

LULAC

NEWS

SUMMER 2024

The Recent Rise
of Anti-Immigrant
Legislation

The Hidden Housing
Cost of Climate Change

The Latino Vote in 2024

We Must Never Forget
Uvalde, Texas

**EMPOWERING
THE NEXT
GENERATION**



About LULAC

Ninety-five years ago, a coalition of Latino leaders took a pivotal step by establishing the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) to champion the rights and well-being of Latinos. Today, LULAC has evolved into the largest and most active membership organization dedicated to serving the Latino community.

LULAC now operates through a network of 535 local organizations known as LULAC councils, each committed to fostering engagement and empowerment within the Latino community. These councils spearhead initiatives aimed at actively supporting Latino communities, nurturing leadership, and facilitating capacity building for enduring transformation and civic participation. It's worth noting that the LULAC National Office (LNO) was founded as a 501(c)(4) and spearheads all of the direct advocacy work of the organization. The

LULAC National Institute (LNI) operates as under a 501(c)(3) designation and manages all of the programmatic work, scholarship, and leadership programs. Both organizations are bi-partisan.

With a membership totaling nearly 140,000, LULAC members have been pivotal in driving significant progress and enhancing the quality of life for Latinos across the nation. Since its inception, LULAC members have demonstrated unwavering commitment to eradicating discrimination and injustice against Latinos in the United States.

Through both national and community-based initiatives, LULAC has implemented programs aimed at addressing the diverse needs of the Latino community and fostering progress in critical areas such as education, economic empowerment, and social justice.



LULAC News

SUMMER
2024

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Letter from the National President

Dear LULAC Familia and Friends,

Welcome to this historic edition of LULAC News, which coincides with the 95th Annual Convention of the League of United Latin American Citizens. *Con orgullo y corazón*, I address you today as your LULAC National President.

We stand together, united in our diversity, as a testament to the enduring spirit of our Raza. Our journey, much like the journey of my own family, is woven into the fabric of this great nation. It's an American story. It's our stories. My parents, like many of yours, came to the United States with a dream—a dream for a better life for their children. From the fields where I picked cotton to the halls of power where I now advocate for the rights of 62 million Latinos, our story is one of perseverance and triumph.

Growing up in the oil fields of West Texas, moving to the bustling streets of West Dallas, I learned the value of hard work as a shoeshine boy, a newspaper boy, a construction worker, a waiter, and a student determined to excel. Sports and debate honed my competitive edge, but the desire to defend the voiceless and oppressed led me to the Thurgood Marshall School of Law and eventually serve as an attorney.

My commitment to service did not stop in the courtroom. As a member of the Texas Legislature, I

was instrumental in passing the nation's first Texas DREAM Act, a beacon of hope for undocumented Latino students. My tenure on the Dallas City Council and as the youngest Mayor Pro Tem further solidified my dedication to our community by creating the first Latino cultural center and helping organize the Mega Marcha of 2006, with 500,000 Raza in the streets of downtown Dallas.

The values instilled in me by my parents—hard work, integrity, pride, and humility—have guided me throughout my life. Many LULAC members have shaped my path, igniting a passion to serve the underserved, the ignored, and the neglected. It has been an honor to lead LULAC, to be a voice, ungrito, for our people, and to stand for social justice and equality. *Que Viva LULAC* — 95 years strong!

Sincerely,

Domingo A. Garcia

National President

League of United Latin American Citizens



Be the

LEADER OF YOUR
COMMUNITY
BECOME A LULAC MEMBER

lulac.org



SCAN & JOIN US



A Message from the CEO

As we celebrate the 95th anniversary of the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), we reflect on nearly a century of advocacy, community building, and unwavering commitment to the advancement of the Latino community. Since our founding in 1929, LULAC has championed civil rights, fought against discrimination, and worked tirelessly to ensure that every Latino in the United States has an opportunity to pursue their own version of the American dream.

This milestone is not just a time to look back but also a call to action, a reminder of the challenges that still lie ahead—disparities in education, a widening gap in access to insurance and healthcare, a persistent gap in median Latino income and home ownership, and an immigration system in need of an overhaul to deal with global migration impacted by war, economic crises, and climate change around the world.

To add to these challenges, we face an election season in which Latinos are under assault with threats of closing the border (again), mass deportation, and even a threat against birthright citizenship in the United States. Despite incredible contributions to this country that have helped fuel its prosperity, including filling essential jobs in the economy, growing the

number of small businesses, and adding over \$1.6 trillion to the GDP, Latinos continue to face significant challenges that are further compounded by outright racism and discrimination.

As a first-generation immigrant, I witnessed firsthand the many sacrifices my parents made for me and my siblings. Like millions of other immigrant families, we were raised with the belief that anything is possible in the United States. We learned that education was the cornerstone of opportunity and that a person's hard work and perseverance would be rewarded. What we were able to accomplish in one generation laid the ground for kind of resilience that reverberates in Latino communities across the nation. With this resilience runs a responsibility to pave paths for new generations to continue breaking barriers to higher education and economic prosperity.

Latino students today too often still face significant barriers. Despite progress, our community still grapples with lower graduation rates and limited access to higher education. Addressing these disparities requires a concerted effort to invest in educational programs, support systems, and policies that ensure equitable opportunities for all.

