

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

EducationPg. 3

Interesting contextual information and advocacy points as you prepare to support in-school youth.

City Council RacePg. 4

Council District 7 has been left without representation since May! That may soon change, but we need to help determine who that will be, in a creative way...

NOTE: NEW UPDATES FOR THE WEEK ARE BOLDED & IN GREEN.

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Important Dates

• **Today – October 10, 2006**

Voter registration ends October 10th for the November elections! **Congreso's goal is 1,000 new voters. We have approximately 250 so far.** We are part of a non-partisan “Latino Empowerment and Advocacy Project”, led by the National Council of La Raza. The project involves 17 other Latino organizations around the country. If you want to become involved, email shiplerk@congreso.net or call Kristin at 215.763.8870 x1505.

• **September 7, 2006**

Large mobilization and rally for immigration reform, in Washington DC – Buses are leaving Philadelphia at the Independence Transportation Center between Arch and Race at 11:00am. Because of the high costs, reserving a seat costs \$20. Call Lisa Linn de Barona at 215-490-5128 evening, 215-746-2762 day or linndebarona@yahoo.com to reserve a seat(s). See www.undiasin.com, for more information.

• **September 14, 2006**

Philadelphia Campaign for Housing Justice is holding a rally on the first day of session for the Philadelphia City Council. It is a rally for Inclusionary Housing, to be held Thursday, September 14th at noon, at the Municipal Service Building Plaza at 16th and JFK, north of City Hall. The campaign wants to ensure that the housing boom in Philadelphia includes provisions for affordable housing, paramount for the security of our low-income residents.

• **September 20-23, 2006**

The US Hispanic Chamber of Commerce's 27th Annual Convention and Business Expo – for Hispanic business owners, Chamber members and partners, a variety of workshops, chamber training, and business sessions focused on building business relationships and creating opportunities for participants from all industries. See <http://www.usbcc.com/27thConv/> to register and pass along the word!

• **September 26, 2006**

Ending Handgun Violence in Pennsylvania Rally in Harrisburg – An effort, involving the Philadelphia Coalition for Children and Youth (PCCY) focused on promoting safer communities the same day that the State Legislature has a day long session on the subject. Call 215.923.1940 or www.september26rally.org to join the effort!

- **October 14, 2006**

“Latinos: They Speak Your Language” a conference at the Northampton Community College, which includes a session on Social Justice. <http://www.northampton.edu/latinoconference>

- **October 26-28, 2006**

“Nuestro Tiempo es Ahora”, the 11th Annual PSLC conference, further emphasizes PSLC’s commitment to their mission of serving as an alliance of Latino leaders, organizations, community activists, students, and individuals that serves as a statewide institutional catalyst for positive social change and political advancement. See www.pslconline.org for more information.

- **November, 2006**

Stay tuned for information about the *Latino Juvenile Justice Network “Know Your Rights Training”* for youth and interested parents/community members.

- **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

Education – Back to School

Summary

Are your clients and children ready for school? 10 interesting tidbits (many provided by weekly editions of the Public Education Network Weekly NewsBlast) as the new school year begins:

