The Case for Civic Engagement
SFOP Leaders Retreat 2012
Changing the Narrative Based on Myths

• Success comes from hard work and right living alone.
• Individuals and communities can and do thrive without strong policies, programs and institutions.
• Race, ethnicity and economics have no impact on access to opportunity.
SFOP’s Organizing Work

1. Narrative Change
2. Policy Change
$20 Billion
Projected State budget deficit for 2012-13
75% Percentage of the state budget that goes directly to city & county services
Fraction of CA voters who are white and over age 65.

Whites make up 44% of the population, but 65% of likely voters.

Latinos make up 33% of the population but only 17% of likely voters.
$49.3 Billion
Profit that Wells Fargo made between 2008-10.
$681 Million

The amount of federal REFUND that Wells Fargo received in 2010.
400% Annual percentage rate on a bank-financed payday loan made to a low-income family
How Does This Happen?

$20 Billion

75%

2/3

$49.3 Billion

$681 Million

400%
Cycle of Economic Descent

CA Voters: majority white, older, higher income; Largest election donations come from corporate donors

People of color & youth are further disenfranchised – poverty, voter suppression laws, lack of hope, etc.

State income shrinks. Critical services erode. Those in need of those services are blamed.

Policies reflect interests of voters and donors; these are messaged as “common good”

Policy & tax loopholes mean corporate donors and those with higher incomes contribute less.
Organizing = Interruption

Engage youth and others most impacted and make sure they vote!

People of color & youth are further disenfranchised – poverty, felonies, lack of hope, etc.

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Advocacy around policies that impact our families

Prophetic leadership – message of need for systemic change

Voter Registration & Engagement in OUR communities
November 2012: CA’s DECISION

Governor’s Revenue Measure (Prop. 30)
- $8.5 billion in 2012-13 and 2013-14
- Increases income taxes for those making $250k +
- Increases state sales tax by ¼ cent for 4 years
- Opens the door for greater tax policy reform

No New Sources of State Revenue
- $6 billion in budget cuts
- $4.8 billion cut to K-12
- K-12 school year cut by as much as 3 weeks (20 days BELOW national average)
- Most of the rest from CSU, UC, Community Colleges and Law Enforcement
November 2012: SFOP’s DECISION

No Voter Track Record or Credential

- Leaves action as only way to hold officials accountable
- Bystanders who largely get lip-service from electeds
- No ability to make change at the ballot box
- Stereotypes of our community members affirmed

100% Voting Congregations, Schools & Communities

- Powerful tool to make change directly
- Clear way to hold elected officials accountable
- Power to enact our agenda for neighborhoods and city
- Our people thrive in schools, jobs, housing, etc.
“The worst illiterate is the political illiterate. He hears nothing, sees nothing, takes no part in political life. He doesn’t seem to know that...the price of beans, of flour, of rent, of medicines all depend on political decisions... He doesn’t know that from his political non-participation comes the prostitute, the abandoned child, the robber and worst of all, the corrupt officials, the lackeys of exploitative multinational corporations.”

- Bertolt Brecht
Questions & Reactions

Discussion in Pairs & Small Groups:
- What struck you?
- How does this cycle impact your community?
- What are you willing to do to impact Decision 2012?
Decision-Making Time!

• How much energy are we willing to put towards civic engagement as an organization?
• Are you individually and collectively excited about making a big impact on the November 2012 election?