



## ***2005 Legislative Report Card on Racial Equity***

### **Executive Summary**

#### **REPORT CARD FINDINGS**

The California Department of Finance forecasts that by 2050, 77 percent of Californians will be people of color. Although a growing number of legislators are introducing policies to advance racial equity, the *2005 Legislative Report Card on Racial Equity* finds that the State Legislature and Governor Schwarzenegger lack both the political will and a cohesive plan to address the needs of the growing majority of the state's population. The top 18 racial equity bills to reach the Governor's desk had common themes of increasing access, closing disparities, and protecting against discrimination and hate. While these policies would have a positive impact on communities of color because they address the particular structural disadvantages existing along racial lines, all Californians would benefit from these reforms.

**The Assembly received a C and the Senate a D grade for support of racial equity for California.** This grade, however, masks disparities along party lines and by the racial demographics of legislative districts.

**Governor Schwarzenegger vetoed 8 of 18 racial equity reforms; a 56 percent rating equating to a D average.** Policies that would have provided significant structural changes in California were rejected by the Governor. The Health Access for Kids (AB 772) and the Fair Minimum Wage Increase (AB 48) if signed, would have improved the plight of millions of Black, Latino, Asian, Native, immigrant, and poor communities across the state.

**Five racial equity bills received strong bipartisan support;** School Spending Accountability (SB 687); Improving Access, Counseling and Treatment for Prostate Cancer (SB 650)); Language Reporting by Hospitals (AB 800); Protections Against Human Trafficking (AB 22); and Civil Justice for Hate Crime Survivors (AB 378)

**Districts with highest percent populations of people of color were most likely to support racial equity:** Average scores for Assembly and Senate districts with populations of 75 percent or more people of color were 97 percent in the Assembly and 92 percent in the Senate. In comparison, districts with white majorities voted for racial equity 51 percent of the time in the Assembly and 43 percent of the time in the Senate. Fifteen Assembly Members and seven Senators in districts with majority white populations received an A for their support for racial equity.

**Legislative ethnic caucuses stand behind racial equity:** The Asian/Pacific Islander Legislative Caucus received a perfect score for 100 percent support of racial equity; the Latino Legislative Caucus received a 96 percent score; and the California Legislative Black Caucus scored 90 percent. The legislature's four Republicans of color received a cumulative failing grade of 44 percent.

**Thirty-one Assembly Members and seven Senators made the honor role** for 100 percent support for racial equity. Assembly Members Bonnie Garcia (R-80) and Shirley Horton (R-78) and Senator Abel Maldonado (R-15) deserve honorable mention as the only Republicans to receive passing grades for their support of racial equity legislation.

**The Report Card exposes Missed Opportunities, revealing where and how racial equity policies were undermined throughout the legislative process;** most important reforms for communities of color do not make it out of committee or are significantly weakened before they reach a vote.

**Legislating institutional racism was evident in a number of proposed bills for 2005:** Bills like Criminalizing Poverty (SB 786), Punishing the Uninsured (AB 1670), Writing Discrimination into the Constitution (ACA 6), Tuition Discrimination (AB 589), and Promoting Racial Profiling (AB 332) targeted immigrants and low-income families, and regardless of intent, would have racist outcomes. None of these bills passed out of the legislature.

## **REPORT CARD METHODOLOGY**

*2005 Legislative Report Card on Racial Equity* evaluates and grades the Governor and members of the California State Legislature on their responses to eighteen pieces of legislation that, if passed by the Legislature and signed into law by the Governor, would have the most direct positive impact on communities of color.

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 with a view toward representing the breadth of California's communities.

The report card is broken down into five issue areas: educational equity, economic justice, health equity, civil rights, and criminal justice. Each section provides an overview of racial disparities, a description of key legislation advance in 2005, and a summary of grades for the Assembly, Senate, and Governor. Demographics of each legislative district are included in the appendix.

Grading on a Curve: Partisan politics has meant that some of the most important reforms for communities of color do not make it out of committee or are significantly weakened before they reach a vote on the floor of the Assembly or Senate. This report card exposes missed opportunities, revealing where and how racial equity policies were undermined throughout the legislative process.