

Illinois Latino Agenda

Convened by Latino Policy Forum and Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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PRESS CONFERENCE

Illinois Latino Leaders Unite to Preserve Latino Employment, Encourage State Investment in Community

WHO: Representatives from the recently-formed Illinois Latino Agenda, a strategic alliance of nearly 40 Latino-focused organizations committed to securing equitable resources and investment for Latinos, with a message that Illinois must preserve state opportunities for Latinos. The Illinois Association of Hispanic State Employees (IAHSE), the Latino Policy Forum, MALDEF, the Illinois Latino Council on Higher Education (ILACHE) and the Hispanic Illinois State Law Enforcement Association (HISLEA), will unite in Springfield to call on Governor Quinn and other legislative leaders for equitable Latino representation in policy-making and front-line staff positions.

WHAT: Leaders will discuss Latino concerns over state investment and employment in a press conference with remarks from Illinois Latino legislative leaders, Ricardo Meza, MALDEF Midwest Regional Counsel, Martha L. Lopez, IAHSE President, Elizabeth Ortiz, ILACHE President, and David Roldan, HISLEA President.

WHEN: Wednesday, April 28, 11:15 am.

WHERE: Blue Room, Statehouse, Springfield

The Illinois Latino Agenda is a historic, collaborative effort among Latino organizations that seeks to promote accountability in business, government, the private sector, and within the Latino community by leveraging their collective voice and influence. On April 28, Agenda members will travel to Springfield to participate in "Capitol Day," organized by IAHSE. The Agenda will meet with key legislative leaders to ask for maintenance of both employment opportunities for and funding of services in Illinois Latino community.

"We need to increase Latino representation at all levels of state government, to better serve the Latino community", said Martha L. Lopez, IAHSE President. "By placing Latinos in decision making positions, access to state services would increase."

Illinois Latinos represent nearly 90 percent of the population growth in the state over the past decade but yet the state's investment in Latinos has not kept pace.

"Budget cuts go deep in Latino communities, where they represent significant reductions in critical areas, including education, housing, and human services," said Sylvia Puente, executive director of the Latino Policy Forum. "Proper investment in these communities is no longer a 'Latino' issue – the well-being of the Latino community is inextricably linked to the well-being of the entire state."

Concern with sufficient state employment opportunities and state resources for Illinois Latinos is documented in the *Blueprint for Latino Investment*, a first-of-its-kind report commissioned by the Illinois Legislative Caucus Foundation and prepared by the Latino Policy Forum late last year. The report recognizes the vital role that Latinos play in fueling Illinois' economy and develops a framework for investment in Latino children, families, and workers.

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Key findings from the report include:

- Illinois' economic future is increasingly intertwined with prosperity and success of the Latino workforce. In 2008, Latinos accounted for 14.3 percent of the state's labor force and have become a greater contributor to the state's income and sales tax base.
- Latino workers only constitute 4.1 percent of the state's employees, despite being 14.3 percent of the state's labor force. This disparity is most evident among senior public service administrators, who maintain leadership positions in state agencies.

"Given the growth of the Latino community, even maintenance of current funding levels represents a significant cut. Decreasing funding while the number of people requesting services increases adds insult to injury," said Ricardo Meza, Midwest Regional Counsel of MALDEF. "Latinos are now the largest ethnic minority group in Illinois and represent one out of every four children under the age five. As such, we must take steps to invest in our community today."

The Illinois Latino Agenda, convened by the Latino Policy Forum and MALDEF, includes: Alivio Medical Center, Arden Shore Child & Family Services, Casa Central, Centro de Información, Chicago Hispanic Health Coalition (CHHC), Cicero Area Project, El Hogar del Niño, El Valor, Erie Neighborhood House, Family Focus - Aurora, Family Focus - Nuestra Familia, FEDCMI/Casa Michoacán, Gad Hill Center, Hispanic Housing Development Corporation, Illinois Association of Hispanic State Employees (IAHSE), Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights, Illinois Latino Resource Institute, Instituto del Progreso Latino, La Casa Norte, Latino Consortium, Latino Education Alliance (LEA), Latino Organization of the Southwest, LULAC of Illinois, Most Blessed Trinity Parish, Mujeres Latinas en Acción, National Council of La Raza (NCLR), Near Northwest Neighborhood Network, Onward Neighborhood House, Puerto Rican Agenda, Puerto Rican Arts Alliance, Salud Latina, San Jose Obrero Mission, The Resurrection Project, and Youth Service Project, Inc.

About the Latino Policy Forum

The Latino Policy Forum is the only organization in the region whose primary focus is to facilitate the inclusion of Latinos at all levels in public policy and decision-making processes. Founded in Chicago in 1988 as Latinos United, the Forum provides research, information, advocacy and leadership development to improve education outcomes for Latino children, ameliorate the mortgage foreclosure crisis for Latino families, deepen our roots through sound immigration and immigrant integration policy, and build leadership and a common collective agenda. For more information, visit www.latinopolicyforum.org.

About MALDEF

Founded in 1968, MALDEF, the nation's leading Latino legal organization, promotes and protects the rights of Latinos through litigation, advocacy, community education and outreach, leadership development, and higher education scholarships. For more information on MALDEF, please visit: www.maldef.org.

About IAHSE

The Illinois Association of Hispanic State Employees' mission as a nonprofit, volunteer-driven organization is to advocate for the employment, educational and professional development of the Latino state employees and to ensure quality services to our Latino communities in Illinois. Since 1987, IAHSE has been instrumental in addressing issues affecting Latinos in employment and community services. As an advocate, it is IAHSE's intent to remain a viable and effective force impacting the employment and educational policies which may infringe on the aspirations of our constituency. www.iahse.org

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