



Inajo Davis Chappell
Chairwoman

Jeff Hastings
Member

Eben O. (Sandy) McNair, IV
Member

Robert S. Frost
Member

Pat McDonald
Director

Anthony W. Perlatti
Deputy Director

Spanish- Language Advisory Board Meeting Minutes

December 2, 2013

5:30 PM

Cuyahoga County Board of Elections (4th floor)
2925 Euclid Ave
Cleveland, Ohio 44115

Bilingual Election Program Coordinator: Ivelisse Roig
Meeting facilitator: Pablo Castro III -Chair

Attendance:

Jonathan Anderson- Member
María Anderson- Member
Ron Berger- Member
Luis Cartagena- Member
Luis Gómez- Member
Lorna McLain- Member
Omar Medina- Member
Juan Molina-Crespo- Member
Marilyn Peña- Member
Pablo Santiago- Member

Cuyahoga County Board of Elections Staff:

Anthony Alto- Poll Worker Recruiter Specialist
Henry Curtis- Poll Worker Department Manager
Robert Frost- Board of Elections Board Member
Pat McDonald- Director
Eben O. (Sandy) McNair, IV- Board of Elections Board Member
Tony Perlatti- Deputy Director
Mike West- Media and Voter Education Specialist

Department of Justice Attorneys:

Michelle L. Heyer
Steven M. Dettelbach
Carole Rendón
Heather Tonsing Volosin
Mike Tobin (US Attorney's Office Community Outreach Specialist)

Via Phone –from Washington DC:

Christine McCormick - Voting Section Act Attorney- Civil Rights Division
Tim Mellett- Voting Section Act Attorney- Civil Rights Division

Guests:

Janet García- Prospective Member
Christopher Martínez- Prospective Member
Ricardo Peña- Attendee

Agenda Item 1: Welcome

- A. Approval of Minutes from the September 16, 2013 Board meeting; the motion was introduced by Pablo Castro and seconded by Luis Gómez.
- B. Everybody introduced themselves including those on the phone from Washington DC: Tim Mellett and Christine McCormick, Voting Section Act Attorneys. Department of Justice attorney Michelle Hayer opened the discussion with the Spanish Language Advisory Board by asking for their feedback and input with regard to the Bilingual Program. She asked the group if they would like to share any problems, comments or concerns:
 - Spanish Language Advisory Board members shared the following comments:***
 - No Federal Observers at Brooklyn precincts.
 - That Community Outreach projects and Poll Workers Recruitment efforts should be enhanced.
 - Bilingual poll worker positions were very difficult to fill for the November 5, 2013 Election.
 - The survey project took away a good amount of prospective bilingual poll workers.
 - Voters were aware of the Spanish resources, and they therefore they felt more comfortable requesting assistance.
 - Facebook was a successful marketing tool to promote the Spanish Hotline on Election Day. Spanish Hotline operators Lorna McLain and Jonathan Anderson concluded that thanks to Facebook the Spanish Hotline usage on November 5, 2013 Election Day was greater than in previous elections during 2013. Bilingual Coordinator Roig reported that the Spanish Hotline received twenty seven (27) calls on Election Day; ten (10) calls were from English speaking voters or poll workers and seventeen (17) calls were from Spanish-speaking voters. Some examples of the calls received include: “Where do I vote?”; “Am I registered?”; “At what time do the polling locations close?”; The Spanish hotline received an average of one (1) or two (2) calls per election during 2013.
 - People are starting to become more active because they have a better understanding of the election process.
 - Marilyn Bagley shared her experience with one Spanish speaking voter during the November 5th Election. The Limited English Proficiency (LEP) voter requested assistance with the ballot. Apparently the LEP voter felt that the translations were targeting other Spanish speaking countries and not Puerto Ricans. The Bilingual Coordinator, Ivelisse Roig, assured Marilyn Bagley that the CCBOE uses a certified translation company and that former Director Platten provided instructions to use general Spanish for translations even though the decree indicates the CCBOE should use translations that are linguistically competent to the County’s Spanish speaking voters educated in Puerto Rico. The CCBOE is not responsible for writing ballot language, the Ohio Secretary of State provides the templates and directives, the terms and the language used is very technical with a selection of legal terms. One of the potential reasons why voters had difficulties understanding the ballot language could be related to the voter’s unfamiliarity with the terms and literacy or education level. Ballot issues are translated to mirror the English text and they can’t be simplified. US Attorney Michelle Hayer asked Marilyn Bagley if she had any suggestions; however, Marilyn said that her Spanish is not at a fluency level to do that. Other SLAB members expressed their willingness to read, review and help with translations in the future.
 - Other members expressed that translations are appropriate and that voter education should be the focus; Luis Gómez pointed out that translations seem to be in pure “Castellano” (Spanish promulgated by the Royal Spanish Academy) which is considered the proper Spanish. The CCBOE is open to suggestions.
 - SLAB would like to see more outreach initiatives in our community like “Tu Decides”

