

CA CRC Commission Meeting
September 11, 2021
Public Outreach: Zones I & K

Good morning, Commissioners and those following us today. My name is Andrew Amorao, Southern CA Field Team Lead for Outreach Zones I and K that include Riverside, San Bernardino, Imperial, and San Diego Counties.

I joined the Commission's staff at the end of May 2021 along with my colleagues Kimberly Briggs and Jose Eduardo Chavez. The monumental task you entrusted us with was to continue building on the Commission's outreach and educational efforts in Phase 1 and help initiate Phase 2 -- the activation of all Californians in the redistricting process through the Communities of Interest (COI) Public Input Meetings, the Draw My CA Community online submission tool, and the other ways individuals and organizations can have their voices heard.

As of the 2020 Census, the Inland Empire comprises now 4.7 million Californians. Riverside County alone added over 228,000 residents – the most of any county in CA. The San Diego Region, which includes Imperial County, increased to 3.4 million. In all, Outreach Zones I and K represent over 20% of CA's total population.

These outreach zones couldn't be any more different. The San Diego Region represents sunsets over the Coronado Bridge, the vast fields of the Imperial Valley that help feed the nation during the winter months, and serves as a gateway to our neighbors south of the border. The Inland Empire on the other hand has one of the largest geographic areas of the United States, most of it owned by the federal government as official wilderness areas. Millions of visitors a year make the journey to see the rock formations of Joshua Tree National Park or unwind at the luxury desert resorts in Palm Springs. What was once considered uninhabitable, the High Desert is teeming with as much diversity and economic development as its "down the hill" counterparts. And as I mentioned earlier, Riverside County is becoming home to more and more Californians seeking to find affordable and livable housing than the high-priced options found in Los Angeles and San Diego Counties.

As someone who worked on the 2020 Census as well as my support staff Isabel, I knew the importance of conducting outreach in an intentional and equitable way to include as many Californians as possible in this process. By making new connections to communities who may have little to no experience in participating in redistricting or that may find it difficult to participate due to issues such as language barriers or limited access to broadband, I was able to successfully activate these communities by being invested in their success, helping them navigate how to provide public input, and meeting them where they're no matter where they are in the process. Despite no face-to-face contact because of the challenges surrounding the COVID 19 pandemic, you'll see from the public input we collected that it reflects the rich diversity of these two distinct outreach zones.

I would like to acknowledge the tremendous groundwork Commissioners Sinay, Kennedy, Ahmad, and LeMons did in my outreach zones. They established a stable foundation for me to build upon. The doors they opened made my job easier to deepen those connections and keep organizations engaged

throughout this process. From Commissioner Kennedy's county profiles to Commissioner Sinay's introductions over email with leaders and organizations she recently met, I felt fully supported in this work -- thank you. At the beginning, I focused primarily on government associations and local governments to spread the word about the COI meetings, the COI tool, and other ways to provide input. I also contacted the organizations and groups which hosted Commissioner led redistricting basics presentations. Because most of these organizations already had some familiarity with the Commission's work and had received some education, groups were much more willing to engage their stakeholders in encouraging them to provide input.

Leveraging these contacts and connections, I was able to spread the word about the COI meetings and the Commission's work to a wide range of constituents and stakeholders. In Zone I, one of the Calexico City Council Members shared with me the intricacies of her constituents and wanted to learn more about participating in the COI meetings. Equipping her with translated flyers and materials and the deadline to request language assistance was vital to encourage communities along the border to submit their COI input and suggested boundaries. In Zone K, a Community Representative for San Diego City Council District 9, collaborated with the office's community representatives to announce our COI meetings in their district's community meetings and town councils. What makes District 9 so unique and important in our work, is that it is the home of one of the most diverse refugee populations in the United States.

I then moved on to organizations that work on civic engagement and community empowerment. These included statewide networks, labor councils, health center collaboratives, coalitions, service-based organizations like Rotary Clubs, political parties, business associations, chambers of commerce, local Farm Bureaus, and those receiving funding for redistricting work. Even though some of them weren't quite ready initially, most if not all, have turned out their community members to the COI meetings, conducted educational workshops, or assisted individuals with their COI input. For example, the California Labor Federation and the San Diego and Imperial Counties Labor Council connected me with their statewide consultant and staff at the Inland Empire Labor Council to help promote our COI meetings and amplify our messaging to over 200,000 working families between both zones. NAIOP, the Commercial Real Estate Development Association – Inland Empire Chapter, assisted industry members with their registrations and shared our outreach materials with their chapters in Southern CA.

Perhaps the most important and impactful outreach I did was to organizations that are trusted messengers in their respective communities. These include ethnic and cultural groups, libraries, legal assistance organizations, community colleges and universities, LGBT communities, and faith-based groups. An example of this is Asian Solidarity Collective in Zone K. Their team organized community members and leaders from the San Diego Asian Pacific Islander Coalition to provide COI input at the September 2nd meeting as part of a statewide effort of AAPI orgs to uplift their communities' voices. In Zone I, TODEC Legal Center turned out Latino community members in Riverside County. As the Commission is well aware, the registration slots for a couple of Zone I COI meetings completely filled well before the deadline. And when their community members were experiencing difficulties providing public input, the outreach staff assisted them with formulating a plan to submit video public input through mail.

These past few weeks, I have been able to utilize the data posted on the CRC website to inform my outreach efforts. The pin map generated through the online Airtable COI Input database is an invaluable tool to identify areas where we may be lacking COI testimony – especially in rural communities such as Needles, Blythe, Borrego Springs, Barstow, Baker, Holtville, Calexico, and Calipatria.

As we sunset Phase 2 of the Commission's work, Isabel and I look forward to continue working with you, our existing community partners, and new organizations and communities we have yet to introduce ourselves to, to collect more Communities of Interest public input through this next phase of the redistricting process.

That concludes my presentation and I'll be happy to answer any questions that you may have.

Thank you for your time.