




Civic Engagement Update for the Pennsylvania Latino Community

A Congreso Publication

March 6, 2007



March 6, 2007

Dear Fellow Pennsylvanians:

On March 8, a Philadelphia Latino delegation of over 20 staff and clients from Congreso de Latinos Unidos and Asociación Puertorriqueños en Marcha (APM) will forge onto Capitol Hill to urge our congressional representatives to support an agenda for building a stronger America and keeping our nation competitive. Our delegation is scheduled to meet with the offices of Senators Specter and Casey and Representatives Fattah, Brady, Schwartz and Murphy. We will also deliver materials to the remaining Representatives in Pennsylvania.

One of our best opportunities to unite the voices of Latinos across the nation is through the National Council of La Raza's National Advocacy Day March 7 & 8. The Philadelphia Latino delegation will be among 200 representatives from 112 community-based Latino organizations in 38 states and the District of Columbia. The community representatives will give voice to the concerns and goals shared by many of the 42 million Hispanics in the U.S. Congreso & APM will address issues critical to maintaining a workforce that is educated, healthy, and able to contribute fully to keep our economy strong and growing. Such issues include improving children's health, higher education, economic mobility, juvenile justice, and comprehensive immigration reform. See outlines of the issues below and [join us by calling our Senators and Representatives to support these pieces of legislation!](#)

On a local level, we continue supporting voices of the Latino community by providing venues through which our opinions are expressed and heard. We held a successful 2007 Election Kick-off Event last week, where almost 100 community members shared their opinions through videotaped interviews and through our Mayoral Forum issues survey for the candidates. These priorities, your priorities, will shape the agenda for the April 5 Latino Mayoral Forum. [Please fill out the quick online survey to share your opinions and join us on April 5th](#), when Congreso and The Greater Philadelphia Hispanic Chamber of Commerce will host a Mayoral candidate forum for the Latino community.

With the recent release of governmental budgets by our President, Governor and Mayor, Congreso's next Civic Engagement update on the Fiscal Year 2008 federal, state and local budgets and implications for the Latino community in Pennsylvania.

We look forward to working alongside you in all of these endeavors.

Gracias,

Nicholas Torres
President, Congreso de Latinos Unidos



Civic Engagement Update

March 2, 2007

www.congreso.net

Congreso's update on city, state & federal issues affecting the Latino Community shared with community leaders around PA, staff, and other interested parties.

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Congreso thanks the National Council of La Raza for its tremendous contributions to this edition of the Civic Engagement Update via briefings and conference calls.

Comprehensive Immigration Reform

Need for Federal Reform

Current immigration laws are out of touch with our country's economy, and millions of close family members remain in visa backlogs for years, waiting to be reunited. There are approximately 12 million undocumented immigrants living and working in the U.S., filling essential gaps in the labor market while enduring low wages and poor working conditions. Comprehensive reforms – not quick fixes – are needed to solve the root causes of undocumented immigration and create a system that is legal, safe, and fair.¹

There is a good chance that comprehensive immigration reform could pass this year. There are **new immigration bills being drafted by Senators and House Representatives from both sides of the aisle**. Kennedy & McCain are still the chief architects. Rep Jeff Flake, (R-AZ) Arizona, and Luis V. Gutierrez, (D-IL) are chief writers on the House side. Advocates expect that these bills will be introduced mid-March 2007.

The 2006 midterm elections signaled that Americans do not favor an “enforcement only” approach, and polls have shown that Americans believe that reasonable, workable immigration reform is necessary. President Bush has repeatedly stated that reforming the immigration system is a priority of his administration. Further, in May 2006, the Senate passed a bipartisan comprehensive immigration reform bill which contained a path to citizenship for current undocumented immigrants, new legal pathways for future flows of immigrants, and a reduction of family immigration backlogs. It is significant that a bipartisan comprehensive bill passed the Senate; however, the bill contained provisions that would have made implementation nearly impossible and included many harmful enforcement provisions from the House bill.²

Local Action

Over the last year, Pennsylvania has been labeled as the ‘anti-immigrant’ state. Pennsylvania is home to 32 negative ordinances in Pennsylvania cities (almost half of all anti-immigrant ordinances nationwide). The reason for this is somewhat of a mystery, though, as undocumented immigrants make up barely 1% of our state population.

