

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

- City Council Race**.....Pg. 2
Daniel Savage elected Focus now is on the May primaries where the community voice (not the ward leaders' voice) will be heard.
- Federal Immigration Reform**.....Pg. 6
Many anti-immigrant bills have passed in the House. We need to prevent the same from happening in the Senate.
- Mid-Term Elections and the Voter ID Bill**Pg. 10
Elections are fast approaching, and we have major races this year. At the same time, Congress is looking to complicate the voting process, right after overwhelmingly passing the Voting Rights Act.
- **NOTE: NEW UPDATES FOR THE WEEK ARE BOLDED & IN GREEN.****

Table of Contents (sections include new information and calls to action!)

<u>City Council Race</u>	Pg 2
<u>State-level Immigration</u>	Pg 3
<u>Federal Immigration Reform</u>	Pg. 6
<u>Mid-Term Elections and the Voter ID Bill</u>	Pg. 10
<u>Federal Budget</u>	Pg. 12
<u>Newsworthy</u>	Pg 15
<u>Important Links</u>	Pg 17

Important Dates

- **Today – October 10, 2006**
Voter registration ends October 10th for the November elections! **Congreso's goal is at least 500 new voters. We have approximately 350 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.
- **October 14, 2006**
“*Latinos: They Speak Your Language*” a conference at the Northhampton 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 18, 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. Congreso will be hosting a table at the Democracy Expo that day. <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

City Council Race

Summary

The primaries occurred with little fanfare. Former ward leaders have been slotted into the three Democratic slots for City Council on September 18th. Controversial since ward leaders were the ones electing their representative. So it was no surprise that they elected 'their own', a disappointment to the general public who wanted an opportunity to vote in this 'special primary'. Representing the 7th District for the Democratic party will be Daniel Savage.

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 encouraged 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

See the attached resource, from the US Citizenship and Immigration Service (USCIS) which highlights accredited citizenship organizations throughout the Delaware Valley. They are the ones authorized by USCIS to offer citizenship services.

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.
- 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

From the Pennsylvania Immigration and Citizenship Coalition:

Hazleton city council held a meeting on Tuesday September 12th for the second and third reading of both ordinances, and their final passage.

The new version is much longer than the original, and was drafted with help from FAIR, the Federation for American Immigration Reform, a national anti-immigrant group. Additionally, the English language component was stripped out and introduced as a separate ordinance. The English language ordinance passed unanimously.

The two ordinances compliment the city's new Rental Registration ordinance, which requires hammers out the details of the revisions to landlord provisions of the original ordinance. All individuals renting in Hazleton will be required to first obtain an occupancy permit – an occupancy permit must be obtained for each member of the household. A new permit must be obtained if the individual moves. Each occupancy permit costs \$10 (fee waived for those over age 65). Proof of citizenship or legal status must be shown in order to obtain the occupancy permit. Landlords will be fined if they do not ensure that all residents at their properties have occupancy permits. Fines are \$1,000 per person plus additional charges per day. The Rental Registration ordinance was introduced for first reading at the July 13th City council meeting. Second and third readings and final passage occurred at the August 15th Council meeting.

Mayor Barletta hasn't determined a timetable for when the ordinance will begin; instead the City Council's focus at this point will be on educating the community of Hazleton on the intentions laid out in the ordinances. The lone City Councilman who voted against the ordinances, Robert Nilles, said that if Hazleton wants the town to be English-only, then the town needs to invest in more English language education. This comment was not well received by the Mayor.

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.

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 Altoona, 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.
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FEDERAL LEVEL Current Issues

Federal Immigration Reform

Summary

Congress is moving quickly, some say in time to use ‘action on immigration’ as an electoral issue, before they close at month’s end for the election season. Comprehensive reform would be impossible in that time frame, so the House and Senate are considering passage of individual measures. Recent movement includes:

From the National Immigration Forum www.immigrationforum.org :

Enforcement-Only Bills introduced at the end of the 109th Congress

Fearing a loss of their majority in the House, and believing that anti-immigrant initiatives would make their supporters more likely to turn out in the general election of November 2006, House Republican leaders broke down the Sensenbrenner bill passed in December 2005 and re-introduced pieces of it at the end of the 109th Congress. None were considered in committees, but were rushed to the floor of the House and voted on by the entire House.

