

Portuguese American Citizenship Project

# THE USER'S GUIDE



EVERY VOTE BRINGS DIGNITY AND  
RESPECT TO OUR COMMUNITY

JAMES MARTIN MCGLINCHEY

## Excerpts of Declarations from U.S. Officials

“It is truly an honor to support the Portuguese American Citizenship Project for all of their hard work and dedication to making the Portuguese American Community a stronger voice in our community and in our nation.” **U.S. Congressman Jim Costa (D-CA)**

“I am proud to be able to lend my support to the labors of the Portuguese American Citizenship Project. Civic involvement is the cornerstone of the American democracy and is part of our national identity.” **U.S. Congressman Devin Nunes (R-CA)**

## Excerpts of Declarations from Portuguese Officials

“I wish to highlight here the meritorious work undertaken by the Portuguese American Citizenship Project, promoting access to the rights of citizenship for the Portuguese-American community and thus contributing to the growing participation of US citizens of Portuguese origin and the strengthening of ties between Portugal and the United States. \*

**President of the Portuguese Republic, Cavaco Silva.**

“I take this opportunity to endorse and commend the Portuguese American Citizenship Project as a vehicle, not only for promoting Luso-American ties of friendship and alliance, but also liberty, dignity and civic responsibility among Portuguese immigrants in the United States”.

**President of the Portuguese Assembly, João Bosco Mota Amaral**

“The hoped-for complete integration (into the United States) has to include the right to elect and be elected, to have the possibility of participating in the government of your city, your state in the nation where you have chosen to live. Doing this does not imply you will become less Azorean or less Portuguese, on the contrary, only in this manner can you be truly citizens of the Azores in the world.” \*

**President of the Regional Government of the Azores, Carlos César**

\*Translation from original Portuguese-language message

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**THE PORTUGUESE  
AMERICAN CITIZENSHIP PROJECT**

# **THE USER'S GUIDE**

**James Martin McGlinchey**



## Preface

The *User's Guide* is derived from *The Final Report: A History of the Portuguese American Citizenship Project* published in December 2019,

*The Final Report* is a comprehensive review of the origins and operations of an initiative to promote civic involvement in the Portuguese-American community. *The Final Report* highlights both the purpose and strategy of the nationwide program and describes noteworthy events among the individual organizations. By its very nature, the readership for *The Final Report* was anticipated to be limited to readers who were involved in the Project's activities over its 16 years of operation.

This *User's Guide* is a distilled version of the original book. It was edited to only examine the purpose of promoting political participation, the strategies of implementing a get-out-the vote campaign, and the methods for staging candidates' nights. As a consequence, the *User's Guide* will omit all of the annual summaries provided in the *Final Report*. The practical consequence is that the *Guide* is a more readable 85 pages compared to the daunting 383 pages of the original publication.

The *Guide* provides specific examples of how a program to support civic integration was assembled. Many of these concepts and strategies were designed to operate within the rules, laws, and regulations of the United States. There are, however, general concepts and lessons to be learned which could be usefully applied to a comparable effort in any country.

It is hoped that the Project's experiences will not only benefit the Portuguese-American community but extend beyond the United States to Portuguese émigrés in other countries. Many of the Project's efforts could assist in the design of campaigns to advance the civic integration of these transplanted communities into their newly-adopted societies.



## Acknowledgements

I am indebted to the many Portuguese-Americans who received me into their offices, their churches, their clubs, and their homes. Without their involvement, the Project would not have had a place from which to even start. It would take many pages of small print to list the individuals who selflessly gave their time and energy to this endeavor. I was proud to have worked with them, and even prouder to call them friends.

Recognition must be accorded to the Luso-American Foundation. The Foundation not only fostered the creation of the Portuguese American Citizenship Project but also steadfastly provided financial support to this enterprise over its 16-year existence.

I also appreciate the invaluable contributions by the Regional Government of the Azores that played a critical part in the Project's development.

The *Final Report* and this *User's Guide* are the product of three years of compiling, condensing, and interpreting all the moving parts that brought the Project to fruition. The editor-in-chief, my wife Andrea, and her editing prowess made the text readable. It is thanks to her that every sentence has a verb in it and paragraphs actually make sense.

Several colleagues volunteered to review the chapters and I am very appreciative of their contributions. Comments from this editing cohort were important in flagging any potential misinterpretation and correcting flat-out errors in reporting the history of the Project. Thanks to all.



**James M. McGlinchey**  
**McLean, Virginia**





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# Introduction

Portuguese immigrants have been coming to the United States for more than two centuries. Like other new arrivals, they have become economically and socially integrated into all levels of American society. However, in contrast with other comparable ethnic groups, many believe that Portuguese-Americans, as a community, do not fully exercise their civic duties which in turn leads to diminished influence over the political decisions that affect their lives.

The Portuguese American Citizenship Project (*née The Citizenship Action Program*) was created in 1999 to address this very problem. The general nature of the issue was well understood, but essential questions about political engagement had to be resolved. Specifically, the Project had to understand if and where the critical fault lines were in Portuguese immigrants' civic integration into American society. Was there a problem in adoption of U.S. citizenship? Did those who became U.S. citizens register to vote? And, finally, if they did register, did Portuguese-Americans reliably turn out to vote?

The answers to these questions could affect a number of issues. While the estimated one and a half million Portuguese immigrants and Americans of Portuguese descent could not be expected to have a major impact in a nation of 327 million people, many Portuguese-American communities are concentrated in certain regions, towns and neighborhoods where they can have a decisive effect on local, state and federal elections.

## **Campaigns without Candidates**

A priority during the Project's first year was to better understand the nature of Portuguese-American civic participation. Once the strengths and weaknesses were identified, the participating organizations would be able to more confidently direct resources toward addressing critical issues. The most immediate action was to focus on maximizing voter turnout.

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The Project's promotion of increased participation in the civic process was labeled 'Campaigns without Candidates'. We did not support any political party or cause. We did not even favor political candidates of Portuguese heritage. A voter's choice of candidate was left entirely to the individual. We just wanted Portuguese-Americans to vote.

Without a candidate or issue at stake, the Project could not immediately assess the effectiveness of its efforts on an election night. It did not operate in the dark, however, and designed processes to calculate and compare the community's voter turnout from official voter records. As a result, the Project regularly assessed the get-out-the-vote programs and we were confident of the value of our work.

It was one thing to mobilize voters into a recognized bloc, but the next steps involved defining what the community wanted from its government and communicating these demands to political leaders. A 'Candidates' Night' forum, originally developed in Santa Clara, California, provided the perfect solution. The Project adopted the format of these events and introduced them to East Coast organizations with remarkable results.

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Throughout its 16 years of operation, the Project conducted non-partisan voter outreach with cultural, fraternal and religious organizations in communities located in California, Connecticut, Massachusetts, New Jersey and Rhode Island. During that time, the Project submitted over 50 periodic reports on its programs for its Board of Directors and principal sponsors; the Luso-American Foundation and the Regional Government of the Azores. As implied in its title, the *Final Report* published in December 1999 was the last submission.

The *Final Report* was a comprehensive description of how and why the Project was created and what was accomplished. This *User's Guide* is a distilled version of the original book. It was edited to specifically examine the purpose of promoting civic participation, the strategies of implementing a get-out-the vote campaign, and the methods for staging candidates' nights.

## *Introduction*

This *User's Guide* is organized into the following chapters:

**The Luso-American Foundation** describes the role of the Foundation in fostering the advancement of the Portuguese-American community and how this broad programmatic goal evolved into an initiative focused on citizenship and civic participation.

**First Letters** summarizes the findings of a field study among Portuguese-American leaders in 1998, a year before a formal grant request was made to the Foundation to initiate the Project.

**The Citizenship Action Program** outlines the terms and conditions of the Luso-American Foundation's initial grant to address the issue of civic involvement.

**Azorean-Americans and the Government of the Azores** examines the essential contribution of the Regional Government toward the shared goal of promoting civic engagement in the immigrant community.

**The Challenge** discusses the background of voting laws in the United States. Additionally, it addresses the perception of civic apathy in the Portuguese-American community which was believed to be a significant obstacle to gaining influence in governmental affairs.

**Development of a Methodology** is a presentation of the three elements which made up the Project's campaign. The first step was the information processing system which linked an organization's membership to voter registration lists. The second campaign element consisted of conducting voter registration and get-out-the-vote campaigns. The third and final piece of this suite of civic campaign programs was the staging of Candidates' Nights, which proved to be an effective avenue to communicate the community's concerns to the political establishment.

**A Balance of Accounts** reviews what the Project had accomplished, what could have been done better, and finally examines what issues the Project should have resolved but did not. When the Project was terminated

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in 2016, the closing eliminated the national character of its civic promotion campaigns. All was not lost, however, and the gained skills and valuable experiences left a legacy of information for those who might wish to take up the cause in the future.

### **A Note of Caution**

This *User's' Guide* and the *Final Report* which preceded it do not pretend to be academic papers but rather a first-hand account by the individuals charged with management of the Project's nationwide campaign. Opinions and observations are not based on research into the work and literature of political scientists, but rely primarily on what has been experienced in the church halls and social club rooms of the organizations with which we have worked. We believe what we have seen and experienced first-hand, not necessarily what we have read.

The Portuguese American Citizenship Project also does not claim to be a pioneer in the promotion of civic participation among Portuguese-Americans. On the contrary, we were honored to meet with and work with countless Portuguese-Americans who for many decades have been dedicated to promoting citizenship and civic involvement in their communities. Their invaluable and largely unsung contribution began long before the Project started and will no doubt continue long after the Project has been forgotten.

# The Luso-American Foundation

***“The Luso-American Foundation’s main objective is to contribute toward Portugal’s economic, cultural and social development.***

***“By upgrading the educational level of Luso-Americans and deepening their integration into the society in which they live, we (FLAD) are, at the same time, promoting interest in and opportunities for stronger cultural, economic and social ties between U.S. and Portuguese entities and institutions.”***

Editorial by Dr. Rui Machete,  
Luso-American Development Foundation Newsletter  
January 1997

The best description of the *Luso-American Development Foundation – Fundação Luso-Americana para o Desenvolvimento (FLAD)* – is provided by the Foundation itself:

*“The Luso-American Development Foundation is a private, financially self-sufficient Portuguese institution. Its mission is to contribute to Portuguese development by financially and strategically supporting innovative projects and encouraging cooperation between Portuguese and American societies.”<sup>1</sup>*

Created by the Portuguese Government decree in 1985, the Foundation’s primary role has been to foster economic, social and cultural development within Portugal. By the 1990’s, the Foundation leadership expanded its programmatic mission and decided that fostering the advancement of the Portuguese immigrant community in the United States would be an integral element of the organization’s mandate.

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<sup>1</sup> *Luso-American Development Foundation – History and Mission*  
(<http://www.flad.pt/en/history-and-mission/>)



In a 1997 editorial entitled “*Luso-American Goals and Objectives*”, FLAD President Dr. Rui Machete summarized the Foundation’s general objectives and its policy *vis a vis* the Portuguese-American community as follows:<sup>2</sup>

*“The Luso-American Foundation’s main objective is to contribute toward Portugal’s economic, cultural and social development.”*

*“...it makes little difference whether the strengthening of Luso-American ties takes place on Portuguese or American soil, as long as the final result means progress for the Portuguese people.”*

## **Grants and Program Evaluations in the United States**

The Foundation has been instrumental in the creation, growth and development of professional organizations centered on the Portuguese-American community. The Foundation’s mission also aimed at building ties through programs concerning science and technology, education, and culture.

It was an important sponsor of the Portuguese American Leadership Council (PALCUS), and Portuguese-American Chambers of Commerce as geographically disparate as the American Chamber of Commerce in Lisbon and the Portuguese-American Chamber of Commerce in the Silicon Valley of California.

The Foundation’s management of its grant program in the United States had one serious gap. Despite spending hundreds of thousands of dollars within the U.S., the Foundation received little objective feedback on the value of these programs. The Foundation had no staff residing in the United States and could only rely on periodic visits by senior officials to assess the merits of its efforts. As such, it had no established method to monitor the effectiveness of its assistance, since the primary and often only source of evaluating these sponsored projects was the feedback from the beneficiaries themselves. It would be extraordinary for a grant recipient to grade its own work as anything less than completely satisfactory.

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<sup>2</sup> Dr. Rui Machete served as President of the Foundation from 1988 to 2010.

## **The Portuguese-American Community**

The Foundation has a long history of active engagement not only with Portuguese-American institutions but with Portuguese-Americans themselves. This involvement with the community concentrated in the Foundation's traditional areas of competence, namely, cultural endeavors and, most importantly, improving post-secondary educational opportunities for the immigrants and their children.

Nonetheless, the Foundation had never conducted a comprehensive assessment of the Portuguese-Americans' essential problems and, as a result, could not develop a strategic plan for its programs targeted to this community. The difficulty of fairly evaluating grant requests in the absence of a strategic plan was further complicated by the reality that the Foundation did not possess complete knowledge of the local communities to use in an assessment of their genuine requirements.

## **Reevaluation and Redirection**

To the Foundation's credit, in the mid-1990's, its leadership understood the importance of reexamining its program support to the Portuguese-American community. The task of improving its U.S. grant program was hampered by the realization that the current method of judging requests for assistance was not based on a satisfactory understanding of the local communities. Before embarking on any new financial assistance programs, the Foundation needed to understand some basic facts:

How are these communities organized? What organizations bring them together?

Who are the leaders? Are Portuguese-American elected officials best placed to speak for the community or are there others better suited to fulfill this role?

Finally, could the Foundation help and, if so, how? While the Foundation leadership demonstrated a willingness to devote re-

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sources to assist, how could the most important problems be identified and what do community leaders believe are the best solutions to these issues?

The straightforward way to answer these questions was to visit these communities and directly ask the local residents themselves for their advice and recommendations. This approach formed the basis of the Foundation's agreement to fund a 1998 visit to the East Coast Portuguese-American communities by James McGlinchey, a State Department official who had been assigned to the U.S. Embassy in Lisbon from 1992 to 1995. The conclusions drawn from these visits and interviews are presented in the following chapter, *First Letters*.

# The First Letters

*“The best way to be good Portuguese citizens in America is to be good American citizens.”*

Former President of Portugal Mário Soares

In 1998, the Luso-American Foundation determined that the most efficient and productive method of formulating a strategy to help Portuguese-Americans was to speak directly with prominent members of these communities. The purpose of the conversations was to identify problems and to seek out ideas wherein the Foundation could possibly provide assistance.

In the Spring of that year, the Foundation enlisted James McGlinchey to conduct on its behalf a survey of Portuguese-Americans in New Jersey, Rhode Island and Massachusetts. The plan was to meet with a broad spectrum of leaders and activists in major Portuguese centers of each state. The consultations with these individuals set no pre-ordained objectives or agenda, but rather encouraged a wide ranging and open discussion of their concerns.

The interviews began with a note of caution that the Foundation’s potential offer to consider assistance was not open-ended. The Foundation did not have unlimited funds to devote to Portuguese-American causes. In fact, the Foundation’s first focus was to address requests from organizations within Portugal. Additionally, considering the economic wealth of the U.S. compared to Portugal, there would be a limitation on the grant programs that could be considered and approved in the best of circumstances.

It became evident after several conversations that the best method of conveying the thoughts and opinions would be for these leaders to communicate directly with the Foundation’s senior management. Each person was invited to prepare a paper detailing the issues they believed would benefit from collaboration with the Foundation. While the papers were not

proposals for specific projects *per se*, they presented strategic visions of how best to marry the goals of the Foundation with the needs of their community. Opinions varied as broadly as the personal experiences of the individuals approached. There were, nonetheless, areas of common concern that emerged from the conversations and the written submissions to the Foundation. Most of the correspondents emphasized the importance of education, citizenship, commerce and culture in strengthening the community.

The following is a synopsis of the interviews and papers focusing on issues of concern, the Foundation's possible role in addressing them, and potential benefits. The descriptions represent the opinions of the contributors themselves without comment on the feasibility of support for these priorities from the Foundation.<sup>3</sup>

### ***Education - Secondary School Education***

*Reported Issue:* A high percentage of Portuguese-American youth particularly from inner-city neighborhoods do not complete high school. For many immigrants, the main concern when reaching adulthood is securing work as quickly as possible. Incomes for many Portuguese-American working-class families are low and every member is expected to contribute as soon as employment can be found. If that means dropping out of high school, there is often no hesitation. Consequently, many Portuguese-Americans do not have a high school diploma and are severely restricted in gaining higher-paying jobs. As a community, Portuguese-Americans must do better in encouraging and promoting education among young people.