Hazleton has not been successful in implementing the provisions in its local ordinance. In fact, the city has had to alter its ordinance various times due to legal issues, and the city is scheduled to go to trial on March 12th against a lawsuit filed by PRLDEF, MALDEF and the ACLU.

This ordinance and the one in Riverside, New Jersey, have proven that local communities are unable and even lack capacity to manage the provisions inherent within them.

¿Y Qué?

Pennsylvania has an aging and slow-growing population and a workforce that cannot sustain growth. **Immigrants have countered the steady population loss Pennsylvania has witnessed** over the last 50 years. There is a current worker gap, as there is not enough unskilled labor in the state to meet the economy's current demands. This point was eloquently made in the US Senate public hearing in Philadelphia on July 5-2006, by representatives from multiple industries: agriculture, hotel & tourism, and landscaping. **Immigrants**, whether documented or not, **provide much needed labor that sustains our economy**. 90% of new job growth from 1996-2000 in Pennsylvania was due to immigrants.³ Philadelphia is one of two of the 10 largest metro areas to lose population in the 90s. This out-migration has not been equally countered by foreign-born populations, which generally maintain balance and rejuvenate large cities, as has happened in New York and Boston.

¹ NCLR Enact Comprehensive Immigration Reform Fact Sheet March 2007

² Ibid.

³ Pennsylvania Immigration & Citizenship Coalition Fact Sheet, 2006

Latinos are the face of immigration, even though in some cities such as Philadelphia, Latinos are actually a minority immigrant group representing less than 25%⁴. Latinos are now the majority minority in 27 states. As such, even when looking at images in the media, it seems as though anti-immigrant individuals and groups have made the ‘illegal immigration’ issue a Latino issue.

This presents problems for numbers of reasons:

- a. You can’t judge someone’s legal status based on the color of someone’s skin.
- b. Most Latinos are in the country legally.
- c. Honing ‘illegal immigration’ as a Latino issue has led to racial profiling. Recent ‘illegal immigrants’ raids have led to the arrest of innocent Latinos. These ‘mis-arrests’ were based on supposition, largely because of the color of the victims’ skin.
- d. The results of the recent 2006 National Survey of Latinos conducted by the Pew Hispanic Center shows that more than half of Latinos surveyed say they see an increase in discrimination as a result of this year’s policy debate. Latinos are feeling more discrimination in their everyday lives.

The exodus of resident and citizen Latinos from Hazelton, PA and Riverside, NJ have affected Latino businesses and even the businesses and economies of the towns in general. Many Latinos have been in the press, reporting recent challenges due to the negativity provoked by the ordinances. Some Latinos are not having their trash picked up by city services, a business owner had a rock thrown through his window the first week he was in business, and many businesses, which revitalized a fledgling community, have shut down because they’ve lost so many customers. The local ordinances have divided communities and brought out the worst in some of its residents.

For Latinos who came without papers, they did so in large part because of economic despair. The immigration debate has become a civil and human rights issue. One that touches all US residents, regardless of race or ethnicity.

Congreso’s Position

- The United States needs comprehensive immigration reform.
- Immigration reform will be much more successful if undocumented residents are given **ways in which to legalize their status**, without leaving the country.
- Our immigration system must also more effectively address the **backlogs** and complexities of bureaucracy for our legal immigrants. Many immigrants’ legal situations are tenuous and threatened because of the difficulty in gaining permanent legal status.
- **Immigrants are good for the economy**, so we need to develop a system that allows for that labor force.
- **Families need to be together**, when at all possible.
- We need to ensure that reform includes **provisions to protect American and immigrant workers**.
- **Creating legal channels for future immigrant workers** will also be imperative.
- Imagine the strength of the United States if more of its citizens were bilingual. Our political landscape would have greater connections to Latin America and Spain. Our citizens would be more interested in learning more about the world, which is very important in the increasingly global society. As such, **English-only** provisions to immigration reform are counterproductive. Not only would limiting all government forms and communications to English disenfranchise documented and undocumented residents and citizens, but doing so would put a drain on city and state government. The time and effort to handle the confusion and misunderstanding of residents increases the work that city and state government workers have to do. Instead, Congress should look at ways in which to fund more English language classes, which are of very high demand. Building competency in two languages serves our residents, our government, and our country better.
- **The immigration system is federally-based**. We cannot create local and state strategies or proposed solutions, because they just create more problems for those communities and the ones surrounding them.

