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NHCSL ELECTS NEW LEADERSHIP AND SPEARHEADS INITIATIVE TO INCREASE LATINA REPRESENTATION

By Kenneth Romero-Cruz, Executive Director

NHCSL held its annual gathering earlier this year where the organization elected new leadership, approved resolutions on some of the most relevant topics of the day and held panels on some of those key issues.

In addition to a policy session on “Ensuring the Census Works for All Americans” (see p. 3), experts shared their thoughts on the impact of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) and the state of the current renegotiations. **Karen Antebi**, the number two chief negotiator for Mexico in the talks, stated that 40¢ out of every \$1 Mexico obtains from exports, comes back to the US, while the figure is just 4¢ in the case of China. **Christopher E. Wilson**, Deputy Director for the Woodrow Wilson Center’s Mexico Institute, shared that, since NAFTA went into effect in 1994, trade between the US and Mexico surged from \$150B/yr. to \$600B in 2016.

Sen. Carmelo Ríos (PR) kicked off a discussion on resiliency, emphasizing the economic importance of having a 21st century infrastructure and sustainability in the wake of natural disasters that inflicted damage in Texas, California, Florida, Puerto Rico, and the US Virgin Islands. Ríos argued that “this is not a theoretical exercise for us, it is literally the difference between having safe drinking water, and a reliable electricity grid that can withstand Category 5 hurricanes and other calamities.” Participants in the panel included **Juan Torres**, Associate Laboratory Director for Energy Systems Integration at the National Renewable Energy Laboratory (NREL); and **Joseph Viens**, Chair of the Communications Infrastructure Information Sharing and Analysis Center.

Dr. Carolyn Orr, Agriculture Policy Consultant at the Council of State Governments (CSG), moderated an agricultural entrepreneurship panel, along with **Rudy Arredondo**, President of the

National Latino Farmers and Ranchers Trade Association (NLFRTA), and **Amelia Morán Ceja**, President of Ceja Vineyards.

LATINAS LEAD

In a historic first, NHCSL signed an agreement with **Rutgers University’s Center for American Women and Politics (CAWP)** to hold a yearly leadership academy to boost the amount of Latina state legislators nationwide, ensure that incumbent Latina legislators have the tools they need to reach leadership positions within their Legislatures as well as aspire to higher office. **Latinas are 1.3% of state legislators of all racial and ethnic backgrounds and are just 1.6% in Congress.**

NHCSL ELECTIONS AND AWARDS

The newly sworn-in leadership of NHCSL consists of: President – **Sen. Carmelo Ríos (PR)**; 1st Vice-President – **Rep. Ángela Romero (UT)**; Vice President for Public Policy – **Rep. Carlos Tobón (RI)**; Vice President for Membership – **Rep. Roberto Alonzo (TX)**; Treasurer – **Rep. Mark Archuleta Wheatley (UT)**; and Secretary – **Rep. Juan Candelaria (CT)**.

NHCSL awarded its highest honor, the John S.

Martínez Legislator of the Year Award, to retiring **Rep. Dan Pabón (CO)**. Representative Pabón has been a pioneer who spearheaded important discussions on cannabis and consumer financial protection to broaden NHCSL’s educational efforts. In addition, the organization bestowed its Corporate Leadership Award to **Iván Báez**, Director of Government Affairs for Walmart in Puerto Rico and Vice President for Membership in NHCSL’s Business Board of Advisors (BBA). Báez was recognized for his role in Walmart’s response efforts after Hurricane Maria and for his contributions to NHCSL.

RESOLUTIONS

NHCSL also ratified resolutions expressing the organization’s support for a pathway to citizenship for DACA recipients, ensuring the Census works for all Americans, supporting the establishment of the National Museum of the American Latino, calling for legislation to ban workplace discrimination against LGBTQ Americans, among other relevant issues.

From left to right: Latina Leads Chair, **Sen. Patricia Torres Ray (MN)**; and Rutgers CAWP Director, **Prof. Deborah Walsh**.



LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT



Welcome to the Summer Edition of our quarterly newsletter. I am excited to write my first welcome letter as President, following my election at our Annual Summit in Chicago last February.

NHCSL works in a bipartisan manner on many issues, including criminal justice reform, equal access to technology, quality healthcare and affordable housing, as well as promoting respect and equality for all people: from immigrants, to women, to LGBTQ individuals, to racial, religious and ethnic minorities, including non-Hispanics.

But, for the last two years, it feels like we have been in overdrive – in a permanent state of emergency – constantly fighting to defend our community, one attack after the other. These attacks include: families being separated at the southern border, efforts to undercount our people in the 2020 Census, the Muslim Ban, the border wall, and the constant attacks on the press.

In 2016, only 13 out of 27 million eligible Latinos turned out to vote, and here we are, in 2018, and it looks like “history repeating.” Back then, the hateful rhetoric trumpeted against us was just words. Today, we are living the consequences of our inaction every day.