The need for basic education extends to older immigrants as well. The requirement for English literacy for new immigrants extends be-

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<sup>3</sup> The letters were sent directly to the Foundation's President. While the interviewer received copies of these letters, only brief summaries are presented here. The authors of these papers wrote these comments in 1998 and it is beyond the scope of this discussion to request updates in 2019 to conform to present conditions. The letters served at that time as a basis for the Foundation to reevaluate its policies *vis a vis* the Portuguese-American community.

## *The First Letters*

yond the need to survive economically. Unless they qualify for a language exemption, non-citizens also need a level of fluency in English to pass the examination for U.S. citizenship.

*Anticipated Benefit:* Meetings of educators from Portuguese-American communities across the United States to discuss the education shortcomings in their communities could provide solutions to this long-standing problem. A common curriculum for English language instruction for all Lusophone residents could provide economies of scale since course material might be designed to include Brazilian- and Cabo Verdean-American populations. If the basic educational level were raised, especially in English language skills, individuals would be better qualified to participate in training programs; obtain higher-paying jobs, integrate more completely into the local community and participate more fully in the political process.

### ***Post-Secondary School Education***

*Reported Issue:* Education beyond high school has not received the attention it deserves. Given the economic reality of working-class immigrants, many find it difficult to pay college tuition and to forgo wages needed for family support. Delaying employment through four years of high school is difficult, but many find it nearly impossible to put off a young person's earning capacity through a two- or four- year college program.

The problem is rooted in Portugal's pre-1970's lack of investment in education for the general population. Because many immigrants from this period - especially from the Azores - came to the United States with minimal formal education, they often did not carry with them a strong family tradition of encouraging their own children to pursue the highest levels of achievement.

*Anticipated Benefit:* Education is perceived as a *sine qua non* for achieving success in American society. It is a fundamental axiom that it is not only the individuals who benefit when they successfully complete post-secondary degrees but the community at large is

strengthened through the participation of these new graduates in business and political leadership roles.

### ***Cultural Programs***

*Reported Issue:* More cultural programs are necessary. These events are seen as essential in preserving ties to Portugal. Cultural events are also viewed as a source of pride in the accomplishments and traditions of Portugal and Portuguese immigrants in America. Programs can be tailored for mass appeal to the broadest general audience or to select groups with specific interests. Heritage is also an element of Portuguese language training programs in the communities.

*Anticipated Benefit:* The promotion of Portuguese culture has the advantage of not only raising the stature of Portuguese-Americans as a whole but also serving as a promotion of Portugal itself to a wider audience.

### ***Portuguese Language Education***

*Reported Issue:* More support is required for locally-sponsored Portuguese language education. In many communities, Portuguese-American social clubs offer after-school Portuguese language and culture classes to children aged 6 to 18. Participation in these classes shows the importance parents attach to passing on Portuguese language and cultural traditions to succeeding generations. It also demonstrates the students' fortitude in attending additional hours of classes after the regular school day. Although these classes are officially recognized and backed by the Portuguese government, the language educators complained that they often lack suitable facilities and teaching material.

*Anticipated Benefit:* The Portuguese-American communities are often defined by their language. Preservation of this language capability in succeeding generations would ensure that these cultural and social foundations will be maintained.

### ***Civic and Political Education***

*Reported Issue:* Portuguese-Americans in many communities do not believe they enjoy the full rights and privileges due them from their local, state and federal governments. Many Portuguese-Americans are not fully aware of the legal workings of the American political system. For these individuals, there is no accessible authoritative source for information about the structure, rules and regulations of government authorities. There is often a great deal of confusion regarding diverse subjects such as the civil rights of legal residents in the United States, the intricacies of U.S. Immigration laws, and a host of questions about voters' rights and obligations.

*Anticipated Benefit:* Political literacy leads to greater civic involvement; adoption of U.S. citizenship, voter registration and voting itself. Taken further, greater Portuguese-American civic participation can and should encourage members of the community to run as candidates for local, state and federal offices.

### ***Citizenship and Voting***

*Reported Issue:* According to community leaders, Portuguese-Americans, especially those concentrated in certain regions of New England, should be a political force. Yet they are not. Political underrepresentation is the fundamental problem affecting the local Portuguese immigrant community. Striking evidence of this problem is the scarcity of Portuguese-American elected officials in leadership positions. The cause of this problem, according to the interviewed leaders, is that Portuguese-Americans do not vote in numbers reflective of their population. Many do not become U.S. citizens and, of those who are citizens, many do not register to vote.

Without political influence, programs that would benefit the Portuguese-American residents are not a priority for elected officials. Educational and cultural programs are less than fully funded. Portuguese-American needs are set aside in favor of other interest groups who command attention by virtue of their voting strength and civic participation. One correspondent cited a statement by then



President of Portugal, Mário Soares. While on a visit to the U.S., he famously said "*The best way to be good Portuguese citizens in America is to be good American citizens.*"

*Anticipated Benefit:* If such a campaign proved successful, it would fundamentally change the role of Portuguese-Americans in the U.S. political landscape. If the community could become more active in civic affairs and voted in proportion to its numbers, then elected officials would be more responsive to its demands. The Foundation can help make Portuguese-Americans into good American citizens.

### **Commerce**

*Reported Issue:* Portuguese-American businesses need a vehicle to serve as a networking service for their commercial interests. Traditionally businessmen find networking to be a useful method of representing their concerns to governments, expanding their business contacts and discovering new investment opportunities among companies with shared interests. There are business-oriented organizations in every Portuguese-American city visited on the East Coast but some wished to create state-wide or even a national Portuguese-American business group.

Additionally, some interviewed businessmen have tried, many without success, to establish their companies in Portugal. Although the Portuguese government has long maintained programs to attract foreign investment, Portuguese-American businessmen reported that legal entanglements, bureaucratic delays and high start-up costs have discouraged all but the strongest of heart. A Portuguese-American chamber of commerce based in the United States would be able to represent the concerns of the American investors to Portuguese government officials.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> In 1998, a Portuguese business development agency "ICEP" (now entitled AICEP) was responsible for attracting foreign investment to Portugal and supporting the internationalization of Portuguese companies.

## *The First Letters*

*Anticipated Benefit:* Although the Foundation was already supporting national efforts to establish a Luso-American business network, the outreach was not complete given that most businessmen interviewed were not aware of any country-wide Portuguese-American business organization.

On the international front, the Foundation can use its good offices to bring U.S. businessmen together with Portuguese officials to identify key obstacles to Portuguese-American investment in Portugal.

### ***Other Subjects***

While the issues of education, citizenship, commerce and culture were common to virtually all papers submitted, valuable insights and other issues were raised by individual contributors. These subjects were as follows:

*The Role of Women:* Portuguese-American women are on the front lines when dealing with the non-Portuguese society. In general, many wives have to take jobs in order to support their families and are also responsible for meeting obligations such as; overseeing their children's education; coping with neighborhood problems such as safety in the streets; taking family members to doctor's visits; and performing mundane but essential tasks such as shopping for food and clothing. Most importantly, it is the women who are generally most conversant with local political issues, and, as a result, most willing to become civically involved.

*The Importance of the Azores:* One contributor pointed out that the Azores are the source of the Foundation's original funds and the native lands for many Portuguese-Americans. The Azores have problems which are unique due largely to its isolation and the remoteness from the center of Portuguese political power in Lisbon. The writer suggested that the Foundation should be more responsive to the Azorean Islands' concerns.

## **Conclusions**

A thread throughout the comments was concern over the political standing of Portuguese-Americans in the regions where they have settled. Ever since the first Portuguese immigrants arrived in the U.S., there have been innumerable campaigns by selfless volunteers to promote citizenship and voter registration. For reasons which were not explained in any of the letters, it was believed these efforts to encourage civic participation have not altered the commonly-held perception that Portuguese-Americans have not fully engaged in the political process.

In many regions, this perception of political apathy has become a reality and resulted in concrete and immediate consequences. Despite individual achievements in business, in academic circles, and, in the civil society, Portuguese-Americans believe they have been treated, for lack of a better expression, as second-class citizens. In face to face interviews and in their written comments presented to the Foundation, leaders repeated their opinion that there is lack of understanding and general respect for Portuguese-Americans by government authorities in the United States. The question of political empowerment appears to be inexorably linked to this unacceptable social standing.

# The Citizenship Action Program

*"This is not a three-year project. This is a ten-year project."*

*Rui Chancerelle de Machete  
President, Luso-American Foundation*

## The Issue

After reviewing the letters from the 1998 survey, the Luso-American Foundation re-examined its relationship with the Portuguese-American communities. The policy discussion within the Foundation moved beyond its traditional focus on cultural, scientific and academic areas to consideration of a comprehensive assessment of the problems confronting Portuguese-Americans at the grassroots level.

Civic involvement stood out as the central concern in the interviews and communications. The Foundation's motivation to act was a response to the conviction of many correspondents that their communities were still regarded as second-class citizens. Some also believed that this unacceptable social standing was further reflected in relationships with political authorities.

The messages from community leaders were unanimous in wanting to rectify this situation. The consensus was that a great deal more work in promoting civic engagement was needed for the Portuguese-American neighborhoods to enjoy the rights, dignity and respect to which they were entitled. Even those communities that were politically empowered wanted to do more. The Foundation's leadership concluded that new grant initiatives to local communities should be directed toward programs encouraging the adoption of U.S. citizenship and advancing greater political participation.

## **Basis of Collaboration**

The guiding principle of the Foundation's plans was that each organization should determine its own specific political goals and objectives. The Foundation was prepared to assist, but the overall direction of any political action would rest entirely with the local community.

An important goal was to increase communications between communities. The Foundation's role was not intended to create a civic action program from scratch, but rather to strengthen the programs and accomplishments already achieved.

The 1998 round of interviews demonstrated that there was little political collaboration among or even within communities. Each local civic program appeared to be operating in isolation. There was little evidence that any successful initiatives were shared with neighboring jurisdictions. This was not necessarily because of any territorial jealousy, but apparently these groups simply did not interact with each other. In terms of working to promote Portuguese-American civic participation, New Jersey communities did not collaborate with New England, New England states did not speak among themselves and no one had any contact with California. Even at the grass-roots level within cities and neighborhoods, there was no indication that individual groups worked together to promote a common political program.

There were many examples where Portuguese-Americans had demonstrated considerable political muscle, and had enjoyed significant influence in municipal and state governments. Notwithstanding these noteworthy accomplishments, many other Portuguese immigrant communities perceived themselves effectively shut out of the political process. The Foundation's plan was to build on the successes from empowered groups and introduce these winning programs to other organizations and communities.

## **The Contract of Work**

In 1998, Foundation President Dr. Rui Machete approved a Contract of Work with James McGlinchey to serve as the Coordinator of a grant program intended to encourage greater civic participation in Portuguese-

## *The Citizenship Action Program*

American communities. The endeavor was entitled *The Citizenship Action Program*.

The Contract committed the parties to a trial period of two years to work “*towards strengthening citizenship and voting campaigns in Portuguese-American communities.....*”. Following an evaluation of results, the Foundation had the option to continue the program for a third year. After the three-year period elapsed, the Contract of Work could continue on an ‘at will’ basis, i.e., the agreement could be terminated by any party at any time.

Dr. Machete, who is an experienced political leader, had a different perspective on what would be required to accomplish the Program’s objectives. Soon after the Contract of Work was signed, he declared “*This is not a three-year project. This is a ten-year project.*” The statement did not imply that the *Citizenship Action Program* would be sacrosanct and unchallenged from year to year, but rather that he was certain, to be successful, the Foundation had to be in it for the long haul.

The Contract of Work outlined the Foundation’s objectives for the program and expected measurement of results. The General Section of the Agreement stated in part that:

*“The Luso-American Development Foundation (FLAD) wishes to encourage Portuguese-Americans living in the United States to participate fully in the civic activities of their communities, become citizens at an early opportunity and vote in local, state and federal elections. Observers have noted that relative to other ethnic groups formed through immigration to the United States over many years, the Portuguese-Americans have shown less interest in civic action, citizenship, politics and civic participation in local affairs. This has led to a situation where few Portuguese-Americans occupy positions of political leadership relative to their numbers in the community, and consequently, the social, cultural, and economic interests of Portuguese-American families and communities are under-represented.*

*For the above to occur, it is necessary to stimulate the Portuguese-American communities to become involved in political processes, learn about*

*the benefits of political participation, and most importantly, become citizens and vote in elections. A variety of "citizenship participation campaigns" have been started in cities in Rhode Island, Massachusetts and New Jersey but they are managed in isolation from one another and thus do not benefit from coordinated efforts nor from an exchange of knowledge and experiences. FLAD believes that such exchanges of information and experiences can be valuable to these campaigns and wishes to employ James McGlinchey on a full-time basis for two years, to work among selected Portuguese-American communities to accomplish the objectives set forth in this agreement."*

## **Rules of Engagement**

Before establishing a working partnership with community organizations, it was first necessary to create a framework of rules in which to operate.

The first fundamental stipulation was the restriction of the Project to three areas of activity; adoption of U.S. citizenship, voter registration, and voting. The practical reasoning for this constraint was that there were financial and personal limitations as to what could be accomplished. If the Program were to be diverted outside these boundaries, the risk was that the attention devoted to the primary goals would be compromised and any chance of success would be correspondingly diminished.

The second crucial stipulation was that community projects considered for Foundation support must be non-partisan both in their message and in their implementation. The collaborative work with the Foundation was to encourage citizenship, voter registration and voter participation – no more, no less.

The strategic reasoning for the absolute avoidance of partisan involvement is complex. Non-partisanship has the benefit of substantially inoculating the *Program* against criticism about interference in U.S. political affairs. The notion of promoting democracy, in general, and promoting voting, specifically, is widely praised in the abstract. Actually, when any civic initiative comes to the point where it brings more voters to the polls and influences election outcomes, the noble promotion of voter participation can become an opportunity for some candidates but a threat for others.

## *The Citizenship Action Program*

Because the Foundation's efforts to promote voter registration and voting had no underlying political agenda, any individual or political party that voiced opposition to the *Citizenship Action Program* would be essentially criticizing the promotion of citizenship and the right and duty of all citizens to vote – an untenable argument.

### **Implementation**

During the first stages of collaboration, the participating organizations were encouraged to compose a multi-year strategy to methodically attack the long-standing problem of political apathy. The intention was to no longer rely solely on the heroic actions of individual activists but to construct a plan of action which consciously put these individual contributions into a larger, mutually reinforcing scheme.

For example, the benefit to the community at large would be lost if the individual gaining his or her U.S. citizenship did not register to vote. Likewise, voter registration itself would be of little value if the individual did not actually exercise his or her right to vote. The plan of action was intended to consciously merge individual accomplishments and separate campaigns into a more comprehensive effort to raise the political standing of the entire community.

The participating organizations were first asked to define the most important problems to be addressed. Then, they would outline a systematic method of overcoming these difficulties. Once a written plan of action was completed, the financial gaps that could be bridged by the Foundation would be considered. The Foundation would then be assured that its assistance would be part of a coherent, community-supported strategy and not an independent initiative operating in isolation. As part of the grant approval, the participating organizations also undertook to match the Foundation's contributions through their own fundraising efforts.

These plans of action with local groups were not contracts. The agreements only reflected the current best intentions of the individual organizations. It was likely and even desirable that, in the future, these plans would be reviewed and amended as necessary to reflect the experiences gained in implementation of the first stages of their original planning.

With these marching orders, the *Citizenship Action Program* began.



# Azorean Americans and the Autonomous Regional Government of the Azores

*"For the past 30 years I have many, many times visited the Portuguese communities in the United States. A large number of these communities trace their roots to the Azores Islands where I myself was born in and for whose burden of governance took responsibility during almost two decades.*

*Political and financial aid from America was crucial in some circumstances to solve the problems of the Azores thus strengthening the old friendly relationship between Portugal and the United States.*

*I am convinced we could go further in these purposes once every Portuguese person men and women living legally and permanently in America become full citizens and registered voters in the United States."*

*/s/ Joao Bosco Mota Amaral*

The Luso-American Foundation for Development (FLAD) was the founding organization and the principal sponsor of the Portuguese American Citizenship Project. The Regional Government of the Azores, however, played an essential role in the Project's introduction of these civic programs to communities, and provided critical financial support in 2009 when the Project was about to close down.

The Azores is a nine-island archipelago located in the North Atlantic, 1,500 kilometers from Lisbon, Portugal's capital. When Portugal's prolonged period of dictatorship ended in 1974, the country's new democratic constitution granted the Azores status as an autonomous region with its own political and administrative institutions.

