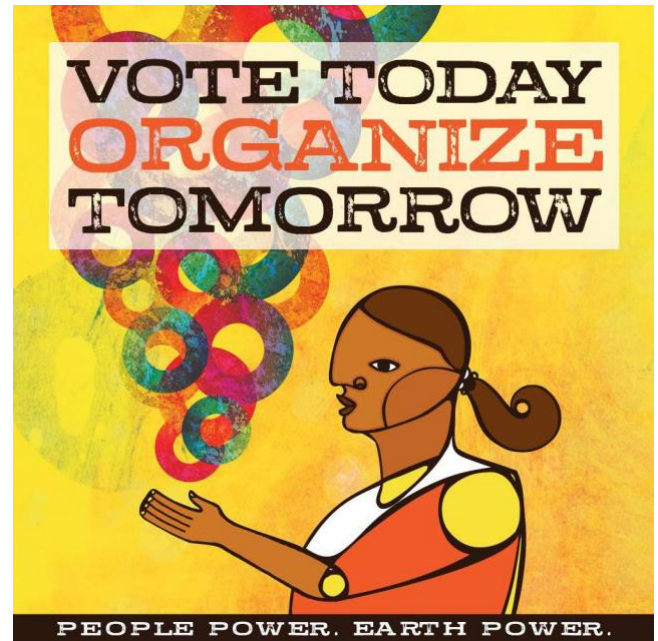


This year Southwest Workers Union took on a South Texas Get Out the Vote campaign at an unprecedented scale. Our commitment to electoral work in 2012, as it has been in years before, is part of our work to create systemic transformations that accompany the personal and value transformations we seek to create throughout all our work.

This year's Nuestra Voz/Community Voices Rising grassroots political empowerment campaign has developed and built upon the work of the past several years. In 2010, we block walked "hard to count" communities to encourage folks to fill out their Census forms. During the 2011 legislative session, we protested and educated lawmakers to make our community's demands known, and followed it up with engaging community members in the redistricting process across Texas to ensure that Latin@s could elect their candidates of choice. We have fought hard against voter suppression policies that intended to cripple the Latin@ electorate and confuse voters. And in the past month we have worked to remove information and even logistic barriers that prevent our community from voting.



By: Favianna Rodriguez

For the 2012 election cycle, SWU had a prestigious goal of turning out 25,000 voters in Bexar and Medina counties in the highly contested congressional swing district 23. It has been a learning experience for us as a whole utilizing technology and tools to expand our reach and take our work to the next level. Throughout the course of our campaign we phone banked communities to inform them about early voting dates and polling locations and to encourage them to vote. In all we reached 13,000 voters in Bexar County and 3,000 in Medina.

Last night we awaited the results in our Medina County offices while phone bankers made last minute calls to their own friends and family and gave rides to those who needed it up to the 7:00pm mark. We collectively went through a series of highs and lows looking at national, state and local returns in Bexar and Medina County. Finally, close to midnight we saw the results for congressional district 23, where Democratic candidate Pete Gallego defeated the tea party GOP incumbent Francisco Canseco.

We were ecstatic to see our communities' values at work in the election as we saw big wins for education investment and just immigration reform. In Bexar County, we also maintained the voter turnout numbers of 2008 (despite media reports of disinterested voters), which have climbed steadily in the past several presidential elections.



Talking to and turning out thousands of South Texas voters is a milestone in our organization's history, and one we hope to continue to build upon in the coming state legislative cycle, as well as in local community level battles. We are proud to know that the South Texas community is coming out to be at the table and show the media, pundits, and elected officials what Latin@s continue to care about. And we are proud to know that our community has voted for those who still cannot vote—both young students and undocumented immigrants—who are left voiceless in the current system.

Bexar County phone bankers

We know many things will remain unchanged by election results, and that the struggle to organize, empower, and transform communities in the face of racism, oppression, and hate will be ongoing and very real. But we celebrate and honor those who have inspired us, preceded us, joined us, and pushed us forward in our steps to transform a governmental process that has historically oppressed our communities into one that we shape and have the power to hold it accountable.



Medina County phone bankers