

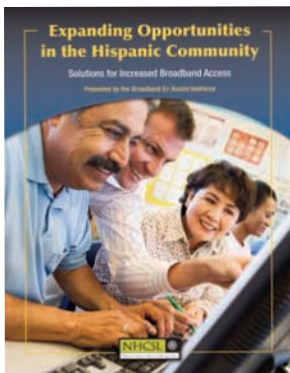
STRENGTHENING OUR VOICES

NATIONAL HISPANIC CAUCUS OF STATE LEGISLATORS

NEWSLETTER | WINTER 2010

NHCSL RELEASES FIRST EVER BROADBAND WHITE PAPER FOR HISPANICS

NHCSL is looking forward to moving into a full digital environment for all Americans. One of the most important topics the organization addressed this past year was the need to increase broadband access in all communities — especially for Hispanics, who continue to lag behind other Americans in adopting wireline broadband and in development of digital literacy skills. Competitive nations are now moving towards global networks; in order for America to remain competitive in the future, we must make digital literacy for all such a high priority that it becomes an American value. Increased digital innovation will stimulate economic growth, offering more opportunities for all communities as they become connected to broadband networks.



Earlier in the year, NHCSL held a press conference to release its first broadband white paper entitled *Expanding Opportunities in the Hispanic Community: Solutions for Increased Broadband Access*. The policy paper is a product of NHCSL's Broadband En Acción taskforce, which is comprised of NHCSL members: Senator Juan Pichardo (RI), Chair; Representative Joseph E. Miró (DE), Co-Chair; Representative Geraldo Alicea (MA); Senator Eduardo Bahtia (PR); Representative Mara Candelaria Reardon (IN); Representative Nora Espinoza (NM); Representative Minnie Gonzalez (CT); Representative Pedro Marin (GA); and NHCSL President, Senator Iris Y. Martinez (IL). The paper offers a proposed broadband

regulatory framework calling for policies that promote investment, access and digital training among the Latino community.

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NHCSL's 8th National Summit: Increasing Latino Competitiveness in the 21st Century



NHCSL held its 8th National Summit in San Antonio this past year. Many policy priorities were discussed, including disparities in health, education, and immigration. Members also addressed midterm election results and the representation of Hispanics in politics. During the Summit, NHCSL launched its obesity white paper entitled *Hispanic Obesity: An American Crisis*. Attendees received copies of both the broadband and obesity white papers.

The summit began with a welcome reception hosted by NHCSL Past President Senator Leticia Van de Putte (TX), who also serves in her legislature as Chair of Veteran Affairs and Military Installations. During the reception, local Hispanic legislators who served in the armed forces were honored and recognized for their services. The *Immigration Town Hall* luncheon was also held, where panelists included: Senator Richard Miranda (AZ),

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From the President



NHCSL President,
Sen. Iris Y. Martinez (IL)

Dear Colleagues:

New political realities across the nation leave questions for many on how to move an agenda, build new coalitions and build messages in a changed landscape of many newly elected officials. The 2010 elections saw the number of Latino state legislators increase slightly, as Latinos made gains even in non-traditional states, like Hawaii and Missouri. Even as the political winds shift, it is

heartening to know that the role of Latino state leaders has not diminished — in fact, there are Latino leaders across political parties who ran and won in both parties across the country.

NHCSL also saw our members ascend to Congress. Most notably, Marco Rubio and David Rivera will represent the state of Florida in the US Senate and US House of Representatives. We congratulate them on this accomplishment and stand ready to work with them in Congress.

There has never been a more important time for Latino leadership than today. By so many indicators, Latinos continue to struggle through tough economic times, with higher unemployment than the nation and what many families consider difficult prospects for the future. The Latino dropout rate is still double that of America, and we are moving too many Latinos to jail, as opposed to college. And the Latino community struggles with health disparities that have us contracting chronic illnesses and dying from them at higher rates than the rest of America.

Elections come and go, but we must remind ourselves, no matter our party affiliation, to unify around the work of strengthening our community. The great ideas cannot be held in reserve for elections. Rather, we must call ourselves to action as Latino leaders, to do our part to increase quality of life for Latinos.

