



**CNC**  
EDUCATION FUND

Sacramento – Merced – Fresno - Coachella



# CNC EDUCATION FUND

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CASE STUDY: A Voice For Every Merced Neighborhood

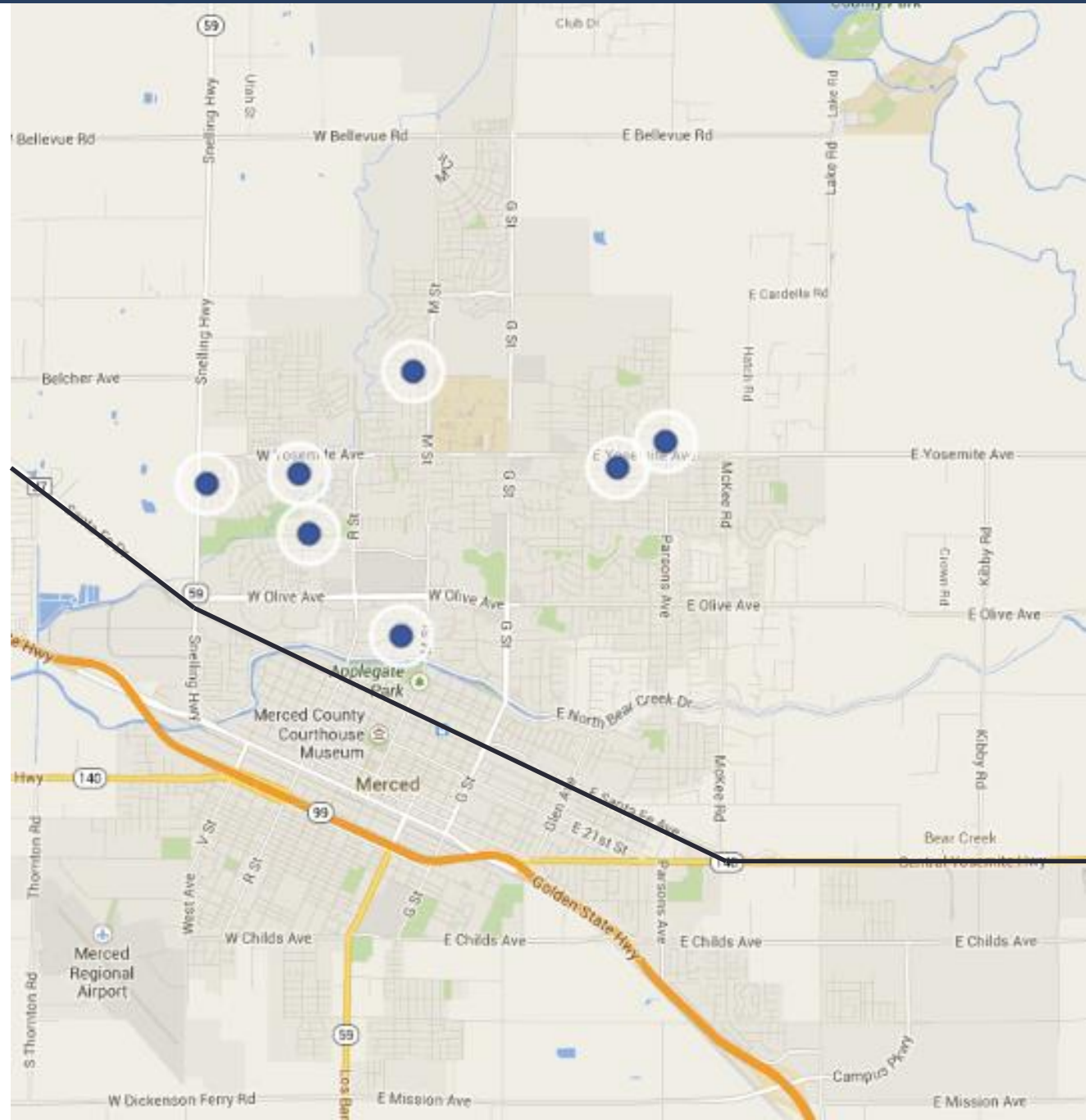






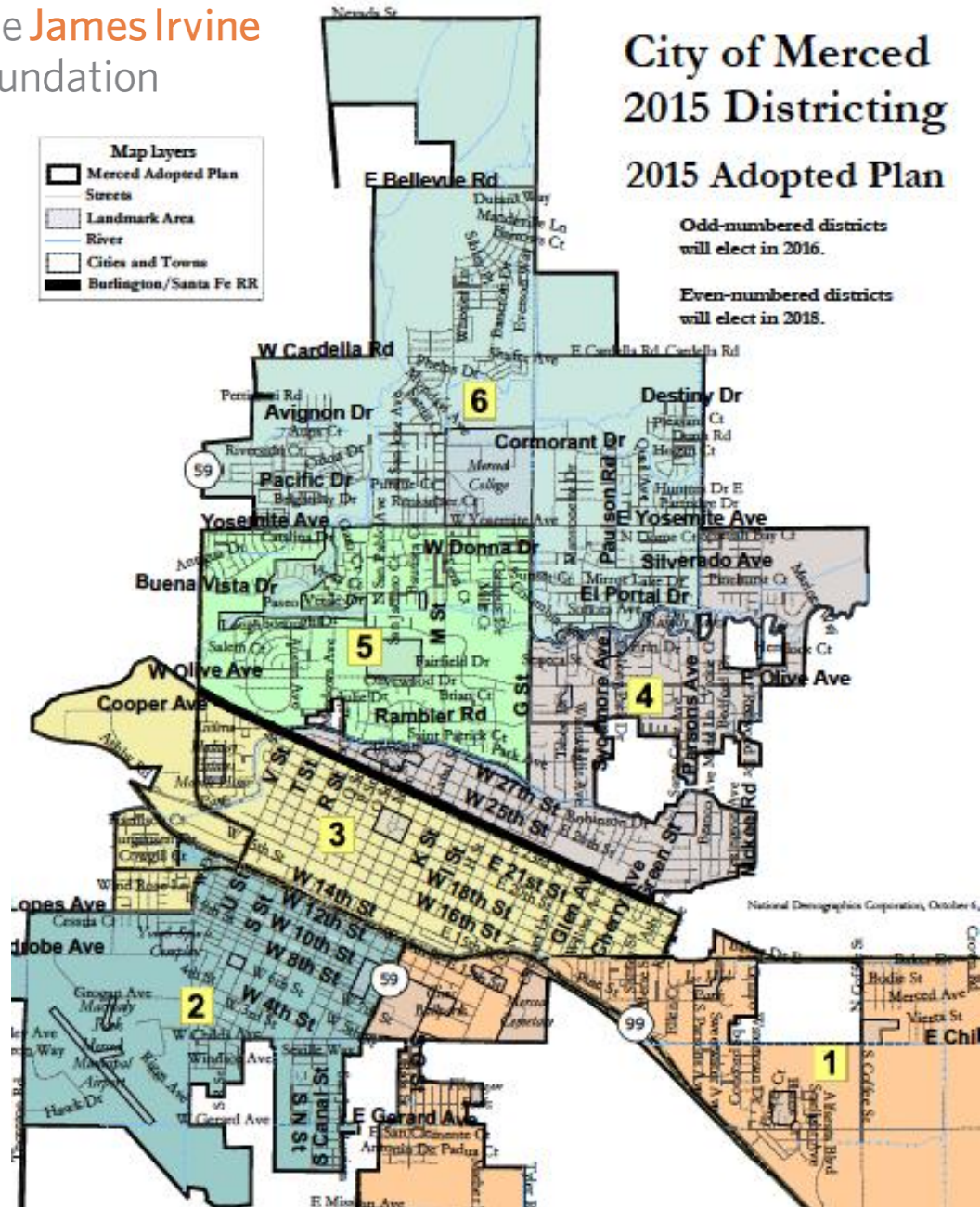
Building Healthy  
**Communities**  
Southwest Merced & East Merced County

