



Bay Area Parent Leadership Action Network (PLAN)

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Dear PLAN Forum Participants:

Six weeks ago, 24 days before Governor Schwarzenegger's Nov. 8 Special Election, we came together to learn about the impact of Prop. 76 – the Governor's effort to revamp the state budget process – on public education funding. We shared how current budget cuts are affecting our children's schools – special education counseling sessions held in broom closets, students moved to substandard facilities, high school students without desks or textbooks, overcrowded classrooms, etc. – and learned that Prop. 76 would have cut education spending by at least \$4 billion more per year. It would have also cut health and human services programs for families by more than \$3.5 billion, and would have taken the budget process out of the hands of our elected representatives and into the control of the Governor.

Armed with that information, we pledged to take action – to phone bank, speak out at our churches and clubs and committees, set up booths at schools and community festivals, register voters and distribute voter materials – in short, to do whatever we could to inform other parents and community members of what was at stake and how they could make a difference in the Special Election.

We pledged to make a difference, and we did!

Between October 15 and the November 8 Election, with 60% of group reporting back, we accomplished great things:

- We distributed at least 1000 voter guides and voter palm cards!
- We engaged in one-on-one conversations with at least 900 parents and community members!
- We reached at least an additional 1500 potential voters through public speaking (250); tabling at events, churches and schools (400); phone banking/phone calls (250); and email (600).
- We registered at least 90 voters and encouraged 225 voters to get out and vote on Election Day!

For many of us, this was our first time getting involved in an election. Some of us were voting for the first time! Many people reported back that one-on-one contact was the most successful strategy for reaching voters. Many people also reported that personalizing the message – saying how it affects you and the person you're speaking to – helped get the message across. Working in pairs and working through churches were also successful strategies. And phone banking with the unions was a great way to reach a lot of people.

Challenges included overcoming shyness, convincing youth about the importance of voting, getting people to listen, and talking about “wedge” issues, like Prop. 73, which would have required parental consent for a minor to get an abortion.

The results on Election Day were decisive – all four of Schwarzenegger’s initiatives went down to defeat, as did Props. 73, 78, 79, and 80. The “NO” votes for Prop. 76 in the counties represented in our group were:

SF – 84.5% * Alameda – 80% * San Mateo – 72.9% * Solano – 69.2% * Contra Costa – 68.3%

Our collective efforts and the outcome of the election demonstrate that every effort, no matter how small, makes a difference.

What’s next?

Elections can be an opportunity to galvanize communities into action. But our work shouldn’t stop after the election. Every person you contacted about the election is a potential ally in your next fight with city hall or the school board. Or, they’re a potential new member or volunteer for your group. All of the skills you developed doing outreach can be put to use on your next campaign!

Over the next few months, PLAN will be bringing together parents and others to develop a social justice platform for children and families. If you have events coming up and would like to invite PLAN to engage your group in this conversation, please contact Melia at 510-531-7526 or melia@parentactionnet.org. We hope to present this platform to policy makers at our Spring forum in March, exact date TBA.

SAVE THE DATE! We have a Leadership in Education parent training series coming up **Saturday, January 21 & Saturday, February 4**, to be held at the First Unitarian Church of Oakland. Topics include: school site governance, parent rights in education, effective facilitation, asking the right questions, understanding budgets, and more! Watch for a mailing and e-mail announcement soon.

I also encourage you to visit www.parentactionnet.org for news and resources, including materials from past forums. Post events to the online calendar and our Parent Action e-list. To add your organization to our growing regional parent organization directory, visit http://www.parentactionnet.org/get_connected.html. Coming soon, we’ll have online access to our PLAN to LEAD Parent Leadership and Advocacy Curriculum for Educational Equity.

May you and your family have a peaceful holiday season. We look forward to working with you to pursue educational justice and social justice for families in the months to come!

In solidarity,

Melia Franklin, Director
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