2011 Professional Practices

Redistricting Essentials Workshop

Los Angeles County, CA

Submitted by:
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ABSTRACT OF THE PROGRAM

On January 20, 2011, the Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk (RR/CC) held a Redistricting Essentials Workshop to provide local Los Angeles County political districts the opportunity to prepare for their redistricting efforts by reviewing legal deadlines, best practices and tools, demographic changes affecting Los Angeles County, and requirements for submitting redistricting plans to RR/CC. As the agency responsible for implementing new district boundaries, RR/CC stands to benefit from jurisdictions that are prepared for their redistricting efforts and are able to submit their redistricting plans in an accurate, thorough, and timely manner.

THE PROBLEM/NEED FOR THE PROGRAM

Redistricting is a complex technical, legal and political process that is difficult to carry out, especially on the part of small local jurisdictions with limited resources. Moreover, because redistricting is performed once every ten years following the decennial Census, it is a process that is often vague and poorly understood by those charged with carrying it out, either because they have never done it before, or because a process unpracticed is a process forgotten. Moreover, the laws and technology applicable to redistricting have also changed dramatically since the last redistricting effort in 2001. From the perspective of RR/CC, local jurisdictions that are unprepared for redistricting represent a risk to the conduct of elections. This is due to the fact that RR/CC’s mandate to implement redistricted boundary lines into the election system comes at the tail end of the redistricting process. If a local jurisdiction submits inaccurate or incomplete redistricting plans, if the plans are submitted late or in improper formats, or if the redistricting plans are subjected to legal challenge, either because the public process or the reapportionment results were not in compliance with the law, the ability of the RR/CC to implement the new district boundaries to support scheduled elections could be adversely affected.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PROGRAM

Recognizing the need to ensure that local jurisdictions are prepared for the redistricting process and that they have limited resources with which to educate and prepare themselves, RR/CC developed the proactive and innovative project of conducting a redistricting workshop for the benefit of all local and special jurisdictions, with the belief that a smooth redistricting process was clearly in the best interests of the department, the County, and the general public. The workshop was hosted by the University of Southern California’s Office of Local Government Relations and held in the Founders’ Room at the Galen Center from 7:00 a.m. until 2:00 p.m. on Thursday, January 20, 2011. The location of the workshop was crucial, not only because of the central location of USC within the County, but also the University’s excellent rapport with local governments. The timing of the workshop was also deliberate, with January coming at a relatively quiet time ahead of local municipal elections in the Spring, but more importantly being on the eve of the release of the U.S. Census data and the commencement of 2011 redistricting processes, so that the information shared would be fresh in the minds of those charged with that important task.

The workshop began with a panel discussion called Redistricting and the Community: Law and Practice, which featured an attorney, and local leaders from prominent national organizations, with experience and expertise in redistricting and voting rights in California.
The second presentation, called *Drawing The Lines: Data and Tools*, was made by a Fellow from Claremont-McKenna College’s Rose Institute for State and Local Government, who is recognized throughout California and the Southwest as an expert on the technical process of redistricting. A keynote luncheon address entitled *Changing Demographics and the Electoral Context of Los Angeles County*, was made by Dowell Myers, the award-winning demographer and Professor of Urban Planning and Demography at USC’s School of Policy, Planning, and Development. After lunch, the workshop concluded with a presentation by RR/CC entitled *Submitting Redistricting Plans to the Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk*, which provided important information about the content and format of the data RR/CC is expecting to receive from local jurisdictions as part of their plan submissions and described the RR/CC’s process for implementing redistricting plans into our election systems. The total cost of the workshop, which included USC conference hosting and the keynote luncheon speaker's fee was $7,440 – well under the $10,000 budget. This cost does not include the County’s cost for staff time.

**THE RESULTS/SUCCESS OF THE PROGRAM**

Approximately 80 people representing over 30 jurisdictions attended this well-received event, including city clerks, city council members, school district superintendents, and representatives from the County Board of Supervisors. Feedback from participants expressed satisfaction that the workshop was professional, appropriate in depth and complexity of content, and very valuable and timely. RR/CC is confident that the workshop will result in local redistricting processes that are more effective and on time, and therefore greatly benefiting RR/CC in terms of its role in implementing the new boundary lines and conducting elections accordingly.