- Total of 95,330 Merced County Voters
- 1 of every 5 (17,869) Merced County Voters live within the Southwest Merced and East Merced County Place
- The image to the right shows the result of at-large elections in the City of Merced.
- All six city councilmembers and the Mayor currently live in North Merced.
- Zero currently live in South Merced.



# SUCCESS!!!!

- On Monday October 5, 2015 the City of Merced adopted a districting plan which officially ended the use of at-large elections to elect city councilmembers.
- *CHEERS AND APPLAUSE!!*
- Two districts in South Merced (#1 and #3) elected new councilmembers in November 2016
- **HOW DID WE DO IT?**







**CNC MISSION:** CNC Education Fund is a 501(c)(3) organization committed to achieving environmental, economic, and socially just public policy for working class families in the rural areas of California.

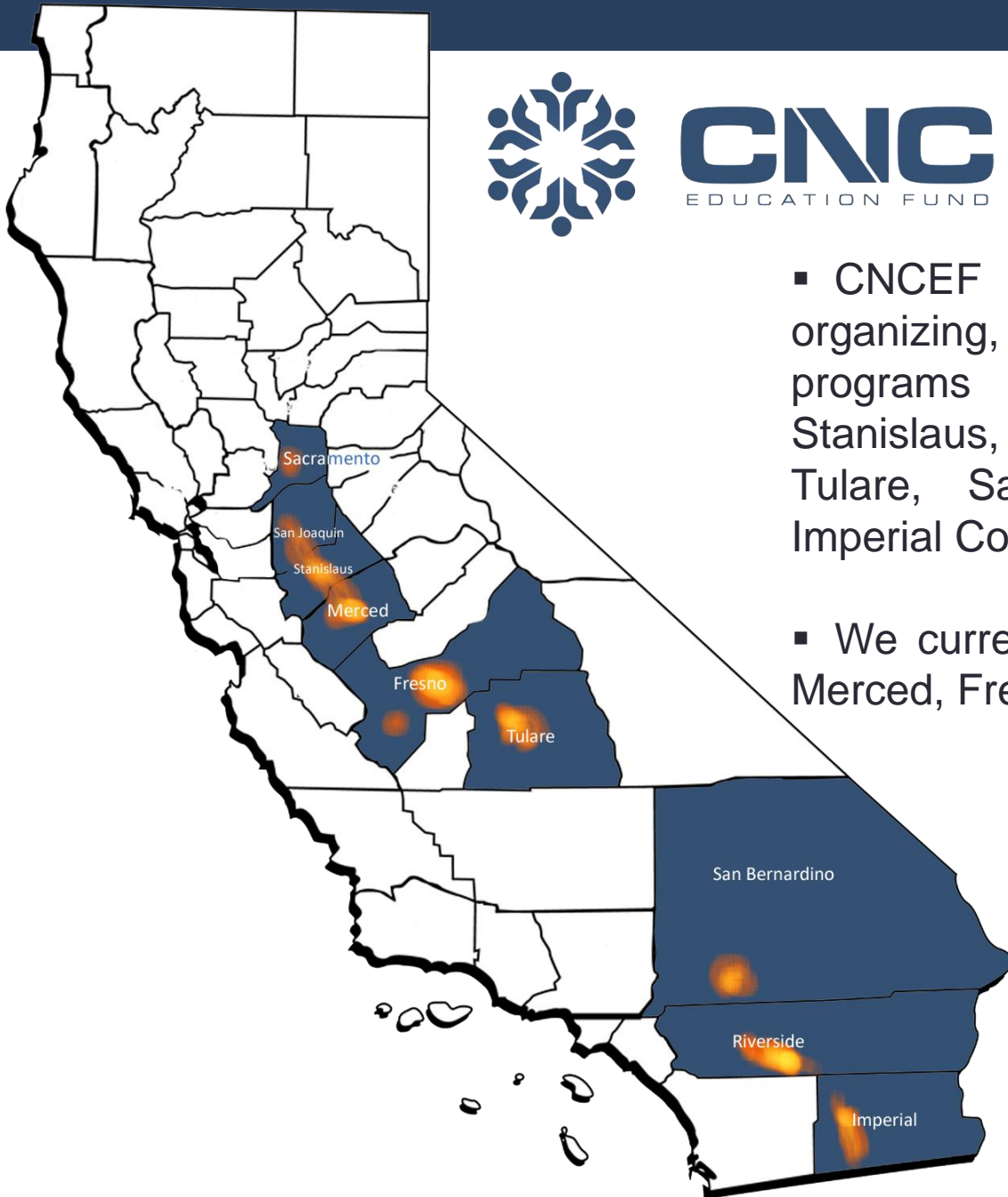
Founded in February 2011, CNCEF provides public education on policy issues relevant to rural areas of California including health, immigration, environmental justice, workers rights, civil and human rights.



