

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

Important Updates

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Congresso sees advocacy success as CCP increases availability of classes for September 2006!	
PA State Immigration	Pg. 3
Public hearings have started, and Congreso was chosen to speak July 27 th !	
Voting Rights Act	Pg. 7
The House has reauthorized this historic piece of legislation, and today it's headed for the Senate floor today!	
Federal Budget	Pg. 9
The Senate Appropriations Committee has passed its version of the Labor-HHS-Education bill.	

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Important Dates

- **July 1, 2006**
Begins *Democracy Summer*, a nationwide effort led by the We Are America Alliance, to help eligible immigrants become naturalized citizens and register new voters - 1 million goal for the nation. **Congreso's goal is 1,000 new voters** by October 2006. http://www.cccaction.org/cccaction/waa_index.html for more information. We are part of a non-partisan "Latino Empowerment and Advocacy Project", led by the National Council of La Raza. The project involves 15 other Latino organizations around the country. If you want to become involved, email shiplerk@congreso.net or call Kristin at 215.763.8870 x1505.
- **July 27, 2006 10am**
House Republican Policy Committee public hearing – Come hear Congreso speak at the National Constitution Center. The focus of these hearings is "examining the impact of illegal immigration on Pennsylvania". Other scheduled hearings by the committee are scheduled for July 18 in Harrisburg, July 26 in the Lehigh Valley and August 2 in Western Pennsylvania.
- **July 28, 2006**
Deadline for NCLR's Lideres de Hoy essay contest. (See the Newsworthy section!)
- **September 2-3, 2006**
Labor Day weekend - *Large mobilization* for immigration reform, either regionally or in Washington DC (TBD)
- **November 4, 2006**
Dash for Democracy 5k Run by Committee of 70: an event to celebrate what democracy means to you. <http://www.dashfordemocracy.org/>

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 Greater Philadelphia area.

Congreso's update on city, state & federal issues affecting the Latino Community *In Detail* - NOTE: NEW UPDATES FOR THE WEEK ARE BOLDED & IN GREEN.

LOCAL LEVEL- Current Issues

Adult Education

Summary

Success – After meeting with The Community College of Philadelphia (CCP) July 5, 2006, Congreso was told that CCP will be increasing the amount of Adult Literacy classes to 2004 levels. Last year, CCP had to decrease the availability and increase the costs of Adult Literacy classes (Adult Basic Education - ABE, GED, and ESL) offered to Latinos in Philadelphia. The Local News section of the Philadelphia Inquirer highlighted an article at the beginning of July on the demand for English language training throughout Philadelphia. The demand for classes far outweighs the funding available to support classes. Philadelphia has the highest percentage of Limited-English Proficient persons in the entire state, at 7.8% of the total population. Funding sources are very limited, and classes are offered at only two locations in the Eastern North Philadelphia area (at Congreso and at Lighthouse).

Congreso's Position

We would like to challenge state and city governments to provide even more funding. Less than 50% of Latinos in Philadelphia have a high school diploma or its equivalent and 50% are unemployed. City and state governments are considering English-only legislation. Without these educational opportunities, Latinos are even more limited in advancing in their education; hence, limiting their employment opportunities.

Congreso's Action

- **SEE WIA/ADULT EDUCATION UNDER FEDERAL ISSUES**
- **Congreso and ENPYS members The Lighthouse and Nueva Esperanza met with the Board and Executive Staff of CCP on this issue on July 5, 2006. Congreso is happy to report that CCP is now offering 2004 levels of classes in our neighborhood, come September 2006. This is the level of classes offered previously, before sections were cut. Now Congreso plans to coordinate with CCP to leverage more funding on the state level for Adult Literacy (GED, ABE and ESL classes).**

Philadelphia School Budget

Summary

Passage of the PA State Budget will positively impact Philadelphia School District's funding level for the new fiscal year, with a Basic Education increase statewide of 5.9%. According to Philadelphia Citizens for Children and Youth (PCCY) \$10 million is still needed to avoid cuts in the FY07 budget.

The School Reform Commission approved a \$2 billion operating budget for fiscal year 2007, which begins on July 1. A few of the highlights:

1. The central office has provided funding for 129 school growth teachers so that individual schools can free up funds for other purposes.
2. 119 teaching positions are restored overall.
3. Individual schools have been asked to reduce their budgets by 5% across the board.
4. Early childhood education programs (CECL, Pre-K, Bright Future, Head Start, Cradle to Classroom, and Parent Child Home) that currently serve 9,769 children will be expanded by 500 slots are expected to serve 11,000 students by 2008.

