

Sacramento Television Coverage of the November 2010 General Election by Sacramento Media Group March 2011

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Television stations are licensed by the Federal Communications Commission (FCC) to use the publicly owned airwaves free of charge. In return, the stations pledge to serve the public interest and further democracy, especially during elections. During the month of October, 2010, the Sacramento Media Group (SMG) convened a group of community representatives from the League of Women Voters of Sacramento County, Access Sacramento, and other community groups to interview local station leaders. We asked each station a series of questions about their plans to inform the public about candidates and propositions during the lead up to the 2010 statewide general elections.

This concludes SMG's fourth survey of local television's regional and statewide election news coverage. We wish to thank the management teams at each of the five local television stations with local news broadcasts interviewed. For the first time, all five stations cooperated with our interviews and each leadership team was forthcoming and thorough in their responses. SMG appreciates each station's news management team for responding in a timely manner, with candor and cooperation.

Our meetings each lasted approximately sixty minutes and focused attention upon our questions and a full discussion of each topic. None of the participants appeared to avoid or consider "off limits" any topic. Quite to the contrary, each station seemed proud of their plans for 2010 General Election political coverage. In past years, some stations expressed a less than enthusiastic attitude. Previously expressed sentiments included:

- Viewers are not interested in political coverage.
- Election coverage often makes for "boring" television.
- The audiences for election coverage are small and we need to conserve local production resources.

SMG was heartened to hear that these past opinions appear to be changing. Innovative election websites, highly produced candidate debates, responsiveness to viewer suggestions, and sincere invitations to viewers to participate in the democratic electoral process, demonstrate a growing commitment to voter education by our local television stations.

The FCC grants renewable transmission licenses and free use of the publicly owned broadcast frequencies, and in return, each station is required to program their channels in the public interest, an important and unique obligation to serve their communities. SMG station visits serve to remind the broadcasters of these obligations and opportunities.

SMG conducts these periodic inquiries asking each station to embrace civic engagement by encouraging voter participation and education with creativity and leadership. Fair, impartial elections require an informed and motivated electorate. Each station receives significant revenue from election-related advertising. We ask station management to consider election-related income when budgeting production expenses and to use their considerable local resources to further voter education and democratic ideals, by profiling initiatives and candidates, and producing debates.

SMG does not record the interviews but participants took thorough notes and each station was invited to submit their own written answers to the questions afterward. This report includes these response letters as an appendix.

Based upon our impressions and the station responses, we offer the following observations:

KCRA Channel 3 (NBC): Proud of their slogan "Where the News Comes First." Has more resources than other stations and utilizes them with enthusiasm. Of particular note this year were the gubernatorial debates, produced by KCRA for statewide distribution. KCRA sets a high bar for local election coverage with a deep reporting pool, diverse, experienced reporters assigned to election coverage, and strong logistical support of the Hearst-Argyle management group.

Suggestions for future: Expand outreach to younger voters and cultivate greater involvement in other-than-English speaking communities.

KXTV Channel 10 (ABC): Noteworthy for investment in news coverage resources and innovative use of Web 2.0 community blogging. Aggressively invites audience feedback. Actively building "on-line" connection to younger viewers.

Suggestions for future: Strengthen diversity outreach strategies. Improve election coverage focus and continue use of secondary digital channel for election coverage as a unique and highly competitive feature in the Sacramento regional television market.

KOVR Channel 13 (CBS): Part of a strong, California-wide CBS Owned and Operated station network. Management originated the extensive "Voters Guide" website inviting viewers to gather and provide election and candidate information from extensive northern California viewing area.

Suggestions for future: Long-range local election coverage strategy is needed. Statewide focus needs complementary local election strategy. Continue collecting detailed data from innovative website and utilize this advantage to enhance television station election coverage.

KUVS Channel 19 (Univision): Station personnel strive to serve community leaders among Spanish-speaking Valley voters, north-south along Highway 99 and Interstate 5. Station leadership has resourcefully expanded station influence by partnering with other community organizations. Management assumes significant responsibility for educating and informing Spanish-speaking voters in a very proactive manner.