⁴ Immigration and Urban Revitalization in Philadelphia, Welcoming Center for New Pennsylvanians, Sept. 2004

Congreso's Action

- Congreso's President, Nicholas Torres, served on a panel of immigration experts on WHYY's Citizen's Forum in January. He was positioned to give the "pro-immigrant stance". Nick highlighted the need to give the divisive issue a human face, as it is the system that is broken, not low-income workers trying to support themselves and their families.
- Congreso signed onto NCLR's letter requesting that the United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) reconsider an increase of the naturalization fees charged for processing naturalization and immigration applications. NCLR noted that "people should not be forced to pay a lot more money for poor customer service, lost files, and long backlogs." Fees for naturalization applications may increase as much as 100% or more, raising the fee from the current \$400 to \$600 or even \$1,000. This would prevent citizenship for many low-income immigrants who wish to become U.S. citizens but simply cannot afford to do so. We hope that USCIS and the Department of Homeland Security will be able to find another solution to the financial burden that USCIS feels on its operations. Fees have increased 450% since 1990.⁵ The Dominican American National Roundtable (DANR) issued a press release on February 2nd with important steps to follow, if you choose to advocate for Congressional funding of USCIS fees.
<http://www.danr.org/ip.asp?op=news>
- Congreso has worked the last two years in calling for comprehensive immigration reform, through legislative visits, rallying staff and clients, calling legislative offices and encouraging other Pennsylvania advocates to do the same.

⁵ National Immigration Forum Update, December 29, 2006

The “DREAM Act” and the “American DREAM Act”

The “DREAM Act” in the Senate and the “American DREAM Act” in the House of Representatives are going to be reintroduced for consideration in March, either on their own or through the comprehensive immigration reform bills. If passed, the “Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act,” a bipartisan federal proposal led by Senators Richard Durbin (R-IL), Chuck Hagel (R-NE), and Richard Lugar (R-IN), would facilitate access to college for immigrant students by restoring states’ rights to offer in-state tuition to immigrant students. Representatives Howard Berman (D-CA), Lucille Roybal-Allard (D-CA), and Lincoln Diaz-Balart (R-FL) are championing its counterpart in the U.S. House of Representatives. The “DREAM Act” would also provide a path to citizenship for hardworking immigrant youth who were brought to the U.S. as young children and to pursue higher education or military service, enabling them to contribute fully to our society. Every year, U.S. high schools graduate approximately 65,000 immigrant students. Brought to this country as young children, they have grown up in American schools and share our culture and values. Like their U.S.-born peers, they dream of pursuing higher education. However, due to their immigration status, they are barred from the opportunities that currently make a college education affordable – in-state tuition rates, state and federal grants and loans, most private scholarships, and the ability to work legally to earn their way through college.

¿Y Qué?

In Pennsylvania, in 2005, workers with college degrees earned \$21.72 per hour on average, while those with high school diplomas earned \$12.59. Although wages declined or were stagnated for workers of all education levels in Pennsylvania from 1979-2005, the decline is much greater for those without higher education.⁶ The DREAM Act would afford more students the opportunity to spiral out of poverty by providing opportunities.

- **America rewards hard work.** Students know that by studying and achieving success in high school they can earn the reward of a college education and fulfill their potential. The American way is to offer equal opportunities to all and to encourage all to make the most of their talents.
- **Current law punishes children for a decision they did not make.** America cannot continue to penalize young people who were brought to the U.S. at a very young age; they are not to blame for their lack of documentation. They have done nothing wrong and should not be punished.
- **These children are Americans.** Granting access to the American Dream for kids who have grown up reciting the Pledge of Allegiance, playing baseball, and eating apple pie is the right thing to do. They have sat side-by-side with our children in the classroom. They share American values and traditions. This country is their home.
- **There is a significant cost to our nation in denying these children a college education.** We have already made a significant investment in their K-12 education. We risk a large cost by cutting their education short and not reaping the full potential of our investment. There is no benefit to this nation in leaving this segment of the population undereducated and thereby relegated to second-class citizenship and low-paying jobs that are insufficient to support a family.⁷

Congreso’s Position

Congreso joins NCLR in urging passage of the “DREAM Act.” Providing a path to U.S. citizenship for hardworking and talented immigrant students who have been raised in the U.S. is critical to improving the pipeline from high school to college and providing meaningful employment.