5. \$4 million was allocated to complete the standardization of the Pre-K through 12th grade curriculum, which was started in 2003.

To learn more about next year's budgetary highlights:

http://www.phila.k12.pa.us/offices/communications/press_releases/2006/05

Congreso's Position

Education is key to our children's success. As such, full funding for effective public schools is imperative.

Congreso's Action

- **As suggested by PCCY, Call Jacqueline Barnett, Secretary of Education in Mayor Street's Office at 215-686-9002 and your City Council Representative (*Click on this link ... [Philadelphia City Council](#) ... to find out who your representative is.*)**

Message: "Because real signs of improvement are appearing in our schools, we urge the City to provide additional support so that this progress may continue. Eight to ten million dollars would indeed make a difference. The Commonwealth has passed a budget that will provide strong support for our schools and education in general. Now we urge the City, as soon as possible, to provide more funds for educating our children."

STATE LEVEL – Current Issues

State-level Immigration

Immigration Hearings in PA this summer

Immigration Hearings have been set through the House Republican Policy Committee, as they expect to examine the impact of illegal immigration on Pennsylvania. The Committee is chaired by Mario J. Civera, Jr. (R-Delaware). A hearing is scheduled in Philadelphia for July 27. **Congreso has been asked to testify!** Other hearings around the state are scheduled for: July 18 in Harrisburg, July 26 in the Lehigh Valley and August 2 in western PA.

Recommendations by the committee will be considered by the House in the fall. Information about yesterday's hearing in Harrisburg:

<http://www.philly.com/mld/inquirer/news/local/states/pennsylvania/15069108.htm> Copies of the testimony can be found at:

http://www.pahousegop.com/uploads/Agenda_7_18_2006_III_ImmigrationTesties2.pdf

In response to the lack of action on the federal level, the PA House of Representatives have introduced multiple pieces of legislation:

1. House Resolution no. 799

- **Calls on the President and Congress to "secure all borders of this nation to protect American citizens from the dangers of unlawful invasion and illegal immigration;"**

2. House Bill no. 2760

- **Makes it a 3rd degree felony to knowingly or intentionally employ an "illegal alien"**
- **Empowers the Attorney General to investigate and enforce.**
- **Defines "illegal alien:" as "a non-citizen of the United States who is violating Federal immigration laws and is providing compensated labor within this Commonwealth".**

3. House Bill no. 2761 - Public benefits

- **Provides that "no public benefits shall be expended on, and no public benefit shall be provided to, any illegal alien" with exceptions for:**
 1. **Emergency medical care**
 2. **Law enforcement, prosecution, incarceration and related expenses**

4. *House Bill no. 2819*

- Amends tax reform code
- Provides that no wages or remuneration for labor services of \$600 or more per year may be claimed and allowed as a deductible business expenses for state income tax purposes unless the individual is an authorized employee (regardless of whether 1099d or not)
- Exceptions – business exempt from employment verification; person hired prior to Jan. 1 2008; person not directly compensating/employing the individual; wages paid to a person who holds and presents a valid DL or ID

5. *House Bill no. 2820 –a multi-subject bill*

- Requires public employers to register and participate in “the Federal work authorization program to verify information of all new employees”
- Public employers can’t contract with contractors who do not use the “Federal work authorization program” – same as GA bill
- Prohibits contractors and subcontractors with state from contracting with anyone who does not register and participate in EVS program
- Authorizes PA state police to enter into a MOU with DOJ/DHS to engage in enforcement of immigration law
- Requires determination of nationality of person charged with felony or DUI – if a foreign national, a determination of lawful status in US is to be made
- Regulates provision of immigration assistance
- Requires state and local agencies to verify lawful presence of any one 18 and over who has applied for state or local public benefits (as defined in section 411 of the PRWORA). Certain exceptions are provided

6. *House Bill no. 1314 (from 2005 session)*

- Provides that “an employer shall not employ any alien who is not authorized to be employed under the provisions of relevant Federal law”
- Gives district attorneys and attorney general power to investigate and enforce.

