



BOX TURTLE BULLETIN

Prop 8 and Race: A Rejoinder

Jim Burroway
January 14th, 2009

I want to highlight [this comment](#) left by Jaime Grant, director of the NGLTF Policy Institute, the research arm of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force. Jaime critiques [my critique of the NGLTF study](#) on California's Prop 8 shedding some light on a key figure, discusses my concern about margins of error, and disagrees outright on some of my points. This is why we have comments; well-informed commenters keep us on our toes. We will have someone else weighing in on the study, hopefully later today.

As director of the NGLTF Policy Institute, I want to thank Jim Burroway for ultimately concluding that the authors of our recent election analysis report on Prop 8 – Ken Sherrill and Pat Egan “were successful in demonstrating that the Black vote may be closer to 58% than 70%.” At no point in the Task Force report do we make a claim that 58 percent is the precise answer. Rather, we stress throughout the study that the range of data available to us leads us to the conclusion that 58% is much more accurate than 70%.

Burroway is justifiably concerned about sample size. The DBR survey includes 149 African Americans, making the margin of error for that population (as is typically calculated by pollsters) 8 percentage points. Our analysis of this minority population is of course limited by its sample size in this survey. But unlike other polls, the DBR survey makes a deliberate attempt to rectify this problem by over-sampling African Americans, resulting in an African American sample that is at least double the size of those found in typical surveys of Californians. This greatly augments the statistical power of our survey to detect differences among racial and ethnic groups.

Burroway says that we conclude that “religiosity explains the differences in how African-Americans voted relative to everyone else.” This falsely characterizes our conclusions. We say rather that “controlling for frequency of religious attendance helps explain why African Americans supported Proposition 8 at higher levels than the population as a whole.” In other words, if you’re trying to figure out why African Americans voted at higher rates for Proposition 8 than the general population, part of the answer is that they as a group are more religious than the general population—and religious people voted at high rates for Prop. 8. We show this quite clearly.

Thanks for your attention to this study, which we believe points to the value of LGBT-friendly faith based organizing in ballot measure campaigns. As all of us consider how to move the dial just a few more critical points toward marriage equality, taking a close look at the vote, while taking stock of our strategies to date, is an important next step.

Jaime Grant
Director of the Policy Institute
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