- **Secure Fence Act**
H.R. 6061, introduced in the House by Peter King (R-NY) on September 13, 2006.

This bill calls for 700 miles of fence on the U.S./Mexico border and requires DHS to achieve “operational control” of the rest of the U.S./Mexico border through a “virtual fence.”

- **Immigration Law Enforcement Act**
H.R. 6095, introduced in the House by James Sensenbrenner (R-WI).

This bill would give state and local police the authority to enforce civil immigration laws. It would also shield the government from accountability for the misdeeds or misapplication of the law by government agents, making it practically impossible for an immigrant who is a victim of government misdeeds to gain a remedy from a judge. In the application of immigration law, it basically gives DHS unchecked power.

- **Community Protection Act**
H.R. 6094, introduced in the House by James Sensenbrenner (R-WI)

This bill would reverse two Supreme Court decisions that held that the government cannot on its own outside of any judicial process impose what is effectively a life sentence in cases where an individual’s home country will not accept him back and when there is no realistic prospect that the government will be able to deport the immigrant. The bill would also expand expedited removal to certain non-citizens anywhere in the U.S. who have committed crimes—allowing the government to avoid a judicial determination of a person’s eligibility to stay. Another provision of this bill gives the Attorney General the ability to designate any group as a “gang,” and then punish an individual for belonging to that group—regardless of whether the individual committed a crime. It gives the government the ability to declare someone guilty by their association with a group the government says is a gang, not merely their actual criminal conduct.

Status

On September 14, 2006, the House passed the Secure Fence Act (H.R. 6061) by a vote of 283 to 138. On September 21, 2006, the House passed the Immigration Law Enforcement Act (H.R. 6095) by a vote of 277 to 140. It also passed the Community Protection Act by a vote of 328 to 95. The House also passed on September 21 the Border Tunnel Prevention Act (H.R. 4830), by a vote of 422 to 0.

The Senate may take up the Fence Act during the week of September 25. The Senate will more than likely not pass any other enforcement measures before they end their sessions for fall elections at the end of this week.

Immigration is being used as a pre-election message, on both sides of the issue. The House proposals will more than likely not result in public police change.

CBO ANALYSIS FINDS INCREASED REVENUES WOULD OFFSET INCREASED ENTITLEMENT COSTS UNDER SENATE IMMIGRATION BILL:

Often-Cited Cost Figure of \$126 Billion Reflects Misreading of the CBO Report

by Richard Kogan and James Horney

<http://www.cbpp.org/9-15-06imm.htm>

<http://www.cbpp.org/9-15-06imm.pdf> 7pp.

Regional arrests by federal agents are accumulating for undocumented residents. 115 people were arrested last week. See <http://www.philly.com/mlb/philly/news/15568228.htm> for details.

Rallies for comprehensive immigration reform occurred around the country early September, as communities prepared 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.

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.cirnnow.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.

Congreso's Position

Congreso opposes Anti-immigrant enforcement-only proposals like the ones voted on recently, the 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

- **Focus must now be concentrated on the Senate side. THE SENATE IS LOOKING TO VOTE ON THE SECURE FENCE ACT THIS WEEK! We need to ensure that Senator Specter – (202) 224-4254 will stay behind comprehensive reform. Some or all of the border security provisions could be attached to the Department of Homeland Security funding bill, as House and Senate conferees work out differences between the House and Senate-passed versions of DHS funding.**
- * **Please continue your support of a Comprehensive approach to immigration reform**
- ***Please vote against HR 6061, the Secure Fence Act and any other enforcement only immigration bills that are brought to the Senate floor.**
- * **Reject attempts to attach enforcement only immigration amendments to any appropriations bill, such as the FY 07 Department of Homeland Security Appropriations Bill. We should not allow piecemeal immigration policy to be attached to spending bills.**
- **Senator Santorum should also be called with the following message:**

- **Enforcement-only approach taken by the U.S. House of Representatives will only make the immigration situation worse. Without comprehensive immigration reform, the border crisis will continue, our immigration system will remain broken, and voters will not be satisfied.**
- **We should not allow pieces of the Sensenbrenner bill to be attached to unrelated legislation, such as spending bills or the U.S. Department of Defense authorization bill. If they are going to pass immigration-related legislation, it should be a comprehensive approach that can make a difference by bringing order to our broken immigration system.**

