

How the California Secretary of State Approaches Civic Engagement

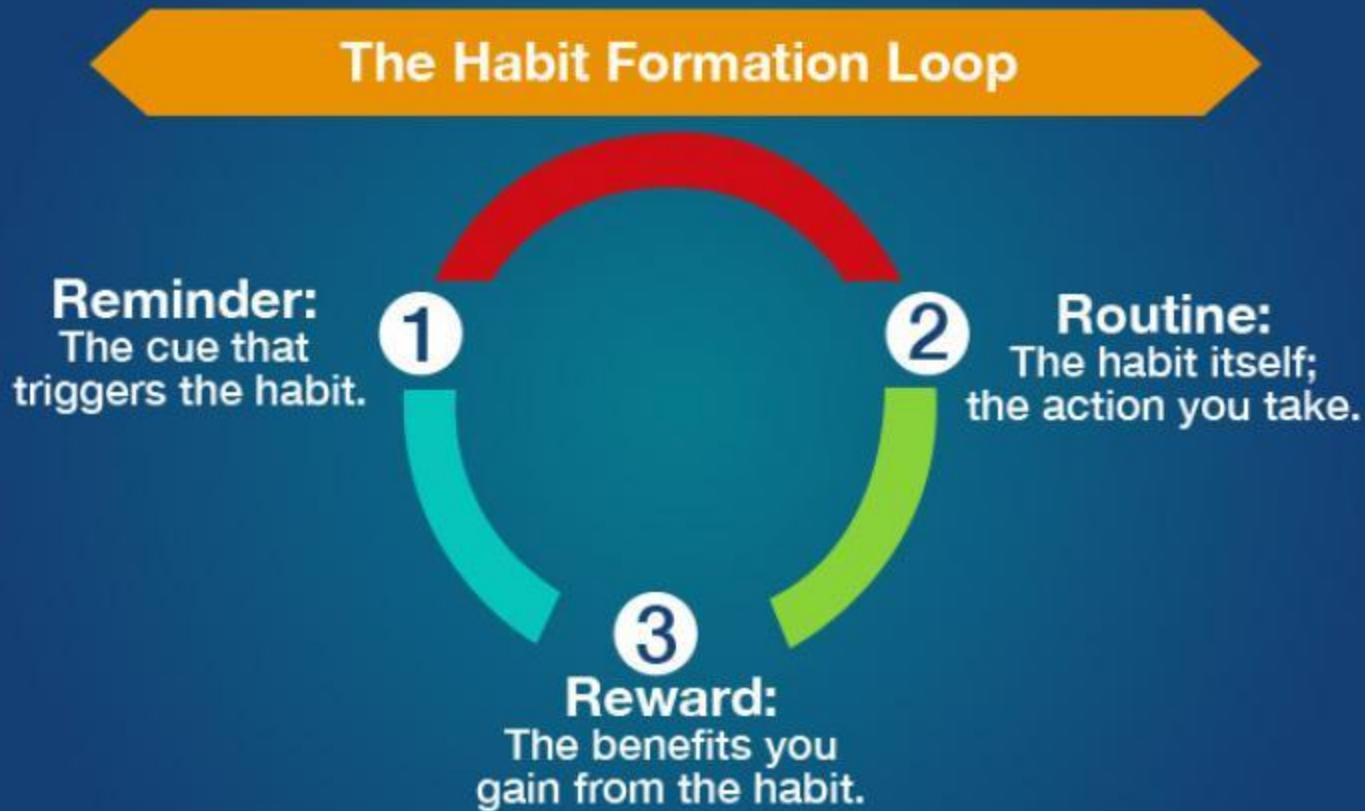


An Invitation to Democracy



- California consistently has one of the lowest voter turnout rates in the US.
- To increase voter participation we should focus resources on underrepresented communities – low voter registration and turnout.
- Underrepresented communities need an invitation, they need a direct cue to register and to vote.
- Once people start voting, they are more likely to continue voting. Voting is a habit.