The Azorean Government's responsibilities are primarily related to the well-being of its resident citizens but, at the same time, it also pays a great deal of attention to the welfare of its countrymen who have emigrated. *The Regional Directorate for Communities, Direcção Regional das Comunidades*, is the government entity charged, *inter alia*, with promoting dialog and exchange with émigré groups located principally in the United

## *Azorean Americans*

States of America, Canada, Bermuda, Brazil and Uruguay. An integral part of these communications consists of long-standing Azorean initiatives to encourage compatriots to fully engage in the civic and political affairs of the societies where they have created their new lives.

The Azorean-American community represents an important element of this outreach effort. The numbers speak for themselves. In the United States, Azoreans ventured west on Yankee whalers as early as the 1800's. After three major waves of immigration over the next two hundred years, the U.S. Census estimated that there are currently 1.3 million residents of the United States who were born in Portugal or born in the United States of Portuguese heritage. Of these, approximately one million have roots in the Azores.<sup>5</sup> By contrast, the Portuguese census in 2011 listed the total population of the Azores as 245,000.

### **Endorsement of Citizenship and Civic Participation**

The assistance of leaders of the Regional Government was an important contribution in the beginning years of the Portuguese American Citizenship Project. When the Project was first inaugurated, it was a completely unknown entity and no one in the community knew who we were and what we were trying to accomplish. Some organizations and groups were uncertain of the importance and even the legitimacy of this civic effort. The endorsement of respected Azorean officials was an important factor in gaining acceptance into these tightly knit circles.

In an interview with the Project Coordinator in 2003, Dr. Mota Amaral, the President of the Portuguese Assembly and the President of the Azores from 1976 to 1995, endorsed the importance of immigrants' full participation in the civic and political affairs of their new country, the United States. Dr. Amaral reiterated the same thoughts in a recorded message to the Azorean-American community and a written statement echoing the same message.<sup>6</sup>

The Azorean Government's endorsement of the Project was further reinforced in 2005 with the President of the Azores, Carlos César, hosting the

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<sup>5</sup> *U.S. Census Bureau, 2011-2015 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates*

<sup>6</sup> See *Letters of Support / Mota Amaral* for a copy of this statement.

Project's Board of Directors in Ponta Delgada. The conversation covered the Azorean Government's activities in the United States and the operational details of the Project's own programs to promote citizenship, voter registration and voting.

### **Financial Rescue Mission**

For the Project's first ten years, the Luso-American Foundation provided virtually all financial support to the Portuguese American Citizenship Project. This commitment was remarkable for both the amount of funding devoted to the Project and for the extraordinary duration of this support.

In the world-wide recession of 2008, however, the Foundation's endowment suffered substantial losses and, as such, was forced to curtail many of its grant programs. As part of this cutback, the Foundation notified the Project that it could no longer provide financial assistance. With the termination of Foundation support, coupled with the Project's own failure to raise funding from American sources, it became inevitable that the Portuguese American Citizenship Project would be forced to close.

In 2009, as part of a farewell series of visits to acknowledge supporters, the Project Coordinator met with Portuguese government officials and Portuguese media in Lisbon to discuss what the civic promotion activities had accomplished. One final stop was the Azores to provide a summary of our work and to express our gratitude to the Regional Government for its steadfast backing.

In a Ponta Delgada press conference sponsored by the Azorean government and attended by Luso-American Foundation Administrator, Mário Mesquita, and Senior Foundation Staff Member, Antonio Vicente, Andre Bradford, an advisor to the Azorean President, announced that his government was prepared to provide a three- year grant to the Project to ensure its continued operation. No one saw this coming but everyone was pleasantly surprised. The Luso-American Foundation subsequently pledged to match the Azorean contribution and the Project was suddenly back in business.

### *Azorean Americans*

This crucial decision by the Azorean government to provide financial assistance of €35,000 per year for three years was essentially a lifeline which allowed the Project to restart its work and continue in operation. During the next seven years, the Azorean Director for the Communities regularly participated in the Project's Board of Directors annual meetings and took a direct role in the formulation of the Project's plans.

# The Challenge

***“Se não votarmos, a administração deste vila nunca terá em conta a nossa comunidade, estaremos condenados a ser eternamente apenas pagadores de impostos sem qualquer voz sobre o modo o nosso dinheiro é gasto.”***

***“If we do not vote, the leadership of this city will not pay attention to our community and we will be eternally condemned to be mere payers of taxes without any voice in how our money is spent.”***

Voter Registration Drive Letter. Fall 2002  
Centro Romeu Cascaes, Harrison, New Jersey.

## Voter's Rights

The voting laws of the United States are not absolute, nor are they set in stone. On the contrary, U.S. voting laws have dramatically evolved over the nation's history from the first drafting of the Constitution, to modern efforts to rewrite election laws, to the Supreme Court's rulings on the legitimacy of changes to voting rules and regulations.

At our nation's beginning, the right to vote was granted only to male individuals who owned property. The reasoning was that those with the biggest stake in the society were also the best educated and could be entrusted to make decisions on behalf of the entire country. There was no provision for the working-class citizen who owned little or no land to enjoy the voting franchise. The possibility of women, slaves, and former slaves being granted the right to vote was out of the question.

Historically, efforts to expand voting rights were often accompanied by long and sometimes violent struggle. In the post-Civil War period enfranchising newly freed African-American slaves, or even granting voting rights to African-Americans who resided in the northern states, was a matter of hard-fought debate. Women were not granted the right to vote until 1920 after decades-long efforts.

## *The Challenge*

Even today, there are groups within the United States who are attempting to restrict the voting rights of selected classes of voters. While some tightening of voting rights has been nominally enacted to address potential voter fraud, often these measures are advocated by partisan interests and are interpreted as barely concealed attempts to reduce the voting franchise of populations likely to favor the 'other' political side.

Notwithstanding the ebb and flow of expanding and restricting the right to vote, over the history of the United States, the clear trend has been toward progressively greater access to the ballot box. Moreover, the laws of the land guarantee a citizen's right to vote. There are draconian provisions to prosecute those who try to prevent a citizen from exercising this right. That is the good news.

Now the bad news: There is no law which penalizes a citizen for abstaining from voting. In many countries, someone who fails to vote is fined or, in some regimes, imprisoned. In the United States, every citizen is at liberty to vote or not vote in elections as he or she so chooses. The United States has never had a major election with 100 percent voter turnout. In Presidential elections, the turnout rate is usually between 50 and 60 percent of all eligible voters. In local elections, in which individual citizens have the most at stake and the greatest influence on the outcome, turnout rates range between 15 and 30 percent. In some special elections, such as a bond authorization or a sudden elective office vacancy, turnout rates can fall below 10 percent of eligible voters.

### **The Consequence of Not Voting**

Whom a citizen votes for is a secret. That is a basic principle of the U.S. voting system. Whether one casts a ballot or not, however, is public information. Politicians seeking to win elections pay strict attention to individuals or groups identified through registration records as citizens who reliably show up on election day. If a candidate seeking office can determine from past voter history that a citizen is virtually certain to vote in an upcoming election, he or she will work hard to win that person's favor. It is the first rule of Politics 101.

## *The User's Guide*

One non-voter can be and, in fact, usually will be ignored. If an individual rarely or never votes, a political campaign will obviously not waste resources soliciting his or her support nor devote time to listen to that person's concerns. While a non-voter's mailbox will be free of campaign material in the run up to an election, the same non-voter may find it difficult in time of need to voice a complaint and find a helping hand from government representatives.

When one person chooses not to vote, there are consequences. The political dynamic changes when a distinguishable group of citizens – individuals identifiable by age, race, culture or language – chooses to stay home on Election Day. The impact of a collective absence from the polls can be devastating. Those groups who are identified as non-voters invariably end up missing out on services such as safer streets and better schools yet they still pay the costs in the form of taxes. There are no prizes for guessing which groups - the high voter turnout neighborhoods or the politically disengaged populations - get the better schools, stronger police protection, and, in New England and New Jersey, faster snow removal.

Robert Correia, a long-serving member of the Massachusetts House of Representatives and former Mayor of Fall River, succinctly referred to the role voters play in the political process when he stated,

*“Decisions are made by those who show up.”*

### **Immigrant Communities**

Immigrants do not immediately enjoy the full rights and privileges of U.S. citizenship upon entry. Assimilation and integration into the political arena begin when the traveler steps ashore and continue as an ongoing process through the hurdles of securing legal residency, gaining U.S. citizenship, registering to vote and, last but not least, voting.

On the one hand, a basic principle of democracy requires that as many members of a country as possible become active participants in civic affairs. On the other hand, incorporating new waves of immigrants is not always encouraged by the vested interests of entrenched society. The litany of hostile reaction to each wave of new immigrants to the United

## *The Challenge*

States is extensive. Read any history of the Irish immigration to New York to capture the difficulty of the struggles that Irish immigrants overcame. The same story held basically true for every other immigrant group as they tried to gain a foothold in their newly adopted country.

The political integration of most immigrants is often complicated by partisan politics. If a newly-arriving group is seen as lending an advantage to one political faction over another, such as the Irish impact on the Democratic Party of New York, partisan politics invariably come into play. As a more recent example, the initiative to register Hispanic-American citizens to vote has become entangled in charges and counter-charges by Democrats and Republicans. Republicans claim widespread voter fraud by non-citizens, while Democrats cite the lack of any credible evidence to support these allegations.

However honorable the intentions, immigrant citizenship drives and voter registration campaigns are characteristically guided by national organizations that espouse particular political agendas. If an immigrant community is generally poor and disadvantaged, organizers for progressive or liberal programs are more likely to sponsor efforts to bring these individuals into the political process and support their causes.

'Americanism' versus programs targeted to specific ethnic populations is the next most widely cited excuse against focusing voter registration and get-out-the-vote campaigns on selected immigrant groups. This objection to ethnic-based civic programs argues that newly arrived citizens should conduct themselves as 'Americans' and not continue to embrace in any shape, manner, or form the heritage of their country of origin.

That entreaty to focus on the national good, rather than the self-interested objectives of a particular group, ignores the common American practice of 'tribal politics'. To ignore the pervasive influence of assemblies of individuals acting in the best interests of their ethnic, racial, religious, cultural, or even sexual orientation is to ignore the engines that drive much of the U.S. political world. As a specific case in point, you cannot fully explain the machinations of modern Massachusetts government unless you understand the role that tribal politics has played in the state.



## **The Portuguese-American Immigrant Community**

Portuguese immigrants have been coming to the United States for more than two hundred years. Like other ethnic groups, they have become economically and socially integrated into American society. Portuguese-Americans are rich, middle class and poor. Some qualify for food stamps and some build skyscrapers. They represent all elements, organizers, leaders and followers, in their communities. However, unlike other ethnic groups, particularly ethnic groups of European origin, Portuguese-Americans tend to perceive themselves as less involved in civic life than others, and consequently they exercise significantly less influence over their own governance.

Civic indifference could be the consequence of the historical experience of the Portuguese immigrants. Perhaps from the experience of the *Estado Novo* dictatorship in Portugal (1933 to 1974) or perhaps from more recent difficulties dealing with sometimes unresponsive government agencies in the United States, some immigrants suspect that if an official government representative comes to your door, it can only lead to unforeseen trouble. The logic is that if you stay away from politics, politics will stay away from you.

In the Luso-American Foundation's 1998 survey of East Coast Portuguese-American communities, political leaders and activists voiced a commonly held belief that the cause of this lack of participation was simply that many Portuguese do not apply for U.S. citizenship, despite residing and working in the country legally for decades. They believed that this problem has been compounded by failure of those who do acquire citizenship, to register to vote or, even if they do register, to actually vote.

An urban legend often repeated in New England is the '50 percent rule': that is 50 percent of Portuguese immigrants do not adopt U.S. citizenship; 50 percent of those who are U.S. citizens do not register to vote; and, finally, 50 percent of those who do register to vote, do not vote. The '50 percent rule' if applied to its mathematical conclusion implies that only 12.5 percent of the Portuguese-American population ever vote.

## *The Challenge*

In Rhode Island, the '50 percent rule' has been restated, labelling untapped Portuguese-American voting power as the "sleeping elephant." This description recognizes the potential of the Portuguese-American vote, but suggests that it is a force that is largely inactive and dormant.

There is no shortage of falsehoods in the political arena and, as will be demonstrated in the *Methodology* chapter, the '50 percent rule' is one of them. Nonetheless, if elected government officials and Portuguese-Americans themselves accept this fabrication, political decision makers believe they can safely ignore the concerns of the Portuguese-American community and focus on the demands of other groups they believe are essential to keep them in office.

This is not a decision based on a like or dislike of Portuguese-Americans, it is purely the necessary course of action of getting elected and re-elected. Candidates for political office do not ignore Portuguese-Americans because of ethnic prejudice - some candidates are themselves Portuguese-American. Rather, political office seekers do not focus their attention on Portuguese-American voters largely because they have come to believe that the community does not fully exercise its voting franchise.

Because of this widespread perception of civic apathy, Portuguese-American communities in some regions have not enjoyed political advantages commensurate with their numbers or economic strength. The consequences of this perceived indifference to the political process are real and immediate.

### **The Solution?**

The *Citizenship Action Program* was premised on the observation from the 1998 interviews that Portuguese-Americans were dissatisfied with their political standing. The question remained, 'what can be done to address the problem?'

There are two basic choices for citizens who are dissatisfied with their government. They can just accept what is decided by others as a *fait accompli* or they can insist on being an integral part of the deliberative process. As soon as citizen groups demand that their voices be heard, they

## *The User's Guide*

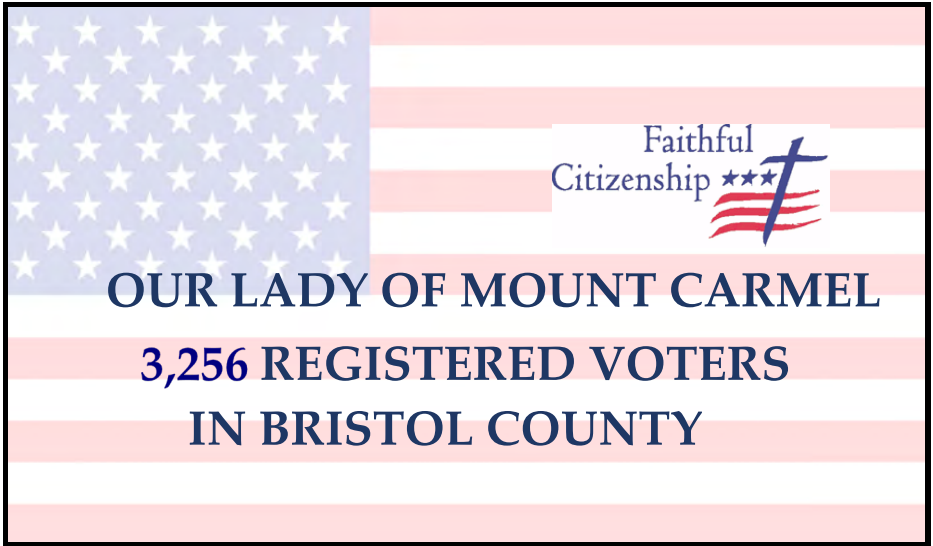
become part of decision-making. Elected leaders can continue to ignore these voices but then only at their own peril.

The unspoken consequence of the “Sleeping Elephant” metaphor from Rhode Island was, that once aroused, elephants, especially angry ones, are capable of wreaking a great deal of havoc. The order of the day was therefore to do whatever possible to mobilize the Portuguese-American vote into a coherent and forceful participant in the political arena.

In politics, there are no prizes for weakness. In fact, the penalty is real. The Harrison, New Jersey club, *Centro Romeu Cascaes*, sent a letter introducing the Portuguese American Citizenship Project to residents of that city. The unforgettable message in English and Portuguese included the following:

*“If we do not vote, the leadership of this city will not pay attention to our community and we will be eternally condemned to be mere payers of taxes without any voice in how our money is spent.”*

*“Eternally condemned”* - it cannot be stated more directly than that.