Suggestions for future: Continue efforts reaching out to English-speaking communities and to other local media outlets as a liaison bridging linguistic barriers.

KTXL Channel 40 (FOX): Very resourceful, young and aggressive. Station leadership encourages FOX 40 reporters to "represent" and reach out to neighborhoods throughout region. Website traffic encourages feeds from other local media. Creative and efficient uses of limited resources by inviting story contributions from viewers.

Suggestions for future: Continue youth outreach and expansion of social media. Bring greater focus to periodic election coverage with same creative enthusiasm particularly outreach to young voters.

Conclusions

Democracy and the public interest are better served when viewers are interested and better informed and the television stations note larger, appreciative audiences. In conclusion, the Sacramento Media Group notes significant election coverage improvements by local news stations in our market, including the following.

- New Web 2.0 technologies have invited the northern California viewers and voters to contribute information and story ideas, resulting in improved election coverage.
- Creative approaches, candidate and issue profiles, election commercial fact checking, and production of candidate debates have improved voter education in the thirty days leading up to election night.
- Stations are investing more resources and report greater audience interest.

Introduction

Much debate and discussion regarding political and election television coverage focuses on policy decisions made by national networks (NBC, ABC, CBS, FOX, Univision, and cable news) and by the five politically appointed members of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC). While indeed important, the national emphasis overlooks the importance of local television station managers and news directors who schedule local television stations' human and technical resources. While the national debate points to the networks and the FCC, local station management often gets little direction from network-level executives or station group owners.

The Sacramento Media Group (SMG) has discovered during our past election cycle reports that local station leaders are willing to meet with local groups interested in substantive election reporting. At such meetings, station general managers have expressed their concerns to our team. They report they rarely hear from concerned local citizens.

Television stations are licensed by the FCC to use the publicly owned airwaves free of charge. In return, the stations pledge to serve the public interest and further democracy especially during elections. During the month of October, 2010, SMG convened a group of representatives from the League of Women Voters of Sacramento County, Access Sacramento and other community groups to interview local station leaders. We asked each station a series of questions about their plans to inform the public about candidates and propositions during the lead up to the statewide general elections.

We interviewed station managers, news directors or both from KCRA Channel 3 (NBC), KXTV Channel 10 (ABC), KOVR Channel 13 (CBS), KUVS Channel 19 (Univision), and KTXL Channel 40 (FOX). We asked each station the same set of questions and their responses are listed below. We also invited each station to submit their answers in writing and these written responses are included in the appendix.

Every station representative noted the difficulty covering local election news in a geographically large market area (19th largest market in the nation stretching from Marysville to Manteca, and from Sonoma to Tahoe, including Stanislaus, San Joaquin, Sacramento and 13 other counties). They understand the need to cover local elections, but struggle in making local campaigns relevant to viewers in other locales. We found stations are localizing their political coverage by expanding their website information.

SMG Questions and Each Station's Answers

1. Please describe your station's plans to provide November 2010 General election coverage. Highlight locally produced programming your station will produce.

KCRA Channel 3 (NBC)

General Manager Troshinsky calls KCRA's "leadership in local news and especially political coverage, the cornerstone of their company's policy and part of their culture to do good local TV news." News Manager Anzio Williams says he has "a commitment to the community, especially during the campaign season to educate the community about the candidates and the initiatives on the ballot." They have worked to make debates more visually interesting and said the great ratings they received during the governor's debate was due to an outstanding production and proves people will watch public affairs programming if it is done well. KCRA station owner Hearst/Argyle has won the Cronkite Award for reporting for five years in a row.

