

COPA in 2012, Taking it to the Polls with Stand up and Take Charge

"I am working on behalf of the American people!" How many times have you heard these words from candidates or elected officials? When was the last time your civic pride overflowed due to the positive or courageous actions of elected officials? While an action or piece of legislation maybe recalled such as congressional unity following 9/11, we can readily identify far more occasions of governmental disappointment.

In this election year, the media bombards us with stories which reinforce what we already know; people with money, invest to make more money. Those "earnings" are used to buy power with the expressed political purpose of determining "our" elections. In some states, legislatures are drafting laws to limit voter accessibility. The rest of us, who cannot organize concentrated money or laws, have to compete by organizing people.

Those of us fortunately gainfully employed, cognizant of these actions, feel resentment at this inequity, yet, fail to act in response. The task, may feel too daunting to tackle. The unemployed, facing foreclosure or eviction, literally praying for food, spend their days in despair. You can't consider anything else. You either concede you're powerless or alternatively, one could consider acting in partnership with others towards positive change.

Passionate movements like Occupy, capture our attention. Their message to hold Wall Street and/or Washington accountable is commendable. However, their movement begs questions like, how do we hold those with power accountable? One answer is, working together **and taking action** on an achievable local agenda.

In the Monterey Bay, the work of Communities Organized for Relational Power in Action or COPA, a **broad-based organization comprised of dues-paying faith, non-profit, education and labor institutions**, can claim many civic accomplishments, since it's founding June, 2004, in our issue areas of affordable housing, immigration reform, education, health care, economic development and public safety.

Last Monday, COPA announced its strategy for election year 2012 with an ambitious campaign called Stand Up and Take Charge. COPA will add to its vast resume of non-partisan organizing work, with pledging 30,000 voters to the polls.

At a family home in Watsonville, COPA faith and institutional leaders including the Catholic Diocese of Monterey, Temple Beth El, Center for Community Advocacy, Live Oak Family Resource Center and dozens more, gathered to announce the Stand Up and Take Charge agenda. These home owners with COPA, teamed successfully to obtain a home loan modification which not only saved a home from foreclosure, preserved human dignity.

This COPA story, well represents the mission of COPA and is the perfect metaphor for Stand Up and Take Charge. The feelings of resignation over people with money deciding our elections will be dispelled. COPA is energized and organized to bring our members and friends to the ballot box and hold accountable elected officials from around the Monterey Bay.

A commitment has been made within COPA to produce 30,000 voters with an agenda of issues, ratified by its members. COPA believes these 30,000 represent many silent voices within our community. Our multitude of voters will minimize the antics of media vote buyers. Electoral change has arrived in the Monterey Bay.

You can find the Stand Up and Take Charge Agenda at www.copa-iaf.org. When COPA precinct walkers knock at your door please ask questions, study our agenda then, multiply the COPA 30,000, by adding your vote.

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