

# **A Study of Impediments to Voter Registration**

**Focusing on the  
Doña Ana County  
Hispanic Population**

**September, 2014**



# A Study of Impediments to Voter Registration

September 4, 2014

## 1.0 Introduction

In 2012, the League of Women Voters of Greater Las Cruces approved the initiation of a study of impediments to voter registration for citizens that are eligible to vote. The study was initially defined as follows:

*The scope of this study is to research voting participation of the general population and of sub-populations to discover whether populations with certain characteristics display different voting behaviors. This could involve analysis of historic voting records by ethnicity, age, gender, income, type of residence (urban or rural), and type of election (general, primary, municipal, bond issue, school board). If statistically significant discrepancies among eligible voters of different populations are found, the study should be prioritized by size of the population in order to discover what variables account for this. Possible government actions could then be proposed to remove impediments to voter participation in the general population and/or for specific groups.*

A study committee was formed with the following participants:

Committee Chair: Roberta Gran

Committee Members: Johnnie Aldrich, Sue Cain, Jane Carter, Martha Duran, Barbara Goedecke, Dr. Rae Fortunato, Erika Graf-Webster. Additional League members participated in some of the committee's activities.

At the study's kick-off meeting, the study statement shown above was discussed. It was agreed that the statement laid out very broad objectives, and that it would take a very long time (probably several years) to address its full scope. In order to enable the completion of this study within a reasonable time (a year or two), the study committee agreed to limit the population studied to the Hispanic community in Doña Ana County. Research (see Section 2) later determined that Hispanics actually make up 66% of the county's residents, so the study did in fact address a large segment of the local population.

There had been considerable effort on the part of the League and other organizations such as Comunidades en Accion y de Fé (CAFé) to register Hispanic voters. Various media reports stated that over 50% of the Hispanic citizens in the US were not registered to vote, but there were no data on that statistic for the county. There was a sense among committee members that the 50+% statistic would be roughly reflected in the Doña Ana County population of unregistered Hispanic citizens as well. But the committee wanted better, more accurate information.

**The study's objectives, therefore, were to (a) determine (as best as could be done) the actual percentage of Doña Ana County's Hispanic citizens that were not registered voters, and, (2) to determine the reasons why our Hispanic citizens do not register to vote.**

The planned application of the data gathered in this study is League action, via education and distribution of information, to increase the number of registered voters, especially Hispanic voters.

The immediate focus of the committee was to start identifying what kinds of data exist that capture the total eligible voting population and the percentage of the Hispanic population that actually votes. The online research to capture these data is discussed in the next section. A number of community interviews were also done, and these are described in Section 3.

The committee agreed that it would want to do a survey, one that was fairly brief and not onerous, within the Hispanic community to determine why so many Hispanic citizens have not registered to vote.

The survey, its results, the conclusions reached, and follow-up plan are covered in Sections 4, 5 and 6. The committee realizes that this survey cannot be labeled as a scientifically valid representation of Doña Ana County's Hispanic citizens about voter registration. This is not only due to the number of responses being a very small fraction of the total population, but also because it was not possible to ensure an accurate proportional representation of age groups, income levels or other socio-economic characteristics of the target population. The committee does feel, however, that the results lead us to some understanding of the cultural attitudes and lack of knowledge among citizens of the voter registration process.

## 2.0 Online Research

One impetus for this study was a report heard on the radio by one of the study participants that "52% of Hispanic citizens are not registered to vote". This seemed like a startling statistic, and the research described in this section was intended to determine the accuracy of this statement, and to determine, if possible, the percentage of Hispanic citizens in Doña Ana County who are registered voters.

Regarding the nation as a whole, the following appears on the Gallup polling website<sup>1</sup>, dated November 6, 2013:

PRINCETON, NJ -- U.S. Hispanics and Asians are much less likely to be registered to vote than whites or blacks. Whereas more than eight in 10 blacks and whites are registered, and therefore able to vote in elections, 60% of Asians and barely half of Hispanics are currently able to participate in the electoral process.

| <i>Self-Reported Voter Registration by Racial and Ethnic Subgroup</i> |                     |
|---|---------------------|
|   | <b>% Registered</b> |
| All Americans   | 78                  |
| Non-Hispanic whites   | 85                  |
| Non-Hispanic blacks   | 81                  |
| Asians  | 60                  |
| Hispanics   | 51                  |
| Gallup Daily tracking, July 1-Sept. 26, 2013                          |                     |
| GALLUP®   |                     |

The results are based on Gallup Daily tracking interviews conducted from July 1-Sept. 26, and include interviews with more than 4,000 Hispanics and 1,000 Asians.

The committee was satisfied that these data well represented the US. The challenge now was to find good data for New Mexico and for Doña Ana County.