7. *HB 1959: English-Only Legislation*

- The Pennsylvania House adopted English only legislation at the end of June couched through amendments to an insurance bill, HB 1959.
- The amendment was adopted 122-60.
- This legislation must now be considered by the PA Senate (and has been drawn up as SB 810), when they return from summer recess in September.
- The measure is being promoted as a way for both the state and local governments to conduct business and use official documents written only in English (which therefore saves on printing costs).

http://www.philly.com/mld/inquirer/news/local/states/pennsylvania/counties/bucks_county/14925229.htm

Congreso’s Position

Congreso understands the State’s frustration, in terms of the stalled immigration reform on the federal level. Much of immigration law is determined at the federal level, though; hence, we need to continue to press for comprehensive reform within our federal government.

In reference to HB 1959, Congreso advocates for fair and reasonable access to government services. Many immigrants new to the United States do not speak or read English fluently. Providing written documents in languages that people understand provides an opportunity for everyone to participate fully in government and participate in the services afforded to eligible recipients. Congreso values freedom of expression but strongly disagrees with individuals who do not support diversity or multilingualism given the history of our country. Individuals who choose to express their viewpoint against diversity and multilingualism send a message that

Pennsylvania is not a multi-cultural state, and is not a welcoming place to international visitors or potential residents.

In reference to HB 2761, Congreso agrees with PICC that such PA legislation is not legally enforceable, thus consideration of this bill is a diversion of energy that could be expended on other issues like our state budget. Enactment of such a bill would likely subject the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to unnecessary litigation by affected employers. It is a waste of taxpayers' money to defend against legislation that is clearly prohibited by federal law. We are working on employment verification on the federal level.

Congreso's Action

- **Congreso encourages everyone to attend the public hearings of the House Republic Policy Committee next week and supports balanced dialogue on comprehensive immigration reform, dialogue appropriate on federal, state and city levels. Congreso will be speaking on July 27th at 10am at the National Constitution Center.**
- The Pennsylvania Welfare Coalition, of which Congreso is a part, has sent a letter to the House Health and Human Services Committee, questioning the necessity and validity of HB 2761.
- Please take immediate action by calling or faxing House Representatives at their home offices at <http://www.house.state.pa.us/index.cfm>.
- Contact the Speaker of the House, the Honorable John Perzel at 717-787-2016.
- Contact the Majority Leader, the Honorable Samuel Smith at 717-787-3845.
- Congreso led the charge in writing a press statement with the Anti-Defamation League, GPUAC, People's Emergency Center and the Urban League on an English-only issue: the sign at the Geno's Steaks establishment that states that "This is America. When Ordering, Speak English". This statement and other English-only movements are detracting from the national focus on the comprehensive immigration reform debate.
- Congreso encourages calling State Senators during the recess and when they convene in September to advocate for immigrant & Latino rights. <http://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/legis/home/find.cfm>

Hazleton, PA

Summary

The Mayor of Hazleton, PA, Lou Barletta and the Hazleton City Council passed a city ordinance July 13, 2006 entitled the "Illegal Immigrant Relief Act". This ordinance claims that illegal immigrants are destroying neighborhoods, increasing crime rates and lowering quality of life. It most pointedly targets employers and landlords. Penalties include denial of permits and contracts for 5 years and fines of \$1,000 per undocumented immigrant. The ordinance also declares English the official language of Hazleton. Mayor Barletta received a national audience on July 5, 2006 through the Senate Judiciary Committee's public hearing on comprehensive immigration reform. He was the only representative present who stated that undocumented residents are a detriment, rather than an asset, to our communities. **To see the city's website, which houses Barletta's reaction to July 13 and the final ordinance, see http://www.hazletoncity.org/home_frameset.htm.**

The issue is receiving national attention. For more background and a national perspective, see <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2006/06/19/AR2006061900623.html>

Congreso's Position

Congreso supports the rights of undocumented workers and residents and, hence, opposes the provisions laid out in city ordinance. **Additionally, this ordinance is causing fear and polarization of the Latino community in general. Many Latinos reside and work in the town legally and have added to the social and economic vibrancy of Hazleton. Approaching legislation from an anti-immigrant, criminal point of view damages the community as a whole and is not a solution to immigration reform.**

Congreso's Action

- **Congreso attended the city council meeting (although was not permitted in due to space capacity), alongside El Concilio, Eastern North Philadelphia Youth Services Coalition composed of the leadership of the 18 primary Eastern North Philadelphia non profit organizations and the Dominican Cultural Association. Congreso was able to share written testimony from the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund (MALDEF), supporting the immigrant community. MALDEF is now coordinating with the National Council of La Raza to track similar efforts around the country.**
- Congreso is participating in a statewide effort called “the Hazelton Area Latino Taskforce” to defend the rights of immigrants in Pennsylvania and around the country.

