

# CALIFORNIA *Voices*

## Real People. Real Issues.

Most campaigns and elected officials focus on likely voters.

Here are the perspectives of less likely voters on the most important issues for California's future.



Read about it.

Think about it.

Talk about it.

*What future do you want for California?*

This California Voices Project is sponsored by the California State Library under the provisions of the Library Services and Technology Act. Project partners include California Library Literacy Services, the League of Women Voters of California Education Fund and the Easy Voter Guide Project. Visit [www.easyvoter.org](http://www.easyvoter.org) for a copy of this report and related information.

**October 2004**

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**Visit [www.easyvoter.org](http://www.easyvoter.org) for a copy of this report and related information.**

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# CALIFORNIA *Voices*

*California Voices* invites underrepresented audiences to share their perspectives on the how to enhance California’s future. In addition to providing a fresh and frank look at the issues of ordinary people, the process of identifying and discussing issues has been demonstrated to increase civic participation among those least likely to be involved. This catalyzes new civic capacity to address California’s challenges and opportunities.

We invite you to use this report as a discussion guide to reflect on your thoughts about these issues and engage others in working together to make our state the best it can be.



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# CALIFORNIA *Voices*

*California Voices* is a nonpartisan project to encourage greater civic participation, particularly among those Californians who have been underrepresented in the political process. The California State Library partnered with the League of Women Voters of California Education Fund and other organizations to:

- Increase civic engagement, especially among underserved audiences, such as adult learners, new citizens and lower income Californians.
- Give voice to the issues as experienced by underrepresented audiences, adding a new and critical dimension to the issues that are framed and presented by political campaigns and major media.
- Foster two-way communication between underrepresented communities and the state's elected officials to promote greater understanding of the circumstances of each.



The *California Voices* project highlights the ongoing role of California's public libraries in increasing informed participation and a healthier civil society. Central to the project are the state library's California Library Literacy Services (CLLS) programs, which work to enable Californians of all ages to reach their literacy goals. These learner-centered, volunteer-based programs are dedicated to empowering adult learners in all areas of their lives – as workers, as parents, as community members and as lifelong learners.

Adult learners in CLLS programs are diverse in terms of age, income and ethnicity, but have characteristics common to many nonvoters: limited education, low to middle income and not growing up in a household where voting and discussing public issues were the norm. Serving over 100,000 Californians each year, the CLLS network of over 100 library-based literacy programs is an excellent channel to reach and connect with nonvoters and less likely voters.

## **Addressing uneven representation**

According to a 1994 State Adult Literacy Survey conducted by ETS, 40% of Californians read at an 8th grade level or less (and this proportion has grown since then). Many Californians who have attended or even completed high school still lack the literacy skills to read a newspaper or write a letter. Only 41% of Californians with a high school education or less vote compared to 62% with a college degree. Only 12% have written to an elected official.<sup>1</sup>

*Only 41% of Californians with a high school education or less vote compared to 62% with a college degree. Only 12% have written to an elected official.*

<sup>1</sup>From *The Ties that Bind: Changing Demographics and Civic Engagement in California*; Public Policy Institute of California 2004

# project overview

Prior library-funded research with adult learners has shown that dialogue about issues they choose is effective in increasing engagement among those who have felt excluded in the past. More information about this research and the resulting voter involvement model is on page 20. *California Voices* is a constructive response to the growing sentiment among thousands of citizens who feel distanced or disenfranchised by the political process.

## How the project worked

On August 10, 2004 four libraries hosted regional forums:

- Corona Public Library
- Sacramento Public Library
- San Diego Public Library
- San Francisco Public Library

Adult students from each region participated in a 2-3 hour forum that used a “History of the Future” format (adapted from the Center for Applied Research in Philadelphia, PA). For the first portion of the evening, in small groups, they envisioned what California would be like in 2010 if it were once again a model for the best state to live in. They role-played being some of the interviewees in 2010 who describe the 3-4 things that changed to make California a better place to live, and constructed scenarios about how those changes occurred.

After the local forums, over 100 participants across the four locations were linked in the first ever learner-to-learner videoconference in California. Adult learners shared their perspectives with each other and collectively identified *their* common issues which serve as the framework for this report:

- Health Care
- Education
- Transportation
- Housing

After the August 10, 2004 forum, CLLS programs across the state were encouraged to invite their adult learners to write about these issues. Several CLLS programs hosted issue workshops. The issue worksheets they used are available at [www.easyvoter.org](http://www.easyvoter.org).