## 2.1 The Search for Hispanic Registration Data for New Mexico

The study team contacted both the Doña Ana County Bureau of Elections and the New Mexico Secretary of State. Both confirmed that ethnicity data are not captured when individuals register to vote.

An extensive Internet search was then conducted to determine whether such data existed anywhere. This search identified Dr. Gabriel Sanchez, an Associate Professor of Political Science at the University of New Mexico, and Director of Research for [Latino Decisions](#) as an expert in Hispanic voter information. Latino Decisions is a website devoted to Hispanic opinion and behavior research.

Dr. Sanchez has been published in a wide range of academic journals and is also a co-author of “Hispanics and the U.S. Political System”, one of the most popular Latino Politics textbooks in colleges today. Sanchez has been the principal or co-principal investigator on several large-scale surveys, including the Latino Decisions National Poll on Health Care Reform (2009), and the Collaborative Multi-racial Post-election Study (2008).

We contacted Dr. Sanchez by telephone. While he was well aware of the Hispanic voting trends in the state, he said he had not done any surveys about Hispanic voter registration, and was not aware of the existence of such data. He said a new survey would have to be done.

However, he has documented the importance of the Hispanic voter in elections. The study group felt that this was interesting background information, so we are citing it here. In “The State of Play in New Mexico: The Role of the 2010 Winners in 2012 Race”<sup>2</sup>, Dr. Sanchez states: “Latinos make up nearly half of the state’s population, and more importantly, comprise nearly 40% of New Mexico’s electorate, the highest ratio in the nation for both categories. Consequently, elections in New Mexico are essentially always dependent on the voting behavior of the Hispanic community.”

Other publications and resources also emphasized the importance of the Hispanic voter. The June 9, 2012 issue of the New York Times contained an article entitled “Latino Growth Not Fully Felt at Voting Booth”<sup>3</sup> by Adam Nagourney. This article states:

*“The nation’s rapidly growing Latino population is one of the most powerful forces working in President Obama’s favor in many of the states that will determine his contest with Mitt Romney. But Latinos are not registering or voting in numbers that fully reflect their potential strength, leaving Hispanic leaders frustrated and Democrats worried as they increase efforts to rally Latino support.”*

*Interviews with Latino voters across the country suggested a range of reasons for what has become, over a decade, an entrenched pattern of nonparticipation, ranging from a distrust of government to a fear of what many see as an intimidating effort by law enforcement and political leaders to crack down on immigrants, legal or not.”*

The article further cites that, as a percentage of the voting population, far fewer Hispanics vote than do Whites or African American. For example, in Nevada, only 42% of eligible Hispanics are registered (no data for New Mexico were given).

## 2.2 Population Baseline Data

Since it seemed that we would not be able to obtain hard numeric data about Hispanic voter registration, the study group decided to at least identify the valid demographics for the Hispanic population of New Mexico and Doña Ana County.

The following information is from the Pew Hispanic Research Center<sup>4</sup>:

**Table 1**  
**Population and Electorate in the United States and New Mexico, 2010**

|  | U.S.    | New Mexico | New Mexico state rank |
|--|---------|------------|-----------------------|
| <b>Total population (all ages)</b>                                       |         |            |                       |
| All (thousands)  | 309,350 | 2,066      | 36                    |
| Hispanics (thousands)  | 50,730  | 960        | 9                     |
| Percent Hispanic   | 16.4    | 46.5       | 1                     |
| <b>Total eligible voter population (U.S. citizens ages 18 and older)</b> |         |            |                       |
| All (thousands)  | 214,972 | 1,426      | 37                    |
| Hispanics (thousands)  | 21,509  | 550        | 8                     |
| Percent Hispanic   | 10.0    | 38.6       | 1                     |
| <b>Eligibility of Hispanic population</b>                                |         |            |                       |
| Percent of Hispanic population eligible to vote                          | 42.4    | 57.3       | 3*                    |

Notes: Percentages calculated before rounding. \*Rankings for "Percent of Hispanic population eligible to vote" are based on the District of Columbia and the 46 states whose Hispanic samples in the 2010 American Community Survey (ACS) are large enough to generate reliable estimates. All other rankings are based on the District of Columbia and the 50 states.