- **If candidates for this year intend to use immigration reform as a platform issue, we need to demand to know where they stand! Congreso will soon be sharing results of our Candidate Surveys, to let you know where the Senate and Gubernatorial candidates stand on immigration. Additionally, make sure to find out from your State Reps & State Senators (<http://www.legis.state.pa.us/index.cfm>), US Representatives (www.house.gov) and Senator Santorum where they stand on the issue, as all Representatives, State and Federal and many State Senators are up for re-election in November!**

- 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/>

Mid-Term Elections & the Voter ID Bill

Summary

Congreso & Voter Registration

Yes, the elections are fast approaching, and Congreso is very involved in voter registration, education, protection and mobilization. For now, our efforts have centered around registration and education. October 10th is the registration deadline!! We are building information about the mid-term elections into our programmatic work; educating our staff and clients in our classes, events and meetings.

Congreso will be publishing candidate survey responses from the Gubernatorial and Senatorial candidates in October. The League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania Citizen Education Fund will sponsor a Gubernatorial debate October 10 at 7:00-8:00pm and a U.S. Senatorial debate October 16 at 7:00-8:00pm on WPVI -6 ABC in Philadelphia, the largest television market in Pennsylvania. Statewide coverage will be available through satellite up-link and sharing of feed with affiliates plus showing on Pennsylvania Cable Network.

Voter ID Bill

This week, the House of Representatives passed the “Voter ID Bill” H.R. 4844, the Federal Election Integrity Act of 2006. The VOTER ID bill aims to mandate new ID requirements on all voters in federal elections. The provisions on the bill would require an individual to present a government issued photo ID in order to cast a ballot, require anyone other than overseas active military personnel to include with their absentee ballot a copy of a current and valid government-issued photo ID, and burden citizens to pay for documents to confirm they are U.S citizens. The original bill, introduced by Rep. Hyde, would have also required proof of citizenship at time of registration. The substitute bill, offered by Rep. Ehlers and voted on by the House, requires that voters present proof of citizenship in order to obtain their photo ID (similar to REAL ID).

This poses a problem for the elderly, for example, who may have been born at home and do not have a birth certificate. People living in poverty are the least likely to have documents to prove they are U.S. citizens. Hundreds of organizations around the country, including MALDEF, AFL-CIO, AARP, NCLR, NALEO, Congressional Hispanic Caucus and the Hispanic National Bar Association are fighting against this legislation.

The Congressional Hispanic Caucus sees it as a retaliation measure against the protections secured in the Voting Right Act (HR9), that was passed unanimously earlier this year.

Youth Vote

Learn more about the youth vote, as it is critical for them to decide the direction in which they want government to move in the future:

http://www.civicyouth.org/research/products/quick_facts_youth_voters2006.htm There are 1.9 million citizens under 30 who are eligible to vote in Pennsylvania. In 2002, the last mid-term election year, only 21% of those eligible came out to vote. Encourage a change with your youth populations. 5.7% of Pennsylvanians are Latino citizens, and they’re the ones who are eligible to vote. That’s over 100,000 voters!

Congreso’s Position

In terms of HR 4844, millions of US citizens, who do not have the identification and proof of citizenship that the bill requires -- the elderly, the disabled, and Latinos in general, will be negatively impacted by this legislation. H.R. 4844 will do far more to suppress turnout and intimidate voters than to prevent voter fraud, as the proponents of the Voter ID bill claim. Millions of Americans will be denied their right to vote because the House of Representatives is addressing a problem that does not really exist.

Congreso's mission is "Strengthening Latino Communities", as such civic engagement is an important part of that. We strongly encourage all community members that we work with to register to vote. We want stronger communities and recognize that exercise your right to vote gets us one step closer.

