

ANGELENOS FOR FAIR MAPS

YES ON MEASURES DD & LL

People-Centered Representation

Findings from the Angelenos for Fair Maps Campaign



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Redistricting determines representation. Redistricting run by politicians silences voices and lets them manipulate the system to hold onto power. Redistricting led by the community lifts voices and ensures people come first.

Every ten years, federal law requires the boundaries of council districts and school board districts to be redrawn because of population changes. This redistricting process determines where boundaries are set, whether communities have fair representation, and which communities are silenced and which communities are empowered.

As we know too well, incumbent politicians use their power to draw districts that bolster their chances of re-election, regardless of the impacts on neighborhoods and communities. Independent redistricting commissions (IRCs) are an alternative – a proven, trusted, nonpartisan reform that has worked well in countless California jurisdictions and at the state level. Redistricting led by a wholly independent body allows unbiased and impartial residents within a state or local jurisdiction to draw boundaries based on input from the public.

Los Angeles City Charter Amendments DD & LL appeared on the November 2024 General Election ballot following multiple decades of scandal around the City Council's handling of redistricting. The ballot measures asked voters whether to give the power to draw district lines for the Los Angeles City Council and Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD) to community members across LA, and, in so doing, take that power out of the hands of politicians. Both measures ultimately passed with over 74% of the vote.

To ensure their passage, our coalition of community-based and civic organizations formed a ballot measure campaign committee – Angelenos for Fair Maps, YES on Measures DD & LL! – that would fight together for independent redistricting commissions in Los Angeles and educate voters to put redistricting in the hands of the people. Through this effort, we developed a formal coalition structure with working groups to inform and shape the debate about the need for independent redistricting in LA. Coalition members determined a clear understanding of each others' obligations, how resources would be used, and how we would partner most effectively. Through the coalition, we informed our organizations' supporters and constituencies about the redistricting process and how it impacts their communities. The campaign used 501(c)(4) funds from donations and in-kind contributions, for which we are sincerely grateful.

Our coalition of community-based and civic organizations, including AAPI Equity Alliance, Alliance for A Better Community, California Common Cause, Catalyst California, LA Forward Institute, the League of Women Voters Greater Los Angeles, and Fair Rep LA, was the leading voice in a multi-month process the City of Los Angeles underwent to consider reforms to their city charter to establish independent redistricting commissions for the City of Los Angeles and LAUSD. We watchdogged the process at countless meetings, educated community groups and community members, and provided regular input at the request of city leaders, including extended testimony at Council meetings.

With the Angelenos for Fair Maps campaign concluded, this report explores the key activities undertaken by the campaign and other salient factors that significantly contributed to its success.

BACKGROUND

Angelenos for Fair Maps – YES on Measures DD & LL! operated on a tight budget, spending just over \$96,000, including monetary and non-monetary contributions, between September and November 2024. This is a relatively small amount for a ballot measure campaign in Los Angeles, especially compared to another measure presented to voters earlier in 2024, which spent nearly \$4.5 million—46 times more than our expenditure—and only garnered 65% of the vote. The remarkable passage of Measures DD & LL exemplifies how strategic patience, political will, and persistent community involvement enabled elected officials to relinquish district-drawing authority to the public, illustrating the reasons behind the people’s victory.

Los Angeles’ political system has a long history marked by corruption, embezzlement, perjury, and various unethical practices that persisted throughout the 2020 redistricting process. In 2020, the City of Los Angeles Advisory Redistricting Commission was assigned the task of redrawing district lines based on data from the United States Census and in accordance with the Federal Voting Rights Act, the California Fair Maps Act, and community input.

The initial indications of sinister interference emerged when long standing political figures and allies were appointed to the Commission by elected officials. This suggested to the public and the media that the Commissioners would serve as political proxies for those who nominated them.

Second, early in the redistricting process, Commissioners were required to disclose ex parte communications—or private correspondence with decision-makers—to the public. Nevertheless, we found that Commissioners had no hesitation discussing the redistricting process privately with elected officials and other decision-makers. Over 130 ex parte communications occurred, particularly in the final weeks of the mapping process, raising concerns about the Commission’s independence. This behavior indicated that elected officials might have been attempting to sway the Commission’s work covertly.

Third, the City Council hired its own demographers to draw district lines outside of the Advisory Commission, which caused community-based organizations and community members to believe that the City Council would follow the precedent from 2011 and undermine the Advisory Commission’s map in favor of a district map they developed. That indeed did happen, with the City Council tossing aside the work of the Advisory Commission and adopting their district map, invalidating hundreds of hours of work and community testimony.

