



## **Next-Generation Latino Agenda: A Guide for Candidates**

Elected officials face a critical choice about how to engage and appeal to Latino voters. Unless candidates speak to Latino priorities, their path to victory will be narrow. In 2014, there were over 25 million eligible Hispanic voters, representing 11% of all eligible voters. While a smaller number of Latinos are registered to vote—about 14 million in 2012—the large number of Latinos not yet registered highlights the formidable potential of this population’s influence. The vast majority (93%) of Hispanic children in this country are U.S. citizens, and they will be a main driver of growth in the Hispanic electorate: roughly 900,000 U.S.-born Hispanics will turn 18 each year over the next decade.

Recently, the hard work of Latinos has shown results in many areas, but overall this progress is muted as they continue to lag behind other Americans. Over the next two years, policymakers have an opportunity to build on recent socioeconomic advances to lead the nation toward greater equity. To this end, they must protect programs that have already improved the lives of millions and embrace policies that will benefit Americans more evenly. They must also work together to examine the challenges and resulting disparities faced by the Hispanic community. Only then will our nation realize a policy agenda that promotes the ideals of equitable treatment and growing opportunity for all.

### **Civil Rights and Criminal Justice**

There is much work to be done to eradicate racial and ethnic discrimination, reduce socioeconomic, health, and other disparities, advance equal rights, and improve overall relations across many segments of society. NCLR supports a civil rights policy agenda that focuses on recent threats to voting rights, continued employment discrimination, racial profiling, the digital divide, and Latinos’ disproportionate contact with the criminal and juvenile justice systems.

- Support federal policy changes to address threats to voting accessibility and protect against discriminatory voting rules.
- Advance legislation and regulatory action to restore and expand safeguards against discriminatory practices across all sectors of society—including in the workplace, in schools, and during interactions with law enforcement—to address disparate treatment of individuals.
- Promote efforts to close the digital divide by enhancing the use of telecommunications and Internet services within the Latino community.
- Support policies that prevent entry into the criminal justice system, reform mandatory sentencing laws that disproportionately affect the Latino community, and encourage reintegration into society upon release to reduce the number of repeat offenses.

## **Income and Job Quality**

Latinos have recently experienced economic gains, including strong job growth and a drop in poverty. However, these have not been enough to counteract long-standing economic inequities. Absent change, hardworking Latinos will keep struggling to pay their bills and find a pathway out of low-wage jobs. NCLR believes that hard work should help all families, including Latino families, achieve a better quality of life.

- Support legislation that expands career opportunities for all Latinos, including youth, and raises workplace standards.
- Advance legislation that restores the value of the minimum wage, including by raising the minimum wage to \$12.50 per hour by 2020 and gradually phasing out the subminimum wage for tipped workers.
- Make permanent the 2009 expansions of the Earned Income Tax Credit and the Child Tax Credit and expand access to refundable tax credits to more taxpayers.

## **Wealth-Building**

Latinos share in the American Dream of building a nest egg and attaining financial security, but they face challenges in accessing wealth-building tools that can make that dream a reality. Without access to safe financial products, Latinos are more likely to turn to alternative financial products that often come with predatory and discriminatory lending practices. NCLR supports an agenda that helps hardworking families secure their long-term financial stability and, in turn, the financial stability of the whole nation.

- Enhance access to mainstream financial products, including responsibly designed small-dollar loans and credit for underserved consumers.
- Support retirement security by maintaining Social Security and expanding access to private retirement savings plans for more workers through initiatives such as myRA.
- Protect consumers by promoting regulatory actions and legislation that increase access to credit and strong consumer protections from predatory and discriminatory practices.
- Advance housing finance system reform that works for all creditworthy borrowers, especially first-time buyers, communities of color, and other underserved populations.

## **Education**

Promising educational gains are evident among Latinos, as students are graduating from high school at greater rates than ever before and more are going to college. Still, research shows that Latinos continue to lag behind other students in critical educational outcomes. NCLR urges an agenda that supports equitable opportunity and outcomes for Hispanic students, who will play an increasingly vital role in the economic development and prosperity of the country.

- Support administrative and legislative action to improve opportunities and outcomes for English language learners.
- Pass legislation that invests in early education to improve the quality of programs and help children acquire the skills necessary to succeed.
- Reauthorize the Elementary and Secondary Education Act to ensure strong transitions at every level of education and enforce accountability provisions, including the provision that all students are entitled to a high-quality education and assessed annually to ensure that

academic progress is made, learning targets are met, and achievement gaps are detected and eliminated.

- Reauthorize the Higher Education Act to safeguard affordability, minimize debt burdens, and hold postsecondary institutions accountable for the increased retention and graduation rates of Latino students.

## **Health**

The enactment of major health care reform has paved the way for millions of Americans to get insured and access health care. Despite a drop in the number of uninsured Latinos due to the Affordable Care Act (ACA), Latinos remain the largest uninsured population. Limited access to health insurance, among other factors, contributes to worse health outcomes for Latinos. NCLR supports an agenda that provides health coverage for all Latinos, ensures equitable access to health care for all minorities, and provides quality nutrition services to our nations' children.

- Support continued implementation of health care reform and include strong rules for nondiscrimination so that all American can access health care services.
- Improve targeted ACA enrollment efforts to meet the needs of Latinos, including additional capacity-building work, funding for community-based organizations, and culturally and linguistically appropriate information for organizations enrolling this population.
- Advance legislation which ensures that Latinos receive culturally competent, linguistically appropriate, high-quality, and effective health coverage.
- Support policies that provide critical nutrition services to Latino children, including reauthorization of the Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 and strengthening benefits through the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

## **Immigration**

The nation's immigration system is experiencing systemic failure due to legislative neglect. The toxic nature of the immigration debate and consequences of an outdated immigration system affect most Hispanics, regardless of immigration status. NCLR supports an agenda that will advance sensible and effective immigration reform to boost our economy, benefit our workforce, and strengthen family unity.

- Pass comprehensive immigration reform that 1) restores the rule of law by creating a roadmap to legalization and earned citizenship for 11 million aspiring Americans and 2) promotes smart enforcement that improves safety, supports legal immigration channels, and prevents discrimination.
- Strengthen the fabric of our society by adopting proactive measures that advance the successful integration of new immigrants.
- Oppose any attempts to block, discontinue, defund, or debilitate President Obama's executive actions, which represent the most significant progress on immigration policy in decades.