



Activating Asian Pacific America

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18MR.org Launches Indiegogo Campaign for Ballot Translation

Oakland, CA – August 5, 2015 – National online organization for Asian Pacific Americans launches ambitious civic tech project to make democracy accessible in every language.

18MR.org, the first national organization to serve Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders (AAPIs) online, is developing a translation and community building app to make democracy accessible in every language. The group's Indiegogo launches August 5, 2015 to fund the technical development of VoterVOX.

VoterVOX is a scalable, grassroots tech solution that will fill a critical translation need not provided by existing laws, systems, and infrastructure.

Currently, the Voting Rights Act only requires that voting materials be translated into languages spoken by more than 10,000 people in a district. Despite that requirement, 45% of precincts required to provide translations don't. And in those that do, there's no automatic process to get new ballot translations when demographics change. Because AAPIs have the broadest spectrum of native languages of any racial demographic, this locks many of them out of the democratic process.

AAPIs voters are three times more likely than Latino voters to say that the language barrier is what kept them from the polls. According to National Asian American Survey data, 77% of those voters say they would use in-language tools, if they could get them, when they register to vote or cast a ballot. Language access to the electoral process affects many Asian Pacific American communities, but it hits poor and working-class communities the hardest.

That's why 18MR.org is designing VoterVOX. **VoterVOX will address one of the biggest, most powerful civic problems in our country: voter disenfranchisement.**



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VoterVOX will be a matching app that connects bilingual AAPI volunteers with limited English speakers so that every eligible voter gets access to a ballot and voting information in their language. VoterVOX will also be a model for bridging generation gaps and digital divides. Through partnerships with community-based organizations, VoterVOX will reach limited English speakers where they're at — places like libraries, grocery stores, and social centers — and help them sign up for translation in-person.

"This project plays to 18MR.org's best strengths - using technology in innovative ways to amplify their work, staying nimble as they navigate complex political terrain," says Debra Cleaver, founder and executive director of Long Distance Voter. "We're excited to partner with them to get VoterVOX in the hands of millions of citizens who've faced barriers to voting."

18MR.org is launching a Indiegogo to fund VoterVOX development on August 5, 2015, the day before the 50th anniversary of the Voting Rights Act. The organization's Founding Director and Chief Technology Officer will also participate in the White House LGBTQ Tech & Innovation Summit on August 10, 2015. While in Washington, D.C., C. M. Samala and Cayden Mak will connect with the most innovative, talented, and influential technologists, designers, product specialists and community leaders to solve some of America's toughest challenges. An initial concept test of VoterVOX is scheduled for November 2015 local elections in test cities. Official roll-out of the app is scheduled for July 2016, well in advance of national elections.

"When we have an engaged AAPI electorate, we can achieve policy wins that benefit all communities of color and low income families," said Cayden Mak, Chief Technology Officer at 18MR.org. "The voters and volunteers who use VoterVOX will join a history of grassroots networks that have instigated many of the last century's biggest victories for equity and justice. They will be setting the stage for the next generation, making voting accessible to more Americans, and improving the health of our democracy."

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About 18MR.org: For the past three years, 18MR has convened a network of creative, tech-savvy, and passionate individuals and organizations working with AAPI communities across the country. We're agile, inspired, and create opportunities by bringing diverse partners into unlikely coalitions. 21st century community power can be built through smart tech and good organizing, and our campaign wins and vision are testament to how we can bring them together.

Visit our Indiegogo campaign at www.bit.ly/VoterVOX

Download high-resolution photos and learn more about VoterVOX at www.votervox.org