Forming A Habit

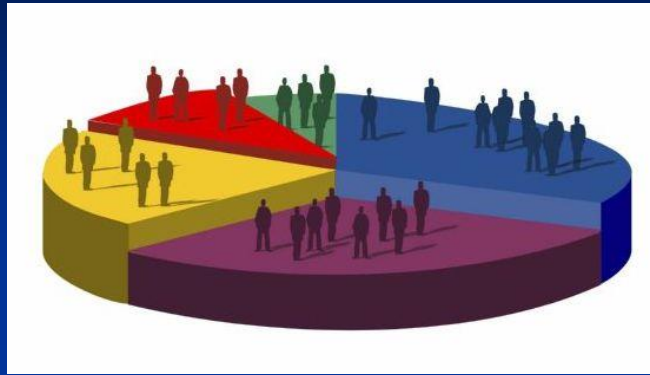


Voting is a Habit



- A vast body of evidence suggests that habits form when people vote. Once a person starts voting they are more likely to continue voting.
- Research strongly suggests that events, institutions, or campaigns that mobilize voters have long-lasting impacts on voting habits.
- We also pick up habits from our family. For many Californians parents provide the first invitation to vote.

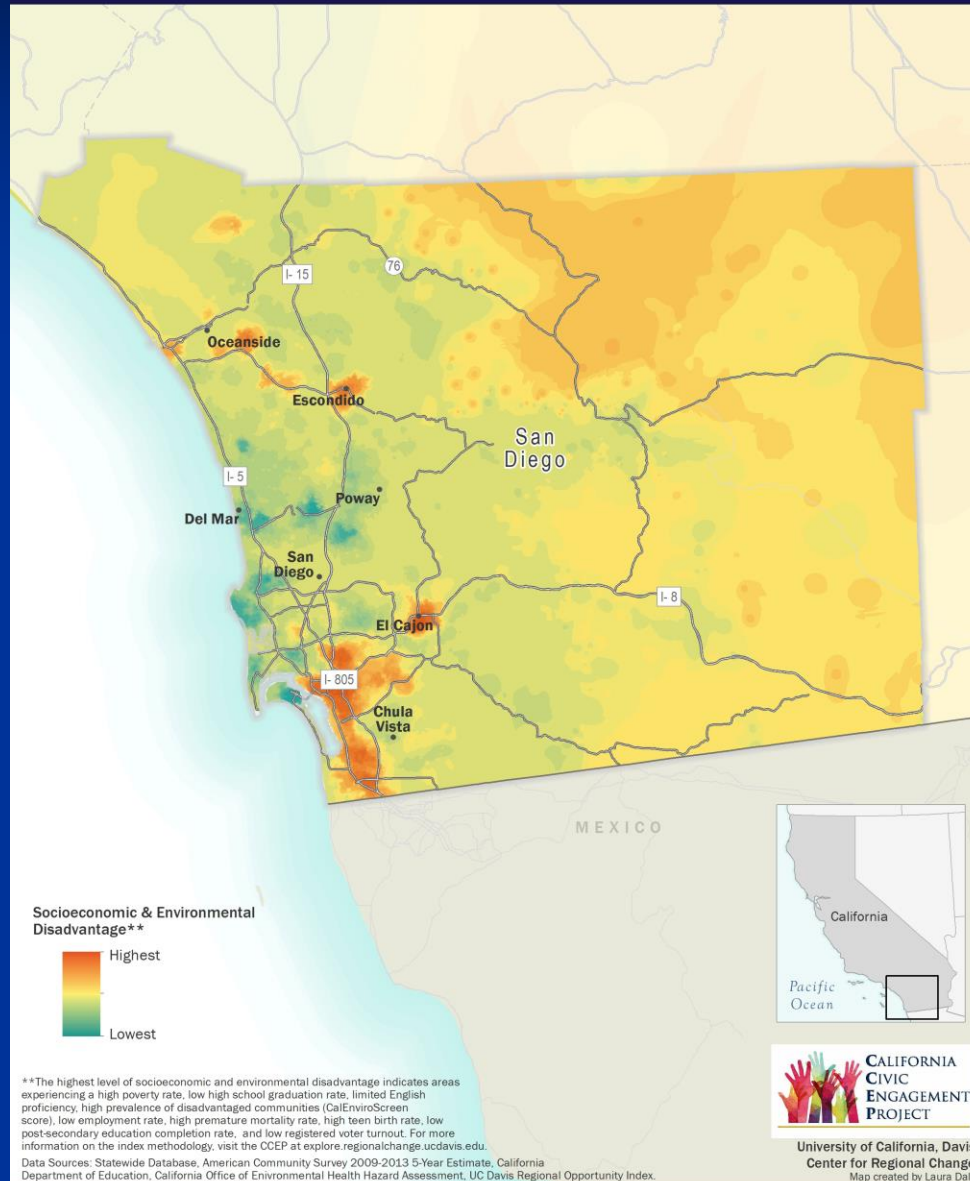
Who Needs An Invitation?



