

oakland LOCAL

Prop. 30 passage seen as a grassroots victory

Published on Wednesday, November 07, 2012

Last updated on 06:09PM, Saturday, November 10, 2012



Oakland Rising members returned their notes after knocking doors for Prop. 30

The victory of [Proposition 30](#) – which averts a huge cut to public school education – is a page-turner in California history, Oakland proponents say, in that the young, the vulnerable, people of color, labor, immigrants, and people of faith had their say in state politics.

In Oakland alone, some 150 to 200 volunteers knocked on doors and called neighbors to ask for support of the proposition and get out the vote, according to [Oakland Rising](#), a coalition of four Oakland community groups that called on its members to get involved.

"This is largest community led voter mobilization effort in recent California history," said Vivian Chang, an Oakland resident and mother of two and co-founder of [Oakland Rising](#), as she walked Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard on Tuesday evening knocking on doors to remind supporters to get to their polling booths before the polls closed.

"The folks most affected by budget cuts also have traditionally been those who stay at home on election day," she said. So, a huge get-out-the-vote effort by Oakland Rising's member groups, the [Ella Baker Center for Human Rights](#), [Causa Justa](#), the [Asian Pacific Environmental Network](#), the [East Bay Alliance for a Sustainable Economy](#) and [Mujeres Unidos y Activas](#), was put into action in recent days and weeks. They were part of a bigger, statewide action called [Reclaiming California's Future](#).

"What's at play is a long term political movement," she said.

Proposition 30 won with 53.9 percent of California votes cast in its favor, according to the California Secretary of State's statistics posted this morning. The measure temporarily raise the sales tax by 1/4 of a percent and income taxes on people earning more than \$250,000 a year by one percent to three percent with the proceeds directed to maintain funding for public school education and public safety.

Sure, California Gov. Jerry Brown and labor groups had a lot do with Prop. 30's victory in that the Governor proposed the measure and vigorously campaigned for it and the [California Teachers Association](#) and the SEIU/California State Council of Service Employees were its main financial backers.

But across the state, 14,000 people affiliated with grassroots organizations volunteered on an endeavor called Reclaiming California's Future which was about knocking on doors and calling

people to ask for votes for Prop.30. They reached 426,000 potential voters, Chang said.

Tuesday night, as the last hour of voting ticked away at California polling booths, about 17 of those volunteers were still walking Oakland neighborhoods, knocking on doors and making sure people they believed were supporters had voted.

"Oh I voted for sure," responded Rosie Davis, calling down from the balcony of her apartment on Martin Luther King Blvd. to some Oakland Rising volunteers. "I got up early and went there first thing this morning," she said.

For [Oakland Unified School District](#), the passage of Proposition 30 means it avoids cuts that could have been \$13 million mid-year and another \$20 million in September, according to board of education members interviewed in the weeks up to Election Day. So its passage is a huge relief.

"We're relieved and grateful," said OUSD Superintendent Tony Smith. "It's not easy to impose taxes when people are struggling, but a majority of Californians made the tough choice to invest in our children, because it's the right thing to do and because they realize that investment will be returned many times over in the form a better educated, more employable, more productive and more responsible citizenry."

Retired OUSD teacher Andrew Young, who now often substitutes in the schools, said that Oakland schools could have hardly shouldered more budget cuts.

"As a current substitute in Oakland public schools I can certainly say that I feel a great sense of relief," he said. "Passage of Prop 30 means a stable school year ahead. Unfortunately, a stable status quo is continued austerity in many respects— class sizes that are much larger than they were prior to the recession and a good deal of administrative juggling to allocate scarce resources."

But parent Pelle Bourelly said that assurances of Prop 30 money is not all that education needs and she does not want politicians in Sacramento to feel off the hook from reforming education in the state so that schools are more accountable.

"As a parent who sits on two SSC's (school site councils), Chabot Elementary and Claremont Middle School, and the mother of three students attending two public schools in Oakland, my concern is that politicians are not being held accountable for the current state of the educational system. More money is not necessarily going to rectify this. The current system is antiquated and not sufficient for raising the young scholars CA insists they have made a commitment to," Bourelly said in an email.

"We parents need to hold politicians accountable for the decisions they make," she said. "I need assurances that the money will benefit the schools in lower income neighborhoods."

Tuesday's election also brought the re-election of two Oakland school board members, Jody London and Jumoke Hinton Hodge, while incumbent Alice Spearman lost to challenger James Harris. Newcomer Rosie Torres, a parent involved in Oakland schools, was elected to an open seat representing the Fruitvale neighborhood.

Hinton Hodge, in an email interview about Prop.30 prior to the election, said that what could be lost "is painful to even think about."

If Prop. 30 had been defeated, she said, it "could force further consolidation of schools, teachers and services." She said she particularly feared that special programs such as the African American Male Achievement Initiative and Programs for Exceptional Children would be particularly hurt. She also said a desire to increase teachers' salaries would also be at stake.

About [Barbara Grady](#)

Barbara Grady is a freelance reporter who often writes for Oakland Local. Before her current stint of writing about social issues for various news and non-profit organizations, Barbara was on staff at the Oakland Tribune and, earlier, at Reuters. She's a recipient of a Sigma Delta Chi award from the Society of Professional Journalists for a series published in 2008. Contact her at barbgrady1@gmail.com