



STRENGTHENING OUR VOICES

NATIONAL HISPANIC CAUCUS OF STATE LEGISLATORS

NEWSLETTER | WINTER 2006

From the President



Felix Ortiz

Welcome to the premiere issue of *Strengthening Our Voices*, the quarterly newsletter of the National Hispanic Caucus of State Legislators (NHCSL). This is an exciting milestone for NHCSL and I am delighted to share it with you. The NHCSL is the nation's premier organization dedicated specifically to addressing the needs of the more than 300 Hispanic state legislators across the country. In addition, we center our policy priorities in the areas of health, education and immigration, which impact our Hispanic communities greatly. *Strengthening Our Voices* will serve as the venue to inform you about the NHCSL, our activities and the work of our legislators. I hope you find *Strengthening Our Voices* informative and insightful. I encourage you to share it with your colleagues. Thank you again for your continued support and commitment to NHCSL.

Assemblyman Felix Ortiz (NY)
NHCSL President



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HISPANIC STATE LEGISLATORS CONVENE AT SUMMIT



Hispanic State Legislators at NHCSL Summit

Hispanic legislators, corporate executives, government officials and policymakers convened at the Third National Summit where immigration, education, and health issues topped the agenda. United States Treasurer Anna Escobedo Cabral and Speaker-Designate of the Florida House Legislature Marco Rubio were among the featured keynote speakers at the Summit last November.

State Senators Receive National Recognition

Texas State Senator Gonzalo Barrientos was awarded the first John S. Martinez Excellence in Leadership Award from NHCSL. The Excellence in Leadership Award was created in honor of the late John S. Martinez, former State Representative of Connecticut and NHCSL President in 2001-2002. Senator Barrientos has served the state of Texas in the Senate for 20 years and in the House for 10 years prior. Senator Barrientos is the most Senior Hispanic in the Texas Senate.

Former New Mexico State Senator Manny Aragon was the recipient of the NHCSL Special Recognition Award. Aragon has been involved in politics and public service from an early age. He began his career in public service as an Assistant District Attorney and has practiced law since graduating in 1973. From numerous ranking positions in the New Mexico Legislature, Aragon was an ardent supporter of higher education. His constituents returned him to office every election since 1974. On

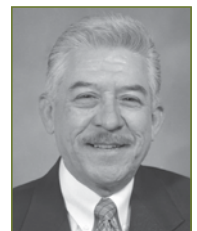
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Marco Rubio



Anna Escobedo Cabral



Gonzalo Barrientos



Manny Aragon

Verizon Communications is pleased to support the National Hispanic Caucus of State Legislators (NHCSL) and sponsor the inaugural year of its quarterly newsletter -- *Strengthening Our Voices*. The newsletter will serve as a forum to keep Hispanic legislators as well as members of the Business Board of Advisors informed and connected to the NHCSL.



NHCSL ANNOUNCES 2006 EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

NHCSL President-Elect: Representative Joe Miro (DE) was elected to office in 1998 and represents the 22nd District. He chairs the Business/Corporations/Commerce Committee, and Homeland Security. He is also the Vice Chair of the House Health and Human Development Committee.

NHCSL Vice President for Public Policy: Senator Bernadette Sanchez (NM) represents the 26th District. She serves on the committees of Corporations & Transportation, Economic & Rural Development & Telecommunications Committee, Education and Land Grant.

NHCSL Vice President for Membership: Representative John Aguilera (IN), was elected in 2000 to represent District 12 and currently serves on the Commission on Hispanic/Latino Affairs, the NW Indiana Transportation Study Commission, Motor Vehicle Issues Committee, and House Ways and Means Committee. Prior to his election he served on the Lake County Council from 1994 to 2000.

NHCSL Treasurer: Representative Minnie Gonzalez (CT) was elected to serve for the 3rd District of Connecticut in 1996. She is the Assistant Majority Whip and also serves on the Committees for Appropriations, Judiciary and Public Safety. She is also the Chair of the Connecticut Black and Latino Caucus.

NHCSL Secretary: Representative Mario Goico (KS) represents the 100th District. A retired Air Force Colonel after 32 years of service, Representative Goico served as the deputy group commander for the 931st Air Refueling Group at McConnell Air Force Base, Kan., in 1998-1999. He serves on the committees for Taxation, Health and Human Services, and Financial Institutions.

NHCSL RECEIVES GRANT TO HELP HISPANIC STUDENTS



NHCSL will expand its efforts to close the educational achievement gap for Hispanic students through ENLACE (Engaging Latino Communities for Education), a nationwide initiative created to increase higher education participation and completion opportunities for Latino/Hispanic students. The project is funded by a \$300,000 grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation.