- California's demographics have an impact on voting habits.
- According to Census Data 27% of California's population is foreign born.
- Nearly half of California's children live in a household with at least one foreign born parent.
- New census data also shows that California has the highest poverty rate in the US – 20.6 percent.
- New citizens and their families, Californians living in poverty, and young people are most need of an invitation.

Who Needs an Invitation

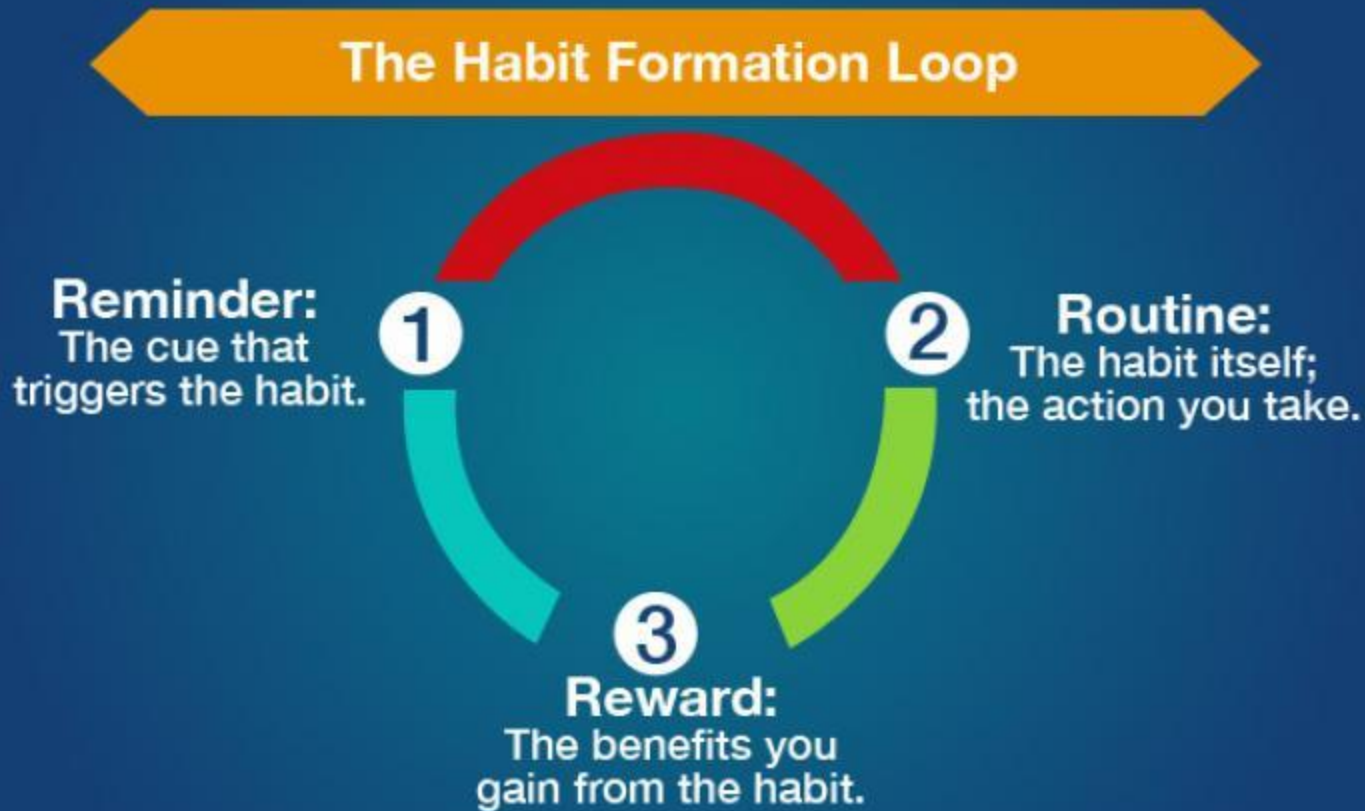
Political Vulnerability in San Diego County
General Election 2014



