



Latino Policy & Politics Initiative

## Voting Rights Project

August 27, 2020

Tompkins County Legislature  
Governor Daniel D. Tompkins Building  
121 E. Court Street  
Ithaca, NY 14850

Re: Election Material Language Access for the APPI Population in Tompkins County.

As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to present novel ballot access issues, the UCLA Voting Rights Project (VRP) has observed that Tompkins County is not providing its sizable and growing Chinese community with the resources to best exercise their right to vote. We write to bring this to your attention and invite your jurisdiction's officials to provide a timely remedy in advance of the upcoming elections.

While the size of Tompkins County's Chinese population may not rise to the level of coverage by the Voting Rights Act's language access mandate, our research indicates that the County's Chinese community is among the largest in the nation. Tompkins County has 5,265 Chinese residents, representing 5.11% of the County's population.

To best serve this population, the County should conduct bilingual elections. All information that is provided in English should also be provided in Chinese. This covers not only the ballot, but all election information, including voter registration, candidate qualifications, polling place notices, voter information pamphlets, and absentee and regular ballots. Assistance at the polls should also be provided as far as necessary.

The COVID-19 pandemic is exacerbating existing voting language access issues. It is also presenting a unique opportunity for jurisdictions to revise their election measures to best serve voters facing the disenfranchising effects of the virus. The UCLA VRP encourages your Office to provide election materials and other election-related services in Chinese. We would like to offer our services to translate any election materials should that be useful to your Office. We remain available at any time to provide any other resources your County needs to best enable all your residents to vote. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Sonni Waknin".

Sonni Waknin  
*Managing Legal Fellow*  
UCLA Voting Rights Project