Technology has also become essential to modern life, influencing everything from job opportunities to healthcare access. Artificial intelligence promises to unleash a wave of creativity and productivity while threatening to leave millions of Latinos further behind the technology curve. The digital divide continues to disproportionately affect Latino communities, limiting access to the tools and resources necessary for success in the 21st century.

Moreover, Latino net worth remains significantly lower than that of other ethnic groups, a reflection of systemic inequities and barriers to economic opportunity. Building wealth in our community requires comprehensive strategies, including financial literacy education, support for Latino-owned businesses, and policies that promote economic inclusion.

Homeownership is a key indicator of economic stability and prosperity, yet many Latino families face obstacles in achieving this dream. From discriminatory lending practices to economic disparities, the path to homeownership is fraught with challenges. Efforts to support first-time homebuyers, eliminate discriminatory practices, and promote affordable housing are crucial to closing this gap.

Despite these challenges, we have much for which to be hopeful. Over the past 95 years, LULAC has made tremendous strides in advocating for the rights and opportunities of Latinos across the nation. Our community's resilience, ingenuity, and determination are the foundation upon which we will continue to build. As we look to the future, we must leverage our collective strength to create lasting change.

This edition of LULAC News is dedicated to exploring these critical issues, celebrating our successes, and charting a course for the future. Together, we can build a more equitable and prosperous future for all Latinos. Let us honor our past, confront our present, and forge ahead with hope and determination.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Juan Proaño", written in a cursive style.

Juan Proaño
CEO, LULAC



Trailblazers of Change: LULAC's 95-Year Legacy

By **Juan Diego Gonzales** and **Nathan Weisbrod**
LULAC Policy Fellows

For 95 years, the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) has spearheaded the fight for Latino civil rights across the United States. Established in 1929 in Corpus Christi, LULAC played a pivotal role in desegregating public spaces in Texas and has since dedicated itself to advancing equal rights and opportunities for the Latino community.

Early on, LULAC's impact expanded with the introduction of *LULAC News*, which remains one of the longest-running Latino publications in the U.S. The establishment of the first LULAC Ladies' Auxiliaries in 1934 represented a key moment for women's engagement in the organization's mission, marking a significant milestone for Latina civic engagement.

Identifying key battlegrounds such as the justice system, military, and education, LULAC fought against racial discrimination faced by returning Latino veterans like Macario Garcia and Felix Longoria. Pivotal moments, like initiating and funding the *Mendez v. Westminster* lawsuit in 1946 and winning the *Hernandez v. State of Texas* case in 1954, solidified LULAC's commitment to equality. Initiatives like the "Little School of the 400" in 1958, supported by figures like Lyndon B. Johnson, set the stage for Project Head Start, benefiting millions.


In 1963, President John F. Kennedy's attendance at a LULAC event underscored the organization's political significance and the power of the Latino vote, tragically preceding his assassination the following day. The establishment of the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund (MALDEF) in 1968 further expanded LULAC's impact, leading to landmark victories like *Plyler v. Doe* in 1982. In a separate lawsuit filed in 1994, LULAC effectively halted California's Prop 187 from taking effect.

The 2006 immigration protests, organized by LULAC in response to H.R. 4437, marked a pivotal moment in Latino politics, with millions rallying nationwide for

comprehensive immigration reform. These protests, starting in Chicago and culminating in the historic La Gran Marcha in Los Angeles, attracted an estimated 1.25 to 1.5 million participants.

Following the 2006 protests, LULAC continued its advocacy, founding the LULAC Rainbow Council of Dallas to highlight the intersectionality between Latino and LGBT communities. In 2020, LULAC's campaign I Am Vanessa Guillen brought attention to sexual violence in the military, resulting in the signing of the I AM Vanessa Guillen Act in 2022. Additionally, LULAC raised funds for victims of tragedies like the Robb Elementary School mass shooting and the Baltimore Bridge Tragedy in 2024, highlighting issues affecting Latino communities.

Despite LULAC's efforts, disparities persist for Latinos in the United States, with economic and political opportunities remaining unequal. LULAC remains steadfast in its commitment to championing policies aimed at fostering equality and dismantling the systemic barriers that impede the advancement of the Latino community. Through advocacy, education, and grassroots mobilization, LULAC strives to create a more equitable society where all Latinos have access to the same opportunities for success.

As LULAC commemorates 95 years of steadfast dedication to advocacy, education, and empowerment, its legacy serves as a poignant reminder of the ongoing civil rights struggle in the United States. While every Latino in the United States has reaped the rewards of LULAC's efforts, the quest for equality remains incomplete. Let us unite with LULAC and rally others to join our cause, forging a future where every Latino can thrive and prosper, thus ensuring a future of representation and justice for all. 

LULAC's Fight for Healthcare Justice



By **Dr. Ray Serrano**

Director of Research and Policy.

Ray holds a PhD from Emory University, a Master's in Public Health from Yale, and a Bachelor's degree from Stanford University.

There's an old Spanish saying that resonates deeply: '¿De qué te sirven tus bienes si buena salud no tienes?' Translated, it asks: Of what use are your possessions if you don't have good health? This sentiment encapsulates the urgent reality facing Latino communities today, where access to healthcare remains a critical issue often defined by acceptability and affordability.