## The Questions We Asked

*It is now the year 2010. California has become a great place to live.*

- If you have everything you want for your family and community, what is it like to live in California in 2010?
- What were the most important things that happened in making California a better place to live?
- How did these things happen?

## **Impacts of the California Voices Statewide Townhall and Videoconference**

For many adult learners, this was the first forum they had ever attended and the first time they had spoken in public about an issue they cared about. A major realization of the evening was that people who have not been involved *do* have an important role in making the changes they want. Another theme was that underrepresented Californians would like to have a different type of relationship with elected officials.

These notes from the local forum in Corona represented the sentiments of the other locations:

How did we get to this better California in 2010?

- Focusing on solutions – not just restating the problems
- Using the creativity and knowledge of all the people

How do we get government to make it a mandate that we develop this kind of system?

- Start writing letters
- Register to vote

Politicians may pretend to listen and make lots of promises, but don't follow through to get to the better California. They concentrate on the problems that we have. Political leaders need to concentrate on solutions and be willing to do the hard work needed to get to the solutions—and be willing to put in the time.

Citizens must stay active as well – we can't just have a meeting and then stop. We have to keep at it and watch what happens once it gets to the politicians or behind closed doors – people must keep at it and become a force to be reckoned with. Too often people express their needs and opinions and it gets put into a paper or a speech but nothing gets done.

***Education And Motivation Makes Everything Happen!***

*Corona Public Library Forum*  
*RESULTS OF GROUP DISCUSSION*

## Did You Know?

- Where do people get health care? Six out of 10 Americans get health care from their employers. Seniors can use Medicare. Californians with low-income can use the Medi-Cal and Healthy Families programs. About 5% buy private insurance.
- About 15% in the U.S. have no health care. These tend to be people 18-44 and people in low-wage jobs without benefits.
- Health care costs have been going up about 7% each year. Experts say the main reasons are the high cost of prescription drugs and the fact that people are living longer. On average, people now live 25 to 30 years longer than they did 100 years ago.



*Norma Shaw*  
SAN LEANDRO, CA

I am a Latina, a mother of three boys and an avid learner in an adult literacy program. I am an optimistic person and I have seen how health care in this state has improved over time. However, the health care system today is still challenged by an ever-increasing amount of people with special needs who experience marginalization and opposition in this system. There are so many without good health care. The elderly, people with disabilities and children are the most vulnerable and suffer in all contexts: at home, at school, and in the emergency rooms.

Californians need to continue to work hard to improve our health care system and to support the many dedicated non-profit organizations that weave the safety net of care for these groups. The leadership should continue to work with people, not against them. Many Californians feel angry resentful and alone. They have given up, but our leadership should let them know that they continue to work with compassion and indebtedness.

The taxpayer, “big business”, national state and local organizations should continue to organize to better fund and diversify our health care system. A program that improves the health of the people through support and education can transform the bodies, the minds and the spirit of the people.

I think health care should be available to everybody in California. People are working very hard, two or three jobs, but still don't have health care because their employers can't afford it. They don't go to the doctor so small problems become big problems and then they have to use Medi-Cal.

We need preventive medicine where people can get these problems nipped in the bud. In the long run, that will save the state money.

Free health care should be on the ballot. We should vote on it. I want it to start at the county level. People do local planning to see what the county can do and then ask the state for rest.

*Sherries Oakmon*  
SANTA ROSA, CA

In my opinion people in the USA should have Universal Health Care. For everybody. If we can pay for it in different ways like: taxes, payroll deductibles, etc., that would be excellent for all.

*José Rios*  
THERMAL, CA

Health care today is broken when seniors are forced to pay for their medicine or their rent. In the year 2006 they will cut Medicaid by 15%. This will make the problem worse.

*James Flowers*  
VALLEJO, CA

## Town Hall Highlights

### Our Vision For 2010

Health care is available for all people. You can see a doctor without waiting and get preventive health care.

### How To Get There

- We need universal health care for everyone. Other countries do it. Let's send a team to study how they make it work.
- We need to think about what we can do in our communities. We can pool our resources to increase our buying power. Maybe have a community health care co-op.
- One of the reasons health care costs so much is the lawsuits and lobbying. There needs to be a limit on what people can sue for.