We look forward to celebrating the victories of our new colleagues and welcoming them to NHCSL. And we will celebrate those victories by convening our colleagues around issues, and seeking solutions to our community's shared concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Iris Y. Martinez".

Senator Iris Y. Martinez (IL)
President

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ADDRESSING MAJOR DEPRESSIVE DISORDER

This past summer, NHCSL held a mental health session focusing specifically on Major Depressive Disorder (MDD). MDD refers to a severe condition of depression with one or more major depressive episodes. At the session, members heard from experts such as Dr. Maria Oquendo, President of the Hispanic Psychiatry Association and Dr. Melba Vasquez, President of the American Psychiatry Association. Members were excited to hear presentations from such powerful women, both of whom were the first Latinas to chair their associations. This session was moderated by Representative Louis Ruiz (KS).



Dr. Vasquez

Participants at the session learned that there are higher rates of mental illness among U.S. born and long-term residents than among recent Latino immigrants. Dr. Vasquez explained that birthplace has a significant correlation with the subsequent risk of forming psychiatric disorders. She spoke of research on suicidal ideation that found that foreign-born Mexican Americans are at significantly lower risk of suicide and depression than those born in the U.S.

Dr. Oquendo also addressed concerns of postpartum depression, as the condition poses a high risk to mothers. She emphasized the need for treatment to avoid an adverse impact on the child, who may also become depressed. Studies conducted at Columbia University showed that when mothers receive treatment for their postpartum depression, their child gets better; she added that treatment for mothers is vitally important as it enhances our communities as a whole.

Members were stunned to hear Dr. Oquendo speak of a study published by Dr. Glorisa Canino from the University of Puerto Rico, which compared Puerto Ricans who had recently migrated to New York to those who had already lived there for many years. The study found that there is a higher incidence of depression among Puerto Ricans with similar socioeconomic backgrounds living in New York compared to those living in Puerto Rico. She went on to explain a relationship with the dynamics of the migration from Puerto Rico based on the economic situation of the island being so robust compared to that of the originating countries of other Latino immigrants.

Author Irene Vilar shared her personal experience with MDD, as she and past generations of women in her family battled depression. She explained how she is using her writing as therapy to help combat the disorder. Depression is a disease that particularly affects many Latinas; based on SAMHSA's 2003 reports, although Hispanic girls ages 12 to 17 were at higher risk for suicide than other youths, only 32% of young Latinas at risk for suicide received mental health treatment.

Members shared experiences and information about campaigns they work with in their constituencies, such as the "Háblalo no te Trages el Problema," (translated to English - Speak it, Don't Swallow the Problem) campaign in Puerto Rico described by Representative Aponte Hernandez. Recommendations were made for members to increase public awareness of depression and work with doctors to ask that they elicit information from their patients so that necessary treatment can be received. It has been demonstrated that if depression is treated, many of

the physical conditions that originally bring the patient to the doctor's office are improved. Dr. Oquendo added that with the passage of the parity bill, there is more hope that mental conditions will have the same footing as physical conditions; there is still much work to do to assure that true parity becomes reality. Other points made involved the need to develop intervention programs that serve racial and ethnic minority youth to reduce at-risk behaviors that lead to mental illness.



Dr. Oquendo

We thank our supporter AstraZeneca for making this session possible. NHCSL continues to reach out to its members across the country to provide them with educational forums and materials to better equip them in making sound legislative decisions related to health. 🌐

NHCSL Releases First Ever Broadband White Paper for Hispanics

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Recommendations offered by the broadband white paper include implementation of effective digital literacy training, as well as updating of the Universal Service Fund (USF) to address needs of today's users across the nation, especially in rural and remote locations. Other recommendations made were the need for the FCC to lead in promoting and adopting smart grid technologies as well governing through increased transparency and flexible case-by-case oversight that increases consumer protection. 🌐



Rep. Mara Candelaria Reardon (IN), Sen. Juan Pichardo (RI), Rep. Minnie Gonzalez (CT), Rep. Joseph E. Miro (DE) and Sen. Eduardo Bahtia (PR).