A staggering statistic underscores the gravity of the situation: nearly half of the U.S.' uninsured population is Latino, with Latinos three times more likely than whites to lack health insurance. This profound disparity highlights the need for equitable and culturally-competent healthcare access across the board. Advocacy groups like LULAC have long championed these causes, working tirelessly to address systemic inequities and promote healthcare as a basic human right.

Consider the challenge of accessing anti-obesity medications. Obesity rates among Latinos in the United States are alarmingly high, with nearly 47% of Hispanic adults affected, compared to 42% of the general population. This disparity extends to Latino children, where 26% are classified as obese, compared to 16% of non-Hispanic white children and 22% of non-Hispanic Black children. However, many Latinos struggle to obtain essential anti-obesity medications due to high costs and inadequate insurance coverage, exacerbating health risks associated with obesity.

The recent scaling back of Medicaid provisions in the aftermath of COVID-19 adds another layer of complexity,

disproportionately impacting Latinos who are already at heightened risk of losing coverage. This rollback threatens to exacerbate existing health disparities, highlighting the urgent necessity for continuous access to healthcare. It's in this landscape that LULAC's advocacy plays a pivotal role, steadfastly confronting these obstacles to secure comprehensive healthcare access for all.

Reproductive healthcare presents another critical challenge, particularly for Latinas. Increased criminalization and surveillance of reproductive health decisions in states like Louisiana, Texas, and Idaho have created a climate of fear and restricted access to essential services. Latinas are more likely to experience unintended pregnancies and encounter barriers to contraception and abortion services, exacerbated by restrictive laws that subject them to heightened scrutiny and legal risks.

In confronting these multifaceted challenges, there is an opportunity for profound change and progress. By prioritizing equitable access to treatments, healthcare coverage, and reproductive healthcare for Latinos in the United States, we can foster healthier communities and a more just society. This effort is not just about addressing disparities; it is about affirming fundamental rights and empowering individuals to lead healthier lives with dignity and respect. Through sustained advocacy and collective action, including the ongoing efforts of organizations like LULAC, we can bridge these gaps and forge a future where every individual, regardless of background, has the healthcare they need to thrive. 



LULAC:

A 95-Year Legacy of Empowering Latinos

By **David Cruz**
LULAC Communications Director

For nearly a century, the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) has stood as a beacon of hope and justice, tirelessly championing the rights and dignity of Latinos across the United States. From its humble beginnings to its current status as the nation's oldest and largest Latino civil rights organization, LULAC's journey is a testament to the enduring spirit of a community in pursuit of the American dream.

In the heart of Corpus Christi in 1929, a movement was born. LULAC emerged as a pivotal force in dismantling the segregation that marred the public spaces of Texas. Swimming pools, restrooms, barber shops, and water fountains—once symbols of division—were transformed into places of unity, thanks to LULAC's unwavering resolve.

By 1931, LULAC's voice found a new medium—LULAC News. This monthly publication became the sinews connecting LULAC's mission to the broader nation, weaving a network of informed and engaged citizens ready to stand up for their rights.

The year 1934 marked a significant milestone as LULAC expanded its embrace to include Las Mujeres de LULAC. Forming the first Ladies' Auxiliaries in cities like Alice, El Paso, Kingsville, and San Antonio was not just a step toward inclusivity but a leap toward empowerment.

In a bold move in 1940, LULAC confronted the marginalization head-on, persuading the Census Bureau to reclassify Mexican Americans from "Mexican" to "White." This pivotal change was more than a mere administrative update; it declared that Latinos would no longer accept second-class citizenship.

The struggle against discrimination soon extended into the justice system, the military, and, crucially, education. In 1946, LULAC instigated and funded legal action in Santa Ana, California, which culminated in the landmark *Mendez v. Westminster* lawsuit. This victory shattered a century of educational segregation and laid the groundwork for the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision.

As the echoes of World War II faded, Latino veterans returned home, their service to the nation undiminished. Yet, they found themselves in another kind of battle—a



fight against the racial discrimination that still pervaded their homeland. The indignities faced by heroes like Macario Garcia, denied service despite his Medal of Honor, and Felix Longoria, whose widow was refused a wake for her fallen husband, became rallying cries in LULAC's relentless pursuit of justice.

In 1954, LULAC's legal prowess shone brightly as its attorneys triumphed in the *Hernandez v. Texas* case before the U.S. Supreme Court. This landmark victory secured the right for Mexican Americans to serve on juries, dismantling a significant barrier to equal protection under the law.

Four years later, LULAC again broke new ground with the launch of the "Little School of the 400". This pioneering preschool program, aimed at teaching basic English to Spanish-speaking children, found an ally in Lyndon B. Johnson who started his career as a school teacher in Cotulla, Texas in 1929. His involvement helped shape the program into a precursor for the Head Start initiative,

which was championed by Lady Bird Johnson since enriched the lives of millions of Latino and African American children.

The year 1963 marked a watershed moment for LULAC as it solidified its political clout. President John F. Kennedy, acknowledging the burgeoning power of the Latino vote, made history as the first sitting president to attend a LULAC event. This gesture, occurring just a day before his tragic assassination, underscored the national significance of LULAC's mission. Since 1963, LULAC has hosted every U.S. President to discuss issues impacting the Latino community at its Legislative Conference or National Convention.

