

# Best Practices for Outreach to AAPI and Limited-English-Proficient Communities in Local Redistricting

To ensure that communities are meaningfully represented by their local governments and that elected officials reflect the full diversity of California’s population, it is crucial that local governments create a redistricting process that is accessible to historically underrepresented communities. Asian Americans Advancing Justice – Los Angeles and Asian Americans Advancing Justice – Asian Law Caucus have compiled the below best practices based on their work with community organizations to engage AAPI Californians in voting, census, and the transition to districts under the California Voting Rights Act.

## Building Public Awareness through Robust and Translated Outreach

### *Create outreach & publicity materials and distribute them through a variety of channels.*

To maximize the number of residents who are informed about the redistricting process, a jurisdiction should produce outreach and publicity materials and distribute them as widely as possible. A successful district map-drawing body (whether it is a city council, a school board, or some independent body) should hear from all of the communities and neighborhoods within a jurisdiction’s limits, regardless of their language abilities, resources, or previous levels of engagement in local politics.

The map-drawing body should spread the word about its work in local newspapers in various languages, at meetings of local community groups, on popular cultural social media platforms, in multilingual robo-calls, on digital marquees at local schools, in flyers sent home with school children, and so on. Simply publicizing the process on the jurisdiction’s website and in a small number of newsletters and community newspapers is not enough.

### *Ensure that outreach & publicity materials are distributed in multiple languages.*

A jurisdiction should prepare outreach & publicity materials in a variety of languages so that word about redistricting spreads to all of the jurisdiction’s language communities. Outreach materials about the redistricting process, information publicizing upcoming redistricting workshops and hearings, and the designated redistricting web page itself should be translated. The Secretary of State provides translated template materials in ten languages: <https://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/helpful-resources/redistricting>.

Translated materials should be shared with civic, cultural, and community organizations, posted online, and sent to ethnic news media sources, including print, web, and radio outlets. Ideally, translated materials should be shared with leaders from the relevant language communities

before they are released publicly to make sure the materials are accurate, accessible, and culturally competent. Local jurisdictions should consult with leaders from the relevant language communities to determine the best way to distribute the translated information. For example, some language communities are best reached through audio rather than written means, so use of ethnic radio might be the best way to reach them.

### ***Actively promote local redistricting via social media and local influencers.***

Create eye-catching and clear draft social media content to promote engagement in local redistricting. Call upon local elected officials, artists, community leaders, etc. to post about local redistricting on their social media channels. Purchase boosted ads on Instagram and Facebook to spread the word. Use a variety of platforms to reach a diversity of communities. For example, some Asian American communities frequently share information via WeChat or WhatsApp. Lastly, consider launching a social media campaign to alert community members to this process.

### ***Ensure that non-citizens know about redistricting and feel welcome participating.***

The redistricting process affects all local residents, whether they are U.S. citizens or not. In California, all people, whether they can vote or not, must be included when determining the size of political districts. The lines drawn from the redistricting process affect all local residents. It is critical to the redistricting process that everyone participates to best reflect local communities of interest. Avoid using the word “voter” when doing redistricting outreach. Instead talk about representation for Californians and use other inclusive terms.

## **Language Access**

### ***Offer live interpretation for public hearings and translate key redistricting materials.***

It is important to provide interpretation for public hearings so that community members who do not primarily speak English can participate and give input about their communities. We recommend providing interpretation for all key languages spoken in the city or county. If you provide interpretation on request only, be sure to prominently advertise the availability of interpretation and give people an easy, in-language way to request translation.

Under state law, cities and counties *must* offer live translation of public redistricting hearings or workshops in applicable languages (defined below) if a request is made at least 72 hours in advance. Elections Code § 21508(b), 21608(b), 21628(b). If less than five days' notice is given for the hearing, then cities and counties must be prepared to fulfill translation requests

received at least 48 hours in advance. Cities and counties should also advertise the fact that the public may provide written or oral input in all applicable languages.

#### “Applicable Languages”

- For cities, applicable language refers to “any language that is spoken by a group of city residents with limited English proficiency who constitute 3 percent or more of the city’s total population over four years of age for whom language can be determined.” Cities can find the list of applicable languages for their city by visiting the Secretary of State’s local redistricting website.
- For counties, applicable language refers to any language that the county must provide translated ballots in under Section 203 of the federal Voting Rights Act of 1965.

