


The background of the cover features several large, overlapping, curved bands in a light green color, set against a white background. The text is centered and rendered in a bold, dark blue font.

Civic Engagement Update for the Pennsylvania Latino Community

A Congreso Publication



July 16, 2007

Dear Fellow Pennsylvanians:

As we find ourselves at the height of the summer season and in the beginning of a new fiscal year, the buzz is all about the stand still of the national immigration debate and the ever present issue of what to do about Philadelphia's youth. This year's Philadelphia Safe and Sound Report Card release showed mixed results about the state of youth in Philadelphia. It also coincided with the Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention Act coming back up for reauthorization.

The PSS Report Card provided a comprehensive analysis of the state of the city's youth, and some of the news was encouraging. There was an increase in enrollment for CHIP and Medical Assistance and improvement in the number of city-sponsored after school and youth development opportunities which reached a new high of 48,000. There was a downward trend in teen pregnancy rates and the number of overweight and at-risk for overweight children. However other news was not so promising. The abysmal status of violence in Philadelphia is worsening and has begun to infiltrate the ranks of our children. PSS reported a 92% increase in the number of homicide victims aged 18-24 since 2004, and a 12% increase in juvenile arrests for Part 1 Major Crimes. With a growing volume of our young people coming into contact with the criminal justice system, the reauthorization of the Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDP) is more important than ever. The JJDP was created specifically to aid youth who become involved in the system, recognizing that their needs cannot be and are not adequately addressed by the adult Criminal Justice System. Congreso is proud to be the lead convener of the National Council of La Raza's Latino Juvenile Justice Network (LJJN), and as part of its goal to establish fair and equal treatment for Latino youth, we strongly support the reauthorization of the JJDP and encourage you all to voice your support for it as well. You will find more information in this month's Update about the JJDP and how it is dedicated to serving young adults involved in the criminal justice system.

There are a number of other bills up for debate on the State level pertaining to workforce development and welfare which are highlighted below. I know that as advocates we all agree about the importance of educating ourselves about these issues and using our access to information to educate and mobilize our communities, ensuring that the legislators hear our voices and make changes that are in sync with the needs of their constituents. With this interest in mind, Congreso will be joining the efforts of several other Latino organizations in Pennsylvania in the coming months to assist in the planning of a Statewide Advocacy Day, tentatively slated for October.

As always, we appreciate your support and look forward to your partnership.

Gracias,

Nicholas Torres
President, Congreso de Latinos Unidos



Civic Engagement Update

July 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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Contributions from the Latino community are always encouraged. Email them to cortess@congreso.net for inclusion.

Summary

The **Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act** calls for the “deinstitutionalization” of juvenile delinquents, requiring that states holding youth within adult prisons for status offenses remove them within a span of two years. The act also provides program grants to states, based on their youth populations and created the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention (OJJDP)¹.

Reauthorization of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974 is due for consideration by the upcoming 110th Congress. 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 protection, many Latino youth face a system that doesn't have any accountability. Specifically, if reauthorized, the JJDPA will account 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 JJDPA, 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, and 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 8 times more likely to commit suicide, 2 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.

¹ <http://www.juvenilejusticefyi.com/>

- **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 two-thirds are in contact with the juvenile justice system. As such, states are required to gather information and assess the reason for disproportionate minority contact.²

¿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.³
3. Our country's incarceration rate is 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!
7. Although Latinos do not commit more crimes than whites, they are much more likely to serve prison time Hispanic youth are incarcerated at 4-5 times the rate of white youth.⁴
8. Young people of color represent nearly two-thirds of people in detention; 82% of youth cases filed in adult courts are those of minority youth⁵.
9. 27% of youth in the juvenile system have 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 isn't any 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.⁶ 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 JJDPA, states will receive the technical assistance and tools necessary to ensure a more effective juvenile justice system that is responsible 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 across 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

² What is the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act (JJDPA), NCLR, March 2007

³ Turning it Around: A Collective Effort to Understand and Resolve Philadelphia's Dropout Crisis, 2006

⁴ Justice Policy Institute brochure www.justicepolicy.org

⁵ Childhood on Trial: The Failure of Trying and Sentencing Youth in Adult Criminal Court. Coalition for Juvenile Justice, 2005

⁶ Models for Change: Building Momentum for Juvenile Justice Reform: 2006

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 JJDPa, these organizations can be placed at the front line of the funding system 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 sensitive.