Faithful  
Citizenship

**OUR LADY OF MOUNT CARMEL**  
**3,256 REGISTERED VOTERS**  
**IN BRISTOL COUNTY**

*Presentation of Organizational  
Voter Strength*

# Development of a Methodology

**“O VOTO DÁ-NOS DIGNIDADE E RESPEITO  
EVERY VOTE BRINGS DIGNITY AND RESPECT TO OUR COMMUNITY”**

From the 1998 surveys and later discussions with Portuguese-American groups, it was evident that a successful campaign to promote greater civic participation required three main elements:

*Basic Information:* The Project needed to develop a reliable and objective yardstick to evaluate the political weaknesses and strengths of the Portuguese-American communities. Were the most pressing problems centered on the question of U.S. citizenship, voter registration, voter turnout, or all of the above?

*Focused Strategy:* Once the nature of the problem was better understood, the Project had to prioritize and attack the most decisive issues. If the problem was that Portuguese immigrants did not adopt U.S. citizenship, then a drive to encourage and facilitate the application for citizenship would be necessary. If voter registration and voter turnout were unsatisfactory, then registration drives and get-out-the-vote campaigns would be the order of the day.

*Effective Communications:* As soon as the voting strength of a community was well established, the Project had to create an opportunity whereby citizens could effectively communicate their concerns to the political establishment.

## **The Value of Information**

The principle of providing concrete evidence to verify the progress of the campaign originated with the Luso-American Foundation. While the Foundation was willing to undertake a multi-year commitment to support

## *Development of a Methodology*

the Project, it requested periodic reporting that included quantitative indications of accomplishments to demonstrate that the Project was achieving the desired results.

The importance of measuring outcomes was just as vital to the Foundation as it was to the participating volunteer organizations. Throughout the Portuguese-American communities, activists devoted countless hours to fostering responsible civic participation. But after examining these efforts, it was evident that there was a basic management problem which limited their effectiveness.

Most of the observed communities had benefited from time-honored programs such as citizenship drives and voter registration initiatives. While every volunteer effort had a clear purpose, many of these endeavors lacked a process for measuring the success of their efforts. Did these extraordinary contributions by local activists achieve meaningful results? Or, to use the Portuguese idiom, '*vale a pena?*' - 'was it worth the trouble?'

For example, in New England, Portuguese parishes and clubs would organize annual summer festivals that attracted large crowds. Civic activists customarily set up booths on festival grounds to promote voter registration. It is a long-established custom for a few volunteers to sit at a table under the hot August sun in order to register a dozen or so individuals who may or may not vote at election time. It takes a remarkable commitment by these activists to forego the celebrations in order to promote participation in Fall elections, a far-off prospect in fairgoers' minds. Despite the sacrifice, there would typically be no assessment of whether the volunteers' time was well spent. How many were registered at the festival? Did these newly registered individuals actually turn out on Election Day to vote? Did the effort make a difference?

A not-for-profit volunteer organization is similar to a business. A for-profit business must direct its financial and human assets to achieve the best result as measured in profit and loss statements. Similarly, a not-for-profit organization has limited resources at hand but often does not have an evaluation process to determine if its efforts are making the best use of its volunteers' time and energy. Volunteers are 'free' in the sense that they work for no pay. They are, nonetheless, a very valuable resource

and, as such, should be used to best advantage not only for the good of the community but also for the satisfaction of the volunteers themselves.

## **Separating Fact from Fiction**

Frustration with Portuguese-American political influence was a common theme in the 1998 interviews. Most attributed the lack of political visibility to the perceived reluctance of Portuguese-Americans to engage in the civic process. These activists explained that voter apathy, whether real or imagined, had significant consequences in a political environment that rewarded those who took their civic duties seriously at the expense of those who stayed home at election time.

Coming to grips with the perception of Portuguese-American civic indifference was not an inconsequential matter. Opinions on how and why the Portuguese-American community had a reputation for not voting were numerous and varied. The '50 percent rule,' described earlier, spread the blame among those who did not adopt U.S. citizenship, those who were U.S. citizens but did not register to vote, and those Portuguese-Americans registered to vote but did not vote. One could only wonder if this urban legend, so neat in its symmetry and often repeated as a reality, was actually true.

A priority in the Project's first year of operation was to create a method of separating fact from fiction. Once the nature of Portuguese-American civic participation was better understood, the community would be able to more confidently direct resources toward the most critical issues.

## **Fall River and the Creation of a Data Driven Campaign**

Fall River, Massachusetts was one of the central points of contact during the 1998 interviews. In 1999, the city became the laboratory for a trial and error process of creating the Project's underlying methodology. Kevin Costa, a political activist, formed the inaugural Fall River Committee, a collection of high-energy Portuguese-Americans who had years of experience in political organizing. After months of many meetings open to all interested parties, the committee was gradually reduced to a hard core /

## *Development of a Methodology*

*nucleo duro* of contributors who persevered - notably Kevin Costa himself; Donna Miranda, a workers' representative for the textile union, and John and Anna Paula DeJesus, state employees who were active in the Massachusetts Democratic Party.

In examining the campaigns of candidates for political office, John DeJesus described the Massachusetts Democratic Party's practice of mailing postcards prior to elections urging its members to vote. The Fall River committee decided that this technique would be an efficient way to engage the largest numbers of registered voters, considering the limited volunteer and financial resources at hand. The Project did not know yet how to implement this strategy.

The committee initially faced a problem of how to identify the target population. that is Portuguese-American residents of the city. Although most of the Fall River population is of Portuguese descent, the committee decided it would be inefficient and prohibitively expensive to send voter cards to all registered voters regardless of ethnicity.

To resolve this problem, the committee decided to focus on the centers of the Portuguese community - the social clubs and Catholic parishes. Portuguese settlements in the United States do not lack organizational structure. In these neighborhoods, there are numerous religious and social associations that cater almost exclusively to the immigrant community. In Fall River, Portuguese-Americans' wallets hold numerous membership cards from their parishes, social clubs, soccer clubs, *bandas filharmonicas*, and cultural clubs. The immediate benefit of working with the clubs and parishes was acquiring access to lists of city residents who could reliably be identified as Portuguese-Americans.

An important added advantage to this method of defining a target audience was having parish pastors and club presidents act as the primary communicators of the civic campaign message. In contrast to impersonal corporate-style letters from political parties with their own agendas, the involvement of a trusted and authoritative leader such as a parish pastor or a club president would likely be a more meaningful and effective method of communicating with their members.



## **The Catholic Church and Faithful Citizenship**

In 2000, the Fall River-wide committee met with Reverend Sean O'Malley, then Bishop of the Fall River Diocese, seeking approval to collaborate with parishes under his authority which included congregations in the major Portuguese centers of Fall River, New Bedford and Taunton

The policy of the Catholic Church on the duty of its members to participate in civic life was clear. In 1998, the *National Conference of Catholic Bishops* issued its statement on civic responsibility, "*Faithful Citizenship*", which included the following:

*"For Catholics, public virtue is as important as private virtue in building up the common good. In the Catholic tradition, responsible citizenship is a virtue; participation in the political process is a moral obligation. Every believer is called to faithful citizenship, to become an informed, active and responsible participant in the political process."*

With this objective in mind, the Catholic Bishops added the following clarification of their policy:

*"We (the bishops) do not seek the formation of a religious voting bloc, nor do we wish to instruct persons on how they should vote by endorsing or opposing candidates.....We are convinced that a consistent ethic of life should be the moral framework from which to address all issues in the political arena. ... As Catholics, we need to share our values, raise our voices, and use our votes to shape a society that protects human life, promotes family life, pursues social justice, and practices solidarity."*

The Catholic Church is categorized by the U.S. Internal Revenue Service as a '*not-for-profit organization*'. That classification carries benefits for tax purposes but imposes restrictions on the political involvement of the organization. In practical terms, the Church could instruct its parishioners on articles of faith but is prohibited from telling its members how they should vote.

## *Development of a Methodology*

There was a shared purpose between the *Faithful Citizenship* program and the Portuguese-American Citizenship Project. A cooperative working arrangement between the parishes and the Project was even more compelling, given the importance of the Catholic Church to the Portuguese-American community. The practical benefit of working with the Church was straightforward and obvious: Catholic parishes number in the thousands, while clubs and social organizations number in the hundreds. The only point of difference was that the Catholic Church wished to promote civic participation in order to shape a society while the Portuguese-American Citizenship Project was solely concerned with promoting citizenship and voting without any policy objectives attached.

### **The Fall River Parishes**

Following the audience with Bishop O'Malley, Donna Miranda, who from the start insisted on focusing attention on the Catholic parishes, arranged a subsequent meeting with Father Gastão Oliveira, the pastor of Santo Cristo parish in Fall River. Before the Coordinator could even finish the introductory descriptions of the Project, Father Gastão immediately voiced his support by responding, "I understand what you are doing and this is what you can do for us".

This seemingly innocuous statement was important because it was the first explicit recognition of the intended relationship between the Portuguese American Citizenship Project and the participating organizations. In past conversations, many community leaders who were supportive of the Project's goals would ask what their organization could do for the Project. Father Gastão understood instantly that the Project was intended to serve his organization rather than the reverse. That recognition established the basis of the entire collaborative relationship.

This one conversation also proved to be the pivotal breakthrough for the Project's relations with the Catholic Church. Father Gastão agreed to provide the Project with his parish's membership list. With this information, the Project embarked for the first time on identifying the parish's registered voters, measuring its voting strength, and establishing the groundwork for a get-out-the-vote campaign. The pastor took significant risk by providing this private and privileged information. The Coordinator could only give his personal assurance that the confidentiality of the information would be honored.

Donna Miranda's own parish, Espirito Santo, soon joined the Project. The cooperation of Santo Cristo and Espirito Santo parishes opened the doors for other parishes in Fall River and New Bedford to participate fully by providing the same information about their parishioners. The Project now had comprehensive membership lists from the largest Portuguese Catholic congregations in Fall River and New Bedford.

Combining the information provided by the parishes with official voter registration data, the Project moved beyond uninformed speculation about the potential political strength of the Portuguese-American electorate. The Project could now identify the parishes' members who were registered to vote.

### **Linking Organization Membership with Voter Registration Data**

The process of matching voter registration information with a list of parishioners was not a trivial matter. One may try to match the name and address of a parishioner with the voter registration data by searching the official rolls for the status of each parishioner one by one. It can be done, but using this system to examine the registration status of a parish with thousands of members is impractical. The Project had to create a more efficient and trustworthy technique to allow for examination of many organizations with memberships numbering from the hundreds to the thousands.<sup>7</sup>

This was how we did it.

Data on voter registration and voting participation is public information and available from voter registrars' official records. Following is an example of a typical official voter record:

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<sup>7</sup> The Project acknowledges the invaluable contribution of then Election Commission Chairwoman for the City of New Bedford, Maria Tomasia, and her staff. Thanks to their patient explanation of the intricacies of voter databases, we were able to decipher the volumes of voter registration information and make use of it for our campaign.

## Sample Official Voter Registration and Voter History

Registered Voter	Street Address	Voter ID	Sep98	Nov98	Mar00	Nov00
Mary Borges	188 Oak St	ABC33820	9/7/98	11/9/98	3/10/00	11/10/00
John Carrie	117 Maple Rd	DEF52094	9/7/98		3/10/00	11/10/00
Mary Smith	39 Pine St	HIJ87657				
Robert Walsh	89 Rose Ave	KLM90134				11/10/00

Only individuals registered to vote appear on the voter rolls. This data shows that Mary Borges is a committed voter participating in every surveyed election. John Carrie is a registered voter who voted in three of the past four elections, but he did not vote in the November 1998 election. Mary Smith is also registered but has not voted in any of the four surveyed elections. Robert Walsh voted only in the 2000 Presidential Election.

On the other side of the ledger, parishes and social clubs maintain contact information for all their members. These lists contain surnames, first names, and addresses.

## Sample Organization Membership List

Member	Street Number	Street Name
Edward Borges	188	Oak St
Mary Borges	188	Oak St
John Carrie	117	Maple Rd
Sandra Jones	16	Main St
Mary Smith	39	Pine St
Robert Walsh	89	Rose Ave

Using a custom-designed computer program, *Datafixer*, the Project linked organization membership lists with official registration records, to create composite listings of all members, their voter registration status and their voting histories.

## Sample Composite List Members Linked with Voter Registration and Voter History

Member	Street Address	Voter ID	Sep98	Nov98	Mar00	Nov00
Edward Borges	188 Oak St					
Mary Borges	188 Oak St	ABC33820	9/7/98	11/9/98	3/10/00	11/10/00
John Carrie	117 Maple Rd	DEF52094	9/7/98		3/10/00	11/10/00
Sandra Jones	16 Main St					
Mary Smith	39 Pine St	HIJ87657				
Robert Walsh	89 Rose	KLM90134				11/10/00

In this example, Edward Borges and Sandra Jones, are listed as members of the organization, but not identified as registered voters.

The *Composite List* is the 'go-to-war' document. It represents the underpinnings for the civic campaign efforts to follow. The Project could now precisely count the number of registered voters in the organization and how many of the members went to the polls for each surveyed election. The following is the summary data from a Project report in 2008 for Santo Cristo parish:

HISTORICAL DATA: SANTO CRISTO PARISH REGISTRATION - VOTING			
PARISHIONERS RESIDING IN FALL RIVER	3,844		
PARISHIONERS REGISTERED TO VOTE IN THE CITY OF FALL RIVER	1,690	HEADS OF HOUSEHOLD	
	2,085	ALL HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS	
<u>VOTING PERFORMANCE OF FALL RIVER RESIDENTS</u>			
HEADS OF HOUSEHOLD	AS PERCENT OF ALL PARISHIONERS REGISTERED TO VOTE	CITYWIDE VOTING HISTORY AS PERCENT OF ALL REGISTERED VOTERS	
COMPARABLE STATISTICS			
VOTERS SEP 2006	722	43.6%	28.8%
VOTERS NOV 2006	958	56.0%	47.3%
VOTERS SEP 2007	727	57.4%	33.4%
VOTERS NOV 2007	739	58.3%	37.9%
VOTERS FEB 2008	881	60.0%	36.8%
VOTERS SEP 2008	534	36.4%	22.7%
VOTERS NOV 2008	1170	79.6%	67.5%

## *Development of a Methodology*

The table shows that the parish has 3,844 members who reside in the city. These listed members are normally the husband and wife of a household and single adults. Dependent children (of voting age or minors) and senior dependents resident at the same address are often not included in this listing.

The Project identified 1,690 heads of household who are registered to vote. The Project counted an additional 395 family members - adult children or senior citizens resident at the same address - who are also registered to vote. The total number registered amounted to 2,085 parishioners - the largest collection of registered voters in the city and one of the largest in the entire county.

Summary data reports such as that presented above was available for interested parties to examine. Detailed information on individual members, however, was sacrosanct. Throughout 16 years of operation, the Project treated membership information as confidential and the sole property of the club or parish. Under the direction of an organization's leaders, the Project's role was to analyze the data, compare it with voter registration lists, prepare voter cards, and complete analyses for further action. The Project did not combine these databases into a city- or state-wide collection of Portuguese-American registered voters. Each club or parish retained complete control over this information.

In one incident, a politician asked the Project to provide its data on a parish's members who were registered to vote in order to "compare my list with your list." The Project Coordinator replied that this data was not his to divulge and suggested that the request be made directly to the pastor. The Coordinator explained that he would only comply with the parish's instructions. Needless to say, the request to the pastor was never made and the matter was dropped.

### **Information on Citizenship**

Information about the citizenship status of an organization's members was essential in forming a civic campaign. If a large percentage of members were not U.S. citizens, a campaign to promote application for citizenship would be the first order of business.

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The problem in such a situation was that citizenship status could be a sensitive matter. In the Project's introductory meeting in one community, a member of the audience became so convinced of the merits of the Project's ambitions that he enthusiastically stood up and requested that anyone in the audience who was not a citizen raise his or her hand. It was quickly suggested this was a bad idea that would embarrass anyone who was not a U.S. citizen in front of friends and neighbors. The question remained, however, how to assess the existing citizenship situation.

The Project had already developed a technique to distinguish individuals who were registered to vote from those not registered, but this data only provided a partial answer to the citizenship question. If a member was registered to vote, then, by law, he or she must be a U.S. citizen. But an individual not registered to vote could be either a U.S. citizen or not.<sup>8</sup>

To illustrate the point, in the membership and voter registration tables presented in the *Sample Composite List* presented earlier, we were confident that Mary Borges, John Carrie, Mary Smith and Robert Walsh were U.S. citizens because they were registered to vote. Edward Borges and Sandra Jones were not registered and information on their citizenship status was not available. If an organization's member was not listed as registered to vote, there would be no publicly available data showing such status and one would have to ask the individual concerned.

