

STRENGTHENING OUR VOICES

NATIONAL HISPANIC CAUCUS OF STATE LEGISLATORS

NEWSLETTER | WINTER 2007

From the President



Look forward to an exciting and fruitful year for all of the newly elected state legislators and welcome you to the National Hispanic Caucus of State Legislators. I also want to take this opportunity to thank all of you for attending the Fourth National Summit held last November in San Juan, Puerto Rico.

It is now time to get ready for a new year full of meaningful activities and all that it will bring as we continue to work hard and with diligence for the communities we serve. This is another important year for NHCSL as we continue to implement our programs and initiatives on issues of health, education, immigration and economic development. I am pleased to share that we are now entering our third year of the Healthy States Initiative and plan to host a series of forums and meetings focusing on specific health topics.

On the education forefront, most recently NHCSL announced a \$150,000 grant from Comcast to support the John S. Martinez Scholarship Fund. We are also entering another phase of the ENLACE project and look forward to engaging the participation of our newly elected state legislators. We will continue to inform you of our activities and programs or you can also visit www.nhcsl.org for updates.

In this issue we highlight the impact of chronic disease on our elder Hispanics, provide an update of State Legislation on Public Health, and an interview with Georgia Representative Pedro Marin.

Thank you again for your continued support and I look forward to working with each of you in the coming months.

Sincerely,

Felix W. Ortiz
NHCSL President

LEGISLATORS CALL FOR ACCESS AND OPPORTUNITY



National Hispanic Caucus of State Legislators president, New York Assemblyman Felix W. Ortiz, announced that the NHCSL Executive Committee adopted and approved a series of resolutions that will ensure equal access and opportunity for the Hispanic community, as well as other disadvantaged and underserved communities.

The nine resolutions were adopted at the NHCSL Annual Executive Committee Meeting which was held during its Fourth National Summit this past November in San Juan, Puerto Rico. "NHCSL remains committed to ensuring that all Hispanic families have access to education, healthcare and economic opportunities," said Ortiz.

The resolutions range from ending Cervical Cancer in our lifetime to providing free tax filing for low-income, disadvantaged, underserved and working poor.

The entire text of the Resolutions can be found at www.nhcsl.org.

COMCAST JOINS NHCSL TO CLOSE THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP

Comcast announced a \$150,000 grant to the National Hispanic Caucus of State Legislators' (NHCSL) John S. Martinez Scholarship Fund at the NHCSL Annual Summit in Puerto Rico. This commitment reinforces Comcast's initiative to create education and employment opportunities for the Hispanic community and specifically impacts students in six states where Comcast provides products and services. The John S. Martinez Scholarship Fund is focused on developing tomorrow's Hispanic leaders through work experience and learning opportunities within the public service arena. The \$150K Comcast Foundation grant will be applied over the next three years in support of this program developed by NHCSL.



IN THIS ISSUE

- Q&A: Meet the Legislator
- Healthy States Focus
- Legislative Update

*Q&A: MEET THE LEGISLATOR



Pedro Marin

Representative Pedro Marin is a member of the Georgia House of Representatives. He represents House District 96, which includes the city of Norcross and the southwest portion of Gwinnett County, which is the second-largest county in Georgia with a population of approximately 700,000. When Representative Marin was first elected in 2002, he became one of the first three Latino members of the Georgia General Assembly. Currently in his third term, serves on the House Economic Development & Tourism, Industrial Relations, and Banks & Banking Committees.

Q: What is your priority issue as a state legislator?

A: My top priority is building stronger and safer communities, with a special focus on fighting gangs, drugs and other crimes. I have had great success in passing anti-gang legislation, and these laws are showing results in cleaning up our streets and making our neighborhoods safer. "Safe communities" bills include House Bill 130 http://www.legis.ga.gov/legis/2005_06/sum/hb130.htm and House Bill 465 http://www.legis.ga.gov/legis/2005_06/sum/hb465.htm from the 2005-06 sessions.

Q: How does your background working on various socio-economic issues help you as a legislator?

A: I have been able to take advantage of eight years of experience working for non-profit organizations, building public support through a grassroots approach to solving problems and meeting the needs our community. I have been involved with some of the following groups including: Advisory Board of Directors, Boys & Girls Clubs of Metro Atlanta; Advisory Board of Directors, United Way in Gwinnett County; Board of Directors, Selective Service System/Region 2; and Board of Directors, Hudgens Center for the Arts among others.

Q: What is the most important legislation that you have introduced and why?

A: That would be my graffiti bill of 2003, which authorizes the use of inmate labor to remove gang graffiti from private property. Not only is graffiti an eyesore, it is a means of communication that criminal gangs rely on to intimidate law-abiding citizens and each other. The law has helped reduce the presence of graffiti in our communities because the faster it is removed, the less likely it is to reappear. The 2003 graffiti bill was House Bill 144 (http://www.legis.ga.gov/legis/2003_04/search/hb144.htm)

Q: In 2006 the immigration debate was a national hot issue. How does this issue impact your constituency?

