

CALIFORNIA IMMIGRANT WELFARE COLLABORATIVE  
**California Update**

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## ***Minorities in California Reach Majority Status*** **CHANGING DEMOGRAPHICS' POLITICAL IMPACT SEEN IN RECENT ELECTIONS**

According to the U.S. Census Bureau, California's minority populations now comprise the majority of the state's overall population, confirming the sea change in the state's makeup that demographers have long projected. Experts agree that the rise to majority status of minorities has profound implications for virtually every aspect of life in the state. And with increasing numbers of minorities going to the polls, the changes in demographics have already made an impact in the political arena.

**Shifting demographics.** In August 2000, the Census Bureau released figures—based on estimates of births, deaths, and net migration for 1990 through 1999—showing that the percentage of non-Latino whites in California dropped from 57.1 percent to 49.9 percent. During that same time frame, the proportion of Latinos in California rose from 26 percent to 31.6 percent, while the Asian and Pacific Islanders' (API) share increased from less than 10 to 12 percent.

These statewide changes were portended years ago in some parts of California, most notably the city of San Francisco. By the early 1990s, the white segment of San Francisco's population had already fallen below 50 percent of the total. According to the Census Bureau, as of 2000, whites did not even make up the city's largest racial group. The agency's projections indicate that San Francisco will soon join Honolulu as the only major U.S. cities where APIs outnumber whites.

The gains made by Latinos and APIs are dramatic. Since many of the gains were driven by immigration, some demographers predict even more dramatic shifts lie ahead. Mark Baldassare, a senior fellow at the Public Policy Institute of California, projects that by mid-century, whites will be outnumbered by Latinos alone.

**Latinos make huge gains; draw major party attention state-wide and nationally.** Some of the political implications of these changes have already been borne out by recent trends

in voting and voter registration. According to a May 2000 study released by the Field Institute, a research center that tracks voting trends, virtually all of the 1.1 million increase in California's registered voters during the past 10 years was accounted for by minorities, most of them Latino. The study also showed that the total number of white voters actually fell by 100,000 during the same period, with Latinos adding about the same number.

*Please see "Changing Demographics," page 2, column 1*

### **ADVOCACY TRAININGS**

## **CIWC to Hold Skills-Building Sessions on Dec. 5 and 14**

*On the heels of the closest presidential election in recent memory, the California Immigrant Welfare Collaborative will be conducting its annual advocacy skills-building trainings in December 2000. One session is scheduled for Los Angeles on the 5th and the other for Oakland on the 14th. Topics to be covered include:*

- **Conducting advocacy at the state and federal levels**
- **Rules covering lobbying by nonprofits**
- **Coalition-building**
- **Interacting with the media**
- **Updates on successful local advocacy efforts**

*Cost for registration is \$30 per person, which includes materials, continental breakfast, and lunch. The registration deadline for the Los Angeles training is November 29 and the deadline for the Oakland training is December 7. Late registration may be available. For more information, interested persons should contact Mike Muñoz at 213-639-3900, ext. 110 or munoz@nilc.org.*

### **THE CALIFORNIA IMMIGRANT WELFARE COLLABORATIVE IS A JOINT PROJECT OF**

National Immigration Law Center • Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights of Los Angeles  
Asian Pacific American Legal Center of Southern California • Northern California Coalition for Immigrant Rights

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### ***Changing Demographics*** (continued from page 1)

Spurred on by the passage of Proposition 187, Latinos have registered to vote in ever-increasing numbers. In fact, half of the state's Latino voters have registered only since 1994, the year Proposition 187 passed. And over the past decade, Latino candidates have won significant statewide and local elected offices, including the lieutenant governorship and Assembly speakership.

Perhaps the most telling indicator of the increase in Latino political power can be seen in the ways candidates from both major parties have run recent campaigns. Candidates for statewide office now regularly run advertisements in Spanish-language media, and in 1998 the two major party gubernatorial candidates conducted a debate on Spanish-language television.

More recently, Latinos exerted their growing political power in the presidential primaries and general election. According to an exit poll conducted by the Voter News Service, California Latinos voted overwhelmingly for Democratic candidate Al Gore in the state's March 2000 blanket primary, accounting almost entirely for his six percent margin over Republican candidate George W. Bush.

Latinos' preference for Gore was repeated in the recently held general election, both in California and nationally, with 62 percent of the national Latino vote going to Gore and only 35 percent to Bush. The Republican Party, assuming that their candidate has been popular among his home state's Latinos, had hoped their candidate would make headway in attracting Latino voters. But according to Hispanic Trends, a Miami-based polling and research firm, Republicans' opposition to the Latino and Immigrant Fairness Act likely undermined their candidate's chances. For example, among foreign-born Latino voters who naturalized in the 1980s, Bush had enjoyed a 5-point lead up to the week before the election. Days before election day, the lead disappeared and became a 17-point deficit. Hispanic Trends attributed the reversal to extensive national newscasts by Univision and Telemundo, two Spanish-language television networks, of Republican opposition to the bill.

***Recent API success suggests community coming of political age.*** While Latinos have been able to translate their increasing numbers into political power, APIs have shown signs in recent years of following in their steps. During the 1990s, APIs added about 300,000 to the rolls of registered voters and nearly doubled their share of voter turnout to 6 percent by the decade's end.

A number of other factors suggest that APIs are beginning to draw political power from their growing numbers.

Similar to Latinos, APIs who naturalize tend to take more seriously notions of civic duty and are more likely to register to vote and exercise the right. With APIs' high rates of naturalization and their continuing status as a community largely made up of recent immigrants, some observers of API voting patterns believe APIs are about to come of age politically. As Ted Wang, policy director for Chinese for Affirmative Action, noted, "Ten years ago, Asian American voters weren't even seen by political consultants as a swing group—nobody did focus groups on APIs for statewide elections even as late as 1996." But the tendency to ignore API voters is going the way of poll taxes and other anachronisms of this country's political past. Citing the increased numbers of API elected officials at the state and local levels, Wang predicted that "the political presence of APIs could greatly expand during this decade."

Recent surveys also indicate that API voters have begun to overcome the linguistic and cultural barriers that have kept them from consistently voting as a cohesive bloc. They have tended to stand behind either API candidates or issues of importance to the community, such as immigration. November 7 exit polls conducted by the Asian Pacific American Legal Center in Los Angeles and the Asian American Legal Defense and Educational Fund in New York showed that API voters in the two metropolises voted more often for Democrats than Republicans. The results support the notion that immigrant communities view the former party as more immigrant-friendly.

Advocates like Wang suggest that in addition to documenting voting patterns, community groups can help accelerate APIs' political growth by conducting education and outreach encouraging naturalization and voter registration. As with any group of voters, APIs will, with more education and information, likely become more frequent and better-informed participants in the political process.

Some of the effects of increased API political participation will be in evidence on the Dec. 4, 2000, swear-in day for the new state legislature's 120 members. At least 3 APIs, along with 35 women, 27 Latinos, and 4 openly gay members, will take the oath and, along with their nonminority colleagues, make up the most diverse legislature to take office in the state's history.

When these numbers are compared to California minority groups' share of the general population, it is clear that they have longer roads to travel before their political representation matches demographic reality. As the face of California continues to change, the state's minority and immigrant communities will need to work as well to ensure accountability from all elected officials.