★ Easy Voter Guide

A community-driven design process

Begun in 1994, a nonpartisan project sponsored by the California State Library used community-based market research (a combination of in-depth interviews and target audience working groups) to delve beneath the familiar approaches to addressing low voter turnout. We found that many common excuses about not voting relate to information needs and low self-efficacy rather than political or structural issues.

What they say:	What they really mean:
Takes too much time	*Don't know how to vote*
My vote won't count	*Don't feel own opinion matters*
Don't like the choices	*Don't know the candidates/issues*
It's inconvenient	*Intimidated by the process*

This research indicated also revealed "performance anxiety" across all voter types. New voters felt that voting was like "taking a test." Experienced voters felt that they had to "cram" to get prepared.

What new voters need:

Over the past ten years, the *Easy Voter Guide* community working groups have identified and refined three kinds of information needed by current non-voters (also corroborated by several national studies):

1) **information about the basics of the voting process** — especially for people growing up in households that don't vote, new citizens, but also everyone else too now because of new voting equipment

   → the www.easyvoter.org website provides a simple 1-2-3 step explanation with photos along with a "virtual tour" of the voting process

2) **a nonpartisan overview of what is on the ballot** — who is running and why, the duties of each elected office and a concise, jargon free summary of statewide ballot measures

   → the *Easy Voter Guide* — in print and web formats — satisfies this need for new voters and also serves as a user-friendly "menu" for more experienced voters, with links for more information as needed

3) **context about how the issues they are concerned about connect to voting and public policy** — to help address widespread confusion about the levels and functions of government

   → the www.easyvoter.org website helps potential voters learn more about the issues *they* choose (not just the ones campaigns choose for them) and also about which parts and levels of government can impact what they care about

This information — prepared and delivered by peers — is a significant tool in reducing barriers to voting. A 1996 study funded by the Kettering Foundation showed that students in adult schools and community colleges who were exposed to two out of three of these elements voted at a rate of 70% compared to just 35% for their demographic peers.

Please visit the www.easyvoter.org website to see how we are providing these essential elements for new voters. For more information, contact Susan Clark at 415-454-6500 or email her at ssclark@easyvoter.org. The easyvoter.org website is designed and hosted by Literacyworks.