A: I represent one of the largest Latino constituencies in the state of Georgia, but they are invisible as a voting bloc. Since the enactment of the anti-immigrant legislation here last year (SB 529), they have gone even further underground out of fear.

Q: How can NHCSL support your efforts as a legislator?

A: NHCSL keeps me informed and abreast of national issues and consistently offers outstanding educational programs at conference meetings.

Q: What do you want your colleagues to know about Georgia?

A: We are a welcoming state, a warm state in which to live. We do business globally and have plenty of opportunities to offer.



focus

Chronic Disease & Elder Hispanics

The following is an excerpt of an article written by the National Hispanic Caucus of State Legislators (NHCSL) as a part of the Healthy States Initiative. To read the entire article visit www.nhcsl.org



Facts

- The elderly Hispanic population was 2 million in 2002 and is projected to grow to more than 13 million by 2050.
- By 2050, the Hispanic elderly will be 16 percent of the total number of seniors in the United States.
- The Hispanic elderly will be the second most rapidly growing segment of the population between 1990 and 2020.

Insufficient English skills and low economic status are common barriers in the health care system for elderly Hispanics in the United States, especially when it comes to getting early diagnosis and treatment of various chronic diseases. Further complicating the matter is the fact that one in three Hispanics lacks health insurance and still more have little or no access to health care services, which puts the Hispanic elderly at an even greater risk of not getting the required services for chronic diseases such as

diabetes, asthma or high blood pressure.

There is a growing need for community-based interventions that improve the health behaviors and health status among the elderly Hispanic population, as well as for a meaningful health care policy and legislation that can be replicated throughout the country. Learn more about how chronic disease affects the elderly Hispanic by reading the full article at www.nhcsl.org



Elizabeth Burgos, Executive Director
Maria Ibañez, Senior Advisor, Editor, *Strengthening Our Voices*
Tatiana Guerra, Senior Research Associate
Rhina Villatoro, Administrative Assistant

444 North Capitol Street, NW, Suite 404
 Washington, DC 20001

Tel: 202-434-8070 | Fax: 202-434-8072 | www.nhcsl.org

* LEGISLATIVE UPDATE: NEW REPORT TRACKS STATE LEGISLATION ON PUBLIC HEALTH

According to a report on legislative activity during 2006, lawmakers were especially keen to curb rising childhood obesity rates and debated immunization policies and smoking bans. Prepared for the Healthy States Initiative by the Health Policy Tracking Service, a service of Thomson West, the report tracked legislation in the states on a wide range of public health issues from Jan. 1 through July 3, when most state legislatures had completed the bulk of their legislative activity. Download the report from www.healthystates.csg.org. Here is a sampling of state action in 2006 based on the report.

Childhood Obesity: At least 23 states considered legislation to establish or change school nutrition standards, and 34 states debated bills to enhance physical education requirements for school children.

Connecticut enacted legislation (Senate Bill 373) to regulate the kind of beverages children in all grade-levels can buy at school or at school-related activities.

Vermont (House Bill 456) and **Oklahoma** (House Bill 2655) passed legislation to make it easier for children to get fresh fruits and vegetables in schools by creating farm-to-school programs.

Colorado (SB 127) launched a pilot program to offer free fruits and vegetables to students in selected schools during the school day.

West Virginia (Senate Bill 785), **Tennessee** (House Bill 3750) and **Florida** (House Bill 7087) all enacted legislation to enhance health and physical education requirements in school.

Immunization: Forty-one states considered a range of legislation dealing with immunization issues including **New York** (Assembly Bill 11236) and **Ohio** (House Bill 257) to improve access to vaccines to seniors.

Wyoming (House Bill 36) focused on providing funding for vaccines for children.

Public Place Smoking Bans: In the first six months of 2006, at least 15 states debated legislation aimed at implementing statewide bans on smoking in public places, and a total of 33 states considered a variety of measures to discourage or restrict smoking.

Colorado enacted the “Colorado Clean Indoor Air Act” (House Bill 1175).

Arkansas (Senate Bill 19), **New Jersey** (Senate Bill 1926), **Louisiana** (Senate Bill 742) and **Washington, D.C.** (L.B. 16-293) also enacted smoke-free public place legislation.

Workplace wellness: At least 14 states introduced legislation aimed at enhancing physical wellness at places of employment.

Oklahoma (House Bill 2149) repealed a sunset provision on the Oklahoma Wellness Council—allowing the council to continue its work to improve workplace wellness efforts statewide.

Health Disparities: **Maryland** enacted four bills dealing with health disparities, including one (House Bill 1455), which created a pilot program for cultural competency training for health care providers.

North Carolina (Senate Bill 1741) aims at reducing health disparities with a community-focused initiative.

