




**A Civic Engagement Update
for the Pennsylvania Latino Community**

A CONGRESO Bi-Monthly Publication

November 17, 2006



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Dear Fellow Pennsylvanians:

Leading up to November 7th, Congreso asked the Latino community if it wanted a quality education, safe neighborhood, and good health care for our children. Of course all Latinos do, but in asking the question we wanted to encourage the community to get out and vote. We believe these ideas are within our reach when the Latino community takes the first step in exercising this important right and responsibility. We owe it to our children, and we owe it to those Latinos who are not yet citizens. Latinos are increasingly a more active part of the electoral process, and as such we have more power to influence decisions that affect our everyday lives.

Please read ahead in our Civic Engagement Update to see what resulted from the Mid-term elections and initial indications of how the Latino community will be impacted as a result. Much remains to be seen, but with the power that the public exerted in casting strong votes November 7th, government at all levels was sent a message to pay attention to the needs of their constituencies.

Now we need to hold our elected officials to their campaign promises, so that a better future for all Latinos will be ensured. The Latino community had a strong turnout, so now officials will need to pay attention when we reach out to them to discuss policies and systems that affect us.

And the elections aren't over. In 2007, Philadelphia leadership will be changing with a new Mayor and potentially new City Council members. We're learning now about who our candidates will be in these races, and even for the 2008 Presidential race. We will keep you informed.

Please join Congreso de Latinos Unidos in strengthening the Latino community across the Commonwealth. We hope you find the enclosed information useful, and your feedback is always welcome.

Gracias,

Nicholas Torres
President, Congreso de Latinos Unidos



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

It's not too late!! --- As a way to make the Civic Engagement more useful for you, please take two minutes to complete the attached survey. It will really inform Congreso, to make our advocacy efforts more effective for you: <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s.asp?u=474292776704>

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Important Dates

• **November 18, 2006 12 noon - 4pm**

The *Latino Juvenile Justice Network's "Know Your Rights Training"* for youth and interested parents/community members will be held from noon-4pm on this day at Julia de Burgos Elementary School at 4th and Lehigh. If you are interested in keeping our youth from entering the Juvenile Justice system, this training is for you. Call Kristin Shipler at 215.763.8870 x1505 or email shiplerk@congreso.net to participate.

• **November 30, 2006 6-8pm**

A *Public Town Hall Meeting on Education* will be held at The Lighthouse at 152 W. Lehigh Avenue in room 208. This Town Hall Meeting will focus on *needs of the Latino Community in Philadelphia* as it relates to Education. Representatives from the Mayor's newly formed Educational Task Force will host this meeting and record the comments made by community members and report to the full Task Force and ultimately to the Mayor. All are welcomed (parents, students, young people in and out of school, community leaders, concerned citizens, educators, and any other stakeholders interested in Education).

• **December 12, 2006 1 - 4pm**

PICC is hosting a training on *Victims Compensation for Immigrants and Refugees* at CBH, 801 Market Street, 7th flr, Philadelphia. Undocumented Immigrants are eligible for the program. email your name, agency, email address, phone and fax numbers to Michael Reich c-mreich@state.pa.us. The deadline to register is December 4th, 2006.

• **December 16, 2006 9:30 – 12 noon**

Congreso is hosting an *Individual Taxpayer Identification Number (ITIN) Day* for anyone who does not qualify for a Social Security Number, so they can pay taxes. The only document you need is a current passport (or if you don't have one – two of the following are acceptable, if they are current: your country's national ID card, foreign driver's license, civil birth certificate, foreign voter registration card or foreign military registration card).

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

Information Highlight: The Mid-term Elections **and potential effects on the Latino community in PA in the coming year.**