By this time, members of this coalition and members of the Advisory Commission were already advocating for a redistricting process that was removed entirely from the City Council’s influence and led by a genuinely independent redistricting commission. But public support and political will for that goal did not emerge until nearly a year after the City Council implemented new maps, when an audio leak exposed racist remarks made by city leaders and Councilmembers about gerrymandering voting districts.

The leaked audio made clear that certain elected officials at City Hall colluded to alter district lines, ensuring their re-election or that of their political allies, harming opponents, and hoarding cultural, economic, and community “assets” in their districts. Their ultimate goal was to select their voters rather than allowing voters to select them. Community-based and civic organizations denounced the comments and called on city leaders to immediately take steps to reform LA’s redistricting process to implement a fully independent redistricting commission.

This time, however, City Attorney Mike Feuer, and other elected officials, called for a fully independent body to be assigned to redraw the council districts in 2031. Ultimately, the City Council established the

Ad Hoc Committee on Governance Reform, responsible for amending the City’s Charter to eliminate corruption, increase transparency, and make City leadership more representative to all residents. One of the Committee’s issues was studying how to establish an IRC for the City of Los Angeles and LAUSD.

As the Council began considering how an independent commission would be structured, California Common Cause released five key principles for this process. These included a focus on commission independence, community-centered map-drawing criteria, and requiring a transparent and participatory process. Throughout the development of the IRC reform process, members of this campaign committee partnered with academics and other community organizations to push the Ad Hoc Committee to create the strongest possible IRC proposal. We participated and provided testimony at each Ad Hoc Committee meeting, totaling over 100 hours of effort. This input was reflected in the final ballot language approved for the City IRC - Measure DD in April 2024 and for the LAUSD IRC - Measure LL two months later.

In the spring of 2024, our coalition of community-based and civic organizations involved in advocating for the creation of an IRC joined forces to establish a campaign committee focused on educating voters and ensuring that the IRC ballot measures would pass. Angelenos for Fair Maps–YES on Measures DD & LL! officially launched in September 2024, and we held a press conference in front of LA City Hall on October 9, 2024, the two-year anniversary of the leaked tapes. We authored the ballot argument and rebuttal in favor of the LAUSD IRC and served as a signatory for the City IRC ballot argument.



Angelenos for Fair Maps won endorsements from local organizations, community leaders, and the Los Angeles Times. The campaign published digital and print ads, including in local and ethnic media, reached voters at community events, sent out postcards and texts, and coordinated phone banking in support of the measures. The campaign focused on engaging communities of color, historically disenfranchised communities, and those who have been less likely to vote recently to ensure that they have a voice in this reform and future independent redistricting processes.

THE CAMPAIGN

In the span of a little over two months, the campaign developed and executed a multi-prong strategy to ensure voters were educated and mobilized to vote, primarily targeting voters in diverse communities in South LA, Southeast LA, Koreatown, San Fernando Valley, and neighboring cities that fall within LAUSD's boundaries. After establishing ourselves as the official campaign committee for Measures DD & LL, we focused on five key strategic areas to effectively leverage our strengths and optimize our limited resources (under \$100k in campaign funds) for reaching voters. These were:

- **Obtain impactful endorsements:** We collected various endorsements from major organizations, prominent individuals, and other significant stakeholders to showcase widespread and diverse community backing.
- **Develop a powerful communications strategy:** We designed branding materials for the campaign, created a dedicated webpage, and formulated messaging, including plans for social media and traditional media. Further, we arranged a press conference and secured both digital and print advertisements to promote Measures DD & LL, increase support, and motivate voters.
- **Enhance voter awareness:** We planned and conducted workshops and presentations throughout different areas of LA City and LAUSD, engaging diverse demographic groups to increase understanding and encourage voter participation.
- **Broaden engagement with voters via external partners:** We gained opportunities to incorporate our messaging and materials into get-out-the-vote field campaigns and voter guides from external partners, enhancing our campaign's outreach and educational initiatives.
- **Engage with voters individually:** We reached out to more than 110,000 voters via text and phone banking to motivate and mobilize them to cast their votes.

Ballot Arguments

We authored and secured signatures from leadership at trusted community-based organizations, former LA City and LAUSD Redistricting Commissioners, and current LAUSD Board Members for the ballot argument and rebuttal in support of the LAUSD IRC. Additionally, we recorded a ballot measure statement that aired on a local public access channel throughout November to educate and persuade voters to support Measure LL. Lastly, we served as signatories for the City IRC ballot argument.