Directly inquiring about the citizenship status of an organization's members not listed as 'registered to vote' would be unrealistic. In some cases, this meant personally contacting more than a thousand individuals. The process of this interviewing would not only be time-consuming but would also present an impossible burden for volunteers. Questioning a person's citizenship status could be considered intrusive. In a trial program to interview parishioners whose citizenship status was unknown, parish volunteers reported some very un-Christian replies by individuals who deeply resented the inquiry.

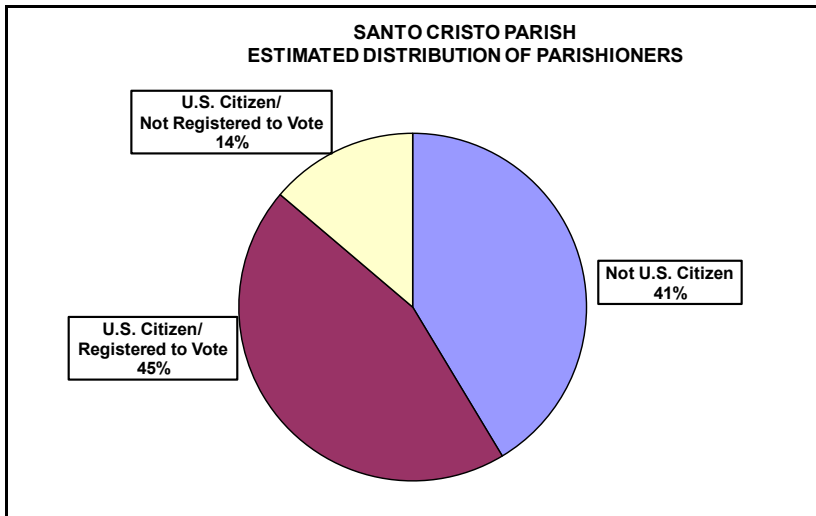
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<sup>8</sup> In order to register to vote, a citizen has to attest to the fact that he or she is a U.S. citizen.

### *Development of a Methodology*

The Project designed a survey for participating organizations to gain a better understanding of its citizenship profile by contacting only a small group without having to undertake the Herculean task of questioning every member not registered to vote.

The statistical survey randomly selected 100 parishioners who were not already identified as registered voters and requested parish volunteers to ask only those individuals if they were U.S. citizens. The following graph presents the findings of a survey conducted in 2002 from Santo Cristo parish.



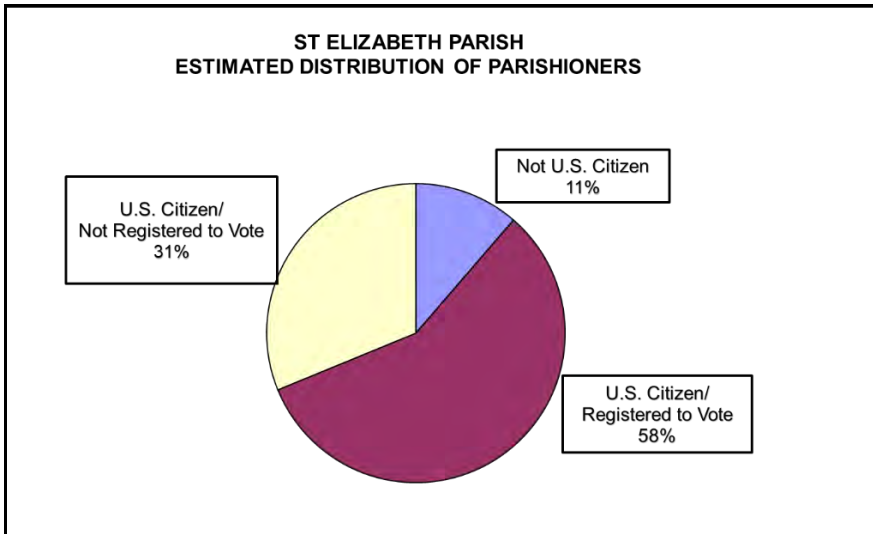
The survey suggested that the estimated number of parishioners who did not possess US citizenship, 41 percent, was only slightly below the estimated number of parishioners who were U.S. citizens registered to vote, 45 percent. The elevated non-citizenship rate could be expected, given the parish was in a working-class neighborhood with programs and religious services designed to serve the Portuguese/Azorean parishioners. Masses and confession were offered in English and Portuguese. Other programs, such as saints' day celebrations, processions and festivals, were deeply rooted in the Azores where many of the parishioners traced their heritage.



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The parish's voter registration rate of 45 percent was lower than a comparable Fall River city average of 55 percent.<sup>9</sup> If non-citizens are removed from the calculation, however, the survey estimated that 76 percent of the U.S. citizen parishioners eligible to vote were registered. The conclusion of this study was that Santo Cristo's biggest problem was citizenship not voter registration.

Additional surveys of Espirito Santo Parish in Fall River and Mount Carmel in New Bedford resulted in remarkably similar profiles and similar conclusions. The 2002 investigation of St. Elizabeth parish located in nearby Bristol, Rhode Island, however, yielded a markedly different result.



St. Elizabeth parish, like many of the Fall River parishes, also had a large number of parishioners with origins in the Azorean Islands but its economy was not centered on labor intensive industries as found in New Bedford and Fall River.

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<sup>9</sup> Source: Secretary of State, Commonwealth of Massachusetts and the U.S. Census. Both the parish voter registration rate and the Fall River city voter registration rate are calculated by dividing the number of registered voters by total members/population which includes both U.S. citizens and noncitizens.

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Only an estimated 11 percent of the St. Elizabeth parishioners were not U.S. citizens. The parish's voter registration rate of 58 percent was significantly higher than the Santo Cristo registration rate of 45 percent. If non-citizens are removed from the calculation, the survey estimated that 65 percent of the St. Elizabeth's U.S. citizen parishioners eligible to vote were registered, lower than the comparable registration rate for the Fall River parishes and marginally lower than the registration rate for Bristol city at large of 68 percent.<sup>10</sup> Unlike the Fall River and New Bedford parishes, St. Elizabeth had a voter registration issue to address.

### **The Annual Program of Work**

Once the membership was linked to voter registration rolls and the 'go-to-war' list was assembled, the organization would be prepared to inaugurate a full-scale voter registration and get-out-the-vote campaign.

Information on voter registration and voter history for an organization's membership was used in three ways:

Correspondence – Once an organization decided to promote citizenship and civic participation, it would send letters to all its members presenting the purpose of this new campaign to promote involvement in the political process.

Voter Cards – In a mailing immediately before a targeted election, the organization would send voter reminder cards to each registered member.

Measuring Results – Following each election, the Project would assemble voter data for the targeted election and compare that turnout in past elections and the average turnout for the jurisdiction at large.

The Project's annual cycle of campaign activities before and after a Fall election was as follows:

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<sup>10</sup> Source: Rhode Island Department of State and the U.S. Census. The voter registration rate is calculated by dividing the number of registered voters by total population which includes both U.S. citizens and noncitizens.

### **KEY DATES**

<b>SUMMER BEFORE ELECTION</b>	<b>OBTAIN VOTER REGISTRATION DATA</b> <b>OBTAIN ORGANIZATIONAL MEMBERSHIP LISTS</b> <b>PREPARE MAILING LIST OF ORGANIZATION MEMBERS REGISTERED TO VOTE</b>
<b>MONTHS PRIOR TO</b>	<b>SEND INTRODUCTORY LETTERS TO ENCOURAGE VOTER REGISTRATION</b>
<b>IMMEDIATELY PRIOR TO ELECTION</b>	<b>SEND VOTER CARDS</b>
<b>SEPTEMBER TO NOVEMBER</b>	<b>ELECTIONS</b>
<b>JANUARY/FEBRUARY FOLLOWING ELECTION</b>	<b>PROCURE UPDATED VOTER HISTORY INFORMATION FROM REGISTRAR OF VOTERS</b>
<b>SPRING/SUMMER</b>	<b>PREPARE REPORTS ON MEMBERS' ELECTION PARTICIPATION</b> <b>MEET WITH EACH PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATION TO DETERMINE STRATEGY FOR NEXT ELECTION CYCLE</b>

## **Correspondence**

For many participating organizations, active engagement in elections and political campaigns would be considered outside the normal course of business and might prove surprising and unsettling to the membership. To set the stage for a civic action campaign, participating organizations sent letters to members' households explaining the purpose of the upcoming initiative, and why it was so important to participate in civic affairs. The letters stressed that voting not only helped the individual, but also promoted the well-being of the entire community.


The call-to-arms message of these letters had two distinct purposes. The first was to persuade non-citizen members to apply for U.S. citizenship. The second purpose was to encourage voter registration. The correspondence included a voter registration card for members who were eligible to vote but not yet registered. If all members of a family were registered, recipients were encouraged to use the form to register other relatives and friends. The idea was to put a blank voter registration card on

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every family's kitchen table and thereby enlist every household in a community-wide registration campaign. Additionally, in communities like Fall River and New Bedford, a parish's request to the Registrar of Voters for several thousand voter registration forms did not go unnoticed by the political establishment.

The following introductory letter from Hartford, Connecticut demonstrate this method:

### ***Letter from the Portuguese Club of Hartford***



*Portuguese Club of Hartford, Inc.*  
since 1927

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730 North Mountain Road • Newington, CT 06111 • (860) 953-3971 Fax (860) 953-6808

**Portuguese American Citizenship Project**

AOS SÓCIOS DO CLUBE PORTUGUÊS DE HARTFORD  
RESIDENTES EM NEWINGTON e EAST HARTFORD, CT.

Votar é um importante dever cívico.

Os nossos filhos, os nossos pais e os nossos vizinhos esperam que cada um de nós vote para podermos todos eleger os melhores líderes políticos, pessoas que ouçam os nossos anseios e apoiem a nossa comunidade.

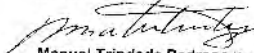
Para que os Portugueses e Luso-Americanos tenham voz em Newington e East Hartford em assuntos que afectam as nossas vidas e as nossas propriedades é preciso que muitos mais Luso-Americanos votem em cada eleição.

O nosso objectivo é -de um modo rigorosamente apartidário -colocar nos cadernos eleitorais desta vilas mais 500 novos eleitores e é por isso que estamos a escrever. Presentemente, há pouco mais de 200 eleitores Luso-Americanos. Se não votarmos a administração destas vilas nunca terá em conta a nossa comunidade, estaremos condenados a ser eternamente apenas pagadores de impostos sem qualquer voz sobre o modo como o nosso dinheiro é gasto.

***Se é cidadão americano e está registado para votar, Não se esqueça de votar em cada acto eleitoral. Registe nos cadernos eleitorais a sua família inteira. Faça-lhes ver a necessidade de votar. A comunidade Portuguesa de precisa dos seus votos.***

Como você bem sabe, só quem vota e ouvido e cada novo eleitor fará uma diferença grande se votar em cada acto eleitoral.

.Se, entretanto, tiver alguma pergunta a fazer, pode ligar para (860) 953-3971.

  
Manuel Trindade Pedroso President  
Portuguese Club of Hartford

Informal Translation:

**“Voting is an important civic obligation.**

**Our children, our parents and our neighbors hope that each one of us votes so we will be able to elect the best political leaders, people who will listen to our expectations and support our community.**

**In order for Portuguese-Americans to have a voice in Newington and East Hartford on subjects that affect our lives and our homes, it is necessary that many more Luso-Americans vote in each election.**

**Our objective which is strictly nonpartisan is to bring more than 500 new voters to the polling stations of these cities. It is for this reason we are writing. Currently there less than 200 Luso-American voters in these towns. If we don't vote, the administrators of these cities will never pay attention to our community and we will be eternally condemned to be only payers of taxes without any voice in the manner in which this money is spent.**

**If you are an American citizen and registered to vote don't forget to vote in each election. Register your entire family to vote and impress upon them the necessity for voting. The Portuguese community needs your votes.**

**As you well know only those who vote are heard and each new voter will make a great difference by voting in every election.”**

**/s/ Manuel Trindade Pedroso, President**

**Portuguese Club Hartford**

## **Voter Reminder Cards**

The get-out-the-vote campaign was designed to be a regular event that would be an integral part of every election cycle. The grand strategy was to establish a campaign program that would reliably return like clockwork for every election, year after year.

After the initial letters were sent to all organization members explaining the purpose of the campaign, the next step was to send reminder cards to every registered voter in advance of each election. The cards were scheduled for delivery just days before the election, notifying voters of the date of the election, the addresses, and hours of operation of their respective polling stations.

The voter reminder cards were sent out before Federal, state, municipal and special out-of-cycle elections. In California, Connecticut and Rhode Island, this plan required mailings for primary and general elections in

## *Development of a Methodology*


every even-numbered year. For New Jersey and Massachusetts, with additional off-year elections, mailings for primary and general elections would be required every year.<sup>11</sup>

The reminder of the ‘greater good’ benefit, promoted in the introductory letters, also appeared on the voter cards. The knowledge that voting was not a solitary action, but rather constituted a benefit to the community, was conveyed in the following declaration:

**“O VOTO DÁ-NOS DIGNIDADE E RESPEITO  
EVERY VOTE BRINGS DIGNITY AND RESPECT TO OUR COMMUNITY”**

This message was repeated before every election to every member of a participating organization registered to vote. Included below is a sample of the front and back of a voter card.

### **Sample Voter Card (Front)**

Our Lady of Fatima 408 Spring Street Elizabeth, New Jersey 07201		<b>DUARTE VICENTE 1234 MAPLE AVE ELIZABETH NJ 12345</b>
<small>O VOTO DÁ-NOS DIGNIDADE E RESPEITO EVERY VOTE BRINGS DIGNITY AND RESPECT TO OUR COMMUNITY</small>		

### **Sample Voter Card (Back)**

<b>DUARTE VICENTE 1234 MAPLE AVE</b>	
<b>PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS</b>	
<b>TERÇA-FEIRA, 4 DE NOVEMBRO    TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 4</b> 6 :00AM - 8:00PM	
<b>VOCÊ VAI VOTAR NA:    YOU VOTE AT:</b>	
<b><u>FRED ERXLBEN RECREATIONAL CENTER</u></b> <b><u>RICHMOND ST. (POOL ENTRANCE)</u></b>	
<small>MAIS INFORMAÇÕES? TELEPHONE: THE UNION COUNTY BOARD OF ELECTIONS 908-527-4123 THE PORTUGUESE-AMERICAN CITIZENSHIP PROJECT <a href="http://WWW.PORTUGUESEAMERICAN.ORG">WWW.PORTUGUESEAMERICAN.ORG</a></small>	

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<sup>11</sup> An off-year is a term used to describe odd-numbered years when no Presidential or mid-term federal elections would take place. In New Jersey, these off-year elections were held for state and local offices. In Massachusetts, they were held for local offices.

The voter cards provided an unexpected benefit for some elderly citizens who were not fluent English speakers. When election officers at the polling stations would ask these individuals to state their names and addresses before voting, the exchange could be difficult at best and incomprehensible at worst. It was reported in several neighborhoods that some citizens entered the polling stations with the voter card from their parish or club in hand. When asked for their name and address, they presented their voter cards and declared, “*Sou Eu*” (That’s Me). Without another word, the attending officials could obtain the required information from the voter cards avoiding unnecessary further confusion. The voter cards thus effectively served for some as an unofficial permit to vote.

## **Measuring Results**

Because a non-partisan ‘Campaign-without-Candidates’ by definition does not promote any particular individual or issue, no election night wins or losses would indicate the effectiveness of the Project’s voter mobilization effort. An immediate but informal assessment of the get-out-the-vote programs was to cite anecdotal reports in Portuguese neighborhoods of voting precincts running out of ballots or of unusually long lines at polling stations. However, this information was imprecise and essentially hearsay.

Hard facts were necessary to validate a campaign strategy. Although the voting authorities provide election results immediately after polls close, the voter registrar is only able to provide complete information on the voting performance of the individual voter several months after the actual election. Once this data becomes available, the Project could determine the definitive results on voter turnout of an organization’s members. This information was used in the preparation of an election performance report for each participating organization. The report consisted of a table of statistics on the voter turnout of selected past elections (See *Methodology/Santo Cristo Voter Registration and Voting Record*).

This summary data was accompanied by an explanation of the results and recommendations for future campaigns. The *Results* and *Recommendations* reports below were completed for Our Lady of Fatima Parish, Elizabeth, New Jersey for the 2006 election cycle.

### **RESULTS**

Our Lady of Fatima's heads of household voter turnout was higher than the citywide turnout in the September 2006 Primary Election and in the November 2006 General Election. Heads of household turnout for the September 2006 Primary Elections was 41%, as compared to the city turnout of 22%. Our Lady of Fatima heads of household turnout for the November 2006 General Election was 48%, as compared to the city turnout of 37%.