1. In the fiscal year ending June 30, Philadelphia's city budget posted a \$202 million surplus, almost \$33 million more than it was estimating just a few months ago. Will any of the surplus be put toward education? See Page 5 of the itemized State budget for 2006-2007, to see where monies are going toward education across Pennsylvania: http://www.budget.state.pa.us/budget/lib/budget/2006-2007/2006_07lineitemappropriations.pdf
2. Read the School Readiness Report published recently by the Pennsylvania Partnerships for Children (PPC), found at: <http://www.papartnerships.org/sr/>, it details 14 of the most significant indicators of a child's capacity to enter school ready to learn and be ready to succeed.
3. Elena Rocha, a writer for the Washington Post and analyst for the Center for American Progress, recently wrote that:
 - a. Academic achievement gaps between Latinos and African-Americans and their white counterparts can span more than two grade levels.
 - b. From state to state, average per-pupil expenditures can vary by more than \$5,000.
 - c. Fifty-two percent of Hispanics graduate from high school, in comparison to 54% of African Americans and 78% of Caucasians
 - d. A large scale school refinance coalition has been formed to address these concerns. The "Fund the Child" coalition looks to prefer a formula for a child-centered recommendation that would change education funding at the local, state and federal levels in an effort to equalize educational outputs of all children.
4. A recent study by The Education Trust states that schools, under No Child Left Behind, are failing to ensure that poor and minority students get their fair share of qualified teachers. Both states and the Department of Education are blamed in the report for this.
5. A report by the National Conference of State Legislatures states that for the first time in six years, K-12 education expenditures are exceeding expenditures on Medicaid.
6. A recent report from Richard D. Kahlenberg of the Century Foundation suggests that the No Child law should be amended to create opportunities for low-income students to attend high-quality, middle-class public schools. He points out that research long has found this to be the single-most-promising step for raising achievement of children from poor families. Research shows a four-year gap in achievement between the low-end and high-end socioeconomic groups.
7. National Statistics:
 - a. Demographic make-up of public schools in 2004: 19 percent Hispanic, 57 percent white, 16 percent black, 7 percent other.
 - b. Public school enrollment Pre-K-12 in 2006: 49 million.
 - c. Sources of public spending on schools in 2003: Federal: 8.5 percent; States: 48.7 percent; Local: 42.8 percent.
8. The latest National Retail Federation survey projects that families in the US are likely to spend an average of \$527 this year on back-to-school shopping. Most spending will be for clothes and electronics, but on average, \$86 will go toward school supplies.
9. A recent survey by the National School Supply and Equipment Association states that teachers, on average, expect to spend about \$1,802 out of their own pockets for work-related materials with \$826 of it going toward classroom supplies.

10. A recent report by the New York University’s Robert F. Wagner Graduate School of Public Service states that putting police officers in violence-prone schools may cut crime, but it also increases tensions, turns harmless disputes into criminal matters and is perceived by many students as racially biased.

City Council Race

Summary

A special election for the vacant 7th District will occur in November. Congreso’s City Council seat is vacant, at this point, since Councilman Rick Mariano has been jailed for federal corruption charges. So the seat is planning to be filled alongside the elections for our Governor and US Senate seat. What makes the story even more interesting is that the Philadelphia City Council President, Anna Verna, has called on ward leaders to select each party's Council nominees in lieu of a primary. This may happen as soon as the week of Labor Day. Yes, that’s right, our ward leaders will make the decision on who will represent our district, not the voting public. See more at:

<http://www.philly.com/mld/inquirer/news/local/15354635.htm>. Our US House Representative, Bob Brady, is the Chair of the Philadelphia Democratic Party, and he will lead the charge in making the decision. In the Seventh District: John Sabatina Sr., leader of the 56th Ward and an ally of labor leader John J. Dougherty; former candidate Maria Quinones-Sanchez; and 23rd Ward leader Dan Savage are the known candidates, all of whom are Democratic.

Congreso’s Position

Congreso supports fair elections and advocates that the community have a voice in who serves the 7th District.

Congreso’s Action

We encourage community members to call area Ward Leaders, State Representative Angel Cruz (and local Ward Leader) at (215) 291-5643 and US Representative Bob Brady (Chair of Philadelphia Democratic Party) at (215) 389-4627, to learn more about the candidates and express your “vote” for our 7th District City Councilperson. See <http://www.seventy.org/map/> to learn who your Ward Leader is. Then use <http://www.seventy.org/electioninfo/06elections/Citizensguide2006.pdf> to get your Ward Leader’s phone number.

STATE LEVEL – Current Issues

State-level Immigration

Immigration from a statewide lens

State Representative Daryl Metcalfe, one of the lead conveners of the House Republican Policy Committee public hearings and one of the State Representatives who introduced legislation in the House against undocumented immigrants, recently wrote an op-ed piece which sheds some light into his intentions for this fall around state immigration reform. He states, “From the Steel City of Pittsburgh, to the coal City of Hazleton, to his (Governor Rendell’s) home city of Philadelphia, which the CIA reports is rapidly becoming one of America’s most frequently used human trafficking gateways, illegal immigration is without question a very real problem that is already negatively affecting the daily lives of Pennsylvania citizens with ever-increasing, documented incidents of homicide, identity theft, property theft, drug running, gang violence and growing costs to taxpayers—just to name a few. It is time for our governments at the federal, state and local levels to work together to protect our citizens and their property from the clear and present dangers of illegal immigration.” He “encourages everyone who wants secure borders and safer communities free of illegal immigrants to visit RepMetcalfe.com and sign the National Security Begins at Home petition.” Aside from registering your support, it is unclear at this point what is intended to happen with the petitions that are circulated.

There was a lot of attention paid in August to the demographic shifts in our country and in the state.

