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*The Hon. Members of the Los Angeles City Council
1 John Ferraro Council Chamber, Room 340
Los Angeles, CA 90012*

To the Hon. Members of the Los Angeles City Council,

I write this regarding the forum you held last night on increasing voter turnout and participation in our democratic society. First, let me congratulate you on even taking the time to host such a forum. Most bodies of elected officials don't even remotely bother to address voter turnout or civic participation in their communities, but since you all have chosen that step I am writing to you about it. Second, let me thank you for listening to the suggestions made by my friend Joseph Segal. He is a dedicated activist who has been working on this problem for several years now and in my opinion he is certainly an authority on the issue.

I also wanted to pose a few of my own suggestions for improving voter turnout in the abstract, based on my experience working elections and voting in the last few campaign cycles. These suggestions are in no specific order, and they may not all work for all communities. You are, of course, free to completely ignore them all. But it is my hope that they will at least inspire further debate and discussion on a chronic issue of increasing importance in our country.

1) Voter registration forms should be mailed to new residents every six months, or offered to new residents as part of a relocation packet that welcomes them to the neighborhood, gives them essential contacts, numbers of local businesses, etc. The greatest hurdle to voting is registration, and research has shown time and time again that once someone is registered they are significantly more likely to vote.

2) The second most important thing the community can provide to increase turnout are civics classes, not just for children but for adults as well. Research has consistently

indicated that along with registration, education level is the single most determining factor in the likelihood of a person to vote. This relates to the first point as well: those most effected by registration laws tend to be those with the least amount of formal education, according to a 1997 study on voting barriers and education by political scientist Benjamin Highton. Deciding to just improve formal education, of course is easier said than done. But prioritizing civics classes for junior high students and recruiting a pool of volunteer civics teachers or professors for adult classes on the weekends is a much more manageable proposal, and one that has the potential to measurably increase voter turnout.

3) Encourage a voluntary program where businesses offer an hour or two on election day for employees to go vote. This benefits local business owners by giving them another opportunity to be good members of the community, and benefits working voters by giving them the time out of their day to vote.

I could go on, but these three suggestions are the ones I feel are the most manageable and the easiest to enact. I appreciate you taking the time to address this issue, and I hope you find a solution to this chronic problem.

Respectfully,

-Gil Wildridge