Source: Pew Hispanic Center tabulations of the 2010 American Community Survey (1% IPUMS sample)

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

The US census webpage includes surveys done during the 2012 election. Here are the data on Hispanic vs. total population voting reported for New Mexico.<sup>5</sup>

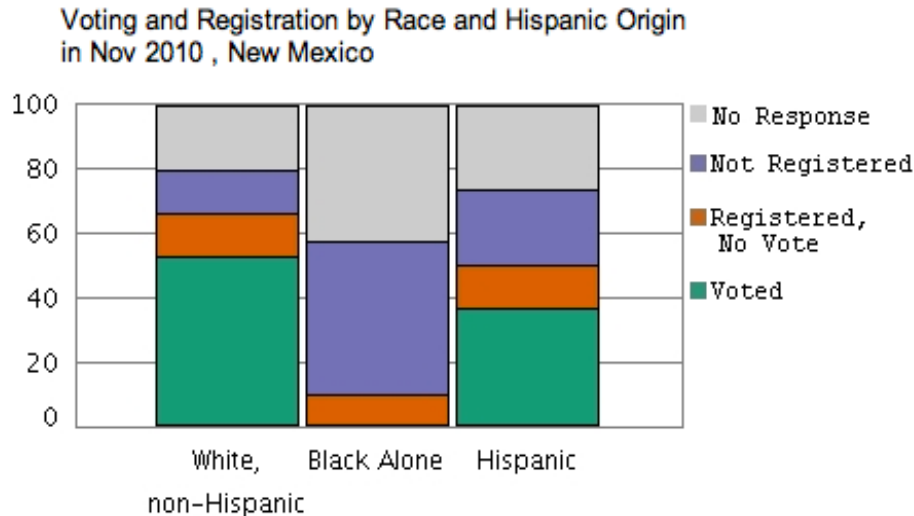
Table 4b. Reported Voting and Registration, by Sex, Race and Hispanic Origin, for States: November 2012 (in thousands)

| State      | Race and Hispanic origin | Total Population | Total Citizen Population | Total registered | Percent registered (Total) | Total voted | Percent voted (Citizen) |
|------------|--------------------------|------------------|--------------------------|------------------|----------------------------|-------------|-------------------------|
| NEW MEXICO | Total                    | 1,553            | 1,426                    | 978              | 63.0                       | 878         | 61.6                    |
|            | Hispanic (of any race)   | 624              | 544                      | 349              | 55.9                       | 306         | 56.2                    |

These numbers don't jibe with the "gut feeling" of Dr. Sanchez and many of the political reporters. However, it must be noted that this survey states that the error factor may be as much as 6%. But even if these numbers are correct, the Hispanic population still is shown as being under-represented in the voting booth.

Here is another figure from the US Census website:

### Race and Hispanic Origin



Note: Because the collection of race data changed in 2003, this graphic is only available from 2004 and on.

Source: U.S.Census Bureau, Current Population Survey

The likelihood of voting frequently differs among race groups and Hispanics. In New Mexico in 2010, non-Hispanic Whites voted at a higher rate (52 percent) than Hispanics (35 percent). The Black population, meanwhile, was not large enough to make meaningful state specific comparisons.

In the data represented by this figure, approximately 25% of the Hispanic individuals who responded stated that they were not registered. It is reasonable to assume that some of the individuals who chose not to respond to this survey question did so because they were also not registered to vote. This could, therefore, be an indicator that the number of unregistered Hispanic citizens may well approach or exceed 50%.

The study committee concluded that there was no way that we could obtain registration data for the percentage of Hispanic citizens specific to Doña Ana County. We are proceeding with the assumption that the approximate 50% number for New Mexico would probably hold for the county as well.

The committee then focused on its objective of determining why so many Hispanic citizens do not register to vote. We decided that the only way we could accomplish this was to do our own survey. As a baseline for our survey, we obtained the demographic population (all

residents, not just citizens) data from the US Census site for the county – this is shown below.

| <b>Population Facts</b>                            | <b>Dona Ana County</b> |
|--|------------------------|
| Population, 2012 estimate                          | 214,445                |
| Population, 2010 (April 1) estimates base          | 209,234                |
| Two or More Races, percent, 2012                   | 1.7%                   |
| Hispanic or Latino, percent, 2012 (b)              | 66.4%                  |
| White alone, not Hispanic or Latino, percent, 2012 | 29.4%                  |

This table shows that the percentage of Hispanic population in the county is 66%! That is quite a bit higher than the Hispanic population for the state as a whole, which is given by the Census Bureau as 47%. In fact, Hispanics are the largest race/ethnicity group in the county by far. Doing a Voting Impediments survey for the Hispanic population would be quite informative about voter participation in the county overall.

### 3.0 Community Interviews

Following the literature research, the committee created a contact list of potential local resources and volunteers, and met with some who were thought to be willing to help us conduct a survey and provide us with demographic and experiential information.

#### 3.1 Community Interviews Overview

The table below shows the individuals and organizations that were contacted in this effort, and provided useful input to the construction of the survey. A few other individuals were also contacted, but the information they provided was more sparse and repeated ideas that we had heard from our principal contacts.

