

Immigrant Voting Rights Taskforce

February 11, 4:30-6:30 PM

City Hall, Room 370

Meeting Minutes

- Members Present:** Jasmine Marwaha, Sharon Maeda, Luis Fraga, Alex Miller
- Members Absent:** Jaime Garcia, Tanya Santiago, Abdullahi Jama, Many Uch, Hilary Stern, Diane Butler, Rich Stolz
- OIRA Staff Present:** Aaliyah Gupta, Sahar Fathi
- Guests:** Toby Guevin, One America
- Call to Order:** 4:50 pm

Welcome (Co-Chairs)

Sharon welcomed everyone.

Debrief and Discussion around Jan Meeting (Sharon/Luis)-

There was some discussion around the delay for information from the King County Elections Office. Aaliyah mentioned that it might be due to the upcoming elections, and Luis asked whether a date should be set for materials after the election. Items on the agenda at this meeting would have a more fruitful discussion if they had the materials. Aaliyah agreed to write an email to the Elections Office and ask them for a concrete date for information and to cc the co-chairs on the correspondence.

Toby indicated that One America had done Section 203 outreach in 2012 and had worked with Sheril in the past. He noted that Elections hired staff to make sure interpretation and translation went through rigorous review.

There was discussion around the various costs for interpretation and translation. They agreed that they would like more information about the county budget, the procedure in which it has been submitted, and the history of the election's budget. The committee wanted a better sense of the appetite of the Council to fund more interpretation and translations services. Sharon thought it might be useful to bring some folks from King County to discuss the politics of the Elections budget. Names were agreed upon and Sahar will follow up to get them scheduled. It was acknowledged that the County is strapped in the way things are funded and there is no funding in the general fund for this kind of service. The group will discuss funding mechanisms after the briefing. They may decide to reach out to the Secretary of State and see their costs.

Luis asked if there was a city doing this work – Tacoma Park, Maryland, for example. He could use some funds at the University to have experts come and talk about the work. They could look for successes around increasing voter registration. The group would like to look into whether voting has been a focus for the national immigrant integration conference or for the law review symposiums.

Toby suggested that David Perez would be a good resource for ballot box research – how much they cost, is there case law, has the post office been considered as an option, etc. Sahar will follow up to see if he can come in and brief the taskforce. Toby also suggested looking further into Section 203 outreach requirements – what fulfills “targeted” outreach? Sharon agreed that they could take small ads out in ethnic language newspapers and think strategically around how to do a better job on this issue.

Luis stated that there needs to be an ethnic origin box for voter registration forms so that people could track success or failures of outreach.

Subcommittee Report: Report from Luis on Intern Findings (Luis)

Luis reported that they are struggling with getting the data they want. The ideal data isn’t normally identified at the census level. They want data that can, by census block, identify the foreign-born population who were naturalized and who are over 18 years of age. The census doesn’t put together data in an easy way. They know for the City of Seattle there are 113,000 foreign-born people and 53% are naturalized. Then they generated the breakdown of the foreign-born population by country of origin –for example, 13.9% European. From Asian descent the number of people is 61,000 – Chinese is the largest. Filipinos are 10,000 and Vietnamese are 14,500. From East Africa Ethiopia is the largest, with 6,000. From the Americas the largest concentration is Latin American (13,900) – of that group the largest country is Mexico (8000). Still, they don’t know how many folks are registered. Luis wants to know the percentage of Somalis over the age of 18 who are naturalized – the impression from community is 75%. Aaliyah shared that OIRA is entering into partnership with USCIS , she is going to talk with Anne Corsano, and suggested that she ask for any data or information that might inform the voting taskforce. They are specifically looking for foreign-born population, naturalized, 18 years or older, by country of origin. Toby mentioned that it would be interesting to check in with Win/Win because they do a good job of putting together maps by precinct block. Specifically, Bill Baugh can put together maps broken down by precinct.

Subcommittee Report: Strategic Community Outreach Discussion (Sharon)

Sharon began the discussion and stated that the Community Engagement Subcommittee has not yet met. Jasmine volunteered to be on the Subcommittee because she had missed the meeting before. Sharon stated that the main goal is to hear from community folks about obstacles that have been in their community, so the taskforce can begin to get a broader picture. She is of the opinion that the more public, the better. There was some discussion around the possible format of gaining feedback – whether they should be recorded, whether there should be community information sessions, and how they should invite participants.

Luis thought that they would want to hear from as many different community members and leaders as possible, and to hear how challenges vary from community to community. He said that his assumption was that the recommendations would be based out of the information provided by the community. The group suggested getting an intern, possibly from the Korematsu Center, to assist in these information sessions. Aaliyah reminded the group that hearings could be recorded by the

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Seattle Channel. There was discussion around the pros and cons of a public hearing: namely that there would be people in an audience, high-level individuals could be invited, and it would require a lot of resources. It was decided that if they chose this path, everyone could commit to help it be a success.

Sharon suggested two community roundtables and then to assess the next steps from there. She would like to first pull in folks who have done this work for awhile and pick their brains – for example Win/Win, APACE, and various groups that have been working on the voting issues. Sharon asked for other suggestions for participants and the following were suggested: Latino Community Fund, VFA, ACRS, CISC, El Centro, ICHS, Interim, Refugee Federation, SeaMar, White Center Community Development Center, and the Somali Community (Abdullahi would be asked for a recommendation). The organizations need to be trusted. This first cohort would help brainstorm whether there should be a public event. The aim is to have 40-50 invitees, with the intent of having about 20 organizations commit to participate. The second roundtable would be for people to testify who have actually been impacted by voting barriers.

It was decided that the Community Engagement Subcommittee would be convened by Sharon in the next week or two by phone to develop a list of organizations and preliminary agenda.

New Member Brainstorm (Aaliyah)

Five vacancies have been identified. Invitations will be sent out. We have five vacant.

Wrap-Up and Adjourn (Sharon)

6:30 pm.