Minimum Wage Increase – HB 257 & SB 1090

Summary

Minimum wage legislation was signed by Governor Rendell Sunday, July 9, 2006 in Philadelphia. See related press at: [Philadelphia Daily News | 07/10/2006 | Rendell praises wage increase](#) [Philadelphia Inquirer | 07/10/2006 | Rendell signs \\$7.15 wage law to cheers](#) [NBC10.com - NewsLinks - Pennsylvania Minimum Wage To Go Up \\$2 Per Hour](#)

The increase will be to \$6.25 on Jan. 1, 2007 and \$7.15 on July 1, 2007. For workers in companies of less than 10 employees the increase will be to \$5.65 on Jan. 1, 2007; \$6.65 on July 1, 2007 and \$7.15 July 1, 2007.

Pennsylvania is the 21st state in the US to raise the wage. NY, NJ, DE, and MD and 16 other states have also passed minimum wage increases. Two-thirds of workers earning the minimum wage are women. 7% (approximately 423,000) of working Pennsylvanians earn this wage.

Movement is seen throughout the federal government as well. In both the House and the Senate, recent amendments to increase the federal minimum wage have failed. More than 80% of people in the US support raising the minimum wage. Most of these residents now live in states that have already raised the state minimum wage. See the attached chart for more information (and note, this was published two months before PA passed its raise): <http://pewresearch.org/assets/obdeck/18-1-full.jpg>

The Center for Economic and Policy Research highlights how the Federal Minimum Wage (\$5.15) is at its lowest level in 50 years, when adjusted for inflation:

http://www.cepr.net/pressreleases/2006_06_19_graph.htm

Congreso's Position

We supported the measure as it will assist many families (Latinos) and adults to spiral out of poverty and reach a more livable wage. The current minimum wage of \$5.15 falls below the federal poverty level, and as such puts a strain on taxpayers through the social welfare system. Without an increase low wage earners cannot invest in education, healthcare, homeownership, or retirement.

Congreso's Action

- **Our own State Senator, Christine Tartaglione, fought for 6 years to have this legislation passed. Congreso is sending her an official thank you letter, and we suggest that you thank her as well.**
http://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/legis/home/member_information/senate_bio.cfm?districtnumber=2
- **Congreso attended the signing of the legislation on July 9, after graciously receiving a call from Governor Rendell's to attend.**
- Congreso is part of the “Raise the Minimum Wage Coalition”, led by the Philadelphia

Unemployment Project (PUP). PUP did an exemplary job of uniting the coalition and advocating for this increase. Many thanks to all coalition members for a hard-earned victory.

State Budget

Summary

Pennsylvania passed a state budget in the early hours of July 3, 2006. The \$26.1 Billion budget reflects a 5.8% increase, largely due to a \$850 Million surplus the state had from last fiscal year. The areas receiving the largest increases are education and healthcare. Basic education will see a 5.9% increase, State-owned universities 5%, Libraries 23%, State police 19.4%, Mass transit 2% and Subsidized child care a 34% increase. With this success behind them, lawmakers are heading to their respective homes for the summer recess. Time will tell how these increases will assist community-based organizations in the areas of youth development, crime reduction, adult literacy, and assisting TANF recipients to abide by the new work requirement regulations.

Other highlights:

- tax-free savings for parents helping their kids go to college;
- increases in funding for community colleges and higher educational institutions intended to keep the cost of tuition down;
- low cost drug program for seniors;
- health care coverage for every child;
- the highest level of Pennsylvania State Police in history, as well as funds for special efforts to tackle gun and drug crimes;
- increase in the state's Educational Improvement Tax Credit (EITC) program by \$10 million – a 23 percent increase;
- increase in mass-transit assistance by \$299 million, or 2 percent;
- a permanent a \$25 million appropriation to the Philadelphia School District (by merging it with its basic subsidy).

Congreso's Position

Congreso supports a budget that strengthens children and families, improves quality and access in child care, and supports school readiness and effective public education.