Congreso’s Action

- Congreso has been active in the last two years in calling constituents to sign petitions, send postcards and call legislators to strongly encourage support for the “DREAM Act” and the “American DREAM Act”.
- The Pennsylvania Immigration and Citizenship Coalition (PICC) has already met with the offices of Senators Specter and Casey and Representative Murphy to support the DREAM Act this year.

⁶ The State of Working Pennsylvania 2006, Keystone Research Center, Harrisburg, PA

⁷ Support the DREAM Act, NCLR fact sheet, March 2007

Workforce Investment Act

According to the U.S. Census, 42.7 million Hispanics lived in the U.S. as of July 1, 2005. Hispanics make up 13% of the labor market and have the highest labor force participation rate (68%) compared to other groups; this rate is expected to rise steadily over the next decade. Three-fourths (75.8%) of Latino men and half (51.5%) of Latinas over the age of 16 are employed. Therefore, investments in Latino workers are essential to the vitality of the nation's workforce.

In 1998, Congress passed the Workforce Investment Act (WIA), replacing the Job Training Partnership Act (JTPA) and it is the largest single source of federal funding for workforce development activities. Title II in the WIA funds the Adult Education programs (GED, ABE, and ESL) that are critical to our community. WIA was to create a universal access system of one-stop career centers, which would provide access to training and employment services for a range of workers, including low-income adults, low-income youth, and dislocated workers. Reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Act will ensure that more Latinos have access to education and training programs, leading to higher family-sustaining wages. It is likely to be reauthorized in this Congressional session. In the last five years, WIA funding in Pennsylvania has continually dropped, putting workforce development education and training programs at risk.

¿Y Qué?

Only 6.8% of Pennsylvanians without high school diplomas or GEDs are enrolled in Adult Education programs. 44% of all racial and ethnic minority families in the Commonwealth are low-income and need educational and training supports to advance professionally and economically.⁸ One-fourth of all Philadelphians live below the federal poverty level.

- **Programs should be created under the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) which integrate occupational training and language acquisition.** Currently, few programs integrate language acquisition with occupational training. As a result, many Latinos who are not bilingual and are primarily Spanish-speaking are not able to access training programs. With increased investments in integrated training programs, more Latinos will have access to high-wage, high-demand occupations, earning wages sufficient to support their families. NCLR has proposed \$50 million to be allocated toward these programs.
- **Reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) should strengthen the training services provided to limited-English-proficient (LEP) individuals.** The current job training services structure is not favorable toward Latinos due to the "sequential eligibility" for training programs. This prevents many Latinos from accessing training that will enable them to earn a livable wage. In order for Latinos to achieve career mobility, it is important that they are able to access services concurrently, such as English-as-a-Second-Language (ESL) and training services.⁹

Congreso's Position

Congreso strongly supports the reauthorization of the Workforce Investment Act. Significant investments in training and education programs, including Limited English Proficient populations, will increase Latinos' opportunities to enhance their skills and education level which will lead to career advancement and self-sufficient wages. Providing better access to community-based organizations to receive funding for Adult Basic Education and workforce development services serves the larger community more effectively.

Congreso's Action

- Congreso has been active in the last few years in working alongside the Pennsylvania Welfare Coalition and with other partner community-based organizations to emphasize the importance of prioritizing job training, education to assist low-income constituents in building skills required for the increasingly demanding labor force.
- Congreso has a close working relationship with the Philadelphia Workforce Investment Board, the local WIA governing body.

⁸ Investing in Pennsylvania's Families: Economic Opportunity for All, Pathways PA, January 2007

⁹ Support Workforce Development Programs, NCLR, March 2007

Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP)

Reauthorization of the Juvenile Justice Delinquency and Prevention Act of 1974 (JJDP) is scheduled for 2007. This law provides federal standards and mandates for safeguarding the care and custody of children and youth in the juvenile and criminal justice systems. Without such protections, many Latino youth face a system that has no accountability. Specifically, if reauthorized, JJDP will provide for:

- A juvenile justice planning/advisory system for all states, territories, and the District of Columbia
- Federal funding for delinquency prevention and improved state/local juvenile justice programs
- Operation of a federal agency (OJJDP) dedicated to training, technical assistance, model programs, and research and evaluation to support state and local efforts

Under JJDP, all states, territories, and the District of Columbia must comply with the following core protections in order to receive federal funding:

- Deinstitutionalization of Status Offenders (DSO)
 - Status offenses include truancy, breaking curfew and possession of alcohol. DSO ensures that status offenders who haven't committed criminal offenses are not held in secure juvenile or adult facilities for extended periods of time. Alternative treatments, such as community-based services, counseling, alternative education are sought instead.
- Adult Jail and Lock-up Removal
 - Youth cannot be detained in adult jails except in special circumstances. Children placed in adult jails and lock-ups are eight times more likely to commit suicide, two times more likely to be assaulted by staff, and 50 percent more likely to be attacked with a weapon than children in juvenile facilities.
- "Sight and Sound" Separation
 - When placed in adult jail or lock-ups, 'sight and sound' contact with adults is prohibited. This is done to keep children from psychological abuse and physical assault. The provision includes keeping children from being housed next to adults, sharing common areas with adults or exposing them to situations that are potentially dangerous due to threats or abuse from adult offenders.
- Disproportionate Minority Contact (DMC)
 - Youth of color receive more stringent sentences and are more likely to be incarcerated than Caucasian youth – for the same offenses. Youth of color are one-third of the youth population yet are two-thirds of youth in contact with the juvenile justice system. As such, states are required to gather information and assess the reason for disproportionate minority contact.¹⁰

¿Y Qué?

So why should we be concerned?

1. Latino males have the lowest on-time graduation rate of any group in Philadelphia: 29.3-38.2% (The average high school graduation rate in Philadelphia is 51%).
2. 90% of youth involved in the juvenile justice system during high school drop out.¹¹
3. Our country's incarceration rates are the highest in the world.
4. Approaches that support treatment and community-based alternatives save money, promote safety and build communities.
5. Between 1985 and 2000, state corrections spending (166%) grew at six times the rate of higher education (24%).
6. Nearly one in six Latino males born in 2001 is expected to go to prison at some time in their lives!

¹⁰ What is the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP), NCLR, March 2007

¹¹ Turning It Around: A Collective Effort to Understand and Resolve Philadelphia's Dropout Crisis, 2006

7. Although Latinos do not commit more crimes than whites, they are much more likely to serve prison time. (Hispanic youth are incarcerated 4 to 5 times the rate of white youth.)¹²
8. Young people of color represent nearly two-thirds of young people in detention.
9. 27% of youth in the juvenile justice system has mental health disorders severe enough to require significant and immediate treatment.
10. In PA, Hispanic youth make-up 5% of the state's youth population, but represent 10% of youth in detention or committed to facilities.
11. There is no reliable statewide data on Hispanic youth, since data collection methods are flawed and race/ethnicity codification doesn't consider the different races of Hispanics. Hispanic/Latino is an ethnicity, not a race.¹³ Unless Hispanic children are adequately counted and recognized in the justice system, their rehabilitation needs will go unmet. Furthermore, all children deserve fair and equitable treatment. Under JJJPA, states will receive the technical assistance and tools necessary to ensure a more effective juvenile justice system that is responsive to the needs of children, as well as an overall reduction in the over-reliance on incarceration as a one-size-fits-all approach to building safer communities.

Community safety and crime reduction can be effectively addressed and maintained by Latino-serving community-based organizations (CBOs). Currently, hundreds of CBOs throughout the country are providing prevention, intervention, treatment, and aftercare services for Latino youth and their families. However, critical recognition of their existence is still lacking within the justice system, resulting in the neglect of access for rehabilitative services when Latino youth are placed in the justice system. This problem is further compounded when Latino-serving CBOs are under-funded at both the federal and local levels. Under JJJPA, these organizations can be placed at the front line of the funding stream to enhance, expand, and ultimately reach system-involved youth who could be more effectively rehabilitated by accessing appropriate services that are community-based and culturally and linguistically appropriate.

Congreso's Position

Congreso and NCLR support reauthorization of JJJPA as a step in the right direction to ensuring the reduction of racial disparities and maintaining safer communities. Strengths and effectiveness of rehabilitative programs and services addressing the root causes of crime and create safer communities are paramount. Specifically, in addition to supporting the current four core requirements outlined above, NCLR and Congreso support:

- Ensuring adequate data collection and reporting of Latino children in every stage of the justice system.
- Developing, modifying, and/or implementing culturally- and linguistically-competent policies, practices, and programs.
- Keeping children and youth under age 18 within juvenile court jurisdiction.
- Supporting community-based alternatives to incarceration for low-level, nonviolent offenders, including status offenses such as truancy and curfew violations.