Voter turnout is not uniform across age groups. Voters under 30 years of age and even those between 30 and 40 years old had lower turnout rates than the older voters. This is true for the registered voters in the parish and true for the registered voters in the community at large.

### **RECOMMENDATIONS**

The parish should examine ways to increase its overall voter turnout rate. While the parishioners have outvoted the city overall, the difference between Our Lady of Fatima's turnout and the Elizabeth city turnout is growing smaller. Also, among the parishioners, older voters consistently outvote younger voters. This issue should be addressed.

## **In-Depth Examination of Voter Turnout**

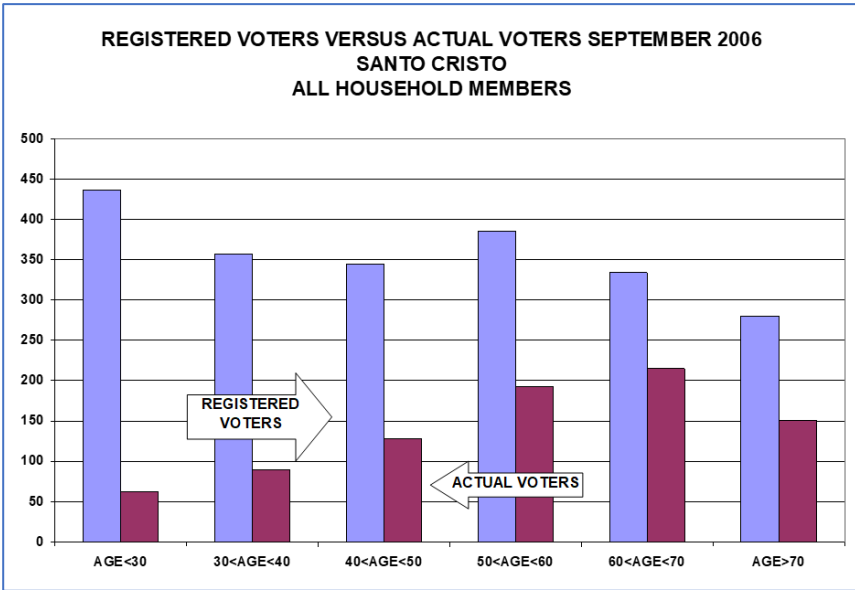
In the first years, analyses of election results focused entirely on each organization's overall voter turnout. Subsequently, in order to better understand the voting dynamics of separate segments of the Portuguese-American population, it was necessary to break out voter performance by age groups.

Turnout among younger citizens in America has become a subject of concern. Assuming the national problem of low voter turnout among younger age groups extends to the Portuguese-American community, the Project attempted to better understand the degree of the problem and to take measures to correct it.

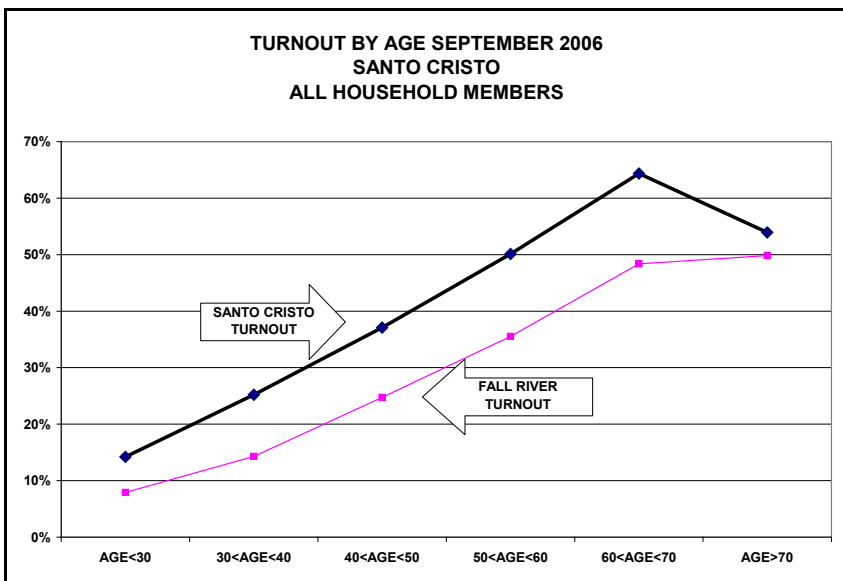
A study of the September, 2006 Primary Election of Santo Cristo Parish, Fall River revealed that parishioners under 30 years of age represented the largest number of registered voters, but the smallest collection of actual voters.



## The User's Guide



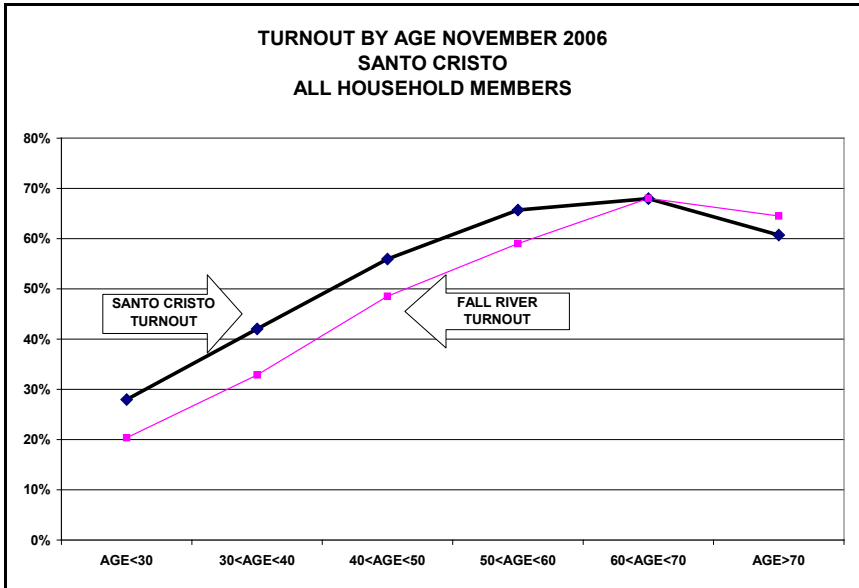
In the September election, the voter turnout for the under-30 age group was below 15 percent, in comparison to the 60 to 70 age group with its turnout rate of close to 65 percent.



## Development of a Methodology

These results demonstrated that voter registration was not the most pressing problem for younger Portuguese-American citizens; voter turnout was the more immediate issue.

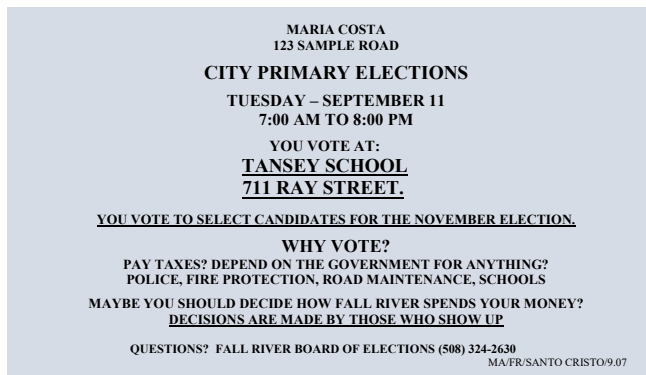
This analysis also illustrated that the voter cards have a dramatically different impact in separate age groups. In November, 2006, the parish did not send out voter cards, with the result presented in the following graph.



When voter cards were mailed to all parishioners registered to vote in September 2006, the widest margin over the city turnout was in the 60 to 70 age group. In November, 2006, when no mailing took place, this difference disappeared. In the over-70 group, the parishioner turnout even fell below the city average. In contrast, for the younger groups, the cards apparently had no measurable impact on their turnout rate.

For 2007, the Project attempted to address this discrepancy by designing different voter cards for different age groups. The traditional cards composed in Portuguese and English were sent to members over 30 years of age. The 'under 30 cards' were composed only in English and designed to confront the long-standing question of "Why Vote?," among younger citizens.

## **Under-30 Voter Card**



## **Promoting the Civic Campaign and Publicizing the Results**

If an organization desires to become active in civic affairs, it is essential that it have a basic understanding of its voting strength, i.e., how many of its members are registered to vote. If the organization is aware of the potential number of its members who will vote on election day, it will likely be more confident in pushing its weight around in city hall.

Simple posters like that represented below for Mount Carmel, New Bedford Massachusetts were created for display in parish halls in the weeks before the elections.

### **Sample Poster**



## *Development of a Methodology*

Mount Carmel Church could declare with authority the number of registered voters in the parish. This imposing number puts the parish, along with other Portuguese churches, among the largest collection of registered voters in the county.

Once the voting strength of the Portuguese-American groups was understood, there was a determined effort to publicize this information in the Portuguese and English language press. The following release on voting in Fall River was sent to the local Portuguese- and English-language media.

### **Draft Press Release**

#### **Voters from Portuguese Parishes turn out in numbers**

Portuguese-American voters in Fall River, MA are forcing politicians to pay attention to them.

A recent study revealed that voters from two traditionally Portuguese parishes in Fall River showed up to the polls at surprisingly high rates during the Presidential election last November.

Rejecting the long-standing belief that Portuguese-Americans do not participate in elections, voters from Santo Cristo Parish and Espirito Santo Parish in Fall River voted almost 15 percent more often than city wide voters did during last November's election.

Fr. James Ferry, Pastor of Espirito Santo said,

Our parishioners are becoming increasingly conscious of the civic and moral responsibility of giving witness to the faith at the ballot box. Anyone who aspires to serve this constituency in public office would be wise to take them seriously.

Os nossos paroquianos estão a ficar cada vez mais conscientes da sua responsabilidade cívica e moral de darem testemunho da fé nas urnas e voto. Quem quer que tençione servir estes constituintes num cargo público, será prudente que os considere sériamente.

In a study conducted by the Portuguese American Citizenship Project, 73 percent of registered voters from Santo Cristo Parish and 67 percent of registered voters from Espirito Santo Parish took part in the November 2000 election. In comparison, 55 percent of registered voters across the city cast their ballots during that election.

Fr. James Ferry said,

This study clearly shows that Portuguese Americans recognize the importance of civic and political involvement in bringing about a culture that supports life, family, faith and moral values. The more these values come under attack by certain segments of society, the more we can expect Portuguese-Americans' turnout to rise.

Este estudo revela que os Luso-Americanos reconhecem a importância do envolvimento cívico e político no trazer ao de cima uma cultura que apoia os valores da vida familiar, da fé e da moral. Quanto mais estes valores são alvo do ataque de alguns sectores da sociedade, tanto mais se poderá esperar que aumente o número de votantes Luso-Americanos.

In November, 1999, the Catholic Church stated its intention to get more Catholics to the polls. "Faithful Citizenship", a product of the United States Catholic Conference, is the Church's official effort to get members politically involved. The Portuguese American Citizenship Project is a non-partisan effort to increase voter registration and turnout among Americans of Portuguese heritage.

## **Other Publicity Media**

In 1999, the Fall River committee completed voter video advertisements, for airing on the local Portuguese language television station.



### **Community Leaders 2**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pH5JnKtWM6o>



### **Factory Workers**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NzY7AWyDIWw>



### **The Portuguese Kids on Voting**

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9E7LI55SBqE>

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The audience for these videos was remarkable. The *Portuguese Kids On Voting* video enjoyed over 100,000 views on social media.

The downside to utilizing these 30-second commercials was the difficulty of measuring their impact. If a particular commercial was aired before an election, there was no straight forward way to identify how it affected voter turnout. As a result, the use of these messages never became a core element of the Project's campaign strategy.

## **Candidates' Nights and Communicating with the Political Establishment**

By the end of its second year, the Project had constructed a reliable method of measuring Portuguese-American voting strength and publicizing these findings in the English and Portuguese-language media. The third element of the campaign involved adopting an effective process of communicating priorities and concerns to elected officials.

The final piece of the voter mobilization puzzle was provided ready-made by the *Portuguese-American Forum* in Santa Clara, California, where, in 1994, activists created a mechanism for Portuguese-American citizens to present their views directly to candidates for public office. The Forum was originally designed for one purpose: to convince the Santa Clara City Council to allow *Rádio e Televisão de Portugal* (RTP) access to the local cable TV network. The City Council had previously denied petitions from the community to allow RTP access, claiming the cable company did not have the capacity to accommodate the Portuguese channel. Although Portuguese-Americans packed City Hall for every public hearing on the matter, the Council held fast to its decision to deny the request.

Faced with this roadblock, the Santa Clara Portuguese-American residents formed a committee to bring the RTP question into the political arena. With advice from RTP Washington Correspondent, Pedro Bicudo, the *Portuguese American Forum* organized a public meeting prior to a 1994 election for candidates for City Council. Predictably, when each candidate was asked for his or her position on the RTP question, everyone, challengers and incumbents alike, voiced support for providing access on the city cable network.

## *The User's Guide*

One election cycle did not resolve the problem. The Santa Clara City Council's term of office is four years with one half the positions up for re-election every two years. The winning candidates who had attended the first Forum event comprised only half the Council. When the newly constituted Council met, the RTP cable access proposal was blocked once again. Two years later, as the next election approached, the committee reassembled and organized another Candidates' Night. The same questions were posed, and the same promises were made. When the new City Council sat, every member, including those elected two years earlier, was on record as favoring the RTP question. The proposal that had been impossible four years earlier, was, within days, approved and then completed with the full cooperation of the cable company.

Access for the Portuguese channel was nice but the battle itself created a new political dynamic in the city. Success breeds success and the Portuguese American Forum soon gained recognition as a powerful tool for dealing with city government. In succeeding years, the candidates for City Council themselves insisted on the continuation of the panels. Candidates for School Board and Chief of Police also wanted to participate in these meetings. Subsequent questions from the Santa Clara community evolved to include concerns about management of Santa Clara's economic growth, housing prices, traffic, and even the new San Francisco 49ers football stadium.

The Santa Clara organizers developed several rules and practices that resulted in productive and even enjoyable exchanges:

*The discussion had to be non-partisan. Every candidate had an opportunity to express his or her opinions, but event organizers would not endorse anyone, under any circumstances.*

*The candidates were not permitted to question their rivals for office. Each speaker's time on the podium would be uninterrupted.*

*The organizers would prepare questions of concern to the Portuguese-American community and members of the audience would be permitted to submit questions in writing.*

## *Development of a Methodology*

*Finally, in keeping with the Portuguese tradition of hospitality, there was a social hour with hors d'oeuvres and wine after the formal presentations which allowed the candidates to speak with the individual members of the audience in a relaxed environment.*



### **CANDIDATES' NIGHT SANTA CLARA, CALIFORNIA**

These rules of engagement proved successful over the years. A critical element was that the organizing committee selected the issues to be discussed. Candidates would often wish to focus exclusively on their favorite topics. There is a tendency to please the crowd with popular non-controversial concepts and avoid the difficult issues that any government body must confront. As an example, everyone wants better roads, safer streets, and good schools but not many candidates for public office want to discuss the taxes necessary to achieve these results. By drafting the questions for the Candidates' Night participants, the organizing committee could focus the discussion on important issues that needed attention, as in the following examples:



**The Portuguese-American Forum of Santa Clara  
"Candidates' Night" Questions  
November 3rd, 2006**

- 1. Would you identify two of the most important challenges currently facing the City of Santa Clara? If elected, what skills do you have that will help address those challenges?**
- 2. Elderly care is an important issue to our community and most of our Portuguese-American seniors are not proficient in English. So they do not feel shut out of the City Senior Citizen Center services and activities, translation assistance would be needed. If elected how would you address this matter? And when?**
- 3. A large development is being proposed near Santa Clara University and the downtown area. If approved, will it be funded by Santa Clara taxpayers?**
- 4. If, due to budget restraints, you had to limit some of the programs and services you propose to support, which ones would you reduce or eliminate?**

A striking instance of the value of citizens, not candidates, determining a meeting's agenda occurred in 2006 at a New Bedford, Massachusetts forum when a resident of a working-class neighborhood raised the issue of illegal drugs being sold openly on the streets. The question for those running for the position of County District Attorney was the following;

*"There are four open air drug markets within walking distance of this meeting place. Everyone here knows where they are. Why are they allowed to exist?"*

No experienced politician would choose to raise such an issue of his or her own accord. The incumbent had to confront the apparent long-standing official tolerance of the situation. The challenger had to come up with a credible solution to the problem and, if elected, take measures to resolve this important issue.