Congreso Action

Congreso and NCLR fully support the reauthorization of JJDPa 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 creating 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 on Latino children locally, statewide, and nationally at every stage of the justice system. Congreso will address this issue on behalf of the LJN at Statewide Advocacy Day this fall.
- 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 to Date:

- Congreso is proud to be the Lead Convener of the Philadelphia Latino Juvenile Justice Network (LJN). As part of a grant from NCLR and Comcast, Congreso has expanded its outreach to include the formation of the **Youth Advocacy Council (YAC)**. The Council consists of 10-15 youth who are both driven and dedicated to being catalysts for change in their community. The YAC has already begun to affect the lives of their peers, and is beginning to make their presence known on a larger scale:
 - The YAC is dedicated to forming relationships between local authorities and youth in a series of workshops entitled "Know Your Rights." These workshops build bridges between law enforcement, youth and their parents within the community establishing trusting relationships and keeping youth informed of their rights, as well as educating parents about how to be advocates for their children.
 - The YAC has recently kicked off a postcard campaign for the JJDPa that highlights the act's issues and importance and states its support for the act's reauthorization. The postcards have a place for individuals to sign their name in support of the bill and are addressed to legislators who will be voting on the act. If you would like postcards to send to your legislators, please contact aguirrem@congreso.net.

Most importantly Congreso has joined with numerous other organizations to provide real alternatives to incarcerations/residential treatment through community based interventions incorporating family, school, and community. Through addressing the cause we are finding long-lasting solutions to youth incarceration. At the core of our strategy is to ensure that these youth are on a pathway toward graduation and/or occupational skills for the workforce. We can not afford to give our youth anything less than a quality education and skills that give them alternatives to violence and crime. By addressing the educational and skill gap we are addressing one of the primary causes and not the symptom of violence.

Immigration

1. Immigration Bill Tabled Until Further Notice

Despite Bush's efforts to overhaul policy with a bill that called for significant changes in immigration law – including offering legal status to millions of undocumented workers while trying to secure borders – the bill collapsed. Both parties believe the measure will not be revived again during the remainder of President Bush's administration. While this came as a disappointment to many across the country, immigration is an omnipresent issue that will not leave public debate quietly.

2. Projections for the Future

There is very little chance that comprehensive immigration reform will return in this Congress. The House had been waiting for the Senate to pass a bill. Since the Senate failed to act, it is very unlikely that the House will. Even if House leadership managed to push a bill through the House, the effort would be largely symbolic—without a Senate bill, there would be no House/Senate conference to produce a final product. Democratic leaders in the House will not risk their tenuous majority for symbolism.

There are pieces of the comprehensive immigration bill that advocates will attempt to move separately—notably, AgJOBS and the DREAM Act. Although there is widespread support for these more targeted bills, getting them passed in this Congress will not be easy.

In the long term, many observers believe that Congress will not turn to comprehensive immigration reform until after the 2008 elections. Congress doesn't like to tackle difficult issues in an election year, when any controversial stance by a Member of Congress might be fresh in the voters' minds in November.

The failure of the national legislature to reform national immigration policy, and continued public frustration with illegal immigration, likely will result in even more focus on states

and localities. Until Congress acts decisively, immigration policy battles are likely to be fought state by state, community by community. As of mid-April of this year, legislatures in every state in the union have introduced immigration-related bills and resolutions—1,169 in all. The majority are punitive. This is more than twice as many as the 570 that were introduced last year.

