

# Illinois Latino Agenda

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

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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **Latino Leaders to Gov. Quinn: Latinos' Future is Illinois' Future *State investment in Latino communities must keep pace with growth***

**CHICAGO – May 21, 2010:** Sustainable investment in Latino communities is no longer just a Latino issue – the well-being of Illinois' Latino community is inextricably linked to the well-being of the entire state. This point was stressed to Gov. Pat Quinn today by several representatives of a newly-launched strategic alliance that includes over 40 Illinois-based, Latino organizations – which has identified itself as the *Illinois Latino Agenda*.

"In these difficult times, it's absolutely vital that the economic engine represented by Illinois Latinos stay well-conditioned," said Sylvia Puente, executive director of the Latino Policy Forum, a co-convenor of the Agenda. "Latinos are increasingly important contributors to their local communities: Latinos purchased half of all new homes in Illinois in the last decade and currently represent three of every four new entrants to the labor market in Metro Chicago. A full 90 percent of Latino children are citizens of this country."

Recognizing that communities across Illinois are hurting economically, Illinois Latino Agenda members voiced several concerns to Gov. Quinn today:

- Maintenance of current state funding to Latinos is critical. At a time where a community representing 15 percent of the state population only receives 5.5 percent of state grants, proposed budget and service cuts would go especially deep in local Latino communities.
- The *Illinois Latino Agenda* represent organizations that are collectively owed millions of dollars in back payments by the State, which jeopardizes vital community programs and services. Latino families often have no "Plan B," for childcare and other services, meaning that many face tough decisions between working and caring for their families.
- Latinos are not represented at the state level, with just 218 Latinos hired to fill 3,681 state-level jobs last year. This is a far cry from the 4,560 Latino employees that would need to be added to the state's workforce to achieve parity, according to the Latino Policy Forum's analysis of Illinois' 2009 Agency Workforce Report.

"Latinos are now the largest ethnic minority group in Illinois, yet the state-level staffers are not fully representative of the persons they represent," said Ricardo Meza, Midwest Regional Counsel of MALDEF. "Supporting leaders that are reflective of the communities they serve isn't just good for the Latino community; it's good for our entire state."

Concern with sufficient state employment opportunities and state resources for Latinos is documented in the *Blueprint for Latino Investment: A Latino Legislative Agenda*, a first-of-its-kind report commissioned by the Illinois Legislative Latino 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. The report and appendices are available for download from the Latino Policy Forum homepage at [www.latinopolicyforum.org](http://www.latinopolicyforum.org).

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 43 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
- Corazon Community Services
- El Hogar del Niño
- El Valor
- 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 Latino Resource Center
- Instituto del Progreso Latino
- 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
- Salud Latina
- San Jose Obrero Mission
- SER, Jobs for Progress, Inc. of Lake County
- Segundo Ruiz Belvis Cultural Center
- The Resurrection Project
- Youth Service Project, Inc.

### **About the Latino Policy Forum**

The Latino Policy Forum is the only organization in the Chicago area that facilitates the involvement of Latinos at all levels of public decision-making. The Forum conducts analysis to inform, influence and lead. Its goals are to improve education outcomes, advocate for affordable housing, promote just immigration policies, and engage diverse sectors of the community, with an understanding that advancing Latinos advances a shared future. For more information, visit [www.latinopolicyforum.org](http://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](http://www.maldef.org).

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