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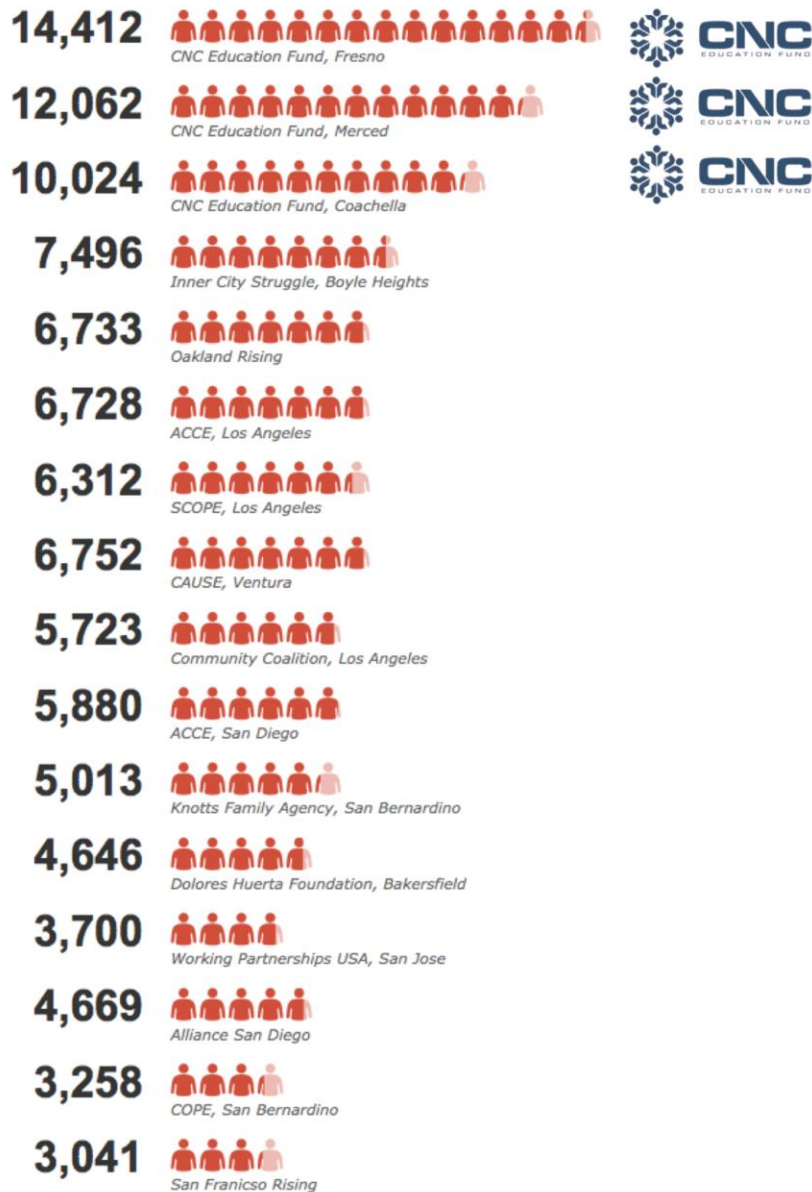
- CNCEF currently implements grassroots organizing, and public policy education programs serving Fresno, Merced, Stanislaus, San Joaquin, Sacramento, Tulare, San Bernardino, Riverside and Imperial Counties.

