



Close the gap CA 2017 Report

Introduction

After two election cycles in which we tried out various methods of recruiting and measured our effectiveness, we concluded that the positive results are sufficient to commit to a decade-long effort. The campaign for gender parity in the CA Legislature can succeed by 2028 if we continue to expand networks, alliances and resources.

Success will require slightly more infrastructure, broader collaboration with the progressive community and a deeper network of local sources to assist in identifying talent early. This year, we transitioned from Beta-testing to strategic campaigning. Here's what we did.

Recruiting

What looked to be a sleepy year for recruiting turned out to be a sprint to the finish. Viable progressive women have now declared in each of these winnable open seats.

AD 30 (Salinas, Watsonville)	SD 12 (Merced)
AD 15 (Richmond, Berkeley, Oakland)	SD 22 (San Gabriel Valley)
AD 51 (Northeast LA)	SD 24 (Central and East LA)

AD 39 is open as of 11/28/17 and we are working with prospective candidates there.

We keep a "watch list" of legislative seats that may come open mid-term and we're prospecting in them. We ventured into recruiting in districts where (AD 16, AD 76) conservative incumbents serve in "purple" districts.

In May, our once-an-election-cycle Sacramento Symposium for prospective 2018 and 2020 candidates was a big hit. Senator Holly Mitchell, Assembly members Eloise Reyes and Shirley Weber along with policy experts, advocates and women's political organizations made the case for service in the legislature.

Twenty-one women were trained at "Recruiter College" in Sacramento and Riverside in September. They will be invaluable "eyes and ears" across the state as we launch our searches for 2020 and 2022 prospects.

Coming Up: a three-day, Central Valley Search Party in January 2018. CTGCA will be in Stockton, Merced, Modesto and Fresno the last week of January for one on one meetings, roundtables and receptions. Building political infrastructure here is key to turning the Valley blue.



Communications

Our message about the value and urgency of achieving gender-parity in the legislature was carried to a wider audience this year and in more diverse ways. We spoke at conferences and on panels, and tabled at events.

We launched a new website www.closesthegapca.org, doubled our following on Facebook, occasionally employed Twitter and added Instagram.

Weekly Alerts covered a wide range of topics: women legislators' bills the Governor signed and those he vetoed. We delved into the fine art of targeting districts and shared plans to engage more former members in mentoring prospective candidates. In addition, our Alerts serve as a virtual bulletin board and clipping service for the progressive women's community.

Fundraising

This year, we hit our stride. With fundraising events in Silicon Valley, Sacramento, Los Angeles and San Francisco, 2017 will be our most productive year yet. Literature, Leadership and Lunch (LLL) events bring political women and writers together to explore women and leadership in politics and beyond. Through these gatherings, we fuel the campaign and many non-political women are finding their way to activism.

In 2018, we will launch "roundtable" discussions for gatherings of up to a dozen donors with special guests. Stay tuned!

Operations

Our biggest challenge by far has been making the transition from a primarily volunteer-powered campaign to a staff driven one. We developed a Board of Directors to guide policy and expand our reach; hired a Finance Director and launched a search for a fulltime Executive Director. More on that soon!

We recruited a Controller to work with us on budgeting and to provide greater fiscal oversight. We are blessed with an extraordinarily talented Volunteer Coordinator and volunteers for whom we're extremely grateful. With an excellent Allies Coordinator in place, we are better collaborators and learn about prospective candidates sooner.

There's more to do to complete our transition to a fully resourced, sustainable campaign for the next decade. Equipping CTGCA to achieve its objective of gender parity in the legislature will always require our best efforts, but in 2017 we made great progress.