Congreso's Action

- Thank your State Representatives http://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/legis/home/member_information/representatives_alpha.cfm and Senators http://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/legis/home/member_information/senemail.cfm for making the passage of a sound budget a priority for the coming fiscal year. We are happy to see that they have prioritized children and families knowing they need more, not less, support.

FEDERAL LEVEL Current Issues

Voting Rights Act – HR 9

Summary

The Voting Rights Act was put forward unanimously on July 20, 2006 by the Senate Judiciary Committee (as S2703), led by Senator Arlen Specter. The bill is planned to go to the Senate floor today, as is, without

amendments, for a vote. In today's Philadelphia Inquirer, Senator Hillary Rodham Clinton and the NAACP have encouraged President Bush to sign the legislation when he speaks at the annual NAACP gathering today. Speaker Dennis Hastert (R-IL) and Majority Leader John Boehner (R-OH), led the charge in bringing H.R. 9 to the floor. The legislation, without amendments, was passed July 13, 2006. Strong hope exists now that it will pass before the August 7 recess, and indications show that when it is brought to a vote that it will also pass without amendments. The Voting Right Act Reauthorization and Amendments Act of 2006 ("VRARA") ensures full and fair access to the voting process for all citizens. The VRARA would renew and restore key provisions of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. This piece of legislation has served as a tool to greatly diminish electoral discrimination against Latinos and other ethnic and racial minorities. Section 5 of the VRARA prohibits intentionally discriminatory voting practices and voting changes preventing minority voters from electing their chosen candidates. Renewal of Sections 4(f)4 and 203 of the Voting Rights Act will make certain that jurisdictions with large limited English proficient communities provide language assistance to Latino, Asian American, American Indian or Alaska Native citizens throughout the voting and registration process.

Congreso's Position

Congreso supports legislation that protects Latino voters and gives our voters a voice in the democratic system of government that we have.

Congreso's Action

- **Congreso is supporting Voting Rights in other forms of activity within the agency.**
 - **Congreso is encouraging community-based organizations in Allentown, Bethlehem, Lancaster & Reading to join us in an effort to encourage youth leaders within our organizations to register voters within their communities.**
 - **Congreso monitored the polls during the May 16, 2006 primary, alongside Committee of 70.**
- Congreso joined NCLR's efforts to get affiliates from around the country to call toll-free (866) 808-0065 to Reps. Hastert and Boehner and your House Representative. We urged them to use their leadership positions to bring H.R. 9 to the floor "as-is" and to ensure that H.R. 9 passes without amendment. Thank you for making phone calls!

Immigration Reform – S. 2611/2612, S. 2454 & H. 4437

Summary

Movement on passing legislation for immigration reform did not pass through before the summer recess. The focus on this issue throughout the summer is coming through the form of public hearings around the country. A public hearing, convened by the Senate Judiciary Committee, occurred in Philadelphia July 5th at the National Constitution Center. Continued negotiation between both Chambers will be possible when they reconvene in September. If Congress does not act this calendar year, the House and the Senate will have to begin anew in 2007 (with potentially, newly elected legislators) should lawmakers want to pursue immigration changes.

Highlights from Wednesday, July 5th's public hearing include:

Speakers

Mayor Bloomberg, New York City: There are over 500,000 undocumented workers in New York City, and taking them out of the city would be devastating to the economy, especially in terms of restaurant workers, hotel employees and taxi cab drivers.

Mayor Barletta, Hazelton, PA: He is sending his city ordinance, entitled "Illegal Immigrant Relief Act", as an example for other cities around the country. This ordinance will criminalize landlords and employers for providing assistance to undocumented residents in Hazelton.

Commissioner Johnson, Philadelphia Police: Less than 1% of homicides in Philadelphia are perpetrated by undocumented residents.

Representative Hershey (R-Chester): There exists an absolute reliance on immigrants for farm work in PA, and agriculture is the largest industry in our state. The issue of status should be handled by federal officials; not by employers.

Congreso Civic Engagement Update – 07.20.06

Rev. Luis Cortes, Esperanza, USA: 8 out of the 12 million undocumented residents in the US are Latino. Many of them are of families with mixed-status. 3 million children, who are citizens, would be directly affected if their family members were made to leave the country. It's a family values issue.

Senator Specter (R-PA): He sees the issue as a bicameral responsibility (both a responsibility of the House and of the Senate). And as witnessed by the presence of Senator Kennedy as the 2nd convener of the public hearing in Philadelphia, it's also a bipartisan responsibility. Overwhelmingly, the consensus of the speakers at the hearing was the need to explore solutions to have immigrant workers come to the US to work legally in industries where there are large gaps of labor: agriculture and service industries being the most prevalent.