Universal health care is not the answer. The Government has too much red tape; it is better left in the hands of private businesses. Prices in countries with universal health care are much higher and the waiting times are ridiculous. United States drug companies are raping the citizens of the United States. Drug companies receive taxpayers' money to do drug research. Why don't they cut us a deal? Drug companies keep the prices artificially high.

*Kenneth McCreddie*  
HEMET, CA

*Resonja Willoughby*  
OAKLAND, CA

I work part time. They gave me partial medical benefits and vision and dental care, but the medical was expensive for a family. This left me to have to track down a health care that I could afford for my kids and me. I've used lots of plans. Now I have one that is \$50 a visit and \$1 a prescription. This is not including hospitalization. I'm just praying that my kids and I don't get sick enough that we need to be put in the hospital.

The United States needs Universal Health Care to make sure all Americans are healthy. Tax the rich. And large corporate businesses. I don't think this idea is such a cliché. Some people are so rich that they won't see the end of their money and their kids won't either. I'm not talking about all of the rich. We can come up with what economic level to start at.

Everybody needs health care! Even if they do not have any work status, because nobody knows when they'll get sick. Last year I had a panic attack. I'm taking medicine that is very expensive for me; but my doctor helps me out a lot. She gave me some sample medicine. I do not have Medi-Cal because I do not have a work visa.

*Usha Kumari*  
FAIRFIELD, CA

*Tim Long*

SAN FRANCISCO, CA

I think health care is one of the most important things. I think everybody should have health care. We have all the knowledge and experience to make people healthier, but half the people can't afford it. I think that big companies should take it over and cut out insurance companies. The big companies should take it over because they employ most of workforce. The government should make sure the rest of the people have health care. Another solution would be to make it nonprofit. Both insurance and healthcare are so expensive for everyone because companies are out to make a profit.

**My Idea About Health Care:** At the present time senior citizens pay about \$50.00 a month for health care. They pay \$100.00 for their first doctor visit. After that the government picks up the rest. The same type of system may work for working people.

I think working people could pay 10% of their wages into a general insurance fund and 1% for each child and 5% for their spouse. This entitles you to go to the doctor at will.

One percent of the insurance fund will help promising doctors and nurses pay for their education. This is only a start. Many other suggestions can benefit this program.

We need better prescription coverage because the low income or fixed income can't afford prescriptions they need. Medi-cal should pay more reliably and quickly so Medi-cal patients would have a bigger choice of doctors. Doctors would be more willing to take them and they would have a better chance to receive optimum health care. Overall the community would be healthier.

*Janet Johnson*

HEMET, CA

I think they should make health care affordable for everyone. They should have other means to help when a person reaches their maximum insurance benefits.

*Neil Mills*

SAN FRANCISCO, CA



*Evelyn Miller*

SACRAMENTO, CA

We need to take care of health of all in our community, including illegal immigrants. They are protected unofficially when there is an emergency, but that is not enough. We need a plan to prevent their medical problems, to provide preventive care not only to those who can pay or have insurance.

I think we should have mandatory health check visits in the homes of those who do not seek medical treatment because of fear or lack of money. This will protect the health of our country.

Government needs to do something to bring down the costs of drugs. People should have a choice to buy drugs wherever they can get them for the least money. It might be best for the government to sell medication itself to keep the prices low and affordable.

*Al Levalle*  
CORONA, CA

*José Molina*  
SANTA PAULA, CA

Poor people have less resources to pay for the high costs of health care. The government should think seriously how to cover the health costs for the people who don't have medical insurance.

Health care for the very young to the elderly and those in between is life saving. Canada has a health care plan for all of its people. We should have the same policy here in the U.S.A. The large profits that the medicine producers make on the sick should stop.

*Lilton Powell, Jr.*  
SAN FRANCISCO, CA

*Donna Frye*  
SACRAMENTO, CA

If we lower the cost of malpractice insurance, we can lower the cost of medical insurance for people like me, who live on a fixed income.

### **What Do You Think?**

- What is the role of government, business, the community and the individual in addressing our health care crisis?
- Should the government pay for health care for everyone, even if it means raising taxes?
- Should we invest more in preventive medicine and less in helping people add more years at the end of life at great cost?
- Are we willing to limit how much we can recover in malpractice lawsuits to bring insurance rates down?