Congreso's Action

- Call our Senators Santorum and Specter to encourage them **NOT** to support a Voter ID bill that requires proof of citizenship. It will further disenfranchise the Latino community and provide unnecessary hardships to our citizens who are secured the right to vote.
 - We are registering voters at Congreso and within the broader community.
 - Congreso has partnered with PICC, the Advancement Project and Women Vote PA to forward voting rights posters to the Philadelphia City Commissioners in English and Spanish to be used by poll workers and voters on Election Day.
 - We will publish soon the Senate and Governor candidate responses to five survey questions we posed: on immigration, education, violence, healthcare, and economic opportunities as they relate to the Latino community.
 - We are monitoring the polls with the Committee of 70, to provide bilingual support on election day, November 7, 2006.
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Federal Budget

Summary

The federal fiscal year begins October 1, and it looks like the year will begin without a budget. In this situation, the government operates through a continuing resolution, where Directors of Agencies continue operations without interruption, but reigns on the budgetary line items are held tight. Without knowing what your budget is going to be, agencies operate very conservatively. The budget is not expected to pass until after the mid-term elections.

NCLR has a new federal budget page on its website. It can be viewed at:

<http://www.nclr.org/fedbudget>

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. **To read more about the effects of the estate tax cuts in the Latino community, go to: <http://www.nclr.org/content/publications/detail/38709/>**

Labor HHS-Education Chairman Senator Specter is still seeking \$2Billion more dollars for this budget, which would provide more than ‘flatlined’ funding for the new fiscal year. 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.

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

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!**
- **Encourage your US Representative to keep discretionary funding above inflation and see where they stand on the House and Senate budgets, before and after the elections. Find your Representative at www.house.gov.**

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)

Summary

The new TANF regulations will go into effect next week, as of October 1. On Sept. 8, the Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare, led by Estelle Richman, issued a release stating that the number of people receiving temporary assistance who are considered in the work force hit 32 percent in July and was on track to be at 50 percent by the end of September. That's a huge jump from the 7 percent that Pennsylvania was facing just two years ago. Richman estimates that Pennsylvania will meet the requirement come month's end.

States that don't meet the federal work requirement face the prospect of losing million in federal funds. Under federal law, states will lose 5 percent of the federal welfare funding the first year they fail to be at the 50 percent threshold. That would be a loss of nearly \$36 million Pennsylvania.

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>

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.
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News-worthy

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. **¡OJO!** Congreso joined the **Coalition to End Handgun Violence in Pennsylvania** and attended a rally (with a bus of 30 Latino partners from the neighborhood – from Lighthouse, APM, Lutheran Settlement House, Temple University and Norris Square Neighborhood Project) in Harrisburg September 26th. This was an effort focused on promoting safer communities on the same day that the State House had a day long session on the subject. It was powerful visiting legislative offices for members of the House Judiciary Committee and attending the rally and prayer vigil. It's just a beginning for how Latinos in Pennsylvania can demand more attention to curbing, if not eliminating, the violence we witness and experience in our cities. Stay tuned for how to continue *your* involvement.
4. **¡OJO!** As highlighted in **Important Dates**, Congreso and its partners will be holding a "**Know Your Rights**" training for the **Latino Juvenile Justice Network on November 18, 2006**. Congreso is the lead convener for the LJJN, 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 LJJN will focus on the last core issue: evaluating Community-Based Alternatives to Incarceration. More information to come on how you can become involved.
5. **¡OJO!** On Saturday, September 23rd, Congreso hosted **Representative Fortuño and State Senator Roberto Arango from Puerto Rico**. Congreso had a last minute opportunity to host these officials for a roundtable discussion with Latino leaders from diverse fields and university students studying Latino politics. The officials shared with Congreso that **Puerto Rico is losing 600 families per month to migration and the economy has been stagnant with 0% growth**. He shared this information to garner support from mainland Boricuas on the situation on the island. Ana Echevarria, with Congreso, commented, "**In many ways Philadelphia parallels the experience of Puerto Rico in terms of brain drain and net external migration. Philadelphia now is experiencing some population increase but overall people are leaving, particular those individuals with some education. Like Representative Fortuño said, we have to give people a reason to stay and improve the quality of life.**" More information about Rep. Fortuño can be found on his website. <http://www.house.gov/fortuno/>.
6. 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.

7. **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.
8. 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.
9. 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>
- **US Citizenship and Immigration Services** <http://www.uscis.gov/graphics/index.htm>

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