With public unrest about the lack of resolution, it is projected by the immigration forum that in place of a national immigration policy, the immigration battle will be fought on local grounds, resulting in hundreds of disparate local policies.

For more information, go to www.immigrationforum.org.

3. State Department withdraws Job-Based Visas

On July 3rd the State Department and immigration service abruptly withdrew an estimated 60,000 job-based visas they offered last month to foreign professionals hoping to become permanent residents in the United States.

This was a reversal of the June 13th announcement declaring a two month window (beginning July 2) for aspiring, high skilled immigrants to apply for green cards. The State Department said the visas would no longer be available because of “sudden backlog reduction efforts” by Citizenship and Immigration Services, the federal agency that processes applications for the visas offered by the department.

The State Department now says they will begin accepting applications on October 1 for 2008 visas. On July 30, the immigration agency will raise its processing fees by an average 66 percent.

4. State Representative Angel Cruz named head of committee task force to study immigration

State Rep. Angel Cruz was recently named chairman of a task force created by the state

House Intergovernmental Affairs Committee to investigate the effects of immigration on Pennsylvania. The task force will study the potential impact immigration has on housing, health care and education in the state.

According to Cruz, although the federal government ultimately regulates immigration laws, some state officials have attempted to create immigration policy at the local and state level (Hazleton was cited as an example). He notes that it makes little sense to vote on the issue of immigration without any hard data on how immigration actually affects the state. As such, this taskforce will be of the utmost importance. Cruz is confident that his position as Chairman will prevent the immigration debate from becoming a question of discrimination.

5. U.S. Will Not Meet Cuban Visa Quota

The United States has said that it will not be able to meet the usual annual quota of 20,000 visas for Cuban citizens, stating that Havana has placed “unreasonable restraints” on U.S. diplomats on the island.

This announcement followed a remonstrance from Cuba’s Foreign Ministry for issuing visas too slowly. The Foreign Ministry implied that this was a deliberate attempt to destabilize the government.

It is as yet unclear how many visas the U.S. will issue this year.

Economic Opportunities

1. The Green Jobs Act of 2007 (H.R. 2847), sponsored by Representatives Hilda Solis (D-CA), John Tierney (D-MA), and Jerry McNerney (D-CA) would create the Energy Efficiency and Renewable Energy Worker Training Program within the Workforce Investment Act. Twenty percent of the program’s \$125 million appropriation would be dedicated to services that create pathways out of poverty for low-income adults. The bill made it out of Committee last week. To ask your representative to co-sponsor the Green Jobs Act of 2007, click [here](#).

2. House Develops Changes to PA public welfare system

The state House amended a bill designed to publicize problems at personal care homes Thursday to include Republican-sponsored measures to combat welfare fraud.

The bill would require the Public Welfare Department to post on the incidents on the Internet in which personal-care home residents are severely injured, have their rights violated, or money misused.

It also mandates disclosure of communicable disease outbreaks, food poisoning, assault, abuse complaints, prescription drug errors and criminal convictions of home workers.

The House amended the bill to require most welfare recipients to apply for benefits in their home counties, make the Public Welfare Department publicly post a variety of federal reports and add the recipient's photograph to welfare benefit cards.

The bill, with its amendments, now awaits a final vote in the House.

3. DHS under review

The department of Human Services has been under severe scrutiny since last fall when a number of media reports made public the deaths of children that were known to DHS. Since then, the department has begun an overhaul of its systems and programs to address immediate child-safety concerns and restore public confidence. They released their findings in May, and as of now, DHS has completed or begun work on 21 of the 31 recommendations outlined in the review panel’s (created by Mayor Street) report. Some highlights:

- Social workers have visited every child receiving in-home services to ensure they were safe. A total of 6,728 children from 2,656 families were seen and information collected that will inform the department’s work
- Social workers began implementing a new standard assessment tool
- A “Rapid Response Strike Team” was formed to assemble information within 24 hours of when DHS is notified of the death of a child known to the agency.
- Staffing was enhanced to ensure that all reports of possible abuse and neglect are investigated promptly.
- Nurses were added to help social workers plan for the needs of medically

fragile children

- DHS enhanced and made public the Commissioner's Action Response Office, which handles concerns, complaints and suggestions from the public, providers and other invested in the welfare of children.
- A new model for contractors' evaluation based on performance rather than administrative compliance was implemented and the frequency of evaluations increased. DHS also began spot checks, calling families to confirm that providers are making scheduled visits and providing appropriate services.