#### **Interviews Done – Results Used to Create Survey**

| <b>NAME</b>      | <b>AFFILIATION</b>                               | <b>NOTES</b>   |
|------------------|--|--|
| Dr. Jose Garcia  | Professor, UNM                                   | Dr. Garcia, a well-known expert on Hispanic data, told us that race or ethnicity was not collected during voter registration in NM. If we wanted that information, we would need to do our own survey. |
| Diana Bustamante | Executive Director, Colonias Development Council | Provided excellent information regarding the Hispanic community’s view of the importance of voting. This information had a big impact on the creation of the survey.                                   |



| NAME  | AFFILIATION   | NOTES  |
|---|---|--|
| Veronica Carmona                            | Community Engagement Coordinator, Ngage NM, SW Voting Project, Colonias Development Council | Provided excellent information regarding the Hispanic community's view of the importance of voting. Provided good ideas for the survey questions.  |
| Olga Pedroza                                | Las Cruces City Council, Dist. 3<br>Chair, Legal Redress Cmte.                              | Was invited to committee meeting to get her input on the cultural issues that deter Hispanics from voting. After this meeting, she decided to join the League and the committee.   |
| Sarah Nolan, Organizer & Executive Director | CAFé (NM Comunidades en Accion y de Fé)   | Attended a committee meeting. Provided the following input: the survey was a good idea; suggested we might also do a telephone survey, not just a written one; offered to try to get for us a list of NM citizens eligible to vote but not registered from the Secretary of State (not successful); suggested a number of venues for doing the survey. |

The information obtained in conversations with the Colonias Development Council, parishioners at the Catholic Church in Anthony, the Women's Intercultural Center in Anthony, members of CAFè and the local American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) provided a good understanding of the general *attitudes* and *perceptions* of the Hispanic population vis-à-vis their rights, fears, negative attitudes, restrictions, obligations to registering and voting, and education in the process of registering and voting.

### **3.2 Colonias Development Council Interview**

The meeting with Diana Bustamante and Veronica Carmona of the Colonias Development Council and Roberta Gran of the League of Women Voters of Greater Las Cruces was by far the most fruitful in our local efforts to gather background information and suggestions. The following summarizes the meeting and the information gained:

Roberta Gran, committee chair, conducted this meeting. She explained the goals of this study, that we had done some general online research, and we were now doing local interviews with organizations that have connections to the Hispanic community. After the interviews, we plan to do surveys in that community. Roberta stated that we hoped that organizations such as the Colonias Development Council and CAFè would be willing to pass out surveys, since the committee felt that such organization were likely to be trusted by Hispanics. The committee was starting to develop a survey, and the information gathered at this meeting would be valuable input to this process. Ms. Gran explained that the League was currently focusing on the Doña Ana County Latino communities, but additional race/ethnicity groups, including African Americans and Native Americans may be studied in the future.

Bustamante and Carmona had some very interesting suggestions. One suggestion was to obtain information through the exit polls from the current election period. The League should contact those organizations that are already planning to do exit polling. Generally, exit polling consists of asking one or two questions as voters are leaving the polls. The committee should consider questions like the following to be included in an exit poll:

1. Why do you think many Latinos don't vote?
2. Have you or your friends ever encountered a problem when you wanted to register or went to vote at the polls?
3. Was this voting process today easy for you?

Both Bustamante and Carmona felt that studying voting patterns was very important. They said effort must be made to debunk myths and misconceptions. Another point made was that some people don't vote to make a political statement. The question was raised how Latino voting data in NM compare with other states with high Latino populations. (Note: the committee did not find such data collected on individual states).

Public education was strongly stressed even though it was not the objective of the meeting. Bustamante felt it was important enough to mention. She suggested a voter education program during which local people who are experts in the voting/election process (former Supreme Court Judge Daniel Sosa was mentioned) give a talk to a group of potential voters, old sample ballots be used to teach them how to fill them out, and have "booths" set up with a "polling station" to demonstrate the voting process.

Bustamante also suggested comparing the most recent election with the voting history of past elections. Such as:

1. Percentage of Latino vote
2. Did coalitions between Black and Latino voters to get out the vote work better this time?
3. How do we use this information to improve voter participation in the future?

It was decided that the advice for future work on voting research given by the Colonias Development Council be entered into this report because it actually helped us to work back from the information in covering some of the issues in our survey, and helped the committee to formulate appropriate questions for the survey. Some of these suggestions, however, clearly apply more to getting out the vote, rather than to increasing voter registration. These suggestions will be passed on the League's Election Procedures Committee.

#### **4.0 Creation of the Survey**

Following the community interviews, the committee created a survey questionnaire. The survey questions were based on information gathered by committee members via research and interviews. During review cycles, similar questions were merged, and the text was simplified to make the questions more understandable. The survey questions were thoroughly reviewed by the committee, resulting in several iterations of the survey. The final formatting was then developed, and the committee consulted with organizations such as CAFé to make sure nothing of importance was omitted. The survey was translated into

Spanish and reviewed for translation accuracy by four Spanish speakers. 1000 copies were printed. The English version of the final survey is shown below.