“We are extremely proud of the work that the NHCSL has done to date to bring parents, families, communities, and educational and business partners together to improve college readiness, access, and degree completion for Latinos. We think their investment in ENLACE has the potential to make every student a success,” said Miguel Satut, program director at the W.K. Kellogg Foundation.

Assemblyman Ortiz called the program a “bold new approach to engaging corporations and the philanthropic community in the struggle to keep Hispanic students in school.” He added,

(Continued on page 3. See Grant)

SENATOR KEYNOTES MEDICARE CONGRESS



Leticia Van de Putte

In order to best inform her constituents about the sweeping changes brought about by the Medicare Modernization Act, Senator Leticia Van de Putte (D-San Antonio) traveled to Washington D.C. to participate in the 2nd National Prescription Drug Medicare Congress. The Congress drew over 500 attendees from around the country, including state Medicaid directors, health professionals and leaders in health information technology.

Van de Putte was a featured speaker at the Congress, sharing her insight on the need for states to develop innovative cost management strategies. She also strongly advised national experts about all states’ frustrations with paying the federal government 90% of the cost of prescription medications for “dual eligibles,” those seniors who qualify for both Medicare and Medicaid. This information is extremely timely, as January 1, 2006 was the implementation date of the new Medicare drug benefit.

“Education and outreach to Medicare recipients is vital to the success of this new

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LEGISLATORS DISCUSS DIABETES PREVALENCE AMONG HISPANICS

NHCSL members discussed the prevalence of diabetes among Hispanics who are 1.5 times more likely to have diabetes than non-Hispanic whites. Diabetes, which can also lead to heart disease, blindness, kidney failure, amputations and death, can be prevented and its dire complications avoided. This was the focus of attention in a national Web Conference as a part of NHCSL's Healthy States Initiative.

NHCSL President, New York State Assemblyman Felix Ortiz and Arizona State Representative Amanda Aguirre were among the panelists and discussed with health experts the importance of preventing diabetes, shared what programs and approaches are working in the Hispanic community, and what legislators are doing and can further do to help address the diabetes epidemic, particularly in the Hispanic community.

Arizona State Representative Amanda Aguirre, who is also a registered dietician said that while we need to be

more aggressive in addressing the issue of obesity and diabetes, particularly in Latino communities where there is often lack of access to healthcare, "healthcare professionals are in need of cultural sensitivity training to deal with Hispanic families on a daily basis."

The web conference is a part of the Healthy States Initiative, a partnership between the Council of State Governments (CSG), the National Hispanic Caucus of State Legislators and the National Black Caucus of State Legislators. The initiative offers trends analysis, innovative solutions and expert advice on critical public health issues for states.

Diabetes Prevention Website Resources:

- CDC Diabetes Public Health Resource: www.cdc.gov/diabetes
- National Diabetes Education Program (NDEP): www.ndep.nih.gov
- National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (About NDEP) www.cdc.gov
- Business and Managed Care Diabetes and Health Resource Kit: www.diabetesatwork.org

Summit (Continued from front page)

July 1, 2004, Aragon became the 16th President of New Mexico Highlands University.



Efrain González

New York State Senator Efrain González, Jr. was the recipient of the NHCSL President's Award. He was elected to the New York State Senate in 1989, during a special election. Since his election, he has focused on the revitalization of the Bronx. As a result, Senator González has been on the forefront of the battle for economic development, education, affordable housing, health reform, and the fight against crime and drug abuse

The NHCSL awards will be presented annually to current and/or former Hispanic legislator who embody a unique passion, dedication and great achievement throughout his/her political career.

Van de Putte (Continued from page 2)

prescription program," said Van de Putte, a pharmacist for over 25 years. "Each state will have to work closely with its local partners to ensure that beneficiaries and their families are able to select a prescription drug plan that best meets their needs."

Key national leaders featured in the Congress included Dr. Mark B. McClellan, current Administrator of the Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services (CMS) and Senator Chuck Grassley (R-Iowa), Chairman of the Senate Finance Committee.

Grant (Continued from page 2)



"creating partnerships in the business and philanthropic community is one way to ensure that students who stay in school will have work opportunities upon graduation." ENLACE has experienced success in several cities including Albuquerque, New Mexico, where efforts include the development of a Hispanic Teacher Pipeline to increase the number of Hispanic teachers in the area. NHCSL introduced ENLACE to its membership during the Summit where participants learned more about ENLACE New Mexico. With this partnership ENLACE will expand its work to include the states of California, Florida, Indiana, Illinois, New York, Ohio and Texas.



(pictured left to right) Indiana State Representative John Aguilera moderates the ENLACE panel at the NHCSL Summit with New Mexico State Senator Bernadette Sanchez, Karen Sanchez-Griego, Executive Director, ENLACE New Mexico, Judy Reed, Coordinator, Family Center, and Melissa Romero, ENLACE undergraduate mentor at the University of New Mexico.



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