In 1968, the fight for equality gained a formidable ally by establishing the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund (MALDEF), spearheaded by LULAC Civil Rights Chair Pete Tijerina. The organization's dedication bore fruit in 1982 with the landmark *Plyer v. Doe* case. After five years of litigation, MALDEF emerged victorious, affirming that all children, irrespective of immigration status, are entitled to a free public education from kindergarten through 12th grade.

In 1994, LULAC stood firm against discrimination, challenging California Governor Pete Wilson by halting the infamous Prop 187. This proposed legislation, which sought to deny essential services to suspected undocumented migrants, was a direct affront to human dignity. LULAC's successful lawsuit protected countless families and affirmed the organization's role as a defender of civil rights.

Since the 1960s, LULAC has cultivated powerful alliances with entities like Operation SER and the LULAC National Education Service Centers (LNESEC). These partnerships have been instrumental in addressing the multifaceted needs of the Hispanic community, from education and job skills training to literacy, employment, and civil rights advocacy.

As the 20th century progressed to the 21st, LULAC continued to forge a path of progress and equality. The organization's unwavering commitment to the Latino community has been a guiding light, illuminating the road to justice and empowerment.

In 2006, the LULAC Rainbow Council of Dallas emerged





as a symbol of unity, bridging the Latino and LGBTQIA+ communities. This council highlights the shared aspirations of both groups, underscoring their collective pursuit of full equality.

As the COVID-19 pandemic swept across the globe in 2020, LULAC witnessed the disproportionate impact it had on Latino essential workers, particularly those in the nation's meatpacking plants. With a sense of urgency and resolve, LULAC stepped into the fray, advocating for improved working conditions to safeguard the health and lives of these vital community members. Their efforts led to enhanced safety protocols and support for workers facing high infection and mortality rates. LULAC's intervention during this critical time not only saved lives but also highlighted the organization's deep commitment to the well-being of Latinos in every sector of society.

The year 2020 marked a somber chapter in LULAC's history as the disappearance of United States Army soldier Vanessa Guillen gripped the nation. LULAC's response was swift and decisive, launching the I AM VANESSA GUILLEN campaign to combat sexual violence in the military. The subsequent lobbying efforts led to President Biden's signing of the I AM Vanessa Guillen Act in 2021, a significant stride towards protecting service members.

In that same year, 2021, LULAC's advocacy efforts culminated in the passage of a historic piece of legislation known as The Brandon Act, named in honor of Brandon Caserta, a Navy sailor who tragically died by suicide in June 2018. Brandon experienced chronic bullying and harassment, and the legislation of which he is the namesake represents a significant advancement in the protection of service members. The Brandon Act provides a confidential channel for military personnel to seek mental health support and services without fear of retribution or stigma. It ensures that cries for help are met with compassion and action, offering a lifeline to those in uniform who might otherwise suffer in silence.

LULAC's capacity for compassion was on full display in 2022 when the organization mobilized over \$2,000,000 in aid for the families affected by the Robb Elementary School shooting in Uvalde, Texas. This act of solidarity provided nearly \$80,000 to each grieving family, embodying the spirit of community support.

Continuing its mission of advocacy and aid, in 2024, LULAC raised over \$40,000 to assist the families impacted by the Baltimore Bridge Tragedy. This initiative not only offered financial support but also shone a light on the disproportionate number of Latino workers facing fatalities in high-risk industries.




Despite Latinos being the fastest-growing demographic in the U.S. and making significant economic contributions, the promise of total financial and political opportunity remains elusive. The stark reality is that the median net worth of Latinos is 80% lower than that of Non-Hispanic White Americans. Nearly half of the nation's uninsured are Latinos, and the homeownership gap between Latino and white families continues to widen despite over half a century since the Fair Housing Act sought to eliminate housing discrimination.

These disparities are not just numbers but a clarion call for change. They remind us that the quest for equal opportunity in the United States is a battle still being waged. LULAC's mission for representation, equity, and justice is as vital today as it was at its inception.

As we continue to chart LULAC's inspiring history, we are reminded of the organization's indomitable spirit. Each victory, act of courage, and step forward has been a stitch in America's progress. LULAC's narrative concerns empowerment, resilience, and unwavering commitment to the Latino community. This narrative calls upon us

to join in solidarity for the journey ahead. Together, we write the next chapter in this remarkable 95-year saga of defending and championing Latinos.

As we stand on the shoulders of giants, we look back at the strides made by the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) with a sense of pride and accomplishment. Yet, we are acutely aware that the journey towards equality and civil rights is ongoing. To some extent, every Latino in the United States has felt the impact of LULAC's dedication. But the work is far from complete.

As LULAC approaches its centennial, its history is not merely a record of past accomplishments but a living narrative of resilience, solidarity, and hope. Each chapter of LULAC's story inspires us to stand together in the face of adversity, uplift one another, and continue fighting for a just and equitable society. The legacy of LULAC is a call to action, urging us all to join hands in shaping a future where every Latino can thrive. Let us answer that call with pride and determination, for the journey of LULAC is our journey, too—toward a brighter, more inclusive tomorrow. 