The Santa Clara script for Candidates' Nights became the holy writ for organizers on the East Coast, with equally favorable results. Two modifications were eventually adopted to broaden the outreach and enhance the impact of the forums.

## *Development of a Methodology*

First, several East Coast organizers arranged for live radio broadcast of the proceedings, thereby reaching an audience beyond the meeting hall. In addition, programs were recorded for rebroadcast on local Portuguese-language TV stations.

Second, the Project initiated a practice of reviewing the recordings of the candidates' statements and compiling a list of promises and guarantees made for future referral. It is an occupational hazard that in the heat of campaigns, candidates for public office sometimes make promises that they might be unable or unwilling to fulfill once voted into office. Armed with video recordings, the Candidates' Nights organizers had the capability of cataloging every statement and holding the elected officials to their commitments.

The following is a sample list of promises made at a Candidates' Night for a City Council election in Bristol, Rhode Island. The time stamp noted at the end of each statement indicates the moment on the video recording when these words were spoken.

### **Notes on Bristol Town Council Forum**

#### **Incumbent**

**Supports \$15 million referendum; infrastructure needs to be repaired; do them now or costs will be driven up later; must support economic development to offset costs (22:20)**

**Town needs to address sewer cost in an effective way; needs to start with \$15 million bond (39:02)**

**Need to convince schools to do more with less money; must continue good relations with school committee (55:50)**

**City government has been flexible with businesses in the past, must remain flexible in the future to encourage more development; must keep manufacturing zones (1:10:52)**

#### **Challenger**

**"Yes" on referendum; should give the taxpayer the choice to see the \$15 million broken down (27:30)**



**Need to bring in economic development to help with education (1:01:11)**

**Need tax incentives and a "friendlier" government to encourage businesses (1:06:33)**

## The User's Guide

As a follow-up to the compilation of commitments and promises, the committee sent letters to the winning Council members after they took office. The letters thanked the officials for their attendance and requested information on how they were progressing toward fulfilling their promises. The content of each letter was based on the individual Council member's public comments during the Candidates' Night leading up to his or her election.

The following letter was one of several sent in the summer of 2007 to the New Bedford, Massachusetts City Council members who were elected in 2005.

<p>OUR LADY OF MOUNT CARMEL PARISH FAMILY 230 Bonney Street New Bedford, Massachusetts 02744-1098</p>	<p>Immigrants' Assistance Center 58 Crapo St. New Bedford, MA 02740</p>
	
<p>City Councilor Debora Coelho New Bedford City Council New Bedford, MA</p>	<p>June 20, 2007</p>

Dear Councilor Coelho,

Once again, thank you for participating in October 2005 Candidates' Night at Mount Carmel Parish. Our community appreciated learning your positions on important issues and how you planned to address these problems.

Our civic involvement is not limited to one evening's debate between candidates but rather an ongoing exchange between our elected officials and the community. In that light, we wish to know what action has been taken regarding the important points you raised during your presentation.

Specifically:

- **Improving safety:** You stated that you would solve police contracts, reinstate gang units, reopen the North and South End police stations, make all police officers community police officers, and create a master plan that includes a formal headquarters
- **Accountability:** You stated you would review the city budget, looking especially to reduce overtime, and look at other cities for models on how to save money
- **Adult Education:** You stated you would make it as easy as possible for immigrants to learn English, especially by bringing classes into their neighborhoods
- **Snow:** You stated that you would work to replace plows lost in privatization

A brief answer to these questions – not more than one page - would be appreciated. Please reply at your earliest convenience to the Immigrant Assistance Center at the address listed above.

We plan to compile into a composite report all of the responses from the Candidates' Night participants who were elected in the November 2005 City Election.

After we have completed this report, but before it is made available to our community, we will send you a copy so that you can ensure your views and actions are accurately presented. Finally, we will translate the responses into Portuguese.

## *Development of a Methodology*

Although the idea of a follow up letter to government officials was theoretically sound, many organizations chose not to send them for a number of reasons.

The first problem was largely administrative. Video recordings had to be collected, reviewed in detail, promises had to be identified and noted, and this information had to be compiled for each winning candidate. The Project's summer staff of college students completed this task for the first round but the prospect of community organizations embarking on this exercise on their own was not realistic.

The second and more critical problem was the reluctance of organizations to step even further out of their traditional bounds. Some groups considered conducting voter registration drives and get-out-the-vote campaigns risky enough and feared incurring the wrath of the political establishment.

Staging Candidates' Nights pushed their civic involvement into even more dangerous waters. Any suggestion of further challenging government officials, however gently, on the progress of their work to fulfill campaign promises was considered too politically sensitive and confrontational for most. The concept of holding elected officials' feet to the figurative fire was, as a result, never fully implemented.

# PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

TERÇA-FEIRA - TUESDAY  
4 DE NOVEMBRO - NOVEMBER 4

## PORQUÊ VOTAR?

VOCÊ ESCOLHE QUEM VAI DIRIGIR  
A NOSSA COMUNIDADE, O NOSSO  
ESTADO, A NOSSA NAÇÃO

## WHY VOTE?

YOU DECIDE WHO WILL LEAD  
OUR LOCAL COMMUNITY, OUR STATE, OUR NATION

Sacred Heart Catholic Church

1301 Corpus Avenue  
Tullock, CA 95280-4119



TULARE CALIFORNIA



Rhode Island



CASA DOS AÇORES da Nova Inglaterra  
East Providence, Rhode Island

St. Anthony of Padua Church

1000 Washington Street  
East Providence, RI 02912

THE PORTUGUESE-AMERICAN FORUM  
OF SANTA CLARA



Grupo Amigos de Terceira Inc.  
Pawtucket RI



Club Juvenilista Lusitano, Inc.

100 Clark Street  
Cumberland, RI 02864  
Number 100-1000



HUDSON MASSACHUSETTS  
PORTUGUESE CLUB



St Michael Church  
Fall River, MA 02720

PORTUGUESE COMMUNITY  
CENTER  
1115 F. Santa Clara St., Suite A  
San Jose, CA 95116

Immigrants' Assistance Center  
New Bedford Massachusetts



80 WINDBLADE  
CANTON, MASSACHUSETTS  
108 J Street  
Methuen, CA 01834



Portuguese Club of Hartford, Inc.  
since 1927



CENTRO MAMEL CASCAIS  
MARRIOTT, N.J. 07038



St John the Baptist Church  
New Bedford Massachusetts

I.D.E.S. of Alvarado Street  
San Leandro, California



Portuguese American Congress  
of New Jersey  
Newark, NJ



Igreja Nacional Portuguesa das Cinco Chagas  
Five Wounds Portuguese National Church  
San Jose California



SANTO CRISTO PARISH  
FALL RIVER MASS  
CLUBE RECREATIVO  
DA FAMILIA  
PORTUGUESA  
SAN LEANDRO,  
CALIFORNIA

SHELTON PORTUGUESE CULTURAL ASSOCIATION  
SHELTON CONNECTICUT



Our Lady of Fatima  
403 Spring Street  
Elizabeth, New Jersey  
07201



Portuguese Educational Foundation of Great Children  
Honoring the Portuguese Language Institution



Our Lady of Fatima Church

OUR LADY OF MOUNT CARMEL PARISH FAMILY  
236 Bonney Street  
New Bedford, Massachusetts 02744-1916



Casa Dos Açores de Hillbr



Immaculate Conception Church  
136 Erie Street  
New Bedford, MA 02740



Clube Social Português Inc.  
Pawtucket, RI



Our Lady of the Assumption  
of the Portuguese Church  
P.O. Box 2030  
Turlock, Calif 95381-2030

SAINT ANNE PARISH & SHRINE  
918 MIDDLE STREET  
FALL RIVER, MA 02721



Our Lady of the Assumption of the Portuguese Church

PORTUGUESE INSTRUCTIVE SOCIAL CLUB  
RIZARDEN NJ



Portuguese Fraternal Association Don Luis Filipe  
Fourth August 21<sup>st</sup>, 1892

DON LUIZ FILIPE HALL  
RHAMPTON, RHODE ISLAND

# The Balance of Accounts

The Portuguese American Citizenship Project was inaugurated in 1999 for the sole purpose of promoting citizenship and civic involvement in the Portuguese-American community. The Luso-American Foundation, which inaugurated the Project and was its primary sponsor, spent over \$1.3 million in grants during the Project's 16-year existence. Additionally, the Regional Government of the Azores disbursed over \$150,000 in direct support to the Project. So, the question must be asked after almost \$1.5 million in investment and thousands of hours in volunteer time, 'What has the Project accomplished?'

## **What Was Done Right**

The Project created a three-pronged strategy of first, measuring the political strength of the Portuguese-American community, then secondly, engaging in a comprehensive effort to encourage voter registration and voting and, lastly, staging public meetings in which candidates for elected office face the members of the Portuguese-American community. That is not a bad track record for an initiative that started virtually from scratch and has implemented these programs with 52 organizations spread over five states.

The Project's unique data-driven campaign algorithm allowed parishes and clubs to gauge their political strength with certainty. The databases that linked the membership lists of partner organizations with official voter registration information were the fundamental instrument for conducting get-out-the-vote campaigns. Prior to every targeted election, a trusted source, for example the pastor of a parish or the president of a social club, would send their members personalized voter reminder cards. The cards repeatedly stressed the importance of voting, not only for the benefit of the individual, but also for the welfare of the community at large.

Promotion of voter registration and increased voter turnout alone were not sufficient to influence political decisions. The community had to define

the topics that were important to its members and present these concerns to elected officials. To accomplish the final step in this suite of campaign programs, the Project introduced the Santa Clara, California Candidates' Night playbook to the East Coast communities.

As all these measures were implemented, the Project prepared press releases and conducted interviews with English- and Portuguese-language media to bring home the point that the Portuguese-American community was engaged in a concerted and long-term effort to advance its political fortunes.

While these programs to promote civic involvement have been in place for 16 years, does that imply the Project can take credit for political successes during this period? Because the Portuguese American Citizenship Project did not advocate any causes or issues, it would be impossible to accurately judge its influence on wins and losses. What we were able to measure were the turnout rates of our target populations, and that has been encouraging.

There remains, nonetheless, the temptation to claim credit for any surge in Portuguese-American civic involvement, but doing so would ignore the myriad of other factors that influenced voters, such as the merits of the candidates, the issues being considered, and, critically, the campaign work of the participating organizations. The five examples cited below do not lay claim to the Project being the game changer, but rather only makes the argument that the Portuguese American Citizenship Project's involvement had a demonstrable effect on the outcome.

## **Deportations**

In Bristol County, Massachusetts, the officials most involved in the implementation and enforcement of Federal immigration statutes are the District Attorney and the Sheriff. The deportation of some non-citizen residents under these laws had a devastating effect on the immigrant community. An election was held in 2006 for the District Attorney's position pitting the incumbent against a local lawyer. Because the Office of District Attorney was so important to the Portuguese-American community, The Immigrants' Assistance Center and Our Lady of Mount Carmel Parish in New Bedford jointly staged a Candidates' Night prior to the election. The

## *The Balance of Accounts*

Project's contribution to these events was to assist with a get-out-the-vote mailing prior to the Primary Election and to collaborate with the Center and the Parish in organizing the Candidates' Night event.

The most important result of the Candidates' Night event was that the candidates were made acutely aware of the importance of the deportee question. The challenger won in an upset. The Portuguese-American vote was believed to be a major factor in the result and political leaders took notice. Consequently, the newly-elected District Attorney, the Sheriff, and several U.S. and Azorean social service organizations came to a shared understanding of the severity of the problem and agreed on measures to minimize the damage caused by the deportations.

### **Teaching of Portuguese in U.S. Schools**

In 2010, the Project took on the long-standing goal of promoting Portuguese language instruction in school districts with large numbers of Portuguese-speaking residents. The Project signed a cooperation agreement with the Portuguese Ministry of Foreign Affairs to prepare a handbook that would guide organizations through the necessary procedures for introducing the teaching of Portuguese in U.S. public schools.

Antonio Borba, the Project Coordinator, along with a representative of the Portuguese American Leadership Council (PALCUS), met with community leaders interested in starting Portuguese in the San Diego, California School District. As a result of the Project's efforts working with the local community, the School District approved offering Portuguese starting in the Fall of 2012. The methods outlined in the Project's handbook proved successful in convincing school authorities of the merits of introducing Portuguese to their curriculum. In addition, other communities could now take comfort in knowing there was a guidebook that had been field-tested.

### **Hess Oil Company's Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) Terminal in Fall River**

Although the Project did not take a position on the merits of political issues, there were points when it was clear that the concerns of the Portuguese-American community were not being heard. Such a case was the proposed construction of a liquefied natural gas (LNG) terminal in Fall



River, Massachusetts. It was unacceptable that federal regulatory authorities had already issued preliminary approvals without adequately considering the concerns of residents in the immediate area of the plant.

The Project and St Michael's parish, which was located adjacent to the planned LNG site, organized a community-wide forum during which the advantages and disadvantages of the Hess investment were fully vetted. St Michael's involvement did not immediately resolve the debate, but it did demonstrate parishioners' complete support for political leaders who were engaged with federal authorities to find an acceptable resolution to the issues associated with the proposed Hess installation.

### **Bristol, Rhode Island Bond Referendum on a New School**

City authorities in Bristol, Rhode Island scheduled a special election in June 2003 to authorize a bond for the construction of a new elementary school. The referendum, if passed, would have resulted in the decommissioning of schools in the Portuguese neighborhoods. Political consultants allegedly advised the city to put the necessary bond authorization measure before the voters with as little fanfare and publicity as possible. To further fuel the suspicion that the government's intention was to minimize the involvement of the general population, the bond referendum was set for the middle of summer vacation.

The Project and the Bristol committee did not take a position on the merits of the referendum, but decided that it was within their rights to inform the community of the question at hand and to conduct a full scale get-out-the-vote campaign. The Project's voter cards presented the referendum question in Portuguese and in English without comment. The referendum was ultimately defeated. A supporter of the bond authorization reportedly said, "As soon as I saw the high voter turnout, I knew we had lost." Once again, the role of the Project was not a determining factor, but it assisted the Bristol committee in assuring that the Portuguese-American community's voice was heard.

## **What Could Have Been Done Better**

As the Project progressed, the following ‘could do better’ items were identified and corrective measures were adopted to address these issues.

### **Technical Considerations**

In the development of a data-driven campaign strategy, the ultimate objective was to create a process in which individual organizations could master the complexities of merging members’ information with voter registration lists. That ambition turned out to be based on wishful thinking rather than an accurate assessment of the volunteers’ capabilities and their available time to devote to mastering this process. António Borba, the Project Coordinator from 2010 to 2013 introduced significantly more efficient methods to process this information, but these reforms did not alter the fact that data processing remained the sole obligation of the Coordinator/Executive Director.

The second shortcoming in the technical realm lay with the preparation and dissemination of 20-to-25-page annual reports for each participating organization. Typically, these reports would outline the voter turnout for each member of the organization in the preceding year’s election cycle and provide a wealth of statistics, graphs, and analyses of voting patterns. When these election outcomes were explained in person-to-person exchanges, the volunteers were reassured of the effectiveness of their efforts. It was unlikely, however, that these studies were later read in detail and absorbed. Although the reports were welcomed by the organization’s leadership, it is possible they were carefully filed away, never to be seen again. The reports were continually restructured to make the critical information more easily understood, but any inroads into expanding the readership was minimal.

### **Program Sustainability**

A fundamental goal of the Project from its very beginning was to create manageable and long-lasting programs in the target communities. At

best, progress toward achieving the goal of organizational sustainability has been uneven.

The problem of keeping an organization's volunteers engaged was evident in the preparation and mailing of voter reminder cards. On the East Coast, volunteers would gather together before each election to affix labels to the cards. On the West Coast, cards were redesigned so that no hands-on assembly was required. The Project's summer staff would do all the preparations and send everything necessary to one key person who would take the cards directly to a printer and then mail them to the targeted voters. The West Coast process was very smooth, very simple, but, in fact, it was too easy.

Experience with the East Coast committees demonstrated that there was significant benefit that accompanied the regular gathering of volunteers before each election. During the lifespan of the Project, virtually all these groups remained intact. On the other hand, many West Coast volunteer committees, ceased to function even while their organizations were counted as active participants in the Project.