Election Results

Federal

- The US Senate race: **Bob Casey** beat Incumbent Senator Santorum, with 59% of Pennsylvanians voting for Casey and 41% for Santorum. See below for his responses to the Congreso Candidate Survey, positions he espoused during his election campaign.
 - Senator-elect Casey has claimed his first priority as raising the Federal Minimum Wage. More than half of all states have already increased their minimum wage. Six states did so through the November 2006 elections. He also states health care, early education and ethics bills as top priorities.
 - He has been named to serve on the Agriculture, Banking and Foreign Relations Committees, the Special Committee on Aging, and the Joint Economic Committee.
- **Democrats gained control** of the US House with a gain of 28 seats *and* the Senate with a gain of 6 seats. As such, PA Senator Specter loses his position at the Majority Chair of the Senate Judiciary Committee.
- In **Pennsylvania's U.S. House delegation**, the balance of power has shifted as well. With the loss of four Republican House seats, the U.S. Congressional delegation shifted from 12-7 favoring Republicans, to 11-8 favoring Democrats. In the Pittsburgh suburbs' 4th District, Republican incumbent Melissa Hart lost to Democratic challenger Jason Altmire (51.9% - 48.1%). In the Philadelphia suburbs, incumbent Republican Michael Fitzpatrick lost to Democratic challenger Patrick Murphy in the 8th District (50.3% - 49.7%), while in the 7th District, Democratic challenger Joe Sestak beat 10-term Republican incumbent Curt Weldon (56.4% - 43.6%). In northeast PA's 10th District, Democratic challenger Chris Carney defeated Republican incumbent Don Sherwood (53.0% - 47.0%).

State

- The PA Governor race: **Governor Rendell** maintained his position with 60% of Pennsylvanians voting for him and 40% of Pennsylvanians supporting his Republican challenger, Lynn Swann. See below for his responses to the Congreso Candidate Survey, positions he espoused during his reelection campaign.
- PA House Representative, **Angel Cruz**, remains as the only Latino State Official. His district covers Eastern North Philadelphia, the neighborhood where the majority of Congreso's clients reside.
- Three **other potential Latino House Reps** lost their races: Olivia Brady (D. District 150/Montgomery County area), Baltasar Rubio (R. District 159/Chester County area), and Eddie Tiburcio (R. District 132/Allentown area).
- The **leadership in the PA House** remains practically unchanged. But the composition of the PA House and Senate has changed dramatically, with one in five legislators changing hands in January. Republicans hold a majority in the House by 102-101, and there are two close races that have still not been decided in Chester County. The County is still counting absentee votes, as the races were too close to call on Election Day.
- The **PA State Senate make-up** remains the same: 29 Republican – 21 Democrat.
- There are **56 new members of the PA General Assembly**, one of the largest groups in decades. Of the newcomers, 51 belong to the 203-member House and five to the 50-member Senate.

A CNN exit poll shows

(Source: <http://www.cnn.com/ELECTION/2006/pages/results/states/PA/>):

- o In Latino concentrated counties, the vote broke down as such:

| County | % of vote | Casey | Santorum |
|--------------|-----------|-------|----------|
| Berks | 100 | 55% | 45% |
| Bucks | 100 | 59% | 41% |
| Chester | 100 | 55% | 45% |
| Delaware | 100 | 62% | 38% |
| Lancaster | 100 | 42% | 58% |
| Lehigh | 100 | 58% | 42% |
| Montgomery | 100 | 62% | 38% |
| Philadelphia | 99 | 84% | 16% |

| County | % of vote | Rendell | Swann |
|--------------|-----------|---------|-------|
| Berks | 100 | 57% | 43% |
| Bucks | 100 | 70% | 30% |
| Chester | 100 | 65% | 35% |
| Delaware | 100 | 74% | 26% |
| Lancaster | 100 | 42% | 58% |
| Lehigh | 100 | 62% | 38% |
| Montgomery | 100 | 72% | 28% |
| Philadelphia | 99 | 89% | 11% |

| Demographic | Casey | Santorum |
|----------------------|---------|----------|
| Non-White Men (6%) | 89% | 11% |
| Non-White Women (6%) | 83% | 17% |
| | Rendell | Swann |
| Non-White Men (6%) | 91% | 9% |
| Non-White Women (6%) | 83% | 17% |

*The Latino vote, quoted as 2%, was deemed too small to count statistically.
 Voter turnout in Latino concentrated counties/wards is yet to be determined.
 Reports show that, in general, voter turnout was about 10% higher than normal for a mid-term election.
 49% of eligible Pennsylvanians voted, casting 4 million ballots*

Local

- Philadelphia held special elections for three **City Council** seats that were vacant. **Daniel Savage** won election in the Seventh Council District, where most of Congreso’s clients reside. He will be up for reelection in the general City Council Primary in May 2007.