- We currently have offices in Sacramento, Merced, Fresno and Coachella.



# JUNE 2016 Non-Partisan Civic Engagement Programs / California Calls

## MILLION VOTERS PROJECT TOTAL VOTER CONTACTS



## YES ID: WILL YOU JOIN "WE ARE CALIFORNIA?"





# Integrated Leadership Development and Mass Voter Engagement Strategy

The integration of our grassroots leadership development and mass non-partisan voter engagement **creates the environment for CNC Education Fund to be a trusted messenger** and build relationships with families living in the San Joaquin and Coachella Valleys.





# Integrated Leadership Development and Mass Voter Engagement Strategy

- Over the last four years we have experienced our programs become increasingly **effective in educating and motivating voters to become consistent in casting their ballots.**
- As we continue to grow, we anticipate being able to **solidify a powerful rural voter engagement infrastructure** of voters who are able to influence and **shape public policy decisions for our families.**





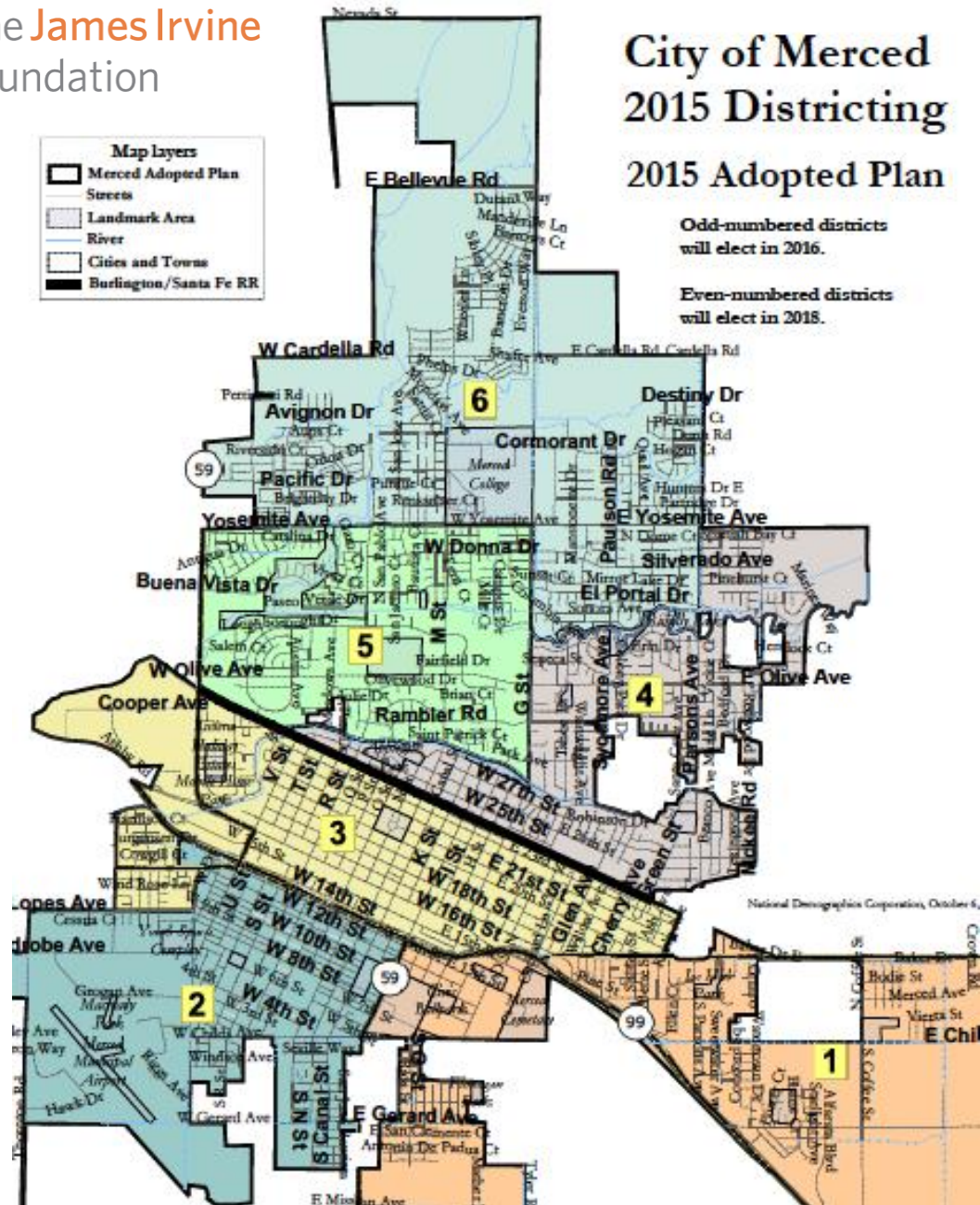
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CASE STUDY: A Voice For Every Merced Neighborhood