Endorsements

Our campaign received 42 endorsements from elected officials, community organizations, and political groups, including Community Coalition, LA City Councilmember Eunisses Hernandez, and the Los Angeles Times. These endorsements created vital momentum, enhanced the visibility of both ballot measures, and signaled to voters that other influential entities backed transparent, community-oriented line drawing in LA.

Los Angeles Times

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Endorsement
The Times Editorial Board

Yes to fixing L.A. City Hall. These measures will fight corruption and increase trust in government



Los Angeles City Hall (Wally Skali) / Los Angeles Times

By The Times Editorial Board
Oct. 4, 2024 5 AM PT

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Education Workshops & Presentations

The campaign's voter education initiatives included making announcements at meetings, hosting tables at events, and conducting both online and in-person presentations, such as the campaign kickoff webinar (discussed below). These presentations offered insights into redistricting, its significance, and how IRCs enhance residents' decision-making power and representation. Altogether, we held more than 13 educational events, reaching nearly 400 Angelenos and LAUSD stakeholders.

On September 25, we led a webinar to educate the community about what independent redistricting is and why it is so important to give residents the ability to elect representatives who prioritize the needs and concerns of their constituents. Over 30 participants attended the webinar, becoming an educational tool for organizations and individuals to share information about Measures DD & LL with others in their network. The webinar was conducted in English and Spanish, and a recording, along with presentation slides were made available in both languages to ensure residents with language access needs were able to consume the information in the language most accessible to them.

Phone Banking & Text Banking

Thanks to RepresentUs' generous in-kind support, which included providing their phone banking infrastructure, we made nearly 49,000 calls between October 28 and November 3, 2024, and had conversations with 1,000 voters. Our campaign employed 16 Promotoras/es to engage with residents, sharing vital information about Measure LL. Due to the challenges faced during the last LAUSD redistricting process in Southeast Los Angeles and the San Fernando Valley specifically, we intentionally focused our phone banking efforts in this area and on the LAUSD independent redistricting measure.

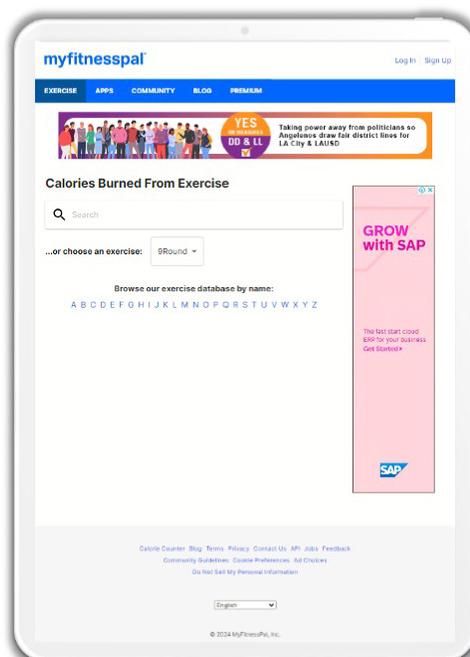
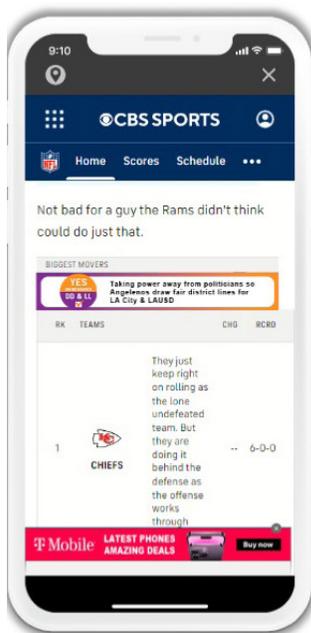
Engaging infrequent voters through Promatora/es emerged as the campaign's correct strategic approach. We chose the Promatora model because it utilizes community members to foster connections and communication with voters. Promotoras serve as trusted messengers within their respective communities, effectively imparting culturally competent messages and assisting voters in overcoming linguistic barriers and other challenges that may hinder their participation at the polls. Our team of Promotoras/es invested 30 hours in phone banking, achieving significant results as 57% of the voters reached confirmed their strong support for Measure LL. Promotoras/es exhibited high levels of engagement throughout the sessions, and numerous voters contacted expressed appreciation for the information provided to them.

We also conducted two rounds of text banking to educate voters about Measures DD & LL, encouraging their commitment to vote yes. Our target audience was voters aged 18 to 45 residing in East LA, South LA, and Koreatown. The initial text message aimed to persuade and inform voters about their power to restore control to the community. The second message served as a reminder or "bump" for those who had not responded to the first.