Under state law, cities and counties must, at a minimum, provide a general explanation of the redistricting process in applicable languages and post the explanation on a redistricting web page. They must also provide instructions for how to provide testimony in applicable languages. Elec. Code § 21508(g), 21608(g), 21628(g).

#### ***Target outreach to language minority communities.***

In order to engage underrepresented and non-English speaking communities in the local redistricting process, counties and cities should reach out to various communities in at least all applicable languages for which they are required to offer live translation at public redistricting hearings or workshops. This includes sharing information about the local redistricting process with media organizations that cover news in that jurisdiction. State law requires cities and counties to make a good faith effort to reach media organizations that reach language minority communities. Elec. Code § 21508(a), 21608(a), 21628(a). Good government, civil rights, civic engagement, and community groups/organizations that are active in the jurisdiction, including groups that are actively involved in language minority communities, may also help reach communities that have been traditionally underrepresented and unheard throughout the redistricting process.

#### **Maximizing Public Participation through Frequent and Accessible Hearings and Workshops**

#### ***Hold more hearings than the legal minimum.***

The map-drawing body in a jurisdiction undergoing a redistricting process should hold a large number of hearings both before the drawing of draft maps and after the release of draft maps but before adoption of a final map. Holding more hearings, particularly after a draft map is introduced, provides community members with multiple opportunities to contribute and enables them to participate even if they learn about redistricting late in the process.

### ***Hold hearings in diverse locations.***

The map-drawing body should bring redistricting hearings and workshops directly to the community and meet residents where they naturally congregate. This means hearings should be held in a diversity of locations, all of which should be accessible by public transit and be ADA-compliant. The map-drawing body should avoid holding all hearings in a single location, like a city hall building. This does not make hearings accessible to residents in all parts of the jurisdiction, especially those who do not have ready access to a car. Government buildings can also feel formal or intimidating to community members who aren't used to conducting business in those locations. Holding hearings in highly-trafficked community spaces such as libraries, community centers, or places of worship in different neighborhoods and parts of town maximizes accessibility and helps create a comfortable environment.

### ***Offer the public diverse hearing days and times.***

To allow residents with a variety of job and family commitments to participate, hearing dates and times should vary. Weekday hearings during business hours should never be used. If possible, hearings scheduled for weekday evenings should be held on different days of the week and should be mixed with weekend hearing dates.

### ***Create stand-alone redistricting hearings.***

Redistricting is a transformative experience in a jurisdiction's political life – it merits a different kind of treatment than the jurisdiction's other business. While a routine amount of public input may be acceptable for other items on the jurisdiction's agendas, it is insufficient on a topic that is critical to the jurisdiction's political future. Local governments should avoid embedding redistricting hearings in city council or school board meetings, and create standalone hearings instead. Local governments should also consider embedding these hearings into community meetings and events that engage diverse constituents who might not otherwise attend a city council, board of supervisors, or school board meeting.

### ***Livestream and/or record all hearings and post on the districting webpage.***

Although cities and counties may provide a written summary in place of an audio or audiovisual recording of redistricting hearings and workshops, posting a recording of hearings is helpful because it allows residents to follow mapping conversations and decisions more closely. Livestreaming the proceedings also increases the accessibility of redistricting meetings, as people can watch from home in real time and potentially even participate virtually if needed.

Recording hearings may present logistical challenges when hearings are held in community spaces instead of city hall buildings. Those challenges should be planned for and budgeted for in advance.

***Host numerous workshops to inform the public and gather community of interest testimony.***

In addition to formal public hearings, local governments should endeavor to host a number of educational and information-gathering workshops in the community to help residents identify priority communities of interest and draw them on a map. City or county staff should come prepared with large blank maps of the jurisdiction, laptops to access Google maps for reference (or printed maps that include key roads and thoroughfares), and pens.

***Offer technical support to help residents submit district maps.***

The redistricting process can be a fairly technical process. Local governments should be prepared to hold workshops that help residents understand redistricting criteria and how to submit a map whether it be via paper, excel, or a digital mapping software. Detailed tutorials and assistance in the form of workshops and office hours should be offered so community members can ask questions when drawing their district maps. If possible, cities and counties should reserve local computer labs at libraries or community centers to give residents greater access to relevant digital mapping software.