S. 2611, the immigration bill passed by the Senate, will go into conference committee with H.R. 4437, the House immigration bill when the Congress resumes in September.

Congreso's Position

Congreso opposes Anti-immigrant enforcement-only proposals like Sensenbrenner-King (HR 4437) and advocates that the final bill for comprehensive immigration reform includes:

- A means for the 12 million undocumented to earn legal status and citizenship
- A legal way for new workers to work in the United States
- A removal of delays that keep family members apart for years
- Targeted and effective enforcement that respects humanness and liberty of expression
- Discouragement of local police enforcement of federal immigration laws
- Inclusion of due process, and
- Exclusion of indefinite detention.
- We must ensure protection for immigrant victims of domestic abuse, sexual assault, or trafficking. The current bill will cut these victims off from immigration relief created by the Violence Against Women Act 12 years ago.

Congreso's Action

- Continue discussions on the issue throughout the summer, while the House and Senate are on recess. Call local offices and continue to advocate for movement and attention to comprehensive reform. (See the above highlights and lowlights of proposed legislation). Senator Specter 215-597-7200, Senator Santorum 215-864-6900 and your House representative <http://www.house.gov/> .

Federal Budget - General

Summary

The Labor-HHS-Education Senate Appropriations Subcommittee approved their spending bill for fiscal year 2007 yesterday. The \$605.6 billion spending bill includes \$142.8 billion in discretionary funding, which has a direct effect on social service programs. This amount is \$5 billion more than the President had proposed, and about \$900 million more than the amount approved by the House Appropriations Committee. It is \$2 billion less than the amount specified in a successful amendment to the Senate budget resolution, approved by the full Senate in March. See <http://appropriations.senate.gov/hearings/LaborHPRSub07.mht> for more information.

The budget amendment to add \$7 billion for this discretionary funding was sponsored by Senators Specter (R-PA) and Harkin (D-IA). Adding \$7 billion would prevent cuts in health, education, job training, and social services below the FY 2005 levels. The \$7 billion does not allow for growth in these areas.

Even though the Appropriations Committee acts as scheduled, most analysts are predicting that the bill will not go to the Senate floor until the fall. Within this timeframe, it could potentially lead to a continuing resolution, especially if final agreement with the House does not occur before October 1.

On June 7, the House Appropriations Committee panel approved the FY 2007 Labor-HHS-Education appropriations bill (HR5647) that we reported on May 23, 2006. The bill provides \$141.9 billion in discretionary (appropriated) funding for a variety of domestic social service programs. This is a .6% increase over the \$141.1 billion provided in FY 2006, and it's insufficient to keep pace with inflation.

The House bill includes a number of program cuts affecting low-income individuals, including a \$1 billion cut for the Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), a \$550 million cut for the Social Services Block Grant (SSBG), a \$200 million cut for the Community Services Block Grant (CSBG), and a \$90 million cut for Head Start.

Due to expected differences between the House and Senate, final action on the bill is not expected before the November elections.

Workforce Investment Act

The Senate Appropriations Committee's version of this budget shifted billions of dollars from defense spending to domestic discretionary spending insulating programs like the Community Services Block Grants – that's the good news. The bad news is adult education through the Workforce Investment Act (WIA). It appears that this budget includes a 7.5 percent cut (\$64 million) to adult education. The full Senate Appropriations Committee is marking up the bill TODAY, July 20th.

Congreso's Position

Congreso opposes domestic social service reductions to the budget.

Congreso's Action

- Please call Jim Sourwine on the Appropriations Committee at 202-224-7230, asking that the Committee include restored funding for WIA adult education, at a minimum, restoring it to 06 levels.
- Congreso signed on to a letter to our US Senators against S3521, the "Stop Over Spending" Bill. The bill is designed to impose rigid spending caps and other budget changes on domestic spending in the areas mostly funded through the Labor-HHS-Education bill - health care, education, community development, social services, etc)
- Call Senator Specter at 202-224-4254 or 215-597-7200 to thank him for advocating for domestic spending! Call Senator Santorum to ask for the same.
- Encourage your US Representative to keep discretionary funding above inflation. Find your Representative at www.house.gov.