- August 15th edition of the Philadelphia Inquirer highlights the boost of Mexicans to the state’s and Philadelphia’s population. Congreso is quoted for aligning the surge of Mexican populations to the boom in Philadelphia’s restaurant and construction industries. Even so, Philadelphia has the lowest percentage of foreign-born residents among the country’s 10 largest cities. See <http://www.philly.com/mld/inquirer/15274492.htm> for more information.
- Additionally, WHYY aired a report on August 15 highlighting the new Census Bureau report that states Mexico has more immigrants coming into the US than any other country. Immigrants in the US now total 35.5 Million, and this excludes university students, inmates and those in nursing homes. New settlement surges are seen in non-gateway states, including Pennsylvania. See <http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=5649835> for the general statistics and a focus on Hazleton, PA. Hazleton is now considering federal law enforcement against undocumented residents. Latino leader Agapito Lopez talks of the now “overt” racism seen in the town.
- The Pew Hispanic Center posted a report on August 10th reporting that “rapid increases in the foreign-born population at the state level are not associated with negative effects on the employment of native-born workers.” <http://pewhispanic.org/reports/report.php?ReportID=69>

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.

Congreso's Action

- To avoid from distracting state government with pieces of legislation that need to be passed on a federal level, Congreso encourages:
 1. calling State Senators to advocate for immigrant & Latino rights for all residents of Pennsylvania. <http://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/legis/home/find.cfm>
 2. doing the same by calling or faxing House Representatives at their home offices at <http://www.house.state.pa.us/index.cfm>

The message that we want to send is that immigration reform is a federal issue. State legislators need to call their US Senators and Representatives to insist on comprehensive reform.
- Congreso thanks Roberto Santiago of El Concilio and all others who supported Congreso's testimony at the House Republican Policy Committee hearing on July 27th at the National Constitution Center. **Congreso's testimony to Rep. Metcalfe and others on the House Republican Policy Committee is attached.**
- 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.
- 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.

Hazleton, PA and neighboring Towns in PA

Summary

Hazleton's City Council is now reworking the Illegal Immigration Relief Act ordinance, with the goal of making it more defensible in court. Timely and not coincidental, considering that the ACLU and PRLDEF have filed a lawsuit stating that the ordinance violates federal and civil rights law. The first reading of the new ordinance will be held September 12th. For more information:

http://www.zwire.com/site/news.cfm?newsid=17122236&BRD=2259&PAG=461&dept_id=455154&rfi=6

An Interfaith Prayer Vigil for Immigrants and Workers, sponsored by El Concilio, PRFAA, PSLC and Jobs for Justice, was held September 3rd, in support of the Latino & immigrant communities in Hazleton, PA.

<http://www.philly.com/mld/inquirer/15434939.htm>

The Pennsylvania Human Relations Commission held a special meeting on immigration in Hazleton on August 28, 2006. An article in the local Standard-Speaker resulted, with important points from state immigration advocates Robert Nix and Jon Blazer:

http://www.standardspeaker.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=2779&Itemid=2.

See above for the NPR radio broadcast of Hazleton's new ordinance, which is now set to go into effect October 1, and the effect it's already having in the town on the Latino population. Similar ordinances are under consideration in Allentown, PA and Plains Township. Last Thursday, August 10th West Hazleton passed their own version of the illegal immigrant relief act, which does not include a provision making English the official language of the town.

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 most recent town to introduce an immigration ordinance is Altoona, Pa., on Wednesday August 23rd. This ordinance would fine and revoke licenses of employers who hire undocumented workers and landlords who house them. Like similar ordinances in Pennsylvania, they stayed away from pushing English as the only language, noting that it would be legally indefensible. More information: <http://www.altoonamirror.com/News/articles.asp?articleID=4232>

Similar measures, which excluded English-only legislation, passed unanimously in August by the City Council of Riverside, NJ. Other similar measures are being considered in PA in the towns of Allentown, Mt. Pocono, Shenandoah, and Hazle Township. Many pro-immigrant groups, such as the Puerto Rican Legal Defense and Education Fund are challenging these measures, stating that they infringe on the exclusive federal power over immigration.

Congreso's Position

Congreso supports the rights of undocumented workers and residents and, hence, opposes the provisions laid out in city ordinances. Additionally, these ordinances are causing fear and polarization of the Latino community in general. The majority of Latinos reside and work in Pennsylvania legally, and all Latinos have added to the social and economic vibrancy of the Commonwealth. 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.

