

Results of the Democrats of Rossmoor Feedback Forum held on September 24, 2015

52 Participants, 21 Facilitators and Scribes

Summary of Results:



On September 24, 2015, the Democrats of Rossmoor (DOR) conducted a Feedback Forum designed to give opportunities to registered Democrats living in Rossmoor (a 55+ community of 9,000+ residents located in Walnut Creek, CA) to express their views on political issues important to them. The responses of the participants will be submitted to local, state, and national campaigns in order to inform candidates of the election issues on which Rossmoor Democrats want them to focus.

The Feedback Forum participants identified their four most important issues in ranked order:

1. **Economy** — job creation, funding projects including infrastructure project funding, training/retraining, veteran preferences, tax reform, strengthened regulations on banks/trading companies
2. **Election Reform** — repeal of Citizens United; opposition to voter suppression laws, strengthening of the Voters Right Acts
3. **Education** — high-quality, free, universal education preschool through college/vocational school; student debt reduction; improvement/modification of Common Core; resolution of charter/public school issues
4. **Environment** — mitigation of climate change; drought mitigation; renewable energy, clean water/air

When asked about local issues, the Forum participants expressed the following:

- 100% are in favor of eliminating the influence of money in elections. They demand campaign reform, especially the repeal of Citizens United.
- The Feedback Forum constituency is strongly pro-union with some seeing a need for reform in strike rules and pensions.
- By a slight majority, participants favor teacher tenure but with modifications to the tenure track. A majority expressed concern about “bad teachers” who are difficult to fire. They also support increases in teacher salaries.
- Participants suggested strong Get Out The Vote activities, door-to-door campaigning, financial support for candidates in swing states and in the area where Democratic Party candidates need help.

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The Feedback Forum participants are generally well-educated, well-informed, civic-minded Democrats whose concerns are **future-oriented**. Their four identified priorities reflect support for their children and grandchildren and for the future of the country in general. When considering economic priorities, they ranked strengthening Social Security sixth (Economic Priorities) and Health was the sixth most important general issue.

Question/Feedback Issue	
<p>Local Issue #1: What issue(s) in the latest election was most important to you and why?</p>	<p>Participants tended to combine local issues with national issues. Answers are repeated in responses to other questions contained in the questionnaire.</p>
<p>Local Issue #2: If you voted for a candidate (Bonilla or Glazer) what influenced you to do so?</p>	<p>Participants who identified voting preference:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 23 Bonilla • 3 Glazer • 24 No preference listed <p>Issues identified by rank:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Pro-union (12), anti-union (2) 2. Progressive candidate 3. School support <p>Sample Observations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Glazer is anti-union. Bonilla is more progressive. • BART strike was important. • Glazer is more representative of Republicans, and Glazer didn't cast a vote in the State Senate on immigration. • Pro-Glazer liked his views on education. • Disgusted with advertising of both candidates. Bonilla is good on education; honest.
<p>Local Issue #3: Would you support a candidate who works to take measures to end the influence of money in politics both by lobbyists and in excessive campaign spending?</p>	<p>100% of the participants responded YES.</p> <p>Sample Observations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support candidates who work to reverse Citizens United. Pass the Disclose Act. • Excessive spending is fueled by big money talking and influencing the average citizen's vote.

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<p>Local Issue #4: How do you view public employee unions (e.g., teachers, fire, police, transit, office workers) in California?</p>	<p>The Feedback Forum constituency is strongly pro-union with some seeing a need for reform in strike rules and pensions.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 31 Strongly pro-public unions • 7 Pro-union but believe pensions are too high • 5 Anti-public unions • 4 Pro-union with reservations • 2 Pro-union but anti-strike (e.g., BART) • 1 Neutral <p>Sample Observations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I support unions. We need their strength to cope with big business. • There should be support of unions nationwide. The employees need a spokesperson for them so they can do their jobs effectively. • We need to protect unions and when Rossmoor builds something and doesn't support the Carpenters' Union we should yell! • I am a CALPERS beneficiary, however, I do not support pension spiking and other excesses currently practiced. • Pension reform is long overdue. Some pensions are really excessive. • Mixed feelings. Teachers union resists firing of bad teachers; seniority is more important to it. • There are many devoted employees in these professions, but, in the past, gains haven't matched public funds.
<p>Local Issue #5: How do you view other labor unions in general?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 80% of the participants were supportive of unions. • 15% were supportive with reservation. • 5% were neutral or did not respond. <p>Sample observations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The country needs unions so that corporations don't have total control as they do now. • Unions are necessary to assure good working conditions and a living wage for people; they helped create the middle class. • Unions are the backbone to the middle class success that we enjoyed until Reagan became president. • OK, but have to question BART strikes (the idea of the greater good). • The BART strike was not good! • Labor unions have greatly benefited employees, but some gains have been