New Face of Leadership

- US House Representative **Nancy Pelosi** (D-Calif.) will be the first woman speaker of the House in U.S. history.
- **Duval Patrick** becomes the 2nd African-American Governor in US history. The first was Governor Doug Wilder (D, VA) in the 1990s.
- The first Muslim to take federal office is US Representative-Elect, **Keith Ellison**, from Minnesota.

- **Senator Menendez** (D, NJ) keeps his seat and was named to the Foreign Relations Committee. He will continue serving on the Senate Banking and Energy Committees. He is the first Latino elected to the US Senate from NJ.
- Although there weren't too many new Latino faces in this election, the shift of power to more women and people of color is a reason for optimism.
- See the **Dominican-Americans** who won elections this year (although none in PA).
<http://www.danr.org/ip.asp?op=news>
- The new chairman of the Republican National Committee is Latino **US Senator Mel Martinez** (R, FL)

Impact on Latino Community

- With the Democrats now holding such a slim majority, **expect both parties to aggressively court the Latino vote going forward.** The day after the elections, Republicans, for instance, appearing to have lost a significant portion of the gains they made with Hispanic voters in 2004, announced that U.S. Senator Mel Martinez (R- Fla.) would become the Chairman of the Republican National Committee.
- **Immigration - Federal:**
 - ◆ The Democratic takeover of both chambers of the U.S. Congress bodes well for comprehensive immigration reform. We now have a Republican president who has wanted comprehensive reform all along- but couldn't get it by a staunchly opposed faction of his own party - set to deal with a new Democrat-controlled Congress that also generally supports comprehensive reform.
 - ◆ Senator Specter (who helped pass S2611, the Senate's version of comprehensive reform), Senator-elect Casey and Governor Rendell all support comprehensive reform, as does President Bush. Where the issue will fall on the nation's priority list is yet to be seen, but Speakers-Elect Pelosi and Reid have named it as a priority issue.
 - ◆ President Bush signed the Secure Fence Act of 2006 on October 26, 2006.
<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2006/10/20061026-1.html> He states that this is just the first step in the plans he has for comprehensive immigration reform.
 - ◆ In exit polls, 37% of Hispanic voters ranked illegal immigration as an issue that was 'extremely important' to them, compared with 29% of all racial demographic groups. In addition, 78% of Hispanic voters said most illegal immigrants should be given a chance to apply for legal status, compared with 57% from all demographic groups.
 - ◆ Both Rep. Pelosi, Speaker of the US House and Sen. Reid, Speaker of the US Senate, are in favor of comprehensive immigration reform. This may not be an easy fight, as 64 Democrats voted for the Secure Fence Act of 2006, and in the Senate, 26 Democrats voted in support as well.
- **Immigration - State:**
 - ◆ With respect to the **local immigration ordinances** such as that passed in Hazleton, the Temporary Restraining Order (TRO) entered by the federal court in Scranton on October 31 - which stopped the City of Hazleton from enforcing its Illegal Immigration Relief Act (IIRA) beginning November 1 - expired on November 14th. Presumably, the Court must now decide whether to issue a longer preliminary injunction, or lift the ban on enforcement altogether. One thing that Hazleton Mayor Lou Barletta, et al. may be considering - is the strong rebuke that the voting public gave Republicans -part of which was an outright rejection of the divisive anti-immigrant strategy that some had hoped would help deflect some of the voter anger directed at the Party in power.
 - ◆ Consider that the mayor and two of the council people of **Riverside, NJ** who voted for that city's illegal immigration ordinance - were all voted out of office on November 7 by the residents of Riverside. This leads to speculation that the new township committee may rescind the anti-illegal immigrant ordinance <http://www.philly.com/mld/inquirer/15974852.htm>.

