we anticipate -- we don’t know how long this infectious disease will be out in the community. We know it likely will be with us for quite some time. And maybe through the -- well, quite some time it will be with us. And so, it potentially will impact our ability to meet in person with social distancing requirements. It could potentially result in more people being sick and maybe not being as willing to participate in public forums, such as these. And also, it may potentially delay even the Census. Who knows at this point? Hopefully, not.

And so, but we’re all having to figure out different ways to communicate with one another, whether it’s this type of Zoom conference -- I mean, our millennials on staff are doing Zoom parties and with -- you know, in some cases like up to a hundred different people all over the world. So, we’re having to figure out how to
communicate differently.

And it’s not just the millennials. I think, you know, a lot of our other staff are learning how to use these forms that they might have been hesitant to use in the past.

In our organization, 95 percent of the healthcare that’s delivered is being done over the telephone, and a computer, and video technology that was unheard of just a couple weeks ago. And we’ve transitioned very quickly to this new environment.

And I think the Commission may need to -- of course, within the parameters of the law, look to other types of ways of interacting with the public and potentially even themselves for the purpose of public health and safety.

MR. DAWSON: Thank you. I have no further questions, if we would like to go back to Ms. Dickison.

CHAIR BELNAP: So, Ms. Dickison, if you would, restate the question you were on and also if you could remind Mr. Toledo what part you had heard up to that point, so we can get restarted.

PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Perfect.

MS. PELLMAN: May I make a time check, too?

PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Yes.

MS. PELLMAN: We have 22 minutes remaining of the
90 and 14 minutes of those are Ms. Dickison’s.

CHAIR BELNAP: Thank you.

PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Toledo.

So, the question was what you learned about, you know, in your travels as you’re working with groups in different areas? What you learned about different needs of communities based on geography?

And the last thing that I heard is we’re talking about how even where you live determines your health situation.

MR. TOLEDO: Yes. And so, I mean evidence shows that where -- the zip code where you live, the place where you live has an impact on your health status. And that’s because of the types of services that are available to you, the schools that are available, the access to food, and other -- nutritious food, I should say. Access to healthcare and other services, you know, or lack thereof.

And those things have a bigger impact on one’s health than even genetics. And so, in terms of addressing some of these health disparities and ensuring that people have -- you know, are able to meaningfully engage with government, being able to meaningfully engage in the community and the democratic process, whether it’s the local process, or the statewide process, or the federal
process. You know, it’s those are -- there might be every
local community has the things that those communities are
working on, whether it’s, you know, development of --
business development in lower, under-served communities or,
in our case, you know, affordable housing. Because the
housing prices, and I think this is happening across the
State of California, are just -- it’s so unaffordable for
people to live in our community that there’s just not the
workforce to be able to do the work.

And so, these are all issues that businesses are
looking at, small businesses, big, larger businesses, but
also community members and we’re all facing some of these
issues. And we’re seeing it in terms of a rise in
homelessness, et cetera, et cetera. And each community
will be dealing with their specific issues whether it’s
safety issues, crime, lack of access to a quality
education, or whatever it may be.

And every community will have their unique issues
that they’re struggling with and that they need their
elected officials to be responsive to, and accountable for,
for addressing.

PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Okay. So, you answered
the rest of my question around communities of interest, and
outreach, and those types of things.

So, the first eight Commissioners are selected
randomly.

MR. TOLEDO: Uh-hum.

PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: And then, they are tasked with selecting the final six. What would you be looking for if you were one of the first eight?

MR. TOLEDO: Well, I think certainly impartiality. But also, I think when you’re one of the first eight you’re also looking for the gaps. What’s not -- what are the expertise, whether it’s legal, or analytical, or data, or demographics, or what are the gaps in terms of what’s not on the -- who’s not on the Commission that should be on the Commission, and will give the Commission more credibility and among the electorate, and the citizens of California. So, those are the things that I would be looking at if I were one of the randomly chosen first eight.

And ensuring that there’s -- that there’s the -- you know, that the requirement, that the promise of the -- that’s in the Redistricting Commission’s guidance is met and that we have a Commission that is made up of people that reflect the State of California, that have these analytical knowledge, that’s impartial, and respects, and reach diversity for all of the State of California.

PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Thank you. Okay, you answered my next question already. Then with that, as
well, I don’t have any further questions right now. Thank you.

CHAIR BELNAP: All right, thanks Ms. Dickison. So, Mr. Dawson has already asked his questions. Mr. Coe, do you have any follow-up questions?

VICE CHAIR COE: I do not have any follow-up questions, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR BELNAP: Okay. I will ask one follow-up question and then I’ll give Ms. Dickison a chance to ask a follow-up question, if she’d like.

So, Mr. Toledo, you’ve testified at the request of bill authors. Has this been recent, this experience?

MR. TOLEDO: It’s been a couple of years because when I was serving as the -- I used to be the Director of Community and Government Relations for Redwood Community Health Coalition. And so, in that context I used to do a lot more of that. So, I would say the last time I did it was probably around four or five years ago.

CHAIR BELNAP: Okay. And do you still have any regular contact with particular legislators that you have testified for their bills?

MR. TOLEDO: Yes. Yes, I do.

CHAIR BELNAP: You still have contact with them?

MR. TOLEDO: Yes.

CHAIR BELNAP: May I ask which ones?
MR. TOLEDO: With Congressman Huffman, Congressman Thompson, both of the House. A little with Jared Huffman, used to be on the State Assembly. And Jim Woods, Mike McGuire.

CHAIR BELNAP: So, if you were selected to be a Commissioner, how do you anticipate that your communication would be modified or continued with legislators?

MR. TOLEDO: I mean my communication with legislators are that of a constituent, right. So, we’re all constituents of our legislators. In terms of modification, it would be that there would -- I would never want any perception of lack of impartiality, so discussions about the -- maybe it’s -- I just don’t -- certainly, there wouldn’t be discussions about the Redistricting Commission and the work of the Redistricting Commission, other than through public comment. So, it has to be something public. It wouldn’t be something individual and one-off.

And I think -- and at this point I’m not doing very much advocacy work. That’s done through our regional association, Redwood Community Health Coalition, and our California State Association.

Occasionally, I still keep in contact with them, especially when there’s bills of interest to us. But those are things that I’ve always done and I wouldn’t do anything out of the ordinary.
CHAIR BELNAP: Okay, thank you.

MR. TOLEDO: It would be very targeted to community health centers and very targeted to the issues that we’ve advocated for in some cases year after year.

CHAIR BELNAP: Understood, thank you.

Ms. Dickison, did you have any follow-up questions?

PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: I do not.

CHAIR BELNAP: Okay. I want to assure Mr. Toledo that Ms. Dickison will have access to the whole interview, the whole tape, so she’ll be able to see any parts that she’s missed, as well as we all have an assistant that’s also watching these proceedings the whole way through and who we collaborate with individually. So, in no way will the technical difficulties that we experienced right now affect your interview results at all.

We’re going to go into recess now.

MR. DAWSON: Oh, I’m sorry.

CHAIR BELNAP: Yes.

MR. DAWSON: May I have a time check with the -- from the Secretary?

MS. PELLMAN: Yes, we have 12 minutes remaining of the 90 minutes.

MR. DAWSON: Okay, thank you. Actually, at this point, with the 12 minutes remaining, we’d like to offer
Mr. Toledo the opportunity to make a closing statement, if he wishes.

MR. TOLEDO: Sure. I would just say that, you know, I am the child of a farmworker, a man that left his village in Mexico to come work in the agricultural fields of California as a bracero, in the 1950s. And he was a man that picked himself up by his bootstraps, like many immigrants, and a man that worked hard to ensure that his family, his kids would have a better -- would have better opportunities than he.

And one of the things that my father instilled in me was the values of democratic participation. I mean he came from -- he became a U.S. Citizen, and very proudly never missed an election, always participated, always wanted to learn about the people running for office, and the issues that were being voted upon.

And he inspired a commitment to those values of democratic participation in me, and of service to the community, and loyalty to our system of democracy.

And my parents sacrificed, and our family’s poverty motivated me to pursue higher education. And I’ve dedicated my career to improving the health status of under-served communities, and trying to improve opportunities to others.

And health clinics have been the main function by
which I’ve tried to improve access, improve opportunities for others. And one of the reasons for that is the community health centers have treated my family with dignity and respect.

You know, I mentioned that La Clinica de La Raza in Oakland was the place where my family and I received medical care when I was growing up. And that was care that we, without them, wouldn’t have been able to afford. I mean they opened up their doors; they treated us with respect, and members of the community.

And after graduating from college I had the opportunity to serve on the Board of Directors for La Clinica. And what made that experience particularly special and meaningful to me is that it was the patients of La Clinica, at a town hall meeting that elected me onto the board to serve as their representative. And that from -- and that really fueled my passion. It was the beginning of my passion for ensuring access to healthcare services for under-served communities.

But also, to ensuring that people have a voice in improving their health and their health outcomes.

I’d like to serve on the committee because it would allow me to provide -- it would provide me with an unparalleled opportunity to give back to the people of California and this is a state that’s given so much to my
family and myself.

And when I -- I do generally believe that when people are acknowledged they feel more tied to their community. When people are included and engaged, they participate more. And when people are empowered, they accomplish great things.

I’ve demonstrated my ability to maintain impartiality and have the ability to analyze large amounts of quantitative and qualitative data, and have a deep appreciation for California’s diversity.

And I think what makes me an ideal candidate for the Commission is that I genuinely believe that everyone deserves a voice and that everyone should have the opportunity to participate.

My family needed someone to hear them when they did and it changed the trajectory of my life. And everyone in California deserves that. Thank you.

CHAIR BELNAP: All right, thank you.

We’re going to go into recess now and be back at 10:44 a.m. Thank you.

(Off the record at 10:27 a.m.)

(On the record at 10:44 a.m.)

CHAIR BELNAP: I will call this meeting back out of recess. I’m going to check with Mr. Coe. Are you on the line? I’m going to pause that for a moment.
Ms. Dickison, are you on the line?

PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: I am on the line. Can you hear me okay?

CHAIR BELNAP: Yes. Mr. Coe?

VICE CHAIR COE: I’m here.

CHAIR BELNAP: Okay, excellent.

I want to welcome Dorothy Hines to her interview.

Ms. Hines, can you hear us okay?

MS. HINES: Yes, I can. Thank you very much.

CHAIR BELNAP: All right. Then, we’re going to start with the standard five questions and I’ll turn the time over to Mr. Dawson.

MR. DAWSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Hines, I’m going to ask you five standard questions that the Panel has requested each applicant respond to. Are you ready, ma’am?

MS. HINES: Yes, I am. Thank you.

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

What skills or competencies should the Commission possess collectively?

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

In summary, how will you contribute to the success of the Commission?
MS. HINES: Well, the application process itself focuses on our ability to be impartial and to appreciate California’s diversity in relevant skills. We should collectively and individually possess each one of these competencies.

And I believe that the transparency of the process is really helping to do that.

Specific attributes I possess include what I’ve just mentioned. Plus, Commissioners should possess attributes of being wholly engaged in the process, be cooperative with each other, organized, productive, thoughtful, and accountable, collaborative, and kind.

My contribution to the success of the Commission is to utilize the wealth of what I’ve learned and practiced over the years in a variety of team settings and project settings.

Skills that I can bring are abilities to facilitate common understanding of the issues, be able to distill the issues, demonstrate active listening, respect for each other’s’ and consensus decision making.

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

What characteristics do you possess, and what characteristics should your fellow Commissioners possess, that will protect against hyperpartisanship?

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

MS. HINES: Well, the characteristics that we should each possess as Commissioners to protect against this hyperpartisanship is an ability to be able to recognize and value each other’s story. The background influences that we’ve had informs who we are and gives us the values that we hold. This is important because this is part of who we are.

We need to demonstrate kindness in how we speak to each other. And when we recognize that someone is speaking from a value system that they hold, we need to take time to ensure that each person is heard, but we may need to have some kind of signals in play to have the person possibly back down on some of the comments that they are holding through that seem to be out of line in terms of the goals of the team. And that can be done in a very respectful and gentle way.

I’ve worked with different teams that were able to employ agreements that we honor each other and say,
okay, we might be getting off track. We need to get back on track.

And what I would do to ensure the work of the Commission is not seen as being biases in any way is to develop a number of agreements amongst all Commissioners that would include items such as committing to adhere to the team messages that are important to be conveyed and agreed upon by the whole group.

I see a lot of group work, a lot of consensus decision making in doing this, and I find that agreement is to act as a body of one. And again, I mentioned the consensus decision making is so vitally important.

We need to develop a work plan and generally employ effective project management techniques and that helps us to basically adhere to what the task is before us.

Further, I would strive to develop a code of conduct that would include how to deal with each stakeholder and to deal with them as a cohesive, apolitical team. And we would refrain from offering personal advice to each other, particularly in public. And then, each one of us would need to understand and embrace the fact that our individual behaviors, particularly at public meetings, does reflect on the entire Commission, and to basically be in check on our behaviors.

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

MS. HINES: When I thought about this and traveled through two or three greatest problems from the complete breakdown of the committee to public outcry with the results, that type of thing. But what I basically wound up centering on is that the greatest problem would be not being able to comprehend the hard-to-count groups and actually getting the lines drawn improperly.

And actions that I would take to respond to this particular problem is to really bring in data, to study previous information, and be able to analyze the highest profile under count risks by known populations, such as Native Americans, renters, low visibility householders, and those types of the profiles.

This would necessitate looking at how those areas might have been previously under counted in the past Census, and look at modeling methods based on the historical data and known patterns. I believe that pulling in some form of external reputable sources to grasp the potential magnitude of the issue would be an important thing to do.

I believe that there’s information out there that would help in trying to bring everything to the table to
see how we could be able to overcome these under-counted populations. And that would be done in various ways through the public meetings, and so on.

So, I do believe that is the greatest problem that we can face. And I believe with our current environment the home Census process I believe is at risk with people kind of flying under the radar, particularly with the whole pandemic situation that we have going on.

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

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

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

MS. HINES: The project that I noted in my application and the biggest project that I’ve worked on was in my professional life. It was an $85 million project for the year 2000, for the semiconductor product sector for Motorola. The semiconductor products is essentially a chemical business, as well as, you know, the whole
electrical -- putting leads on chips, and this type of thing.

In that process there’s a lot of date stamping that goes on. And so, the critical nature of ensuring that we can move from a two-digit to a four-digit code was vitally important to the whole manufacturing process. So, it was a very critical project.

The goal of the project was to ensure that the whole supply chain through customer delivery was not interrupted. And so, this involved an extensive review of all of the manufacturing systems, the customer systems, supply chain, and this type of thing.

The project, I was in charge of the project for our particular sector. We had 2,500 team members and that spanned the Americas, Europe, and Asia. And as I said, the goal was to ensure that we did not have an interruption in our business.

The way that we handled any potential conflicts that came up was through very, very precise project management. We were very proactive in our communication, very consistent in our communication. We had regular conference calls that allowed all areas of the world to be in one call, which meant that here in the United States we were the folks chosen to talk at midnight.

So, in addition to that we took the time to
travel to each one of the countries involved and sit down with the people. And we did risk assessment, we, as I said, did tons of communication. And our ability to essentially grasp hands across the world on an even playing field was key to the success because each segment needed to make sure that they held up their end of what needed to be held up.

And through that process I learned the different cultures in these different areas. I learned the difference in how we even hand each other business cards and, you know, nuances of behavior.

Our work ethic was such that each team member really committed to achieve the higher good for worldwide success. And with that, we all understood that personal biases and so on needed to be set aside.

And so, what we derived from that was just this high commitment to achieve a key goal and everybody bought in to what needed to be achieved.

So, the lessons that I take from this, that whole group experience, a very rich experiences which required very extensive travel in accomplishing it is good planning. The cohesiveness of a team. I cannot stress how important that is at the beginning to do the work right, to get a team fully functional and then have that team building in the follow up.
Being able to anticipate problem areas and having all voices come to the table and saying, well, we need to think about this, we need to think about that helped us with surfacing problems before they -- before they even surfaced. So, we had lots and lots of active listening.

So, those were the basic lessons that I would bring forward into -- and have brought forward, actually, into everything that I’ve, you know, done before and since.

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

If you are selected as a Commissioner, what skills and attributes will make you effective at interacting with people from different backgrounds and who have a variety of perspectives?

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

MS. HINES: Well, the background that I have stems from my formative years growing up in a multi-ethnic environment. We lived in New Mexico my growing up years. My father was road construction and so we moved as
basically a community, together. We all lived in trailer
houses. And we associated, basically entered into small
communities in New Mexico to go to school. We learned how
sometimes unkind people can be when we were those trailer
trash people, you know, coming to town. But then, being
able to work our way through that and to gain the ultimate
respect of folks at our school and so on was a very
formative lesson for me to continue to give voice, even
though we are -- when people attempt to ignore us or look
down on us. And so, that was very formative.

When we traveled with each other, we did have
folks from different races, colors, and we developed just a
keen mutual respect for each other because we’re like a
caravan, you know, going down the street.

Going forward from there and going into the
corporate world after college, I traveled, like I have
previously described in the project that I was on at
Motorola, to countries like Malaysia, and Japan, and
Taiwan, and China, and France, Italy, Scotland, and that
informed me on how different people live in different parts
of the world.

The other interesting aspect, I believe
interesting, is my seminary experience in looking at
research papers on people on the margins, and bringing
people from the margins into the circle. Did research on
that with -- I focused primarily on women, women who are left behind, silenced, women who are silenced, and that type of thing. So, that has enriched my understanding and appreciation of various perspectives, as well. So, that about sums that up.

MR. DAWSON: Thank you. At this point we’ll go to Panel questions. Each Panel Member will have 20 minutes to ask his or her questions. And we will start with the Chair, Mr. Belnap.

CHAIR BELNAP: Good morning, Ms. Hines. In your application you indicated that you worked for over 32 years at Motorola, and for some portion of that time you were a program director. And you referred to that role in your impartiality essay.

How did you have to exercise impartiality in the role of program director at Motorola?

MS. HINES: Well, the title itself imparts some of that notion because as the program director, if you start bellowing out your own biases, or your own way to do something, I would suggest that’s not much of a director.

Using that word, director, reminds me of a director in a symphony. It’s important to help the people get tuned up and to ensure that each one of the instruments are playing. And I think that might be a little bit esoteric kind of analogy, but it’s much of that. And
making sure that the performance comes from the orchestra.

And so, a director is to set aside the directions that they think. I think there’s some gentle guiding that can take place, but that’s just like in the direction of lowering the tone, or coming out with a crescendo and that type of thing. So, hopefully, that’s not too esoteric.

Another way that I was able to do that is I found myself, when I wasn’t actually in the program director role, yet, and I was essentially, you know, a team member, a member in the community, in the room at meetings, at project team meetings that type of thing, it seemed like I wound up being the individual that was able to facilitate the discussion. And as a facilitator, one knows that they need to ensure that that person sitting in the back of the room that is a little shy to say something, that they’re able to give voice. And I think all of those types of behaviors, you’re setting aside from trying to, you know, just drive your own agenda, and you’re giving that impartial open picture to the room for people to be able to work together and move forward. If that makes sense.

CHAIR BELNAP: It does, thank you. In your application you indicated that you studied voting behavior of Californians to see how impartial and fair redistricting lines may impact behaviors.