FEDERAL LEVEL Current Issues

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

Summary

Rallies for comprehensive immigration reform are occurring around the country this month, as communities prepare for the federal legislature to return from the August recess. Many hearings have occurred around the country, more candidates are using the issue to fuel their electoral races, and anti-immigrant ordinances around the country have passed in reaction to the lack of action seen on a federal level. *The closest rally to Pennsylvania will be in Washington, DC Thursday September 7th. If interested in attending, A Day Without An Immigrant is coordinating buses in Philadelphia. For more information, link to: www.daywithoutanimmigrant.com*

A report published recently by the bipartisan Congressional Budget Office (CBO) estimates that as much as \$126 billion will be spent over the next decade if S2611 (comprehensive immigration reform) takes effect. ****Most of the \$78 billion in discretionary spending that the Senate bill authorizes through 2016 would fund law enforcement measures that are proposed as well in HR4437.**

The monies will also be spent on:

- the hiring of nearly 31,000 federal workers in the next five years,
- the building and maintenance of 870 miles of fencing and vehicle barriers would cost \$3.3 billion.
- Newly legalized immigrants would claim nearly \$50 billion in federal benefits such as the earned income and child tax credits, Medicaid, and Social Security.
- \$800 million to hire 1,000 additional Border Patrol agents
- \$2.6 billion to build detention facilities for 20,000
- \$1.6 billion to establish a computerized system to verify the eligibility of applicants for lawful employment.

Now let's look at the revenue that would be generated from the 'newly legalized' immigration population (which will virtually offset all of the costs). Tax revenue will prove to be a boon for the Social Security System and will fuel the tax base, which is predicted to increasingly diminish considering that the baby boomer generation is close to retirement. The National Immigration Law Center estimates that there will be a net benefit of \$12 Billion over the next 10 years. These estimates depend on the removal of an amendment that would prohibit legalizing immigrants from utilizing credits and refunds available to all other taxpayers when computing their back taxes. Payment of back taxes will be required for those seeking citizenship. In June, more than 500 economists signed a letter to President Bush reiterating that immigration is a positive force on the US economy and is a net gain for US citizens. See who signed on at <http://www.independent.org/newsroom/article.asp?id=1727>

The prediction for public benefits is also interesting. Caseloads for programs such as Medicaid, food stamps, and child nutrition programs are only estimated to increase by 2 or 3%.

This is the most detailed analysis to date of the highly controversial legislation in Congress. It has been seen as divisive for the Republican Party and energizing for millions of Latinos around the country and definitely around Pennsylvania.

See details of the CBO report at: <http://www.cbo.gov/showdoc.cfm?index=7501&sequence=0>

The immigration debate is seen as an electoral & political issue this summer, more than movement around actually trying to find solutions to the system that many view as being broken. Politicians and news sources note that this is

being used as an election issue as a way to distract people from the real challenges that are facing our country today. Whether candidates staunchly stand for or against the immigration issue, they are building their constituent bases based on this ‘hot’ federal issue. Using this hot button and/or ‘wedge’ issue is not restricted to federal government. State governments have seen heightened activity on this issue this summer as well.

As a way to gather support for H4437, the House’s “enforcement only” approach, various House committees are holding hearings on the Senate bill (S2611) for the rest of the summer.

http://www.cirnow.org/content/en/hearings_062926.htm shows the proposed schedule. None are proposed for Pennsylvania.

Another attempt to solving the immigration debate centers on a compromise piece of legislation by two members of Congress, Sen. Kay Bailey Hutchison (R-TX) and Rep. Mike Pence (R-IN). The Pence-Hutchison compromise starts by enacting border enforcement only (new border fences, additional enforcement personnel and bigger detention facilities) for the first two years and then would allow NAFTA & CAFTA residents only to apply for a two year visa. They would have to work here for 17 years through multiple visas, however, to be eligible for U.S. citizenship.

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.

