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**Executive Director**

Arturo Vargas

† Deceased

07/10

December 9, 2010

California Citizens Redistricting Commission  
Bureau of the State Audits  
555 Capitol Mall, Suite 300  
Sacramento, CA 95814

RE: Selection of the final six Commissioners for California’s Citizens Redistricting Commission

Dear Commissioners:

The National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO) Educational Fund congratulates the first eight Commissioners of California’s inaugural Citizens Redistricting Commission. Your work will define California’s future for the next 10 years and it will set precedent for future Commissions. The NALEO Educational Fund is the leading nonprofit nonpartisan organization that facilitates full Latino participation in the American political process, from citizenship to public service. Our Board and constituency are comprised of Democrats, Republicans, and individuals not affiliated with either of those parties. This letter outlines Commissioner qualifications and recommends specific applicants in connection with the review you are conducting for the selection of the final six Commissioners.

Commissioner Qualifications

Proposition 11 and the regulations outlining Commissioner qualifications require that members of California’s Citizens Redistricting Commission demonstrate a commitment to upholding the federal Voting Rights Act of 1965 (VRA), and demonstrate an understanding of California’s diverse populations and the benefits of having such diverse populations participate in the electoral process. In addition, under Proposition 11, the final Commissioners must reflect the geographic and ethnic diversity of California.

Congress enacted the VRA to protect against discrimination in the voting and electoral process against underrepresented groups such as African Americans, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders, Latinos and Native Americans. Under Proposition 11, compliance with the VRA is the second highest priority for the maps that will be drawn by the Commission. In order to determine whether California’s maps comply with the VRA, Commissioners must be fully committed to safeguarding the rights of federally-protected groups during the redistricting process. Commissioners must demonstrate their appreciation, understanding and commitment to upholding the VRA.

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1122 W. Washington Blvd., Third Floor  
Los Angeles, CA 90015  
Tel: (213) 747-7606  
Fax: (213) 747-7664

600 Pennsylvania Ave., SE Suite 230  
Washington, DC 20003  
Tel: (202) 546-2536  
Fax: (202) 546-4121

1314 Texas Avenue, Suite 410  
Houston, TX 77002  
Tel: (713) 228-6400  
Fax: (713) 228-0606

110 Wall Street, 16<sup>th</sup> Floor  
New York, NY 10005  
Tel: (212) 480-1918  
Fax: (212) 480-1967

Furthermore, in accordance with Regulation §60805, which governs Proposition 11's implementation, Commissioners must demonstrate an understanding that California's diverse populations sharing demographic and/or geographic characteristics may reflect preferences concerning political representation; and that California benefits from the wide participation of its diverse populations, including Californians who in the past, as a consequence of sharing demographic characteristics, such as race and ethnicity, have had less opportunity than other members of the electorate to participate in the electoral process. Given these regulations, Commissioners must be committed to ensuring that map lines are drawn in a manner that provides historically underrepresented groups with a fair opportunity to participate in the electoral process.

In addition to the qualifications outlined above, we ask that you consider the geographic diversity of the current Commissioners when selecting the final six. The 14-member Commission must reflect the geographic distribution of California's population. According to data from the Census Bureau's American Community Survey estimates (2009), approximately 45 percent of California's population resides in the counties of Orange, San Diego, Ventura and a significant concentration in Los Angeles. The current distribution of the first eight Commissioners does not reflect this pattern. Concentrations of Commissioners are needed from these counties for the final Commission to truly reflect California's geographic diversity.

In order to comply with the intent of Proposition 11 and the regulations, Latino representation on the Commission must increase. The race and ethnic makeup of the first eight Commissioners does not adequately represent California's rich racial and ethnic diversity. Latinos are California's second largest and fastest growing population group, and they comprise more than one-third (37%) of the state's population. It is critical that there be significant Latino representation in all three groups that comprise the Commission, including Republicans, Democrats, and persons not affiliated with either major party. Under the provisions of Proposition 11, the selection process must produce a Commission that reasonably reflects the state's diversity. The Commission cannot reflect California's diversity without strong Latino representation. The new Commissioners must fulfill their responsibilities by selecting the final six members in a manner that increases Latino representation and ensures that the Commission sufficiently represents this important population.

Recommendations of Latino applicants for the final six Commissioners

The NALEO Educational Fund strongly supports the Latino applicants outlined below for the final 14-member Commission. These Latino applicants meet the eligibility criteria as defined in Proposition 11 and subsequent regulations, including the ability to be impartial, appreciation of California’s diversity and having relevant analytical skills. Additionally, these applicants have proven that they have the commitment to uphold the VRA and the understanding that California benefits from the participation of its diverse populations.

Application ID	Name	Highlights of qualifications
6276	Gina Simas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrated understanding of California’s diverse geography. Applicant has lived and/or traveled throughout California, including Stockton, Modesto, Santa Cruz, San Francisco, Orange County, and Santa Monica.</li> <li>• Demonstrated understanding that California benefits from participation of its diverse populations . Applicant sat on the diversity committee at her law firm.</li> <li>• Strong analytic skills as demonstrated through legal background as a litigation attorney. Applicant was recognized as a Southern California Super Lawyer by “Law&amp;Politics” and “Los Angeles” magazine.</li> </ul>
8543	Maria Blanco	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exhibits strong legal background and expertise on the VRA. Applicant has been involved in three VRA compliance cases.</li> <li>• Prior redistricting experience. Worked with MALDEF in the 2000 redistricting cycle providing legal expertise on communities of interest, the VRA, analyzing Census data and proposing maps.</li> <li>• Demonstrated understanding that California benefits from the participation of its diverse communities. Applicant’s pro bono nonprofit legal work has continually been to defend communities of color, including Asian, African American and Latino.</li> <li>• Demonstrated understanding of California’s diverse geography. Applicant has worked and lived throughout California including, San Diego, Bay Area, Los Angeles, Sacramento and rural California cities, such as Fresno and Modesto.</li> </ul>

Application ID	Name	Highlights of qualifications
3622	Gabino Aguirre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Demonstrated understanding of California's diverse populations from personal and professional experiences, including a former farm worker, teacher, counselor, advocate and elected official.</li> <li>• Demonstrated understanding of the importance of fair and transparent public processes from applicant's experience as city council member and Mayor for the City of Santa Clara.</li> </ul>
499	Maria Martinez Stewart	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prior redistricting experience. Applicant was City Clerk for the City of Pasadena in the 2000 redistricting cycle and is intimately familiar with conducting fair and transparent public processes.</li> <li>• Demonstrated understanding and commitment to upholding the VRA, based on 20 year experience as an elections official.</li> <li>• Demonstrated understanding of California's diverse populations. Applicant's varied personal and professional experiences have allowed her to interact with people of all backgrounds from garment workers to city officials.</li> <li>• Demonstrated appreciation that California benefits from participation of all its diverse populations, as seen through applicant's professional experience as City Clerk and elections official.</li> </ul>

We appreciate your efforts in providing the public an opportunity for input at this stage of the Redistricting Commissioner selection process. We wish you great success as you determine the final composition of the Commission and draw the maps that will define the future of California's democracy. If you have any additional questions regarding this letter, please do not hesitate to contact Astrid Garcia, Redistricting and State Policy Manager at [agarcia@naleo.org](mailto:agarcia@naleo.org) (213) 747-7606, ext. 4438. Thank you for your consideration of our views.

Sincerely,



Arturo Vargas  
 Executive Director