Who Needs an Invitation?

- Communities that don't vote are also the most impacted by poverty and its symptoms.
- Hot spot map from the UCD Center for Civic Engagement. H/T Prof. Mindy Romero
- Hot spots have the highest level of socioeconomic and environmental disadvantages;
 - High poverty
 - Low High School Graduation rate
 - Limited English proficiency
 - Low employment
 - High premature mortality
 - High teen birth rate
 - Low higher education completion rate
 - Low registered voter turnout.
- To have an economy and public policy that is inclusive of all we must increase the civic participation of underrepresented communities.
- The habit cycle requires voters to see some benefit of voting. Another topic for a another day.

Forming A Habit



Who Is Giving The Cue?

- When family cannot pass on the tradition of voting, who can we turn to?
- The SOS has focused engagement efforts on:
 - Schools
 - Employers
 - New Citizens
 - Social Media
 - Automation
 - Election Officials & Campaigns

SOS Student Mock Elections



SOS Student Mock Elections

- Goals:
 - Educate students about the voting process.
 - Initiate discussions between students and parents.
 - Gives students have a voice.
- SOS provides materials, sample curriculum;
 - A VIG with statewide candidates and a sample of propositions.
 - Create a mock polling place.
 - Bring in local voting machines for display and education.
 - Hold debates.
 - Promote poll worker opportunities.
 - Promote pre-registration.
- Nearly 1,000 schools, 600,000 students participated in 2016.

Democracy at Work



Democracy at Work

- SOS partners with employers to promote civic engagement.
 - SOS provides sample messages and images.
 - Messages can be to employees and customers.
 - LA Metro, SD Padres, Starbucks.
- Promote online voter registration.
- Reminders of deadlines and date of the Election.
- Distribute “Time Off To Vote” Posters
 - Employees can be given as much time as they need to vote, but only 2 paid hours.

New Citizens



New Citizens

- SOS Padilla, SOS Staff, county election officials coordinate to speak to new citizens as they are sworn in.
- Before ceremony starts every new citizen is given a VRC.
- SOS has created a Voting Guide for New Citizens, translated into 9 languages.

College Students



College Students

- In 2014 General Election, 8% of 18-24 voted.
- In September 2016 the SOS signed MOU's with CCC, CSU, and UC to promote election information to students - "The California Students Vote Project"
- SOS created tool kits for college administrators and students available on our website.
- The goal of the project is to implement best practices at all public colleges and universities. These include:
 - asking students during optimal time periods or via their student portals to register to vote,
 - sending all-campus emails and notifications about the importance of voting before voter registration deadlines and elections,
 - and implementing said practices for on-the-ground voter registration efforts.