## Did You Know?

- California spends an average of \$6,719 each year for each student in public schools. The national average per student is \$7,548.
- Only 36% of 4th graders in California tested as being skilled in English. This number was only 20% for low-income students and 50% for higher income students.
- In California, 52% of high school graduates go on to study more. 19% go straight to a 4-year college. 33% go to community college.



*Lilton Powell, Jr.*  
SAN FRANCISCO, CA

Education is the key to an orderly society. Knowing what is expected of a person will keep him or her in a civil state of mind. What's being taught at the Elementary, Middle School, and High School levels will keep our children in balance with society as well. We should pay our teachers a wage worthy of the gift of teaching.

Parents should be informed by first or second grade if their child has a learning problem. Their child should be tested and teachers should be taught how to recognize learning differences. The schools should not try to say the child will grow out of these differences. Special Ed classes need to be overhauled completely. There is not nearly enough one on one work with individual students for each type of learning disability. I know it's asking a lot, but as a person with a long history of learning difficulties, many doors were kept closed to me."

*Adeline Rivas*  
PALMDALE, CA

*James Flowers*  
VALLEJO, CA

The education system today is like the court. If you are rich, the system is for you. If you live in the part of town like the ghetto, your child's chance of going to college is 1 in 10. We can change this by going to all PTA meetings and demand the same money that the schools in the good neighborhood get.

Teachers should have only fifteen students in class. Parents need to be involved in the education of their kids. We need to motivate our children with little gifts for every goal they reach.

*José Rios*  
THERMAL, CA

*Pat Bozik*  
SAN DIEGO, CA

My biggest concern with the Public School System is that they don't specialize their teaching techniques. Currently public schools spend \$6,719 per child each year on education. I think this money would be better spent in a voucher system.

A voucher system is a system in which the taxes currently spent per child on education could be used to send a child to the school of their parent's choice. This would make schools compete with one another. Schools would specialize in many different techniques of teaching. Some schools would have teachers with degrees in Special Education, learning disabilities and teaching English as a Second Language.

I think this would improve education because it would take government curriculum out of schools, and give teachers the freedom to teach.

How can we improve education in California? I think that by building more schools for the community, because at this time the schools have an overpopulation of students. In my opinion that affects the apprenticeship of the students.

*José Molina*  
SANTA PAULA, CA

*Kenneth McCreddie*  
HEMET, CA

All classes should teach phonics and should use the correct phonetic symbols. Class sizes should be smaller. Students who have a problem should have more attention devoted to them. The priority should be on English classes. Students falling behind in English should be given extra reading classes and should not be made to attend extra classes like P.E., art, or any other elective classes.

Education for children: Improve the kid-to-teacher ratio; more teachers aides in classes.

Education for adults: More support for adult literacy programs so they could get better jobs or go to college and be less likely to get into trouble with the law. The people would be more likely to vote and be more active in the community.

*Janet Johnson*  
HEMET, CA

A better education is important for all young people, to stop them from falling through the cracks. The means to obtain a better paying job is a broader literacy/training program for those adults who have fallen behind, to help them reach their potential. Once they can lift their heads up, they become part of society.

*Randy Cook*  
RANCHO CORDOVA, CA

Education is important because it is a tool for learning. Schools and teachers need respect from students, parents, and the community or they can't do their jobs. If they can't do their jobs, no one gets to learn. If you don't learn, you can't be what you want to be or do what you want to do.

If you want to be able to build a house, you will only be able to use your hands and not your ability to read. You can use a hammer, tape measure and other tools, but you won't be able to read instructions, permits or blueprints. So, if your goal is to build that house you will need to know how to read and also how to use a hammer.

So if building a house or anything else is your goal, you need to learn to read. Learning to read will help you to achieve goals, whatever they may be.

*Mike Hawley*  
SACRAMENTO, CA

## Town Hall Highlights

### Our Vision For 2010

Children gain the tools they need for a successful life. Everyone is involved in education.

### How To Get There

- We need smaller class sizes and a better teacher to kid ratio. There needs to be more individual focus on each child and more choices to build different talents.
- Let's recognize that not all kids want to go to college. Some are looking for skills to make a living. Other countries have a system that helps those kids early on.
- To make our schools better, the whole community needs to get involved. More people have to get engaged in the decision-making process.



- High-pay teaching jobs attract more decent teachers.
- All public school students must wear a uniform until they graduate 12th grade.
- No calculators until 6th grade.
- Phonic systems must apply to first and second graders.
- All tests must have 50% multiple choice and 50% essay.