Safety & Violence

1. "Put it Down" Campaign

At the end of last week, Mayor Street kicked off a new anti-violence campaign entitled "Put it Down," targeted at the high rate of gun violence among Philadelphia youth. The effort is organized by a coalition of activist groups and city government and calls on community organizations, clergy and nontraditional groups – including motorcycle clubs and entertainment promoters – to help spread the word. Among the efforts are black rubber wristbands that say "Put It Down," a "peace pledge" for young people to sign committing them to be "nonviolent and peaceable" citizens, to "avoid hateful words" and "to avoid violence in all it's forms...whether at home, at school or in the community."

2. Gun Bill Receives Wide Support in House

The state House yesterday gave broad approval to legislation aimed at tackling the monumental issue of urban violence. The House will still have to vote on the final passage of the legislation and it will then need to be approved by the Senate. The measures would expand the criminal code definition of a firearm to include rifles and would require police to trace guns illegally possessed by people under 21. These measures moved quickly through the legislative process in response to threats by Pennsylvania's Legislative Black Caucus to block the budget vote if progress was not made.

Education

1. Good News in the Budget for Education

The proposed education budget for the new fiscal year is \$9.3 billion, which is an increase of about 6%, or nearly \$528 million more than last year. Highlights of the intended spending are:

- \$100 million to increase the number of children in pre-kindergarten and full day kindergarten
- Increases in current programs
- Classrooms for the Future (which puts laptops in classrooms and would increase the \$20 million budget to \$90 million)
- Science, It's Elementary: currently operating at \$10 million and increased to \$15 million
- Basic Education Funding, a 3.5 percent increase (\$166.7 million) totaling about \$4.95 billion.

2. Project U-Turn Funding

The School District of Philadelphia will receive \$4.8 million from the federal government to help expand the district's Project U-Turn for older at-risk students. The grant, two times as large as Philadelphia actually asked for, will allow the district to work with up to 12,000 additional youth. These include teen mothers, dropouts, chronic truants, and youths who have come into contact with the juvenile justice system.

The money will be used to create an accelerated high school to provide technical education for 200 students, develop a "bridge" program for older teens who are behind in reading and math, expand existing E3 centers, and start a "learning to work" program focusing on at-risk students inside four existing high schools.

Health

1. Philadelphia Safe and Sound Report

This year saw the eighth annual issue of the Philadelphia Safe and Sound Report Card. The Report Card presents "the most up-to-date and reliable information available on important healthy, safety, educational and developmental

indicators that measure progress toward the five desired results for children and youth⁷.” A brief summary of each of the five indicators results follows. For the complete report, go to www.philasafeandsound.org.

A Healthy Start:

Ideal: “Children are born healthy, thrive and are ready for school.”

Findings: This was the first year that an indicator has received a commendable rating. After six consecutive years of reductions, the number of children with elevated blood lead levels is down to a current level of 69%. However, infant mortality has increased to 11.3 deaths per every 1,000 births.

Stable Early Lives:

Ideal: “Children and youth live in stable and supportive families.”

Findings: The percentage of children living in poverty continued an upward trend for the fifth year in a row, reaching 30.3%. Enrollment in CHIP and Medical Assistance continues to increase as well. Nonetheless, the percentage of uninsured children has doubled since 2000. The number of substantiated cases of abuse or neglect continued to drop, as did the number of youth being placed outside the home.

Healthy Behaviors:

Ideal: “Children and Youth practice healthy behaviors and do not engage in high risk behaviors.”

