

## SoS ForumWatch Toolkit

ForumWatch parties can get people talking about the candidates AND, more importantly, the barriers to voting in California. Besides promoting civic engagement and raising awareness about the upcoming election, ForumWatch parties can strengthen an organization by offering media opportunities, allowing new voices to be heard, and providing an opportunity to grow membership.

In this toolkit is everything you need to plan and host a watch party for the upcoming:

**California Secretary of State (SOS) Candidate Forum**  
Livestreamed @<https://www.youtube.com/user/ucberkeleyevents>\*  
From the University of California at Berkeley  
Thursday, October 9, 2014, 6:30 to 7:30 PM

*This forum will focus on voting rights & the Secretary of State's crucial role in managing California's elections. Many people don't even know California has a Secretary of State, let alone that they hold the keys to California's democracy.*

John Myers, Senior Editor of California Politics and Government for KQED public media in Northern California, will be moderating the final SOS candidate forum before the November 4<sup>th</sup> election. Myers will be questioning the candidates as well as moderating questions from a live studio audience in Fresno **and from people at watch parties submitting questions in real time via Twitter!**

Inside you will find:

- Tips for how to plan your party.
- Suggested questions to get the conversation going.
- Candidate Profiles
- An overview of some facts and voting rights issues for background information and discussion.
- Some suggestions for social media messaging.
- A Twitter cheat sheet so your guests can join the statewide conversations and ask the candidates questions in real time!

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ForumWatch Toolkit Sources:

1. Commission on Presidential Debates (<http://www.Forums.org/index.php?page=tips-for-organizations-schools-or-students#6>)
2. League of Women Voters (<http://www.lwv.org/content/debate-watching-101>)

**\*For updates on the Livestream please check <https://www.aclusandiego.org/2014-california-secretary-state-candidate-forums/> before the event.**

# ForumWatch Toolkit: How to Plan Your Party

## **ForumWatch on Campus**

Dorms and school campuses are perfect locations for ForumWatch parties. Here are a couple of ideas for hosting an event at your college or university:

- Work with your school to throw a campus-wide ForumWatch party at an auditorium, restaurant, or other location with a large screen or multiple TVs. Then, break into smaller groups of 6-12 for discussion. Make a night of it by soliciting local restaurants to provide free food and inviting a local band to play before the forum starts.
- Get your event on the student activities board calendar.
- Talk to your campus' Greek organizations, athletic teams, or other groups about throwing a ForumWatch party as a community service project.
- Find the political junkies at your school by promoting your event to the student government, political science/government classes and the local chapters of the College Democrats/Republicans.
- Tap into your campus media – the student newspaper, the college radio station, etc.
- Encourage professors, especially those teaching classes such as political science and communications, to incorporate ForumWatch into their curricula (extra credit!).
- Use ForumWatch to talk about the issues important to students and young people, such as voting rights.

## **ForumWatch for Organizations and Community Groups**

- Host a ForumWatch at a community center, library, or other public facility.
- Partner with local organizations to get people motivated. Think creatively about groups you can get involved: Chambers of Commerce, other nonprofits, religious centers, book groups, parent groups, etc.
- Work with a high school, community college, or university to get students involved in hosting the groups. Work with those schools to recruit faculty members from government and communications departments to serve as group leaders.
- Partner with local media (newspaper, television/radio) to promote ForumWatch, and don't forget to invite the press to some of the local discussions. This could help gain publicity for your organization while encouraging civic participation.
- Integrate ForumWatch into efforts to recruit first-time voters.

Promote ForumWatch on social media, in your newsletters, membership emails, and community calendars.

# ForumWatch Toolkit: How to Plan Your Party

## Planning Ahead: Schedule and Format

- A couple of weeks before the forum, use [Eventbrite](#) or create a [Facebook event page](#) to invite your friends, classmates, colleagues and organizational members. This will help you promote the event and keep track of everyone attending.
- Set the start time for at least an hour before the forum is scheduled to begin – this will give everyone plenty of time to get acquainted, register to vote, start discussing the issues, and fire up the tweeting!
- Think about food and drinks. Free refreshment will help guarantee a crowd. Try making it a potluck – asking each person to bring one item, like chips, cookies, etc.
- Designate a photographer and a note taker. Take photos, keep track of the issues raised in the discussions, and make sure to share your stories and pictures on social media and share them with us at [votingrights@acluca.org](mailto:votingrights@acluca.org). We'll make sure the candidates see the feedback you provide!