Digital Advertisements

Thanks to the generous in kind support from InMarket, a marketing firm led by former California Common Cause Board Chair Todd Dipaola, we launched digital advertisements on digital properties such as MyFitnessPal, CBS Sports, and Allrecipes, reaching over 1 million voters in the region. We focused on East LA, South LA, and Koreatown, targeting individuals aged 18 to 45 who typically vote infrequently. The campaign surpassed the company's engagement goal, which was a 0.15% click-through rate, indicating how often users clicked on the ad and were directed to the campaign website. The campaign achieved a 0.38% click-through rate, two and a half times higher than the set benchmark. This success demonstrates that we reached the right audience, who responded positively to our message and creative content through their engagement.



CONTRIBUTING FACTORS

When examining how Measures DD & LL garnered significant approval margins despite running a campaign with limited funding, we highlight four key elements: (1) the strength of community involvement, (2) the sustained presence of local and ethnic news coverage, (3) the continuous engagement of policy experts and advocates, and (4) the lack of organized or financed opposition. Throughout the process, pro-democracy and community-based organizations actively sought feedback from Angelenos, incorporating public insights into their proposals. Additionally, extensive media coverage during the 2020 redistricting process, coupled with the revelations from the leaked audio scandal and the formation of the Ad Hoc Committee, kept redistricting at the forefront of public attention. Lastly, pro-democracy reform organizations remained active and engaged throughout the four-year period from the start of the redistricting process until voters approved Measures DD & LL.

Strong Academic & Research Community Presence

The Los Angeles Governance Reform Project (LAGRP) brought together university experts, researchers, and national leaders who were invested in governance reform research and well-acquainted with LA's political and social landscape. Their goal was to craft innovative and credible reform proposals to establish a more transparent, accountable, and community-focused municipal government in Los Angeles. To assess each proposal's strengths and weaknesses, the project sought public input through surveys, focus groups, and stakeholder meetings. Following their outreach effort, the project unveiled its final recommendations in December 2023¹.

These final recommendations called for the establishment of IRCs for both the LA City Council and LAUSD, including detailed suggestions regarding the commissioner selection process, qualification criteria, eligibility, staff support, compensation, training, duration of service, post-service restrictions, independence assurance, and compliance with the Fair Maps Act.

Substantial Local Media Coverage

Intense media scrutiny kept the redistricting process and its effects front of mind for many Angelenos. Media involvement was vital, emphasizing the importance of robust local and ethnic outlets. Publications such as POLITICO, LAist, and the Los Angeles Daily News consistently reported on the developments surrounding the 2020 redistricting process. Shortly after the 2020 redistricting process commenced, the Los Angeles Times Editorial Board, which functions independently from the newsroom responsible for the Times' editorial stance, openly called the previous redistricting effort a farce. They observed that implementing an independent redistricting system for Los Angeles would require a decade to amend the City Charter through a ballot measure.² Fortunately, independent redistricting for LA was established just four years after the 2020 cycle, much sooner than the anticipated ten years.

¹ Hancock, A. M., Segura, G. M., Guerra, F. J., Ricks, B. E., Sadhwani, S., & Sonenshein, R. J. (2023). *Toward a Better Governed City of Los Angeles: Final Recommendations of the Los Angeles Governance Reform Project* [Research and recommendations to consider local government improvements in Los Angeles]. <https://www.lagovreform.org/reports>

² "Editorial: L.A.'s Last Redistricting Was a Sham. City Leaders Have to Do Better This Time." Los Angeles Times, 2 Oct. 2020, p. 1. <https://www.latimes.com/opinion/story/2020-10-02/los-angeles-redistricting-commission-reforms>

Leaked Audio Spurred Political Will

The leaked audio sparked a national outcry, drawing the attention of President Biden and prompting public backlash, increasing awareness, and inviting scrutiny. If it hadn't sunk in before, the community now clearly understood that redistricting and representation are vital to democracy and community empowerment.

During this period, LA City Attorney Mike Feuer, along with other elected officials and the Advisory Redistricting Commission, advocated for creating a fully independent body to redraw the council districts in 2031. When the City Council decided to establish the Ad Hoc Committee on Governance Reform, it diminished the urgency among community and civic organizations to initiate a signature-gathering campaign for a ballot measure for Angelenos to consider. Organizing a signature drive in LA would have required acquiring over 324,000 signatures and would have cost at least \$5 million. However, this tactic was avoided as elected officials showed a political commitment to focusing on their constituents' needs. As well, the Ad Hoc Committee engaged with the community through a series of meetings held at convenient times and at various public venues throughout LA, including parks and recreation centers, to gather input on developing IRCs for the City and LAUSD. We attended every Ad Hoc Committee meeting and organized our members to join us. This allowed residents to voice their concerns about the previous redistricting process, directly influencing the ballot measures presented to voters. Additionally, we drafted a white paper and provided expert testimony and our recommendations for what should be included in an IRC to the Ad Hoc Committee.