Congreso's Action

- Congreso is honored to be the Lead Convener of the Philadelphia LJN. We plan to expand the network in 2007, to include a youth subcommittee, as we see the impact this work can have on effective reform for Latinos. We invite the private, non-profit and government sectors to join us.
- Congreso led the development, facilitation and delivery of the 2006 workshops.
- Congreso recently gave testimony to the Educational Task Force and City Council on related issues, the drop-out crisis, truancy and the E3 center as a potential model for serving adjudicated youth.
- Congreso has a multitude of youth prevention and intervention services. Our mission is to strengthen Latino communities through social, economic, education and health services; leadership development; and advocacy. 34% of our clients in 2006 were under the age of 17; we have a commitment to these youth and their success.

¹² Justice Policy Institute brochure www.justicepolicy.org

¹³ Models for Change: Building Momentum for Juvenile Justice Reform: 2006

SCHIP: Community Health Workers Act of 2007 & Immigrant Children's Health Improvement Act (ICHIA)

SCHIP

The federal government is slated to reauthorize State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) legislation this year. The federal government must increase its investment in child health programs so states can improve and expand coverage for children. Advocates in Pennsylvania are asking Congress to provide new tools and financial support to enroll more uninsured children in PA's new "Cover All Kids" program. New funding for SCHIP should not be financed by cuts in Medicaid. About 68 cents of every dollar spent on CHIP in Pennsylvania comes from the federal government, making federal support crucial.¹⁴

As of February 22, 2007, Pennsylvania was approved by the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to provide access to affordable health insurance for all uninsured children and youth. The initiative in Pennsylvania is entitled, "Cover All Kids" and it offers coverage for services including doctors' visits, hospital care, prescription drugs, vision, dental and home health care, as well as, mental health and substance abuse services.¹⁵

Community Health Workers Act of 2007

Senator Jeff Bingaman (D-NM) has introduced the "Community Health Workers Act of 2007 (S. 586)," legislation that would help to broaden the reach of *promotores*, or health educators and outreach workers. Two important highlights of the bill include:

- Grants would be provided to community-based organizations (CBOs) for health education and outreach in minority communities that are medically underserved. It would also provide grants for CBOs to promote healthy lifestyles among women and children, such as nutrition promotion activities.
- In addition, this legislation would ensure that community-based organizations could take the next step in helping those they serve connect with health care insurance programs, such as Medicaid and the State Children's Health Insurance program (SCHIP). By providing enrollment resources to CBOs who already have culturally-competent and linguistically appropriate education, the legislation would make certain that many eligible Latinos could connect with the health coverage they need.

ICHIA

Across the country, many lawfully residing immigrants lack health coverage due to the arbitrary and inequitable restrictions enacted by the 1996 welfare law and are left uncovered by SCHIP. The health of immigrant families suffers as a result.

The proposed Immigrant Children's Health Improvement Act (ICHIA) provides a solution for these children and pregnant women. For the past decade, newly-arrived immigrant children have been left uncovered by the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) and Medicaid. ICHIA would allow states to provide federally funded medical coverage to lawfully residing children and pregnant women, with no waiting period. Passage of ICHIA in 2007 is a real possibility as the new Congress considers the reauthorization of SCHIP.

The proposed legislation would grant states the option to cover lawfully residing immigrant children and pregnant women under the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) and Medicaid. ICHIA has a history of strong bipartisan support in both the Senate and the House of Representatives. The National

¹⁴ PA Partnerships for Children and PCCY SCHIP Facts, February 2007

¹⁵ Governor Rendell says final Approval received to expand CHIP to Cover All Kids", Press Release, 2/22/07

Governors Association and the National Conference of State Legislators as well as every major state and local government organization have endorsed this policy change.

Under current law, lawfully residing pregnant women and children who have entered the country since August 22, 1996 are barred from Medicaid and SCHIP for five years. This restriction has increased racial and ethnic health disparities among children in the U.S. While SCHIP and Medicaid expansions have increased insurance coverage for citizen children over the past decade, coverage for low-income immigrant children has fallen further behind. This is true even though many states with the greatest numbers of immigrant children have chosen to extend health coverage to them using state funds, recognizing that SCHIP and Medicaid are vital supports. Providing a state option to restore access would encourage more states to cover immigrant children and would give fiscal redress to the states that are already doing so.¹⁶

¿Y Qué?