Channel 3's "Commitment 2010" focused on live debate coverage garnering a huge viewership. The station produced the debate, including live pre- and post-debate interviews with candidates for governor, and the program aired live on stations in every market in California, in conjunction with UC Davis, the Sacramento Bee, and Capital Public Radio. The station carried the second gubernatorial debate, the debate by senatorial candidates, and the Sacramento County sheriff's debate, and covered the debate by candidates for California Attorney General.

In addition, KCRA produced 30-minute profiles of candidates for governor and a 30-minute debate on Proposition 19 focusing on the split in the African-American community between the stands taken by the NAACP and local churches. At the time of the interview, they planned to air a debate on Proposition 23. They offered candidates two minutes of free coverage on the station's website with candidates' contrasting stands highlighted, and moderated the Asian Pacific American Political Association debate.

KXTV Channel 10 (ABC)

Acting General Manager and current Vice President and News Director Tim Geraghty says he understands that elections are not high-profile for many people, but feels that if a person doesn't vote, they lose their right to complain. He sees television news as having a duty to tell voters what they need to know, gaining the viewers' interest by interesting presentations. He says the "news market has changed and there is now greater interaction with customers and that is important to Channel 10." KXTV News10 listens to customers in a variety of ways and seeks out key local stories from tips. The station emphasizes the need to stay current with popular technology.

Geraghty reports the station aired daily information on statewide and local ballot measures, the statewide elected offices, key local state legislative races, and key local candidate races. The station especially focused on the Arden Arcade cityhood question, Sacramento city council races, and the sheriffs' races in Sacramento and El Dorado Counties. The station aired information on the last day to register to vote and other important deadlines and covered election issues during the primaries.

KXTV aired a 30-minute program on Proposition 19 called "Prop Pot" and ran an hour-long program covering election issues after a popular NASCAR race. At the time of the interview, they also planned a one-hour special to air the Saturday before the election, comprised of new material and the previously produced stories mentioned above. Election Day plans include live coverage on their 10.2 digital channel and their website, and on-air updates cut into regular programming at 8am, 10am, and 2pm.

KOVR Channel 13 (CBS)

Kevin Walsh, President and General Manager, and Cameryn Beck, News Director, point out that the station's brand of "Asking Questions - Getting Answers" shows that the station strives to make politics interesting and to press candidates to answer questions that people want answered. To do this, the station invites questions from viewers and directs those questions to candidates. They advocate for a smarter electorate and see their job as encouraging "water-cooler" conversations by educating voters. They don't depend on presenting "point versus counterpoint," but instead plan to "whet voters' appetites for information and to present resources where they can learn more about the election."

The station is able to tap the CBS network's resources in Los Angeles and San Francisco to provide wide coverage of state issues in addition to the station's dedicated political reporter Michael Loury, who regularly covers issues such as government waste, job creation, and the public versus the private sector.

Walsh reports that the station has featured stories about statewide races, Proposition 19, the Sacramento County sheriff's race, and the influence of the Tea Party movement. On Election Day, they plan to provide extended coverage, providing updates with a network "ticker" running during prime time shows showing early results, and plan to extend local coverage to 11:30pm or midnight.

KUVS Channel 19 (Univision)

General Manager Struck commented that the station enjoys "a huge level of trust by the Spanish-speaking community in our area" and as such takes seriously their commitment to inform their audience about election issues and encourage people to register and vote. The station produces *Voz y Voto*, a year-round 30-minute news program on Saturday mornings (rerun on Sunday), and airs *Al Punto*, a national program aired Sunday mornings.

The station participates in events to register voters and discuss issues of importance to their community. On air they explain how to register to vote including how to vote by mail. As Election Day draws near, they plan to air "get out and vote" messages produced by famous celebrities as well as instructions for using voting machines. They also work closely with the League of Women Voters to distribute nonpartisan *Smart Voter* information at their station's offices and in the community.

In addition to their weekly political discussion programs, Channel 19 produced and aired 90-second briefings on all propositions and produced the gubernatorial candidates' debate in Fresno, translated for the Spanish-speaking audience.