League of Women Voters of Greater Las Cruces

**VOTER STUDY**

The League of Women Voters would like to understand why eligible voters do not register to vote. This is a confidential survey.

**Please fill out this survey ONLY IF you are a US Citizen, at least 18 years of age, and are NOT a registered voter.**

**Please check one of the following:**  Hispanic  White  Asian Pacific  
 African American  Native American  Other

Please check ALL the reasons that apply.

- I did not know:**  I had to register to vote.  
 Where to register  
 How to register  
 I could register in Spanish.  
 I could vote in Spanish.  
 I could get help filling out the Registration Form.  
 I could get help marking my ballot.  
 I thought I needed a picture ID to register or to vote.  
 That a convicted felon could vote after completing sentence, all terms of probation or other conditions, and has a Certificate of Completion.

- I do not have transportation to go to:**  The Board of Elections to register  
 A Voting Center to vote

- I am afraid to register because:**  I might be put on a jury list.  
 Someone in my family might be found by Border Patrol or police.

- I do not want to vote because:**  I do not know enough about the candidates or issues.  
 My vote will not make any difference.  
 I do not care about politics.

**Other (Please explain):** \_\_\_\_\_

*The League of Women Voters of Greater Las Cruces is a nonpartisan political organization that encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues and influences public policy through education and advocacy. Tel: (575) 524-VOTE (8683) - Web: www.lwvglc.org*

## 5.0 Conducting the Surveys

Committee members were able to conduct surveys at Walmart, the Munson Senior Center, the American Women Vets Stand Down event, St. Anthony's Catholic Church in Anthony, NM, the Women's Cultural Center in Anthony NM, the Ben Archer Clinic, the Community Centers in Hatch and Radium Springs NM, NMSU's four Government 101 classes and one Constitutional Law class at NMSU, Doña Ana Community College, and the New America School (a public charter high school in downtown Las Cruces).

We were enormously gratified that Professors Neil Harvey, Head of the Department of Government, and Peter Ossorio, Professor in the Department of Government, were very supportive of this effort, and offered to have the surveys conducted in their classes. However, surveys administered at this institution required approval of the NMSU Internal Review Board, and required that a certified Principal Investigator was identified. Dr. Neil Harvey agreed to serve as the NMSU "in-house" Principal Investigator. We were extremely fortunate that one of our committee members, Dr. Rae Fortunato, was also a certified NMSU Principal Investigator. Drs. Harvey and Fortunato shepherded our request through the Internal Review Board, and permission was granted for NMSU students to take the survey.

The surveys were conducted so that confidentiality of response and anonymity of responders were ensured. Four approaches were used to conduct the surveys:

1. Permission was obtained from organizations such as Walmart and churches for use of their public areas; random people were approached on a one-by-one basis, given assurance of confidentiality and anonymity, and asked to take the survey.
2. Copies of the survey were left with trusted non-profit organizations to be administered by the directors of the organizations and were returned to the committee by a designated time.
3. Students at designated government classes at NMSU were surveyed with the assistance of Drs. Harvey, Ossorio and Fortunato. Time was taken at the beginning of each Government 101 and Constitutional Law class to explain the reasons for and the procedure by which the survey would be conducted. The room was monitored during the survey administration to ensure confidentiality, the confidential surveys were placed in slotted boxes by the students to maintain anonymity, and the boxes were removed intact after those students who chose to answer the survey had left the room.
4. With the schools' permission, students at Doña Ana Community College, and the New America School participated in the survey.

The committee found that it was not easy to obtain a large number of survey participants. Committee members queried parishioners at the St. Anthony Catholic Church in Anthony, NM and learned that many of its members were already registered to vote, in great part due to the efforts of the Women's Intercultural Center in that community. However, in talking with them we learned, surprisingly, that they had friends and relatives who don't want to register, because they don't want to serve on juries. We explained that jury duty is determined through vehicle registrations, not by registering to vote, and we asked them to pass that information along.

The director of the Women’s Intercultural Center, Mary Carter, stated that they have an active and successful effort at registering people to vote. She did take surveys and was able to get some unregistered people to complete them.

A volunteer from CAFé took surveys to Radium Springs, Doña Ana, and Hatch. This was not as successful as we had hoped. Cooperation from some individuals in these locations was often not forthcoming. Fortunately, she was able to get a few surveys done.

The director of the local ACLU office, Vicki Gaubeca, experienced some reluctance in getting attendees at gatherings to answer the surveys. She indicated that it was likely that some of the individuals asked had very little understanding of our registration and election processes, and were reluctant to be put in a position of having to answer questions related to these processes.

