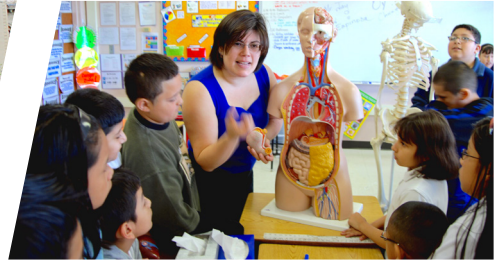




STATISTICS ON LATINOS
BY LATINO POLICY FORUM



PHOTOS: OLGA LOPEZ

Latino Policy Forum 10th Anniversary **ILLINOIS LATINO AGENDA (ILA)**

IMPACT STATEMENT

The Illinois Latino Agenda (ILA) is the largest coalition of Latino-led nonprofits and businesses in the state. With more than 40 member organizations, its members organization reach over 250,000 people each year in a wide range of areas including health care, family services, education, and small business development.

GOAL

The Illinois Latino Agenda is committed to securing equitable resources and investment for Latinos while building their power, influence, and leadership through a strategic alliance of Latino organizations.

BUILDING UNITY AMONG LEADING LATINO ORGANIZATIONS

In 2010, recognizing that the distribution of state resources in Illinois was not reflective of changing demographics and that the number of Latino state employees was also not commensurate with the growing Latino population, the Forum convened MALDEF (Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund), the Illinois Latino Family Commission and other Latino leading organizations from across the state and established Illinois Latino Agenda. Similar to the Forum's Acuerdo model, which is central to its work across all issues, ILA was created as a collaborative effort among organizations that seeks to promote accountability in government by leveraging its collective voice and civic influence. Members work to ensure that information, policy, and advocacy on state issues represent the Latino perspective and its community needs. They meet with

key state legislators and other public officials for their commitment and collaboration to secure equitable access to state government services, equitable representation on state Boards and Commissions, and equitable distribution of state resources reflective of the community's changing demographics.

Regrettably, during the state's two-year budget impasse (2015-2017) and ensuing fiscal crisis, ILA membership declined from 48 organizations to about 40. Several nonprofits were extremely challenged by the state's lack of funding, and some did not survive – among them, *La Voz Latina* a 40+ year-old community-based organization in Rockford, IL, and Casa Guanajuato, an organization with more than 20 years serving Latinos in the Quad Cities. Many other organizations were forced to cut staff and reduce services, which resulted in a diminished quality of life for many low-income families throughout the state.

ADVOCATING FOR EQUITY & GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY

Changing demographics dictate changing needs of communities throughout Illinois. Unfortunately, realignment to ensure resources are proportionate with shifts in population is not often initiated by government. Hence, the Forum conducts analysis to document issues and then convenes the Agenda to work for greater investments of public resources through legislative and administrative advocacy with state leaders.

The Blueprint for Latino Investment: A Latino Legislative Agenda, commissioned by the Public Policy Institute of the IL Legislative Latino Caucus and researched and published by the Forum, assessed the Governor's proposed budget for 2010 and found that public resources were not keeping pace with the demographic growth and needs of Latinos in Illinois.

This inequality was further exacerbated by the state budget crisis (2015-2017) and reductions in funding, which contributed to increased challenges in achieving parity. Many organizations were left no recourse but to operate from survival mode, which led to leadership fatigue and burn out. The ILA organized rallies, press conferences and published a four-part series in *Hoy*, Spanish language newsprint, depicting the impact the budget crisis was having on the Latino community. The forced cut of countless services caused irreparable harm in the nonprofit and human services sector. Thankfully, with the passage of a full budget for FY2019, the ILA along with many other community organizations are in the rebuilding process.

ILA recognizes that progress is often incremental and that it requires consistent vigilance and advocacy. Thus, despite not reaching equity as quickly as desired, there have been significant gains. Due to collaborative advocacy efforts led by the Forum, the Illinois Department of Human Services allocated an additional \$500,000 for Latino led organizations in 2012. \$750,000 was secured for the Illinois Latino Family Commission in 2013 and "Latino Unity Day", which brings hundreds of Latinos and allies to the state's capitol every spring to advocate on issues that directly impact their communities was officially recognized by the Governor's Office in 2018. The 2018 Latino Unity Day theme was, *Illinois: 2.2 Million Latinos, 1 Voice*. The title demonstrates the growing Latino population in the state and the importance to leverage their civic influence.