Domingo Garcia Retrospective

By **David Cruz**

LULAC Communications Director

Domingo Garcia's tenure as the National President of the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC) has been marked by a steadfast commitment to the community and an unwavering pursuit of justice and equality. Over the past six years, Garcia has led LULAC with a visionary zeal, drawing from his rich tapestry of experiences as a self-made success, a son of Mexican immigrants, and a trailblazer in both law and politics.

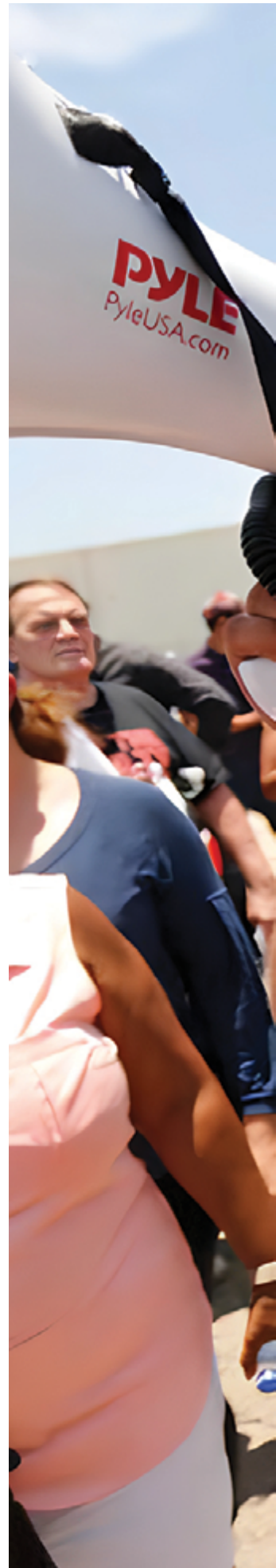
"In the face of adversity, we rise," says Garcia. "LULAC stands as a beacon of hope, uniting Latinos nationwide to forge a future where our voices are heard and echoed in the halls of power. Justice is not a privilege; it's a right. We will march, speak, and fight until the scales are balanced for every Latino, in every community," he adds.

Garcia's journey is a testament to the power of perseverance and the impact of education. His path from a shoeshine boy to the Statehouse of Texas is inspiring and a narrative that resonates deeply within the Latino community. "Education has always held a special place in my heart," Garcia once said, emphasizing its role in his life.

Under Garcia's leadership, LULAC has seen significant advocacy and policy reform strides. He has been instrumental in championing the rights of Dreamers and ensuring that immigrant students receive the support they need to thrive. "When you have unjust laws and unjust actions, people take to the streets," he declared, highlighting his belief in the power of peaceful protest and civil disobedience.

Garcia adds, "Our heritage is our strength. As Latinos, we carry our ancestors' spirit, which speaks of resilience, pride, and an unwavering quest for equality. Solidarity is our superpower. When one of us is targeted, all of us respond. LULAC is more than an organization; it's a family that protects its own."

Garcia's achievements at LULAC are numerous, but perhaps his most notable accomplishment is his work in education reform. He has been a vocal advocate for Latino students, understanding that "education is the key to unlocking the potential within our community and the cornerstone of our progress. We empower our youth with knowledge so they can





“Justice is not a privilege; it’s a right. We will march, speak, and fight until the scales are balanced for every Latino, in every community”



build bridges to a brighter tomorrow for all Latinos," he adds. His efforts have not gone unnoticed, as he has been recognized for his contributions to students across America, particularly his advocacy for immigrant students.

His words often reflect his dedication to service and community. "I encourage people interested in social change to get involved to make things happen," he urges, inviting active participation in the democratic process. Garcia's approach to leadership is inclusive

and action-oriented, believing that "when the people are watching, elected leaders know, they have to get moving or we will get them out."

His commitment to economic empowerment has also marked Garcia's tenure. During difficult periods, he understands the importance of a solid financial foundation for the Latino business community. For example, he fought to ensure that Latino family-owned enterprises were not shut out from government assistance loans and grants during the COVID-19 pandemic. "It was the equivalent of a snow day regarding the effect on the economy. Many businesses were closed, especially in construction, restaurants, hotels, and the service industry." This awareness of the economic challenges many Latinos face has driven his advocacy for policies that support economic growth and stability.

As a leader, Garcia has not shied away from difficult conversations, recognizing that "dialogue about immigration is the best victory. Everybody is paying attention to it." His ability to bring attention to critical issues and foster meaningful discussions has been a hallmark of his presidency.

"We will not be silenced by fear. Our commitment to civil rights is as enduring as the legacy we will leave for future generations of Latinos. Unity in diversity is our call to action. LULAC celebrates the tapestry of Latino cultures, weaving together a movement that is as vibrant as the people it serves."

Garcia's legacy at LULAC will undoubtedly be remembered for his passionate advocacy, commitment to education and economic empowerment, and ability to inspire action. "All of us, young and old, are sending a message, and hopefully, it will be from our local city hall to the White House. However, we are asking all Latinos that our message has to be done more constructively and for the things that will make a lasting difference," he reflected.

The impact of Garcia's leadership will continue to resonate within LULAC and the broader Latino community for generations. His dedication to justice, equality, and the betterment of his community will guide future leaders, including embracing everyone. "I believe

in giving people second chances and redemption, given our imperfect human condition. We make mistakes, but every day is a chance to try again and make valuable contributions to our society,” Garcia stated, encapsulating the spirit of resilience and hope he has fostered throughout his tenure.