Nearby Jurisdictions and the State's Use of IRCs for Redistricting

The state of California, along with Los Angeles and San Diego counties and the cities of San Diego, Long Beach, Sacramento, Oakland, and others, all employ independent redistricting commissions. Approximately 17.5 million residents of California live in areas that utilize an independent commission—more than the population of 46 states.

These IRCs have universally performed well. For example, during its first year, the Long Beach Independent Redistricting Commission saw significant public involvement, with hundreds of residents providing public or written feedback. The Long Beach independent commission received many map proposals from large advocacy organizations, community groups, local collectives, individuals, and neighborhood associations. Most notably, the community seemed to trust the process. Many public commenters and media representatives showed confidence in the Long Beach process and its commission, despite some disagreements regarding decisions. The LA City Council Ad Hoc Committee received comprehensive information about the Long Beach, various other local jurisdiction IRCs, and the state IRC processes, which informed their choices of elements to include in proposals for the City of LA and LAUSD.

From 2020 to 2024, community-based organizations remained vigilant by attending all public meetings organized by the Advisory Commission and the City Council. We engaged with academic groups and addressed media inquiries to foster an independent redistricting process in LA. The continuous efforts of policy experts and advocates, coupled with significant community involvement and media attention, created a winning formula for LA.

Summary of Observations

In summary, we think these factors explain the success of the Angelenos for Fair Maps-YES on Measures DD & LL! campaign.

- There was clear evidence of gerrymandering during the 2020 redistricting process significantly affecting community interest.
- Community-based civic organizations maintained involvement by presenting information to city leaders and the public about independent redistricting commissions.
- Local and ethnic media played a crucial role in covering the 2020 redistricting process and associated ballot measures, effectively educating community members about these important issues.
- No organized opposition existed.
- Elected officials provided strong support.
- Successful local and state independent redistricting commissions served as effective models.
- The academic community actively engaged with community perspectives and included their findings in their research.
- Local elected officials promoted public engagement across various communities in Los Angeles to seek input on enhancing the redistricting process.

CHALLENGES AND LESSONS LEARNED

Every campaign has opportunities for improvement. Although the campaign achieved significant success, securing additional funding could have enhanced our community engagement. If we lead an IRC campaign in another city, we would start fundraising earlier, targeting the first quarter of the election year, to guarantee we had adequate resources to set up essential infrastructure and hire a campaign treasurer and legal counsel sooner. Additionally, we would establish our campaign framework during those months to ensure we were fully equipped to execute all campaign activities.

Importantly, we encountered challenges with the phone banking process, facing various technical issues that impacted our efforts.

- 1. Connectivity Problems:** Many Promotoras/es faced unreliable internet connections, disrupting their access to online resources and reducing engagement during virtual training sessions.
- 2. Software Issues:** The phone banking system presented the script in English, while the majority of phone bankers were Spanish speakers. To resolve this, the campaign created a Spanish version of the phone banking script. We also faced multiple glitches with Hubdailer, the phone banking system, that prevented callers from completing calls and finishing the questionnaire. Voters reported receiving multiple calls from the system. In response, we sincerely thanked them for their time.
- 3. Timeliness:** Voters expressed a need for earlier access to information.

To prevent any future complications, we would onboard and test the phone banking system several weeks before the campaign's launch. This approach will confirm that the systems are operational and reduce technical issues, promoting a smooth experience. Additionally, we would prefer to implement a tool that can display phone banking scripts in multiple languages to address language access needs.

CONCLUSION

Independent redistricting commissions ensure fairness and inclusivity. The process of drawing district lines greatly influences which communities are empowered to engage with their government and which ones are overlooked. When politicians manage redistricting, it silences the voices of the populace and allows politicians to manipulate the system to maintain their power. Fortunately, this issue has been addressed in LA, thanks to strong community participation, the media's robust presence (making LA perhaps the only city in California where this is true), and continuous input from policy experts and advocates.

The reforms introduced by Measures DD & LL will allow Angelenos to partake in a redistricting process that values community input, steering Los Angeles towards a fairer, healthier multiracial democracy.

Acknowledgments

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