*Kimchi Teng*  
CORONA, CA

*Robert Lopez*  
SAN DIEGO, CA

I feel we spend too much money on positions that aren't necessary. The School Board has too many members. The money they use for their salaries could be used to hire more teachers.

Also, I believe that we need to increase parent involvement in school programs. We should include parents in school decisions like curriculum. Increase the relationship between parents and teachers to make a working team. A team would aid the students more when it came to homework and projects because both would be working for the good of the student.

Lastly, I think that we should fix the Bilingual Education program so that it helps the students improve instead of hurting them. Bilingual teachers should be trained better and given more resources for dealing not only with the language barrier but also with the cultural differences so that the child can fit in faster and feel more comfortable and ready for the transition.

### **What Do You Think?**

- Is school about preparing kids for life or about academic skills?
- Should we have a system that has more individual focus or one that treats all children equally?
- Should parents have a choice of schools?
- Is parent involvement a necessary part of a student's and school's success?

## Did You Know?

- In 2000, the average rent in California was \$747 per month. The median (midpoint) price of a house in the state is now over \$400,000, up 65% from just 3 years ago.
- People in California are less likely to own a home than people in other states. California housing is made up of 42% renters and 58% owners. That compares to 31% renters and 69% owners across the U. S. as a whole.
- In the 2000 census, there were about 28,000 people without homes in California. But it is hard to get a true count of homeless people.



*Sherries Oakmon*  
SANTA ROSA, CA

There is a housing crisis in California. It is a shame that someone working two or three jobs still needs a roommate to make the rent. We need to vote on rent control.

The cost of real estate keeps going up while our wages stay the same. Houses should not be an investment for the rich. People are allowed to sell houses at exorbitant rates – way above what the houses are really worth. There ought to be a cap on how much people make in real estate so homes would be more affordable. For people who are working hard, who have good income and good credit, there ought to be a way you can buy a home for your family and yourself.

Housing must be affordable, drug free, and crime free. Shelters and hotel rooms aren't good housing for a family. The comfort of good housing means a stable, safe place to live.

*Lilton Powell, Jr.*  
SAN FRANCISCO, CA

*Pat Bozik*  
SAN DIEGO, CA

People are leaving San Diego for places like Texas because there is no affordable housing and there are no rent caps.

I consider that to own a home in California, we need more time to pay off the mortgage. An increase of five years would make a difference. Also we need to have better interest rates.

*José Rios*  
THERMAL, CA

The future of California will have no homeless and it will be safe on the street at any time of the day, as it was in the 1950s.

*Elizabeth Hughes*  
SAN FRANCISCO, CA

Slum-lords should be imprisoned and the housing should be turned into affordable housing. Several years ago we were having a water shortage but meanwhile California allowed thousands of new homes to be constructed, some with golf courses (complete with lakes). We need to think about where the water will come from before we build more.

*Kenneth McCreddie*  
HEMET, CA

## Town Hall Highlights

### Our Vision For 2010

Everyone has a place to live that is secure and healthy.

### How To Get There

- To get more affordable housing, we need to build coalitions in the community. Neighborhoods could actually build the housing they need.
- Let's give landlords of vacant buildings a deadline to clean the buildings up. If they don't do it, have the state come in and turn the building into affordable housing.
- Affordable housing needs to include yards where children can get exercise to be healthy and strong. We should also use neighborhood patrols to make our housing safer.



*Maria Castaneda*  
LODI, CA

Eight years ago we came to live in the United States. First we lived in an apartment, but it was too small, so we started thinking about getting a house. We applied for a loan for five years until we got the loan. Our house cost \$190,000. The monthly payments are \$1570.00. I am happy but at the same time worried because I have to find the money for the payments. I hope you can help families in California buy homes with reasonable payments. If you lower the prices, many Californians can achieve their dreams of buying a house.



Housing is too expensive. There should be equal housing for all, rich and poor. The average family needs a flat rate for buying and renting. The homeless need a place to bathe and eat and have a reasonable curfew.

*Brooke Bradley*  
SANTA ROSA, CA

### **What Do You Think?**

- Is a place to live a right of all people?
- Owning a home is a way that many people build wealth. Should income from home sales be limited to make houses more affordable?
- Should affordable housing be pursued in “high density” locations?
- Should there be rent control? How does rent control affect different people?