Findings: Teen pregnancy continued a downward trend and dropped to a new low of 55 pregnancies per 1,000 young women ages 15-19. The number of overweight or at-risk for overweight children decreased to 8.5% since 2004, but nearly half of Philadelphia’s children are at risk for severe health consequences associated with obesity. The death rate for 15-19 year olds rose to a rate not seen since 1997. Sexual health indicators are still troublesome, with persistently high rates.

Safe Supportive Communities:

Ideal: “Children and Youth Live in Safe and Supportive Communities and Environments.”

Findings: The number of juveniles victimized by violent crime increased 6% in the past year, and the number of juvenile arrests for Part 1

Major Crimes increased by 12%. The number of homicide victims 18-24 has increased 92% since 2004. Assaults in public schools have declined for the second consecutive year, and the number of city-sponsored after school and youth development opportunities reached a new high of over 48,000 in FY 2006-07.

Productive Young Adults:

Ideal: “Children and Youth achieve in school and make a successful transition to adulthood.”

Findings: While there has been improvement in the number of students scoring proficient or advanced on the PSSA, less than half of 5th, 8th, and 11th graders achieved this score. Average daily attendance remained steady, with little change. The on-time graduation rate decreased, but the drop-out rate improved. The average combined reading and math SAT score dropped to a new low of 792.

2. Maternity Clinics Operate under Severe Strain

The Philadelphia region already is operating under a strained maternity care system, dealing with major issues such as inadequate payments from Medicaid and skyrocketing malpractice insurance costs, but a more troubling concern is the rapidly increasing number of undocumented women filling the area’s maternity clinics to capacity. These women cannot afford prenatal care themselves and their sheer volume is putting a huge strain on all of the “safety-net” systems. According to the Philadelphia Department of Public Health’s director of maternal, child, and family health, undocumented women make up about 60-65 percent of the near 3,000 prenatal patients treated at city health clinics each year. Some hospital leaders say that Medicaid pays less than care costs, and as a result, clinics can lose more money on a pregnancy that goes bad than on the providing prenatal care below cost. In support of this argument, many doctors and midwives explain that proper prenatal care can prevent physical and mental disabilities that in the long run would save society money. Clinics across the region are running without adequate funding, and a number of hospital operated clinics are requiring their doctors to work in the clinics without extra pay and are still losing money.

The clinics’ mission is to provide services for those who are not able to afford it, as a part of the belief that everyone is deserving of proper

⁷ Philadelphia Safe and Sound, www.philasafeandsound.org

healthcare, regardless of their social or economic position. Nonetheless, they are struggling to keep up with a growing population of the undocumented who cannot obtain health insurance and seek out their services for prenatal care.

3. Childbirth crisis Update

While the state legislature hammers out a budget, there are plans this summer to address the childbirth crisis within the executive branches at the local and state levels. In Philadelphia, Philadelphia Health Commissioner Carmen Paris convened a June 26th meeting of providers, hospitals, doctors, nurse midwives, health planners, insurers, educators and advocates to discuss the decline of OB services in Philadelphia. She summarized the group's ambitions, stating that "The main concern for each of us is that each woman should have access to prenatal care, continuity of care, and access to a safe delivery environment." The City plans to convene a task force to address various aspects of the childbirth crisis. In Montgomery County, the Montgomery County Department of Health is preparing the "Norristown Alliance for Healthy Babies' Community Action Plan." The report will be released in July. For further information, please contact Barbara O'Malley, Project Director/Community Liaison for Montgomery Department of Public Health, at (610) 278-5117 x 6878. The Maternity Care Coalition (MCC) met with the Governor's Cabinet on June 21 to discuss the need to look at OB capacity by neighborhood and payer; increase the monitoring and availability of prenatal services; and improve reimbursement rates for uninsured patients. MCC intends to continue the dialogue after the budget passes.

For more information or to join in MCC's advocacy on this issue, contact Kristine Carolan, Community Engagement Coordinator, at 215-989-3554 or kcarolan@momobile.org. (Thanks to MCC for this report.)

