

TERESA ACUÑA

P O L I T I C A L & P O L I C Y A D V I S O R



EDUCATION

Master in Public Administration
& certificate in Management,
Leadership and Decision Sciences
Kennedy School of Government
Harvard University
2017

Bachelor of Arts in Political Science
& Chicana and Chicano Studies
San Diego State University
2007

Study Abroad
Oxford University
2006

SKILLS

- Fluent Spanish speaker
- Democratic manager who values team's diverse ideas and needs
- Exceptional collaborator and multi-sector relationship manager
- Results driven project manager and evaluator
- Trained negotiator and exceptional communicator
- Adaptive leader, catalyzing organizational systems change

PROFILE

Experienced government, legislative, and programmatic strategist at the state and federal level. Served in senior advisory roles with policy expertise in economic justice, future of work, and democratic governance innovations. Managed diverse teams through organizational change and in fast-paced work environments.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Associate Director, Democratic Governance Jul 2017-Present **Ash Center, Harvard University**

Lead program at Harvard-based think tank bridging multi-disciplinary academics and practitioners in reimagining democracy through civic engagement, economic equality, responsive governance, and research.

- Manage project based cross functional teams of 10+ people and oversee programmatic and pass-through funding of <\$1 million
- Direct *Technology and Democracy Fellowship*, democratic governance incubator focused on improving citizen engagement
- Co-found the *Harvard Votes Challenge*, the first university-wide civic engagement initiative, recipient of the Harvard Presidential Administrative Innovation Fund Award and Dean's Award
- Convert theory into practice for real world use by political stakeholders

Deputy Coalitions Director Aug 2020-Nov 2020 **Biden for President**

Served in inaugural coalitions team in the battleground state of Arizona, delivered critical votes to help flip the state and secured Arizona's electoral votes to first Democratic presidential candidate in over 20 years.

- Directed *Arizona Women's Vote Program* and *Out for Biden Program*, built intersectional coalitions reflective of the state's diverse populations
- Managed and expanded program organizing capacity by converting <1,000 supporters into recurring volunteers
- Cultivated relationships with key in-state and national stakeholders

Director, Policy & Leadership Programs Mar 2015-May 2016 **National Hispanic Leadership Agenda**

Served historic coalition of 40 prominent national Latino organizations, advocating on behalf of 56 million Latinos living in the United States.

- Directed advocacy strategy between coalition members, consultants, and national decision-makers including Congress and Obama administration
- Led national program to increase diversity in presidential appointments and co-managed *Latinas Represent*, to embolden Latinas to run for office
- Managed cross functional teams of 7+ people and programmatic budget of approximately <\$250 thousand

LEADERSHIP

National Board Member
League of Women Voters
2020-Present

Executive Board Member
New American Leaders
2019-Present

Executive Committee Member
Student Learn Student Vote
2020-Present

Board Member
Harvard Kennedy School Alumni Board
2018-Present

AFFILIATIONS

At-Large Delegate
Hillary for America
2016

Fellow
Partnerships for a Secure America
2014

Fellow
Wilson Foreign Policy Fellowship
2013

Fellow
New Leaders Council-Sacramento
2011

PUBLICATION

Be Counted in Our Democracy: 2020 Census and the Latinx Community.
Harvard Kennedy School Journal of Hispanic Policy. 2020.

INTERESTS

Proud daughter of immigrants, democracy futurists, avid traveler, host of technology and democracy podcast.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE (CONT'D)

Legislative Director **Jan 2013-Jan 2015**
U.S. Representative Gloria Negrete McLeod (CA-35)

Established legislative office for freshman member of Congress, developed policy agenda, and identified leadership opportunities.

- Managed policy team of six aides and interns, negotiated legislation as staffer to the Farm Bill conference committee
- Built strong rapport with congressional leadership and their staff, supported member's creation of bipartisan caucus, assisted member with crafting and introducing bipartisan bills and amendments
- Developed communication strategies, wrote editorials, speeches, talking points and translated press material to Spanish

Legislative Representative **Jun 2012-Dec 2012**
California Special Districts Association

State registered in-house lobbyist to statewide association representing over 1,000 local governments in California.

- Testified at legislative hearings, educated policymakers, legislative staff, and regulatory agencies on client's priorities
- Led coalition of over 20 local government interest groups and developed an effective rapid response communication campaign
- Executed workshops on best practices for public governance

Legislative Director **Dec 2010-Jun 2012**
California State Assemblymember Luis Alejo (D-28)

Established legislative team for freshman member of the California State Assembly, developed policy agenda reflecting constituent needs.

- Generated new legislative ideas that advanced the member's progressive agenda, managed policy team of five aides and interns, oversaw 20+ bills each session
- Introduced legislation to raise the state minimum wage and secured \$2.1 million in state and federal infrastructure funding for project in farmworker community
- Managed the California Latino Legislative Caucus Subcommittee on Governor Appointments, served as on-the-record spokesperson
- Met strict legislative deadlines while negotiating amendments with stakeholders including labor groups, the private sector, and the governor's administration

Legislative Aide **Oct 2008-Dec 2010**
California State Senator Gilbert Cedillo (D-22)

Created bold public policy solutions reflective of the legislator's economically diverse and largely immigrant constituency.

- Managed policy and projects for the California Latino Legislative Caucus, including economic policy forum series and green jobs summit
- Staffed legislation granting right to obtain driver's licenses to almost 1 million undocumented immigrants
- Primary staff liaison to Senate Health Committee and developed expertise around complex health policies