



## UNIDOS US POLICY PRIORITIES FOR THE 2020 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION

By 2020, Latinos will be the largest minority voting bloc in the country. The last midterm elections demonstrated the Latino community's increased engagement in the political process. And future elections will increasingly hinge on this important and growing demographic.

At UnidosUS, we believe in an America where everyone's contributions are recognized and valued. And we believe in policies that ensure Latinos and all Americans can achieve their American Dream.

UnidosUS has worked hard to make sure Latinos have a voice in helping to develop the nation's policies, and in pursuit of that effort, the organization has helped register more than 700,000 new voters over the last decade. It has also helped nearly 3 million people become citizens.

Today, as the candidates for the major parties build their platforms for the 2020 election, we outline our priority issues and give voice to the hopes and dreams of the nearly 59 million Latinos who call this country home.

### ABOUT US

UnidosUS, formerly the National Council of La Raza (NCLR), is the nation's largest Latino civil rights and advocacy organization. Through our unique combination of research, advocacy, programs, and a national network of nearly 300 community-based Affiliate organizations across the country, we simultaneously challenge the social, economic, and political barriers that affect Latinos in the United States.

## INCREASE ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITY FOR LATINOS

**We advocate for policies that increase pathways to the middle class for Latinos and all Americans.**

***Presidential candidates must advocate for policies that:***

- *Enhance job quality and close the wage gap*
- *Design a more inclusive tax code*
- *Improve retirement access and enrollment*
- *Increase access to financial services*

### INCREASING JOB QUALITY AND INCOME

Latinos have one of the highest labor force participation rates (66.6%) of any racial or ethnic group. But while Latinos have historically been optimistic about the economy and their place in it, the current share of Latinos describing their economic situation as “excellent” or “good” dropped by 10 percentage points between 2015 and 2018.

Median income for Latino households improved in 2017 to \$46,486, a record high. However, this still falls significantly below the median household income for all American households of \$59,039 in 2017.

More than a million fewer Latinos lived in poverty in 2017 compared to 2016. However, more than 10 million Latinos continue to live in poverty and the rate of poverty in the Latino community (18.3%) is almost twice the rate for their White counterparts (10.7%).

It is time that the hard work of all Americans, including Latinos, results in fair opportunities to build and maintain assets.

#### ***Related UnidosUS Publications***

- [Latinos and the Great Recession: 10 Years of Economic Loss and Recovery](#)
- [The Future of Banking: Overcoming Barriers to Financial Inclusion for Communities of Color](#)
- [The State of, and Barriers to, Latino Homeownership](#)

## INVESTING IN THE SUCCESS OF ALL CHILDREN

**Latino youth make up one in four students in our nation’s public schools, a figure that is projected to rise to nearly 30% by 2023. In addition, there are nearly five million English learners enrolled in our schools. They are growing up to represent an ever-larger portion of the American workforce. Policymakers must invest in strategies that achieve equity and effectively move all students through each stage of education.**

***Presidential candidates must advocate for policies that:***

- *Invest in early childhood education*
- *Strengthen K-12 education*
- *Support student success and completion in higher education*

Latino students have made progress on a variety of education indicators in the past decade: the high school dropout rate for Hispanics is at a record low, the college enrollment rate gap between Latinos and Whites is narrowing, and more Latinos are earning a bachelor's degree.

This progress is notable and a testament to the persistence and work of the Latino community and bipartisan support for federal policies—like No Child Left Behind and the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)—to support more of our nation's students.

Presidential candidates should support policies that will continue to close achievement gaps and provide a high-quality education for all students.

### EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

All students must have the opportunity to get a strong start to fully reach their potential and contribute to our nation. Sufficient resources must be dedicated to all children no matter who they are or how much their parents earn.

We support policies to increase access and improve the quality of early childhood education programs. We also support policies that emphasize the benefits of dual language development.

