

Sylvia Puente, Executive Director



Sylvia Puente began serving as Executive Director of the Latino Policy Forum, the only public policy and advocacy organization in the Chicago metropolitan area working to improve educational outcomes for children, make housing accessible and affordable, promoting just immigration reform, and building the influence and leadership of the Latino community. She is the convener of the Illinois Latino Agenda where her collaboration and consensus-building skills are highly valued. Through the Forum, she works with more than 100 organizational leaders in the Chicago metropolitan region. She has been recognized as one of the 100 Most Influential Hispanics in the U.S. by Hispanic Business magazine.

As a highly respected and thoughtful policy analyst, she is regularly called upon to provide perspective on the implications of the nation's changing demographics; at conferences and meetings she often serves as keynote speaker. Puente is frequently cited in the media as an expert on Latino issues and has published numerous reports that articulate the vital role Latinos play in society.

Puente founded the Latino Leadership Council of the Chicago Foundation for Women, which has raised thousands of dollars to support organizations that provide services to women and girls. Along with many other civic organizations in which she is active, Puente serves as a board director of Advance Illinois, a public policy agency working to improve education in the State, and was appointed by Governor Quinn to serve as chair of the Education Funding Advisory Board.

In 2007, Puente was invited by the US State Department to study Muslim immigrant integration issues in Spain. In 2008, she was asked by the Israeli government to participate in discussions about the country's immigrant integration policies. She has been invited three times to Mexico to increase understanding of Mexican immigration to the United States. In 2009, she was awarded a leadership fellowship by the Chicago Community Trust to continue her global work in this field.

Puente's twenty-five year career serving her community spans a wide range of experiences: from 2001-08 she served as director of the Center for Metropolitan Chicago Initiatives for the University of Notre Dame's Institute for Latino Studies. While at the Institute, she was the driving force behind convening a regional dialogue on the suburbanization of the Latino community. Her work also included the publication of *Bordering the Mainstream: A Needs Assessment of Latinos in Berwyn and Cicero, Illinois*, and *Forging the Tools for Unity: A report on Metro Chicago's Mayors Roundtables on Latino Integration*.

As Director of New Community Initiatives for The Resurrection Project, Puente expanded the agency's outreach efforts in health, education, parental leadership, and economic development. At the Latino Institute, a prominent think tank on Latino issues during the 1990s, she served as director of research, public policy, and advocacy, overseeing the development of analyses on issues such as immigration, workforce development, and education. Puente also gained broad experience in policy, legislative, and decision-making processes while holding a variety of positions with the State of Illinois.

In 2011, Puente received a leadership award from the League of United Latin American Citizens. Since 2003, she has received the Jane Addams award from Hull House; a leadership award from the Illinois Latino Legislative Caucus Foundation; the Community Service award from the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund; the Sor Juana Women of Achievement Award for Community Service by the National Museum of Mexican Art; and was one of 25 Chicago area women named a Pioneer for Social Justice.+

Sylvia was introduced to her life's work as an advocate, policy analyst, and activist for Latino issues at age thirteen when she joined her mother on picket lines in support of the United Farm Workers.

Puente began her master's degree studies at the Harvard Kennedy School of Government and received her M.A. from the Harris School of Public Policy at the University of Chicago. She holds a B.A. in Economics from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

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