Doing nothing about it on Election Day is immoral --- not as immoral as the cages full of innocent children, weeping for their parents --- but immoral nonetheless. We often talk about the power of the Latino vote, but there is no power if we don't flex our collective muscle and make sure that every single member of our community comes out in force this November.

I look forward to working with you in the months ahead, so when we wake up on Wednesday, November 7th, we celebrate the fruits of that hard work, by saying: ¡Ya era hora!

Sincerely,

Senator Carmelo Ríos (PR), President
National Hispanic Caucus of State Legislators

NHCSL AMENDS BYLAWS TO ENSHRINE GENDER AND REGIONAL DIVERSITY

By Guillermo L. Mena-Irizarry, Esq., Policy Lead

In a historic vote at our Annual Summit in February, NHCSL's Legislative Members unanimously approved changes to the Caucus' bylaws that enshrine gender and regional diversity at all levels of the organization. The changes require absolute gender parity in the Executive Committee — the body charged with governing the Caucus — and they create new officers, and representative and electoral requirements that guarantee NHCSL's regional diversity moving forward.

The most sweeping change comes at the highest level. Starting with the next elections in 2019, NHCSL will elect a President-Elect that must be from a different region than the incoming President. The four regions are Northeast, South, Midwest and West.

The approved changes reflect a growing consensus that our strength as a Caucus comes from our diversity, which we must strengthen to continue growing in numbers, stature, and relevancy. They help NHCSL lead by example, providing further moral authority to our calls for inclusion and diversity in Federal appointments as well as corporate recruitment and advancement.

Senator Mo Denis (NV) led the effort to update the bylaws as a capstone to several years working as Chair of the Bylaws Committee, which recommended them. **Senators Patricia Torres Ray (MN)** and **Daniel Ivey-Soto (NM)**, and **Representatives Juan Candelaria (CT)** and **Louis Ruiz (KS)**, also worked on the changes as members of the Committee at different periods. Then **NHCSL President Representative Ángel Cruz (PA)** charged the Committee with drafting workable diversity policies.

CONTINUED CHARGE FOR GENDER EQUALITY

This was not the first time in recent years that NHCSL took steps to advance women within and to its ranks. In 2016, the Caucus announced its Latinas Lead Initiative that seeks to train Latinas

to run for state legislatures and further helps Latina legislators move up the ranks to leadership positions or run for higher office. But the bylaws changes are the most far-reaching gender efforts in the Caucus' history.

The new bylaws ensure that there is an equal number from each gender in the Executive Committee. This means that even electoral results at the officer level cannot serve as an excuse for gender disparity at NHCSL. If there are more men than women among the elected officers, then they must appoint more women to the Executive Committee to balance the scales.

REGIONAL DIVERSITY GUARANTEE

As groundbreaking as the gender equality commitment is, the main changes to NHCSL governance enshrine regional and, consequently, ethnic diversity.

Along with the alternating regions required for the NHCSL Presidency, regions now have elected Chairs who serve as NHCSL officers to help ensure that their region's interests are always considered. The Regional Chairs also help facilitate regional meetings, business partnerships, and membership recruitment.

Further, all regions must have balanced representation among the appointed Executive Committee members, allowing at least four and no more than five per region, for a total of seventeen. The members also kept the existing requirement that no state or territory have more than two elected officers at any time, excepting the Regional Chairs.

IMMEDIATE RESULTS

NHCSL's new President, Senator Carmelo Ríos (PR), was the first to embrace the new system, appointing the most diverse Executive Committee in NHCSL history, including members from 18 states and territories, 13 women, and three Republicans.

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ENSURING THE CENSUS WORKS FOR ALL AMERICANS

By Rep. Tony Navarrete (AZ), Latino Voting & Elections Task Force Chair

Just a few weeks after NHCSL kicked off its 15th Annual National Summit of Hispanic State Legislators with a policy session on the 2020 Census, **US Secretary of Commerce Wilbur Ross**, announced his decision to include a question about respondents' citizenship in the 2020 Census that is likely to cause an undercount of Hispanics, unless Congress or the courts overturn this decision.

NHCSL immediately mobilized and approved Emergency Resolution 2018-12, which I sponsored with **Rep. Rebecca Chávez-Houck (UT)**. The Resolution was unanimously adopted at the 2018 Spring Executive Committee meeting, on behalf of the entire Caucus, rejecting the inclusion of the citizenship question in the Census questionnaire.

Secretary Ross' announcement came on the heels of an earlier decision announced by the Office of Management and Budget (OMB) in January 2018, which eliminated the combined race/ethnicity question from the Census, that would have made it easier for Hispanics to identify themselves in the questionnaire.

Senator Daniel Ivey-Soto (NM), moderator of the Summit's policy session, emphasized the importance of the upcoming Census and that all Latinos participate and be counted. Ivey-Soto was quick to point out how Latino participation in the Census is critical for states' federal funding formulas, and how it is also crucial to advance political representation for the Hispanic community.