- According to a recent **national poll by NCLR**, the issues on the top of the Latino agenda continue to be education and jobs/the economy, with the war in Iraq coming in third and immigration fourth. However, immigration is a great motivator in this election. Twenty-nine percent of Latinos polled said they, a family member, or a close friend participated in the immigration marches this year. This connection is even stronger for young Latino voters (45%). (See attached NCLR poll memo)
- **Domestic Programs:**
 - ◆ In terms of education, with Congress now controlled by Democrats, and with the **No Child Left Behind Act** coming up for re-authorization next year, Latinos may have a better opportunity to advocate for provisions and funding more aimed at closing the Hispanic educational achievement gap.
 - ◆ Nevertheless, it remains to be seen how the Republican White House and Democratic Congress will work together towards addressing some of the nation's heavy lifting (i.e., **social security, healthcare, national deficit, energy policy**) that has been stifled by the bitter partisanship that marked the Bush administration's first six years.
 - ◆ The federal government has not been able to pass a budget for the 2007 fiscal year, which started October 1, 2006. A continuing resolution has been extended to mid-December, and reports indicate that the budget is more likely to pass with the new legislature in January. 11 budgets have yet to pass, and the big disappointment is that \$5.3 billion has been shifted from domestic funding to the defense and homeland security appropriations bills. Remember, the domestic bills fund housing, education, healthcare, and workforce development. Domestic spending has already seen \$12 billion in cuts in the last two years.
 - ◆ An exit Plan for Iraq may potentially more funds for domestic spending, but there's no guarantee. If there's an intention to balance the budget rather than operating on a deficit, there's no certainty yet that domestic spending will increase.
- **Want to work for a US Senator-Elect?** You can drop off or fax your Résumé drop-off for Senators-elect is located in the Senate Placement Office:
 - Room SH-116
 - Hart Senate Office Building
 - 8:30 a.m. - 5:30 p.m.
 - Monday thru Friday
 - (Résumés in envelopes will not be accepted.)

To fax, use:

Senator-Elect _____
 United States Senate
 Washington, DC 20510
 (202) 224-1881

Latino Turnout

- The Miami Herald reported that, “exit polls show that **Hispanics accounted for 8 percent of the total vote**. That is about equal to the Hispanic vote's record turnout in the 2004 presidential election, and much more than its turnout in previous mid-term elections. What's more, 73 percent of Hispanics voted for the Democratic Party on Tuesday, while only 26 percent voted for Republican candidates, CNN exit poll shows. In the 2004 presidential elections, 55 percent of Hispanics voted Democrat and about 42 percent voted Republican.”
- **Voter registration among Hispanic Pennsylvanians** has increased by at least 27 percent since 2004, with some of the largest numbers of new registrations from the Lehigh Valley.

- Pennsylvania, which has almost **27,000 newly registered Hispanic voters**, due to the efforts of voter registration from groups such as Democracia USA and Congreso. Democracia USA reports that the largest number of new Hispanic registrations in Pennsylvania came from Philadelphia, Berks, Lehigh, Lancaster and Northampton counties. Sixty-four percent of the Pennsylvania registrants were between 18 and 34 years old.
- The new registrants bring the statewide total of **registered Hispanic voters** to **more than 120,000**. The State Department reports that there are about 8.1 million registered voters in Pennsylvania.
- 72 percent of Latinos voted for President Clinton in 1996 and 39 percent of Latinos voted for President Bush, highlighting the fact that both parties understand the importance of the Latino vote. There is historically **no committed alliance of Latino voters for either of the two major political parties** in the US.
- In 2004, only 47 percent of the eligible 7.6 million Latino voters cast a ballot in the presidential election, compared to 67 percent of eligible whites and 60 percent of eligible blacks who voted in the 2004 race, according to the National Council of La Raza.

Senate & Gubernatorial Positions

See Below for Responses that Senator-Elect Casey and Governor Rendell gave Congreso for our Get-Out-The-Vote Voter Guide that was published for two weeks in El Sol. These are considered candidate platforms; now over the next 6 years for Senator-Elect Casey and four years for Governor Rendell, we'll need to see if they keep to the positions they took on immigration, education, economic opportunity, youth violence and healthcare.

Senator-Elect Casey's Positions to Congreso:

1. **Immigration Reform:** While it was not a perfect bill and there are changes to be made to the legislation, I would have voted for the Senate-passed immigration bill authored by Senator Arlen Specter. In contrast, Rick Santorum clearly wants to do nothing and politically exploit the issue. Santorum has run TV and radio ads attacking me and has planted "Casey for Amnesty" signs throughout Pennsylvania.

Rick Santorum has changed his position on illegal immigration for political expediency. In April, Rick Santorum said that we should legalize the status of illegal immigrants so they can be paid fair wages. Now that he is using illegal immigration as a political football, Santorum is saying that he would deport all illegal immigrants. I don't support Rick Santorum's plan of rounding up, deporting illegal immigrants, and breaking up their families.