KTXL Channel 40 (FOX)

News Director Brandon Mercer reports that he sees the station as a "digital content business, not a TV station" with reporters being "content providers, rather than broadcasters." While lacking the resources of other local stations, Mercer says Channel 40 places their people in key areas throughout the 16-county coverage area, with

reporters covering regional areas on issues such as transportation. "Other local stations may cover the Capitol, but Channel 40 investigates how viewers are impacted by legislation, not what the politicians have to say."

The station produced "explainers" for every proposition, airing one per night. They aired a 30-minute special on Proposition 19, the third congressional district candidates' debate, and at the time of the interview, planned to provide election night coverage of local elections. The station stresses that their audience "needs to be thorough in their preparation to vote and do more than just watch television to become educated on election issues."

Every other week, on an ongoing basis, the station produces a segment featuring live comments answering viewers' questions by the mayors of Sacramento and other cities.

2. The Presidential Advisory Committee on Public Interest Obligations of Digital Television Broadcaster recommends five minutes per night of candidate-centered discourse in the month before an election. Does your station plan to meet this standard? Does your station have coverage guidelines? How are these determined?

KCRA Channel 3 (NBC)

KCRA exceeds their network-wide commitment of ten minutes per day before an election by spending 16 to 17 minutes per day covering political issues important to the election. They note they were the only local station covering the primary election from 8pm to midnight.

KXTV Channel 10 (ABC)

The station is committed to 9 to 12 minutes per day of election coverage, with at least one story daily repeated on their different newscasts.

KOVR Channel 13 (CBS)

The station hasn't calculated the time spent on election coverage by Channel 13 and notes that Channel 31 (with which they share owners) is independent and plans to provide coverage on Good Day Sacramento and do some news cut-ins.

KUVS Channel 19 (Univision)

From October 4 to Election Day, the station will cover elections on newscasts daily and air public service announcements to encourage people to vote. But they didn't commit to a specific time.

KTXL Channel 40 (FOX)

While the news director feels setting a specified amount of political coverage would be "inappropriate," the station did "expand election news coverage in all news programs." He reported there was "no direction from Fox Corporate; just a local news director making decisions about covering the news." He also reported that he believes "political coverage is second to breaking news."

3. With the advance of digital broadcasting and additional digital spectrum capacity, tell us about your use of digital channels to offer enhanced election-related and public affairs coverage.

KCRA Channel 3 (NBC)

Currently, the station uses the additional digital channels to report the weather and Channel 3.2 repeats the Channel 3 news broadcasts. In the future, they may use one of the new channels for local coverage and longer programs.

KXTV Channel 10 (ABC)

The station is using their digital channel 10.2 for 24-hour weather coverage, and to provide live streaming to mobile devices which is available on cable and free for those with set-top converters. However, more extensive election night coverage will be presented exclusively on the second digital channel.

KOVR Channel 13 (CBS)

The station hasn't used their secondary channels for anything yet and doesn't plan to decide whether to start until next year. So their digital channels will continue to be dark until late next year at least.

KUVS Channel 19 (Univision)

The station currently uses their additional channels to transmit their regular programming. They are still evaluating their use and currently have no plans for additional uses.

KTXL Channel 40 (FOX)

The station planned to launch their digital channel 40.2 in January airing mostly old sitcoms from the past.

4. Please outline your use of website technologies for greater political and civic discourse. What impact is web-based information having on your television channel election coverage?

KCRA Channel 3 (NBC)

The team designs their website to include "complimentary political coverage" with what is aired. They plan for a new interactive voters' guide to include a voter questionnaire to help personalize voters' profiles and where they fall on the political spectrum. They post video clips of candidates for governor, senator, and candidates for Sacramento County sheriff plus pro and con coverage of propositions. The site includes links to the Sacramento Bee and other sources, and archives video footage of the debates on You Tube for example.