Domingo Garcia’s leadership as the National President of LULAC has elicited various responses from the Latino community, reflecting this vibrant demographic’s diverse perspectives and priorities. Here are some key points highlighting the community’s reaction:

Advocacy for Puerto Rico: Garcia’s tenure has seen a push for Puerto Rico’s self-determination, a topic that has garnered widespread national discussion. The goal of Garcia’s administration was to strike a balance between this issue and other important advocacy areas affecting Latinos on the mainland.

Inclusive Leadership: Garcia’s presence at a meeting with the President and Vice President of the United States, discussing the Build Back Better Agenda and equity, demonstrated his commitment to representing Latino interests at the highest levels of government and won support from the Latino business community.

Language and Identity: In a significant move, Garcia instructed LULAC staff and board members to drop the term “Latinx” from official communications, responding to the community’s preferences regarding identity labels. However, this action coincided with Garcia’s staunch public support for the LGBTQ+ community and equity and equality for women.

Networking and Collaboration: Garcia’s role in building coalitions with a wide array of leaders and organizations has been praised for creating a more vibrant and visible LULAC that unites Latinos to address community challenges and opportunities. As the longest-serving LULAC president, his tenure solidified new partnerships that led to historical advances in voting rights and workplace protections for essential workers, and he became the leading Latino civil rights voice on immigration along the nation’s southern border.

The community’s response to Garcia’s leadership is multifaceted, with appreciation for his advocacy,

representation, and debate over the focus of LULAC’s efforts. His leadership has been characterized by a commitment to addressing critical issues affecting Latinos, fostering dialogue, and promoting unity within the community. One of the most vital is access to quality healthcare. “Our community’s health is non-negotiable. We stand for access to healthcare for every Latino because a nation thrives only when its people are well.”

He has been a staunch advocate for comprehensive empowerment within the Latino community, focusing on several key areas to foster growth and stability. “We must be architects of change, not just witnesses. It’s time for Latinos to take the pen and rewrite our nation’s historical narrative. The dream of prosperity is universal, but the path is unique for Latinos. LULAC paves the way for empowerment in many ways and promises a better life.”

Here’s how he has addressed critical issues during his administration:

Advocacy for Small Businesses: Domingo Garcia has been a staunch advocate for the prosperity of Latino communities, recognizing that the backbone of economic growth lies in the hands of small business owners. He has tirelessly campaigned for policies that bolster access to capital, resources, and education, understanding that these are the pillars upon which small businesses can thrive. “It is evident that as go our mom-and-pop businesses, so goes the financial heartbeat of our country because Latinos are driving the engine of small businesses in our country. Latinas, especially, are the fastest-growing segment of entrepreneurs. Yes, Latinos’ pockets may be smaller, but we have millions of them,” Garcia once remarked, highlighting these enterprises’ critical role in the broader economic landscape.

Workforce Development: In the realm of workforce development, Garcia has been a visionary, supporting initiatives that pave the way for training and skill development. He has been instrumental in promoting programs that equip individuals with the skills necessary to navigate the ever-evolving economic terrain. Garcia believes in the power of education and training, asserting, “I urge our youths to strive for more and think

beyond their comfort zone. We will never discover what we can accomplish unless we push ourselves to strive for what some may say is impossible to achieve.” This mindset underscores his commitment to opening doors for those seeking to enhance their professional capabilities.

Economic Reform: Garcia’s influence extends to the corridors of power where economic policies are shaped. At LULAC, he has been a persuasive voice, ensuring that the needs of the Latino community are reflected in monetary policymaking. His advocacy for fair labor practices and equitable opportunities is rooted in a belief that justice and prosperity should go hand in hand. “Unless we are at the decision-making table, we are leaving ourselves open to be on the menu. I don’t believe that Latinos should be content to receive what others do not want. We have the minds, talents, skills, and experience to compete and win in any walk of life, industry, and profession.”

Community Engagement: Garcia’s belief in the transformative power of community engagement has led him to be involved in initiatives that aim to uplift economic mobility and combat poverty. He has been a part of community-driven efforts that have led to effective economic interventions, which reflect his vision of mobilizing communities for economic progress. “We were instrumental in putting together the largest civil rights demonstration in the history of Dallas, Texas – 100,000-plus, so I know we have the people power, and las ganas, or will to speak up and push for the issues, rights, and opportunities that we care about,” he adds. More recently, he helmed nationally televised political debates for the presidential primaries in the crucial state of Iowa. This event drew a standing-room-only audience and national broadcast and cable exposure.

Promoting Financial Literacy: Understanding that financial literacy is a cornerstone of economic empowerment, Garcia has championed the cause of enhancing the community’s grasp of financial systems, savings, and investments. He has been a vocal proponent of efforts demystifying financial concepts and fostering a culture of informed financial decision-making. “That’s why we need to keep the pressure on and send a clear message to the politicians in Washington that we need

a just immigration reform that includes provisions for 12 million immigrants who work and build America every day,” Garcia has articulated, linking financial literacy to broader economic reforms.

