



May 20, 2015

Peter Lee, Executive Director  
Covered California  
1601 Exposition Blvd.  
Sacramento, CA 95815

Dear Mr. Lee,

Covered California is not ready to declare "Mission Accomplished" on voter registration.

According to the Secretary of State, since Covered California started mailing registration cards to all enrollees in March 2014 and enabling online registration, just 48,024 voters were registered through April 20, 2015. This total includes a paltry 8,175 who registered to vote online. This is just 1 percent of an estimated 4 million people who have signed up for insurance at Covered California. Assuming 75 percent of those are already registered to vote, which tracks the general population registered, that would still mean 1 million are not registered voters. If the exchange had as poor of a record converting health insurance applicants to enrollees as it does registering voters, Obamacare would have crumbled before it got off the ground.

Disturbingly, instead of acknowledging this ongoing problem, your proposed 2015-16 budget cites "oversight and legal support for the creation and implementation of the voter registration compliance program" as one of the key accomplishments of the Office of Legal Affairs, and the Policy, Evaluation and Research Division has reduced a \$1.1 million allocation for voter registration in its 2013-14 budget to \$0 for 2015-16.

We are deeply troubled by Covered California's failure to effectively implement its mandate to facilitate voter registration for the millions of Californians it serves.

Covered California started to comply with its voter registration duties a year ago only after voting rights groups were forced to threaten legal action to spur movement. Under the "Motor Voter Law," each applicant for any of Covered California services, renewal of its services, or address changes must be provided with a voter registration form or a declination form as well as assistance in completing the form and forwarding the completed application to the appropriate state or local election official.

The major contact point for people signing up is the online portal. Rather than keeping people on the Covered California site and streamlining voter registration into the enrollment process, the website forces enrollees to leave CoveredCa.com and go the Secretary of State's website when they indicate they want to register. Click-away registration doesn't work and this outdated system should not be the model for Covered California. Instead, Covered California should update the system to auto-fill

the voter form with the personal information needed to register. Such a simple change would make it much easier for Californians to register to vote.

Many eligible voters fail to register due to lack of access and opportunity. According to the Secretary of State, nearly seven million eligible voters have not registered. Nearly 60 percent of those are Latinos. A greater proportion of Latino eligible voters is younger, poorer and has less education than other groups. Nearly 68 percent of those California Latino eligible voters speak a language other than English in the home. In addition, Covered California has targeted millennials in its marketing for health insurance. Young people are twice as likely to register online compared to older people.

Covered California would seem to be in a unique position as a new public entity, with up-to-date analysis, to entice motivated unregistered residents to register. Residents who log on to its site are looking for help and guidance. They should also be receptive to become civically engaged by navigators and agents.

The budget cites one of the key accomplishments of the information technology department was a successful redesign of CoveredCA.com to reflect content and design standards to provide improved consumer experience. As far as we can tell, the voter registration portal was not included in this design because it hasn't been improved at all. The proposed budget includes \$5 million for IT infrastructure upgrades and projects necessary for organizational IT operations, security and efficiencies. This should include a budget item to enhance the voter registration process.

Covered California can create a new generation of registered voters. By simplifying the system and keeping potential voters on your site, you can become the gold standard for all other public agencies. We look forward to working with you to make sure all eligible voters are encouraged to register to vote and become civically engaged.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Carmen Balber". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal line extending from the end of the name.

Carmen Balber  
Executive Director

Cc:  
Covered California Board members  
Sarah Vu, voter registration coordinator