2. **Education:** I support continuing the federal government's successful class-size reduction program and will work to provide more federal assistance for school construction and repair.

I will work to make higher education a reality for more Pennsylvanians. I will work to increase the size of Pell Grants that provide educational assistance to low-income students; and also support increasing the tuition tax credit and increase the deduction for student loan interest.

3. **Economic Opportunity:** Increasing the minimum wage, investing in working families, and helping to lower health care costs are a few of the many changes that need to occur to help low- and middle-income families. Washington has been too focused on helping the wealthy and the special interests.

The community block grant program and federal HOME program should be funded at levels that enable local communities to address the causes of blight and revitalize neighborhoods. Programs to stimulate private investment in distressed communities, such as the New Markets Tax Credit program, should be encouraged at the federal level. I support reauthorization of this program.

The federal government should assist in the redevelopment of polluted brownfield sites by supporting effective statewide brownfield programs (like those that exist in Pennsylvania).

Small businesses are our greatest sources of breakthrough innovation and new jobs. But Washington continues to slash budgets for crucial technological and capital assistance to the small-business sector. Since 2001, the Bush administration and the Republican Congress have cut the Small Business Administration (SBA) budget by 41 percent.

My economic plan emphasizes the need to restore and enhance funding for the SBA as well as such related federal initiatives as Small Business Development Centers and Manufacturing Extension Partnerships.

4. **Youth Violence:** After-school programs and mentoring programs can offer children a safe and productive alternative during the hours after school. The federal government should provide additional resources to enable greater access to after-school programs.

I also oppose the elimination of the Safe & Drug Free program proposed by the current leadership in Washington.

My early childhood program will help all four year-olds receive pre-K education. I support increased assistance for Head Start, child nutrition education, after school programs, job training, and higher education assistance.

5. **Health Care:** As a United States Senator, I will push for legislation that seeks to eliminate these high-uninsured rates and to eliminate the disparity in health care access in the Latino community.

I am committed to guarding against cuts to Medicare and Medicaid that result in loss of services. I announced a health care coverage plan to help increase access to health care while reducing the cost. Under my plan, the federal government would help small businesses provide health care to their employees through tax credits and by forming open purchasing pools. My plan would lower costs for low- and middle-income families by having the federal government pick up a larger share of the Children's Health Insurance Program to cover more children.

Governor Rendell's Positions to Congress:

1. **Immigration Reform:** Effective immigration law is best made at the federal level – not state by state or municipality by municipality. I support comprehensive federal immigration reform that not only ensures our national security, but that also offers legal newcomers to our nation the opportunity to prosper and addresses in a fair and just way the transition of those who have labored for years in this nation and seek legal status. In addition, I favor an appropriate guest worker statute that allows people from other countries to fill jobs that cannot be filled by U.S. workers for a period of time. I remain hopeful that the U.S. Congress will reach an agreement on a reasonable immigration bill that gives hard-working immigrants a chance to stay and contribute to the economy while ensuring that those who break our laws are deported.

I am deeply troubled by the growing local “anti-immigrant” sentiment. Recent proposals foster discrimination against all newcomers, legal or otherwise. Our nation was built by the toil of immigrants from across Europe, Asia, Africa and Latin America, and our diversity and tolerance is what makes this nation so special and dynamic. For that reason, I strongly oppose ill-advised efforts to establish “English-only” laws and I do not believe that state or local laws focused on establishing an official language are appropriate or a reflection of the great heritage of this nation. Requiring myriad government forms to be filled out only in English would be purely punitive. Businesses would not adopt such a policy, and neither should government; I would veto any bills aimed at establishing this policy.

2. **Education:** Education is the passport to prosperity and the social and economic equalizer in our society. In order for Pennsylvania to move forward, we must create a PreK-12 education system that prepares every child for success. Since I took office, the achievement gap between Latino and white students has shrunk by 15% in our elementary and middle schools. With \$1.8 billion of new state investment in PreK-12 education since 2003 and my commitment to continuing to invest in student success, I am confident that we will accelerate our progress. These new resources include \$24 million over the last three years for the state's first-ever funding for Limited English

Proficiency programs. Our historic investments in pre-kindergarten and full-day kindergarten will help close the achievement gap and new tutoring funding will ensure that all students get the help they need.