Legislative Advocacy: Garcia has been a dynamic force in the legislative arena, advocating for laws and regulations that empower the Latino community economically. His work has been pivotal in championing the rights of immigrant workers and small business owners, acknowledging their substantial contributions to the economy. “Through our individual and collective actions, Latinos can help influence and determine the future of states and our nation. However, we must do everything we can to engage more Latinos to vote and ensure that future generations’ voting rights are not impaired,” he admonishes.

Through these efforts, Domingo Garcia has worked tirelessly to ensure the Latino community has the tools and knowledge necessary for achieving maximum political clout, economic self-sufficiency, and prosperity.

Domingo Garcia has been a vocal and active leader in addressing the most significant issues within the Latino community. His multifaceted approach has focused on advocacy, legal support, and policy change. Here’s how he has tackled these challenges:

Advocacy Against Restrictive Laws: Domingo Garcia has been a vocal opponent of restrictive immigration laws, standing up for the rights and dignity of immigrants. In a bold move, he labeled Florida’s new immigration law as “hostile and dangerous,” prompting LULAC to issue a rare travel advisory for the state. Garcia’s commitment to justice is unwavering, as he declares, “Immigrants are the lifeblood and backbone of our nation’s economy, and we should be thanking, not targeting them,” a sentiment that captures his dedication to fighting against policies that threaten the well-being of immigrant communities.

Legal Support and Representation: As a civil rights force, Garcia has been at the forefront of defending immigrants’ rights, offering legal support to those unfairly marginalized by the system. His legal acumen and passion for justice have made him a beacon of hope for many seeking fair treatment. Reflecting on his role, Garcia emphasizes, “LULAC is the only membership-

based community grassroots civil rights organization with a national presence across the country and Puerto Rico. We must use our power to defend and uplift our community in the courthouses and halls of justice.”

Policy Reform and Legislative Power: Garcia’s influence extends beyond the courtroom and into the halls of power, where he works tirelessly to shape immigration policy at both state and national levels. His involvement in legislative advocacy is a testament to his belief in the power of law to enact positive change. “The road to the statehouses in our country and even the White House must pass through the barrios where Jose y Maria live. We now have the numbers, the political clout, and the sophistication to empower our community to bring about more just laws and opportunities for Latinos to achieve the highest elected offices in the land.”


Public Statements and Mobilization: Garcia has effectively utilized his platform to highlight pressing immigration issues, making public statements that galvanize the community and stakeholders into action. His ability to mobilize support is crucial in bringing about meaningful change. “The phrase that all politics is local is true today in our community, and Latinos are ready to claim what is rightfully theirs. We have earned progress and advancements in our country in all categories, and we will continue to move forward for the betterment of our nation. However, we will lead alongside others, not simply be relegated to the role of laborers serving the rest of our society.”

Economic Considerations: Understanding the profound economic impact of immigration policies, Garcia has consistently highlighted the invaluable contributions of immigrant workers to the economy. His advocacy for their rights and recognition is rooted in a deep appreciation for their societal role. Garcia points out, “That’s why we need to keep the pressure on and send a clear message to the politicians in Washington that we need a just immigration reform that includes provisions for 12 million immigrants who work and build America every day,” underscoring the economic significance of immigrant labor and the need for policies that acknowledge and support this workforce.

Military and Veterans: At the forefront during much of his administration, Garcia has played a leading role

in creating significant initiatives focusing on the needs of active and veteran service members and deported men and women who have served within the military. Following the deaths of Army specialist Vanessa Guillen and Navy Petty Officer 3rd Class Brandon Caserta, Garcia championed intensive campaigns and supported efforts that led to new protections for America’s servicemembers. The Vanessa Guillen Act assists service members against military sexual trauma (MST). The Brandon Act gives access to service members experiencing a mental crisis to seek medical resources without first obtaining authorization from their command and without fear of reprisal for receiving care. As importantly, Garcia is now working on helping to pass federal legislation that will help return home deported undocumented veterans who honorably served within the military but may have been convicted of a nonviolent crime after they were discharged.

Equity and Equality for Women: Garcia’s tenure as LULAC national president has the distinction of witnessing several national board appointments to Latina women. This includes Gloria Leal, LULAC General Counsel, who has played a critical role in helping the organization push back against Texas during one of the most tumultuous times in the state’s modern history. Recent anti-immigrant legislation, SB 4 and SB 17, target Latinos, Blacks, and Asians in education, the ability to travel, and access to essential social services. “Ms. Leal is a seasoned legal expert in the legislative process, and LULAC is fortunate to have her help us navigate the outcome of new, very hostile laws that threaten us daily,” says Garcia. “Every day, LULAC is on watch in Texas and elsewhere. He adds that it is our time to do everything we can to improve and defend our communities, fight for our rights, and strive for a more just and equitable society.

Domingo Garcia’s six-year presidency at LULAC has been a period of growth, challenge, and triumph. His leadership has advanced the organization’s mission and elevated the voices and concerns of the Latino community to the forefront of the national conversation. As he steps down, his legacy of advocacy, empowerment, and unity will continue to inspire and guide LULAC’s journey forward. 

A man with a beard and glasses stands in front of a mural. The mural features a large, stylized portrait of a woman with long dark hair and a yellow flower with a green center. The man is wearing a black t-shirt with a graphic of a person in a white shirt. He has a necklace with a dog tag and a bracelet on his left wrist. A purple rectangular graphic is overlaid on the right side of the image.

