

LONG BEACH RISING!

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM

Long Beach Rising! is a non-partisan civic engagement program designed by LAANE in partnership with the Long Beach Coalition for Good Jobs and a Healthy Community, and co-sponsored by 18 local organizations, including Building Healthy Communities: Long Beach Initiative. The program consisted of a comprehensive approach to promote civic participation, voter mobilization, and community organizing amongst communities historically marginalized from the political process, including low-income communities.

The areas of focus included leadership development, alliance-building, and volunteer canvassing:

- Long Beach Rising! Leadership Academy
- Civic Engagement Committee
- Community Canvass Program

Background

Long Beach is home to nearly half a million residents, yet the number of registered voters is roughly 215,000, while the percentage of civically engaged voters in local elections falls to nearly 13-15%. Although communities of color represent a high number of the population in Long Beach, they continue to be under-represented in the electoral process, particularly Latino and African-American communities.



Research has shown that working families are more likely to face multiple barriers in fully engaging in the voting process (i.e. language, transportation, childcare). By strengthening community engagement, we can ensure the political process is more accessible to working families and organizations working to address issues of unemployment, working poverty, lack of affordable housing, and polluted environments throughout the city.

Goals

- Promote civic participation and voter engagement
- Expand leadership, advocacy and organizing capacity on a variety of levels – individual, organizational, and city-wide – to promote strong public policy solutions
- Broaden and deepen understanding of the political landscape and electoral process
- Build strong alliances with local organizations
- Strengthen overall visibility and influence of LAANE and co-sponsor organizations

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Leadership Program

In December 2011, we launched a leadership program targeting community residents and activists in 4-days of leadership training with an emphasis on strengthening skills in community organizing and voter mobilization.

We successfully graduated a class of 35 leaders that gained skills in areas of organizing, advocacy, political analysis, and voter engagement. The participants reflected a diverse group considering the variety in age, ethnicity, and profession. See below for training information:

Session #1 – Community Organizing 101

Session #2 – Power and Political Analysis

Session #3 – Plan-to-Win Justice in Long Beach

Session #4 – Hit-the-Ground & Community Graduation



Volunteer Canvassing Program

Long Beach Rising graduates and Coalition members participated in the volunteer canvass for 8 walk-days in order to outreach and engage neighborhoods with low-propensity voters, primarily in the West and North Long Beach.

Volunteers talked to residents to pledge to vote in upcoming local elections using the LB Community Action Pledge. Many of the new volunteers engaged throughout the program came from CSU Long Beach and Long Beach City College.

The results of the program were as follows:

- About 40 volunteers
- Over 100 volunteer shifts
- Over 350 community pledges signed
- Over 400 new registered PAVs (Permanent Absentee Voter Registration)

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Civic Engagement Committee

Role of Committee Members

- Recruit at least 2 members to participate in the leadership training
- Meet every 2 weeks to plan and develop the LB Community Action Pledge and participate in the first-ever city-wide forum: People's State of the City



The **Long Beach Community Action Pledge** was used as an effective canvassing tool to engage residents on key issues and solutions to improve the lives of low-income residents and working families.

The pledge outlined the need for living wages, local hiring, environmental protections, responsible development, affordable housing, health & safety, and access to quality education.



16 ORGANIZATIONS PARTICIPATED IN THE CIVIC ENGAGEMENT COMMITTEE

(*) – not able to participate in planning, but sponsored the forum.

Aikona: Sustainability in Service,
AnakBayan Los Angeles,
Building Healthy Communities: Long Beach (BHCLB),
California Faculty Assoc. (CFA) Long Beach,*
Californians for Justice (CFJ) Long Beach,
The Gay & Lesbian Center of Long Beach ,
Clergy Laity United for Economic Justice (CLUE) South Bay,
Community Leadership Institute (CLI),*
CSULB Political Science Student Association,
Filipino Migrant Center (FMC),
Green Long Beach,
Housing Long Beach (HLB),*
LB Area Peace Network,
LBCC Community Studies Project,
LBCC Community College Association (CCA),
Long Beach Coalition for Good Jobs & a Healthy Community,
Long Beach Time-Exchange,
Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy (LAANE),
Shift Long Beach,
*100 Black Men**

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People's State of the City

On February 29th, 2012, residents from across the city gathered at Antioch Church for Long Beach's first-ever People's State of the City. This event brought together 20 co-sponsoring organizations, 7 city leaders, and over 300 community members to discuss the issues impacting Long Beach residents with an emphasis on the strengthening civic participation.

The evening included interactive and engaging programming such as resource tabling with 16 local organizations, video screening of testimonials from Long Beach residents entitled "Long Beach Rising," and 5 discussion groups focused on key issues: living wages, affordable housing, clean environment, healthy & safe neighborhoods, and access to quality education. A presentation on the "Current State of Long Beach" was led by Tonia Reyes Uranga, former 7th District City Council Member and current Steering Member of the Long Beach Coalition.

7 representatives from City Offices in attendance:

- Council Member, Robert Garcia (1st District)
- Council Member, Patrick O'Donnell (4th District)
- Field Deputy, Council Member Steven Neal (9th District)
- Field Representative, Senator Bonnie Lowenthal
- Chief of Staff, Mayor Bob Foster's Office
- LBCC Board of Trustee – Area 2, Roberto Uranga
- LBCC Board of Trustee – Area 4, Doug Otto



Above: LB Rising Graduate, Jesus Balcazar, shares about his learning experience and what inspires him to do community organizing.