When did you engage in this analysis and what
were your conclusions?

MS. HINES: Well, in that -- I need to tone that
down just a little bit. What I was doing was looking at
essentially the Californians here in this region that I’m
in. We’ve had our board of supervisors and some of the
local elections. We’re taking a look at how people, if
they feel that there’s an election that is -- really
affects, like affects me, you know, on a daily basis, as
just a person on the street, I’ve found that the -- going
to the polls when you have a higher sensitive issue at
hand, or attempting to select a particular candidate, and
doing cross-over voting, going to the polls, looking at the
percentages of voting.

One example, in our community here we had some
key elections and we’re looking -- I looked at the voting
previously, the turn out, and saw that there was like a
spike of -- a huge percentage turn out. So, it was a
little bit more confined. It wasn’t like the whole State
of California type of thing.

But I did do -- wanted to just -- I was just
interested in that. And I did that as I was -- as I’ve
worked five different elections as an inspector. And so,
being an inspector at the polls, we have the Adopt-A-Poll
here in our community. And that just caused me to be
interested in seeing how people -- you know, just look at
the patterns of how they voted over that period of time.

CHAIR BELNAP: And, yeah, I was going to ask you about your time as a precinct inspector. But first, I wanted to ask as you’re observing these patterns did anything surprising come out to you, or anything that was confirmed in your mind, any general principle that you could share with us?

MS. HINES: Well, I mean the basic, general principle is if I believe my vote counts, I will vote. If somehow it’s going to just not mean anything or essentially a decision is already made because there’s just an overwhelming attitude on a different side, it’s just, you know, really? Why bother. And I know that seems a little pedestrian, but that’s essentially the bottom line.

CHAIR BELNAP: And from your life experiences, from your just observational skills how do people come to the conclusion that their vote counts?

MS. HINES: Well, one of the ways that I’ve observed that people did come to that conclusion is that people talk to them, for one thing, about getting involved. And I’ve found -- I never really observed, because I never really did it before, is getting involved and seeing, you know, campaigns how they work.

But when people reach out to their neighbors and just talk about what’s at risk, and talk about how we can
be influencers that interest expressed in that individual goes a long way.

Did I answer your question?

CHAIR BELNAP: Yes, absolutely. As you’re visualizing the Commission and being on that Commission, some part of it’s going to be reaching out to communities and finding out communities of interest, simultaneous to those forums I think the Commission would be trying to help people feel like their vote counts.

If you were a Commissioner and you’re in one of those meetings, what would you say to the people in attendance that would help them realize why they matter and how their vote counts?

MS. HINES: Well, one of the things that I would say is first of all we’re here because it matters, and it’s important that we’re taking our time together. And to lay out the ways that it can matter to them, the ways that it can matter to their family to support for their children, that type of thing. To be informative and to say that your voice is important to hear. And to be able to collectively -- it’s difficult to look, you know, people the eye, in their eyes directly when you’re in a room full of people, but essentially do that. Saying that it’s a privilege and just really talk to the institutions that sustain this nation and how they are sustained because we show up. And
every single person, every single person counts.

And maybe that sounds like a little preachy in a way, but then it’s also it would be very heartfelt. That people say, okay, now I hear. It does count, it really does count. So, that would be the way to do it.

CHAIR BELNAP: Excellent. Thank you. So, I want to shift gears and talk about your time at Motorola. I’d like to hear more about some of the complex analysis and decision making that you were involved in at your time in Motorola?

MS. HINES: Well, when I first went into Motorola, my degree was -- my bachelor’s was in business administration, with an emphasis in accounting. And some people would look at, you know, doing accounting and coming up with financial strategies for a global company could be maybe that back room, ho hum thing.

But what we had to deal with was of a kind of a technical nature from the standpoint of being able to collect the information worldwide, from all these different countries, be able to put it all together, take a look at what the whole financial picture looks like, be able to do forecasting, and be able to do trend analysis, be able to put together a five-year plan, and be able to do that so that all of the communities, the manufacturing and, you know, all of the different segments of the company are
accounted for.

And attempting to do that when you have separate systems that don’t like to talk to each other, that type of thing, and trying to bridge gaps between, you know, like finance, and technology, and marketing, and purchasing and things like that it’s a matter of mapping out the whole business systems, and being able to develop and acquire new systems that would fit the different organizations, but be able to talk to each other.

And so, we embarked upon some pretty massive global systems to install, and it was a matter of doing all the testing. And when you’re doing it in a manufacturing business, you know, it’s making sure that the manufacturing people figuratively and, you know, literally can talk to each other through the systems.

So, it was developing that, and moving, and trying to bring the company together as a global company, and be able to produce a consolidated result. So, those were the types of things that we did.

CHAIR BELNAP: Thank you. Madam Secretary, can I get a time check?

MS. PELLMAN: Yes, we have eight minutes, 15 seconds remaining.

CHAIR BELNAP: Okay. Ms. Hines, I’m interested in your master’s in theology that you received from the
Fuller Theological Seminary. It indicates here it took about three years. So, tell me about your courses of study and what you gained from that discipline, that degree that you obtained?

MS. HINES: Well, the course of study I started in 2007, graduated in 2010. And a master of theology with Biblical studies means that I studied Hebrew and Greek, and as well as Old Testament classes, New Testament classes, did communication classes. The different religions, world religions.

And so, I was able to first of all parsing Hebrew was a fascinating experience to be able to do that, and look at the scripture in the original text was fascinating.

So, just an absolute wealth of learning how people devoted their lives to really bringing the text forward that we have what we have today.

I did a lot of emphasis on women in the Bible, unnamed women. In the silencing of women, I looked at the scripture like in the original Greek, in the New Testament, and saw how biases have been put into translations, and different theologians have instilled their personal view as to how the scripture should be read.

I saw a really opening up of what -- how to really look at a topic and see the depth of it, and to see that there’s -- it’s both/and situation, as opposed to an
either/or. And what we see, like in the hyperpartisanship, those types of things, we see this dualistic approach to life. It’s either this or it’s that, and you’re in, you’re out.

And one of the richness, rich, wonderful things that I learned from this it’s not necessarily so. It’s a both/and situation. Let’s look at the totality of this. Let’s look at what the intent was. You know, let’s look at what is happening -- one of the phrases that still stays in my mind today, ten years later, is we need to understand what’s going on then and there in order to understand what is going on here and now.

And so, I think that’s something rather than just zip into something and read into something, it’s important to read from something.

And I think that can apply to human beings, as to me trying to read something into you, and credit you with something that’s important to have it come from you. I don’t know if that’s -- that is not a direct translation there, but it was that type of thing. Just an opening up of the mind.

CHAIR BELNAP: All right, thank you. I appreciate it. I don’t have any further questions, so I’m going to turn the time over to Mr. Coe for his questions.

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

In your application you indicate that you’re involved in a number of volunteer activities with various organizations. In your essay on activities, I believe, you describe the people served by the organizations that you volunteer with are the homeless population and children who face adversity, financially or otherwise, among others.

What is it that motivates you to seek out these particular missions or these particular types of organizations to volunteer for?

MS. HINES: Well, the thing that I may have touched upon in some of my comments so far is living the way that we lived growing up, and understanding that I have to have my own voice or nobody’s going to, you know, really give it to me. I need to find it. And so, when I see people that they may not have or know how to use their voice to be able to reach out and say, yes, you do have a voice, and you are important to reach out to. And you are a human being. You’re part of this shared humanity that we experience.

And so, so I’d like to try to help people, you know, stand on their own ground and to be able to, essentially, stand tall, with respect for themselves. And so, reaching out in whatever way I can
through donations and bringing awareness to people for them
to reach out as well is just a small thing that I can do to
try to help with that voice.

VICE CHAIR COE: Thank you. And how do you think
that this motivating factor or this reason for you getting
involved, how do you think that that could be a benefit to
the Commission if you were to be a member of that
Commission?

MS. HINES: Well, I mean one of the things that
comes to my mind, as we touched upon just a few minutes
ago, is in public forums being able to find the people,
like the communities of interest, and different people who
tend to fly under the radar. You know, try to go under the
radar and see how we might be able to find those
populations and have empathy to say that you could, and
here’s why you count. And if you allow yourself to be
counted and if you allow yourself to speak up, there would
be benefits that come back to you.

It’s not like a quid pro quo thing, but it’s just
having them be able to have what’s -- they may not have --
I mean having -- let them have a forum that they may not
have had before. And I can see bringing that into some of
the public meetings.

VICE CHAIR COE: And with these communities that
you allude to that they either don’t know that they have a
forum or they are aware, but they’re uncomfortable engaging for one reason or another, as some groups are, what could the Commission do to have these particular groups feel more comfortable providing their perspective?

MS. HINES: Well, what the Commission can do is essentially sit down and listen. And I think that listening is very, very valuable. I think finding them and sitting down -- I think finding them, there would need to be help from different community leaders and all, and bringing together the forum, but a lot of time listening. And that’s what I’ve learned when we were doing projects around the world is being able to hear the people from, you know, South Korea give their inputs. It would be a similar sort of thing, listening. Listening is vitally important.

And I think the presence of the Commission in various forums can do that.

VICE CHAIR COE: Thank you. In regards to impartiality, I’m wondering if you could give us a specific example of a time where you had to make a difficult impartial decision that perhaps involved setting aside your preference or self-interest?

MS. HINES: I have to really admit that I do have opinions, but I am able to hold myself in check. So, I haven’t had massively, you know, difficult times. Early on in my career, I was the first female accountant to enter
Motorola. And as I entered Motorola, the clerical people didn’t have any idea what to do with me, nor did the male professionals. There were no male clerical people and no female professionals. And so, I had to hold myself in check a bit to attempt to reach out to both groups. Instead of, you know, standing in the middle of the floor and saying, you know, what’s going on here type of thing. And be able to reach out. Like with the clerical people, one of the things that I vowed early on to do is attempt to bring them along more into the professional area.

But I had to step back and not offer my opinions on how I thought they should be doing things or what they could be doing differently, but hear from their experiences on what they’re dealing with and really take that to heart before I -- as opposed to rushing in with knowing what I felt needed to be done. I guess that would be an example of kind of holding back a direction that I thought we should go and allow that direction to evolve.

So, having patience with that is one of the things that I needed to learn early on. And then, instead of calling out the kind of bigot behavior that I saw at that time with the male professionals, I had to essentially get in and earn respect. And there was a tendency that I had that I wanted to just, you know, kind of stand them against the wall and say, you know, come on. But that
would not be a way to become an equal professional with them.

I don’t know if that is getting to your point or not.

VICE CHAIR COE: It is and it’s kind of leading to another question. What it sounds like is it’s -- well, let me back up. One of the difficulties with impartiality is being able to recognize and understand your own inherent biases. And it sounds like you had to go through some type of exercises to recognize those, as you decided how you were going to move forward with the decisions you made.

How does an individual go about identifying their internal inherent biases?

MS. HINES: That is -- I think that’s a very challenging question and I’m not sure how many volumes have been written on that, but probably quite a few.

One of the things that is so difficult about it is we have these implicit biases that we don’t even recognize. And when it’s so -- it’s implicit, it’s you just don’t know you have it.

And I think that there’s an issue with that. I think sometimes it just takes someone else to say, you know, hey that language you used was maybe a little -- shows some kind of a slanderous bias towards this particular group or whatever, you may want to think about
that.

So, I think one of the ways to go about it is to have people that you hold yourself accountable to, that they help you discover that. Because one of the things that I’ve attempted to do is bring that into awareness for people.

And what we’ve done here in our community is we celebrate the International Women’s Day, March the 8th. We’ve done that for four years, now. And we bring in a panel of people and we bring in a panel of people that— from all backgrounds. We’ve brought in a Native American to be on the panel. We’ve brought in people from Black Lives Matter and from the Latino community.

And we ask them questions about, you know, equity and that type of thing. And then, we ask all of them to give us an action item, you know, and to help us understand each other better, and help us to expose biases that we may have, and what biases do they have. And so, we have an open -- it’s a rich experience. We have a wonderful brunch, and people come together, and there are about 150 people, and so we have that kind of conversation.

So, I think it takes accountability, conversation, self-reflection, and open-mindedness that I don’t know it all. I’m not the end all, be all. And I definitely carry with me my -- how I grew up, my own
personal story which could have all, you know, different things built into it that need to be looked at and improved.

VICE CHAIR COE: So, with that experience that you had with gathering a panel of folks and increasing awareness of potential internal biases that people may be unaware of, do you think that experience could help you on the Commission if it became a problem amongst the group of Commissioners that there may be some work that needed to be done on that? Do you think that you could help -- help that along within that framework of that team?

MS. HINES: I do. As I’m very aware of it. I have a radar screen that, you know, pings every once in a while. And I -- I have a history of knowing how to gently approach that and talk to people. And I think that’s important, too. When you enter or engage with, you know -- I was talking with a friend the other day and the way she put it is that, you know, I talked her down off the roof kind of thing. But it’s -- there’s an ability to -- it needs to be developed I think in people, to be able to do that with others.

I don’t mean to be talking around the point. Hopefully, I’m responding directly to your question.

VICE CHAIR COE: You are thank you. I wanted to go to a passage that you wrote in your other relevant
material essay in that you said you asked a group of
cohorts why would a selection committee choose a 75-year-
old Caucasian female to serve on the Redistricting
Commission? And that their answer was “because you are
that particular person.”

You go on to say that one of your strengths your
cohorts pointed out to you was “wisdom and sound judgment
acquired and sharpened for years.”

Can you expand a little bit on that? What do you
think that they were referring to?

MS. HINES: Well, the -- what I believe that they
were referring to are my life experiences that I’ve had
from growing up, kind of moving around like a gypsy,
bringing that into my own personal story, going into a
field at that time that women were vacant. And being kind
of a trendsetter in that particular regard. Being able to
step forward and then go from there into the corporate
world and I’ve already, you know, talked about that a
little bit of reaching across the globe with different
cultures.

So, I think that each one of these experiences
they layer on top of each other. And as they layer on top
what comes together is a setting in of some sense that
you’ve got some wisdom, you know. And that just comes with
multiple experiences and just kind of a vastness, a depth
of different -- well, I don’t want to repeat the word experience -- of different life events.

Going through my husband dying. He had early onset Alzheimer’s. And just, you know, going through that particular process with him was another enriching experience, and I think that brings an empathetic approach to people.

And it’s a little bit of a -- the analogy that comes to mind my is a little bit of a velvet and steel sort of thing. You know, hold true to values, but then do it with the expression of love in your heart and a smile on your face sort of thing. And I think that that can be translated into just the experience that I’ve had over decades, it adds up to being called wisdom.

MS. PELLMAN: We have four minutes, 14 seconds remaining.

VICE CHAIR COE: Thank you. Ms. Hines, if you were to be appointed to the Commission what do you see as a role that you would serve as part of that team?

MS. HINES: Well, me--the roles that I tend to find myself in is one of organizational dynamics. I tend to evolve into a leadership role to build together, you know, the consensus, decision making. One of the things that we’ve done here, we have a strategy team. We have a particular air issue that we’re dealing with in our
particular community, and we have a strategy team that we’ve come together and I facilitated with coming up with what our mission, our purpose, our goals, that type of thing are. And then, how we are to behave together in community with each other and how we are to behave as we may approach external organizations.

And so, I tend to do the -- putting together the kind of a framework of how we can be a cohesive group, how we can make our decisions together, and voices heard, all those kinds of things that we’ve talked about so far.

So, I tend to gravitate toward that. But then, I also can be a team player. So, I would see my role more of a guiding force in making sure all the pieces stay together.

VICE CHAIR COE: Which aspects of the role of a Commissioner do you think that you might struggle with a little bit?

MS. HINES: I think that the aspects that I could struggle with, I’m not familiar with the GIS, so that would be a learning curve to dig into the actual usage of that. So, I don’t know what I don’t know, so I don’t whatever kind of a struggle that would be. But if I were to have to do something to manipulate the system, I’m not sure about that because I can’t -- I just can’t say what that would be like. I would anticipate it would be pretty technical and
so that could be a struggle.

VICE CHAIR COE: Okay, thank you very much. No further questions at this time, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR BELNAP: Okay, Ms. Dickison, the time is now yours.

PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Thank you. Good morning, Ms. Hines.

MS. HINES: Good morning.

PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Many of my questions have been answered, but I do have just a few or a couple. I noted that you cofounded the Progressive Women’s Forum. What is that organization?

MS. HINES: The organization is -- it’s not registered with anything. It’s just a loose organization that has come together. What we’ve done with that organization is we wanted to educate ourselves and continue being on the learning curve of understanding, you know, our civil rights, understanding our diversity, understanding, you know, the different issues that face us, becoming informed about the whole climate change. And then, essentially, trying to promote our shared humanity.

And so, what we’ve done with that is we’ve had monthly meetings and we’ve brought in different speakers. Some of those speakers we -- have been some of the same people that we’ve had on our panel discussions for
International Women’s Day. But it’s to bring in different ethnic groups and talk about biases, that type of thing.

One of our favorite speakers is a professor at Cal Poly. And he has brought into play how religion is such a -- can be, should not be, a divisive -- it’s so divisive in our lives. You talk about hyperpartisanship it’s, you know, hyper-religion. You know, the Muslims versus Hindus, versus Christians, and so on.

And so, what we’ve attempted to do with this view of our shared humanity, as I mentioned earlier, is bring in perspective on what the core values of the Muslim faith, and that type of thing. And so, we’ve had Dr. Lloyd Moffett come multiple times to talk about that.

We’ve had our local, the police chief of San Luis Obispo come and speak about the different issues facing the community and the county with regard to homelessness, and violence and, you know, that kind of a thing. So, those are the types of things that we’ve done with the forum.

PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Okay. Who is on that? Who’s it made of, who are the members?

MS. HINES: They’re members here in the community. The steering committee is a group of all women, but the forum is open to -- not just people right here in our community, but also in the county.

PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Oh, okay. Okay, thank
you. So, you may have talked about this a little bit, but in your essay when you talked about that large project you were on, how you worked across, you know, different disciplines, and multiple countries. What did you learn on that project about the different cultures that will assist you in the work with the Commission, should you be selected?

MS. HINES: What I learned from the different cultures is that we each have a different way of speaking up. Like in the Japanese culture, their style of communication is different. I learned that there’s a brashness in some cultures and there’s a timidity in other cultures.

One of the things that was very gratifying was what we did was some of the people from some of the manufacturing teams, I headed up, we had our participating management program where we had teams fly into the United States, that we had different gatherings together. And they were able to talk about what they were doing. And just experiencing the richness of them coming together. Like some of them had never left their village. You know, they were like -- they never left home more than like 25 miles and here they were coming to the United States.

And just being able to embrace that and see how they respond to that. So, it was some of those personal
touches that were very, very gratifying.

And I think that it just really gives me an awareness of each individual uniqueness. So.

PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Okay, thank you. So, you moved to California in 2013, is that correct?

MS. HINES: That is correct.

PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: What brought you to California?

MS. HINES: Well, as I mentioned earlier my husband had died and my brother moved in with me at the time, and our sister lives in San Luis Obispo.

PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Oh, okay.

MS. HINES: And so, we were -- my husband, like I said had passed away, my brother retired, and so we just came and visited, and just fell in love with the state, fell in love with where I live, and it was nice to have kind of our little tribe gathered back together again.

PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Great.

(Pause)

PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: So, most of my questions have been answered. I have a couple of ones I’d like to ask.

If you are selected as one of the first eight Commissioners, which are done randomly, you’ll be tasked with selecting the next six Commissioners to round out the
Commission. What would you be looking for in those individuals?

MS. HINES: Well, what I would be looking for, what we would need to do is the first eight do a skills assessment. We would need to look at who we are, what’s our demographic, and how can we closely mirror the demographic of, you know, the region, the state we’re supposed to represent. You know, as closely as we could with 14 people.

And so, I think the work would need to take place in planning for what are we missing. And have there be just a basic agreement on we think we’re missing, you know, XYZ. And as we would approach looking for that, I think that we can take a page from your all’s approach, and what you’ve done in terms of coming together, rating the different people with, you know, the impartiality, the diversity, the relevant skills in mind. Keep those at the forefront.

And I would look at the 14 people, you know, the first eight would be -- like a puzzle, like a jigsaw puzzle where you get the 14 pieces in this and they have to interlock. And so, you would see that maybe the first eight would be the frame and some pieces in the middle, and then what’s missing.

And to the best of our ability, possibly, I don’t
know what the rules of the road specifically would be in terms of us even being able to consult with you folks on, you know, how you looked for different things. But learn maybe some from you. Learn from the first eight of those that have gone before. And then, do that homework and have that firmly in mind and then go from there in selecting the final six. That would be my process.

PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Thank you. What would you like to see the Commission ultimately accomplish?

MS. HINES: Well, I would like to see the Commission ultimately accomplish its four maps. I would like to see it accomplish facilitating public meetings such that there’s a -- the reaction to the meetings would be on the plus side, and not the negative side.

I would like to see that the work of the committee, you know, from the public, you know, has been very nicely accepted. The maps seem reasonable, and justifiable, and different stakeholders are happy as they can be. So, yeah, there would be those that aren’t with the maps.

And then, maybe one final thing would be that there’s no legal challenge to it. So, that would be I think a good thing to accomplish.

PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Thank you. Mr. Chair, I don’t have any further questions at this time.
CHAIR BELNAP: Okay, thank you. Mr. Dawson, we’ll turn the time over to you.

MR. DAWSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Ms. Hines, I wanted to follow up on a couple of things that you said in response to the standard questions. I noticed that several times in response to several of the questions you mentioned project management being important. So, my question is how is project management important in the context of the Commission? What would it look like? What would that -- how do you envision that working positively for the Commission?

MS. HINES: Well, the project management would lay out not a critical path method, per se, but like a chart, a plan. So, saying this is the start date, this is the end date, these are the goals that we need to accomplish. These are the tasks that we need to do. We need to put it into some sort of a framework. We need to do the upfront piece well.

Because there’s a saying that there’s never enough time to do it right the first time, there’s always a lot of time to redo it. And we would want to make sure that we do it right the first time, which is the cohesiveness of the group, take time for that. And then, lay out some dates. And, you know, like folks that need to be brought in, consultants that need to be brought in, the
legal team that would need to be brought in. Get all of
the players into place, have dates set for that. So, it
would be managing to that and there would be follow up.
Have we lagged in the time frame? What are we looking at?
How do we make up time?

So, we would use the methodology to make sure
that we’re tracking to that and recognize that there needs
to, you know, be some wiggle room every once in a while.

Get meetings, public meetings scheduled with the
help of administrative people well in advance, get it on
people’s calendars, make sure that the 14-day notices are
lined out. So, that takes a lot of, you know,
organization. It’s good to put it into a visual. And that
way you can see it visible then it’s something that you can
work. It’s an actual working tool. And so, that’s what I
would start with and that’s what -- I believe that’s good
project management. Have a visible tool, have the follow
up on a regular basis, and then this anticipation of what
can go wrong and how do we avoid it, that type of thing.

MR. DAWSON: Thank you. One of the other things
that caught my ear was in your response to standard
question two, which is -- yeah, I think it was. You had
mentioned that you would like to see the Commission adopt a
code of conduct. And what would be the parts of your code
of conduct?
MS. HINES: Well, the parts of the code of conduct is we speak as a voice of one. And when we make decisions they’re consensus decisions. We allow each person to be heard. There are ways that we can hold each other accountable to avoid going off on tangents. And how can we -- what’s our agreement to let that process work? So, it would be a list of those types of things. And it would almost be like we would work it out together and we would have it in front of us. It’s not like something we would just, you know, talk about and say okay, yeah. We would actually document it. You know, it would be like -- you know, we wouldn’t sign it, that type of thing, but we would know that this is our agreement on how we behave with each other, how we behave when we’re in front of stakeholders, that type of thing.

MR. DAWSON: I wanted to follow up on one of your responses to Ms. Dickison’s questions about you came to California relatively recently. My question is as a recently -- relatively recently arrived Californian, what advantages do you think this might bring to your work on the Commission and what handicaps do you think it might bring to your work on the Commission?

MS. HINES: I think the advantages that I would bring is -- the term that comes to my mind, I don’t have that implicit bias, you know, built into a particular area
or region, you know, that might be well entrenched in other people to the point that they might -- you know, I don’t know that any Commissioner would be like this, to the point that the folks in L.A. don’t even count San Francisco as part of California. You know, that’s going a little extreme. But I don’t have that kind of an implicit bias.

I think that what is against me is the depth of traversing the state. I don’t know how many Commissioners have been able to completely traverse the state. I’ve been through a lot of it. I’ve seen a lot of California. I’ve been to California multiple, multiple times.

But then, actually drilling down. Now, I have that kind of surface, I know the surface of it. And I know the surface of the people and I know the different regions and all, but a drill down, I don’t have that. And at some point that could be a strike against me.

MR. DAWSON: Thank you. I notice in your activities you discussed this Adopt-A-Poll. How did you get involved in that?

MS. HINES: Well, the Adopt-A-Poll, we have a service club here. And the service club is devoted to giving back to the broader Nipomo community. And so, what it does is different projects that we have fundraisers. The service club has been in existence I think since 2012, thereabouts, maybe a little bit later than that. And we’ve
been able to raise funds, about half a million dollars for the broader community.

And so, the Adopt-A-Poll what we do is we work, we have all the shifts, and the inspectors and everything, and the money doesn’t go to us. It goes to the service club to be distributed to the -- we’ve done the food bank, we’ve done women’s shelters, we’ve done different organizations like that. Five Cities Homeless Coalition. And so, that’s what we’ve done with part of that 500 million dollars [sic].

MR. DAWSON: I’m sorry the money goes to the precinct workers, the poll workers?

MS. HINES: You know, precinct workers get paid but we don’t get the money. We as workers do not personally get the money. The service club gets the money that precinct workers normally get paid.

So, the money goes to the service club and then we, the precinct workers decide that we want it to be donated to Five Cities Homeless Coalition, for an example, is how that flows.

MR. DAWSON: I see. Those are all my follow ups. Do any of the Panel Members have follow-up questions?

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

VICE CHAIR COE: No follow-up questions.
PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Ms. Dickison? I do not have any follow-up questions.

CHAIR BELNAP: I do not, either.

All right, Madam Secretary, could I have a time check, please?

MS. PELLMAN: Yes, we have 19 minutes, 28 seconds remaining.

CHAIR BELNAP: All right, thank you.

Well, with the time remaining, Ms. Hines, we’d like to offer you the opportunity to make a closing statement to the Panel, if you wish.

MS. HINES: Yes, I would like to make a closing statement. The first thing I’d like to start with is I’d like to thank the Panel and you Mr. Dawson, all of those of you in front of the camera for the dedication and the service that you are providing for the state. I think you’re doing an awesome job. I appreciate the transparency of the process.

And I’d like to personally thank Shauna and the other folks I’ve talked with and all of the people behind the camera who make this possible.

And I would like to do my final closing with some excerpts from the letters of recommendation and public comments that were submitted on my behalf. I’d like to give voice to them. Of course, I’ve had the three letters
of recommendation and 19 public comments.

And so, I’d like to close, like I said, reading some excerpts from some of these. I’ll go through these relatively quickly. I’ll just read them and then give my final expression. So, I’ll start.

“Dorothy Hines is one of the most energetic and committed individuals I know. She’s organized and efficient and through those skills is often a step ahead of others in understanding what the next logical step should be. She’s not afraid to ask questions, nor to express her thoughts and suggestions. Her sense of humor often diffuses any tension that may develop. I see Dorothy as diligent, organized, resourceful, and a team leader as well as a participating team member. Dorothy is a woman of strength, skills, compassion, with the ability to listen, lead and inspire. With her ability to utilize her technical and social skills to gather data, analyze and defense positions, I highly recommend Dorothy Hines as a member of the 2020 Census Redistricting Committee.

She brought civility, thoughtfulness, time spend studying the issues, listening to others and effective answers to the group. Her thoughtfulness in discussions comes from studying issues thoroughly. Humor, tact, thorough research and wise decisions are some of her many strengths in dealing with people.
Ms. Hines is a natural leader characterized by fairness, with an ability to be objective in a complex and emotionally charged situation. She listens and is open to the opinions of others, taking a thoughtful and analytical approach in decision making. In all cases her candor, tact, creativity and problem solving skills were visible and appreciated. She’s also adept at the groundwork. Research, writing, outreach, even clean up. Her appreciation for California’s beauty, diversity, human rights protections and impact on the national agenda is strong and evident.

I have never seen her less than gracious and welcoming to anyone in any setting. Dorothy’s innate intelligence and amazing ability to immediately grasp a situation are well known. Her analytical skills have obviously served her well in life and offer an extraordinary assets in anything she pursues. Her work ethic is very strong. She absorbs lots of amounts of information, studies and analyzes data, and draws logical conclusions. She’s able to reach sound conclusions and make effective recommendations even when there are overwhelming amounts of information or conflicting interests to consider. Her approach is methodical and her attention to detail is meticulous. She’s a very good writer and public speaker.”
I have others here, but I’ll go ahead and just wrap up on a couple.

“Personally, I cannot think of anyone other than Dorothy who would, or could serve on this Commission and possess her analytical skills, intelligence, impartiality, organizational skills, robust attitude, patience, and above all her integrity.

California is fortunate to have Dorothy as a resident and I believe she would be an excellent asset to the Redistricting Commission. She’s objective, fair, and treats everyone with respect. She is willing and able to travel and perform the duties to obtain an equitable redrawing of the public political districts in our state.”

So, with that, I want to thank these people for taking the time that they have taken on my behalf to give expression. And I just wanted to give voice to their words. I’m humbled and honored by their input, as well as humbled and honored to be considered for the Commission. And I want to thank each and every one of you.

CHAIR BELNAP: All right, thank you, Ms. Hines. We’re going to go into a recess now and we’re going to be back at 1:14 p.m.

MS. HINES: Thank you.

(Off the record at 12:00 p.m.)

(On the record at 1:14 p.m.)
CHAIR BELNAP: All right, I’ll call this meeting back out of recess, and we’ll get started.

Ms. Dickison, can you hear me?

PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Yes, I can hear you.

CHAIR BELNAP: And Mr. Coe?

VICE CHAIR COE: I can hear you just fine.

CHAIR BELNAP: All right. And Mr. Jeff Comerchero?

MR. COMERCHERO: Very good.

CHAIR BELNAP: I said it right, okay. We’re going to get started with the standard questions. I’ll turn the time over to Mr. Dawson.

MR. DAWSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Comerchero, I’m going to ask you five standard questions that the Panel has requested that each applicant respond to. Are you ready, sir?

MR. COMERCHERO: I am.

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

What skills or competencies should the Commission possess collectively?

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

In summary, how will you contribute to the success of the Commission?
MR. COMERCHERO: Well, first and foremost I think it’s clear that every Commissioner has to have the ability to listen. And I’m sure you’ve heard that from every applicant you’ve asked that question to, and my guess is you’ll hear it from every other.

But it goes beyond just listening. It really involves hearing what’s being said, taking it to heart, taking it seriously, and having the ability to mold it and fold it into all of the other inputs that you’re getting. So, it’s more complex than just opening your ears and listening.

I also think each Commissioner needs to be politically flexible. Obviously, the Commission is partisan. It’s set up to be that way. And you’ve got people on the left, and people on the right, and people in the middle, and everybody’s got a different option and sometimes very strong.

One thing I’ve found in my career is that good ideas come from everywhere. And every Commissioner has to have an open mind sufficient so that they can recognize good ideas whether they come from the left, or the right, or the middle. It sounds easy to do, but it’s not always so easy for all of us who bring strong opinions to the table.

I also believe that a Commissioner has to have
the right attitude and demeanor. And by that I mean we must, when we’re sitting up in front of the public and soliciting their testimony, we must make them feel welcome when they’re there. There’s an inherent mistrust of government to begin with and if we’re not doing what we should be doing, if we’re looking at the ceiling, or looking out of the audience -- I’ve even sat on boards and commissioners where people will get up to go get a cup of coffee in the middle of somebody who’s speaking. It’s really rude. But more than that, it creates an impression that we just don’t care. And I know we do and we will. And so, I think that’s very important.

I also believe that all Commissioners have to respect each other and view each other as equals. Normally, when we talk about equality we talk about race and ethnicity, economic status and the like, and those things are very important but that’s not what I’m referring to here.

I’ve sat on a lot of boards and commissions in my career and very often, especially in regional, and state, and national groups, big cities tend to look down on small cities. Economically advantaged cities tend to look down on those that are less advantaged. And we just can’t have that. Everybody has to realize that there are 14 seats on that Commission and each Commissioner carries equal weight.
Everybody gets one vote and everybody’s input is important.

As a whole, I think the Commission, again, needs to show responsiveness to the public. It’s not an easy thing for most members of the public to come forward and speak in a public setting. It’s just not something they do every day and they’re not used to it. And we, as the Commission, have to create an environment where they feel comfortable doing that. If not, we’re not going to get the most out of those hearings.

I also think that the Commission, in the beginning of the process, has to set a very aggressive work plan. And this is not an easy task. It’s a long, drawn out process with many meetings. I think the previous Commission, in 2010 and ’11 held 70 business meetings and 34 public hearings. That’s a lot of meetings. That’s lot of travel. And it’s an awful lot of work. And that plan has to be laid out on the front end and make sure everybody’s comfortable with it, and everybody’s willing to take up their fair share of that responsibility.

And finally, I think it’s something that’s often overlooked is as Commissioners, whatever the board is, we come from different backgrounds, different educational stand points, obviously different geographies. That’s part of the makeup of the Commission and that’s the design. None of us would really be trained in the work that’s being
done, but we might have similar experiences. And it’s so important to respect and listen to the staff of the Commission. You’re the ones trained to do it. And we would really be remiss if we didn’t listen to what you have to say and guide us through the process, and allow you to guide us through the process.

What would I bring to the Commission? Well, as a 21-year local elected official in Temecula, California, if I haven’t learned the qualities that I’ve just outlined, I don’t think I would have been there for 21 years, and I don’t think I would have been reelected four or five times.

I don’t know for sure the number, but I’ve kind of calculated in my head that over all those years I’ve participated in about 1,500 public meetings. And I’ve chaired about 500 of those. Those experiences, I think, can be very valuable to the Commission.

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

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

MR. COMERCHERO: Well, that’s potentially a very serious problem, but I honestly think it has a very simple solution if everyone’s willing to adhere to it, and that’s simply to act civilly to each other. And I’ve seen both and I’ve participated in both kinds where there’s a lot of friction, where groups tend to be more contentious than collaborative, and it just doesn’t work in the long run and it just doesn’t produce the desired outcome.

So, if we will just respect each other, give a lot of weight to everything that each of us are saying, a little joviality is fine, too, have a collegial type of environment I think hyperpartisanship just doesn’t get a foothold if you do that. It just gets squeezed out and everything goes a whole lot smoother.

In 2015 I was the mayor of my city that year, and I instituted a program early in the year called “Temecula Has Heart Because Nice Matters”. And honestly, I thought it was just kind of a feel good statement, maybe it would bring a few smiles to people. But it took off in a way that I never realized it would. And people went around smiling all the time, knocking on their neighbors’ doors saying, you know, can I do anything for you? Can I mow
your lawn? Do you need anything at the grocery store?
Just smiling at strangers on the street.

And then, we asked them to post those good deeds
on a Facebook page that we had set up and we got literally
thousands of postings on that site. More from those who
the good deeds were perfected upon, than those who were
doing them and you would expect that.

And we held contests. We held a video contest
and asked people to recreate good deeds and we got hundreds
of entries on that. We had an art contest for both
children and adults, and asked them to create a piece of
art that said what Temecula has heart means to them. And
it was just incredible what happened during that year. It
became a magical year.

And it was just simply being nice to people and
the effect that that has. We’re seeing it today in many of
our communities with what we’re all dealing with where, you
know, neighbors are saying hi to each other again. And not
getting too close to each other, but really nice to see.

I know later in that year, in 2015 I was on a
business trip and I was in Hong Kong. And as I passed by
in the airport they had a Plexiglas case where they were
soliciting donations. And on the side of the case it said
“Hong Kong has heart.” Well, I don’t know if they got that
from us or where they got that from, but it certainly made
my heart sing when I saw that. It’s a very simple thing, but it goes a long, long way. And, you know, we just all need to set the example, me and everybody else, and if we do that, there’s just no place — hyperpartisanship has to go in hiding because there’s just no place for it. And I believe that.

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

MR. COMERCHERO: I think it’s invariable that the Commission will be bombarded, both at public meetings and probably written documentation by special interest groups and, in particular paid advocates, whether they be consultants, or executive directors of various organizations. And that in and of itself is certainly not a bad thing. Input is great wherever it comes from and if it’s good input, we need to hear it.

But I do think the Commission has to be on guard because I’ve seen too often in my experience where paid executive directors or consultants will be over zealous in asking for everything. It demeanes them and their comments. They lose credibility when they do that.

And ideally what we’d like to see — and again, you’re going to listen to all the input. But ideally what
you’d like to see is those people who come forward representing either themselves, or an interest group, who say I don’t think we’re being treated fairly in the process. And then, we can look at that and make a determination as to why that may be the case and solve that problem, and that’s why we’re there. But when somebody asks for the moon very often they get less than their fair share, and that’s unfortunate.

So, I think we as Commissioners need to have the ability and the experience to recognize the difference. And that’s not an easy thing to do. It’s really more intuitive than anything else. But if we can do that, we can solve a lot of the pushing and pulling back and forth, and things are can run a whole lot smoothly.

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

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

What lessons would you take from this group experience to the Commission if selected?
MR. COMERCHERO: Well, in 2005 there was a land use project that came forward in the County of Riverside. It was right on our southwestern border of our city, in an area of beautiful hills that surrounded our city and really were the signature, and a big part of our identity as a city.

The project was on 414 acres and it was to be a rock quarry, a strip mining operation. The name of the project was Liberty Quarry. It gained a lot of attention both in the state and nationally, as well. It was a very large project and it got to be very contentious. We as the city decided to oppose it, that we just had too much to lose. And so, we set about setting a budget, interviewing and hiring consultants, technical experts to help us dive into the environmental impact report to refute it where we felt it made sense to do so.

And we knew we were in for a tough fight. And then another group came forward to us and they were a grass roots environmental group. It’s called SOS Hills, Save Our Southwest Hills. They had many members, quite a few hundred in fact. And they were mostly environmentalists and members of the Sierra Club.