Elizabeth Burgos
Executive Director

Rhina Villatoro
Policy and Communications Manager
Editor, Strengthening our Voices

Nelly Robles
Administrative Policy Associate

444 North Capitol Street, NW • Suite 404 • Washington, DC 20001
Tel: 202-434-8070 • Fax: 202-434-8072
www.nhcsl.org

NOT GIVING UP ON THE DREAM

NHCSL was saddened that, despite all of the efforts made to pass the DREAM Act in 2010, the bill did not pass the Senate. This year was the closest we have come to passing the bill. As our youth and our nation need the legislation to move forward, we will not give up on ensuring that it is enacted. We look forward to working with you in 2011 in advancing the DREAM Act and comprehensive immigration reform. Below is a letter from the National Immigration Forum to our members.



DREAMers prepare for Senate vote on December 18, 2010.

Dear NHCSL Legislators:

On Saturday morning, with millions of immigrants and immigration reform supporters watching, the Senate failed to reach the 60 votes necessary to move forward on the DREAM Act. Although this particular vote was lost, our resolve has been strengthened as have efforts to address the problems with our nation's immigration system. I want to thank you for lending your voice in support of the DREAM Act and the thousands of immigrant students whom this legislation would have benefited.

This month DREAM Act students dropped everything in their lives and came to Washington, DC in the greatest lobbying effort many have ever seen from the immigration reform community. Day in and day out they sang DREAM Christmas carols in 15 degree weather, practiced military drills on the Capitol grounds, staged "study-ins" at the Senate cafeteria, prayed with Members of Congress and staff constantly lobbied the halls of Congress. It is their unified strength and ability to mobilize that makes these students so incredible, but it is also their determination to continue fighting for justice that makes them leaders. I ask you to keep these DREAMers and their ability to keep up the good fight in mind as we head into a new year.

As you continue to reflect, remember that it is our responsibility to keep moving forward. It is our responsibility to never give up. Commenting on the defeat of the 2007 comprehensive immigration reform bill in the Senate, our late immigration champion Senator Edward Kennedy said:

"We will endure today's loss, and begin anew to build the kind of tough, fair and practical reform that is worthy of our shared history as immigrants and as Americans. Immigration reforms are always controversial. But Congress was created to muster political will to answer such challenges. Today we didn't, but tomorrow we will."

Our focus now turns to state legislatures in 2011 and the need to push back on Arizona-style and other hostile legislation as well as the 2012 elections. On behalf of the DREAM Act advocates, I extend a heartfelt thank you for all that you have done to support the DREAM Act and immigration reform. I look forward to our continued work together in the new year.

*Happy Holidays!
Sincerely,
Ali Noorani
Executive Director, National Immigration Forum*

who addressed current concerns and issues in Arizona; Ali Noorani of The National Immigration Forum, who highlighted trends throughout the nation; Hector Sanchez of LCLAA, who shared the labor unions' perspective; and Gaby Pacheco, a DREAM Walker who has been part of the youth movement in advocating immigrant rights and passage of the DREAM Act.

During the Annual Meeting, the newly-elected Business Board of Advisors (BBA) leadership was recognized. Congratulations to our newly-elected BBA leadership members! Mr. Emilio González of Verizon Communications will continue to serve as Chair for the BBA. We welcome new leadership members Jamie Oldani from Lilly USA, LLC and Nilda Gumbs of the National Cable and Telecommunications Association to the BBA. A special thank you to all of our BBA members for their continued support.

You may visit the NHCSL website at www.nhcsl.org for photos and additional information on the 8th National Summit of Hispanic State Legislators. 🌐



Rep. Roberto Alonzo (TX) actively participates at the Summit.



Immigration Town Hall panel addresses Summit participants.



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The NHCSL is the premier national association of Hispanic state legislators working to design and implement policies and procedures that will improve the quality of life for Hispanics throughout the country. NHCSL was founded in 1989 as a nonpartisan, nonprofit 501(c)3 with the mission to be the most effective voice for the more than 300 Hispanic legislators. For more information visit www.nhcsl.org.



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