KXTV Channel 10 (ABC)

The acting General Manager does not agree with a "walled garden approach" covering only Channel 10 media stories on their website. Instead, they link to other websites and other media, and their staff searches online for news. He sees the website as augmenting television coverage and offering a greater depth of coverage than television alone, and cited as an example, the interactive map from their program on water. The website has pages with the Gannett station group's election coverage, national and local news, which features the Arden Arcade cityhood vote and the sheriffs' races in Sacramento and El Dorado Counties. They are seeking out "digital influencers," bloggers who influence the ideas and decisions of others to host on the website.

KOVR Channel 13 (CBS)

News Director Beck reported being "proud" of their on-line Voter Guide formatted like the sample ballot and featuring all races in the viewing area. The station invited all candidates to participate in the web-based Voter Guide, which is updated by the candidates themselves. The website provides supplemental information such as the full interviews with candidates and blogs by reporters. While the station's website does not link to other media outlets, they do use it to reach out for "other voices" and to invite people to make comments.

KUVS Channel 19 (Univision)

The station has had a California politics splash page on their website since April and plans to continue through November. The website includes some station-produced information and some information directly from campaigns and focuses on candidates running for Sacramento County Sheriff, Sacramento City Council, the California Senate, governor, and other statewide offices. It features a calendar with information on forums being held in the community.

KTXL Channel 40 (FOX)

The News Director observed that the environment is changing because younger audiences don't watch television channels and the Internet audience is very different from a television audience. Channel 40 reports a bigger audience on their website (he reports 300,000 hits) than on the television channel, which forces the station to rethink what they do to convey news to the widest audience possible. They cater to the Internet audience by streaming debates and candidates' political speeches such as, for example, Sarah Palin's speech in Merced.

The station's website links to all other local television stations' sites and the Sacramento Bee's website, as well as blogs that covers political news, such as Capitol Pulse. Fox 40 believes in "linking to wherever someone has a good story." Mercer commented that they were not in the television business but in the "content business" and said he wants to access the audience via cell phone, the Internet, or any other new device. Mercer commented that the news is different and more interesting thanks to the Internet. In the future, they want to work with Comcast to present "news on demand."

5. How will your station reach out to youth, other-than-English-speaking citizens and groups with limited involvement in the electoral process so critical to our democracy? Is this effort a priority for your station?

KCRA Channel 3 (NBC)

While Channel 3 is an “English-dominated station, [they try to involve youth with debates and forums.” For example, they organized a debate on Proposition 19 with a diverse, local nonprofit, the Sol Collective, and worked with the Asian Pacific American Political Association on that organization’s debate. KCRA’s reporting team reflects the diversity of the communities they serve.

KXTV Channel 10 (ABC)

Since youth now live on Facebook and Twitter, News10 plans to “stay relevant to these audiences understanding that to connect with youth, you need to go where they are.” The large viewing area means a station needs a diversity of coverage to appeal to the many interests of viewers. To ensure diversity, the station hires staff who can provide insight and access into diverse communities. While the station hasn’t had requests for translations into languages other than English, the station encourages contact with organizations which could help them reach non-English audiences, for instance by translating Channel 10’s stories into Hmong on the organization’s website.

KOVR Channel 13 (CBS)

The station carries Channel 31 news programs simultaneously in Spanish on their Second Audio Program and looks forward to better translating technology for translations of multiple languages in the future. The station, in collaboration with UC Davis, reached out to youth by interviewing first-time voters.

General Manager Walsh reports that, “while staff must have the proper credentials, diversity is paramount.” He said it is important to hire staff who reflect the local community so that they have access to and understand the issues of local communities.

KUVS Channel 19 (Univision)

“Connecting with youth and Spanish-speakers is a priority for the station.” They value voter education and encourage Hispanic voters to get involved in the political process. They already have a young audience with their news program rated as the most watched news program by all 18-24 year olds.