Now, our city was growing very rapidly then, in 2005. We were actually at one time the fastest growing city in America. So, there was a lot of development going
on. And any time you have a lot of development, you have a little head butting between officials and environmentalists because it’s the natural way things are, and that’s okay. It makes for a good end result.

And they were coming to it from a different point of view. They were concerned about the environmental aspects, clearly. They were concerned that there’s the last free-flowing river in California that goes through that property, from our city 20, 25 miles or so to provide drinking water for Camp Pendleton. And they were concerned it would be polluted.

They were also concerned that there were endangered species that inhabited that area and it would shut off their corridor, and that was very important to them.

So, although we may have been at odds on different projects throughout the years, we had a common enemy so to speak in this case, and so we were forced to work together and we took on that role.

Then as we were going through the process a third group came in and it was the Pechanga Band of Luiseño Mission Indians. A very powerful tribe in the state. One of the most successful gaming tribes in the country.

And they told us their stories about how they were adjacent to that land and they viewed it as their area
of creation. And they told us this beautiful story about how father sun and mother earth got together there and their civilization began. They likened it to the Garden of Eden.

And I said to the tribal chairman, I said, Mark, you have to go forward and tell that story to the planning commission and to the board of supervisors when the time comes. And he said, no, they’ve discussed it among themselves with the elders of the tribe and that information as very private to them, and they held it very close, and they felt that they were doing a disservice to their ancestors if they were to go public with this information, and about their spirituality and the deep aspects of their culture.

So, I said okay. But they did say they’d provide help, they’d provide funding for us if we needed it, things that we needed regardless.

And as we went further and further into the process we were very concerned that we weren’t winning the battle. It was really difficult. And so, I called the chairman again and I said, you know, how important is this property to you? Because we’re going to lose this fight if you don’t come forward and tell your story, and tell people about that area and how sacred it is to you.

And finally they came back to us and said that
they would do that, and they did. It was very heartwarming and, oh, in probably six or eight public meetings they told that story, sometimes in their own native Luiseño language, and they would interpret for it. People had never seen that before.

And so, at the end of the day we prevailed and in large part because of what they did. And we won the fight three to two at the planning commission and then three to two again at the board of supervisors.

But even with that, we were all concerned that the project proponent, it was a large construction company, still owned the land. And they had property rights. They could come forward with another project, maybe smaller. Do the same thing and revise their Environmental Impact Report.

And so, we didn’t quite know what to do, we were worried. And I got a call a month or so later from the tribe, and they asked me, can you come up to our parking lot at the top of our -- the rooftop. At 2:30 that afternoon we’re going to have a press conference, and they did. And they announced that after a 7-year fight they purchased the land, $22 million. It was a big hit to them, even though they’re a pretty well off tribe, but that’s how important it was to them.

And so, here we’d come through this long, years’
long battle with three very diverse groups, who came about the same problem from different directions, with different interests, but all with the same goal. And for me personally, I learned a great lesson from that. I learned that it doesn’t matter how diverse you are and what you think and what you believe on this side of your life, or on this side of your life. If you have an issue where everybody needs to work together, it can be done, and it can be done very effectively.

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

If you are selected as a Commissioner, what skills and attributes will make you effective at interacting with people from different backgrounds and who have a variety of perspectives?

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

MR. COMERCHERO: Well, first of all, I was born and raised and went to school in a very rough section of Brooklyn, New York. The Coney Island section, if you know
if it. Especially the 50s or so when I was going to school, and the 60s, well, it wasn’t a great place to be. But everyone was in the same position. We were poor, but we had a roof over our head and we ate every day. And the makeup of that area, I don’t have statistics, I’m just going off the top of my head, but my sense is it was about 50 percent black, 25 percent white, and 25 percent Puerto Rican. And we all were born into that. We didn’t know any better that we should be wary of each other, we were just all people. So, that was the start of my experiences in life, not really knowing about bias or anything like that. People were just people and we all got along, mostly we all got along.

But it wasn’t until much later in my life, in 1997, when I was first elected to the city council, and then I got involved quickly and heavily in the League of California Cities, the National League of Cities, and in years when I was the mayor in the U.S. Conference of Mayors.

Each of those groups had committees, and I was a member of committees of each of those groups, and we would hold meetings three to four times a year. And in all cases there was a host who was a mayor, a councilmember, and they would, you know, bid to have the meeting in their city, and they were very proud of their city. And so, when we would
have those meetings, we would have essentially a one-day
agenda, where we’d go over, you know, whatever the general
topics were that the state was dealing with.

And then, we would go out in the field, into
their cities, and the host would show us areas that they
were proud of and they wanted us to see, where they’ve had
successes in various programs. Maybe they were affordable
housing programs or cleanup programs.

But they also showed us areas that they weren’t
so proud of, where they had problems and they were having a
difficult time solving them. And it ranged the gamut, you
know, almost all cities faced them. Whether it’s the areas
of poverty, areas of gang violence, drug use, whatever it
happened to be. And then after those meetings, we would
sit down and work through the problems with the host and
provide whatever we could provide, because we were all
dealing with similar problems, in terms of best practices,
and the like and it would really be a collaborative effort.

And that experience was amazing through the years
that I did that. And many years, boy, everywhere from San
Diego up through Redding just about. Now, maybe not every
city, but a good deal of cities in California we had those
meetings. And we really had a hands on look, with our
boots on the ground, as to what was going on in those
cities and got to talk to a lot of people. Not just the
elected representatives, but also people in the field who they wanted us to talk to.

I thought that was a tremendous experience and it taught me an awful lot, and that’s the part of the experience that I would bring to the Commission.

MR. DAWSON: Okay, thank you. All right, we will now go to Panel questions. Each Panel Member will have 20 minutes to ask his or her questions. And we’ll start with the Chair, Mr. Belnap.

CHAIR BELNAP: Okay, my first question is about your two decades of elected public service. How will this service help you be a more effective Commissioner?

MR. COMERCHERO: Well, I think the work itself that’s done over the course of those years, and being an elected official is pretty much as close as you can come to the work of the Commission, at least in terms of process. And being comfortable in public hearings, knowing what questions to ask, knowing how to interact with other Commissioners.

Nobody has the exact experience to be on this Commission. There are only 12, 10 people in the state who have that experience and none of them are applicants this time around. So, the question is how close can you come to duplicating that experience? And I do believe that those are just things that you learn through years and years of
going through similar things.

CHAIR BELNAP: Thank you. So, one of the factors that the Commission has to consider as it’s redrawing the district lines is the boundaries of cities. So, as a former city official can you describe why it is important to keep city boundaries intact in the redistricting process?

MR. COMERCHERO: Well, I can tell you it didn’t work in our case in the last Census, in 2010. And I don’t mean to disparage the work of the previous Commission. I realize that it’s a very, very difficult task and lines have to be drawn somewhere.

But we really felt the effects of that. Particularly the Congressional district. We have two. The northern part of our city is in the 50th and the southern part in the 42nd, or maybe the other way around, I forget. But there were times when our citizens didn’t even know who their Congress member was. And in our case, and maybe this was unique, the councilmember on the northern part of the city and going further up north, to other cities from there, was somebody we were very familiar with and he represented our city before, and we were very comfortable with him. He’d been there a long time. He’s still there. And we were not happy with losing him.

The Congress member on the southern side of the
city, which just happens to be where I live, turned out to
be not quite the same and eventually last year had to
resign because he had done some things that weren’t quite
proper. And so, for the last year or so we haven’t had any
representation, no Congress member. And that was very
difficult.

To his credit, the one that represented us on the
northern side came to us and said I don’t care who my
constituents are, if you need help I’m here for you. And
he was. And that was very helpful.

But we really saw the effects of dividing a city
in half, especially a city like ours which is pretty
homogeneous. We don’t necessarily have pockets of
communities of interest. We have those interests there,
but they’re really well divided amongst the city. And so,
by nature those same communities of interest were also
divided. And it just didn’t work very well and it made me
think.

In fact, it was really the impetus for me to
apply for this Commission. That and the fact that I’m
retired and I’m going stir crazy right now and I want to
get back into public service because I love it. But it
really is difficult when you have to divide communities
like that.

CHAIR BELNAP: All right, thank you. So, if the
geography of a community of interest extends beyond city lines and keeping the community of interest within the district conflicts with keeping the city boundaries intact, so the two interests, one being community of interest and city boundaries, in this case they’re in conflict. I know that’s not necessarily the case with your city. But I want you to think through how would you evaluate that situation as a Commission and reach a resolution to that conflict between the two criteria?

MR. COMERCHERO: Well, I mean every situation obviously is different and has its own parameters. And certainly that could happen, an area that you’re looking at could happen. And I’d have to look at that very carefully.

One thing a city manager told me one time, he was explaining to me what my job was as a council member, and he said sometimes you just have to split the baby. And we all knew what he meant. You have times when rights conflict. And it’s a right for a community of interest to remain solid and also the right of the city remain intact. So, I think it’s a very difficult issue. It would have to be solved on a case-by-case basis.

For me, I think I would tend to keep the community of interest intact because I think overall that’s the charge of the Commission. It’s not necessarily to preserve city boundaries. That’s where I would tend to
lead, but you really have to look at all of the facts in that case.

CHAIR BELNAP: Okay. So, where -- I appreciate your answer. And where I’m going with that and I guess I’ll ask it directly is given your history with your city, and what happened to your city do you think you have a stronger preference than maybe other Commissioners, maybe even a bias towards keeping city boundaries intact in the redistricting process?

MR. COMERCHERO: I probably do have more of a bias than others. But, you know, I’ve sat on a lot of regional boards and commissions and there’s a difference between sitting as a city council and wearing your city council hat, and taking that hat off when you go to a broader commission or a board. And that’s what has to happen here.

So, I would like to think that I have the ability to see beyond my own city boundaries, I believe I do. But that’s the way it needs to be approached, I think.

CHAIR BELNAP: All right, thank you. In your essay on appreciation for diversity you described a realization you had while participating in a League of Cities committee. Can you talk about that experience and the realization you had?

MR. COMERCHERO: Sure. It was very young in the
job and very green. I had no experience whatsoever in terms of city leadership and how to do that. But I got cajoled to join the California League of Cities by a colleague of mine and said, hey, I’m the only one from the city representing us in that body, and I need some help. And so, I said okay.

And they put me on a committee that was community development -- economic and community development committee. And there were about 40 members or so of that committee and the very first thing they did, and the very first meeting I went to was the chair asked for everyone to introduce themselves, and as they went around the room to give a brief story about what they felt was the principle obstacle in their city to providing a high level of community service.

And as fate would have it I was one of the last ones to go. And so, I’m sitting there formulating what my answer would be and I knew that just a night or two before that we had had a rather contentious city council meeting where we had identified $8 million in funds that weren’t being used, and they could be reprogrammed in our capital improvement program. And so, the meeting was all about how are we going to spend this $8 million?

And everybody had a different point of view. Everybody had a project they wanted to do. Everything from
a road project to a children’s museum, which is what I wanted to do, to a new park, major sports park, and a performing arts theater. It was all over the place.

And so, my answer was to be, well, we have some politics going on and we can’t decide how best to use the public money. And as I’m listening to everybody give their point of view and their answer I heard some remarkable things to me. One in particular that really stuck in my mind was a woman from the San Joaquin Valley, I believe, she was the mayor of a fairly small town. And she said that they were instituting a program of providing basketball sneakers for a kids program, and they didn’t have the $5,000 they needed to do that.

And I heard that, similar stories again and again in that group, and I’m sitting there thinking my goodness. I’m listening to this and everybody else’s problems, and I’m going to say that we have a hard time spending $8 million?

It really made me realize very early in my public career one how fortunate we were and, two, the level of diversity that exists in California. Not everybody has a healthy city. And I didn’t know any different. And so, that was a tremendous education and it really -- I mean I can remember the exact words today, more than 20 years later, it really tailored how I looked at my job for the
next 20 years.

CHAIR BELNAP: All right, thank you for sharing that. So, for 14 years you were President and CEO of Rancon Group of Companies. So, please tell us about that company and your role in it?

MR. COMERCHERO: Well, I started as a consultant, and I think it was 2002. I was looking to change careers because actually, and I don’t think you see this on my application, I had a 25-year career before I ever got involved in public, and in Rancon, in the toy business. I was a manufacturing and consultant, and did marketing, put marketing teams together and the like.

And then when I saw very significant changes going on in that industry to where the niche that I had created was rapidly disappearing and I had to remake myself. And so, I had a talk with a fellow who was a very good friend of mine, who happened to be a developer, and he said have you ever thought about being a development consultant? And I said, no, I don’t know the first thing about that. And he said, well, you’ve been a city councilman now for several years in one of the fastest growing cities around, you know a whole lot more than you think you know.

And he helped me put together a group of several different clients that I would start this consulting
company with. And I felt a little awkward because I felt a little bit like a fish out of water but, you know, I plowed forward. And one of the companies was the Rancon Group. And it’s a real estate development company. It was founded in 1971. Very, very well respected in the community. It’s founder had been named citizen of the year in just about every city where the company did business. He’s a great philanthropist and really a good community guy.

So, it intrigued me. I wanted to get involved with them. So, I started consulting for him. He wanted to use more and more of my time, so I let my other clients go because I really liked where I was. And then, about a year later he came to me and said, you know, I’m getting older, I want to travel more. I don’t want to be hassled with the day-to-day of the company. Why don’t you just take over the company and become the President and CEO. I was a little shocked by that. But I said yes and I did, and it lasted for 14 years. We had -- until I retired.

We had at any given time 90 to 100 different companies that made up the Rancon Group. Most of them were single-purpose LLCs, so they weren’t intense. Like they weren’t all big companies. But they all required management and we had, you know, a fairly good sized staff. And we just did land development projects. That was the nature of the business.
Occasionally we built things, but usually we didn’t. We built some self-storage facilities. We built a winery in Temecula’s wine country and actually we’re in the process of expanding that. It’s going to be one of the most dynamic wine resorts in the world. So, I still watch that. I still keep my fingers in it a little bit, although I’m retired, but I don’t really work at it.

CHAIR BELNAP: All right, thank you. I didn’t catch what industry you were in for 25 years before you got into city management or city elected office.

MR. COMERCHERO: Toys.

CHAIR BELNAP: Toys?


CHAIR BELNAP: Ah.

MR. COMERCHERO: I know it always brings a smile to people’s faces. But it was a job and an industry just like any other.

CHAIR BELNAP: Can you tell us about a toy that you helped develop?

MR. COMERCHERO: Sure. I wasn’t prepared to answer this one. But I do remember, at least in one case, a gentleman came to me, actually two gentlemen. And one had been an executive with Mattel for a number of years, a big toy company, and he was a toy inventor. And the other was his brother-in-law, who was a marketer. And I met with...
them in a hotel room. They wanted me to market this particular product and put together a team to do so. And it was called a Koosh Ball, K-O-O-S-H. And if you had kids in that time, you probably would know what it was. And it was this crazy ball that it just had a feel to it. It was a bunch or rubber, wire looking things that were soft and came out from it. And I looked at them and I was so intrigued, and I said I don’t know why this is going to be a success, but it is. And it was. It was huge. And I certainly wasn’t the only one who shared that opinion. But that was a great story, I enjoyed that one.

CHAIR BELNAP: All right, thank you.

Madam Secretary, how much time do I have left?

MS. PELLMAN: Five minutes, 54 seconds.

CHAIR BELNAP: Okay, thank you.

So, I guess I’ll -- in either industry, whether it be in real estate or in toys, can you give us an example of the type of analysis that you would perform? Something particularly applicable to the type of analysis that would be performed by the Commission?

MR. COMERCHERO: Well, particularly in the real estate development industry, when developing the project on the front end there’s a tremendous amount of analysis. both the due diligence before actually buying a property that you’re going to develop, in which case the greatest
tool that I would use would be the County of Riverside’s GIS system. And it’s very robust. And a good GIS system has many, many layers, and you need to kind of navigate around the layers that are relevant to you and those which are not. But it would provide a tremendous amount of information concerning a particular property. And all you’d need to do is type in the APN number of the property and a lot of things would come up that were very helpful.

In one of the ways it was helpful was often we would look at a property that was maybe a little bit too small or configured in a way that it didn’t lend itself too well to development. And, therefore, we would look at the surrounding properties and see if there was the potential to pick up another couple of acres, or whatever it would be. And so, we’d need to research that and know who the owner is of that property, what’s their contact information, and we would go from there.

Once we got started with a project then just about all of the work was mapping. Mapping in terms of plotting studies, doing residential configurations, looking at geotechnical maps that gave you the topography of the areas. I’ll tell you, with all the projects that we did, it was a very active company, we had a map room that was constantly bursting at the seams. We didn’t know where to put them all. So, that was a big part of the work.
CHAIR BELNAP: All right, thank you. I have no further questions. I’m going to turn the time over to Mr. Coe.

VICE CHAIR COE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Good afternoon, Mr. Comerchero. Thank you for taking the time to speak with us today.

MR. COMERCHERO: My pleasure.

VICE CHAIR COE: In your application, I believe it was the last essay your wrote, you indicate that you’re a proud Vietnam Veteran, and you told a little story about your experience returning to American soil on your return from the war. And something kind of flooded over you that caused you to reflect on what America’s principles mean to you.

How do you think that that experience and that perspective has benefitting your public service thus far and how could it benefit this Commission?

MR. COMERCHERO: Well, one of the things it does is inform your philosophies on where you live. And freedom is such a precious thing and so many of us take it for granted. I know it’s trite to say that, but when you go through an experience like a war, and being seven or eight thousands miles from home, you develop an appreciation that you just never thought you would.

And I’ll tell you quite freely, Vietnam and
Southeast Asia was not a place I wanted to be. I didn’t choose to be there. I didn’t like being there. But after I came back and reflected on it, I became a very proud American. I was proud to have fulfilled my obligations to my country. And I took that very, very seriously.

You know, we all experienced in that war, when we came home, something less than we would have liked. And we experienced really hatred in some circles and, you know, people yelled things at us. Some very nasty things. Actually, it thickened my skin and gave me the ability to be a council member.

But there is that appreciation. And I know one of the things I did that even though it was many years later, almost 50 years later, it still rang true. And in, I think it was 2010, again that was the year I was the mayor, and Governor, then Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger pronounced March 31st to be Welcome Home Vietnam Veterans Day. In fact, we just celebrated it.

And I wanted to do something. I really felt committed to right some wrongs that had taken place at that time. And we rounded up all the Vietnam Veterans in our city that we could find. We found about 60 of them. And we had a special medal struck that we called the Mayor’s Medal. And one by one I put this medal -- they came to a council meeting, so in public and on TV I put this medal
around each of their necks and officially welcomed them home. I’ll tell you, there wasn’t a dry eye in the place, including mine. And you can see I’m still emotional about that.

VICE CHAIR COE: Thank you for sharing that, appreciate that.

In one of your letters of recommendation the author of the letter states that: You garner respect from people of all backgrounds and viewpoints.

Since much of the success of this Commission’s work will depend on the vast and diverse residents of California respecting and trusting the Commission, and providing their viewpoints to the Commission, how would you go about garnering the respect of the diverse population of the State of California?