Higher education is essential to improving the social, political and economic conditions of Pennsylvania's Latinos. I am pleased that minority college enrollment has increased three times faster than total student enrollment over the last four years, and I am committed to making higher education more affordable and accountable. I have increased funding for student tuition grants by \$38 million, and I signed a law to enable families to save for college tax-free. I also personally intervened to hold tuition increases at our State System of Higher Education to below inflation (2.0% and 2.7%) the past two years. For many middle- and low-income families, it actually costs less to attend our public universities now than when I took office. I have also insisted that community colleges publicly report their student success rates by race and ethnicity. Having more information will enable us to hold these colleges accountable, and I believe that similar requirements should be extended to all publicly funded higher education institutions.

3. Economic Opportunity: Despite the uncertain economic climate at the national level, Pennsylvania is making strong progress and we have more jobs than ever before in our state's history. By increasing the minimum wage for the first time in nearly a decade, creating higher-paying jobs, and providing opportunities for workers to develop their skills, my Administration has created economic opportunity for hard-working Latinos. The Hispanic unemployment rate has dropped by 25% since I took office, and my economic development programs have helped many of our Hispanic-owned businesses thrive and contribute to our economic prosperity.

The health care industry is a perfect example of how we can increase workers' skills – and their wages. I created the Center for Health Careers to recruit and retain health care professionals for areas with shortages. The Center has created strategies for helping more people become registered nurses and licensed practical nurses, and it has focused on ways to help lower-skill employees in the health industry move up to better paying jobs. My Administration has specifically worked with licensed nurses from Puerto Rico to help them become nurses here.

Much of the state's Latino population is centered in older cities that have been in need of repair. As a result of our community investments that are an essential part of our \$2.8 billion economic stimulus plan, communities like Reading, Lancaster, York, Scranton, Bethlehem, Wilkes-Barre, Johnstown and Erie are now being revitalized. In order to sustain these gains, we must do more to make the dream of homeownership a reality for Latino Pennsylvanians. My Housing Finance Agency has assisted nearly 19,000 Pennsylvanians in becoming homeowners and my \$1 billion property tax reduction will make homeownership more affordable. I look forward to making even more progress in the next four years.

4. Youth Violence: Security is a basic right, and we must do more so that every Pennsylvanian feels safe. I believe that we need additional police officers in the communities that have been hardest hit by gun- and drug-related violence – which is why I am providing \$10 million to add 195 officers in cities like Philadelphia, Reading, Allentown and York – as well as laws that crack down on illegal gun purchasers who flood our communities with weapons. I also strongly believe that our cities must be given the right to enact their own appropriate gun laws.

To truly solve the crisis of violence, we also need to address the root causes by working with community partners to change youth attitudes and behavior. My Administration continues to support the Blueprint for a Safer Philadelphia community-based violence prevention programs, and the Pennsylvania Commission for Crime and Delinquency is making investments each year in community programs that reduce violence. We must determine which programs are the most effective at combating crime among youth, and then ensure that our communities have the resources they need to put these proven programs in place.

Creating more opportunity for young people to find quality jobs will show that there is an alternative to violence. Under my leadership, Pennsylvania has more jobs than ever before and we are building a vibrant economy in communities across the Commonwealth. In addition, keeping young Pennsylvanians in school with the aspiration of becoming the leaders of tomorrow will help combat youth violence. My investments in education – and

particularly the focus on tutoring and increased state funding for college tuition grants – give students hope and create new possibilities for their success.

5. Health Care: Access to quality, affordable health care is essential for the well-being of our residents. Since I took office, we have enrolled more than 370,000 additional Pennsylvanians in health care totally or partially provided by the state. This is in stark contrast to many other states, that have actually cut thousands of people off of health care coverage. I championed a plan to Cover All Kids because it is our fundamental responsibility to make sure that every one of our 133,000 children who are presently without health insurance receive the health care they need – beginning with 15,000 additional children in 2007. In addition, I have made it possible for nearly 12,000 more working adults whose employers do not provide health insurance to purchase affordable insurance through the state. And unlike so many other states, I have worked hard to make sure we have the resources to continue health care coverage for the most vulnerable citizens. I will continue to increase access to affordable health care for all Pennsylvanians.