## Night of the Forum

- Arrange seating in the room so that everyone can see the TV or computer. Make sure you have a way to stream the internet feed on your TV or have a large computer screen. Keep pens and paper handy in case anyone wants to take notes during the Forum.
- Test your live stream and internet before guests arrive. Turn the TV or computer on about five minutes before the forum starts but leave the volume off until it actually begins.
- Turn the TV or computer off again as soon as the forum is over.
- Make time to discuss the issues before the forum. For some ideas to get the conversation moving, look over the attached *ForumWatch Toolkit: Facts & Issues* or pick some issues that are specific to your community and the challenges it faces when it comes to voting and elections.
- Come up with a couple of questions from your group and start tweeting! Make sure everyone has their Twitter Cheat Sheet or designate someone from your group to tweet on behalf of your party.
- Set some ground rules for discussion and remind everyone that there is no right or wrong opinion.

When the forum ends, use the *ForumWatch Toolkit: Suggested Discussion Questions and the Facts & Issues* to keep the conversation going and get feedback on the forum.

# ForumWatch Toolkit: How to Plan Your Party

## Let's Get This Party Started: Take Action!

Instead of just watching the forum, use the opportunity to get the participants involved!

### Register People to Vote!

The October 9th forum occurs before California's October 20, 2014 voter registration deadline. Make sure everyone who attends your ForumWatch is registered to vote or, if they have moved or are a student, they have updated their voter registration!

Did you know you can register to vote online in California in 10 different languages? Pass around a smartphone, tablet or laptop at your party and invite people to register at either [www.rockthevote.com](http://www.rockthevote.com) or [www.registertovote.ca.gov](http://www.registertovote.ca.gov).

### Talk About Voting Rights!

Plan in advance for a discussion leader to present a few of the issues contained in the attached *ForumWatch Toolkit: Facts & Issues* and start a conversation in the hour before the forum begins. Print up and hand out copies of the *Candidate Profiles*, the *Facts & Issues*, and the *Twitter Cheat Sheet*. Continue the conversation when the forum is over using the *Suggested Discussion Questions* or your own questions.

### Speak Up!

Have something to say about the forum? You can tweet your comments using #myvotemySOS and share them with viewers across California. Check out the ***ForumWatch Toolkit: Tweet Cheat Sheet*** provided here! You can also go old school and hand out comment cards to participants. Then have one or two people assigned to enter the questions through their Twitter account. Several questions from the statewide audience will be pulled from Twitter during the actual forum!

# ForumWatch Toolkit: Suggested Discussion Questions

Refer to the *ForumWatch Toolkit: Facts & Issues* for Background Information

## Icebreakers

- ✓ Why did you decide to participate in ForumWatch?
- ✓ What did you learn about the candidates or issues that you didn't know before?



## The Issues

- ✓ What topics or issues discussed were most useful or informative?
- ✓ Did you consider any of the issues raised to be irrelevant or unimportant?
- ✓ What issues would you like to hear the candidates explain better?
- ✓ Did watching the forum influence the way you think about this election?
- ✓ Identify the issues on which you agree with a candidate and those on which you disagree, and talk about whether they cause you to be more or less likely to vote for that particular candidate.
- ✓ Based on the information you got from watching the forum, which candidate appears most qualified for the office?
- ✓ Why do you think registration and turnout is so low?
- ✓ What do you think can be done to increase participation in elections?
- ✓ Did you or anyone you know run into any problems when registering or trying to vote?

## The Candidates

- ✓ Did they answer questions directly, or did they evade them or fail to answer the specific question?
- ✓ Did they give specifics about their stands on the issues, or did they speak in generalities? Did they support their positions and arguments with facts and figures?
- ✓ Did they talk about their own policies and positions, or did they mostly attack their opponents?
- ✓ Are their proposals realistic? Can they actually carry out the promises they are making?
- ✓ Did they show how their backgrounds and experience qualify them to hold the office?
- ✓ What image are they trying to create?
- ✓ Did their responses appear overly rehearsed or "canned"?