Civic engagement is fundamental to advancing Agenda goals. In 2014 and 2018 questionnaires specific to the needs and interests of the community were created by ILA and sent to gubernatorial candidates. The ILA has also co-hosted events for candidates to speak to community members directly for the 2014 mayoral race and the 2018 gubernatorial and attorney general races.

Additional victories include the passing of two important pieces of legislation and actively engaging in Illinois' redistricting process in collaboration with an African American led coalition. Two important reports were published, the *Latino Paradox* and *The Blueprint for Latino Investment: A Latino Legislative Agenda*, both commissioned by the Public Policy Institute of the IL Legislative Latino Caucus.

THE FUTURE IS NOW

The Forum as the lead convener of the Agenda is committed to developing, nurturing and building unity among leading Latino organizations. This is especially important amidst turbulent economic and political times. The ILA understands this to be paramount for the future success of Latino-serving and led organizations.

As the Latino population continues to grow, so too does the need for its community organizations to provide greater levels of education, health, housing, family, and social services. Now more than ever, leaders require support to bolster the sustainability of their organizations and to provide high-quality programs and services, particularly in suburban Chicago and downstate areas of new growth for the community.

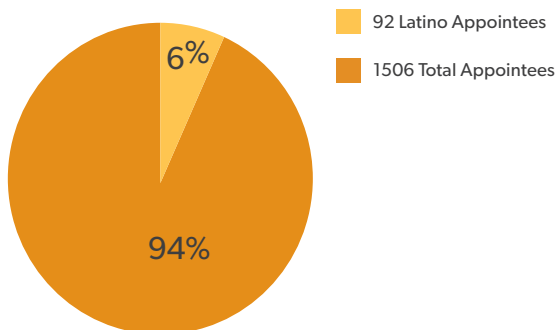
"Sustainable investment in Latino communities is no longer just a Latino issue-the well-being of Illinois' Latino community is inextricably linked to the well-being of the entire state."

Lawndale Bilingual News, 5/27/2010

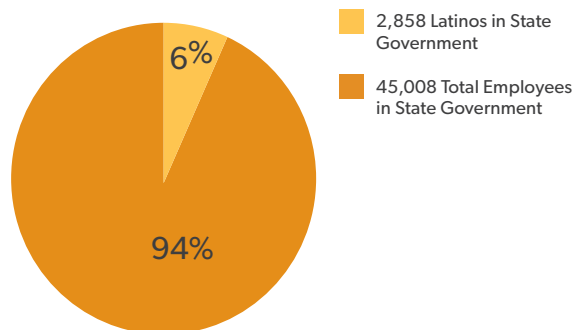
NOTABLE ACCOMPLISHMENTS

- Increased Latino visibility in the Legislator by meeting with key lawmakers on issues of equity and accountability from government.
- Wrote correspondence to Democrat and Republican leadership documenting requests to achieve parity.
- Successfully advocated for an additional \$500,000 for Latino led organizations from the Department of Human Services.
- Secured \$750,000 for the Illinois Latino Family Commission.
- Advocated for the passing of Legislation:
 - ▷ The Data Bill, which requires the Illinois Department of Human Services to report on the racial/ethnic composition of those served. The purpose of this bill is to ensure that state services are distributed equitably.
 - ▷ A law that requires the governor to issue an annual report to the legislature on the demographic composition of those who apply and those who are appointed to a state board. It also requires the Legislative Research Unit to make the report public on its website.
- Provided analysis of potential legislative district boundaries for redistricting of the General Assembly in 2011 and by the City of Chicago in 2012.
- Produced maps that argued for the creation of thirteen Latino congressional districts without disrupting any African American majority district. Only eight districts were ultimately created.
- Successfully recommended the appointments of highly qualified Latinos to state Boards and Commissions such as the Illinois Community College Board, Illinois Racing Board, and Prisoners Review Board.

Gubernatorial Appointees in Illinois Government, 2018



Employment in Illinois Government, 2018



ABOUT SOL

SOL is a series of periodic policy briefs that combines data with insightful analysis from the Latino Policy Forum. The series will provide a unique snapshot of the growth, influence and challenges of the local Latino community, for use by community leaders, urban planners, elected officials, journalists, and anyone interested in building a shared future for all of Illinois.

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