I established the Office of Health Equity in the Department of Health to lead the way in addressing our health disparities so that all Pennsylvanians can enjoy healthy lives. I also directed the Governor’s Advisory Commission on Latino Affairs to launch the Pennsylvania Latino Health Project. This important initiative is bringing together community leaders, health care experts and providers, and representatives from government to discuss and address the health disparities faced by Latinos in Pennsylvania. I am confident that by working in partnership on these issues, we will be able to improve health services for the Latino community.

Active Citizen’s Project

Based in New York City, ACP worked with Congreso and other organizations in Philadelphia and other cities in the US to explore what issues are most important to people who do *not* have the right to vote. The top issues resulted in a ballot for “The People’s Platform”. See <http://www.thepeoplesplatform.com/section/news/view/163> to learn what’s most important to Philadelphia’s youth and immigrant communities!

Getting Ready for 2007 local elections: Philadelphia Mayoral Race and City Council

- There’s already a lot of movement around voting for our next mayor in 2007, as evidenced by the **Mayoral candidate panel** that convened at the **African American Chamber of Commerce** meeting the day after the elections, November 8, 2006. Rep. Evans, US. Rep. Fattah, Michael Nutter, John Seidel, and Tom Knox were there to present their views on education, economic opportunities and the violence that is gripping Philadelphia.
- This race is already predicted to be the most competitive Democratic primary in 16 years! It will be a true race. Question is, will Republicans enter for their own primary in May?
- See the “**Next Mayor Project**” to hear what Philadelphians care about and to learn about the candidates and their platforms. <http://www.thenextmayor.com/1keystone.html>
- **The Mayor’s new ethics panel**, which includes Congreso Board Member Rich Negrin, has stated that one of their first priorities will be the 2007 Mayor’s race and campaign finance. They will be charged with enforcing rules that cap campaign contributions to \$2,500 per individual and \$10,000 per political committee.

Congreso's Position

As a non-partisan, community-based organization in the Eastern North Philadelphia community, Congreso de Latinos Unidos has become increasingly involved in strengthening the Latino community through civic engagement and voter participation.

In urban, low income areas, there are historically low rates of civic participation on behalf of community residents, vast language barriers, and situations seen at the polls where voters are influenced and/or intimidated by people who do not have the voters' best interests in mind. As an example of our work, we have coordinated a voter mobilization activity with elderly clients, alongside the City Commissioner's office and the Advancement Project, to reach citizens how to use the voting machines and to know more clearly what their voting rights are as Philadelphia residents. We are supportive of all efforts to make Pennsylvania's polling places more welcoming and supportive of Latino voters. Our goal is to increase involvement on the part of Latino citizens, as Latinos need to make their voices heard; they are traditionally underrepresented in electoral civic participation.

Congreso is also a part of the National Council of La Raza's Latino Empowerment and Advocacy Project. Throughout the project, we registered over 600 voters in 2006, and we will continue working on non-partisan voter registration, education, protection and mobilization efforts. Congreso advocates for full protection of Latino voters as outlined in the Voting Rights Act, recently reauthorized in summer 2006.

Congreso's Action

- Congreso collaborated with the Department of Justice and the City of Philadelphia to the extent that was appropriate and feasible.
- Congreso registered 625 voters in 2006.
- Congreso published, through El Sol newspaper, a GOTV/Voter Guide to encourage Latinos in Pennsylvania to get out to vote! and to educate the Latino community on five primary issues of concern.
- Congreso held a "Voter Mobilization Caravana" in conjunction with the PA Department of State, Univision and El Concilio, to once again mobilize Latino voters.
- 22 Congreso volunteers monitored the polls in Ward 19, where Congreso's main office and many staff/clients reside, on November 7th. The Committee of 70 hosted 60 other Latino election monitors through a partnership with El Concilio, Aspira, and PRFAA. There were over 250 Committee of 70 volunteers on Election Day.
- Congreso's larger term goal is to increasingly weave voter registration, education and mobilization into our programmatic work. When citizens are registered to vote, they are more likely to become civically engaged and will pay more attention to the decisions that are made in their lives on the part of elected officials.

Immigration

Hazelton, PA has been restricted from enacting its “Illegal Immigration Relief Act”!