MR. COMERCHERO: Well, I think in order to gain respect you have to give respect, and that’s the first place I would look. And I mentioned that a little bit before in some of my other answers. I think you really have to show and demonstrate to the public that you’re not just there -- when you go into a city and hold a public hearing, or whatever it is you’re doing, you have to demonstrate to them that it’s not just a job. You’re not just there because somebody told you to be in this city at this time, and listen to what the public has to say.
You really have to convince people and you do it by your actions and your words, when you can, that you want to hear what they have to say. You can’t do your job effectively unless you do. And that’s critical to the process. And the more you respect the public, the more they’ll respect you.

And I’ve found that over the years one thing that I think is critical and that’s doing the right thing. And that sounds awfully simple, but no matter what that thing is, no matter what you’re dealing with, you never go wrong doing something right.

And when do that, even if people disagree with you at the end of the day they’ll respect you for it. And that’s been the cornerstone of my time in public service.

VICE CHAIR COE: Thank you. I wanted to go back to the example that Mr. Belnap brought up that you spoke about earlier, on your League of California Cities, the meeting, the experience you had listening to mayors and council members of other cities speak.

That was in your appreciation for diversity essay. And certainly from the stand point of appreciation for socioeconomic diversity based on that example, but what about other types of diversity? Cultural diversity, for example, what did you learn maybe from that experience, maybe from a different one about people of different
backgrounds, different cultures, various types of diversity across the state that would make you an effective representative for them on this Commission?

MR. COMERCHERO: Well, I don’t think I learned that much of those aspects in that particular meeting. But my work at both the California League of Cities and the National League of Cities took us into some areas where I’d never been before in terms of all of that, culture.

I learned things, for instance, at the National League of Cities that representation, especially in areas of the south and areas that were predominantly black were very different than those that I had experienced and, really, most of the cities in California, not all. It really, when you get out, it’s so critical. I don’t care what you’re doing in public service, it’s so critical to get out. Get out from your desk, get out from your office and go see the way other people live, and what they believe. And I did that. And it was the greatest work of my life, frankly.

And every time I would come home with something different. And I would talk to my colleagues at home and say you know what, look what they’re doing in Tuscaloosa, Alabama. We can do that here, or something similar and adapt it to what we’re doing. And very often that was cultural.
There’s no substitute for that. You can’t get that out of a book.

VICE CHAIR COE: Thank you for that. So, as has been discussed a little bit already, communities of interest and identifying those is going to be one of the biggest tasks in front of this Commission. But identifying those communities, some are easier to identify than others, some are less engaged or less obvious, so harder to find. What tactics could you employ to identify communities of interest across the state and particularly tactics that could help the Commission inadvertently overlook some of the less obvious communities that are harder to find?

MR. COMERCHERO: Well, I think obviously holding the public hearings, as in the case of the last Commission in 32 different cities is very important, and you have to do that.

But when you look at the numbers in their case, 2,700 people came to speak at those public hearings in 32 different cities and 34 meetings. Now, that’s about 80 per meeting and that’s a lot to sit through. I probably don’t have to tell you what it’s like to sit through a whole lot of interviews and public speaking.

But that’s not enough. I mean that’s a very small percentage of the population. You can try to bring more people out through marketing efforts before you ever
go into a city to hold a public hearing, and go to the right places and that, but I don’t think that gets the job done.

What I would like to see is a work plan that gets us into a city a day before the public hearing, or at least the morning of that public hearing. And I would like to call well in advance so they can set it up, the city manager of the city, the mayor of the city, and ask them to set up more of a roundtable meeting for us. And a few Commissioners could join. Obviously, we’ve got to deal with the constraints of the Bagley-Keene Act. But put together a mayor and a council member, a city manager, head of the chamber of commerce, head of the dominant churches in the area, the superintendent of schools. All of the stakeholders, they’re in that community. they know what the flavor of that community is. And if we could sit down with them for two or three hours and have a set of prewritten questions, very much like you’re doing, to start off with. And really get them to open up about what that community is all about. Where are the communities of interest? How strong are they? How large are they? Are they diverse or are they concentrated in one area? What are the issues that those communities are facing? What’s important to them?

For some it may be issues of poverty, for others
it may be education, for others it may be crime in their cities. Whatever it has to be those have to be identified. And if you can’t go directly to the source, and realistically you can’t, then the next best thing is to go to the people who know more about those communities than anybody else.

VICE CHAIR COE: Thank you. And once those communities are identified, some of them may be less comfortable, or for one reason or another engaging government or, as you mentioned before, you know, coming to public hearing types, of public meeting type settings. And you mentioned doing things to make these folks feel comfortable and welcome at these settings because they’re foreign to them and they’re uncomfortable to them.

But my question is about for some of these groups that are, you know, may be a little leery about engaging in this type of process to begin with how do you reach out to them and make them feel comfortable enough to even show up to these meetings to provide their perspective, to help better inform the work of the Commission?

MR. COMERCHERO: That’s not easy. Even people that are reluctant to come to meetings, it’s not just because they’re reluctant. Let’s face it, there’s an awful lot of apathy when it comes to our citizenry. Sometimes that can be a good thing. Because if we’re all doing our
job as public servants maybe they don’t have to worry too much about the things that we’re doing.

But in those particular groups that you’re talking about, I think you have to reach out to them. And that may mean going to where they feel comfortable being. That may be a church. It may be a civic center. Probably not, that’s too much like government. And get government out of it as much as you possibly can.

Obviously that’s a challenge because you are government. But the more you can convey that we’re not here to do anything other than to help you get proper representation for your group, and with proper representation there are benefits to that. You may get more funding. You may be able to solve those problems that are particular to your group.

But I’m not under any illusions that that’s an easy task. It’s not. But you have to make every effort to get to them in their own habitat, so to speak, because that’s where they feel most comfortable.

VICE CHAIR COE: You mentioned at the beginning of your answer to that question the word “apathy” and apathy amongst the population. Does the Commission have an ability to perhaps get rid of some of that apathy within the population?

MR. COMERCHERO: It’s a noble goal and it’s
certainly worth pursuing, but it’s very difficult. I mean, if you look back to that 2,700 number that addressed the previous Commission, in 2011, there are roughly almost 16 million registered voters in California, and 2,700 people spoke. That’s a big number and it’s nice to get that input, but look at all the people who are not interested in that. So, you do the best you can. You do whatever outreach you can well before going into that city.

One of the things and this sounds funny, provide coffee and donuts. That brings a lot of people out, you’d be surprised. It’s little things like that, what can you think of that creates an environment where it’s not just a task for them to come out because they’re not interested in that. How can you make it a little bit more interesting and even a little bit fun?

VICE CHAIR COE: Thank you. One further question on your time with the League of California Cities. How much did that involvement bring you to different parts of the state?

MR. COMERCHERO: Well, as I said before, about three or four times a year. We usually would have one national -- well, not national. A statewide meeting, a general meeting that was held in Monterey most years. In the last several years they moved it out and moved it around a little bit more.
They were pretty smart. They knew if you hold a conference in Monterey, you’re going to get a lot of participation, and they did.

But we would go to cities all over the state, everywhere. So, three or four times a year, three times a year in other cities would host those meetings. And so it was -- I would guess over the 20 years or so, probably got to 50 cities or so where I had that experience.

VICE CHAIR COE: And from those experiences and those travels did you learn anything about regional perspectives and concerns that you think that would be helpful to your work on this Commission?

MS. PELLMAN: We have four minutes, 35 seconds remaining.

VICE CHAIR COE: Thank you.

MR. COMERCHERO: The work we did was a little bit more concentrated in cities, rather than regions, although we were exposed somewhat to regional activities. You know, and I participated in other groups, too. I participated in a group at SCAG, Southern California Association of Governments that encompasses six Southern California Counties and other regional efforts. You know, Western Riverside Council of Governments, as well.

But in those California League of City meetings it really was more city-centric than it was regional.
VICE CHAIR COE: Okay, thank you. If you were to be appointed to this Commission which aspects of that role do you think that you would enjoy the most and which aspects of that role, conversely, do you think you might struggle with a little bit?

MR. COMERCHERO: Well, I certainly would enjoy the interaction. One of the things I’ve always enjoyed about being on any deliberative body was listening to my colleagues and formulating in my mind because there’s conflict, there’s always conflicts, hopefully it’s well done and not contentious. But trying to think of ways to pull people together in a common solution to where in the end usually not everybody, or nobody gets all of what they want, but everybody gets something of what they want. And is there something that can be supportable?

I’ve always seen that it’s better to move forward collectively as a group, with a unanimous or as close to a unanimous decision as you can, even if it means everybody gives a little bit. So, I love doing that. I love playing that role and I know I would enjoy that on this Commission as well.

What wouldn’t I like? Maybe the tedium sometimes. I know what it’s like to sit through public hearings of many speakers at one time. And as I said, in this case they averaged 80 a night. And if you give
everybody three minutes or five minutes to speak, or whatever it is, it gets to be an awfully long night. And you hope and you really work to be as fresh and as relevant at 11:00 o’clock at night as you were at 6:00 o’clock, but it’s not easy. And so, that wouldn’t be my favorite part of it, but you just learn to do that and you power through it.

VICE CHAIR COE: Okay, thank you very much, Mr. Comerchero.

Mr. Chair, no further questions.

CHAIR BELNAP: Okay, Ms. Dickison, the time is now yours.

PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Thank you. Good afternoon, Mr. Comerchero. So, a lot of my questions have been asked. But why did you decide to retire and not seek reelection when you did?

MR. COMERCHERO: Well, for one, I felt that we were in a very rapidly growing city and we got to do an awful lot of things. And after my last term, in the end of 2018, I felt that the work that I really enjoyed doing was over, it was done. Successfully I might add, and very gratifying. But there comes a time when it’s just best to step to the side and let somebody with some fresh ideas come up and do some different things.

I was at an age where retirement held some
fascination for me and it still does, so I retired from
both my private life and my public life pretty much at the
same time.

PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Okay. So, in your
analytics essay you talked about in your city you went from
at-large districts to -- or at-large elections to district
elections. What was your role in drawing those districts?

MR. COMERCHERO: Well, one thing that our council
always did was divide up the work into council
subcommittees of two people. And so, I was appointed to
the subcommittee to deal with the redistricting.

We went through a process that was obviously new
to us. It wasn’t redistricting, it was districting for the
first time. And so, we got very sage advice from our city
attorney, who’d been there many years and been through it
before. We brought on a consultant team to help us through
the process, and we followed their instructions.

We started out having a series of public
hearings. I believe it was five of them in roughly what
would probably wind up one each in the districts, although
we didn’t know where those district lines for certain would
be.

And then, we took that input back, sat down with
the consultants and came up with three different scenarios
that all work from the stand point of meeting the
objectives. And the lines were just slightly different.

And so, it became our task at that point to take those three maps to the full council, let them weigh in on it, get their responses. And then, we went out again to the community and held another series of five public hearings in each of what would be those districts to get public comment on where the districts themselves were drawn.

And then eventually we voted as a council on which of the three scenarios we were going to institute. It was contentious. It surprised me a little bit that it was. And the vote wound up three to two, which is a little unusual in our city. But at the end of the day everyone realized that’s what we were doing and just locked arms and moved forward.

PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: So, in going through the process did you -- did you recognize communities of interests that you didn’t realize you had in your area?

MR. COMERCHERO: You know, we searched for them but we didn’t find concentrated areas of interest. We certainly found there were communities of interest, but they were scattered throughout the entire city. And so, for instance, one of the charges that we had was to see if we could create a predominantly Hispanic district. And in any scenario that we utilized the highest percent of
Hispanic in any district was 26 percent. And ultimately, that was the scenario that we used.

But it made us wonder, frankly, why we were going to districts and did we need to? But we also realized that this was in that time and that period, and 10, 20, 30 years from now the situations would likely be different. And so, we were setting up a scenario that could accommodate the needs of those years out.

PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: You mentioned that that experience was actually districting because there weren’t lines before. The understanding is California could lose a Congressional district after this next Census. Based on your experience with the districting you did there in Temecula, how do you think that that’s going to affect the job of the Commission going forward?

MR. COMERCHERO: Well, it’s certainly helpful. It’s not exactly the same experience. In the case of the state we’re dealing with existing boundaries that will undoubtedly have to be moved. And so, it is somewhat different. But the process is very much the same in terms of the public hearings and seeking public input.

I’ve been trying to learn everything I -- well, all I can about where California might be going in this redistricting process. You know, I’ve found that of the 58 counties in California, 25 of them grew at a rate of
5 percent or greater over the last ten years, or some of them grew at 10 percent or greater.

But there were also 11 counties that lost population. And so, there’s been really quite a significant shift in population in the last 10 years, even the population itself has remained somewhat stagnant as a state. That’s going to have to be dealt with. And some lines may have to be significantly moved. I’m sure the objective will be not to create winners and losers through that process, but I also think it’s somewhat inevitable, as evidenced by what my own city went through in the last process where we were divided by Congressional districts.

And so, the experience is helpful, but certainly some of it will be new as it will be to all of us.

PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: One of the things you mentioned in your response to questions three, one of the problems that you could see the Commission encountering would be to be bombarded by special interests or paid advocates. And something the last Commission recognized is that there were times that they believed some of the people that were giving public comment were actually presenting themselves as members of the community of interest, when they really weren’t and they had their own outside interests.

How do you think -- do you think you have any
experience that would help you recognize who those people are and how do you think the Commission should account for that?

MR. COMERCHERO: Well, certainly, you know, my experience in as many public hearings as I’ve participated in kind of gives you an intuition about some of those things. It’s not an easy thing to do.

And as far as how the Commission should handle it, I would listen to what that person has to say, whether they have a self-interest or not because it may still be relevant input, and if it is it should be listened to.

But undoubtedly that will happen and we have to do the best we can to recognize it. You sometimes can pick up things that people say. Also, and I don’t know how the Commission will choose to handle it, very often you can ask a question of a speaker. Sometimes, again, based on open meetings laws it may not be permissible, but you can flesh that out a little bit, and that’s helpful.

PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Thank you. So, if you were -- the way the Commission is selected, the first eight are selected randomly and then the final -- and then they are tasked with selecting the final six to round out the Commission.

If you were selected as one of the first eight, what would you look for in the other six Commissioners?
MR. COMERCHERO: Well, I think the first thing that we would have to do is look at the makeup of the eight of us. And knowing that the Commission needs to be and should be diverse in many areas, diversity in all its forms, see where the holes are. And then, looking at the remaining -- if my math is right, I think there would likely be 28 left in the pool, 9 Democrats, 9 Republicans, and 10 Independents or decline to state.

And there would be two of each of those groups that would have to be chosen to fill those additional six seats. So, I would look at that individual pool and see which people best suited the makeup of the existing eight. And, hopefully, there would be more than one. And if there is, then select the person who we think would be the best person for the job.

One of the things I would like to do, and you might not want to hear this so I apologize in advance because the work that you’re doing is so intense, but I’d like to go back to the three of you and say, you know, you’ve become very intimate with these applications, and you’ve seen all the applicants. Of the nine left of the Democrats, the 9 Republicans, and 10 Independents, can you each give me the best two in each category that you would rank as one and two.

I think if that’s possible and if you would be
willing to do it, it would be foolish not to do that.

Nobody knows as much about everybody as you do, so that input could be very valuable.

PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Thank you. What do you see as your role if you were selected as a Commissioner?

MR. COMERCHERO: Again, I think everybody has their strengths and weaknesses. I enjoy being the mediator. I’ve very often been called by people the voice of reason. I don’t get too excited. I like to be analytical in how I approach things and that’s what I’d like to do here. And I really have always seen so much value in having agreement rather than disagreement. And to the extent that I could help facilitated that, I would enjoy that and I would see that as my goal.

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

MR. COMERCHERO: Well, clearly there’s an objective and that’s first and foremost that has to be accomplish the redrawing the lines. But I would like to see the Commission be able to do that in a way that creates the least controversy, in a way that examines the potential loopholes in the beginning, and all along the process. Because I think it’s fairly inevitable that there will be challenges at the end of the day. There will likely be lawsuits. And to what extent can we bullet proof our
discussions and our decision making to where when those lawsuits come they can clearly be defended. I think that’s very important. And it’s easy to lose sight of that along the way because it’s kind of nebulous. And that’s where we could take really good direction from counsel to the Commission, who could help us with that.

PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Thank you. Mr. Belnap, I have no additional questions at this time.

CHAIR BELNAP: Okay, thank you. We will turn the time over to Mr. Dawson.

MR. DAWSON: Thank you, Mr. Belnap. Thank you again for being here, Mr. Comerchero.

I have a couple of follow-up questions. I wanted to -- I didn’t quite understand, you left -- I’m sorry, you resigned from the city council in 2018 but you at the same time had a position with the County of Riverside?

MR. COMERCHERO: Yes. I’ve had a colleague on the Temecula City Council, who we’ve served together for 11 years, and there was a vacancy on the Riverside County Board of Supervisors in 2015. And he applied to fill that vacancy and he ultimately was appointed by then Governor Jerry Brown to fill that’s seat.

And it was there was run year left on the term and then he had to run for reelection. And he came to me and he asked me if he won that reelection, would I consider
coming and being his chief of staff. I was still working at Rancon at the time. I was still on the city council. I had some conversations with my city attorney. I had many conversations with my city attorney over the years. Being a real estate developer, you always realize that there’s the potential and the perception of conflict of interest and I never wanted to allow that to fester. And so, he always knew what I was doing.

And he said, no, there was no conflict in doing that. And I also consulted with the county council, as well, and he said the same thing.

And so, I agree to retire from Rancon after many years and go and join his staff. I was very excited about doing that. He had I were great friends but we always worked very well together. It might be of interest to note as we talk about diversity, he was the first and still is the only African American member of that board.

And when I took over his staff and worked with him, we had a 12-member staff, 9 were African American. And I believe and I hope I gained their respect as much as I had respect for them throughout that process. I enjoyed doing it. And it was only meant to be short term and at the end of two years I wanted to move on. And by then he felt his staff was in shape that he could bring on somebody else and achieve what he needs to achieve.
MR. DAWSON: Well, thank you. You did answer the next question that I was going to ask and that was about the potential for conflict. And I will say as a long time government staff attorney, I appreciate you reaching out to counsel whenever there’s a question.

MR. COMERCHERO: Yeah.

MR. DAWSON: And that does sort of lead to my other question which is how did you navigate the potential conflict of interest while you were working for Rancon, while you were on the Temecula City Council, and were there any projects you had to walk away from because of that?

MR. COMERCHERO: There were -- well, there were several projects we walked away from in the sense that we never got involved in them at all. And when I first took the role as President of Rancon, I had a long talk with the founder and I said two things. One, I don’t want to develop anything in my own city. We just don’t need to. There’s plenty of opportunity elsewhere and it creates serious problems for me.

And the other thing I said to him was I never want to be asked to work on a project and support a project that I couldn’t support if the same project came to me on the city council. I really wanted to do quality things and so did he, and so it wound up a good marriage.

But I always was in my city attorney’s office. I
was involved in a lot of land use projects throughout other parts of the county and he always knew where my interests were, what they were, what their percentages were, and he was terrific in guiding me through any land mines that I might encounter.

From time to time there was a project that I recused myself from, an issue at the city council. Not because it was a project I was involved in, but because the decision we were making might potentially have an effect on the project, even though it was outside of our city limits. And so, I was very careful to do that.