## ForumWatch Toolkit: Candidate Profiles

<p><b>ALEX PADILLA, DEMOCRAT</b></p> 	<p><b>PETE PETERSON, REPUBLICAN</b></p> 
<p><b>POLITICAL EXPERIENCE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Member, California State Senate (2006-present)</li> <li>• President, Los Angeles City Council (2001-2006)</li> <li>• Member, Los Angeles City Council (1999-2006)</li> </ul>	<p><b>POLITICAL EXPERIENCE</b></p> <p>Not Applicable</p>
<p><b>PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• California State Senator</li> <li>• Los Angeles City Council President, 2001-2006</li> <li>• Software writer, Hughes Aircraft (1994)</li> <li>• President, National Association of Latino Elected Officials (NALEO)</li> </ul>	<p><b>PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adjunct Professor, Pepperdine University (current)</li> <li>• Executive director, Davenport Institute for Public Engagement and Civic Leadership at Pepperdine University (2010-present)</li> <li>• Executive director, Common Sense California (2007-2010)</li> <li>• Account executive, Strine Printing Company (2003-2005)</li> <li>• Partner, dotondot (1992-1993)</li> <li>• Public policy fellow, Hoover Institution (2006)</li> </ul>
<p><b>EDUCATION</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BS degree in mechanical engineering, Massachusetts Institute of Technology (1994)</li> </ul>	<p><b>EDUCATION</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• BA degree in history, George Washington University (1989)</li> <li>• MA degree in public policy, Pepperdine University (2007)</li> </ul>
<p><b>TOP PRIORITIES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create Jobs by making it easier to start a business.</li> <li>• Restore trust in government with tough campaign finance laws to increase transparency.</li> <li>• Protect voting rights for all. Register a million more voters and increase voter turnout to strengthen our democracy.</li> </ul>	<p><b>TOP PRIORITIES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Complete statewide voter database.</li> <li>• Bring an "open data" approach to campaign finance database.</li> <li>• Make it easier and cheaper to start a small business in CA.</li> </ul>
<p><b>KEY ENDORSEMENTS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• California Professional Firefighters</li> <li>• California Nurses Association</li> <li>• U.S. Senator Dianne Feinstein</li> </ul>	<p><b>KEY ENDORSEMENTS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bill Jones, Former Secretary of State</li> <li>• Los Angeles Times</li> <li>• Howard Jarvis Taxpayers Assoc.</li> </ul>

# ForumWatch Toolkit: Facts & Issues

*The California Secretary of State, as the state's chief elections officer, holds the keys to a better and more informed electorate. The Secretary of State (SoS) can play a critical role in both advancing and implementing election reforms that could increase voter registration and participation and ensure the right to cast a ballot that is counted.*

## **SECRETARY OF STATE JOB DESCRIPTION**

As the state's chief elections officer, the Secretary of State oversees statewide elections and provides public access to information about who is financing campaigns and doing lobbying in Sacramento. (The Secretary of State also oversees business filings and document preservation, but that won't be the subject of the forum. For more information about this aspect of the California Secretary of State's responsibilities go to <http://www.sos.ca.gov/admin/about-the-agency.htm>.)

## **WHAT'S THE BIG PICTURE?**

California, one of the nation's most populous states, has a problem. Out of fifty states, ***we rank in the bottom ten for voter turnout***. Taken together, our voter registration and turnout rates are so low that less than half of the eligible voters in California are actually voting and making decisions about critical issues of local and statewide importance, including major laws passed by ballot initiative.

## **WHAT ARE THE FACTS ABOUT REGISTERING AND VOTING IN CALIFORNIA?**

- **Registration:** As of 2012, only 65.6% of California's eligible voters were registered, which places the state 45th nationwide in voter registration.<sup>1</sup> That means that anywhere from ***6 to 8 million Californians who are eligible to vote are not registered voters***.
- **Turnout:** In the last presidential election, only 57.5% of California's registered voters actually voted, placing the state 43<sup>rd</sup> nationwide.