# SUCCESS!!!!

- On Monday October 5, 2015 the City of Merced adopted a districting plan which officially ended the use of at-large elections to elect city councilmembers.
- *CHEERS AND APPLAUSE!!*
- Two districts in South Merced (#1 and #3) will elect a councilmember in November 2016
- **HOW DID WE DO IT?**





## BACKGROUND: A VOICE FOR EVERY NEIGHBORHOOD



- The Invest in Merced - Invest In Our Youth collaborative promotes investment in Merced Youth as a core city service and matter of public safety and economic development. Partner organizations have been working together since 2012.
- Successes have included keeping McNamara Park's Public swimming pool open. As well as the establishment and funding of a Merced Youth Commission to advise the City of Merced City Council in matters related to Merced Youth.
- Reopening of two youth centers
- CNCEF and BHC partner organizations are working to ensure city of Merced youth voice resonates in public policy decisions and is reflected in the annual city budget priorities.
- **However, our successes have continually been incredibly labor intensive due to an unresponsive city council.**



# KNOW YOUR VOTING RIGHTS WORKSHOP

CNC Education Fund – MALDEF – Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights of San Francisco

**CNCEF began its internal research in December 2012 following very challenging and frustrating years attempting to influence city budget prioritization and allocation process in the City of Merced.** CNCEF and local Merced partner organizations and community members were dismayed by the lack of accountability and transparency by City of Merced councilmembers and Mayor to residents of South Merced.

Starting in 2013, CNCEF, Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights (LCCR) and the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund (MALDEF) and research organization The Advancement Project, partnered to address potential violations of the California Voting Rights Act (CVRA) by the City of Merced as a result of its antiquated at-large election system which fomented comments from elected officials such as:

***"I represent all Merced not just south Merced."* and *"The problem here is you need to understand I make decisions based on the whole not just special interests."*** were two frequent comments used by city council members to dismiss residents' demand for an end to disproportionate cuts to community and youth services impacting south Merced directly.