Congreso’s Position

Congreso opposes Anti-immigrant enforcement-only proposals like Sensenbrenner-King (HR 4437) and the Pence-Hutchison compromise because we advocate 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

- Two very important federal Pennsylvania legislators that are key to this issue are Republican Senator Specter (215-597-7200 in Phila and 202-224-4254) and Representative Chaka Fattah (D-Phila) (215-387-6404 in Phila and 202-225-4001 in DC), as they sit on their respective Appropriations Committees. Confirm, by calling their offices, that they also support comprehensive reform.
- Continue discussions on the issue. Join the National White Ribbon Campaign for Dialogue, as Congreso has, to promote constructive dialogue on immigration reform: <http://whiteribbon.org/>

Federal Budget

Summary

As highlighted in the last Civic Engagement Update, less than 4% of the federal budget supports Social Service programs such as those provided by Congreso. Philadelphia Citizens for Children and Youth recently encapsulated in their Childwatch how recent measures in Congress may in fact decrease the revenue base for these programs as a way to reduce the federal deficit. Highlights include:

- HR 4890 passed in the House in June, and if approved, will allow the President to propose cuts in appropriations, entitlement programs, and limited tax benefits. The President would also have the power to suspend expenditures for up to 90 days without Congressional approval, as long as he has notified them.
- S 3521 is the Stop Over-Spending bill introduced by Republican Senator Judd Gregg, which creates binding caps on spending and crafts a commission to shrink entitlements. The letter that Congreso signed onto to educate our US Senators highlighted that “S. 3521 would ... make far-reaching changes in the federal budget process all the while overlooking that genuine deficit reduction requires a broad range of solutions including analyzing current and potential revenue sources. Ultimately true fiscal discipline requires that every spending choice and tax policy be subject to scrutiny and revision... The changes embodied in this bill would force Congress to make staggering reductions in spending on important American priorities including: protecting children, providing health care for our most vulnerable, assuring access to education and job preparation activities, making child care available to hard working low-income workers, fostering community development, preserving benefits for our veterans, and public safety.”
- As highlighted in earlier Civic Engagement updates, the U.S. House of Representatives voted 230 to 180 July 29, 2006 on a bill that makes significant cuts in the estate tax while raising the federal minimum wage to \$7.25 over 3 years.

The Labor-HHS-Education Senate Appropriations Subcommittee approved their spending bill for fiscal year 2007. 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.

Highlights & Lowlights

- The Senate increased funds for Responsible Reintegration of Youthful Offenders, to \$60 million, from \$49.1 million in FY 2006. The House zeroed out this program.
- The Senate Committee was harder than the House on Adult Training under the Workforce Investment Act, providing only \$800 million, or a 15 percent cut below inflation-adjusted FY 2005 levels. The House provided \$854 million (9 percent below FY 2005). This includes a 7.5 percent cut (\$64 million) to adult education.
- The Senate Committee kept funding for The Maternal and Child Health Block Grant at the FY 2006 level of \$693 million (9 percent below FY 2005, counting inflation), even lower than the \$700 million in the House bill.
- In the Senate, The Ryan White AIDS program was increased by about \$101 million over FY 2006 levels (to \$2.139 billion), but it still falls 2 percent below inflation-adjusted FY 2005 levels. The House bill was worse, cut 4 percent below FY 2005 levels.
- Low-Income Home Energy Assistance (LIHEAP) is funded at \$1.98 billion, plus \$181 million in contingency funds, the same as the House proposal. An additional \$1 billion funded in FY 2006 because of the spike in energy prices is eliminated, despite the continued soaring cost of energy.

See the Coalition on Human Needs at <http://www.chn.org/humanneeds/060725a.html> for more details.

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.

Congreso's Position

Congreso opposes domestic social service reductions to the budget.

Congreso's Action

- 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.

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)

Summary

The media has been buzzing with articles about the 10th anniversary of welfare reform. Comments to the Department of Health and Human Services were due August 28th, and time will tell if and how the comments that were sent from across the country will affect states' implementation of the new regulations.

The Philadelphia Daily News focused on August 22nd on welfare reform in Pennsylvania and where we are now in comparison to 10 years ago.

<http://www.philly.com/mld/philly/news/columnists/15330262.htm>

TANF was reauthorized for five years through the Deficit Reduction Act. There is a lot of movement on the federal and state level surrounding this reauthorization as these entities try to figure out the implementation of TANF. The reauthorization involves more federal regulation and less flexibility at the state level (which affects the Pennsylvania Maximizing Participation Program (MPP)). Education and training opportunities leading to job placement are coming into question as allowable activities. Other drawbacks include: limits of six weeks per year for counting substance abuse and mental health services as work participation; restrictions on counting programs such as ESL; and the limits of funding for childcare despite the increase in work participation rates. See above to note how these changes are coming at a time when the federal government is drastically cutting funding for many of the social programs needed to prepare welfare recipients for jobs.