Of approximately nine million children that are uninsured, nearly 4 out of 10 of those children are Latino. This statistic is disproportionately high (40% of the population), considering that Latinos currently make up only 14.5% of the nation's population. The most recent National Healthcare Disparities Report concludes that Latinos are experiencing widening racial and ethnic disparities in health care.

Research by the Urban Institute shows that immigrant children are much less likely to obtain medical care than native-born children. Failing to provide basic preventive care for immigrant children jeopardizes their health and creates a need for more expensive subsequent care. Similarly, failing to provide prenatal care risks the health of newborn U.S. citizens and increases the need for costly medical interventions after birth. Despite immigrants' high rate of employment, almost half of low-income immigrant children are uninsured, a rate three times higher than that of children from native-born families.

Congreso's Position

The Community Health Workers Act and ICHIA are priority areas in the upcoming reauthorization of the State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP). Of approximately nine million children that are uninsured, nearly 4 out of 10 of those children are Latino. Many of these children could connect with health insurance programs, if they had information and assistance enrolling into these programs. Further, many more kids would connect with health insurance if their parents had access to coverage. The Community Health Workers Act makes covering uninsured Latinos a priority. Congreso would be able to reach more Latinos, if resources were available to hire health educators, to educate them on dire health statistics and remedies for the Latino community, health prevention and intervention programs, and health insurance.

Congreso's Action

- Congreso is very actively securing better health outcomes for the Latino community, through its "A Su Salud" campaign. Both Philadelphia City Council and the Pennsylvania House of Representatives have declared March 2007 as Latino Health Month. The A Su Salud campaign has received tremendous publicity through a regionally televised cooking show and the distribution of 300,000 copies of a 24-page high gloss educational booklet in both English and Spanish, to be distributed throughout eight counties in Eastern Pennsylvania. This initiative also includes a public health campaign offering free related health screenings at Congreso and other participating health and social service providers.
- During National Advocacy Day, Congreso supports the PA Partnerships for Children and the Philadelphia Citizens for Children and Youth, asking that Congress support at least \$50-\$60 billion in new funding over five years, above baseline funding, to allow states to cover current shortfalls; reach the majority of those already eligible for SCHIP and Medicaid; and support continued enrollment of unenrolled children who are not currently eligible through expansion programs, like Cover All Kids.

¹⁶ National Immigration Law Center, March 5, 2007

CALL TO ACTION:

Support our efforts by calling our Senators and House Representatives

Which of the issues highlighted in the CE update affects you, your program, or your clients?

Make a phone call!

Now is the time to act, to increase the numbers of voices going to Congress about immigration, higher education for our youth, workforce development and Adult Education, juvenile justice, and health education and insurance.

- Call Senator Specter at 202.224.4254
- Call Senator Casey at 202.224.6324
- Call the Capitol Switchboard to find your Representative at 202.224.3121

Tell them, “My name is _____ and I am a concerned Pennsylvanian. I would like to talk to someone about legislation focused on (*topic*). Please support (*legislation title at top of page*) as it affects my community and will support Pennsylvanians to (*mention a benefit to the community*).

Important Dates

- **February – April 2007: *Mayoral Forums***
 - **April 5, 5:30pm: Congreso and Greater Philadelphia Hispanic Chamber of Commerce for the Latino community, focusing on community issues:** All Democratic Mayoral candidates have confirmed their attendance. Details coming soon.
 - **Tonight! March 6, 7pm:** The Philadelphia /Southern New Jersey Chapter of the **American Jewish Committee:** a Forum for Candidates for the Democratic Nomination for Mayor of the City of Philadelphia. The event will be held at the Union League in Lincoln Hall. All five of the Democratic candidates will be attending the forum.
 - **April 4, 6:30pm:** Philadelphia Citizens for Children & Youth: Mayoral Candidates **Forum on Children's Issues** at the Free Library of Philadelphia at 1901 Vine Street. Reserve your seat at www.pccy.org
 - **April 13, 1pm: 2007 Mayoral Youth Forum,** Organized by: The Greater Philadelphia Urban Affairs Coalition (GPUAC) and The Philadelphia Youth Network, Inc. (PYN). More details forthcoming.
 - **April 26, 6:30-8:30pm, Vote for Homes! Mayoral candidates forum on housing, jobs, and services** at Arch Street United Methodist Church, 55 North Broad Street (Broad and Arch Streets)
- **March 12, 3pm**