4. Senate Rejects Smoking Ban

When Governor Rendell announced that the budget impasse had finally been resolved, he also stated that there would be a smoking ban, but the details of the bill would have to be "hashed out between the House and Senate." The bill first passed on June 25 and was quickly disavowed because it allowed smoking in a number of public places, including some bars,

casinos and nursing homes. Perhaps more importantly for Philadelphians, it included a proviso known as a "preemption" that would bar local municipalities from having tougher antismoking rules, such that the state law would replace Philadelphia's stricter clean air laws.

Representative Eachus proposed an amendment that would make Philadelphia an exception and allow them to keep their stricter ban in an effort to garner more votes for the more smoke-friendly bill currently on the table.

The House eventually voted 141-62 to send the bill onto the Senate after four days of debate on how strict to the ban should be.

The Senate promptly rejected the bill, and a conference committee from both the House and Senate has been formed to meet in the fall to try and resolve their differences of opinion.

5. House Passes Bill Affecting Care for Autism

The state House passed a bill without opposition that would have private insurers provide up to \$36,000 in coverage annually for autism services. Any treatment costs that exceed this amount would be covered by the state.

The bill has now been passed to the Senate, but is not likely to be taken up until after the summer recess.

State Budget

1. Budget In Place

After much debate, an impasse that put 25,000 employees out of work for 24 hours, and more than occasional finger-pointing, the House, Senate, and the Governor have signed onto a state budget. As Senator Gerald J. LaValle (D., Allegheny) said: "No one came away completely satisfied, no one came away empty-handed." Republicans in the Senate feel satisfied at having obtained a more conservative spending plan, and Governor Rendell was able to secure significant increases for public schools, health programs and energy policies.

A historic gun-law bill which stipulated mandatory tracing of illegal weapons found in

the possession of any persons under 21 and also mandates stiffer penalties for crimes with rifles or other long guns won final House approval. The governor has agreed to sign on.

There were a variety of “hot” issues on the table during the budget debates. Governor Rendell had an ambitious agenda that included a new energy plan, a smoking ban, and transportation funding. In the end, Governor Rendell has had to table his energy plan until September when there will be a forum to discuss it exclusively, and the Senate rejected the statewide smoking ban. Final passage of the smoking bill will be delayed until the fall or later. The Governor was successful in obtaining a transportation bill which will funnel new dollars into mass transit, and secured a significant boost in spending for education and health care programs.

Overall, total state general fund spending increased by 3.2% to \$27.2 billion. This makes for a total increase of 4.4% when the \$300 million in mass transit money is included.

Y Algo Más

1. Funding for Head Start Hispanic/Latino Service Partnerships

The Office of Head Start (OHS), within the Administration for Children and Families (ACF), has announced the availability of financial assistance. They are requesting applications for grants from institutions of higher education with experience and capability in educating and preparing early childhood teachers to work effectively with Hispanic/Latino young children and families. Those receiving grants will work in partnership with Head Start, Early Head Start, and Migrant and Seasonal Head Start (when the college or university offers an infant toddler degree or specialization).

The primary purpose of these partnerships is to increase the number of employed Head Start, Early Head Start, and Migrant and Seasonal Head Start teaching staff with associate and baccalaureate degrees in early childhood education to improve the quality and long-term effectiveness of program services to young Hispanic/Latino children and their families.

Please review the full announcement for details on eligibility criteria - not all institutions of higher education are eligible to apply.

