

ISSUE OVERVIEW

With more than 40 million Latinos in the U.S., one in every eight Americans is now of Hispanic origin. As a significant and growing presence in school systems, the workforce, and the broader fabric of American economic and social life, the Latino community is heavily invested in ensuring the future well-being of this nation. As the community's prospects are inextricably linked to those of the nation as a whole, the National Council of La Raza (NCLR) and its affiliates are united in the belief that greater investment in the Latino community is an investment in America. We urge action and pledge to work with both sides of the aisle on the following issues:

INVEST IN THE FUTURE TODAY

- Support a strong academic start for children to safeguard the American workforce – invest in Head Start so that Latinos and the children of seasonal and migrant workers are served equitably and effectively.
- Ensure that parents are full partners in their children's education – invest in the full funding of Local Family Information Centers authorized by the No Child Left Behind Act.
- Increase the pool of college-educated workers by ensuring that highly-qualified students have access to college – support the "DREAM Act."

INVEST IN THE WELL-BEING OF AMERICAN COMMUNITIES

- Timely access to health care prevents reliance on costly emergency services – support the bipartisan effort to adopt the "Immigrant Children's Health Improvement Act (ICHIA)," allowing states to cover legal immigrant children and pregnant mothers under Medicaid and the State Children's Health Insurance Program.
- A productive economy is dependent on a healthy workforce, and community-based organizations (CBOs) are essential partners in creating an effective health care service-delivery system. Support funding for the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), particularly for CBO preventative health care and treatment services programs, and oppose cuts to Medicaid, which would aggravate uninsurance rates among Hispanic women and children.

STRENGTHEN THE WORKFORCE NOW

- Improve the quality of the workforce system by ensuring that the Workforce Investment Act serves America's diverse labor force – support the funding and development of integrated training and English acquisition programs for immigrants and meaningful training opportunities for Latino workers.
- The health of American agriculture depends on a strong farmworker labor force – support the bipartisan "Agricultural Job Opportunity, Benefits, and Security Act (AgJOBS) of 2005" (S. 359/H.R.884) to ensure that America has the workers it needs.

INVEST IN MAKING AMERICA SAFER

- Many efforts have surfaced post-9/11 to make America safer, some thoughtfully crafted to deal with the complexities of our new reality, and others enacted out of expediency, regardless of effectiveness. America cannot afford diversionary schemes when so much is at stake – oppose the "REAL ID Act" which does not provide real solutions to fixing our immigration system and does not make our country any safer.

STRENGTHEN THE FABRIC OF AMERICAN SOCIETY

- The United States is a nation of immigrants where foreign-born workers make important contributions to the continued growth of this nation. It is time to fix our broken immigration system to ensure that our economy has the workers it needs and allow these workers to come out of the shadows – support comprehensive immigration reform, as called for by Senators John McCain (R-AZ) and Ted Kennedy (D-MA), that allows immigrants currently living and working in the U.S. to earn their legalization, creates channels to address future needs, and allows families to reunite.