

Illinois Latino Agenda

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

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Candidates to use Mayor's Office to Promote Diversity, Immigration Reform, Bilingual Education

48-Member Illinois Latino Agenda Releases Responses to Mayoral Questionnaire

Chicago – February 9, 2011 – Six candidates for Chicago's next mayor—Gery Chico, Miguel del Valle, Rahm Emanuel, Carol Moseley Braun, Patricia Van Pelt-Watkins, and William Walls, III—have shared their plans to tackle tough issues affecting Chicago Latinos, a community that represents 27 percent of the City's population, and an estimated 320,000 members of its electorate. ***Candidates' complete, unedited responses will be available on the Latino Policy Forum website homepage, www.latinopolicyforum.org, at 9am on Thursday, February 10.***

"Latino voters will play an important role in this historic mayoral race—and these voters must understand candidates' plans for their community to make a well-informed decision at the ballot box," said Sylvia Puente, executive director of the Latino Policy Forum and co-convenor of the *Agenda*. "But beyond the Latino voters, it behooves all Chicagoans to understand how each candidate is prepared to invest in such a large portion of the City's residents."

Candidates' responses were gathered via an open-ended questionnaire distributed by the *Illinois Latino Agenda*, a group of 48 local Latino-led, Latino-serving organizations convened by the Latino Policy Forum and MALDEF (Mexican-American Legal Defense and Educational Fund). Full responses will be available on the Latino Policy Forum website, but highlights from each of the seven questionnaire sections are listed below.

The Latino Policy Forum and other *Agenda* members and coalitions are non-partisan organizations/coalitions. The questionnaire highlights included in this press release are representative of a summary of candidates' responses to open-ended questions. The inclusion of or frequency of individual candidates' names in this press release in no way reflects or suggests endorsement.

- **Governance:** Each of the six candidates ensured their leadership would reflect the diversity of Chicago communities, with two (del Valle and Van Pelt-Watkins) submitting specific plans to put this promise into action.
- **Education:** All candidates supported improved education outcomes for English-language learners, with two (Chico and del Valle) supporting dual-language learning models in city language academies.
- **Workforce & Economic Development:** All candidates committed to improving access to city contracts for minority- and women-owned businesses, with three (Chico, del Valle, Van Pelt-Watkins) prioritizing easing restrictions on small businesses to promote economic development.
- **Immigration:** All candidates supported the maintenance of Chicago's sanctuary city status specifically by offering plans to remove access barriers to services (del Valle, Emanuel and Van Pelt-Watkins) and ensuring the rights of the undocumented within the Cook County judicial system (Chico, del Valle and Van Pelt-Watkins), among other proposals.

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- **Housing:** Four candidates (del Valle, Moseley Braun, Van Pelt-Watkins and Walls) suggested holding banks and financial institutions accountable for skyrocketing foreclosure rates and vacant properties within Chicago communities, with all supporting the maintenance of affordable housing options in the city.
- **Community Safety:** All candidates offered plans to improve the relationship between Latino communities and the Chicago Police Department.
- **Health:** All candidates expressed increased support for community health clinics with adequate funding and culturally-relevant resources, while two candidates provided concrete plans on how to make this happen (Chico, del Valle). All candidates committed to addressing the growing mental health needs within the Latino community.

The Latino community represents more than a quarter of the city's population and 17 percent of its electorate. Given that nearly 37 percent of Chicago's under-18 population of US citizens is Latino, the community's political clout will grow considerably in future years.

Agenda members built the 18-question survey to offer priorities for a Mayor that will cultivate Latino political, economic, social and cultural potential. Survey questions query candidates' plans for Latinos related to city governance, education, workforce and economic development, community safety, immigration, housing and health.

"We see this questionnaire as an opportunity to place our community's concerns on each candidate's table," said Virginia Martinez, Legislative Staff Attorney with MALDEF and co-convenor of the *Agenda*. "Chicago's next mayor must be a mayor for all of Chicago – and appropriate investment in the city's Latino community is imperative for all Chicagoans to continue to enjoy a world-class city in coming years."

About the Illinois Latino Agenda

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. Convened by the Latino Policy Forum and MALDEF, the 48 members of the *Agenda* include: Alivio Medical Center, Arden Shore Child & Family Services, Association House of Chicago, Casa Central, Centro de Información, Chicago Hispanic Health Coalition (CHHC), Cicero Area Project, Corazón Community Services, El Hogar del Niño, El Valor, Enlace Chicago, Erie Neighborhood House, Family Focus – Aurora, Family Focus –Nuestra Familia, FEDCMI/Casa Michoacán, Gads Hill Center, Healthcare Alternative Systems, Inc., Hispanic Housing Development Corporation, Illinois Association of Hispanic State Employees, Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights, Illinois Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, Illinois Latino Council on Higher Education (ILACHE), Illinois Latino Resource Center, Instituto del Progreso Latino, Interfaith Leadership Project, La Casa Norte, Latino Consortium, Latino Education Alliance (LEA), Latino Organization of the Southwest, Latino Policy Forum, Latinos Progresando, LULAC of Illinois, MALDEF, Most Blessed Trinity Parish, Mujeres Latinas en Acción, National Council of La Raza (NCLR), National Latino Education Institute, Near Northwest Neighborhood Network, Onward Neighborhood House, Puerto Rican Agenda, Puerto Rican Arts Alliance, Rainbow House, Salud Latina, San Jose Obrero Misión, SER Jobs for Progress, Inc. of Lake County, Segundo Ruiz Belvis Cultural Center, The Resurrection Project, and Youth Service Project, Inc.

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