

PRESS RELEASE

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State Leaders Encourage Pomona Unified Seniors to Vote, Engage in Political Process

POMONA – Nearly 300 Pomona Unified high school seniors recently got a lesson on the importance of civic engagement and making their voices heard at the polls from the state’s top public official in charge of encouraging voter participation: California Secretary of State Alex Padilla.

Padilla, who was joined by state Sen. Connie Leyva, discussed with students the importance of being engaged citizens and how the right to vote is the essence of democracy during a Sept. 18 session at the Village Academy High School Conference Center.

“This event presented our students with a powerful opportunity to learn the importance of having an engaged electorate and the role and responsibility every generation has in shaping this country’s future,” Board of Education President Andrew Wong said. “Voting is a powerful tool, and I am grateful that we had two of our state’s top leaders visit one of our campuses to demonstrate its significance.”

The event was organized in conjunction with the District’s Service Learning Program, which supports and encourages students and teachers to engage in community service learning projects.

During the program, Padilla advised students to recognize the importance of politics and its relation to a strong community.

“The greatest potential for registering more eligible voters to vote is engaging young people,” said Padilla, who was sworn in as Secretary of State in January and has committed to modernizing the office, increasing voter registration and participation, and strengthening voting rights. “There is no substitute for personally inviting someone to participate in the voting process.”

Prior to addressing the full assembly, Padilla and Leyva met separately with Associated Student Body leaders and challenged them to reach out to their peers to become more aware of the civic benefits of voter registration and participation.

One student ready to accept the challenge is Fremont Academy ASB President Elena Guzman, who also serves as the student liaison on the Pomona Unified Board of Education.

“Both my parents are Hispanic and do not vote. I grew up not wanting to vote,” Guzman said. “My brothers convinced me voting will help my future as well as the future of my peers and friends.”

Leyva, whose district includes Pomona, encouraged students to be active in the political process and to practice due diligence when assessing candidates and elected officials.

“Whom you vote for matters,” said Leyva, who is serving her first term in the State Senate. “The worst thing you can do is nothing.”

Pomona Unified’s Service Learning Program, which helped organize the event, is an instructional strategy in which community service opportunities are integrated into the curriculum, with the goal of enhancing the core curriculum and helping students meet academic standards and develop a sense of civic responsibility.

At the event, eligible students also got the chance to register to vote.

“Civic engagement is a key component to a complete and well-rounded education and the Service Learning Program is one tool we use to encourage our students to be active and productive members of our community,” Superintendent Richard Martinez said. “We care about involving all of our communities, especially our young adults, in the process of making policy.”

PHOTO CAPTIONS:

VOTING1: Pomona Unified high school students proudly display their voter registration pledges during a Sept. 18 session in which California Secretary of State Alex Padilla and state Sen. Connie Leyva spoke about the importance of civic engagement.

VOTING2: California Secretary of State Alex Padilla engages with Pomona Unified students during a voter registration drive on Sept. 18 at Village Academy High School.

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