Social Media



Social Media

- Social media has the power to distribute information faster and wider than print, TV or radio – for almost ZERO cost.
- Facebook posted 3 reminders to register to vote online in 2016. Each post generated approximately 200k+ online registrations in California. 50% were 18-35.
- Easy to get out translated materials.
- New tools online tools can be shared across social media:
 - Online Voter Registration
 - Voter Registration Status
 - Online Voter Information Guide & Quick Guide to Props
 - Sign up to receive electronic information.
- Smart phones often bridge the digital divide. However, the persistent digital divide means social media might not reach portions of the populations we want to talk to.

Automation



Automation

- State government should take a more proactive role in civic engagement.
- National Voter Registration Act in 1993 opened the door. Its time to modernize the NVRA.
- New technology allows for the electronic collection and transfer of data.
- State government often uses this new technology for purposes of healthcare, public safety, and tax collection. Why not civic engagement?
- AB 1461 (Gonzalez, 2015) will create Automatic Voter Registration (AVR) at the DMV next summer.
- DMV interacts with 90% of Californians. There are limits to reach. People visit a DMV every 5-10 years. Young people are less likely to have gone to a DMV.
- If we can make AVR work at the DMV, where else can it work? Covered California, higher education, tax collection, social service departments, county offices, etc.

Getting Out the Vote



Getting Out the Vote

- A face to face invite to participate in the most effective method. How can we make it easier and more powerful?
- SB 450 (Allen, Hertzberg) will transform GOTV.
 - Election Officials will have more resources for voter education and outreach.
 - Expands GOTV from often just 1 day to weeks.