**Did You Know?**

- After paying for housing and food, transportation is the next biggest cost for most California families. They spend about 15% of their household budget on transportation.
- Low-income families who use public transit spend an average of \$360 a year compared to \$3,600 a year for those who use cars.
- About 5% of people in California use public transportation regularly. About 15% of workers carpool.



*Resonja Willoughby*  
OAKLAND, CA

I live in West Oakland where they are cutting bus routes and raising fares. Where does that leave the working poor if they don't have cars? And now they don't have transportation at certain hours and certain places. Are they supposed to walk all the way downtown? People may lose their jobs if they can't get to work on time. Then the poor become poorer.

Limited access to transportation is serious. There are less routes to the library, to the doctor. It affects seniors. High school students need to get to school. You have to be able to have access to get places to improve your life. This is just another way that poor people are excluded.

I think we need to carpool more. In that way we can get more cars off of the road.

*José Rios*  
THERMAL, CA

*Kimchi Teng*  
CORONA, CA

State government can give a certain percent tax break for companies that hire employees who live within a 15 mile radius around those companies. No more toll roads in California freeway systems. Companies will have lower state, county and city tax rates, if they are located in areas such as Riverside and San Bernardino counties.

In the 30's and 40's, L.A. had one of the best transit systems going. This was ruined by the greed of the tire companies. The 91 freeway should have an open diamond lane. I want that diamond lane back. It belonged to the public and they took it away. If they don't, I would sue Orange County for corruption.

*Kenneth McCreddie*  
HEMET, CA

I walk when I can because public transportation takes too long. It's always crowded and there's crazy people. They should put more buses out and get more customer service skills. They should also make fast passes cheaper. \$45 is too much.

*Shaneika Henderson*  
SAN FRANCISCO, CA

Transportation needs to be more accessible for people who are disabled and people working on their literacy. It costs me \$30/week to go back and forth to my literacy classes. There are provisions for people who are physically disabled. What about people who are literacy disabled? Can we get vouchers or credits to get back and forth to improve ourselves?

*Lilton Powell, Jr.*  
SAN FRANCISCO, CA

We need better transportation for the public to get to and from work at a low cost. Some seniors need a special form of transportation to see to their health needs. We also need buses for school children and the handicapped. Energy saving cars that don't pollute the air are also important.

## Town Hall Highlights

### Our Vision For 2010

More people are using public transportation, more people are car pooling, and there is better air quality.

### How To Get There

- We need more mass transit. There should be bullet trains between cities that link up to the light rail or monorail system in the cities.
- We need to get more cars off the road. There should be more special lanes for carpooling. Companies should give people incentives to carpool. Our air quality will get better.
- We need more Paratransit for the elderly and disabled so they can get where they need to go.

*Philip Ginder*  
SAN DIEGO, CA

Affordable housing, health care and better jobs, with higher pay all go together. If you are sick and can't work, have no health insurance, you are unable to pay your rent. More neighborhoods working together with local businesses to create affordable housing along with better jobs.

*Virginia Lobato*  
SACRAMENTO, CA



In 2010, California would have no gangs, drugs, vandalism or other crimes on the streets. We would accomplish this by strengthening and creating programs for parents and their children, such as afterschool and mentorship programs for kids and programs that teach parents to communicate effectively. In addition, more cops would patrol our streets. Finally, there would be stricter punishments for anyone who breaks the law and rehabilitation programs in jail. These things would result from my community uniting and advocating for more involvement from the government. In 2010, California would be free of all crimes with the support and teamwork of my community and the government.