If a parish or club does not enjoy a determined group of members within the organization committed to civic activism, there will be minimal institutional memory of achievements gained through collaboration with the Project. Once the outside involvement ceases, any civic gains will be inevitably lost to the organization if there is no one committed to carry the torch.<sup>12</sup>

### **What Was Never Achieved - The Fatal Flaw**

Fundraising from U.S. donors was the one problem that never went away and the fatal flaw that brought the Project to an end. This issue, that confronted the Project's first Coordinator from 1999 to 2009, remained insoluble for succeeding Project managers to the end in 2016. The reasons

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<sup>12</sup> The exception to this West Coast rule was the Portuguese American Forum of Santa Clara where the two-year cycle of preparation, organizing, and staging of Candidates' Nights kept the committee members fully involved in the political affairs of the city.

## *The Balance of Accounts*

for the inability or unwillingness of the local community to financially support the Project are no doubt numerous and one can only speculate on them. The following list of explanations is based on the Project's experience but may be classified as best guesses

### **Dismissal of Initial Fundraising Efforts**

The importance of raising funds from the local community was not emphasized in the first years and the Project never recovered from this omission. By postponing the initial suggestion of organizers to put together small fundraisers, the Project Coordinator unintentionally, but effectively, minimized the importance of fundraising.

### **The Real Value to the Community**

The lack of financial contributions from Portuguese-American entities suggested that the Project did not enjoy widespread support from the groups it was designed to help. Assistance from the Luso-American Foundation, allowed participants to avoid answering the existential question of whether the Project truly was valued by the community.

Some community members questioned whether raising a few hundred dollars in inner-city neighborhoods would make any difference to the Luso-American Foundation with its endowment of tens of millions of dollars. The Coordinator had to continually explain that an organization or community satisfying its financial obligation would be an important signal to the Foundation that the Project's programs had local support. Conversely, the absence of a meaningful financial contribution from a community would send the exact opposite message. Unfortunately, this argument largely fell on deaf ears.

### **Assistance from U.S. Foundations**

Many U.S. foundations are concerned with the promotion of voter rights, particularly in disadvantaged communities. In 2003, the Project approached a number of U.S. foundations and all but one of these applications were unsuccessful.

The California-based James Irvine Foundation did provide funding to a Portuguese-American group in the San Joaquin Valley who were able to show common cause with the Latino community. The James Irvine Foundation's decision-making ground rules suggested a possible explanation for the Project's inability to successfully engage other foundations. Starkly put, the Portuguese-American community did not have the numbers that would cause a seismic shift in the American electorate and consequently was not a priority for U.S. philanthropic organizations.<sup>13</sup>

### **Tangible Benefits to Financial Supporters**

The Portuguese American Citizenship Project's guiding principle was nonpartisanship and it could not help elect anyone running for office. The Project and its participating organizations could therefore only offer financial supporters a 'feel good' benefit of contributing to the advancement of the civil rights of Portuguese-Americans.

There would be no other advantage for big-money donors to support the Project because it could not offer potential benefactors any *quid pro quo* such as access to political power, influence on government decision-making or favorable treatment in procuring permits or contracts. This reality might be classified under the heading 'the political facts of life in America'.

### **Aftermath**

The consequence of not being able to secure U.S. funding was predictable and inevitable. From the beginning, the Luso-American Foundation had been the unwavering and loyal supporter of the Portuguese American Citizenship Project. Foundations are willing to take risks, that is their primary purpose, but they fully expect organizations to find their own financial footing and continue on their own independently. That did not happen with the Project.

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<sup>13</sup> The U.S. Census Bureau estimated that in 2016 there were 38.9 million Hispanic Americans of which 26.6 million were U.S. citizens. That number dwarfs the estimated 1.5 million Portuguese-Americans.

## *The Balance of Accounts*

When the management of the Luso-American Foundation changed in 2010, the question was raised about continued support for the Project in light of its inability to secure U.S. funding. Nonetheless, because the Azorean government had already committed to a three-year program of support, the Foundation agreed to contribute an equal amount of funding for the duration of the Azorean grant.

When the leadership of the Luso-American Foundation again changed in 2013, the incoming Foundation President, Dr. Vasco Rato, posed the same question of why the Project could not derive its financial support from U.S. sources. There was no good answer.

### **Finale**

In 2016, the Project's Board of Directors voted to dissolve the Corporation and terminated its programs. This closing finished the central organizing function that the Project had provided over the years. It eliminated the data processing, voter card preparation, analyses of elections, and overall national synthesis and coordination of civic promotion programs.

The Portuguese American Citizenship Project's participating organizations, volunteers, Board of Directors, and supporters are justly proud of the many accomplishments achieved during its operational life. With partner communities, the Project created a campaign architecture that encompassed each and every step in the civic assimilation of immigrants to America: that is adopting U.S. citizenship, registering to vote, and voting. The Project's closure had no effect on the lessons learned, the skills honed, and the civic confidence gained from the entire 16-year experiment.

To employ the metaphor of a plane crash, it is worthwhile to consider what can be gained at picking through the wreckage. The Project's programs have been suspended but its 'operating manual' still exists and the underlying support structure is undiminished. A website, *portugueseamerican.org*, is available to describe in detail the entire process of civic campaigning. Field-tested workbooks have been made available on how to organize politically and how to introduce Portuguese-language instruction into school systems. Most importantly, none of the individuals who made

## *The User's Guide*

the Project run have gone away and they are willing to help any community continue the struggle. If anyone wishes to take up the cause, a great deal of the heavy lifting and startup work has already been accomplished, so that a new endeavor would have a running start.

When the Project first began, participants were warned with the adage that this civic campaign was a marathon, not a sprint. After 16 years, we have discovered that civic campaigns cannot be compared to either of these contests because there is no finish line. The struggle is constant and endless. If a group believes it has achieved political 'success' and can rest on its laurels, its members are deceiving themselves.

Dr. Elmano Costa, a Portuguese American community organizer from Turlock California, captured this sentiment in a 2002 meeting with a California state legislator. When asked when the Project would conclude, Dr. Costa said,

*"When 100 percent of Portuguese-Americans  
vote 100 percent of the time."*

The Project certainly did not reach that milestone, but the battle is not over nor will it ever be over. In the *Introduction to this User's Guide*, we acknowledged that concerned citizens in the Portuguese-American community were engaged in promoting civic participation long before the Project started and will continue long after it's been forgotten. We believe that as firmly now as we did in 1999 when we first started down this road.

# Statements of Support

## U.S. Officials

U.S. Congressman, Jim Costa (D)

U.S. Congressman, Devin Nunes (R)

## Portuguese Officials

President of the Republic, Cavaco Silva (with translation)

President of the Portuguese Assembly,  
João Bosco Mota Amaral

President of the Regional Government of the Azores,  
Carlos César (with translation)



# U.S. Officials



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
WASHINGTON, D. C.

Fellow Portuguese Americans,

As a second-generation American of Portuguese descent, I am very proud of our heritage and culture. So let me take this opportunity to commend the Portuguese American Citizenship Project (PACP) for all of their efforts. PACP emphasizes civic involvement because it is imperative for the success of our Democracy.

As citizens of the United States of America, individuals have a voice that can make a difference in this country. PACP reaches out to Portuguese immigrants and Americans, so they understand that their voice has validity. Registering to vote is a crucial component to being a citizen, and I urge all citizens to take part in this civic duty. My Portuguese parents instilled this in me as a young man.

PACP works diligently to forge lasting relationships between the citizens of the United States and Portugal. As someone who was raised in a Portuguese immigrant family, I am very proud of the efforts PACP has made on behalf of Portuguese Americans.

It is truly an honor to support the Portuguese American Citizenship Project for all of their hard work and dedication to making the Portuguese American community a stronger voice in our community and our nation.

Sincerely,  


JIM COSTA  
Member of Congress

NOT PRINTED AT GOVERNMENT EXPENSE  




DEVIN NUNES  
21ST DISTRICT OF CALIFORNIA  
MEMBER OF CONGRESS

Fellow Portuguese Americans,

I am proud to be able to lend my support to the labors of the Portuguese American Citizenship Project. Civic involvement is the cornerstone of the American democracy and is part of our national identity.

For those who are citizens, it is essential that you register to vote and become involved in the electoral process. If you are a recent immigrant, I encourage you to pursue U.S. citizenship, which will eventually enable you to be a part of the world's greatest democracy.

I am impressed with the work of the Portuguese American Citizenship Project's contribution to the strengthening of ties between the citizens of the United States and Portugal. This organization's hard work is commendable and has my full support.

Best Regards,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Devin Nunes". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Devin Nunes  
Member of Congress

# Portuguese Officials

## President Cavaco Silva

*O Presidente da República*

### Mensagem

Como afirmei na primeira mensagem que enderecei como Presidente da República às comunidades portuguesas no dia 10 de Junho de 2006, Dia de Portugal, de Camões e das Comunidades Portuguesas, Portugal tem o dever de tudo fazer para apoiar as comunidades portuguesas e de luso descendentes, estreitando os laços que as unem a Portugal.

Mas é também nosso dever apoiar a integração das comunidades de luso descendentes nas sociedades onde vivem e trabalham, aproveitando o seu potencial como factor de entendimento e aprofundamento das relações com os países de acolhimento.

Quero destacar aqui o meritório trabalho desenvolvido pelo Portuguese American Citizenship Project, promovendo o acesso aos direitos de cidadania da comunidade luso americana e contribuindo assim para a crescente intervenção pública de cidadãos de origem portuguesa e para o reforço dos laços entre Portugal e os Estados Unidos.

Mérito também para a Fundação Luso Americana para o Desenvolvimento por todo o apoio dado a este projecto e também pela "Portuguese Language Initiative", cujo objectivo central é a promoção do ensino da língua e cultura portuguesas nos Estados Unidos.

# *Translation of President Cavaco Silva's Message*

*The President of the Republic*

## **Message**

As I stated in the first message that I addressed as President of the Republic to the Portuguese communities on 10 June 2006, *Day of Portugal, Camões, and the Portuguese Communities*, Portugal has a duty to do everything to support the Portuguese communities and Portuguese descendants, in strengthening the bonds that unite them to Portugal.

But it is also our duty to promote the integration of the communities of Portuguese descent into the societies where they live and work, taking advantage of their potential to influence the understanding and deepening of relations with the countries where they now reside.

I wish to highlight here the meritorious work undertaken by the Portuguese American Citizenship Project, promoting access to the rights of citizenship for the Portuguese-American community and thus contributing to the growing public participation of U.S. citizens of Portuguese origin and the strengthening of ties between Portugal and the United States.

I wish also to recognize the Luso American Development Foundation for all the support given to this project and also for its "Portuguese Language Initiative", whose central objective is to promote the teaching of Portuguese language and culture in the United States.

# President of the Assembly, Mota Amaral

*O Presidente  
da Assembleia da República*

## **PERSONAL ENDORSEMENT OF THE PORTUGUESE-AMERICAN CITIZENSHIP PROJECT**

When The Portuguese-American Citizenship Project first came to my knowledge, I was deeply impressed and immediately decided to support it with strong enthusiasm.

For the past thirty years, I have many, many times visited the Portuguese communities in the United States, from coast to coast, all across America, since Massachusetts and Rhode Island to California and Hawaii.

A large number of these communities trace their roots to the Azores Islands, where I myself was born and for whose burden of governance took responsibility during almost two decades.

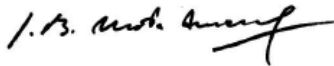
The leaders of the Portuguese-American communities helped me a lot to make the specific problems of the Azores more visible to US authorities. Political and financial aid from America was crucial, in some circumstances, to solve problems of the Azores, thus strengthening the old friendly relationship between Portugal and the United States.

I am convinced we could go further in these purposes, once every Portuguese person, men and women, living legally and permanently in America, become full citizens and registered voters in the United States.

Actually, I have said this in many occasions, speaking frankly to my fellow countrymen, along the different states of the Union.

I take this opportunity to emphasize the same message and endorse and commend the Portuguese-American Citizenship Project as a vehicle, not only for promoting luso-american ties of friendship and alliance, but also liberty, dignity and civic responsibility among portuguese immigrants in the United States.

I consider this Project a major and useful contribution of the Luso-American Foundation to implement its purpose of bringing Portugal and the United States close together.



JOÃO BOSCO MOTA AMARAL

Palácio de São Bento, January 20, 2003

# President of the Government of the Azores, Carlos César



REGIÃO AUTÓNOMA DOS AÇORES  
PRESIDÊNCIA DO GOVERNO REGIONAL  
GABINETE DO PRESIDENTE

## MENSAGEM

\*Portuguese-American Citizenship Program  
(Fundação Luso-Americana)

É com orgulho e reconhecimento que vos escrevo. Tenho ouvido dos diversos responsáveis políticos norte-americanos, com quem tenho contactado ao longo dos anos, palavras de elogio pela forma digna e empenhada como as nossas comunidades têm trabalhado em prol do desenvolvimento do país que as acolheu, honrando, também desse modo, a Região onde nasceram.

Porém, esse facto importante não nos deve fazer esquecer que é preciso ir mais longe. É preciso transformar o vosso trabalho diário numa voz, a ser ouvida e respeitada por aqueles que governam as sociedades que vos acolhem. Para isso, é fundamental a aquisição da nacionalidade norte-americana e o correspondente recenseamento eleitoral.

A integração plena das nossas comunidades não é só laboral ou social, não se faz só pelo trabalho e pelo convívio. A integração plena que se deseja, tem de fazer-se também pelo direito de eleger e de ser eleito, pela possibilidade de participar na governação da vossa cidade, do vosso Estado e do País que vos acolheu.

Não sereis, por isso, menos açorianos ou menos portugueses. Pelo contrário, só assim sereis verdadeiros cidadãos dos Açores no Mundo.

O Presidente do Governo Regional dos Açores

Carlos Manuel Martins do Vale César

# *Translation of President Carlos César Message*

Regional Government of the Azores  
President of the Regional Government  
Office of the President

## **Message**

Portuguese American Citizenship Program  
(Luso-American Foundation)

It is with pride and recognition that I write to you. I have heard from a variety of North American politicians, with whom I have had contact for many years, words of praise for the worthy and diligent manner that our communities have worked in the development of the countries where they have settled, thereby paying homage in this manner to the Region where they were born.

However, it is important not to forget that it is necessary to go even further. It is necessary to transform your daily labors into a voice, which will be heard and respected by those who govern the societies where you have been welcomed. To accomplish this, it is essential to acquire North American citizenship and, along the same lines, to register to vote.

The full integration of our communities is defined not only in terms of employment and daily life; it is not just work and socializing. The hoped-for complete integration has to include the right to elect and to be elected, to have the possibility of participating in the government of your city, your state and the nation where you have chosen to live.

Doing this does not imply that you will become less Azorean or less Portuguese. On the contrary, only in this manner can you be truly citizens of the Azores in the world.

## The Author

From 1999 to 2009, Mr. McGlinchey served as the Coordinator of the Portuguese American Citizenship Project. He worked with churches, clubs and social welfare organizations on grass-roots civic campaigns in communities ranging from factory towns in New England to farming communities in California. In 2009, Mr. McGlinchey resigned from his position but continued to serve on the Project's Board of Directors until it closed in 2016.

He was a Foreign Service Officer with the U.S. Department of State from 1975 to 1999. His 17 years of overseas assignments included tours of duty in embassies and consulates in Poland, Malaysia, Indonesia, Australia and Portugal. His last overseas posting was as the Counselor for Economic Affairs at the U.S. Embassy, Lisbon.

Mr. McGlinchey graduated with a B.A. in Economics from Rutgers University. He also completed Master's Degree programs in Economics at South Dakota State University and the University of Kansas, and received a Master's Degree in Public Administration from Harvard University.

Mr. McGlinchey and his wife Andrea, also a retired Foreign Service Officer, reside in McLean, Virginia.

His Portuguese roots trace back to his maternal grandparents who immigrated to the United States from the Azores Islands at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He was born in Fall River, Massachusetts but spent just the very first days of his life there. Mr. McGlinchey only returned to the city in 1998 - 54 years later. It was ironic that a 'McGlinchey', a distinctly Irish surname, visiting from foreboding and distant Washington D.C., had the distinction in many meetings with Fall River residents of being the only native son at the table.





# ORGANIZE TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

The Portuguese American Citizenship Project was created to encourage Portuguese-Americans to participate more fully in civic affairs and gain a stronger voice in their own governance.

This User's Guide documents the Project's data-driven programs to promote adoption of U.S. citizenship, registering to vote and, most importantly, voting. These non-partisan 'Campaigns without Candidates' did not promote any political party or cause but carried the message that voting is not only a vital civil right but brings with it a greater good benefit for the entire community.



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