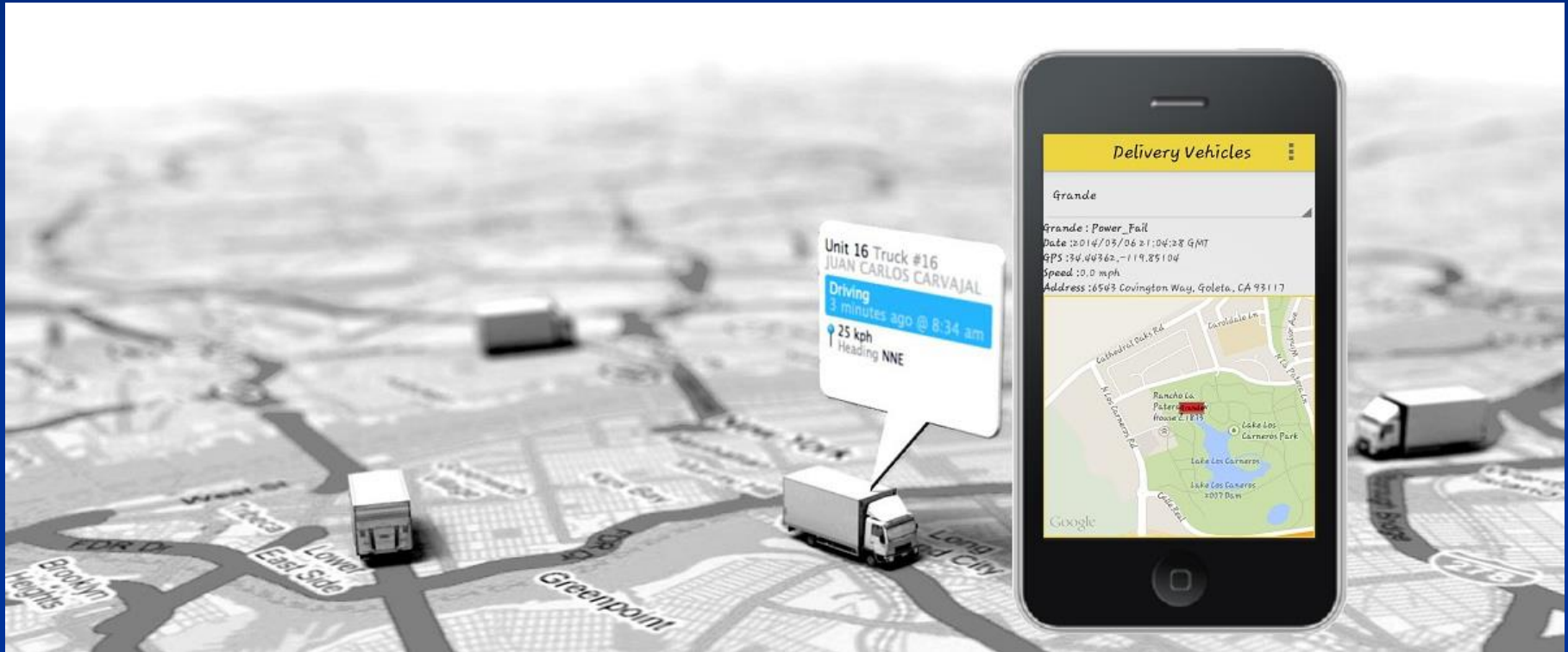
Getting Out The Vote

- SB 450 is similar to a 2015 pilot project in San Mateo county.
- The upfront savings from this model allowed San Mateo to spend an additional \$340,000 on voter education and outreach.
- The county bought ads in newspapers, radio, television, billboards, and public transit.
- Turnout among all demographics increased.

Getting Out The Vote

- Under, SB 450 all registered voters are delivered a ballot 28 days before Election Day.
- Traditionally, underrepresented communities do not vote by mail. SB 450 is more than just mail.
- Provides expanded opportunities to GOTV under represented communities.
- Election officials in other states like Colorado are also using modern technology to communicate with voters.

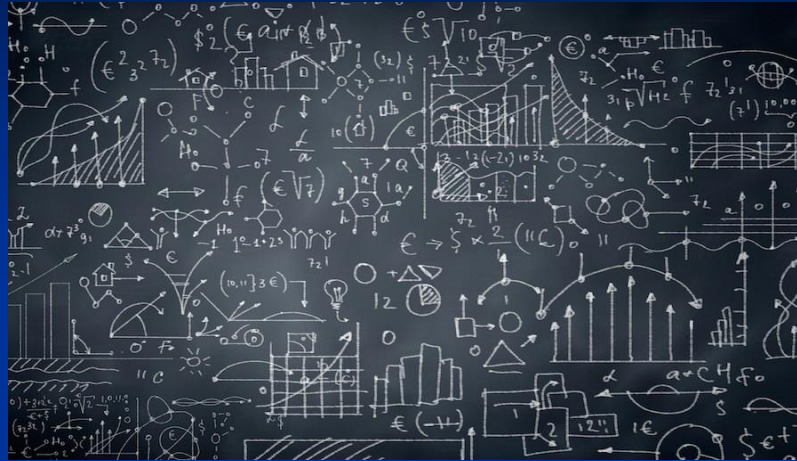
Ballot Tracking



Ballot Tracking

- Ballot TRACE utilizes the Postal Service's intelligent mail barcode technology to track a mail ballot envelope from the time it is printed, through every stage of the U.S. Postal System, and after it has been returned to the Election Official.
- Provides reports about the status of all mail ballots to election officials so that they can assure that ballots sent to voters are delivered in a timely fashion.
- Provides a messaging system where voters receive messages about the status of their ballot: before it enters the mail system, while it is being processed by the USPS, and after it has been returned to the Election Official. Voters can choose to:
 - retrieve their updates using the Election Official's website;
 - automatically receive their updates via email; or
 - automatically receive their updates via text messages.
- Ballot Tracking also modernizes GOTV.

Conclusion: Civic Engagement is Complex



- The goal is simple – establish a habit of voting in underrepresented communities.
- The solution is complex. Increasing civic participation requires multiple approaches across multiple societal institutions – all levels of government, education, and employers can contribute.
- While more resources are desirable, the most effective method is the cheapest – our own voices.
- We must continue to explore what happens between elections so voters see the real benefit of voting.