KXTL Channel 40 (FOX)

The station is outreaching to youth by putting content “where the youth are, on Twitter and Facebook.” Channel 19 covers the Spanish-speaking population and Channel 40 is sharing content with that station. News Director Mercer observed that our area has the eighth largest Asian market in the country, but this population is not served by appropriate programming. One way the station reaches out is through the ethnic diversity of their reporters and staff who include Asian, African-American, Latino, and gay/lesbian staff. This diversity helps serve audiences since staff can pitch stories important to their communities.

6. As an investigative effort of your newscasts, does your station plan a "Fact Check" or "Ad Watch" feature to evaluate political advertising carried on your channel? If not, why not?

KCRA Channel 3 (NBC)

Working with UC Davis Law and Political Science graduate students, the station conducted fact checks during the gubernatorial debate. They review ads, but did not cite any criticism of campaign ads nor did they refuse any ads.

KXTV Channel 10 (ABC)

The station doesn’t do much ad fact-checking due to the resources it requires and the quick turnover of ads with changes coming too fast to check. The fact-checking they present online comes from their parent company (Gannet) which they believe addresses the most widespread controversial ads. The station depends on opposing campaigns to do fact checks of their opponents.

KOVR Channel 13 (CBS)

The station does not review commercials of candidates or propositions. But two political analysts (Republican Brian Jones and Democrat Steve Maviglio) review campaign ad content three days per week in addition to reports by political reporter Mike Loury. The station makes sure ads follow the Federal Communications Commission’s guidelines and would be willing, if there were a protest, to look at an ad. The station reports they have pulled ads off the air. The station understands their responsibility is to present the facts and let people choose, so they don’t provide commentary.

KUVS Channel 19 (Univision)

No fact-checking of controversial ads is performed by the station, but they do cover any controversy over campaign ads.

KTXL Channel 40 (FOX)

The station's Chief of Operations monitors issue ads and ads for propositions, but not candidate ads. He has asked campaigns to revise ads if they contain factually incorrect information, since the station management believes the Federal Communications Commission might hold the station accountable if they ran lies. In addition, fact-checking of candidates is done by viewers through the Viewers Voice, which asks: "What Matters to You?"

7. What is the process your newsroom uses to present local political coverage that is balanced and fair during the election cycle? How does your station plan to cover political parties other than Republican and Democrat?

KCRA Channel 3 (NBC)

The station posts voter guides on their website covering major parties. They are considering opening the voters' guide to candidates other than Democrats and Republicans in the future.

KXTV Channel 10 (ABC)

"The station emphasizes fairness to all candidates, but they find the lack of candidate availability is a real problem with candidates reluctance to participate in unscripted interviews." They plan to improve coverage of third-party candidates when these candidates garner five percent support in major polls. They report results for all candidates.

KOVR Channel 13 (CBS)

The station uses their website to extend coverage and present information on other than major political parties.

KUVS Channel 19 (Univision)

The station makes efforts to reach minor party candidates particularly if they have a Spanish-speaking representative.

KXTL Channel 40 (FOX)

News Director Mercer reported that the key to good coverage is "to hire good reporters willing to see many sides to story and not get lazy in their coverage." He hires "good reporters who try to incorporate five sides to every story instead of covering just two sides, pro and con," and looks for what makes "the best story possible." The station tries to represent a broad range of views on a topic without settling for simple labels of conservative and liberal, such as the commentary regularly aired by the Libertarian Party. The station encourages commentaries from staff and from viewers who can participate via texting or telephoning.

8. The Sacramento Media Group encourages civic engagement and voter education for all community members and must retain impartiality when reviewing the election coverage by our local media. With this in mind, can you suggest ways we might help you secure greater coverage and/or candidate participation?

KCRA Channel 3 (NBC)

The station encourages people to communicate, especially through their website. They answer most emails and letters and keep all written communications in their public file.

KXTL Channel 10 (ABC)

Acting General Manager and current Vice President and News Director Geraghty welcomes feedback from viewers any way they like and answers all communications. Both electronic and written letters are placed in the public record files. He encourages communication by soliciting the station's Facebook friends to generate questions for newsmakers.