Newsworthy

1. **REGISTER TO VOTE!!** Congreso is involved as the Pennsylvania representative to National Council of La Raza's "Latino Empowerment & Advocacy Project", and we have the goal of registering **1,000 voters** in time for the November elections. If you, your family members or clients have changed names, addresses or haven't voted in a while, you need to register again. If you haven't registered before, you need to do so. Your voice matters, and we have important elections in Pennsylvania this year. Come to Kristin Shipler, Director of Civic Engagement, to fill out your registration form. Contact her at shiplerk@congreso.net or at 215.763.8870 x1505.
2. The Children's Defense Fund recently published a report on gun violence called: **Protect Children, Not Guns** http://www.childrensdefense.org/gunrpt_revised06.pdf One highlight: more children and teens died as a result of gun violence in 2003 than the number of American fighting men and women killed in hostile action in Iraq from 2003 to April 2006.
3. The Center for Law and Social Policy and Center on Budget and Policy Priorities have published an important resources entitled: **Implementing the TANF Changes in the Deficit Reduction Act: "Win-Win" Solutions for Families and States** found at <http://www.clasp.org/publications/tanfguide.pdf>

This will assist CBOs as they consider how to change their TANF programs in response to the TANF changes in the Deficit Reduction Act. **The new changes reflect more federal regulation and less flexibility at the state level. States are required to reach a new level of 50% work participation rate, and the activities that fall within this percentage are more restrictive than in the past. In 2004, most states fell short of the 50 percent mark. Pennsylvania's rate was 7 percent, the worst in the nation.**

4. Philadelphia Safe & Sound's 2006 Philadelphia Report Card reports on the **well-being of our city's children**: <http://www.philasafesound.org/>
5. PathwaysPA has released the 5th Edition of their **Self-Sufficiency Standard** which can be used as a tool for assessing wage adequacy among low-wage, working families in Pennsylvania. See the full report at http://pathwayspa.org/policy/FINAL_PA-2006_full%20report5-15-06.pdf. Service providers can use this report Service providers can use the Budget Worksheet with clients to help them take the following steps toward building self-sufficiency: 1) Assess present financial status; 2) Determine preliminary eligibility for work supports (food stamps, child care subsidies, EITC, Medical Assistance, CHIP, etc.); 3) Link to COMPASS, Pennsylvania's online benefits gateway; 4) Develop a realistic family spending and savings plan; and 5) Begin to identify a pathway toward self-sufficiency through education and training.
6. The Department of Health & Human Services has issued **guidelines for** states to implement a new requirement, effective July 1, that persons applying for **Medicaid** actually document their citizenship (rather than checking off a box that verifies they are citizens). The new documentation requirement is mandated by Section 6036 of the Deficit Reduction Act of 2005 (DRA) and is intended to ensure that Medicaid beneficiaries are citizens without imposing undue burdens on them or the states. http://www.cms.hhs.gov/MedicaidEligibility/05_ProofofCitizenship.asp#TopOfPa ***It is important to note that non-citizens still have the same rights to Medicaid and will follow the same eligibility rules that were in place prior to passage of this law. Non-citizens should NOT be denied Medicaid based on failure to produce proof of citizenship.*** As of July 1, the same may be required of children in foster care.
7. Read NCLR's new 20 Frequently Asked Questions about **Hispanics in the US**: http://www.nclr.org/files/1466_file_FreqAskedQuests_6_06_FNL.pdf
8. The National Council of La Raza (NCLR) and Allstate are once again recognizing Hispanic youth who make a difference in their communities with the second **Líderes de Hoy national essay contest**. Twelve winners will be chosen this year – six from high school and six from college. One grand-prize winner from each age group will receive a \$10,000 scholarship for educational expenses. The ten remaining students will each receive a \$5,000 scholarship. Deadline is July 28!! <http://lideres.nclr.org>

Important Links

GOVERNMENT

- US Senator Specter <http://specter.senate.gov/>
- US Senator Santorum <http://santorum.senate.gov/public/>
- 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>

NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATIONS

- National Council of La Raza (Latino advocacy) www.nclr.org
- National Immigration Forum (national immigration issues) <http://www.immigrationforum.org/>
- Committee of Seventy (electoral information) www.seventy.org
- Nationalities Service Center (immigration services) <http://www.nationalitiesservice.org/>
- We Are America Alliance (immigration reform) www.weareamericaalliance.org