## **WHAT CHALLENGES FACE THE NEXT SECRETARY OF STATE?**

### **Felony Disenfranchisement**

The current Secretary of State is trying to take voting rights away from thousands of voters sentenced for a low level crime under the state's new sentencing law, the Criminal Justice Realignment Act of 2011. A California court ruled that the Secretary of State's attempt to disenfranchise these voters, who are disproportionately Latino and African American men, was unconstitutional.<sup>2</sup> The Secretary of State is appealing this decision, putting California among the growing number of states that are passing and implementing restrictive voting policies that make it harder and harder for historically disenfranchised communities to participate in our democracy. What will the next Secretary of State do to ensure that voting rights are protected, not taken away?

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<sup>1</sup> Voting statistics referenced here are taken from U.S. Census Bureau. (2012, November) Table 4a, Reported Voting and Registration, for States: November 2012, Retrieved February 22, 2014, <http://www.census.gov/hhes/www/socdemo/voting>

<sup>2</sup> On February 4, 2014, the ACLU of California and the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights of the San Francisco Bay Area (LCCR) filed a lawsuit charging the state with unconstitutionally stripping tens of thousands of people of their right to vote. Organizational plaintiffs in the case include All of Us or None and the League of Women Voters of California. In May the Alameda County Superior Court found for the plaintiffs, however the government is appealing the Superior Court's ruling.

# ForumWatch Toolkit: Facts & Issues

## Accessibility for Voters with Disabilities

Californians with disabilities still face dramatic barriers to voting. People with disabilities are often deprived of the opportunity to register to vote at all or to register to vote in private. And on Election Day, people with disabilities often show up to vote and find that the polling site is not accessible or that the only accessible voting machine is inoperable. How will the next Secretary of State address the needs and challenges faced by voters with disabilities?

## Language Access

California is the most diverse state in the country with a rapidly changing demographic, with many voters who have limited English proficiency. ***Being offered voter registration or a ballot in a language you do not understand is the modern day equivalent of a literacy test requiring someone to be able to read to vote. This is a practice that was banned in the United States by the Voting Rights Act of 1965.*** There are new and evolving laws that require that voters with limited English proficiency be offered voting materials in their native language or be given assistance in their language when voting. Yet voters with limited English proficiency still have lower registration and participation rates than other voters. What can the next Secretary of State do to make sure that every voter, regardless of what language they speak, is given the same opportunity to register to vote and cast a ballot?

## Vote by Mail (VBM) Problems

In California, after every major election, tens of thousands of VBM ballots are not counted, mostly because they arrived too late or because of voter error, such as failing to sign the ballot envelope. What can the next Secretary of State do to make sure that every ballot cast, whether by mail or otherwise, is counted?<sup>3</sup>

## Campaign Finance Disclosure

It is the Secretary of State's responsibility to make campaign funding information accessible to the public. The Cal-Access system is managed by the Secretary of State and provides access to online information about campaign funding. It is notoriously difficult to navigate and so in need of upgrading that it is in danger of collapsing. Revamping Cal-Access is a large scale infrastructure project the next Secretary of State will have to tackle.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION ABOUT VOTING AND ELECTIONS ISSUES SEE:

ACLU of California: <https://www.aclusandiego.org/voting-rights-resources/>  
League of Women Voters of California Education Fund: <http://www.cavotes.org/>  
California Common Cause: <http://www.commoncause.org/states/california/>  
Rock the Vote: <http://www.rockthevote.com/get-informed/elections/>

***For any questions please email: [votingrights@acluca.org](mailto:votingrights@acluca.org)***

***For updates check: <https://www.aclusandiego.org/2014-california-secretary-state-candidate-forums/>***

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<sup>3</sup> See <http://futureofcaelections.org/new-cvf-report-recommends-improvement-in-vote-by-mail/>; <http://calvoter.org/issues/votereng/votebymail/study/findings.html> and <http://www.cafwd.org/reporting/entry/is-your-absentee-ballot-being-counted-in-california>



# ForumWatch Toolkit: Social Media Suggestions

For the following social media suggestions ForumWatch participants can:

1. Plug in links associated with their ForumWatch party invitations to get RSVPs. Use <https://bitly.com/shorten/> to create short links for social media.
2. Use the Livestream link at <http://bit.ly/1u7kKGU> to tell people where to find the forum livestreamed on October 9.
3. Provide the forum registration link if you want to offer information for people to attend in person at Berkeley: <http://bit.ly/1wwLrTE>

## **Facebook:**

California ranks 48th in the nation in election administration and more than 6 million eligible Californians are not even registered to vote! Who can change that? Come find out at the Secretary of State Candidate ForumWatch on October 9th. RSVP at \_\_\_\_\_

Come hear from Democrat Alex Padilla and Republican Pete Peterson, the candidates who are vying to control the future of California's elections! Secretary of State Candidate ForumWatch on October 9th. RSVP at \_\_\_\_\_

Care about voting rights in California? Come hear from the candidates who are running to be our chief elections officer. Secretary of State Candidate ForumWatch on October 9th. RSVP at \_\_\_\_\_.