### K-12 EDUCATION

The large majority of K-12 school funding comes from states. But the federal government plays a vital role of filling in gaps for low-income students, students with disabilities, and English learners (ELs). Additionally, federal funding supports programs that expand access and affordability to early childhood education and postsecondary opportunities.

A future president's pick to head the Department of Education must work to ensure the department meets its obligation to implement ESSA in a manner consistent with the law, so it lives up to the promise of improving opportunities for all students, including low-income students and ELs.

### HIGHER EDUCATION

Hispanic students are attending college in record numbers, but degree completion lags. In 2016, slightly more than half (54%) of all Latino students completed their bachelor's degrees within six years, less than the completion rate in the same period for Whites (63%).

Presidential candidates should focus on working with Congress to reauthorize the Higher Education Act to safeguard affordability, minimize student debt, and hold colleges and universities accountable for the retention and graduation of Latino students.

***Related UnidosUS Publications***

- [The State of Public Education for Latino Students: A Qualitative Research Project](#)
- [Latinos in Higher Education: Financing and Student Loans](#)

## **ENSURE HEALTH AND WELL-BEING**

**Access to affordable, quality health care, good nutrition, and positive social and emotional supports helps ensure that more people can reach their full potential. That is why we call for health policies and programs that work for Latinos and all Americans.**

***Presidential candidates must advocate for policies that:***

- *Strengthen the Affordable Care Act and build on its progress*
- *Keep Medicaid strong for current and future generations*
- *Enhance health care quality and access*
- *Increase access to healthy, affordable food*

The Affordable Care Act (ACA) provided health insurance to about 4.2 million Latinos. However, Hispanic Americans remain the most uninsured population, with about 16.1% of all Latinos lacking health coverage, compared to 8.5% of non-Hispanic Whites.

Presidential candidates should stand for legislation to strengthen the ACA in ways that increase access to affordable, quality health coverage for all. And all candidates must stand against any efforts to roll back the progress our nation has made in providing affordable, quality health care to millions of Americans.

***Related UnidosUS Publications***

- [UnidosUS Testimony: Latinos' Need for Paid Family and Medical Leave](#)
- [Community-Driven Strategies to Reduce Food Insecurity and Hunger among Latinos](#)

## **BUILD A JUST IMMIGRATION SYSTEM**

**We support immigration reform policies that: create a roadmap to legalization and earned citizenship for 11 million aspiring Americans, promote smart enforcement that improves safety, support legal immigration channels, and prevent discrimination; develop workable legal immigration channels that reunite families, strengthen our economy, and protect workers' rights; and strengthen our society by advancing the successful integration of new immigrants.**

***Presidential candidates must advocate for policies that:***

- *Modernize the immigration system*
- *Protect family unity and achieve permanent protections for longtime residents*
- *Reject an “enforcement-only” approach and increase accountability*

The Trump administration’s family separation policy at the border was universally reviled. Yet a similar threat is playing out often invisibly in communities across the country, posing a threat to millions of American children and their families.

For the nearly six million children under the age of 18 who live in a household with undocumented residents, mostly parents, the risk of being separated from one or both parents has risen exponentially under the Trump administration. The consequences for the children who remain can be devastating. It’s time to focus on commonsense solutions that are based on justice and fairness.

We expect whoever wins the Democratic nomination to push for comprehensive immigration reform, and to work with Congress to make it happen. Absent a comprehensive solution, we need to modernize our legal immigration system, provide a path to legality to those living and contributing to our communities, and implement accountable and humane enforcement. We expect all candidates to make that a priority.

This is not just good policy—it’s good politics. A majority of Americans are in favor of immigration and an updated, modern system that works:

- A 2018 Gallup poll found that 71% of Americans considered immigration a “good thing” for the United States.
- In a 2017 poll, nearly two out of three voters supported a path to citizenship for undocumented immigrants.
- A separate Gallup poll found that among Republicans, support for a path to citizenship (76%) was higher than support for a proposed border wall (62%)

***Related UnidosUS Publications***

- [Beyond the Border: Family Separation in the Trump Era](#)