Municipal Government: Trends & Best Practices

Nicolas Heidorn
Legislative and Policy Advocate
Common Cause
Road Map

1. Trends in City Democracy
   A. Governance
   B. Voting
   C. Election System

2. Best Practices & Local Innovation in Public Engagement
   A. Governance -- Decision-Making
   B. Voting -- Dates & Outreach
   C. Election System -- Redistricting
Municipal Democracy Index

- All 482 cities
- Response rate: 81%
- Survey of governance & election practices
- [Link](#)
Big Trends
Trend #1: Form of Government

Form of Government:
- 97% City Manager
- 1% Decentralized
- 1% Commission
- 1% Strong Mayor

Selection of Mayors:
- 35% Directly Elected
- 65% Council-Selected
- 21% Elected Mayors since 1992
Trend #2: Election Dates

Election Dates:

- **State Prim.**: 5%
- **Other Even**: 3%
- **Odd Years**: 21%
- **State Gen.**: 72%

- **On-Cycle Elections**: $\uparrow 14\%$ since 2000

- **SB 415 (Hueso)**:
  - Requires on-cycle if turnout is $\downarrow 25\%$ than avg. state gen. election
  - Jan. 1, 2018 effective date
Trend #3: Election System

Election System:

- By District Elections:
  \[ \uparrow 2x \text{ since 2010} \]

- CVRA of 2001 (Polanco):
  - Prohibits at-large voting that results in dilution of minority voting power
City Innovation & Best Practices
Increasing citizen engagement in…

**Decision-Making**

Sacramento’s Sunshine Policies:
- Online posting & video
- 5-Day Notice
- Written Public Comment
- Community forums
Increasing citizen engagement in...

**Voting**

Choosing an On-Cycle Election Date – June or November?

- ✓ November: higher turnout
- ✓ November: more diverse

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>2008</th>
<th>2010</th>
<th>2012</th>
<th>2014</th>
<th>Average</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Overall Turnout - Primary</td>
<td>4,550,227</td>
<td>5,654,993</td>
<td>5,328,296</td>
<td>4,461,346</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall Turnout - General</td>
<td>13,743,177</td>
<td>10,300,392</td>
<td>13,202,158</td>
<td>7,513,972</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall Increase</td>
<td>202%</td>
<td>82%</td>
<td>148%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td><strong>125%</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Photo Credit: Robert Couse-Baker (modified)
Increasing citizen engagement in...

**Voting**

**Santa Clara Votes**

- ✔ Registration/Voting Outreach
  - Direct mail, utility inserts, billboard, newspaper ads, etc.
- ✔ Candidate Forums
- ✔ Democracy Consultant
- ➢ 2014: ↓10% undervotes
Increasing citizen engagement in... 

Redistricting

The Redistricting Commission Approach

✓ Growing Popularity:
  • 34% of cities

✓ Increase citizen participation & public trust

✓ SB 1108 (Allen)
## Increasing citizen engagement in Redistricting

### Commission Types
- **Advisory**
  - e.g. Los Angeles
- **Independent**
  - e.g. San Diego
- **Hybrid**
  - E.g. Modesto

### Public Participation
- Involves citizens
  - e.g. Chula Vista
- More hearings
  - e.g. Sacramento
- Greater transparency
  - e.g. Oakland
Increasing citizen engagement in... 

Redistricting

Interested in creating a commission?

✓ CA Local Redistricting Project
  • Common Cause & McGeorge School of Law

✓ Contact:
  • Nicolas Heidorn: nheidorn@commoncause.org

✓ Visit:
  • www.yourlines.org
Thank You

Contact: Nicolas Heidorn, nheidorn@commoncause.org
Key Considerations for a Local Redistricting Commission

- **Authority:**
  - Advisory
  - Independent
  - Hybrid

- **Selection Method:**
  - Political Appointment
  - Independent Appointment
  - Random Selection

- **Qualifications:**
  - Candidate Qualifications
  - During Service Restrictions
  - Post-Service Restrictions

- **Criteria:**
  - Constitutional/Federal/State
  - Demographic
  - Geographic
  - Political

- **Public Engagement:**
  - Outreach/Notice
  - Comment/Hearings
  - Map Submission

- **Administration**