

California's New Majority: 2004 Legislative Report Card on Race

Executive Summary

REPORT CARD FINDINGS

This is California's first multiracial report card on the State Legislature and Governor that assesses their support for policies that advance racial equity to close disparities, protect against violence and discrimination, and promote civic participation for all Californians. The findings demonstrate the growing significance of California's changing demographics and the need for racially conscious policy making.

Both the Senate and Assembly earned a C for support of racial equity for California. However, this grade masks disparities along party lines. 90 percent of Assembly Member Democrats and 76 percent of Senate Democrats received As, while the vast majority of Republican counterparts received an 'F' — 94 percent of Assembly Members and 93 percent of Senators.

Governor Schwarzenegger received a failing grade for vetoing 70 percent of the racial equity reforms rated in this report. The Governor favored business interests and misinterpreted new protections as duplicative or unconstitutional.

Two racial equity bills received significant support from both parties: Native American Sacred Preservation (SB 18) and Food Stamp Restoration (SB 1399).

Thirty-four Assembly Members and 11 Senators made the honor roll for 100% support for racial equity. Assembly Member Shirley Horton (R-78), Assembly Member Keith Stuart Richman (R-38), and Senator Bruce McPherson (R-15) deserve honorable mention as the only Republicans to receive passing grades for their support of racial equity.

REPORT CARD METHODOLOGY

The 2004 Legislative Report Card on Race evaluates and grades each member of the Assembly and Senate, as well as the Governor, based on their votes on key racial equity legislation. Ten pieces of legislation were chosen that, if passed, would have the most direct positive impact on communities of color. These policies represent the top ten racial equity legislative initiatives that were voted on by both the Assembly and Senate in 2004.

Five criteria for racial equity were developed in selecting the legislation:

- Does the legislation explicitly address racial outcomes and work to eliminate racial inequities?
- Will the legislation increase access to public benefits and institutions for communities of color?
- Does the legislation advance enfranchisement and full civic participation for all Californians?
- Will the legislation protect against racial violence, racial profiling, and discrimination?
- Is the legislation enforceable? Are there mechanisms in place to ensure accountability?

Bills were chosen that best represented at least one of the above criteria. Policies were selected to ensure that all of California's communities of color would be represented in this report card. In addition, the report includes a preliminary list of pending and potential racial equity policies for consideration in 2005 and beyond. In the appendix, the members of the 2005 Assembly and Senate are listed, along with a demographic breakdown for each legislative district.