

Illinois Latino Agenda

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

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Illinois Latino Agenda Calls for 20 Latino Districts, Releases Proposed Maps: "We've Shown You Ours, Now Show Us Yours."

49-Member Agenda releases proposal for 16 House, 4 Senate districts at final House hearing, along with a call for transparency, inclusion in redistricting process

Chicago – April 25, 2011 – The *Illinois Latino Agenda*, a collaboration of 49 Latino-serving organizations, today presents maps outlining 16 Latino House districts, along with a proposal for 4 Latino Senate districts, for consideration by the Illinois legislature as part of current redistricting efforts. The 20 proposed districts, a combination of Latino majority, influence and coalition districts represent consensus from the *Agenda*, a broad coalition of city- and suburban-based Latino-serving nonprofits, the largest Latino coalition in the region.

"If Illinois' two million-plus Latinos were proportionately represented, there would be 28 Latino-elected leaders in Springfield. There are just 12 such leaders today. The disparity is troubling, given that Latinos are the second-largest racial/ethnic group in the state," said Sylvia Puente, executive director of the Latino Policy Forum and *Agenda* co-convenor. "However, given the geographic dispersion of our growing Latino community, the *Agenda* is calling for the creation of 20 Latino majority, influence, or coalition districts."

The proposed *Agenda* maps include 13 Latino-majority House districts, with the Latino community accounting for more than 50 percent of the population. Nine of these proposed districts—three on Chicago's North Side, five on Chicago's South Side, and one in suburban Aurora—have at least a 65 percent Latino population.

"History and legal precedent have shown us that 65 percent is the minimum threshold for political effectiveness in the Latino community," said *Agenda* Member Michael Rodriguez, executive director of ENLACE Chicago. "Latino political clout is tempered by the youth of our community—nearly 40 percent is under the voting age of 18—and the portion of non-citizens."

Two of the remaining proposed majority districts—in suburban Franklin Park and Elgin/Carpentersville—would have Latino populations of 63 and 56 percent, respectively, and two "coalition" districts have a Latino majority, along with a significant African American population in Waukegan, and a significant Asian population on Chicago's South Side.

The proposed maps also include provisions for three Latino influence districts, which include a 20-plus percent Latino population, in Joliet and Rockford/Belvidere, with a third in Evanston and adjacent communities on Chicago's North Side. The *Agenda* also calls for the creation of at least four Latino Senate districts, given that Illinois redistricting criteria call for Senate districts to be 'nested' within two contiguous House districts.

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Districts are proposed in accordance with the federal Voting Rights Act as well as the newly-minted Illinois Voter Rights Act of 2011, enacted earlier this year to ensure minority voting rights and transparency in the map-drawing process.

The legislation created several types of political districts to safeguard the electoral power of traditionally underrepresented minority districts. Crossover districts contain a minority population that is potentially large enough to elect the candidate of its choice with the help from voters outside the minority; coalition districts are where more than one minority group could work in alliance to elect the candidate of their choice; finally, influence districts contain a minority group that can influence an election outcome even if its preferred candidate cannot be elected.

“In accordance with the new legislation, we ask that our elected officials draw district lines around united Latino communities, not through them,” said *Agenda* Member Marisol Morales, co-chair of the Puerto Rican Agenda. “The members of the *Illinois Latino Agenda* have thought long and hard about creating maps that keep communities together. In reaching consensus on these proposed maps, we’ve put the well-being of our communities above our individual organizations, and we’re asking that our leaders in Springfield do the same.”

In addition to presenting its maps, the *Illinois Latino Agenda* calls for inclusion and transparency in the redistricting process, asking that legislators make provisions for a two-week period for public comment on proposed final maps.

“The interests of Illinois Latinos are increasingly the interests of all Illinoisans; a transparent, inclusive redistricting process that makes considerations for a representative Latino voice in Springfield is an important step in ensuring all Illinoisans can work together towards a bright shared future,” said *Agenda* Member Raul Raymundo, CEO of The Resurrection Project.

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 49 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 Alliance for Career Enhancement (HACE), 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. Efforts surrounding redistricting have been carried out with the support of Alianza Leadership Institute, Centro de Trabajadores Unidos (Immigrant Workers' Project), Committee for a Unified Back of the Yards, and P.A.S.O. - West Suburban Action Project (Proyecto de Accion de los Suburbios del Oeste).

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