The lawsuit filed against the City of Hazelton begins on March 12. There will be a rally on the front steps of City Hall that same afternoon, at 3pm, for those interested in supporting the immigrant community in Hazelton, and even symbolically for immigrants throughout the Commonwealth. Transportation will be leaving from the 30th Street Train Station at 30th and Market at 12:30pm. Contact Kristin Shipler at Congreso, at 215.763.8870 x1505 if you are interested in attending.
- **March 12, 11am**

Vote for Homes, led by Project HOME and coalition members will hold its ***Election 2007 Registration Kick Off Event.*** 11:00 am is the Rally and Press Conference and at 11:30 am –Volunteers will be dispatched to register voters at shelters, soup kitchens, and neighborhoods. To be held at 1515 Fairmount Avenue. Please RSVP to Megan Kiesel at 215-232-7272 x3106 or email advocacy@projecthome.org
- **March & April 2007**

The ***Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute*** is seeking to develop the next generation of Hispanic Leaders, see <http://www.chci.org/> to apply for the nation's most prestigious ***Latino leadership programs***, expenses paid. There is still an opportunity to apply for a *Public Policy Fellowship by March 1, 2007 and Scholarship Awards by April 16, 2007.*
- **April 10, 2007 2-5pm**

The Urban Studies Program at Penn, in partnership with The Philadelphia Daily News, WHY-FM and others, is hosting ***an in-depth forum called "Urban Poverty and Prosperity: Building an Agenda for Philadelphia's Next Mayor."*** Sponsors have invited someone from the administration of New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg to present that city's poverty alleviation/wealth creation plan and its implementation. A panel and audience discussion will follow. For more information and directions call 215-898-7799.

If you have any other information that would be important for Congreso to include, please email the Director of Civic Engagement, Kristin Shipler, at shiplerk@congreso.net. We want to represent and advocate for all issues affecting Latinos in the SE Pennsylvania area.

Important Links

GOVERNMENT

- **US Senator Specter** <http://specter.senate.gov/>
- **US Senator-Elect Casey** <http://casey.senate.gov/>
- **US House of Representatives** <http://www.house.gov/>
- **PA General Assembly** <http://www.legis.state.pa.us/index.cfm>
- **Governor's Advisory Commission on Latino Affairs (GACLA)**
<http://www.gacla.state.pa.us/gacla/site/default.asp>
- **Philadelphia City Council** <http://www.phila.gov/citycouncil/index.html>
- **US Citizenship and Immigration Services** <http://www.uscis.gov/graphics/index.htm>
- **Pennsylvania Office of the Victim Advocate** (resources statewide for programs that serve victims of domestic, child, elderly abuse and others) <http://www.pbpp.state.pa.us/ova/site/default.asp>

NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

- **Congreso de Latinos Unidos** (Multi-service, social service and civic engagement organization for Latino communities in Philadelphia) www.congreso.net
- **ENPYS – Eastern North Philadelphia Youth Services Coalition** (a group of community-based organizations located in Eastern North Philadelphia to coordinate services and ensure that children and families have access to resources, information and support services) www.northphillysos.net/
- **National Council of La Raza** (Latino advocacy) www.nclr.org
- **National Immigration Forum** (national immigration issues) <http://www.immigrationforum.org/>
- **National Immigration Law Center** (immigrant civil rights) www.nilc.org/
- **Pew Hispanic Center** (Latino research & statistics) <http://pewhispanic.org/>
- **We Are America Alliance** (Federal immigration reform) www.weareamericaalliance.org
- **Committee of Seventy** (Philadelphia-based electoral information) www.seventy.org
- **The Next Mayor's Project** (informative to learn about the Philadelphia Mayoral candidates and how the public wants them to prioritize the issues!) www.nextmayorproject.org
- **The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities** (fiscal policy and public programs that affect low- and moderate-income families and individuals) www.cbpp.org
- **Pennsylvania Budget & Policy Center** (a project focused on state tax, budget, and related policy matters, and effects on working families) <http://www.pennbpc.org/>
- **The Children's Advocacy Project of Philadelphia** (over 200 resources to help families in need) www.cap4kids.org/philadelphia
- **Metropolitan Philadelphia Indicator's Project** (social, environmental and economic indicators that portray the quality of life in the region's communities) www.temple.edu/mpip
- **The Next Great City** (dedicated to creating a positive future for Philadelphia by advocating for policies that enhance environmental quality, strengthen neighborhoods and increase our economic competitiveness. *Congreso has endorsed this effort.*) www.nextgreatcity.org