It was clear to CNCEF the at-large election system was undermining city government accountability and transparency to residents of South Merced. CNCEF sought to partner with non-profit attorneys MALDEF AND LCCR because they are not only two of the leading civil rights organizations in the country - but also because Tom Saenz (President and General Council of MALDEF) and Robert Rubin (LCCR) were instrumental in the drafting and passage of the California Voting Rights Act in 2002.

# YES ON MEASURE T

## A VOICE FOR EVERY NEIGHBORHOOD

### JOIN MAYOR THURSTON AND THE MERCED CITY COUNCIL

A vote for Measure T is a vote to update the city's current at-large election to a district election system.

The city of Merced would be equally divided into six districts, each with the ability to elect their own city council member.

Measure T would ensure that each neighborhood in Merced has a voice, regardless of where it is located.

***"The choice is clear. Voters should approve Measure T."***

Merced Sun Star, September 24, 2014



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# A VOICE FOR EVERY MERCED NEIGHBORHOOD!!

- Through two Know Your Voting Rights workshops in 2013 we learned **at-large election systems have historically limited the ability of voters of color to elect a candidate of their choice** because their votes were diluted by the majority white voter population due to racially polarized voting.
- We learned the use of at-large election systems have **systematically limited the access to political power for communities of color**. As a result, the needs of the families living in these communities have historically been unmet.
- Following the workshops residents of Merced approached MALDEF seeking a legal remedy utilizing the California Voting Rights Act.
- In spring of 2014 MALDEF advised the City of Merced they were in violation of the California Voting Rights Act. They advised unless the city ended the at-large election system to elect city councilmembers they were risking a lawsuit.
- The City of Merced negotiated a settlement with MALDEF. Because Merced is a charter city, the city council could not make the change by ordinance. So, the city placed Measure T on the November 2014 ballot.
- CNCEF implemented a non-partisan 501(c)(3) campaign which contacted nearly 13,000 voters. **MEASURE T passed 52% to 48%**



# A VOICE FOR EVERY MERCED NEIGHBORHOOD!!

- The passage of Measure T triggered the creation of a 7-member Independent Districting Advisory Committee (IDAC).
- Candidates were interviewed and recommended by the League of Women Voters.
- CNCEF and partner organizations recruited applicants to the IDAC.
- **Three of our applicants (CNCEF and Merced Organizing Project) were selected** to serve on the IDAC.
- With the assistance of City Staff, an expert consultant, and public input, the IDAC worked from March through September to recommend final maps for the City Council to adopt.
- In partnership with Building Healthy Communities and Merced Organizing Project, CNC Education Fund drafted a proposed districting plan which would become titled: Palma1 districting plan.



We began conducting a monthly door-to-door volunteer canvass with our CNCEF South Merced committee to mobilize residents to the IDAC public hearings.



# INDEPENDENT DISTRICTING ADVISORY COMMITTEE

August 1, 2015 South Merced Public Hearing

“ ... as expected the South Merced hearing was the most well attended of the hearings to date.”