<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/grants/open/HHS-2007-ACF-OHS-YP-0011.html>

Funding Opportunity Number: HHS-2007-ACF-OHS-YP-0011

Application Deadline: Aug 20, 2007 Expected

Number of Awards: 5 Estimated Total

Program Funding: \$1,000,000

Award Ceiling: \$500,000

2. "Hope for Education Grants Provide Technology & Software to Schools"

Samsung's Hope for Education will be partnering with teen music sensations Aly & AJ for its 2007 program designed to minimize the technology gap in the educational system. Through a partnership with Microsoft Corporation, Hope for Education will provide more than \$2 million in technology and software to schools in the U.S. that enter an essay competition describing how technology can help improve students' education. Maximum Award: \$200,000. Eligibility: legal residents of the United States; minors must obtain parental consent. Participants should nominate a public or state-accredited private school in their community. Deadline: July 22, 2007.

<http://www.hopeforeducation.com/hopeforeducation/index.html>

3. Metropolitan Philadelphia Indicator's Projects

Temple University, with the help of \$2.1 million in two grants awarded by the William Penn Foundation, is mapping and graphing job dispersal, incomes, health-care coverage, arts-related business, and about 100 other quality of life measures in the Philadelphia region's 353 towns and municipalities. The goal is to “bring public data to the public.” Among other information mapped is per-pupil spending, average percentage of children eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, student-to-teacher ratio and a wide variety of other economic and demographic indicators. The best part about this resource is that it is completely free. While still under construction, the website:

www.temple.edu/mpip is available for use.

Important Dates

- **Every 2nd Friday**

Vereda Cultural occurs every second Friday in North Philadelphia the streets are filled with people from all walks just wanting to enjoy an evening filled with art, music, food, shopping and more, in what is known as the Walkway of Art in the Latino Business and Cultural District or in Spanish Vereda Cultural. Sponsored by three community organizations, Taller Puertorriqueño, Hispanic Association of Contractors and Enterprises (HACE) and Raíces Culturales Latinoamericanas, the next Vereda Cultural will take place July 13th from 5:30-7:30 p.m. on 5th Street between Lehigh and Somerset Avenues. The evening events continue from 8-10 p.m. at Taller's Education Building, 2557 N. 5th Street, with Bohemian Night. A group of "Bohemians" invites all to share a song, a poem or an anecdote during an open mic night with friends, good atmosphere, and food. For more information about Vereda Cultural please contact Daniel de Jesus at 215.426.3311 or ddejesus@tallerpr.org. For media inquiries please contact Yolanda Jimenez-Colon at 215.423.6320 or yjcolon@tallerpr.org or Eric Cortes at 215.423.6320 or ecortes@tallerpr.org.

- **July 21-24, 2007**

National Council of La Raza (NCLR) will hold its *annual conference* in Miami, FL. Save the Date! And see www.nclr.org for more information.

- **August 2, 2007**

The Governor's Advisory Commission on Latino Affairs Summer Luncheon, will be held in the Capitol East Wing in Harrisburg. RSVP by July 27 by calling 717.783.3877 or by email at ragacla@state.pa.us The monthly luncheon is a state gathering for the Latino community.

- **August 13, 2007**

Service Learning Institute for Faculty will cover the basics of course construction and community partnership on the first day. Day two will focus on evaluation and assessment and institutional advancement of civic engagement. Sessions will be facilitated by Dr. Cathy Burack, Senior Research Associate, Higher Education, Center for Youth and Communities, Heller School for Social Policy and Management, Brandeis University.
<http://www.upenn.edu/ccp/PHENND/events.html>

- **September 14-16, 2007**

The 2007 National Dropout Prevention Conference is ideal for anyone with an interest in dropout prevention, at any level. That's because it offers challenging presentations which will motivate and encourage participants to 'bridge the gap' for our nation's future leaders: our children, our students. The conference will offer a diversity of topics, skill building and how-to kinds of resources. There's something for everyone. <http://www.ade.az.gov/asd/dropout/conference/>

- **November 30-December 2, 2007**

The Dominican American National Roundtable (DANR) will hold its *annual conference* in Miami, FL. Save the Date! Email info@danr.org for more information.

If you have any other information that would be important for Congreso to include, please email the Communications Coordinator, Sarah Cortés at cortess@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 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/>
- **Latino Leadership Alliance of the Lehigh Valley** <http://llalv.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