MR. DAWSON: Thank you. So, Temecula City Council, that’s a nonpartisan seat?

MR. COMERCHERO: Yes.

MR. DAWSON: How long were the terms?

MR. COMERCHERO: The terms were four years. And by the puzzled look on your face, I see you might be wondering why 21 years.

MR. DAWSON: Exactly.

MR. COMERCHERO: When the city first was formed, it’s a fairly new city. It’s incorporated in 1989, so it’s only 31 years old. And when they started, for some reason they made a decision to hold their council elections on odd years. And after a while, and after I was elected for a couple of years, we found that the turnouts we were getting
were just abysmal. I mean, we were lucky if we would reach 20 percent because there was nothing else going on in those elections, except maybe a proposition or two.

And so, we decided to move our election cycle to even-numbered years, three on one cycle, two on another. I was the cycle where there were Congressional elections, and the other two were on the Presidential election cycle.

And so, in order to effectuate that we had two choices, legally. We could either shorten everybody’s existing term by a year or lengthen everybody’s term by a year. Well, nobody felt it was fair to shorten everybody’s term, so we elected to lengthen everybody’s term.

So, although my first reelection was in 2001, my second reelection was in 2006, and that was a five-year term.

MR. DAWSON: All right, thank you. You talked about the splitting of the city into different Congressional districts. And I thought I heard you say that one of the districts is now vacant?

MR. COMERCHERO: Yes. I’d prefer not to mention his name, but you probably know what it is.

MR. DAWSON: No, that’s all right. But my question was have you considered running for that vacancy?

MR. COMERCHERO: No. I’ve had opportunities in my career. People have tried to push me into different
elected offices that were higher than the city council. I had no desire whatsoever. I was very comfortable. I felt like the contribution that I could make at the local level where you run into your constituents at the grocery store, and on the street corner, you don’t get that at higher levels of elected office. And I was very content where I was.

MR. DAWSON: Thank you. Are you concerned about the effect that COVID-19 could have on the redistricting process?

MR. COMERCHERO: Well, yes, I think we all need to be. And knowing that there are statutorial deadlines that have to be hit, how do you deal with the fact that those timelines for the process, the time to accomplish that may be compressed, possibly by quite a bit. And so, there will have to be creative ways to deal with that, much as you’re doing here with these interviews.

I don’t know what those solutions are to replace 30, to 35 public hearings around the state, but there may have to be creative ways to do that.

MR. DAWSON: Thank you. Mr. Belnap, I have no further questions.

CHAIR BELNAP: Mr. Coe, do you have any further questions?

VICE CHAIR COE: I do not have any further
Chair Belnap: Ms. Dickison? Ms. Dickison, do you have further questions? I’ll assume she doesn’t.

Panel Member Dickison: I could hear you. I’m sorry, I couldn’t unmute.

Chair Belnap: No, no, you don’t?

Panel Member Dickison: No, I do not.

Chair Belnap: Okay, thank you. I don’t, either.

Mr. Dawson: Okay, thank you. Madam Secretary, could I have a time check, please?

Ms. Pellman: Yes, 10 minutes and 34 seconds remaining.

Mr. Dawson: All right, thank you.

Mr. Comerchero, with the time remaining I’d like to offer you the opportunity to make a closing statement to the Panel, if you wish.

Mr. Comerchero: Yes, thank you. You know, I’ve been watching these proceedings just about from the beginning. One of the benefits of being retired is you have the ability to do that.

And I have to tell you that the work that you’ve done and are still doing is remarkable. The task has been monumental and you’ve done it with a great deal of professionalism.

I’ll tell you, all of us as applicants, and
really all of the State of California owes you a debt of gratitude.

I’m hoping that my interview today has given you a better insight into who I am and why I feel that I’m a viable candidate for this Commission. From the very first communication from this office, through today, you’ve made it very clear that although there may be many nuances, the key attributes that are needed to sit on this Commission are respect for California’s diversity in all its forms, a demonstrated ability to place the good of the whole above any individual biases, and the ability to understand and absorb complex data leading to fact-based decisions.

I won’t rehash all of what I’ve already said here, but I hope that I’ve demonstrated that my life and work experiences, both public and private, place me well positioned to meet the challenges that the Commission will undoubtedly face.

I appreciate the opportunity to be before you today and I appreciate your time and efforts. I was very gratified to have the support of all three of you, all throughout this process. That meant a lot to me. And I ask for your continued support as we go forward and complete the process. Thank you.

CHAIR BELNAP: Thank you.

We’re going to go into recess now and we’ll be
back at 2:59 p.m.

(Off the record at 2:36 p.m.)

(On the record at 2:59 p.m.)

CHAIR BELNAP: We’re going to come out of recess and start this meeting. Mr. Coe, can you hear us?

VICE CHAIR COE: I can, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR BELNAP: Ms. Dickison?

PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Yes, I can, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR BELNAP: All right, and we want to welcome Anthony Leadholm. Can you hear us?

MR. LEADHOLM: I can thank you very much. It’s Leadholm, just FYI.

CHAIR BELNAP: Leadholm, okay.

MR. LEADHOLM: Yes, it is thank you.

CHAIR BELNAP: All right, we’re going to go into the standard questions. I’ll turn the time over to Mr. Dawson.

MR. DAWSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair.

Mr. Leadholm, I’m going to ask you five standard questions that the Panel has requested each applicant respond to. Are you ready, sir?

MR. LEADHOLM: Yes, I am.

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

What skills or competencies should the Commission
possess collectively?

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

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

MR. LEADHOLM: Well, I think the very first skill that any Commissioner would need, and this also goes to speak of the Commission as a whole, would be simply to listen. The listening tool I think is first and foremost, number one just to get an idea what communities -- what are the priorities of the communities, themselves, but not necessarily limited to the communities themselves.

When speaking with other Commissioners, I think that is imperative, the ability to listen to all of the Commissioners and what they have to say on top of listening to the communities, themselves, should they have, you know, questions, inquiries, or things that they would like the Commission to handle.

In terms of attributes, I would like to say, and it also again goes to speak to the Commissioners themselves, the most important attribute for me would be to remember that they’re there to serve. The Commission is there to serve. That the Commissioners are there to serve. That their own interests or maybe agendas should be, obviously, left alone. That they are there to serve the
people of California and then, more specifically if they’re talking about a regional issue, the people of that region.

In terms of whether or not I possess the ability or the skill to listen, which I’ve said is my first, and I do most definitely. I have been an academic counselor for a number of years, over a decade, and that is the first attribute that they look for when dealing with any type of problem is your ability to listen wholeheartedly to the situation at hand, and before you can either pass that situation along to somebody who is more knowledgeable than you, or making a decision, or solve the problem yourself, to listen to that entire, entire -- that person’s request until you forward that or make a decision yourself.

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

What characteristics do you possess, and what characteristics should your fellow Commissioners possess, that will protect against hyperpartisanship?

What will you do to ensure that the work of the Commission is not seen as polarized or hyperpartisan and avoid perceptions of political bias and conflict?
MR. LEADHOLM: Well, as you know in this day and age it’s been quite crazy, just the temperance of any types of social media like Facebook or Twitter, or Instagram, or any of those outlets have just been increasingly polarized, as you say.

And what I like to do as a general rule of thumb, in my own life, is I try to assess anything that I’m going to say before I speak it and determine whether or not it’s going to be helpful or not. If what I have to say is only going to add fuel to the flame, or fuel to the fire then I have to take a beat, stop, remove myself, or remove what I was going to write and not send, or hit delete, if you would.

I have a tremendous amount of background, like I said, in my counseling arena in dealing with situations, problematic situations between either faculty, students, them, whatever the party is, not getting what they want. And the situation could be increasingly -- the burden could be extrapolated if I were to have said certain things.

So, my general rule of thumb is to have everybody pause, perhaps, and I can provide this and say, okay, maybe everybody we just need to take a pause, take a step back. And then, what I ask my students to do is say look at this from person B’s situation. I would like you maybe to do an exercise. I would like you to tell why person B is acting
the way or wanting the things that they want. So, essentially, it’s a form of role play. And having, whether or not it’s students, faculty, other counselors, or in this instance other Commissioners, perhaps the public itself to say, you know, hey, maybe if -- we’re not getting anywhere with this situation, how about you take the role of this person and see if perhaps that could maybe enlighten them in a way that they had not foreseen.

And if that doesn’t work, the best remedy always is just simply time to take a beat, to pause, remove yourself from the situation and then come at it maybe ten minutes later, five minutes later. Or if heads are a little hot, or red-tempered as my family would like to say, just again take a beat, pause, and go from there.

And I’d like to think that in all my years I’ve been a very good facilitator. One of those people who will jump into the middle of a disagreement, especially if it gets a little heated and say, hey, that’s enough. We’re not getting anything solved here. So, I have that ability, I think and it’s one of my strengths I would say is to kind of get involved where things -- if I can sense that things are getting heated, and not progressing or moving along in any type of way that is acceptable, that I can see that sort of facilitated, that sort of intermediate and, hopefully, in the long run save time for everybody
involved.

So, that’s what I would do. And I’ve had to do it with my own family from time to time.

MR. DAWSON: Thank you.

MR. LEADHOLM: Yes.

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

MR. LEADHOLM: Well, you know, I suppose the answer to this question has perhaps changed a lot over the last couple of weeks. And my response I guess now would be time. I’m not certain exactly how -- that would be perhaps the biggest issue involved due to this, you know, remarkable situation that we’re in with the COVID virus.

The amount of time that it’s going to take to go and accurately assess and draw these lines, and meet with the people, I think that that might be the biggest problem that we’re facing if we’re not allowed to go and do it ourselves, actually go and see exactly where our lines would be, and what the people in these communities would or would not prefer.

And what I would suggest, I suppose, is, you know, that’s -- my goodness, I’ve had to deal with a lot of application reviews, say for example. A lot of just getting in to the meat of just sheer raw numbers and data.
And we’ve had deadlines bumped up, deadlines pushed back.
And I feel like in this unknown sort of time period that
we’re living in, as to whether or not we’re going to be
able to continue, or do things like we have been doing, or
had -- the way things were done, say, ten years ago, if
that’s going to be an effective measure to take.

So, number one we’d have to figure out what could
we do to supplant any of the things that we did maybe ten
years ago and cannot do now due to this virus, or the well-
being of everybody.

And then, formulate a plan that we can all as a
Commission, you know, and local -- and with local officials
agree on in order to get to the ultimate goal of getting
these lines drawn, and approved by that end goal.

So, my guess is that time might be the biggest
issue facing this or you could argue uncertainty, just
because of the virus itself. But that would be my response
is to again have to work together to formulate alternate
timelines, if you would, or ultimate plans -- or alternate
plans, rather, in order to get us to where we need to be at
the end of the day.

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

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

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

MR. LEADHOLM: Well, when I was at UCLA, working
as -- I was running the chemistry and biochemistry graduate
program, and I was by myself at the time for a good two
years. The university was not hiring anybody and so I was
acting as -- you know, I was doing the job essentially of
three different counselors.

Well, we encountered a problem with our
international students. What was happening is we were
admitting international students and all of the students
were paid in some way, shape or form.

Now, we did this with our first year students by
becoming teaching assistants. All of the students, the
international students that we admitted and decided to come
to -- and join our program had to achieve certain standards
on their TOEFL and their test of spoken English. But UCLA
had a separate test to allow these students to teach.

We were finding that students were arriving with
acceptable scores on their TOEFL or the TSE, but then were
getting to UCLA where they would take these test scores and they were not passing. And UCLA, then, would not allow them to teach, which was a problem because we, meaning the department, was on the hook for all of their tuition and fees. Which is at that time upwards of, goodness, you know, we’re talking about $55,000, $60,000 that the department was -- per student that the department was on the hook for.

And so we had to collectively think of how we can remedy this situation. And it wasn’t just our department. It was a lot of the STEM departments. So, we put together a task force of, you know, counselors, or the people who were in charge of the students in their everyday life. The faculty members, their graduate advisors, and then also student advocates themselves. And we tried to work out how we could deal with this situation. What would cost the departments the least amount of money because that -- and I hate to say this, but it was factual. The bottom line was our common goal was how do we get these students here to teach and be effective for the undergraduate students without costing the departments loads and loads of money?

Well, we thought about perhaps having them come to summer school, but if they came to summer school they’re visas only allotted X amount of weeks. None of UCLA’s summer school sessions would have provided that for these
students. We thought we’d give them, you know, a buffer on English prior to teaching and maybe that would help their UCLA scores to allow them to teach. But the time frame wasn’t proper. We would have had to have gone into more visa issues in terms of with their international status and their F-1 status.

So, everywhere we turned we were encountering problem after problem. So, I happened to suggest and I kind of put the bug in the people’s ears, and then they ran with it, so I cannot take the credit, all the credit. But I kind of put a bug in someone’s ear and said, well, what if these weren’t technically classes that the students were taking, maybe just training sessions?

Since the students, the international students were allotted, I believe, six weeks before they come to the United States, six weeks prior to their first class to get acclimated. All of the sudden when I said, well, maybe if they’re not actual summer school classes, we had our ESL people -- English as a spoken language people at the university all of the sudden went bam. And they quickly put together like a five -- anywhere from, depending on their status, four- to six-week courses that these students could then take, and then be able to properly coincide with their visas so we were okay there, and then cost the university nothing because every one of those students,
whether or not it was my department, or any of the other STEM departments, they all ended up passing the UCLA test, so it allowed them to teach. And then, therefore, UCLA would cover that money, not the departments, which was the ultimate goal.

So, that was one way that I was actually very proud of because it ended up saving the departments a lot of money, but it also meant that the undergraduate students were getting actual or more effective teaching assistance from our TAs. And the TAs felt a sense of pride because they were speaking English much better than they would have, and that they were.

So, I was very, very, very proud of actually that thing where we kind of all had to band together, work together, and were spit-ball ing, I mean to tell you, so many different options, and we ended up coming to an agreement on that one. So, that was something I was very proud of.

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

If you are selected as a Commissioner, what skills and attributes will make you effective at
interacting with people from different backgrounds and who have a variety of perspectives?

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

MR. LEADHOLM: Well, first of all we can talk about this geographically and then also, I suppose, socioeconomically. Geographically speaking, I feel like I’m at an advantage because I’ve been very fortunate to have lived in three unique and distinct areas of California for a good portion of my life.

I was raised, born and raised in the San Joaquin Valley, in Visalia, and so I grew up in a very agrarian region, one that really, really holds its farming dear and its agriculture is extremely important. Also, very conservative in that regard. So, I grew up with a certain perspective on how California is.

When I got into college and then moved to UCLA, I was in for a bit of a culture shock because it was the furthest thing from the Central Valley. And I realized very quickly that where I was from was considered less than my many, many people who were at UCLA at the time. And I had to sort of do a self-check and think, oh, goodness, I always thought where I grew up was great. But having
multiple people say otherwise really kind of made me reevaluate all of that.

And then, I ended up living in Los Angeles for 10 years. I got a job there as well, so I got myself immersed in the more metropolitan existence and gained that perspective.

And then more recently, when I moved up into the Sacramento region to take care of my grandmother initially, who had cancer, and then later on get a job, and then have other aspects of my life progress as well, I got what it was like to live in the more in between, as you say. And that’s not a Stranger Things reference.

But anyway, I was able to understand sort of the difference of how they would mesh. So, I’ve lived in three very, very unique regions. The Capitol region with, you know, high government presence. The sort of Silicon Valley excess, that presence over there and what that means to the area. As well as the agricultural area -- or, excuse me, the agricultural priorities that still remain in the Sacramento region.

And then, all of those three, having ten years living in each of them for at least ten years I feel like gives me a sort of instinctual understanding of what is proper -- or, excuse me, what is important in those communities.
Now, to speak to the socioeconomic or the diversity otherwise, and I say this I am a white male. I cannot truly understand what people from other ethnicities, what their background is and what their experiences have been and, nor will I ever. But I am a member of a group that has marginal -- you know, discriminated against over the course of their lifetime, as a gay male.

And so, I do understand what it’s like being a historically bullied minority. Now, so I do get that. I understand that. I can -- I have the ability to reach out to, say, under-represented minorities in that regard and say, hey, you know, I do understand to the best of my ability what it is like being marginalized, I would say.

So, I have some background. And let me just say, putting those two together, or putting the two things growing up in a very conservative and very agrarian area, while being gay was, you know, difficult. And that was my difficult. Other people’s difficult is completely different. And the best thing that you can do is say look I have a little bit of background in this. It is not what you’ve experienced but, you know, I’m here to listen and try to understand exactly what you’re going through and why that’s important to them.

So, I feel like in that regard I’ve kind of run the gamut a little bit so.
MR. DAWSON: Thank you.

MR. LEADHOLM: Yes.

MR. DAWSON: We’ll now go to Panel questions. Each Panel Member will have 20 minutes to ask his or her questions. We’ll start with the Chair, Mr. Belnap.

MR. LEADHOLM: Great.

CHAIR BELNAP: Mr. Leadholm, you mentioned that you were an academic counselor at UCLA --

MR. LEADHOLM: Yes.

CHAIR BELNAP: -- and UC Davis.

MR. LEADHOLM: Yes.

CHAIR BELNAP: How does an academic counselor have to exercise impartiality?

MR. LEADHOLM: Oh, boy. You know, that’s a great question. I feel like some of it is just instinctual. And, well, there are counselors there that really didn’t. You basically had to look at the situation from every single side possible and that was the key thing.

When encountering an issue you not only had to take -- let’s say the student was bringing you an issue of some sort. Before you could, you know, jump on the side of that student and wave the flag, and carry that in favor of the student, you had to sort of look at that situation and say, okay, how is this in terms of looking at it from the faculty side, or from the programmatic side. Are the
students doing something that it is clearly not something--
that they should not have been doing? Are they doing
something correctly that the program does not maybe account
for, whatever that issue is? Or, are you looking at it
from a broader sense of a university side?

So, what I had to do is basically look at, you
know, whoever’s bringing me this problem or this situation,
take it from their level or their point of view first. And
then always, always say I will get you -- you know, let me
look into that for you and I will get back to you. Never,
ever make promises right out of the gate. I can say things
like, wow, that does not seem very fair, but let me do some
investigation on your behalf and I will get back to you.

So, my solution always was to make sure that
number one whoever’s bringing me that problem felt heard
and were heard whether or not it was a student, or if it
was a faculty member, or if it was the university
themselves saying, you know, hey, something’s not going
right with your program. Okay, let me do some
investigation on that for you and I will get back to you
and see if there’s merit to your, you know, for lack of a
better term gripe.

And do, then take the proper amount of time, do
your due -- or your investigation and then, obviously,
check with the program requirements, check with the
university. Check with other students they could be having issues with or even other counselors and kind of have the rapport with all of those subgroups to be able to say, okay, hey, here’s the situation. How is this looking from your point of view? Is this a problem we need to look at programmatically? Is it a problem we need to look at from a university wide angle, or is this just a one-time sort of blip in the radar that can be fixed right here and now?

And so, that was basically what I felt like I had to do. I had to assess the situation number one, take a step back, look at it from a much broader angle, a much bigger picture than whoever brought me the initial problem, do my investigation properly and then get back to all parties involved, and let them know what I’ve -- what my -- you know where I felt the issue actually -- where it actually was.

