

# Latino Accomplishments of 2007/2008 POLICY FORUM



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The mission of the Latino Policy Forum is to build the power, influence and leadership of the Latino community through collective action to transform public policies that ensure the well being of our community and society as a whole.

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## Closing the Educational Achievement Gap of Latino Children

### SETTING A POLICY AGENDA

The Latino Policy Forum (LPF) has worked toward closing the educational achievement gap of Latino children by developing a Latino early childhood education policy agenda, in collaboration with leading organizations in the field. In 2006, LPF formed a 15 member committee with the largest local Latino organizations in the early childhood education (ECE) field, including El Valor, Casa Central, and Erie House, along with the support of the National Council of La Raza, to develop a policy agenda to meet the needs of young Latino children.

### RESEARCH AND PUBLICATIONS

On June 2007, LPF released the policy brief, *Making Preschool Education Work for Latinos in Illinois*, which used data analysis to understand the status of Latino children in early childhood education and to generate policy recommendations to increase the low participation of Latino children in quality early education programs.

### SHAPING POLICY

In 2007 and 2008, the Latino Policy Forum organized six delegations to Springfield, in addition to several district visits with community leaders, legislators, and policy makers to discuss the need to support early childhood education funding for Preschool for All and capital funds to build and

renovate early childhood education centers in areas with large numbers of underserved children. As a result, \$45 million was set aside for Preschool for All in FY2007.

In addition, LPF has Increased Latino participation in the committees of the Illinois Early Learning Council, established by the legislature to fulfill the vision of a comprehensive, statewide early learning system for children birth to age 5. LPF also provides vital staff support to the IELC subcommittee on Linguistic and Cultural Diversity.

### INFORMING THE PUBLIC

The organization has received wide media coverage of the policy briefs, reports and other information we produced regarding Latinos in early childhood education by various media outlets including: Chicago Public Radio, Catalyst Magazine, Chicago Tribune, Hoy and La Raza newspapers; television outlets included ABC, Univision and Telemundo News and cable television including CAN TV, and Tele Azteca.

## Improving Housing Opportunities for Latinos

### RESEARCH

LPF carried out and released a study on housing overcrowding, *Bajo el Mismo Techo (Under the Same Roof), The Latino Community in Suburban Chicago: Analysis of Overcrowded Housing* in February 2008. The report was based on research and a series of interviews and focus groups with various stakeholders in the suburbs of Elgin, Addison, and Blue Island. The report was widely disseminated through presentations to Mayors, housing advocates, policy makers and community groups in Chicago and in other municipalities.

### SHAPING POLICY

LPF has worked with state and local policy makers and their staffs to increase their awareness and support about the need for affordable housing.

### INFORMING THE PUBLIC

Throughout 2007 and 2008, LPF has conducted weekly community presentations at various sites, including the Mexican Consulate in Chicago, reaching out to thousands of residents to increase their awareness about fair housing laws to identify and prevent housing discrimination. LPF also helped resolve dozens of housing-related problems and disputes between tenants and landlords.

## Integrating Latino Immigrants into the Social, Political, and Economic Fabric of Our Region

### SHAPING POLICY

LPF organized a delegation to Washington, DC in June 2007 to participate in a lobby day to advocate for the Dream Act and for immigration reform. In the spring of 2008, the Latino Policy Forum organized and brought national and local African American and Latino leaders together to address the actual and perceived impacts of immigration

on both communities via the “African American and Latino Symposium on Immigration.”

### INFORMING THE PUBLIC

LPF produced monthly legislative updates and calls to action, in response to legislative action, on immigration issues pertinent to Latinos. It also responded to media questions and interviews regarding the position of Latinos with respect to various immigration issues.

## Building the Leadership Capacity of Latinos in Advocacy and Policy Development

### AN AMERICAN AGENDA FROM A LATINO PERSPECTIVE

On April 11th, 2008, the Latino Policy Forum released the report, *An American Agenda from a Latino Perspective*, a compilation of policy recommendations in education, immigration, housing, health and social services, workforce and economic development, community safety, and leadership development and civic participation, based on feedback from several regional community forums and the latest Latino-related policy reports for the Chicago Metropolitan Region. In an exercise in civic participation and community collaboration, LPF brought together 600 individuals from a broad spectrum of backgrounds to develop a blueprint to guide the Latino community towards achieving its goals. The public release event for the report included over 500 people, with presentations from national and local leaders representing organizations such as the National Council of La Raza, MALDEF, National Institute for Latino Policy (NiLP), LULAC, Erie House, and Casa Central.