KOVR Channel 13 (CBS)

The station reports they answer every email and letter and keep both in the station's public file. They use their website to hear from viewers and have social networking sites such as Facebook for the station.

KUVS Channel 19 (Univision)

Community Affairs Director Rojas-Gore especially encourages groups holding political forums to work with the station to publicize them. She encourages viewer feedback and reports viewers communicate primarily by telephone, with e-mail responses coming in second.

KTXL Channel 40 (FOX)

The news director reports the best way to communicate is to email him. The station has Twitter feeds which he believes are “essential and that the station must stay current with the latest technology whatever that is or becomes.”

Appendix Letters From Stations

SMG invited each of the five stations interviewed to respond to the questions in writing. At the time of publication, the following stations had responded to this invitation.

KCRA Channel 3 (NBC) Letter

“Commitment 2010,” a promise from the KCRA 3 news team to provide candidate-centered and proposition-focused coverage in every newscast. KCRA set a goal to broadcast at least 10 minutes and often averaged more than 16 minutes of political coverage a day.

Former speaker of the house Tip O’Neil said, “All politics are local.” KCRA 3 is the local news leader in Northern California. The commitment to provide excellence in television political journalism is part of our DNA. KCRA and parent company Hearst Television are recipients of six consecutive USC Annenberg Walter Cronkite Awards for excellence in television political journalism.

KCRA 3 news was the only television station to provide six hours of coverage on the night of the 2010 June Primary. KCRA 3 election coverage was the exclusive source the night the stage was set for a Meg Whitman and Jerry Brown historical election season. KCRA 3 was the exclusive television station airing the first Brown versus Whitman debate at UC Davis. The KCRA 3 produced debate was watched by millions across California and shown across the United States on C-Span. KCRA 3 was also the only station to sponsor the second debate from the Bay Area, which was moderated by NBC’s Tom Brokaw.

In addition to two gubernatorial debates, KCRA 3 was the only local station to broadcast the Senate debate between Sen. Barbara Boxer and challenger Carly Fiorina. KCRA 3 political reporter Kevin Riggs moderated the only Attorney General debate and anchor Gulstan Dart moderated a debate for Sacramento County Sheriff. KCRA 3 reporter Sharokina Shams moderated two forums on Prop 19 to legalize marijuana and Prop 23 to repeal environmental regulations. Both forums were hosted by Sol Collective, a non-profit youth organization committed to educating and informing young people.

Political reporter Kevin Riggs is the last remaining broadcast journalist covering the State Capitol. Kevin produced an hour special profiling Brown and Whitman, giving viewers an up-close and personal look at both candidates.

Checking for accuracy and calling out misleading statements in political ads and debates continues to be a focus of the KCRA 3 Truth Squad. We partnered with the League of Women Voters to answer thousands of polling questions on Election Day. For the first time, KCRA 3 was able to provide continuous live streaming coverage on election night from candidates and propositions headquarters on kcra.com.

In the year of furloughs, record budget deficits and the surge of the Tea Party KCRA 3 were committed as ever to providing information to allow citizens to make informed decisions on Election Day. The KCRA 3 family thanks the Northern California community for trusting us with such a responsibility.

Anzio Williams
News Director
KCRA, KQCA and kcra.com
amwilliams@hearst.com

KXTV Channel 10 (ABC) Letter

News10 set the election agenda in the Sacramento television market with two prime time election specials. We focused one special on Proposition 19, an issue which garnered national attention because it dealt with legalizing marijuana. We also produced an educational primer for voters just three days before the election.

We produced three single-topic newscasts solely devoted to the most critical issue facing lawmakers heading into the election season, education. We took three 6pm newscasts and spent considerable time focused on the challenges facing the elementary, secondary and college systems around the state.

News10 also produced a month long series of more than two dozen in-depth reports on the major ballot issues and races before California voters. These stories ran across multiple newscasts and our web site, www.news10.net.