We also had a table at the American Women Vets Stand Down event in Las Cruces. This event was very poorly attended, and we were not able to get any surveys done.

Our most definitive successes in getting people to complete the surveys were at NMSU’s Government Department classes, one on Constitutional Law and four with Government 101. Others were at Walmart, and Doña Ana Community College and the New America School. It became clear that when we were personally involved and able to explain the purpose of the survey, people were more willing to cooperate. It came down to the issue of visibility and better communication.

In the end, the committee was able to obtain 195 completed surveys, and entered those data into a tracking database. Of these, 118 (61%) respondents identified themselves as Hispanic. Thus, our survey population closely mirrored the percentage of Hispanics (66%) in the census data for the county.

## 6.0 Data Analysis and Conclusions

A total of 195 surveys were collected and analyzed. The Hispanic community was the primary target of this survey. The data from the 118 Hispanic surveys are discussed in the next section. Non-Hispanic and total summary data are discussed in section 6.2.

The survey questions can be organized into four categories: (1) Questions 1 – 9 deal with the registration and voting **process**, e.g., the “How, When and Where” to register and to vote, (2) Questions 10 and 11 deal with **transportation**, (3) Questions 12 and 13 address **negative consequences** of registration, and (4) Questions 14, 15, and 16 capture the respondents’ attitudes about **politics** and political candidates.

## **6.1 Hispanic Data**

The table below shows the results for the Hispanic population.

### **Survey Results for Hispanic Population**

| <b>Question No.</b>  | <b>Total Respondents = 118</b>   | <b>Number of Respondents that checked this question</b> | <b>Percent of Respondents that checked this question</b> |
|--|--|---|--|
| 1  | Did not know had to register   | 28  | 24   |
| 2  | Did not know where to register   | 46  | 39   |
| 3  | Did not know how to register   | 41  | 35   |
| 4  | Did not know could register in Spanish   | 16  | 14   |
| 5  | Did not know could vote in Spanish   | 14  | 12   |
| 6  | Did not know could get help filling out Registration Form                              | 20  | 17   |
| 7  | Did not know could get help marking ballot   | 12  | 10   |
| 8  | Thought I needed a Picture ID  | 16  | 14   |
| 9  | Did not know convicted felon could vote after probation, etc.                          | 11  | 9  |
| 10   | Don't have transportation to Board of Elections to register                            | 12  | 10   |
| 11   | Don't have transportation to Voting Center   | 14  | 12   |
| 12   | Afraid to register because might be put on a jury list                                 | 25  | 21   |
| 13   | Afraid to register because someone in family might be found by Border Patrol or Police | 9   | 8  |
| 14   | Do not want to vote because don't know enough about candidates or issues               | 31  | 26   |
| 15   | Do not want to vote because my vote will not make any difference                       | 17  | 14   |
| 16   | Do not want to vote because do not care about politics                                 | 38  | 32   |
| NOTE: ORIGINAL SURVEYS DONE AT NMSU ARE HELD BY DR. RAE FORTUNATO, NMSU PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR |  |   |  |

As can be seen in this table, the most common responses were that the individuals did not know how and where to register. Since the respondents were told that they could check all the items that applied to their situation, many checked multiple items under the general category of Voting Process questions. When we reviewed the original surveys, we found that an astonishing **75%** (88 individuals) checked at least one of the Voting Process items. These survey responses indicate that, for the Hispanic community, not knowing the “how, when and where” of the registration and voting processes is a major deterrent to becoming registered voters.

The other major category of responses that was checked by many individuals was the Politics category. The “don’t know enough about the issues” question was checked by 31 respondents (26%), and the “don’t care about politics” was checked by 38 respondents (32%). The detailed review of the original surveys showed that 83 individuals, e.g., **70%**, checked at least one of the items in Politics category. If we assume that this survey does reflect the Hispanic community to some degree, this leads to the conclusion that:

**75% of the Hispanics don’t know some aspect of the registration and voting process, and 70% don’t think that it’s worth voting or they just don’t care about politics.**

There was also some concern in the survey population about negative consequences of voting, in particular, that there was a fear of being put on a jury list.

Interestingly, the **least** important reason (checked by only 8%) that was cited for not registering was that a family member was an illegal resident and might be found by Border Patrol.

## **6.2 Non-Hispanic and Total Survey Data**

77 survey respondents identified themselves as not being Hispanic. Of these, a large majority, 53 individuals (69%) checked “White”. The next table below shows the results for the non-Hispanic population.

While 77 respondents are only a very small sample to represent non-Hispanics in this community, the data do show a difference in their knowledge, attitude and constraints about registering to vote. The item that received the most number of checks was “do not care about politics” – this was checked by 25 (47%) of the individuals. There were quite a few checks in the Process category of questions as well. When we reviewed the original surveys, we found that 38 (49%) individuals checked at least one item in the Process category, while 44 (57%) checked at least one item in the Politics category.