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • unreasonable, e.g., retiring with full pay. • Unions are under pressure; need change of image. • Mostly favorable however I think there are abuses in unions.
<p>Local Issue #6: What do you think about teacher tenure and the seniority system?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 35% of participants supported teacher tenure/seniority system with modifications. • 23% were opposed. • 23% were in support without modification. • 12.5%% did not know or did not respond. • 6% registered support for pay increases for teachers without indicating opinions on tenure/seniority. <p>Sample Observations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher tenure gets bad press, but I'm not comfortable with alternatives. • Tenure is important for quality instructors/professors to stay in educating. Teachers have an obligation to provide for their families and have security in their fields. They should not be rated on students' grades/success. • Favor tenure, but it should take 5 years. Tenure is challenging. Limited or rolling tenure might be preferred; five year rolling tenure. • Need changes; need better administrators who evaluate teachers fairly and honestly. • Teacher tenure and seniority have been very detrimental to districts such as Oakland. The system discourages new teachers. • It is a difficult problem. Teachers are underpaid. How do we support them? I don't like automatic tenure. • The whole system needs review and overhaul. Tenure needs to be overhauled. Bad teachers should not be rewarded. • Charter schools pull smart kids out of public schools. • With the paltry pay teachers get, it's probably the only way to keep them. Pay them more and we can do it differently.
<p>What should/could Democrats do at the local level to assure a victory in the 2016 election?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 25% specifically identified GOTV (Get Out The Vote) and registration activities. • 31% did not respond or did not know. <p>Other responses included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change techniques — reduce phone calls/mailings <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ TV ads ○ Open meetings

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Slate cards ○ Door to door; walk the precincts. • Provide clear messaging <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Democratic accomplishments under Pres. Obama ○ Positive, empathic messaging ○ Address issues that affect all, not just unions. • Fund candidates in swing states (“we are set in this area”)
Prioritized General Issues	
<p>Priority 1: Economic Priorities</p>	<p>Respondents ranked the following as the highest priorities:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Economy 2. Election Reform 3. Education 4. Environment <p>Respondents expressed a belief that the highest priorities are interrelated: a good education and/or retraining are essential to economic growth; job creation requires that workers are educated to fill vacancies and to succeed in industries like alternative energy (environment), climate change mitigation recycled water, clean air. Election reform includes campaign finance reform, fighting against voter suppression, ability to elect candidates who work on economic, education, and environmental priorities.</p> <p>A high percent of participants identified job creation/funding projects as the most important priority for the Democratic Party to address.</p> <p>Economic Priorities Breakdown:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 42% — Job creation and Fund projects (infrastructure funding, worker training/retraining, veteran preferences, efficient public transportation, roadways, rail lines, and safe bridges, dams waterways) • 15% — Tax reform • 11.7% — Strengthen regulations on banks/trading companies • 10% — Increase minimum wage • 7.5% — Strengthen Social Security • 5.5% — Equal pay, opportunities for women • 5.5% — Other issues, e.g., Veteran care, jobs, retraining for workers in general, subsidize innovative job creation/ideas, prison reform