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. Another point of contention is the barriers to employment that certain populations will face: those with addictions, mental health issues and/or disabilities. In 2004, most states fell short of the 50 percent mark. Pennsylvania's rate was 7 percent in 2004, the worst in the nation. Pennsylvania is now closer to 30%, but we have until October 1 to reach a 50% work participation level. This challenge is coupled with the difficulty in securing child care for most working families. The reauthorization document from the Department of Health & Human Services can be viewed by linking to: <http://a257.g.akamaitech.net/7/257/2422/01jan20061800/edocket.access.gpo.gov/2006/pdf/06-5743.pdf>

The Center for Law and Social Policy and Center on Budget and Policy Priorities have published an important resource 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.

Congreso’s Position

It is important that federal and state government focus on sustainable jobs and career paths as they determine what ‘qualifies’ as work participation. With a goal of the short-term fix of putting people into jobs, we can’t lose sight of the longer-term goal of better preparing our community members for skills that enhance their opportunities in the job market.

Congreso’s Action

- **Congreso wrote to The Office of Family Assistance, Administration for Children and Families, the Department of Health & Human Services division that regulates TANF, to state our observations on how the new regulations will affect our programs.**
- **Congreso also signed onto the Pennsylvania Welfare Coalition’s written comments, whose focus was on the effects of the new regulations in Pennsylvania.**
- **Congreso wrote comments at the end of August to the Philadelphia Workforce Investment Board, responding to the PWIB’s call for comments to their “Philadelphia Workforce Investment Area WIA Title I Operational Plan”. The Workforce Investment Act is another federal mandate designed to create opportunities for workforce development and adult education. It is up for reauthorization, currently as HR 1261, and will be reported on more in the fall.**

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. We haven't even voted in the Mid-term elections yet, and there's already a lot of movement around voting for our next mayor in 2007. See the "**Next Mayor Project**" to hear what Philadelphians care about and to learn about the candidates. <http://www.thenextmayor.com/1keystone.html>
3. Congreso is the lead convener for the **Latino Juvenile Justice Network**, which is an NCLR program designed to encourage the participation of Latino community-based organizations (CBOs) in juvenile justice reform issues, including but not limited to the following four "core areas": disproportionate minority contact (DMC); "adulthood" and "criminalization" of Latino youth, which contributes to differential treatment; anti-gang laws targeting Latino youth and their families; and efforts to increase funding for prevention and treatment programs and other alternatives to incarceration. A community forum conducted May 25, 2006 determined that Congreso's LJNN will focus on the last core issue: evaluating Community-Based Alternatives to Incarceration. More information to come on how you can become involved.
4. **New Census data, released August 30, 2006, reveals that 1 out of 4 Philadelphians live in poverty. The national poverty threshold for a family of four in 2005 was \$19,971. Congreso's clients, on average, earn \$14,000 per year. In general, Philadelphia had the third-lowest median income of cities its size - \$32,573. That was 4 percent less than in 2002, taking inflation into account. Pennsylvania's median household income of \$44,537, ranked 25th among the states. New Jersey has the highest median income, at \$61,672, but Camden earned a median of just \$18,007, the lowest of any city its size. Across the US (the richest country in the world), in 2005, poverty is the reality for 37 million people, over 10% of the overall US population. 17.1% of children in PA live in poverty, up almost 5% in the last four years. The US average is 17.7%, so PA falls slightly below the national average in terms of children living in poverty.**
5. **The Children's Advocacy Project has a helpful, statewide website, www.cap4kids.org, which can help you navigate services for children where you live. It is now translatable into many languages, including Spanish. Just go to the site, look under the "How to Use This Site" ,on the web's home page, and you will see the red and yellow flag of Spain. Click on the flag, and it will translate the website for you in seconds.**
6. View the new Pew Hispanic Center's 2006 **National Survey of Latinos – The Immigration Debate:** <http://pewhispanic.org/reports/report.php?ReportID=68>. This report highlights the discrimination that all Latinos are feeling as a result of the negativity and divisiveness resulting from the immigration debate in the United States.
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

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>
 - **Aug/Sept 2006 Edition of Boletín Latino**
http://www.gacla.state.pa.us/gacla/lib/gacla/boletin_latino_aug_and_sept_2006.pdf
- 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/>
- 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 Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (fiscal policy and public programs that affect low- and moderate-income families and individuals) www.cbpp.org