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### **MAKING OUR DEMOCRACY WORK**

Civic Participation was revitalized as, Communities Organized for Relational Power in Action (COPA) registered 10,000 voters in its 'Stand Up and Take Charge' (SUTC) campaign which concluded on Election Day.

COPA engaged more than 300 leaders across Santa Cruz and Monterey counties to collect 10,000 registered voter signatures in support of a regional, non-partisan agenda of issues. COPA's SUTC agenda of issues includes innovative local strategies around economic development, community safety, immigration and health care. COPA members from the Central Coast Center for Independent Living and First Congregational Church in Santa Cruz, joined with St Mary's of the Natividad, Live Oak Family Resource Center, Temple Beth El and SEIU ULTCW to hold Monterey County officials accountable to implementing a low income health plan in Monterey County this November. Also included in the campaign's successes are the passing of a local preference policy in Monterey County and the securing of funds for housing for Dream Act/AB 540 students at UCSC.

At the Stand Up and Take Charge Regional Assembly on October 7<sup>th</sup>, COPA celebrated its victories with its diverse body of leaders from non-profit, Catholic, Jewish, and Protestant institutions and schools. As stated by Congressman Sam Farr at the Assembly, "*organized people are the antidote to organized money.*" Over 200 COPA leaders attended the Stand Up and Take Charge Regional Assembly to ask for the support of their national, state and local representatives on key issues in the Stand Up and Take Charge Agenda. Commitments were made by local officials to build trust between local law enforcement and the immigrant community, to secure funding for the next stage of the Salinas Regional Soccer Complex project, and to pass a local preference policy in Santa Cruz County that mirrors the policy passed in Monterey County.

The Stand Up and Take Charge issues agenda was created from hundreds of conversations throughout the two counties and negotiated amongst COPA's 24 member democratic and faith-based institutions. The COPA agenda reflects a diverse approach to address the struggles that families are currently facing in Central Coast Communities. Mark Linder, COPA leader from St. Stephen's Lutheran Church in Santa Cruz states, "COPA's Stand Up and Take Charge Campaign was the most challenging and exhilarating effort in the ten year history of the organization. We had thousands of conversations in our neighborhoods, in our institutions, and at public gathering places throughout the Monterey/Santa Cruz region. It was difficult work, but we discovered new leaders and found regional wide support for our agenda. It was so useful in building power for COPA that we will do it again in 2014."

COPA members are celebrating the victories of the Stand Up and Take Charge campaign and the political power that has been built through relationships with leaders from public office, local businesses, the agricultural industry, labor unions, and the non-profit sector across the Central Coast.

**About COPA:** *Communities Organized for relational Power in Action (COPA) is a multi-issue, nonpartisan organization consisting of 24 member institutions across Santa Cruz and Monterey counties, including congregations, synagogues, schools and nonprofit organizations. COPA is affiliated nationally with the Industrial Areas Foundation, the oldest and largest organizing network in the United States. For more information, contact Joaquin Sanchez, COPA Lead Organizer, (831) 277-3521.*