The data show the following:

- (1) Non-Hispanics do not register to vote primarily because they think it is not worth voting or they just don’t care about politics, and**
- (2) While 75% of Hispanics don’t register primarily because they don’t know some aspect of registering or voting, this is the case for only 49% of the non-Hispanics.**

### Survey Results for Non-Hispanic Population

| Question No. | Respondent   | White | Native American | African American | Other | Total     | Percent of Respondents |
|--------------|--|-------|-----------------|------------------|-------|-----------|------------------------|
|              |  | 53    | 6               | 5                | 13    | <b>77</b> |                        |
|              | <b>Responses</b>   |       |                 |                  |       |           |                        |
| 1            | Did not know had to register   | 6     |                 | 1                | 2     | <b>9</b>  | 17                     |
| 2            | Did not know where to register   | 17    | 3               |                  | 3     | <b>23</b> | 43                     |
| 3            | Did not know how to register   | 16    | 3               |                  | 3     | <b>22</b> | 42                     |
| 4            | Did not know could register in Spanish   | 0     |                 |                  |       | <b>0</b>  | 0                      |
| 5            | Did not know could vote in Spanish   | 0     |                 |                  |       | <b>0</b>  | 0                      |
| 6            | Did not know could get help filling out Registration Form                              | 3     | 1               |                  |       | <b>4</b>  | 8                      |
| 7            | Did not know could get help marking ballot   | 2     |                 |                  |       | <b>2</b>  | 4                      |
| 8            | Thought I needed a Picture ID  |       | 1               | 1                | 1     | <b>3</b>  | 6                      |
| 9            | Did not know convicted felon could vote after probation, etc.                          | 4     |                 |                  | 4     | <b>8</b>  | 15                     |
| 10           | Don't have transportation to Board of Elections to register                            | 7     | 2               |                  | 1     | <b>10</b> | 19                     |
| 11           | Don't have transportation to Voting Center   | 9     | 1               |                  |       | <b>10</b> | 19                     |
| 12           | Afraid to register because might be put on a jury list                                 | 4     | 5               | 1                |       | <b>10</b> | 19                     |
| 13           | Afraid to register because someone in family might be found by Border Patrol or Police | 0     |                 |                  |       | <b>0</b>  | 0                      |
| 14           | Do not want to vote because don't know enough about candidates or issues               | 15    | 4               | 1                | 3     | <b>23</b> | 43                     |
| 15           | Do not want to vote because my vote will not make any difference                       | 10    | 4               |                  | 1     | <b>15</b> | 28                     |
| 16           | Do not want to vote because do not care about politics                                 | 18    |                 | 3                | 4     | <b>25</b> | 47                     |

The combined survey tally for **all respondents** is shown in the final table, below.



**Total Survey Tally**

| Question No.  | Respondent   | Hispanic | Percent | Non-Hispanics | Percent | TOTAL      | Total Percent |
|---|--|----------|---------|---------------|---------|------------|---------------|
|   |  | 118      |         | 77            |         | <b>195</b> |               |
|   | <b>Responses</b>   |          |         |               |         |            |               |
| 1   | Did not know had to register   | 28       | 24      | 9             | 12      | <b>37</b>  | 19            |
| 2   | Did not know where to register   | 46       | 39      | 23            | 30      | <b>69</b>  | 35            |
| 3   | Did not know how to register   | 41       | 35      | 22            | 29      | <b>63</b>  | 32            |
| 4   | Did not know could register in Spanish   | 16       | 14      | 0             | 0       | <b>16</b>  | 8             |
| 5   | Did not know could vote in Spanish   | 14       | 12      | 0             | 0       | <b>14</b>  | 7             |
| 6   | Did not know could get help filling out Registration Form                              | 20       | 17      | 4             | 5       | <b>24</b>  | 12            |
| 7   | Did not know could get help marking ballot   | 12       | 10      | 2             | 3       | <b>14</b>  | 7             |
| 8   | Thought I needed a Picture ID  | 16       | 14      | 3             | 4       | <b>19</b>  | 10            |
| 9   | Did not know convicted felon could vote after probation, etc.                          | 11       | 9       | 8             | 10      | <b>19</b>  | 10            |
| 10  | Don't have transportation to Board of Elections to register                            | 12       | 10      | 10            | 13      | <b>22</b>  | 11            |
| 11  | Don't have transportation to Voting Center   | 14       | 12      | 10            | 13      | <b>24</b>  | 12            |
| 12  | Afraid to register because might be put on a jury list                                 | 25       | 21      | 10            | 13      | <b>35</b>  | 18            |
| 13  | Afraid to register because someone in family might be found by Border Patrol or Police | 9        | 8       | 0             | 0       | <b>9</b>   | 5             |
| 14  | Do not want to vote because don't know enough about candidates or issues               | 31       | 26      | 23            | 30      | <b>54</b>  | 28            |
| 15  | Do not want to vote because my vote will not make any difference                       | 17       | 14      | 15            | 19      | <b>32</b>  | 16            |
| 16  | Do not want to vote because do not care about politics                                 | 38       | 32      | 25            | 32      | <b>63</b>  | 32            |
| NOTE: ORIGINAL SURVEYS DONE AT NMSU ARE HELD BY DR. RAE FORTUNATO, PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR |  |          |         |               |         |            |               |