News10 committed itself to daily coverage of the candidates and issues beginning far ahead of the traditional "Labor Day" launch of the campaign season. These efforts went beyond the traditional reporter driven stories focusing on campaign stops, campaign ads, and the various rallies either for or against a particular ballot measure. We did these stories but in addition our coverage included candidate panels and Blogger panels as a regular part of our morning newscasts and News10.net produced a webcast of the Sacramento County Sheriff's candidate debate.

The centerpiece of our election coverage was a commitment to a month long daily series of stories beginning in October aimed at explaining the dozen or so statewide propositions and local ballot measures. News10 also produced the traditional candidate profiles, but went beyond that by outlining candidate positions on key issues such as the races for Governor and U.S. Senate.

Finally, as was noted, News10 devoted a half hour prime time program to the most controversial statewide proposition, Proposition 19, which allowed for the possession and cultivation of marijuana for personal use. This was our second half-hour examination of this issue.

This program along with a one hour election special that aired in prime time three days before the elections provided our viewers with a comprehensive airing of the issues and races before voting on November 2nd. Our coverage concluded election night as the only Sacramento station with live reporter coverage of all four major candidates for U.S. Senate and Governor. We also provided a political analyst for hours of live chat with hundreds of our web customers.

Sincerely,
Tim Geraghty, Vice-President/News Director
KXTX News10
400 Broadway
Sacramento, CA. 95818
916.441.2345

KTXL Channel 40 (FOX) letter

I enjoyed meeting with you all to talk about how to best inform our electorate.

For Election Night 11/02/2010, we did expanded coverage from 9pm-11:45pm, in addition to 2 cut-ins preempting paid commercials during "Glee"

In the month leading up to the election, we did several stories about candidates, the balance of power in Congress, negative (and even some positive) campaigning, Get Out The Vote messages about polling places and when and where to vote, and an entire series at 10pm looking into each and every one of the propositions. We also aired a full half-hour special exploring the issues presented with Prop 19 that aired following our 5:30pm news in the month before the election.

We also created a special section online in the months before the election called "Capitol Pulse" that put all the political stories and explanations of the props in one easy-to-find and use resource.

The main focus for FOX40 was not television on election night, however. The information people really want is not best delivered in the linear format of an anchor reading updates. We need to serve 16 counties, so in order to give local results for specific districts, we focused on the best tool -- online, and then on television, we focused on adding insight and analysis to the race results.

We changed the entire layout of our website for several days before and after the election to deliver that: at-a-glance and up-to-the-minute race results, and then dozens of graphics and articles explaining what was going on.

Reaching out to youth, we brought the pre-election coverage to young people in the forums where they spend their time: Facebook and Twitter. Every newscast (seven hours each weekday) we feature a Viewers' Voice question about issues. Viewers respond to the question via text messaging, Facebook, and phone calls. Later, on election day, we used the same venues to get information out to that audience.

"Question E" talks about other languages. I'm don't know that we can do a lot in foreign languages to reach non-English speakers, but I should mention that we have a very diverse staff that reflects our community. This staff does a great job of finding the issues and topics that matter to various ethnic groups, especially those who don't speak English primarily. Jaime Garza is bilingual, as am I, and some of our photographers and assignment editors. We often do interviews in Spanish and translate them. We also share content back and forth with Univision, which helps us tap into the Spanish-speaking community. As you know, we are well represented in the Asian-American community and African-American community. We've really found most local ethnic groups represented on-air. We also have two staff members now with connections to the Indian subcontinent who help us cover those communities too.

Bill Gee does fact-checking in our ads, and checks them all before they make air. In the event that we find a problem, we have held ads, or asked for changes from the candidates before airing them.

The most important thing about our station is our connection with viewers. Our registered trademark is "We Report to You." Our sub-brand is "What matters to you?" We act on stories and feedback from viewers, and do our best to provide the content and style of news they ask for.

--Brandon
BRANDON M. MERCER | News Director
FOX40 TV