<http://www.aclu.org/immigrants/discrim/27225prs20061031.html> and

<http://www.cnn.com/2006/LAW/10/31/immigration.town.reut/index.html>

A federal judge determined that it would cause irreparable harm to Hazelton’s business owners, landlords and residents. This is evidenced by the fact that many Latinos have left the town. As such, Latino store owners, legally operating in Hazelton, have seen drastic decreases in business. Some have even had to close their doors. PA has 28 anti-immigrant ordinances, *more than half* that have sprung up around the United States.

Education

Philadelphia’s **public schools are in a budget crisis** and the public was given the opportunities to voice their concerns and potential solutions. The school system is facing a \$73.3 million deficit. At the same time, Mayor Street and CEO Paul Vallas are trying to find \$3M to hire 400 more parent-truancy officers, to increase school attendance (40% of Philadelphia’s students have 8 or more unexcused absences). See Paul Vallas’ budget proposal at www.philsch.k12.pa.us.

Economic Self-Sufficiency

Congreso recently spoke at the United Way’s Forum on the **10th Anniversary of Welfare Reform**, with includes TANF. Congreso had the opportunity to present to federal and state officials some of the challenges presented to clients. With so much focus on work participation, clients are not afforded enough opportunity to develop the basic skills they desperately need (English language skills, literacy and numeracy skills) to become self-sufficient. PA’s current Work Participation Rate is 44.8%, a vast difference from the 7% reported in 2004. With Congreso’s clients below the federal poverty level, most of whom are Latinos, many of our clients are eligible to enter TANF programs. PA welfare reform advocate, Cathy Palm, recently reported that:

- a. Approximately 96,000 households will receive *cash assistance*. 25 percent of these households are child-only cases where a small monthly stipend goes only to help support children who may be living with relatives, or who are temporarily in foster care
- b. Approximately 72,000 adults presently are eligible and receiving TANF benefits.
- c. Since the enactment of federal welfare reform in 1996, Pennsylvania has reduced by more than 50 percent its TANF caseload – more than 160,000 adults have graduated to the workforce.

A bipartisan coalition of US Senators has asked the US Government Accountability Office to study how federal welfare law has limited states’ ability to provide childcare for welfare recipients and narrowed the activities that can be defined as “work”. Neither Senator Santorum nor Senator Specter were a part of this coalition.

Health

Latinos are more likely to develop **Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder** – see why in this report: <http://www.apa.org/journals/features/cdp112144.pdf>

On November 2, **Governor Rendell signed HB2699, “PA’s Children’s Health Insurance Program”, into law**. More information on the CHIP program can be found at www.chipcoverspakids.com or by calling 1-800-986-KIDS.

Safety

See Important Dates for information on the LJJN workshop this weekend!

Latino Relations

President Bush hosted **Dominican President, Leonel Fernandez**, at the end of October:

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2006/10/20061025-2.html> Pres. Bush also recently hosted

President-Elect Calderon from Mexico:

<http://www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2006/11/20061109-4.html>

Cast your vote! The Coalition of Human Needs wants to know what you think - [vote](#) by Monday, Nov 20

Last week, voters sent a clear message that they want change in our nation’s priorities. Many candidates were elected who focused at least in part on providing more opportunity and economic security to millions of low-income Americans. The election is only the beginning – we must now work to make sure that Congress takes genuine steps forward. You can help the Coalition on Human Needs as it prepares its agenda for 2007.

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>.
 - **November 2006 Edition of Boletín Latino (*highlighting Congreso's Latino Juvenile Justice Network's workshop on November 18th*)**
http://www.gacla.state.pa.us/gacla/lib/gacla/boletin_november_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 Next Mayor's Project
- The Center on Budget and Policy Priorities (fiscal policy and public programs that affect low- and moderate-income families and individuals) www.cbpp.org
- **Pennsylvania Budget & Policy Center (a project focused on state tax, budget, and related policy matters, and effects on working families)** <http://www.pennbpc.org/>

Sources:

- Cummings, Jeanne, The Wall Street Journal: Republicans Lose Ground With Minorities After Call For Immigrant Crackdown, November 8, 2006
- Cooper, Regan, PA Immigration & Citizenship Coalition; Immigration Updates, November 2006
- Gostomski, Christina, Harrisburg Bureau: Hispanic voters on rise in state: Number of those newly registered second only to Florida, November 2006
- Philadelphia Inquirer; November 7-15, 2006

