

Dear Commissioners,

I am writing to provide several corrections and clarifications to the letter from the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO) dated May 14, 2021.

As we have mentioned to you previously, the Draw My CA Community tool has been developed over a period of multiple years. During that time, the tool has gone through multiple rounds of user experience testing and accessibility assessments, and was then updated to implement the relevant and required changes and additional functionality. The tool has also gone through more than a year of continuous bug-testing and that process continues.

Prior to the deployment of the Draw My CA Community (COI Tool) the Statewide Database sought feedback from an extensive user group which included representatives of NALEO. NALEO participated and provided feedback to us, and had access to the beta version of the tool as recently as January of 2021. Since the COI Tool's public deployment, the Statewide Database has continued to receive feedback from the Commission, many interested groups and users, and is continuing to refine the product. We have always welcomed feedback and have investigated every possible bug in the tool that has been brought to our attention.

We were very surprised to find out about a letter from NALEO directed to the Commission that included user feedback that had never been provided to the Statewide Database (SWDB), thus not giving us the opportunity to investigate. Indeed, we were only made aware of the letter and its contents late on Monday evening after being notified by a member of the public that it had been posted to the Commission's website. This of course limits our ability to provide timely, detailed feedback.

We were also surprised to find out that Commission Staff apparently directed NALEO to send this feedback to the commission rather than the SWDB.

The letter makes multiple recommendations relating to issues either not present in the current version of the product, or for which planned updates have already been discussed during prior public meetings of the Commission. Other recommendations run counter to feedback received from other users during the development and testing phase, or are inconsistent with the underlying design or features of the tool.

Here are two examples, *Section III.3.c states when drawing a community, predetermined boundaries are set within the system.* This appears to be a reference to the census geography. As you know the COI Tool is designed to capture community boundaries *for the purposes of use in redistricting.* As a result, the tool by design is limited to the use of whole census geography, just as the Commission will be in drawing district boundaries.

Section II.3 suggests tutorial videos be made available in the same languages as the rest of the COI Tool. This has always been the intent of the Statewide Database, and the Commission discussed that this work was in progress as recently as last week.

The letter mentions several issues that are simply incorrect. For example:

“Before submitting the map, the user has the option to review it, and the option to download the map. The download option is a zip file containing a pdf of the submitted map, an excel file, and a shapefile to be used in a mapping software. The user finds out the different file options after receiving the confirmation email. Consider providing the different file options within the same screen where the user submits the COI map.”

Users can in fact download these files at any time through the export function.

“After initially saving a map, the user does not have immediate access to that saved map. The user can only access that map by either logging back into the system or creating another map.”

This is incorrect as verified by staff earlier today.

“It would be more user-friendly to label each phase as “Step 1, Step 2, Finish,” so that users know each step is necessary.”

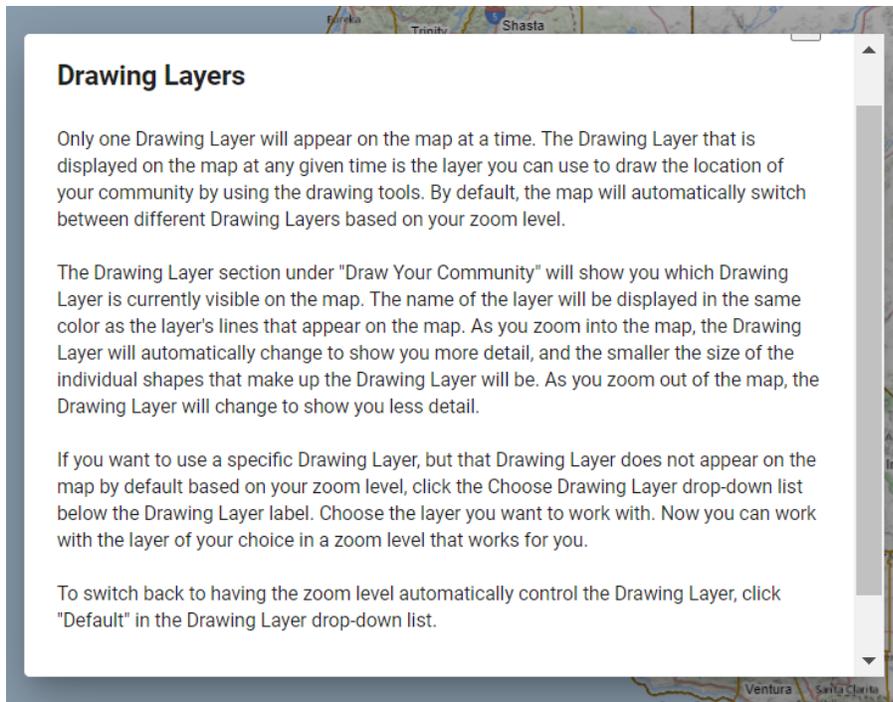
The steps are currently numbered 1,2,3 based on prior user feedback.