So, yeah. And you know what the tricky part about being a counselor is that your person or entity who is bringing you this problems changed. And so, it was never -- you k now, I was not always just the student advocate. I had to bring bad news to students because some of the things that they were doing were in fact out of line with program requirements and I had to put a stop to it. And say, hey guys, you know what, no, this isn’t going to fly anymore. So, I had to be the bad guy. And other times
I had to take some of the concerns all the way up to the university level and stand by my students all the way up there. So, I was in fact a student advocate at times. So, you know, it depended on the situation and you just had to essentially listen to the initial problem and then do your proper investigation, and then move from there. And that’s what I would take if I were a part of a Commission such as this I would definitely bring that expertise to the table.

CHAIR BELNAP: And I gather from your application that at least some point in time part of your role as a counselor was also admissions that you were looking into who should be admitted into a particular program.

MR. LEADHOLM: Yes.

CHAIR BELNAP: Tell me how you exercised impartiality in that situation?

MR. LEADHOLM: Oh, dear. Well, you know, as you know admissions or anything even like this, something of this nature it is -- it can be looked upon by others as very arbitrary as to who gets selected. Our goal, when we were on the admissions -- in any admissions committee, and let me say this, I was never a chemist or a film student, or an engineer. So, I didn’t have, what’s the proper term, you know, final say on who should have gotten in. But I did facilitate those committees and I was a member of those
committees. More of, like I said, a facilitator.

However, I would -- you know, I was a part of the panel and oftentimes faculty who were on those committees would say, hey, what do you think about these two students, what strikes you? And you just had to look at basically what that panel, for that specific year, was looking for in candidates, whether or not it was, you know, for example more biochemist-oriented students. Whether or not the student was doing organic synthesis in their research. You had to kind of take a look at those files, look at -- read the group for that year and say you know what, they were looking at filling, you know, more slots or having a more presence in the organic synthesis field. And so you know what, let’s push these candidates forward. And that was what I would do. I would sort of read the room, read the room of the year, and I mean that, you know, you had to kind of understand what the committees were looking for, present them with the most compatible applicants for what they were looking to -- who they were looking to enter.

And then, if there were some questions, you know, just you had to speak from the gut and speak honestly, and that was it. Everything was obviously written down and/or recorded, so we had -- there was no issue in terms of if anybody wanted to look back, they could always check and see exactly what was said in any of those meetings.
But if it was, you know, going down to this student or that student, and I did have certain faculty say, okay, it’s down to this student or this student, if you had your say who would you pick?

And I would say, well, you know, I got a better vibe from this person in the meeting that I had with them and I feel like they would do a better job in this program, in this situation. And that’s all I can do. And, yeah, that’s -- it was sometimes a very difficult choice when you’re speaking of, you know, thousands and thousands of applicants, especially international applicants who we had to whittle down to, you know, sometimes only take four to eight out of, you know, thousands of international applicants. It was sometimes very daunting.

But you just had to keep a good head on your shoulders and remember what the ultimate goal was or what the panel, what their ultimate goals were as a panel going into it, and keep that in line always.

CHAIR BELNAP: All right, thank you.

MR. LEADHOLM: Yeah.

CHAIR BELNAP: Still on the subject of impartiality, I’m wondering if you have any other experiences, whether it be work, volunteer, or life experiences where you’ve had to set aside your personal views to achieve a broader objective?
MR. LEADHOLM: Well, I will say that it may seem a little bit simple, but I have had to do it, and very recently in fact. During the election I have volunteered now over, goodness, I guess since 2014 -- 2016, I believe. I have volunteered to work my local precinct. And they put me right at the get go, right, to run the precinct, with no previous history at all, and I was quite nervous.

But that is a situation, a day-long situation where you do, you have to set aside everything political that you may believe and just zip it, or go by the line. And trust me in those precincts, as you probably all vote and go into those precincts you probably have seen a lot of more vocal people in those precincts while you may vote. And, you know, you have to do what you’re told in terms of what those rules are and what is expected of you as -- for me, as a Placer County Inspector, is what my title was.

And so, if that means, you know, having -- if I had personal beliefs on say, for example, ID being shown while voting, whatever those may have been. If a voter comes in and trust me, I’ve had multiple voters come in and say, oh, do I need to show you my ID, or why don’t we have to show ID when we vote? You know, my simple response is yes -- or, excuse me, no, you don’t, and that’s it, and move on. No more questions. And if they do ask other questions, you just say that will not be necessary and you
move on, and you change the subject. Regardless of what my political beliefs are on that situation you have to do what you’re supposed to do in that instance, as to not affect the voter in any way, shape, or form.

And so, that happens and it’s not just that issue. You know, I’ve had to tell many people to, you know, take that MAGA hat off, or turn that “I’m with her” shirt around. Multiple times I had to do that. Again, regardless of what my opinion was at the time, I had to, you know, enforce those rules for the benefit and for the good of all voters in that precinct.

So, that has not been difficult, but there have been numerous accounts of people, you know, coming in either wearing -- you know, wearing things, or buttons, or things, or even communication. They’re talking, you know, can be considered technically illegal and I’ve had to put a stop to it. And have, even though I may have agreed with what they were saying.

CHAIR BELNAP: Okay, thank you.
MR. LEADHOLM: Yeah, no problem.
CHAIR BELNAP: So, I want to return to your career in academic counseling.
MR. LEADHOLM: Sure.
CHAIR BELNAP: And the question I have is how did your time in academic counseling increase your
understanding and appreciation of California’s diversity?

MR. LEADHOLM: Oh, wow. Well, since -- oh, goodness, that’s a question. So, I was responsible in all three of those departments that I worked with, two schools, three departments, for compiling of post-admission year statistics. So, essentially, looking at what -- who applied, and who got in. Of those who got in, who accepted.

And so, I was directly responsible for compiling a lot of that information and that meant dealing with just tons, and tons, and tons of data. And seeing those reports come to fruition gave me a real -- was not eye-opening, because I am also from California, but it really gave me a good idea as to in those years who were applying, and the different types -- not types -- different subgroups of people who were applying during those years.

So, I saw of those subgroups and I saw, you know, the percentages of say, Latino -- Latin American, those of Latin American decent, Californians. Oh, and I should say this, working at UC most of the information that I would put together were of the California applicants. Other than the fact they wanted to know what is the percentage of California, or the ratio between California and non-Californians who were applying, other than that it really stopped, and then it only factored in on the California
applicants themselves. The UC really wanted to see who was applying within their own state. And that was the information and I would just kind of footnote that.

So, we did, we had to put forth, oh, my goodness, copious amounts of information that were just detailed, where were these people coming from. UCLA wanted to know why, for example, say, Central Valley students were not applying there. And so, we had to put together reports, and this is just one department, but we had to put together a report and say, okay, why is it that people from the Central Valley are not applying to UCLA.

When I put these reports together for, say, UC Davis I noticed that, no, now that, the Central Valley had a much more intrinsic sort of brotherhood with UC Davis. And so, you could really see how UC Davis seemed to either appeal or provide something that UCLA couldn’t. So, those are the types of information that I feel like I was -- I’ve got to be very good at reading.

You would say, okay, now is it that UC Davis is providing something more for those Central Valley students or is it more than the Central Valley students just feel like they belong more to a university that, technically, is the Central Valley? So, you could go one way or the other. But just putting together that type of information, as well as the demographic information, ethnicity, things of that
nature, socioeconomics. Why are, you know, more people
apply to, say, UCLA film and television who are -- you
know, make X amount of -- you know, more money than others.
I don’t know if you’re ever going to get an answer to that.
You can subject -- and most of that type of stuff would be
done on the university level, rather than the departmental
level. But at least in compiling that information you can
at least surmise and see the just plethora of different
subgroups that is within our great state. You can see that
while you’re compiling this information.

So, I would say that, to answer your question, it
gave me more of an appreciation for this great state
because I could look at see all of the different subgroups,
whether or not be it ethnic wise, socioeconomic, how much
-- you know, what their backgrounds are, or even
geographical. It’s just the state has it all.

CHAIR BELNAP: All right, thank you.

MR. LEADHOLM: Yes.

CHAIR BELNAP: Madam Secretary, can I get a time
check?

MS. PELLMAN: Yes. Two minutes, 35 seconds
remaining.

CHAIR BELNAP: Okay. I don’t think there will be
enough time for you to answer my remaining question. I’m
going to turn the time over to Mr. Coe.
VICE CHAIR COE: Thank you, Mr. Chair. Mr. Leadholm, good afternoon to you. Thank you for taking the time to speak with us today.

MR. LEADHOLM: Oh, my pleasure. Thank you.

VICE CHAIR COE: In your first essay you quote James Madison, from the Federalist Papers.

MR. LEADHOLM: I do.

VICE CHAIR COE: Are you a bit of a history buff?

MR. LEADHOLM: I am. I am a bit of a history buff. It’s particularly American Revolution history buff. Yes, I am, indeed. Over the past -- well, actually over the past three years I have -- well, I’ve read Alexander Hamilton’s, George Washington’s, Ulysses S. Grant, plus the First Continental Congress. Yes, I really am.

VICE CHAIR COE: Do you see this interest or the knowledge you’ve gained from the reading you’ve done there as something that could benefit the Commission?

MR. LEADHOLM: Oh, without question. And I think I said that in my first essay, also, is that the main thing that those -- reading the lives of these great men, and sometimes conflicted men, and sometimes men who had lots of faults, but the main thing that I took from that is it sort of gave me the drive to want to serve myself. To want to do something for this country or this state. I, you know, wanted to give back in a way.
I was struck by how many of these men sacrificed and put their lives on the line, truly put their lives on the line or even gave their lives to something bigger, for the sake of this great experiment. And if I took anything out of that, which was a lot of things, but the main thing was I almost felt like I hadn’t done my part. That I was -- I had left something wanting in my existence here as an American. And I felt like I wanted to do something. And initially what I decided to do was volunteer for those election precincts, like you said. And then, once I had made the decision to sort of get back into the workforce, I happened to come across a little blurb with, you know, Shape California’s Future on it, and I clicked it and was instantly struck. Like oh, my gosh, this is for me. You know, this is how I can do it. So, yes, that’s what I took out of reading. I felt almost inadequate reading these biographies and feeling like I hadn’t done my part to keep this great experiment going. So, yeah.

VICE CHAIR COE: Okay, thank you for that perspective.

MR. LEADHOLM: Yeah.

VICE CHAIR COE: In the other relevant material section of the application you mentioned some awards that you received from UCLA --
MR. LEADHOLM: Yeah.

VICE CHAIR COE: -- including two staff achievement awards and a distinguished serve award. Why did you receive these awards?

MR. LEADHOLM: Ah. Well, the two staff awards I think it was primarily because we were losing counselors left and right, and the university was not hiring. And so, I will, not to diminish those awards, but the staff awards, you know, basically by taking on tons of duties more -- more duties than I really should have been given at that time. And the department, in recognition of that, gave me a staff award.

Now, the James Lavelle Award, that one was a particular honor because that was nominated by my grad students. My grad students took it upon their own time to nominate me as someone who always had the best interests of the grad students at heart, someone they could always talk to, someone who was always there listening, and always went above and beyond what they expected of their actual counselor. That one meant a lot because that was every department nominated -- or, no, I’m sorry, that was university wide, and so for that year I guess you can say I was chosen as the best graduate counselor at UCLA for that year. And that was something that meant a lot to me because it was initiated by my grad students. It wasn’t
just, you know, kind of like a fill out the paper, oh, we have to -- somebody’s got to get this award kind of thing. My grad students took it upon themselves to do that and I had no idea. It was quite special to me.

VICE CHAIR COE: Thank you for that. In your work as an academic counselor, and you discussed a little bit about it already, and you did in your essays. Again, you talk about working with many different types of people, diverse groups of people.

MR. LEADHOLM: Yes.

VICE CHAIR COE: And what, from your interactions from -- with those people what have you learned about the diverse groups of people that you’ve met, about their perspectives, their concerns, their dreams, and their goals, and those types of things that would make you an effective representative for them on this Commission?

MR. LEADHOLM: Well, I think the first thing that I learned early on was to never assume anything and that is the first and foremost thing is that just because somebody is gay, or just because somebody is black, or just because somebody is transgender, they don’t automatically fit into a niche group, or should never, ever, ever be pigeonholed.

And I’ll say this about myself really quick, before getting back to the students, as a gay male it would have been very easy for people to, and have been my whole
life, assumed that I was much more liberal, obviously a Democrat, these types of things, and they are quite taken aback when they actually speak with me. And I say, oh, no, I’m actually pretty darn conservative, or moderately conservative, and I’m a Republican. And the look on their face is just of sheer horror, usually. And they just -- it’s hard for them to process.

I take that into -- I took that into my counseling work because I did, I met so many different types of students from all over the place. I can think of one, and this is the one that put me in check, is I had a transgender student who I did not know was transgender. I just thought that she was a lesbian, a homosexual, and when it came to -- when I came to find out that she actually -- he was born -- he -- excuse me, he was born biologically as a male and then went through the surgery, but remained attraction to women. I thought, oh, my goodness, now this is going to enlighten me. I had to really sit down and wrap my head around it because that was the furthest thing from my mind when I first met this student. So, I got to sit down with this student and really listen to her story, and ended up doing so with many other of my students.

And so, the basic thing that I could say is that whatever I think or whatever I initially assume about anybody, I can’t do that anymore. I had to put myself in
check and say you know what, I’m not going to know anything unless I sit down and actually talk to this person, and learn from them. Learn who they are. Learn where they came from. Otherwise, you know, I’m just guessing. And you can say that about any aspect of their lives.

But I know I’m part of that, not problem but part of that sort of, you know, unexpected, you know, being gay and conservative. But there are so many other sort of things that would seem to contradict that this great state has thousands of, you know, numerically. So, that would be the one thing that I would take from having all of these students, such a diverse group of students that I was responsible for, and being advocate for was really learning about them and kind of then turning it back on me and saying, wow, I know I cannot assume anything anymore.

VICE CHAIR COE: Thank you. A similar question but --

MR. LEADHOLM: Sure.

VICE CHAIR COE: -- in regards to geographic diversity.

MR. LEADHOLM: Uh-hum.

VICE CHAIR COE: I mean you mentioned already that you’ve lived in several different places, grew up in the Central Valley, in Visalia, Los Angeles, and now Placer County. And so, from your interactions with the people
that you’ve met in these regions what have you learned
about them that would make you an effective representative
for them on this Commission?

    MR. LEADHOLM: Ah. Now, in that regard I have
found -- I don’t want to contradict myself with the
individual here, but I feel like in that regards there are
a lot of, say, stereotypes that do hold true. That you
could go and say, you know, the Central Valley people are
just a bunch of aggies or, you know, they just like their
ag. And while I personally did not have anything -- you
know, my family, a teacher and construction, they had
nothing to do with agriculture. But I can say, yeah, that
type of stereotype actually held merit.

    And whereas, you know, metropolitan people really
didn’t seem to care about ag and where they got their food.
And you know what that seems to hold merit from my
perspective. That doesn’t necessarily mean that it was,
it’s just my own personal, you know, sort of analysis.

    So, geographically and regionally speaking, I
feel like there are a lot of areas that do sort of bind
together with a common sort of interest, or a common goal,
or a common philosophy, or a common faith. Those types of
things do hold true in region to region. That’s what I
have found, me, personally.

    And you know what’s so great is that other people
may have a -- may disagree with me and that’s okay. I
don’t see anything wrong with that, that disagreement, it’s
just from their experience.

And so, from my experience I do see the regions
having specific interests that sort of hold them together
and I’m very fortunate to have been a part of three very
unique, uniquely different regions in that regard so.

VICE CHAIR COE: Thank you. I want to talk
about, I believe it was in your analytical skills essay you
mentioned your love of geography and your interest in maps.

MR. LEADHOLM: Yes.

VICE CHAIR COE: And that you have throughout
your life analyzing and in some cases memorizing maps of
all kinds. What kinds of work, professional or otherwise
have you done with maps?

MR. LEADHOLM: Oh, lord. Well, I’m trying to
think. Professionally none, other than knowing the
difference when compiling data for, you know, like I was
telling you the compilation of, say, how has applied to
our department or this year. I did have to separate those
into geographic zones. Generally, they were already given
for me, but I did have to have a basic awareness of what,
you know, the Inland Empire meant and, you know, the
different between the San Joaquin Valley and the Sacramento
Valley, and where that stops and where that ended. But
that’s probably the extent of it in terms of that.

Now, real quick, though, now that I’m thinking about it, on a much more local level, when we do work our precincts, we do have actual maps that we have to go by when we do have voters that come in and say, hey, we live on such and such street, we would like to vote. If we don’t see them on our voting roster, then we have to kind of do a little search and say, okay, actually, you know what you’re going to be in precinct such, and such, and such, and such. That will be the church down the road.

So, I do have a little bit of background. I’m not sure if that’s something that you might be looking for, in actually, you know, sort of assessing, oh, quickly, to a voter, ah, you know what you’re not in our precinct. You’re going to be down in this precinct. Figure out where they live and move them to the precinct accordingly. Other than that, that would probably be the extent of anything sort of professional and/or volunteer.

Other than that, it would just be purely for the sake of fun and being a nerd. In that regard, when I was a little kid and just starting at Atlases forever, and ever, and ever, and looking at populations. And I can remember when there was an earthquake that killed 30,000 people in some place, I don’t know. When I was eight, I had to go and change the population number on the actual Atlas
because it was therefore, you know, not correct anymore because that earthquake had killed 30,000 people. So, I had to make sure that that was rectified in my Atlas. Which my mother did not love that I was writing in their Atlas.

But yeah, it was just purely inquisitive and just like I said being a nerd, and just loved looking at maps, and could stare at my map app on my phone forever, and ever, and ever. Yeah.

VICE CHAIR COE: So, I’d like to talk a little bit about communities of interest.

MR. LEADHOLM: Uh-hum.

VICE CHAIR COE: And one of the biggest and most important jobs in front of the Commission is going to be identifying communities of interest across the state.

MR. LEADHOLM: Right.

VICE CHAIR COE: Some of those communities are rather obvious, easier to identify, locate, and define. Some of them are harder to locate, identify and define for one reason or another. And how would you have the Commission go about trying to identify these communities of interest across the state, particularly paying attention to not having -- not inadvertently overlooking some of the less obvious communities of interest?

MR. LEADHOLM: Well, I think -- oh, go ahead.
MS. PELLMAN: We have five minutes, 20 seconds remaining.

VICE CHAIR COE: Thank you. Five minutes left, thank you.

MR. LEADHOLM: I’ll be brief, then. That’s one of the things where you have to rely on I think your entire Commission. Those who are more familiar with specific areas and have expertise or knowledge that they perhaps see others don’t, you would rely on them I would suggest to maybe give the rest of the Commission the background.

And then from there, you can really have that person take lead, whoever is from that area or knows about that area, or perhaps knows about those types of groups that you’re referring to with more -- with more knowledge. Those people on that Commission can take lead as to ascertain the actual, say, geographic boundary of those.

So, I would just -- I mean that’s how I would do it. I mean I would have the people who, if you’re looking for a specific kind of subgroup have the people who are either knowledgeable of those subgroups or the actual area themselves take lead in actually getting into that area, listening to the people, maybe uncovering subgroups that we didn’t even know existed, as you were saying. And that’s all just by listening and speaking to the communities themselves.
VICE CHAIR COE: So, some of those communities, they may not feel comfortable traditionally coming forward and engaging with government, or with bodies --

MR. LEADHOLM: Yeah.