*Rodrigo Gutierrez*  
NATIONAL CITY, CA

*Elizabeth Hughes*  
SAN FRANCISCO, CA

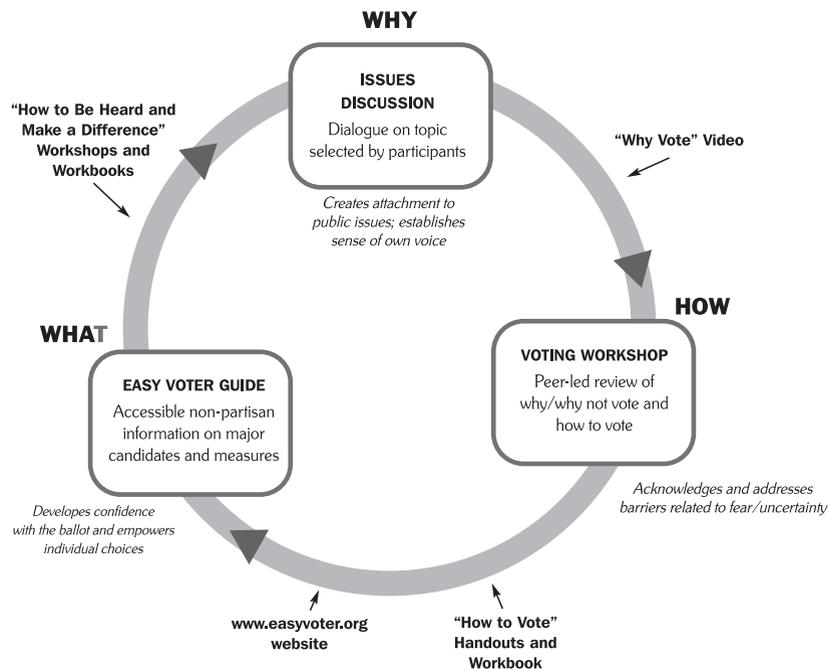
To the future President of the United States, the future Governor of California, and the future Mayor of San Francisco, we need jobs for many people in California. Stop sending our jobs overseas so that more jobs for these California people will be there. America's products are a lot better than overseas' products. If it keeps up, we will lose the ability to know how to produce anything. We are looking for a better future for California with many jobs of all different kinds pay, and vacation pay. Please stop thinking of the people overseas and start thinking about the people of the United States.

*California Voices* was designed to encourage participation among traditional non-voters by:

- Group interactions that help them find their voice on the issues they choose, while making the connection between public issues and their own lives.
- Equipping them with accessible, plain language about these issues and what is on the ballot (e.g., the nonpartisan *Easy Voter Guide* and materials at [www.easyvoter.org](http://www.easyvoter.org)).
- Opportunities to hear from and interact with elected officials.

There is an apathy myth about why people don't vote or get involved in their communities. It is widely reported that nonvoters are lazy and do not care. The number one reason people give in surveys as to why they don't vote is that they don't have time. But when invited to think about it, everyone has something they would like to see changed in their community, for their future and/or the future of their children. Our research has indicated there is no apathy – just a need for invitation, inclusion and education.

Beginning in 1994, the California State Library sponsored the “Key to Community Voter Involvement Project” (now the Easy Voter Guide Project). Community members representing underserved audiences developed peer-driven methods of engagement. Their work evolved into a three-pronged approach to help disenfranchised Californians overcome their resistance to voting:



In the 1996 general election, this model increased turnout among unlikely voters from an expected 35-36% to over 70%. The model forms the basis of the nonpartisan Easy Voter Guide Project housed at [www.easyvoter.org](http://www.easyvoter.org). *California Voices* complements the voter education of the Easy Voter Guide Project with more dialogue about the issues and also expands this work into civic engagement beyond voting.

## **CALIFORNIA'S LIBRARIES CHANGE LIVES**

California Library Literacy Services (CLLS) works to enable Californians of all ages to reach their literacy goals. These learner-centered, volunteer-based programs are dedicated to empowering adult learners in all areas of their lives – as workers, as parents, as community members and as lifelong learners.



Over 100 libraries in California have a CLLS program serving over 100,000 Californians each year. Through a combination of one-on-one tutoring, small group activities and family programming, CLLS programs help unleash new possibilities for people who previously had few options. To find a program near you, go to [www.literacyworks.org/clls](http://www.literacyworks.org/clls).

These are some of the key programs offered by California Library Literacy Services programs:

### **Adult Literacy Services**

To help adults reach their reading and writing goals

- One-to-one and small group tutoring for adults in a library setting
- Volunteer-based instruction

### **Families for Literacy Services**

To foster an intergenerational love of reading and books

- Special library programs and story-times for adult learners and their families
- Quality children's books given away to participating families

### **English Language & Literacy Intensive Program**

To boost the academic performance of at-risk schoolchildren

- After-school and in-school services to children who are learning to speak English
- Family component involves parents and siblings in fun, library-based programs

### **Mobile Library Literacy Services**

To bring library literacy services to underserved communities

- Mobile libraries help overcome the barriers of language, isolation and lack of transportation
- Provide at-risk families with a variety of preschool experiences to support school readiness

For more information, visit  
**[www.literacyworks.org/clls](http://www.literacyworks.org/clls)**

CALIFORNIA  
*Voices*