“When navigating the drawing tools, it is difficult to find community streets until the user experiments with the “Drawing layer” section to have a better visual of the streets. An option of allowing users to type in a zip code should be considered, so that the so the system zooms in on the immediate neighborhood.”

Experimentation with drawing layers is not necessary. The tool works like every other online map and users are able to zoom in. The tool also allows users to search for a zip code where it then drops a pin and the user can zoom in.

“There is absolutely no tutorial about the “drawing layer” feature.”

Please see the information currently available inside the tool about the “drawing layers,” below. There is also a more extensive section about Drawing Layers in the Draw My CA Community User Guide, which is online and available to users at any time. Additionally, a video about the drawing layers is in progress.

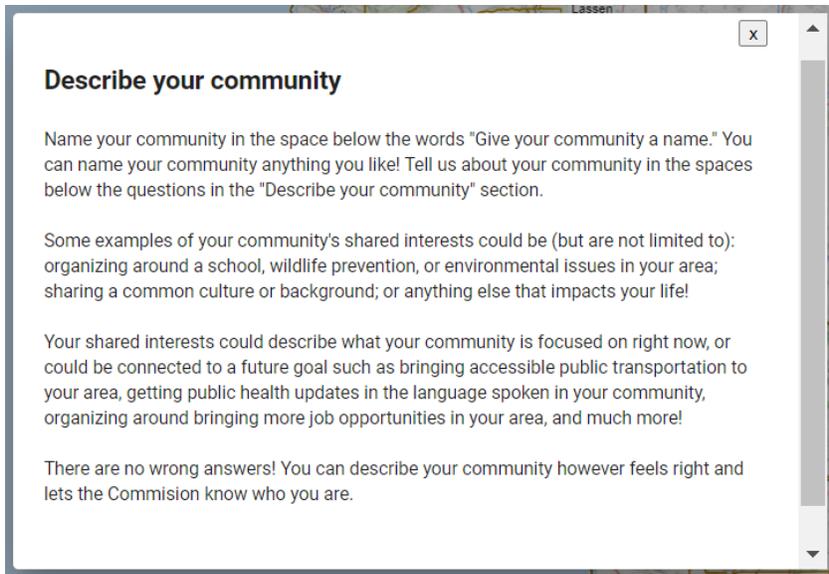


“Moreover, the user is not able to draw a map in any community except under the “Default” option.”

This is again simply incorrect as verified by staff earlier today.

“Describe your Community: When users first start to create a new map, the first prompt is to “Describe your Community.” This is another place where providing examples would be useful – in this case, some examples of how to “Describe your Community.””

Examples are in fact provided:



The letter also points out one ‘bug’ that we are addressing now:

“Section 6 is missing the hyperlink to the statement about clicking for more information: “Para obtener más información sobre cómo la Comisión usará la información que usted proporcione sobre su comunidad, haga clic aquí.”

We found that the hyperlink is present when the tutorial is started once a user is already inside the tool but when the user starts the tutorial *before* they enter the tool, the hyperlink is missing for the Spanish version. Thank you for pointing this out.

The COI Tool is a first-in-the-nation product, designed to provide a new and unique opportunity for the public to access redistricting software as defined under Government Code 8253 (b). The Statewide Database is committed to its success and will continue to review all feedback to identify opportunities for improvements where possible for this cycle. Where not possible, we will compile developer notes for future cycles, and coordinate with the COI Tool Subcommittee on issues requiring Commission feedback.

To allow for continued expeditious improvements of the COI tool, the Commission might consider instructing its staff to direct users to provide COI tool feedback to the SWDB, so ongoing updates can then be coordinated with the Commission.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Karin Mac Donald
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Statewide Database