VICE CHAIR COE: -- that are of authority, like the Commission, and that can be for a variety of reasons that those communities aren’t comfortable doing that.

But since their perspective is very important to helping the Commission do a thorough job for the citizens of the state, how you make them feel more comfortable to come forward and share their perspectives?

MR. LEADHOLM: Wow, that’s an excellent question. And I would just start by being honest with them myself. If there was somebody who I thought their story would be of benefit to the entire state, not just our -- the work we were doing, I would try to speak to them one on one and maybe share some intimate story of myself that could be of relation. I feel like if there’s anything that I could add to this Commission itself is my sincerity and my ears. Really, I feel like I listen to people very, very well. And I’m very sincere in the stories that I may share about my life. And I feel like that’s what I would do personally.

And to maybe help. You know, look, this was the situation that I was in that could be of benefit to you, to
maybe give them a small push to share their story. It may work, it may not, but I would never -- you know, I would do it on the smallest scale possible in order to make them feel that they could share it on a larger scale. So, that’s what I would do.

VICE CHAIR COE: Thank you. Madam Secretary, how much time do we have left?

MS. PELLMAN: Two minutes remaining.

VICE CHAIR COE: Great. Really quick Mr. Leadholm --

MR. LEADHOLM: Yeah.

VICE CHAIR COE: -- if you were to be appointed to the role, which aspects of the role of Commissioner do you think you would enjoy the most and which aspects, conversely, do you think might struggle with a little bit? We have just under two minutes to go.

MR. LEADHOLM: I would enjoy the travel and speaking to the communities one on one. That’s the part that I would love the most. I would be the one who would say I will go to this place or I will go this place. I would love to hear -- I guess I would love to hear what the needs, what the issues that different communities within California felt that were important to them in terms of how, you know, the boundaries would be set up. That would be the part for me, personally, that I would feel like is
the most invigorating, the most exciting, the most fun for me.

VICE CHAIR COE: And which aspects of the role do you think you might struggle with a little bit?

MR. LEADHOLM: Oh, you know, perhaps, you know, I’m not all that -- maybe the cartographer part about it. You know, the map drawing and saying, okay, if we draw here -- I’m more of a people person than I am, you know, a linear person. So, maybe that part I would say. But, yeah.

VICE CHAIR COE: Okay, I think I’m about of time so, Mr. Chair, I will yield the rest of my time, however little that may be.

CHAIR BELNAP: All right, thank you.

MR. LEADHOLM: Thank you very much.

CHAIR BELNAP: We’ll turn the time over to Ms. Dickison.

PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Good afternoon, Mr. Leadholm.

MR. LEADHOLM: Hello, how are you?

PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: I’m fine. So, many of my questions get asked since I’m last, but I do have some.

MR. LEADHOLM: Okay.

PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: You talk about being the inspector/supervisor of the voting precinct in --
MR. LEADHOLM: Yes.

PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: I think it was pretty much related to, you know, being impartial. But what did that position entail? What kind of work was that?

MR. LEADHOLM: Well, essentially what you -- it starts about a week before and what you do is you basically take a training. And you still have to take it, it’s required by law here in Placer County that all inspectors, which is the head person for that specific precinct. So, when you go and vote in that room, usually one room, sometimes there’s multiple, but in that room there’s one person in charge. And they, for whatever reason they decided to put me in charge right out of the get go, and I have done that now since, I believe, 2016. And so a week prior you go and you have to take a refresher course, which lasts a half-a-day, sometimes three-quarters of a day, going over every aspect of possible shenanigan, weird experience with the voting machines, with the voting ballots themselves, workers, voters unruly, all the whole gamut.

And then, up until this past election we were actually given the actual ballot. And then, we had to house those ballots for a week, making sure that nobody tampered with them and they did not come into, you know, somebody’s hands who they shouldn’t have been.
And then, the day of the election we would go and we would get there like an hour before. We had to make sure that all of the machines were set up properly, excuse me, and working properly. So, set up and functioning. And then, be ready. That all the ballots, everything on the table was ready to go before that first 7:00 o’clock, 7:00 a.m. go to, or initial time when people could start to vote.

And then, throughout the day you had -- each person has a duty throughout the day, and I gave myself always the hardest one, which is dealing with the provisional votes or the conditional votes now that they’re called, since Governor Newsome just kind of amended that to allow people who were not registered who can now actual vote. So, we have provisional and conditional now.

And I would be responsible for those. So, I would make sure that these students when they come in -- or excuse me, these voters when they would come in and say, oh, I would like to vote, and you look on the voter roster and you do not see their name, and then you basically investigate as to why, and which section they would fit in, provisionally or conditionally, to ensure that their vote does get counted. So, I -- that’s what my job would be.

So, I was the -- I’m the one who puts out the flames within that precinct. I’m there until 8:00 o’clock
at night. Then when they close, we put everything back
together and we make sure that every -- that all of our
votes and ballots are accounted for so that there's no off
numbers. We make sure that every vote has a ballot, put
that all together, and then we have the responsibility to
take them over to the drop off center where there are, you
know, armed guards and we dropped all those ballots off.
And then, my day usually ends at about 10:00, 10:30. It
starts at about 4:35. So, that's a bit, it's a lot for one
day. But it's something that I do enjoy.

PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Okay. Well, what did you
learn from that work, from especially doing the conditional
and the provisional votes? So, I'm assuming that you, you
know, you spent a lot of time probably working and talking
with different people.

MR. LEADHOLM: Yes.

PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: So, what did you learn
from that that could assist you in the work of the
Commission and working with the public?

MR. LEADHOLM: Well, again, back to what I was
saying with Mr. Coe, you learn not to assume anything. And
this also comes back to that. I learned not to just assume
because a voter may look one way, or talk one way, or acts
one way, I'm not there to assume that obviously he's going
to be pigeonholed into some subcategory.
You have to listen. Number one, you just have to listen. I know I’ve been saying this kind of over and over, but it’s kind of my mantra. You have to listen to every single person and make them feel heard, and actually make them heard. And we -- that’s what I’ve learned as later on in life, you know, where I’m not in that same student arena as I was, I still treat these voters in my precinct as if they were, say, my students from yesteryear. And I listen to their entire situation and then I have a plan that will then I will follow based on what they tell me. And sometimes it’s not very clear and cut out. You know, it’s not very clear and we do have to do a little investigating. And sometimes it’s over my head and I do have to call in the big boys, as we call them, and really get down to business.

But for the most part what I’ve learned is just again treat everybody as if you don’t know a darn thing about them and let them tell you, and just learn from that. And in that instance, the goal is to make sure that their vote is -- excuse me, their vote is counted and that’s the ultimate goal.

PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Okay.

MR. LEADHOLM: Yeah.

PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Okay. So, you said you wanted to make sure, you have to listen and make sure
everybody feels like, you know, that they’re heard. What are some steps you can take maybe at a public meeting, or otherwise to make sure that the public feels like they’re being heard and they’re -- what they have to say is being considered?

MR. LEADHOLM: My -- I would suggest basically on just engaging on whoever was doing the speaking. So, those who want to be heard, you know, they will make themselves known. The trick is definitely to engage with them. Not to, you know, look down at your paper, taking notes, not really make eye contact with them. To share stories that they may relate to that could make them feel at ease as to, yeah, you know, what, that gentleman who spoke to us about, you know, his problems when he took on this, that, and the other, that he heard us. He made sure, you know. Do something to reassure those that you feel like want to be heard, need to be heard. Make sure they feel like they’re heard. And that’s the best I can say. Engage them, you know. Like I said, eye contact, remembering their names, things of that nature, their groups or whatever, and also just maybe share something a bit intimate that, you know, you say you know what I understand on some level, perhaps, how you might feel, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. And they may take solace in the fact that you at least, you know, engaged with them, that you weren’t just, you know, sitting
there, say, writing notes, or looking down the whole time
or something like that. So, that’s what I would do.

PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Okay. So, you talked
about living in the three regions. And if I remember
right, you kind of talked about, you know, in the
agriculture region the stereotype would -- you know, the
stereotype was true or whatnot.

MR. LEADHOLM: Yeah, I --
PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: My question kind of goes
to more along the line of need. So, okay, what did you
learn about the different needs of groups of people based
on where they lived and how that might affect what they
were looking for in representation?

MR. LEADHOLM: Oh, that’s a fantastic question,
actually. So, for example, I mean I could just off the top
of my head, the needs of, say, a Visalian or somebody from
Porterville, or somebody from Fresno obviously may not, or
aren’t the same as somebody living in Santa Monica, or the
west side in Los Angeles.

And I can just say, giving specific examples,
even more recently I would argue that if you took a poll
in, say, the Tulare County, Fresno County, Kern County,
Kings County Region that they would say water would be a
need for those people, and they would prioritize water as
something very, very fundamental and important to that
If I were to ask the same question in, say, West Los Angeles, now I don’t know right now, but when I lived there, which was about, let’s see, ten years ago, I would venture to say -- again, this isn’t scientific, but I would venture to say something to the effect that transportation would be the most -- one of the most important issues. How to get from point A to point B without spending an hour, especially if it’s only a mile away.

And so, you could really sort of -- well, the reason why I would know this is because I was part of that citizen group who say, for example, would have said these were important. And when I lived in Los Angeles, oh, my goodness, transportation would have been the number one concern for me at that time. And I venture to say for many of my fellow citizens.

And in the Sacramento area that’s a little different because I am up here in Placer County, which definitely is part of the Sacramento metropolis. But I would say growth is probably one of the bigger issues up here. That’s just, again, non-scientific, it’s just me doing my best guess. But you can see where water, and transportation, and maybe growth aren’t very similar on paper, but are extremely important to those regions. So, you can see how just region by region priorities absolutely
PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: And how might that affect what they’re looking for in a representative?

MR. LEADHOLM: Oh, I see. Well, you know, when you’re drawing lines -- thank you for bringing me back there. When you’re in charge or responsible for drawing actual lines, you certainly don’t want to maybe cut off a region where they hold similar priorities, if you can help it. Where you would draw a line and maybe group them with like somebody from the Central Valley, and maybe group them with somebody from the Central Coast. If at all possible, I would hope that wouldn’t happen. Because, again, you would have, you know, contrasting priorities. So, that’s how by knowing what those priorities are regionally, I think that you can really help in determining what those lines are and what not to do, and where not to, say, cross regions I would say.

PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Okay. So, you mentioned earlier that you made the decision to get back into the work force. Are you still looking for work at this point?

MR. LEADHOLM: I am, yes.

PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Okay.

MR. LEADHOLM: And so, this is sort of -- yes, I am. And this is sort of -- I had a number of options. I was actually thinking about going back to school. And back
to Mr. Coe’s thing, I was possibly, you know, thinking of getting my PhD in history. And all of this has sort of been put on hold at the moment, as you --

PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Right.

MR. LEADHOLM: Yeah, and so a lot of this is on hold. So, I’m not sure. We’ll see how this plays out and we’ll go from there.

PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Okay. Well, my question was going to go to how would you balance the work of the Commission and anything you have that might be in the hopper at this point?

MR. LEADHOLM: Well, right now this is my number one priority. So, I would -- as it stands right now, I wouldn’t have to juggle. If anything were to have come along, this obviously gets my allegiance because number one it’s the first thing that I would have, you know, given my time to.

But number two, I honest to goodness cannot think of much of anything that would be more exciting for me personally than to do something like this. So, the short answer is I wouldn’t have to juggle it because this would be the only thing on my plate.

PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Okay. So, the first eight Commissioners are selected randomly.

MR. LEADHOLM: Uh-hum.
PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: And then, they are tasked with selecting the next six Commissioners to round out the Commission.

MR. LEADHOLM: Right.

PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: If you were one of the first eight, what would you look for in the other six?

MR. LEADHOLM: Well, what I would --

MS. PELLMAN: And we have five minutes, 20 seconds remaining.

MR. LEADHOLM: Okay.

PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Thank you.

MR. LEADHOLM: Well, I think first of all you’d have to look at who was selected first of all. You’d want some sort of balance. You’d want some sort of mirror to be shown with the entire group on that Commission.

So if, for example, you had a tendency that those ping pong balls selected, you know, six to eight people, you’d want to make sure that they were more diverse afterwards, and maybe lean to having the representation go elsewhere. So I would -- that would be my first order of business would be hopefully to make sure that the rest of the board made and constructed a board that accurately, as best we could, filled out the -- a mirror of, say, what California looks like. That’s what I would be looking for, initially. Obviously, all of the other things at this
point, if they made it that far they’re going to be solid candidates who have been vetted back and forth and, you know, at that point you’d just have to look and see which one you felt like completed the team. Okay.

PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: So, on the flip side of that, if you weren’t selected as one of the eight, why should they select you as one of the six?

MR. LEADHOLM: Well, I’ll just sort of reverse that then. You know, hopefully, at that point I would be there as a voice to some entity, whether or not it was the Central Valley, which I feel like I would provide a good voice to. Whether or not it was having somebody represented in the LGBTQI, I guess now. But I would hope that those voices would be fulfilled. Not that they would select me just merely on that, but I feel like if there weren’t anybody on the panel -- or, excuse me, on the Commission that could directly, maybe speak for those communities, then I would hope that I could be of service in that regard.

PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: Okay, thank you.

Mr. Belnap, I don’t have any further questions at this point, so I yield my time.

CHAIR BELNAP: All right, thank you.

Mr. Dawson.

MR. DAWSON: Thank you, Mr. Chair.
Mr. Leadholm, once again thank you for being here. Good afternoon.

MR. LEADHOLM: Good afternoon.

MR. DAWSON: I just have a couple of quick questions. I wanted to follow up with you on one of your responses to the standard questions was that possibly one of the threats to the Commission was the COVID-19 situation. And I was wondering if you could expand your thoughts on that?

MR. LEADHOLM: Oh. Well, I’m not actually -- that’s more to the -- my fear that it could be. I’m not certain exactly how things, the timeline so to speak, that was more of my concern was the effect on the timeline. I know that there are rigid timelines that need to be followed. And I just felt that having to utilize the group to set up other, you know, say timelines, new timelines because of the COVID that’s more to what I was referring to. Having to put in, I guess, extra time. And I would hope -- I’m certainly available but, you know, those with time restraints, I hope that wouldn’t be a problem for those on the Commission themselves.

MR. DAWSON: Oh, okay. Thank you.

MR. LEADHOLM: Yeah.

MR. DAWSON: We spoke a bit about your experience as an advisor and a counselor, but I was interested if you
thought that maybe -- you spent some time as a stay-at-home caretaker, and I wonder if you thought that that --

MR. LEADHOLM: Yeah.

MR. DAWSON: -- has a particular -- that’s a particular perspective that would be useful on this Commission?

MR. LEADHOLM: Well, you know, yes and no. It makes you internalize a lot of things, I will say that. And for lack -- and for better or worse. And in not dealing with the public on a regular basis, which was something that I was very, very used to, it took a lot out of me to sort of switch gears. And I was able to do that because I wanted to.

So, I would say that what it did allow me was to introspectively gain -- I was able to gain a part of myself that I maybe didn’t know was there. Because I was dealing with a dying grandparent for a very long time. Somebody who I was so very, very close to. That experience in and of itself was life changing.

And for me, dealing with the public, public students so much, I just had dealt with so many different types of people, having to come to terms with just sort of spending time with one or two people throughout my day was something that I had to learn how to do, to switch gears.

So, I will say that in doing so I gained that
ability to be a little bit more versatile with my day-to-day life. And to be perfectly honest, that experience also allowed me to get into touch with my spirituality that I did not realize was there before. And I can now relate to, say, subgroups who would hold spirituality -- or regions that would hold that spirituality dear to them. And I could actually speak to that with them. So, that’s what I would have to say about that.

MR. DAWSON: Thank you. Those were the only follow ups I have. Mr. Chair?

CHAIR BELNAP: I don’t have any follow ups.

Mr. Coe?

VICE CHAIR COE: I do have one, if we think we have time. I don’t want to run over and not allow enough time for a closing statement.

MS. PELLMAN: We have eight minutes, 2 seconds.

VICE CHAIR COE: Okay, I’ll go ahead and ask it really quickly. Mr. Leadholm, under standard question three, in terms of the greatest problem the Commission could encounter, you said that a couple of weeks ago, kind of in a pre-COVID world, your answer would have been different to that question. And I was curious what would your answer have been if this pandemic hadn’t kind of taken hold of the world?

MR. LEADHOLM: Well, I think, yeah, and actually
I’d given some thought to that. And I would just try --
what I was going to say, as I was doing some preparation
for this, was essentially just finding -- because
California is such a unique and diverse place is finding a
Commission that could represent all of those. And I don’t
know if that’s in fact possible.

So, what I had thought I was going to answer
before the virus, you know, epidemic, or pandemic arose was
to making sure, again, that those subgroups that may feel
marginalized, perhaps, that they were able to felt heard.
And that was what initially was my biggest -- what I felt
was the biggest fear is that each of those subgroups, or
however many you want that have them, whether or not they
were dealing with ethnicity, or if they were dealing with
socioeconomic issues, or geographical that they felt heard.
And that -- if there’s somebody on the Commission that
could hopefully speak to them and felt heard, or relate to
them directly. That was my one concern, yeah.

VICE CHAIR COE: Okay, thank you. No further
questions, Mr. Chair.

CHAIR BELNAP: Ms. Dickison, do you have any
further questions?

PANEL MEMBER DICKISON: I do not have any further
questions.

CHAIR BELNAP: Madam Secretary, could I have a
time check, please?

MS. PELLMAN: Yes, six minutes, 25 seconds remaining.

CHAIR BELNAP: Thank you.

Mr. Leadholm, with the remaining time I’d like to offer you the opportunity to make a closing statement, if you wish.

MR. LEADHOLM: Ah, thank you very much. Well, essentially, what I would just like to reiterate is the fact that my years of experience in generally listening to people is one of the reasons, really the main reason why I decided to even throw my name into the ring for this Commission.

I truly cannot emphasize enough how much I do enjoy speaking with people and listening to their stories, and then drawing the maps and the actual -- the job that we would be doing on a national level is just -- I feel like this Commission was really made for me. And I just -- I would consider it a tremendous, tremendous honor should I be selected from here on out. So, that’s it.

CHAIR BELNAP: Okay. We appreciate your time this afternoon.

We’re going to go into recess now and we’re going to be back tomorrow, Friday, at 8:59 a.m.

MR. DAWSON: Correct.
(Thereupon, the Applicant Review Panel meeting recessed at 4:24 p.m.)
REPORTER’S CERTIFICATE

I do hereby certify that the testimony in the foregoing hearing was taken at the time and place therein stated; that the testimony of said witnesses were reported by me, a certified electronic court reporter and a disinterested person, and was under my supervision thereafter transcribed into typewriting.

And I further certify that I am not of counsel or attorney for either or any of the parties to said hearing nor in any way interested in the outcome of the cause named in said caption.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this 21st day of April, 2020.

[Signature]

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CER**D-493
Notary Public
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I certify that the foregoing is a correct transcript, to the best of my ability, from the electronic sound recording of the proceedings in the above-entitled matter.

__________________________
MARTHA L. NELSON, CERT**367

April 21, 2020