



Effective and Accountable Government

As Democrats, we believe in the responsibility of government to, in the words of Robert F. Kennedy, "to tame the savageness of man and to make gentle the life of this world." Our commitment to the cause of public activism brings with it a special responsibility to ensure that government remains the possession of the sovereign people. To that end, we believe that government must be **open, accountable, responsive, and transparent** at all levels. In order to be open, **government must be especially attentive to the voices of the least powerful** and most disenfranchised communities, actively seeking out their opinion and empowering them to take action on their own.

In order to be accountable, **all communities in Santa Barbara County should have local as well as countywide elected offices responsible for basic government.** Without the power of the franchise to reward or punish public officials for their performance, certain unincorporated communities in Santa Barbara County have no direct means of making their will known on important issues of community development, public amenities, and access to vitally important services and utilities.

In order to be transparent, **we must embrace not merely the form but also the spirit of clean elections.** To that end, we must ensure that local and county-wide elections have public funding for all elected offices.

To achieve these ends, we call for the following reforms:

- We support efforts toward enfranchisement of residents in unincorporated areas, including Isla Vista, by developing some form of elected local government, either as incorporated cities or towns, planning districts, or neighborhood councils.
- City councils in incorporated areas should be expanded, in order to achieve a better ratio of voters per representative, so that people can know and be familiar with their local representatives. City council elections should be designed to empower neighborhoods and increase levels of diversity.
- A clean elections fund should be established for county-wide and local elections, so that the impact of small donations can be multiplied with public matching funds, freeing up candidates to spend more time campaigning and less time raising money.

- In order to increase voter turnout and participation in the political process, Santa Barbara County should move towards a system that embraces same-day registration, early voting, and vote-by-mail. Given the wide swings in voter turnout between presidential and off-year elections, city elections should be consolidated with statewide or county elections whenever possible.