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2.75% — High-quality, affordable childcare <p>Sample Observations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Since the business community has not been very successful, the Federal Government needs to fund infrastructure and new energy saving devices, including solar. Unless the tax laws are reformed we will continue to have the great divide between big and little businesses, the wealthy and the poor. Everyone should have a living wage. • Just moved to California, but maintaining infrastructure is important to everyone at every level. Plus it creates jobs. Gas tax is to take care of the roads. Minimum wage increases are necessary to sustain families at the lowest levels. As for bank regulations, we can never allow what happened in the past to happen again. • Our veterans deserve everything we can do for them. • More revenue from the very rich; also tax Wall Street transactions. Fund projects by this increase in revenue. Specify that all project products be manufactured in the USA. • Take the income cap off of Social Security and FICA.
<p>Priority 2: Election Reform</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 38% ranked Repeal Citizens United first • 31.5% ranked Fight Voter Suppression first • 30% ranked Strengthen the Voting Rights Act first <p>Sample Observations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Money is driving elections, and lobbying needs reform. • Citizens United is a top issue for 2016. Amend the Constitution to assure that corporations are not people. • Address voter suppression. Identify gerrymandering and oppose it.
<p>Priority 3: Education</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 39.7% ranked high-quality, free education preschool through college/vocational school first • 35.2 ranked student debt/loan relief first • 13% ranked addressing charter school issues first • 11.7% ranked addressing Common Core issues first <p>Sample Observations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We have to improve the quality of education our children receive. We must prepare students to be competitive in our fast-changing world. Common Core has very high goals, but can minority children keep up with the demands? • Public education should not have any cost. Cap student loans at bank prime rate. Do

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	<p>not fund charter schools.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student debt/loans — we should be like all nations in the world. Let us give our children the chance to have an education without having the loan hanging over their heads... • Reform Prop 13. • Control for-profit colleges.
<p>Priority 4: Environment</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 39.6% ranked renewable energy; recycled, clean water/clean air first • 33.3% ranked Address climate change; global warming first • 26.9% ranked Address drought issues first <p>Sample Observations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Invest aggressively in renewable. • Make solar more affordable for homes and businesses. • Remove oil/gas subsidies. • Support innovation and start-ups. • Invest in infrastructure for recycled water. • Land productivity is not valued enough; build differently. • Investments in the environment/alternative energy will bring jobs.
<p>Priority 5: Immigration</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 39% ranked Comprehensive Immigration Reform with a path to citizenship first • 31.1% ranked maintaining the Dream Act first • 29.5% ranked maintaining the 14th Amendment (Birth right citizenship) first <p>Sample Observations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reform with path to green card to citizenship. Reagan “permanent legal residence” with path to citizenship. Republicans fear more Democratic votes. Can’t get rid of 11 million undocumented and must have them work in hotels, fields, etc. • People will risk anything to have a better life. All people should have the freedom to move, within safety concerns. The Dream Act is wonderful! We need it. • The Dream Act gives kids a path to citizenship. Change the law so babies born here and taken away can’t be citizens. Offer all a path to citizenship — take civics classes and stay a period of time. Become literate in English. • Yes for 14th Amendment, but it is being abused; reduce abuse. If you are here illegally, no path to citizenship. • Reform is needed. Illegal immigrants are afraid to go to the police, if police are needed. Birthright Citizenship is being abused.

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<p>Priority 6: Health</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 37.5% ranked the Affordable Care Act first. • 35.7% ranked Drug Costs as first. • 26.7% ranked Medicare and MediCal first. <p>Sample Observations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Affordable Care Act is most important; don't want it reversed. We need more • Drug companies are driving up costs on necessary medications. Until we get control of drug costs, we can't bring down medical costs. • Stop the prohibition on negotiating drug costs. Democrats should brag about the success of the ACA. • We need a single payer system. • Everyone deserves to get health care no matter their incomes. Planned Parenthood is a big issue. Keep funding for women's health issues. • Take the cap off of FICA, which funds Social Security. Doctors are getting paid for drugs they prescribe. Why does the US pay more for drugs than other countries, e.g., Canada?
<p>Priority 7: Foreign Policy/Defense Sample Issues</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 47% named diplomatic relations first • 29.4% ranked military deployment first. • 23.5% ranked national security first <p>Sample Observations:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Obama has done well. Hope his good negotiating keeps us from war in Iran. • We need national security, not world security. • Too much money in defense. "Manifest Destiny" brought us to the Pacific. We can stop. • Diplomatic relations are very important. American people don't want to send troops. Americans are insensitive to foreign countries; need to increase knowledge of other cultures. • National Security policy is to keep terrorists out. We need to identify what national security is. Too war-like. • Must keep our guard up. Oil companies/corporations dominated the Mideast and foreign policy. Diplomatic relations are as important as national security. We can't solve all the world's problems. • Put more women in power! The US has military installations in 135 countries. Corporations have interests in foreign countries; then we send "protection."