1 in 4 eligible voters in California is not registered. What can the Secretary of State do to improve voter participation? Come find out at the Secretary of State Candidate ForumWatch on October 9th. RSVP at \_\_\_\_\_

Think voting rights are secure? Think again. This year, we will have the power to choose the person who oversees the heart of our democracy – the right to vote! Hear the candidates at ForumWatch on October 9th. RSVP at \_\_\_\_\_

## **Twitter:**

Did you know that one in four eligible Californians is not registered to vote? #myvotemySOS

CA is 45<sup>th</sup> in voter registration? Can anyone change that? #myvotemySOS

Think voting rights are secure? Think again. Get informed. #myvotemySOS

The most powerful office you are not voting for. RSVP at \_\_\_\_\_.

# ForumWatch Toolkit: Tweet Cheat Sheet

CANDIDATES	CANDIDATE TWITTER HANDLES	REPORTERS	TWITTER HANDLES
Alex Padilla	@SenAlexPadilla	Anthony York, former LA Times	@anthonyyork49
Pete Peterson	@Pete4SOS	Chris Cadalego, Sac Bee	@ccadelago
		Carla Marinucci, SF Chronicle	@cmarinucci
		John Diaz, SF Chronicle	@JohnDiazChron
		John Ellis, Fresno Bee	@johnellis24
		John Myers, Moderator, KQED	@johnmyers
		Juliet Williams, AP	@JWilliamsAP
		Ken McLaughlin, SF Mercury	@kmclaughSJMerc
		Patrick McGreevy, LA Times	@mcgreevy99
		Melody Gutierrez, SF Chronicle	@MelodyGutierrez
ORGANIZATIONS	ORG TWITTER HANDLES	ORGANIZATIONS	ORG TWITTER HANDLES
100 Strong	<a href="https://www.facebook.com/100Strong">https://www.facebook.com/100Strong</a>	Disability Rights California	@DisabilityCA
ACLU of San Diego	@SDACLU	Equal Justice Society	@equaljustice
Advancement Project	@adv_project	Filipino Advocates for Justice	@Fils4Justice
All of Us or None	@AllofUsorNone	FilVote	@FILVOTE
Allen Temple Baptist Church	@allentemplebc	Lao American Coalition	@lac_sd
Alliance of Californians for Community Empowerment	@CalOrganize	The Latino Community Foundation	@LatinoCommFdn
Asian Americans Advancing Justice	@AAAJ_LA	Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights	@LawyersComm
ASUC/EAVP Berkeley	@ASUC_Berkeley	League of Women Voters Ed Fund	@cavotes
Black Women Organized for Political Action (BWOPA)	@BWOPATILE	League of Women Voters General Fund	@LWVC
CAIR California	@CAIRSanDiego	MALDEF	@MALDEF
CalNonProfits	@CalNonprofits	Mobilize the Immigrant Vote	@mivcalifornia
California Calls	@Cacalls	NAACP-CA	@CaliforniaNAACP
California Common Cause	@CommonCauseCA	Oakland Rising	@OaklandRising
California Forward	@MoveCAFWD	Pillars of the Community	@sdpillars
California Voter Foundation	@kimalex3	Rock the Vote	@RockTheVote
CALPIRG	@CALPIRG	San Diego Grantmakers	@sdgrantmakers
Center for Latino Policy Research	<a href="http://on.fb.me/1qOJHKR">http://on.fb.me/1qOJHKR</a>	The Greenlining Institute	@greenlining
Community Partners	@CommunityPrtnrs	UC Berkeley Public Service Center	@public_service
EBAYC	@EBAYCPrograms	The Unity Center	@LGBTCenter
		Verified Voting Foundation	@verifiedvoting