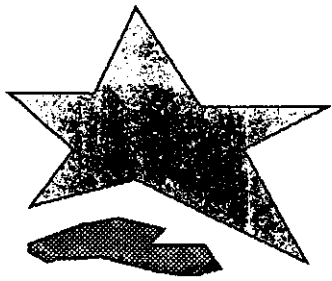


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An Overview of the Easy Reader Voter Guide

Patricia Holt, San Francisco Chronicle

"Thanks to those many industrious adult literacy students throughout the Bay Area who have not only learned to read in midlife but have used that hard-won skill to create the Easy Reader Voter Guide. Their approach is refreshing, succinct, hip and nonjudgmental."

Charles Osgood, CBS Radio

"The Easy Reader Voter Guide turned out to be more popular than they ever dreamed...Simpler is not only shorter - it's better."

Belva Davis, KRON-TV

"The library is a perfect place for this revolution to start."



What is it?

The *Easy Reader Voter Guide* is a non-partisan summary of the statewide races and ballot measures designed to make getting ready to vote easier for all types of citizens.

Begun in 1994 as part of the State Library-funded Key to Community Voter Involvement Project, the *Easy Reader Voter Guide* has become popular with a wide variety of Californians. Over 750,000 copies of the *Easy Reader Voter Guide* were distributed for the March 1996 primary via partnerships with newspapers like the San Jose Mercury News and Los Angeles Times, and purchases by businesses like Wells Fargo and Hewlett-Packard, County Voter Registrars, the League of Women Voters, schools and community groups. For the Fall 1996 election, the goal is to dramatically expand distribution by collaborating with more organizations interested in meeting voter demand for user-friendly non-partisan election information.



What does it have?

- The *Easy Reader Voter Guide* provides descriptions from California's eight political parties, plus concise statements and photographs from the presidential candidates. For each ballot measure, there is a brief background, and pros, cons and costs which are reviewed by the Legislative Analyst's Office to ensure accuracy. Also included are job descriptions for Congressional and legislative races, voting tips and a glossary.
- The guide is printed in a 16 page, three-color booklet format, available in English and Spanish. The version for the November 5, 1996 general election will be ready to ship mid-September. The content is also available to newspapers for reprinting.



Who created it?

- The *Easy Reader Voter Guide* began with the Key to Community Voter Involvement Project -- a comprehensive program designed by adult reading students for their peers. Funded by a California State Library grant to the Santa Clara County Library Reading Program and The Center for Civic Literacy, the 1994 Bay Area demonstration expanded statewide in 1996.
- Design of the guide has been based on research conducted by the Center for Civic Literacy which found that members of the general public, including better educated Californians, also want more user-friendly non-partisan sources to use when making their voting decisions.



Who does it appeal to?

The *Easy Reader Voter Guide* has been used by a wide variety of organizations:

- County Voter Registrars, city clerks and elected officials
- Businesses like Wells Fargo, Hewlett-Packard, Intel, Clorox and McKesson
- Newspapers like the L. A. Times, San Jose Mercury News and Bakersfield Californian
- The State Literacy Resource Center, Community Colleges and adult schools
- Civic organizations: League of Women Voters, Capitol Focus, citizenship classes
- High schools and middle schools
- Churches and seniors groups

Up to 40% of Californians lack the reading skills to get through the non-partisan presentation of the issues in the official State Ballot Pamphlet (1994 State Adult Literacy Survey). Others find they do not have the time or are overwhelmed by the complexity of the issues. The *Easy Reader Voter Guide* has been evaluated with surveys and focus groups among different demographic groups. Key points of appeal: the "layman's language", the easy-to-skim layout with large type, color and photos, basic definitions and background information.



How can organizations use it?

These are a few examples of how different groups have used the guide to support their goals:

- *Community outreach to new voters:*
The Santa Clara County Registrar's Office handed out the guides at naturalization ceremonies.
- *Employee relations:*
Wells Fargo Bank purchased copies for every employee to help them get ready to vote.
- *Support local schools:*
At their Folsom location, Intel purchased copies for local area elementary, junior high and high schools. The guides were well received and much appreciated at all three levels.
- *General community visibility:*
The L. A. Times Community Affairs Department printed 150,000 copies for distribution to schools, libraries and community groups (receiving a national industry award for this program). The San Jose Mercury News ran the *Easy Reader Voter Guide* as a freestanding insert for the March 1996 Primary. In Fall 1994, they made copies available to all area libraries. KDTV Channel 14 announced free copies on-air and provided them to viewers.



What do people like about the Easy Reader Voter Guide?

"It gives a good overview...a simple and clear approach to what all the issues are and then you can do further research for more in-depth information. Keep up the excellent work." Gratia Trevey, Los Gatos

"This is useful for both new readers and for more literate people who lack the time to read the wordier state guide." Matthew Legrand, Folsom

"It was excellent! Thank you for a job well done." Anne Berkey, McKesson, San Francisco

"I live in a retirement facility of 200 persons. Everyone loved it because it was clearly written and understandable. Wonderful. Please continue this important work." Madlyn Gutttag, San Mateo

"It was so helpful for me, the teacher, to understand the ballot." Patricia Jones, Carmel

"What a valuable tool for the voter! The Statewide Ballot Pamphlet is most often a nightmare for voters to read because of the complexity of the language, but because of the Easy Reader Voter Guide, voters will be able to make more accurate choices for voting based on a better understanding of initiatives." Delfina Franco, Chief Deputy Registrar, Riverside

"This really made the difference between going to the polls and not going. It was an easy, quick way to get prepared." Anonymous caller, San Mateo

"Congratulations...I have an advanced degree and although I can read the voter pamphlet from the state, I chose to use yours. It's simple and complete. Thanks." Andy (no last name)

"I'm a new citizen and pretty confused about the voting stuff. This is just great." Call from Martha (no last name)



Who supports the Easy Reader Voter Guide?

The California State Library grant only covers distribution of the voter guides to library literacy programs. Therefore, we seek collaborations to increase distribution to the widest possible audience. Support has come from newspapers, businesses, educational organizations and community groups. Fees to purchase or reprint guides help cover the costs of development and fulfillment. Any surplus is reinvested in the Key to Community curriculum and training which helps adult reading students increase their involvement in their communities.



How do I order the Easy Reader Voter Guide?

- 1.) Order copies of the *Easy Reader Voter Guide* for distribution to your employees and/or community partners. There is a space on each guide to announce your sponsorship of the copies you distribute.
- 2.) Order copies of the *Easy Reader Voter Guide* for distribution at your local library. Your library system and the Key to Community project will work with you to secure joint publicity announcing the free guides available at the library – courtesy of your support.
- 3.) Purchase the rights to print the English and/or Spanish language version of the *Easy Reader Voter Guide* -- or portions of it -- in your local newspaper with a circulation of 10,000 or more. Check here to receive more information about the release process: _____

Cost: Up to 5,000 \$.25/unit
 Over 5,000 \$.20/unit
 Over 50,000 \$.18/unit

Customization: Over 25,000 A one-color logo or message up to 8 x 3 inches will show your sponsorship
 Over 50,000 A two-color logo or message indicating sponsorship

Note: State sales tax of 7.25% plus shipping will be added to all orders.

Quantity: _____ English _____ Spanish _____ TOTAL

Name _____

Organization _____

Phone _____ Fax _____

Address _____

Fax this page to: **415-454-6591** (Voice: 415-454-6500)
 or mail to: **The Easy Reader Voter Guide, 42 Moody Court, San Rafael, CA 94901**

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