Roberto Ramírez, Assistant Division Chief for Special Population Statistics at the **U.S. Census Bureau**, outlined key data points on how the Hispanic population trends have evolved from 1970 to 2016. In the 1970 Census, there were 9.6 million Hispanics in the United States. Fast-forward to the 2010 Census, and that number rose to 50.5 million; a 400% growth. As of July 2016, the number of Latinos in the U.S. was 57.5 million with a projection of 119 million Hispanics by 2060, or 28.6% of the total population.

"The Hispanic question is here to stay," said Ramírez, stating there are no plans to eliminate the query asking Census respondents about their Hispanic ethnic origin. **Ramírez** also said the Census Bureau does not set standards for the collection of information on ethnicity and race for the Federal Government, since they are a data



From left to right: **Sen. Daniel Ivey-Soto (NM)**; **Roberto Ramírez**, Asst. Div. Chief for Special Population Statistics, U.S. Census Bureau; **Rosalind Gold**, Senior Director for Policy Research & Advocacy, NALEO; **Raúl Cisneros**, Director of the Center for New Media and Promotions, U.S. Census Bureau; and **Luis Rosero**, Vice President for Government Relations at NBC/Universal/Telemundo.

agency and not a policy agency. Those standards are decided by OMB, which has determined five categories for race: 1) American Indian/Alaskan Native, 2) Asian, 3) Black/African American, 4) Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, or 5) White.

OMB made the decision not to include a combined race/ethnicity question, despite the fact that the agency had tested it thoroughly and the results had been positive. In contrast, OMB was inconsistent with the application of this reasoning in the case of the citizenship question, which was not researched nor tested prior to the announcement. In fact, the query was not included in the small district in Providence, Rhode Island,

Several issues can jeopardize an accurate count of the population in the 2020 Census:

- 1. The citizenship question.** Many Hispanic organizations are advocating for the Bureau not to go forward with this since the accuracy of the question has never been researched nor tested.
- 2. Federal statute regarding the hiring of Federal Government employees.** Generally, the law says that those employees should be US citizens, but there has always been a waiver for Census staff to work for the Bureau. So far, there will be no waiver, which undermines the cultural competence needed to reach certain populations.
- 3. Resources.** Congress is not providing the Bureau the funds it needs to fully perform its duties. Consequently, community outreach has been delayed.

where, according to **NHCSL Vice President for Policy Carlos Tobón (RI)**, there have already been problems with the testing on the ground. **Tobón** also points out that Providence is a highly urban area and that no rural areas will be tested in the rest of the country, making it difficult to test its effectiveness in counting Latinos and other minorities in those areas.

For **Rosalind Gold**, Senior Director of Policy Research and Advocacy for the **National**

Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO), and a panelist at the session, "you cannot get an accurate count of the Nation's population unless we have a full and complete count of the Latino community." In her view, the two most pressing matters at stake for Latinos in the upcoming Census are power, because population changes affect the apportionment of seats in Congress, and money, because over \$600 billion are allocated based on states' Census data for vital programs in the areas of healthcare, education, highway construction projects, school lunches, and early Head Start programs, to name a few.

Unlike the 2010 enumeration, the Internet will be the primary response mode for answering the 2020 Census. However, the Bureau needs to have a more robust presence with field enumerators, especially for Latinos that do not have access to the Internet.

I urge all my fellow NHCSL state legislators to organize a complete count committee for each state. At least one member in each committee should coordinate all count activities at all state agencies and promote efforts to appropriate state funding for Census outreach.

As to the citizenship question, several states have taken the Administration to court over the matter. A decision is expected before the 2020 Census takes place.

Meanwhile, **NHCSL** will continue to push for this question to be eliminated. The ramifications of leaving the question will affect not just the Latino community and others that will be undercounted – and the federal funding that would jeopardize – but also the economic ramifications of not having accurate data, since businesses use Census information for their investment decisions. The legal arguments are also sound. The 14th amendment of the US Constitution clearly states that every person, regardless of citizenship, needs to be counted. As **NHCSL** Resolution 2018-12 states, the inclusion of the citizenship question also violates procedural and substantive requirements of both the Census Act and the Administrative Procedure Act.

For all these reasons and more, I am proud to stand along my fellow Latino legislators and **NHCSL** in ensuring that every individual in this country is counted in the 2020 Census.

Navarrete represents District 30 in Arizona.

16TH NATIONAL SUMMIT

OF HISPANIC STATE
LEGISLATORS

DEATAILS:

Welcome Reception (12/6)
Policy Sessions
Noche de Celebracion (12/8)

We will be joined by members of NHCSL, local elected officials and community leaders of the city of San Diego.

WHEN:
Dec. 6 – 9, 2018

WHERE:
Kona Kai Resort
San Diego, CA

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