Agenda Item 2: Old Business

- A. November 5, 2013 General Election: The SLAB Chair Pablo Castro encouraged SLAB members to read the report provided.
- B. The Expiration of the Consent Decree: SLAB members asked the DOJ attorneys if they believe that the CCBOE is in compliance with the Consent Decree. Attorney Steven M. Dettelbach stated that they are happy with how things are going so far and that the CCBOE is in compliance. He thinks that some aspects of the Bilingual Program can be improved. Another question from SLAB was concerning the termination process; if the Department of Justice is going to walk away, or if they have an assessment report with recommendations to follow. Attorney Steven M. Dettelbach feels that things are going well and elections are being conducted according to the agreement. They will provide a detailed assessment based on their observations.

The Bilingual Ballot topic was brought up by some members. SLAB members expressed their concerns in regards to the intention of keeping the current bilingual ballot format. CCBOE Board Member Sandy McNair IV stated that the CCBOE doesn't know at this point if the CCBOE is keeping the bilingual format and that's why a survey is being conducted. The purpose of the survey is to understand if the CCBOE should continue providing a bilingual ballot or a separate Spanish only ballot. SLAB members talked about other States in the Country and how California manages to have the ballot in four different languages. CCBOE Board Member McNair responded that California utilizes electronic ballots. Mike Rondón asked McNair about how and when the results will be presented to SLAB. McNair said that a public meeting will be organized and that invitations will be sent.

Janet Garcia is concerned about the possibility of eliminating the bilingual ballot and asked McNair again if the bilingual ballot will continue or not, or if he is seriously thinking about a separate Spanish ballot. McNair expressed that his desire is to figure out ways to make the ballot more voter friendly and he provided a time frame for the decision, and stated that the decision will be made before the Consent Decree expires. He said that the best way to answer the question is to wait until the survey results are presented. The results will help the CCBOE understand the best way to utilize resources and learn how voters feel about the bilingual ballot. CCBOE Board Member Robert Frost commented that the separate ballot is something that has been proposed, they will talk to SLAB first, and that the ballot will be kept as it is for now. He said that outreach is the key to help voters understand the bilingual ballot.

Chairman Castro is interested in addressing the continuance of the Spanish services after the consent decree expires. He said that for the past three years the SLAB and CCBOE have created the foundation and the best system in the county; now he is interested in knowing how to make it better moving forward. He would like to know how to enforce bilingual services once the decree expires. Lorna McLain was interested in knowing how the CCBOE will identify the bilingual precincts once the Consent Decree expires: Will the DOJ continue to provide the report or will the CCBOE need to figure out a way to do this research. Washington DC attorney Tim Mellett said that they will continue to provide the analysis, since they do it for others jurisdictions as well.

The SLAB is interested in setting up a meeting with the DOJ attorneys to obtain recommendations in creating a budget for the Bilingual Program.

C. **Appointments and Nominations**

- New Advisory Board Members: Two prospective Board members provided Chairman Castro with their interest letter. (Janet García and Christian Martínez)
- New Co- Chair Nominations: Two members were nominated for the Co-Chair position: María Anderson and Omar Medina. The voting process was anonymous and confidential. The Bilingual Coordinator, Ms Roig distributed voting ballot packages to all official SLAB members that were present. The voting ballot package included the ballot, and the nominees' resumes. The voted ballots were collected and a total of ten (10) members voted, six (6) for María Anderson, one (1) for Lorna McLain and three (3) for Omar Medina. María Anderson was appointed as the new SLAB Co-Chair.

D. **Update - Creating Rules and Procedures for The Spanish Language Advisory Board Members: The Bylaws** subcommittee met on November 12, 2013. The subcommittee needs to meet again to finish the Bylaws.

Agenda Item 3: New Business

- A. Baldwin Wallace Survey: this subject was tabled until the next SLAB meeting.
- B. Spanish Language Advisory Board Recommendations: this topic was tabled until the next SLAB meeting.

Agenda Item 4: Miscellaneous News & Open Floor for Closing Remarks

Next Advisory meeting has been scheduled for Monday, January 13, 2014 at 5:30 pm at the Hispanic Alliance: 3110 W 25th St, Cleveland, OH 44109.

Meeting adjourned at 7:00 p.m.