– Merced County Times





# Power Only Recognizes Another Power Equal or Greater To It Than Itself

October 3, 2015 Volunteer Canvass



October 5, 2015 City Council Meeting



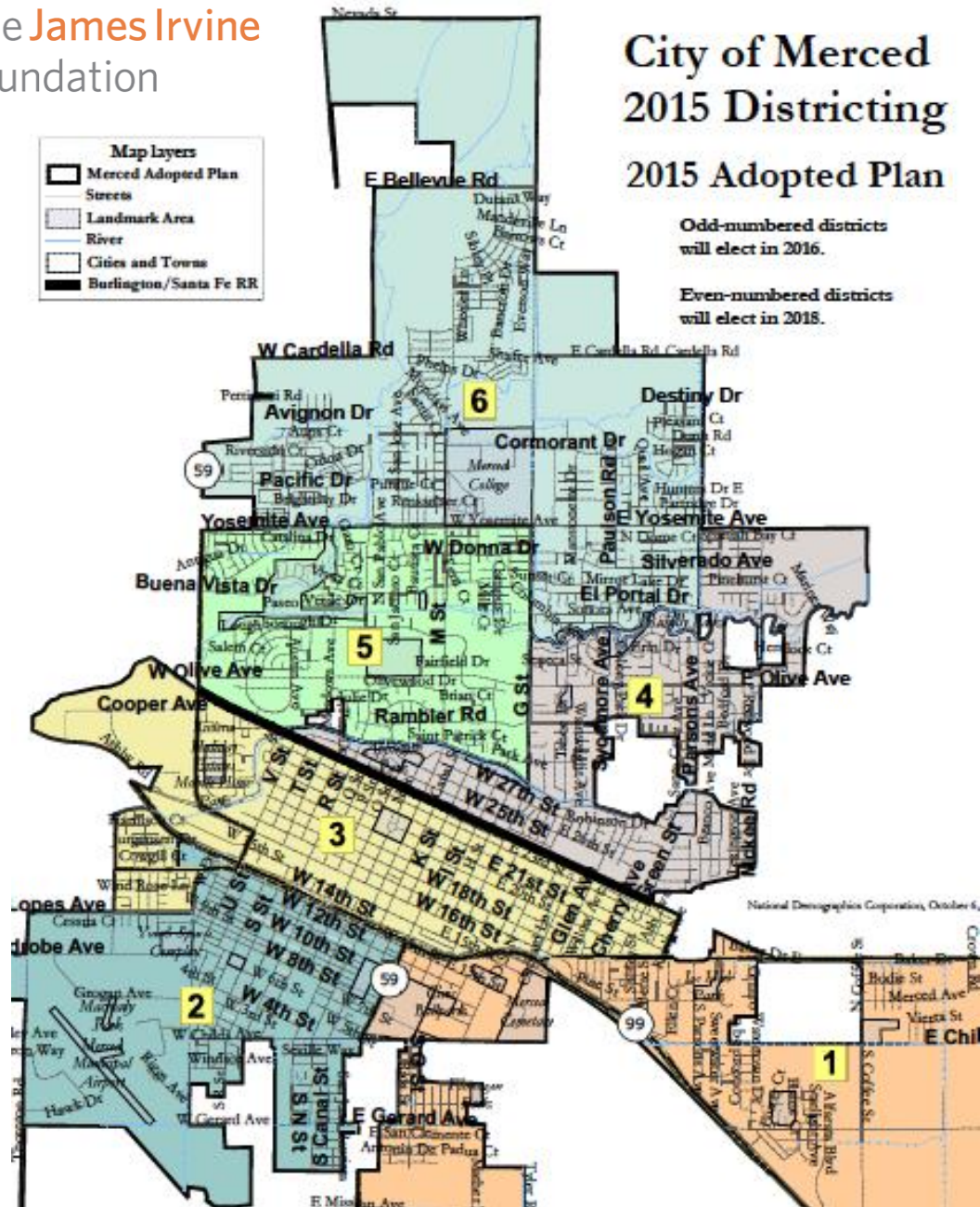
**Organized People + Organized Resources + Shaping Public Opinion = Power**

Must utilize all forms of government which serve us to form strategy combined with communications tactics.  
For Example:

- CA State Law: California Voting Rights Act
- Legal: MALDEF, Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights
- Election System: Examine the election system. It's more than voter registration and mobilization.
- Appointed: Independent Districting Advisory Committee
- Voter Engagement: Ongoing voter engagement is vital, not just during elections. Monthly canvass.
- Public Meetings: Public comment during City Council and Commission meetings.
- Communications: Letters to the Editor penned by volunteers NOT STAFF.

# SUCCESS!!!!

- 3 of 7 seats changed hands November 2016
- No longer are all seats held by all men in North Merced
- District 1 elected a Latino man
- District 3 elected a woman
- 2018: Districts 2,4,6 will elect new councilmembers





# NEXT STEPS: MONTHLY CANVASS