In addition to the 16 survey questions, the respondents were given the opportunity to cite **Other Factors** as the reason for not registering to vote. These are listed here:

- Religious reasons
- Don't know who is telling the truth
- Don't like politicians
- Military - move around too much
- Thought [President] Obama was weak
- Politicians are crooks or liars
- Registered, but did not get a voter card

- No time to vote or register
- I'm lazy
- Had trouble getting registered - name spelling did not match ID
- Thought I had to vote in another county
- Just moved here from out-of-state
- Registered to vote, never received card, am homeless
- Electoral college leaves popular vote useless.
- Just turned 18
- Jury of untrained people shouldn't be judging defendants.
- Nonconformist - don't believe in voting
- Forgot to register
- I've never voted, never knew how
- So far, there has been no candidate that I agree with completely

Of these “Religious reasons” was the most frequent with 5 mentions and “Just turned 18” was said by four respondents. The rest of the comments were made by only one or two individuals each.

While the number of responses gathered were too few to label this as a scientifically valid survey, the survey results provide some interesting data, and do verify the general community and media perceptions that Hispanic citizens are under-represented in the voting pool. These non-registered citizens offer significant opportunities for the League to engage within the community to further voter registration.

**The conclusions to be drawn from the results of this survey are clear:**

**There is a solid need for education of the Hispanic community in the process aspects (the WHEN, WHERE AND HOW) of registration and voting, and there is a further need for education for all potential voters WHY it is important to vote.**

## **Section 7 – Study Conclusion and Action Plan**

The study of Voting Impediments in the Doña Ana County Hispanic Community is completed. This Final report has been submitted to League’s Board of Directors, and was approved. Next steps in this process are to educate League members about the study and its findings, and to develop recommendations for the revision of the League’s Election Procedures position that capture the conclusions reached by this study.

Although the focus of the study was the county’s Hispanic community, the results may be applied generally to the promotion of increased voter registration. The study committee therefore recommends to the Board and the members that an additional bullet be added to our current Election Procedures position that states: (The League of Women Voters supports...)

- **development of educational materials that explain the voter registration process, and wide distribution of such materials throughout the community, ensuring that all citizens, including the Hispanic population, have good access to these materials.**

The last bullet in the current position calls for “increased efforts to inform voters of the importance of voting...”. This bullet covers our study result that voters, especially Hispanic voters, need to be educated on **Why** it is important to vote.

Additionally, the League has recently re-activated the Election Procedures Committee that, among other activities, developed our current Election Procedures position. This committee seems to be the appropriate League entity to take on the development of the recommended educational materials. This committee should engage in the following tasks:

1. Identify existing documents (Ex: Bureau of Elections brochure) or develop and publish a brochure or other document that explains the **How/When/Where** of registering and voting. One version of such a document should be very concise and easily carried in a wallet.
2. Develop a document explaining **Why** it is important to vote.

In conjunction with the Bureau of Elections, these documents should be widely distributed.

Finally, based on this study, the committee recommends future League actions, such as:

- The development and institution of a systematic process (for example, addressing Civics and Government classes on an annual basis) for educating the community, based on the **How/When/Where** and the **Why** educational materials.
- The development of mechanisms for broad-based distribution of the education process and the documents on which it is based. For example, the League should arrange to address high school, DAAC and NMSU students on an annual basis to ensure that they are knowledgeable in the voter registration process, and understand why voting is so important for their own, their families’ and the community’s welfare.

## REFERENCES

<sup>1</sup> [www.gallup.com](http://www.gallup.com), “In U.S., Voter Registration Lags Among Hispanics and Asians”, November 6, 2013

<sup>2</sup> “The State of Play in New Mexico: The Role of 2010 Winners in 2012 Race”, Gabriel Sanchez, PhD, 07/15/2012, Latino Decisions website

<sup>3</sup> “Latino Growth Not Fully Felt at Voting Booth” Adam Nagourney, New York Times, June 9, 2012

<sup>4</sup> Pew Research, Hispanic Trends Project, Statistical Portraits

<sup>5</sup> 2010 US Census Data, New Mexico