



**THE LATINO VOTE:
A Game Plan for victory**

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NCLR
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OVERVIEW:

Latinos are as important to this election as it is to us

- According to [previous NCLR studies](#), the Latino electorate in 2004 will grow by 1-1.5 million voters compared to the 2000 election
- Voting patterns and polling data show that issues and candidate performance are more important than party affiliation to Hispanics
- [An NCLR/Zogby poll](#) shows that Latinos do not believe that candidates are addressing the substantive issues of concern to Latinos

What it will take to win

- **Historically, 62%-72% of Latinos have voted for the Democratic Presidential candidate, while the Republican Presidential candidate has received 21%-35%**
- **This year, each campaign has set Hispanic vote goals above these ranges that it believes are required to win:**
 - [Matthew Dowd](#), a pollster for President Bush, has articulated a target of 38%-40% of the Latino vote for the Bush campaign
 - Kerry staff Paul Rivera told the [Washington Post](#) that the Kerry campaign expects to “do better” than the 72% of the Latino vote President Clinton received in 1996

The most recent polls show that neither candidate is close to reaching their target:

- A [Pew Hispanic Center/Kaiser Family Foundation](#) July national poll reported that the Kerry-Edwards ticket was supported by 62% of Latinos, while the Bush-Cheney ticket by 32%. (Numbers in a 3-way race: 59% Kerry-Edwards; 31% Bush-Cheney; 3% Nader-Camejo)
- A [Washington Post](#)-Tomas Rivera Policy Institute-Univision July poll of Hispanics in 11 states with the largest Hispanic electorates reported 60% of Hispanics favoring Kerry, 30% favoring Bush, and 2% favoring Nader
- A [Democracy Corps](#) poll of 12 states with the largest Hispanic electorates found 65% of Latinos support Kerry and 31% support Bush. (Numbers in a 3-way race: 61% Kerry, 30% Bush, 4% Nader)

Analysis – President George Bush:

President Bush showed much promise and generated real enthusiasm among Latinos as a candidate and early in his term, but is on the verge of “blowing it” with this population

As Governor of Texas, Bush earned substantial support among Hispanics in that state:

- He publicly opposed the anti-immigrant California ballot Proposition 187
- His education reforms created new incentives for schools to close the achievement gap between Latinos and other students
- He appointed many Hispanics to key positions, and was accessible to the community
- He appeared at numerous Latino events in 2000, including the annual gatherings of the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC,) and NCLR

Early in his term, a number of President Bush's key policy initiatives won widespread praise from Latinos:

- Extension of Temporary protection for Salvadoran refugees
- Provisions of the No Child Left Behind law that proposed increased funding and incentives for schools to improve achievement of Hispanic and English Language Learner (ELL) students
- Inclusion of partially refundable Child Tax Credit in tax bill
- Support for successful measure to restore food stamps for legal immigrants
- Discussions with Mexican President Vicente Fox on comprehensive immigration reforms

Since then, many Latinos have been disappointed by many elements of President Bush's first term record

- For example, President Bush's Administration has failed to meet the promise of No Child Left Behind by opposing increased funding and weakening accountability provisions for English language learner (ELL) children

The Bush Administration's tax reforms are skewed against Latinos

- Failure to include refundable tax credits in the 2003 tax bill, and to follow up on a promise to restore these tax cuts for working Hispanic families
- Tax cuts for the wealthy are so large that long-term funding for vital domestic priorities are threatened
- In part as a result, Latinos have lost jobs and their economic position has declined under this Administration

The Bush Administration has made no progress on health care

- Has not offered a comprehensive health care proposal other than medical savings accounts, which are irrelevant to most working Latino families
- Opposed the Immigrant Children's Health Improvement Act (ICHIA), and proposes regulations that deter Latinos from seeking health care
- In part as a result, the proportion of Hispanics with no access to health insurance increased under this Administration

Immigration Reform is still an idea without action

- The Administration has withheld support for the [DREAM Act](#) and [AgJOBS](#) legislation
- The President's [immigration reform](#) principles are problematic, and moving legislation has been a low priority
- The President has failed to respond to anti-immigrant voices in his party

After a strong start, even the President's commitment to include Latinos in leadership positions and build relationships within the Hispanic community appear weak

- For the first time since Ronald Reagan, there are no Latinos in the Cabinet
- The President has consciously avoided major gatherings of Hispanics; he failed to appear in person at:
 - NALEO Convention
 - NCLR Annual Conference
 - LULAC Conference
 - U.S. Hispanic Chamber of Commerce Conference

The Bush Bottom Line

- President Bush could have been an historic figure, catalyzing a potential major realignment of Latino support for Republicans
- Instead, President Bush is “blowing it,” disappointing and even angering many Hispanics who might have rallied to his side

Analysis - Senator John Kerry

Senator Kerry's record is laudable in many respects, but lacks "star quality" from a Latino perspective

Senator Kerry started this election cycle largely as an unknown quantity in the Latino community.

- His voting record, as compiled by the National Hispanic Leadership Agenda, is exemplary. (82% in the [107th Congress](#) , 100% in the [106th](#))
- But he has rarely been a visible champion on key initiatives that benefit Latinos
- He failed to assure full inclusion of high-level Latinos in his campaign inner circle until chided publicly

Senator Kerry's campaign initiatives show promise, but more specifics are needed

- On health care
 - His comprehensive health care plan shows real promise for Latinos
 - But he has not addressed specific barriers that inhibit Latino access to health care
- On education
 - Sen. Kerry has committed to increase investments in vital education programs
 - But he has not articulated a clear education strategy to improve achievement of English Language Learners

Senator Kerry's campaign initiatives:

- On the economy:
 - Sen. Kerry has proposed a return to fiscal policies similar to those of the Clinton Administration, under which Hispanic employment and wages rose and poverty dropped
 - But he has not articulated a specific workforce development strategy to increase employability of Hispanics
- On immigration policy, Sen. Kerry has earned praise for concrete commitments on key Latino priorities, including the [DREAM Act](#), [AgJOBS](#), and comprehensive [immigration reform](#)

Sen. Kerry has made important, albeit tentative, progress towards including Latino leadership in his campaign and building visible relationships

- One of his campaign co-chairs is Latino, and Hispanics are increasingly represented throughout the campaign staff
- Sen. Kerry has reached out aggressively to the Latino community, appearing in person at two major national conferences, hosted by the National Association of Latino Elected Officials (NALEO) and NCLR

The Kerry Bottom Line

- Senator Kerry has made significant progress in attracting Latino support through substantive proposals and relationship building
- But he has yet to “seal the deal” with Latinos to achieve the high level of support he seeks

Road Map to Success:

President Bush still has time to take meaningful action to benefit Latinos. He can:

- Commit to [fund key Latino education, health, housing and workforce initiatives](#)
- Reject tax policy changes that undercut resources for key priorities
- Withdraw initiatives under consideration in his Administration that would limit access to [health care](#) for Latinos
- Support [AgJOBS](#) and [DREAM](#) and ask Congress to pass them immediately
- Commit to appointing Latinos in the cabinet and Supreme Court
- Stand up to [anti-immigrant members](#) of his own party and commit to real, comprehensive immigration reform in the next term

Road Map to Success: Senator Kerry has identified some specifics, but could do more for Latinos. He can:

- Focus policy attention on specific provisions affecting Latinos in his education and health care proposals
- Articulate specifically how his economic policy will benefit Latinos
- Identify specific ways in which his larger vision will mean real change for our community
- Make specific commitments to appoint Latinos in the Cabinet and other key positions