

The Power of Resident Voting Blocs

We can speak to elected officials through the ballot box.

In 2018, for the first time in over a decade, Californians got to decide on the future of affordable housing by voting on Propositions 1 and 2, two statewide housing bonds that would provide over six billion dollars for affordable housing development.

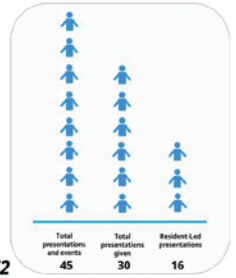
Housing advocates knew that our members could have an impact after we passed two county-wide affordable housing measures—Measure A1 and Measure KK—in 2016. So we implemented an outreach plan to educate our communities, using presentations and community forums. It worked! In Alameda County, 69% of voters and 72% of voters supported Props 1 and 2 respectively. We won, and the result will be new affordable homes for those who need them the most.

What is a Voting Bloc?

So what comes next? We turn our movement into a voting bloc.

A “voting bloc” means we identify with affordable housing as an integral part of our identity; it becomes a named priority when we make decisions about who and what we vote for. We prove that our community has voting power by showing up together, promoting our mission in election season messaging, and tracking our success with traditional “Get Out the Vote” (GOTV) methods such as phone banking and mailers.

When we show our impact at the voting booth, we can leverage this power outside of election season as well, impacting other issues that affect low-income communities and communities of color. In pushing for policy, we can speak to elected officials



Measuring Our Impact: 9/25-11/2

EBHO's resident members tracked their impact during the 2018 campaign, reaching almost 1900 potential voters.

through the ballot box. While most non-profit organizations cannot endorse candidates, we can and should share openly that our community turns out to vote. That speaks volumes to candidates in races where the margin to win a seat is a few hundred or even a few dozen votes.

An Untapped Opportunity for Justice

Housing California's Residents United Network estimates there are 1.1 million Californians living in affordable housing, of whom just 200,000 are registered to vote. This presents a huge opportunity to register, educate and engage affordable housing residents.

We can build a bloc of empowered, informed voters who have the lived experience of affordable housing's benefits. Beyond simple voter registration, we should be engaging in GOTV activities such as door knocking and phone banking to build momentum and organize. Not only does this build a constituency for housing justice, it also builds the power and voice of communities that traditionally have had less political influence—setting the stage for a more just Bay Area.

By Dolores Tejada, EBHO