Emergency preparedness: Six bills expanding the authority of state and local agencies during emergencies or dealing with the qualifications of health care professionals in emergency situations—were enacted, including **Alabama** (House Bill 107 and House Bill 1238), **Louisiana** (House Bill 61), **Maine** (Senate Bill 783) and **Utah** (Senate Bill 146).

Oral health: **New Mexico** (House Bill 2) boosted Medicaid payments for dental services and **Arizona** (HB 2214) now gives dental hygienists’ greater independence to screen patients and to apply topical fluoride without entering into an affiliated practice relationship with a dentist.

HIV/AIDS and hepatitis C: **Massachusetts** (HB 4176) enacted legislation requiring that a public health message about the safe use of hypodermic syringes and needles accompany the sale of the products. The intent is to prevent the contraction or spread of blood-borne diseases like AIDS and Hepatitis C.

Cancer screening: Forty-five bills relating to cancer screening and prevention were introduced in the states. For example, **Washington** (Senate Bill 5714) enacted legislation to establish an early detection program for breast and cervical cancer for low- to moderate-income women aged 40-64.

Environmental health: **New Hampshire** passed a law (House Bill 1673) that sets a goal to reduce mercury emissions from coal-burning power plants in the state by 80 percent by 2013 and requires the installation of scrubber technology.

Diabetes: **Tennessee** enacted Senate Bill 3895 to create a new diabetes prevention agency within the state aimed at combating the spread of type 2 diabetes.

Heart disease: **Maryland** (House Bill 58), **Massachusetts** (HB 4850) and **Washington** (Senate Bill 6197) all enacted legislation that recognizes heart disease as a condition that may impact ethnic and racial minorities at disproportionate rates and directs state officials to collect and publish statistics about who gets the disease.

Preventing birth defects: **California** enacted House Bill 405, which bans pesticide use on school grounds pending a study of the pesticide’s possible role in causing birth defects.

Graduated driver licensing: Three states enacted laws increasing training hours under their driver’s licensing programs: **Delaware** (House Bill 256), **Illinois** (House Bill 4768) and **Missouri** (Senate Bill 1001)

Hospital acquired infections: Several states considered legislation to require that hospitals collect information about infections acquired by patients during their hospital stays. The bill that **Colorado** enacted (House Bill 1045) is one example.

**Excerpts reprinted with permission from the Healthy States Quarterly, Volume 2, Number 3. The author is Dan Lorentz, editor of HS Quarterly. The Healthy States Initiative is a partnership among The Council of State Governments, the National Black Caucus of State Legislators, and the National Hispanic Caucus of State Legislators. The initiative is supported by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.*



NHCSL Executive Committee

NHCSL President

Assemblyman Felix W. Ortiz
New York

NHCSL President-Elect

Representative Joseph Miró
Delaware

Vice President for Public Policy

Senator Bernadette Sanchez
New Mexico

Treasurer

Representative Minnie Gonzalez
Connecticut

Secretary

Representative Mario Goico
Kansas

Representative José F. Aponte Hernandez
Puerto Rico

Senator Jarrett Barrios
Massachusetts

Senator Carlos Cisneros
New Mexico

- Representative Floyd Esquibel
Wyoming
- Representative Steve Gallardo
Arizona
- Senator Efrain González, Jr. (Past-President)
New York
- Delegate Ana Sol Gutiérrez
Maryland
- Speaker Ben Lujan
New Mexico
- Senate President Kenneth McClintock
Puerto Rico
- Senator Antonio Muñoz
Illinois
- Representative Dora Olivo
Texas
- Senator Juan M. Pichardo
Rhode Island
- Assemblyman Peter Rivera
New York

- Senator Leticia Van de Putte
(Immediate Past-President)
Texas

Business Board of Advisors Leadership

Chairman

Rafael Fernandez, Vice President of Latin Music Recording Industry Association of America

Vice Chairman

Armando Mejía Gallardo, District Director Altria Group, Inc

Vice President for Corporate Policy

Bert Gomez, Director, Federal Government Affairs
R. J. Reynolds

Vice President for Membership

Mary Foerster, Director of Diversity
AARP

Secretary

Emilio González, Director, Public Policy & Strategic Alliances
Verizon Communications

The National Hispanic Caucus of State Legislators (NHCSL) is the preeminent organization representing the interests of 300 Hispanic state legislators from all states, commonwealths, and territories of the United States. Founded in 1989 as a nonpartisan, nonprofit 501(c)3, NHCSL is a catalyst and advocate for joint action on issues of common concern, such as health, education, immigration, homeownership and economic development to all segments of the Hispanic community. NHCSL also works to design and implement policies and pro-

cedures that will impact the quality of life for Hispanic communities; serves as a forum for information exchange and member networking; an institute for leadership training; a liaison with sister U.S. Hispanic organizations; a promoter of public/private partnerships with business and labor; and a partner with Hispanic state and provincial legislators and their associations representing Central and South America.



444 North Capitol Street, NW
Suite 404
Washington, DC 20001