We Must Never Forget Uvalde, Texas

By **Javier Cazares**

LULAC Council President, Uvalde, Texas

My name is Javier Cazares, president of the LULAC council in Uvalde, Texas. My daughter Jacklyn was one of the students who lost her life at Robb Elementary School two years ago. She was a beautiful, forgiving, loving child who did not deserve to go that way.

As we observed the second anniversary of that terrible, dark day, it was very difficult because I would give anything to have my daughter back. Nothing is more important or stronger in my life than my love for my daughter. To those who think we settled and accepted \$2,000,000 for the money, it has nothing to do with money. It wasn't \$2,000,000 for each family; instead, it was \$2,000,000 to be divided among all the families, and there are 17 or 18 in total. Lawyers handle all of that.

It is unbelievable to me that here we are two years later, and very little has changed. If anything, those officers who failed to do their job that day should be brought into accountability. We did consider going after them, but it would be a lose-lose situation because the law protects them. There's immunity even when there is misconduct. It is very difficult. You can try, and you may win, but it's a long battle.

What keeps me going is the love for my daughter. It is the most powerful thing that is keeping me going. People see me and say, "You're so strong," and they see my determination to go out, but I don't know if it's that. For sure, it's the love for my daughter because she was loved. She was special. She did not deserve to go this way. I will do whatever I can, somehow, some way, someday, some year. But it's going to happen.

I'm a gun owner, and I believe in the Second Amendment, but to a certain degree. I don't think an 18-year-old should have had that kind of weapon. Texas laws are bad. I use this example a lot because my oldest daughter, who was 17 years old, was flagged in the store for trying to buy superglue at Walmart. But this kid, at 18 years old, was able to buy two ARs and 1,000 rounds

of ammunition with no problem. What's wrong with that picture?

When I talk to people in power, elected office, or appointed officials, and they look in their face, and I'm the one who has suffered this loss, you know how they react? It's a mixture. I've said it to them right in their face, Governor Abbott being one of them. When I told him, "Was my daughter's life not enough? Wasn't it not enough of a price to pay?" They have no words for that because their actions show that they could have done something and haven't done anything.

So, what could they have done? What we're trying to do is pass a law that raises the age from 18 to 21 for these kinds of firearms, and they weren't having it. We need stricter laws and background checks to buy handguns—basic common-sense measures.

In Texas, you can be 18 and purchase a weapon of war without much scrutiny. You should be 21 and go through a rigorous background check for something so deadly. But here, it's almost the Wild West. Open carry laws mean nearly anyone can walk around with a gun, and it feels like we're in a lawless land. They don't listen to us until it's their family suffering.

Life in Uvalde is tough. A few brave souls approach me to thank me and express their support, but they're very few. Ironically, I get recognized and supported more out of town than in my community. Here, people often offer their support quietly, afraid of the backlash they might face for standing with us. It's a slap in the face, and it hurts deeply. But my love for Jacklyn is stronger than any pain. I refuse to let hate drive me. My daughter had a huge heart, full of forgiveness, and I strive to be like her every day.

Meeting people from different places, hearing their stories, and sharing ours have been powerful experiences. We need each other in this fight because who will if we don't support one another? Please, keep our story alive. Let the world know that the Latino community in Uvalde is still fighting for justice. We will not stop until meaningful change is achieved. For Jacklyn and for all the lives taken too soon. 🇺🇸



Being an attorney today often feels like a dream. Sometimes, it still doesn't feel real because I constantly learn and grow. But then, when I get to help many people and make a significant impact, I am reminded that this is my real life. I received an award for one of the top 100 verdicts in Texas for 2023 just yesterday.

My journey with LULAC began as a shy 20-year-old, inspired by the strong Latina women in the fields I aspired to enter. I never imagined I would become someone comfortable speaking in front of others. LULAC taught me the importance of sharing stories—stories of others that need to be heard, stories that uplift and inspire.

LULAC has played a crucial role in shaping who I am today. Leading by example has been the core of my involvement with LULAC as a young adult. I strive to mentor young adults who reach out to me, guiding them through the steps they need to take to achieve their goals, whether preparing for the LSAT or navigating the challenges of their chosen careers.

Moving LULAC forward involves honoring our elders and valuing the traditions that have brought us here while embracing the needs and perspectives of the younger generation. It can be challenging to attract younger members due to traditions that may seem restrictive. Still, we can foster greater understanding and appreciation by emphasizing the importance and reasoning behind these traditions.

We must create a space where tradition and innovation are valued as we progress. Educating and engaging the younger generation can ensure that LULAC remains a powerful force for advocacy and change in America. Together, we can bridge gaps, uplift stories, and build a stronger, more inclusive community for all.

When I reflect on the activism of the younger generation, I am continually amazed. Generation Z, in particular, is proving to be a formidable force. Unlike the millennial generation, which tended to be more subdued in its activism, Gen Z is vocal and unwavering in its demands for change. They refuse to sit idly by and let the world shape itself without their input.

Looking ahead, I am confident that younger people will continue to play a significant role in shaping the future of LULAC and our nation. However, I know the challenges we face in mobilizing young voters. Politicians often overlook the concerns of young adults, leading to a sense of disenchantment. Issues like student loan forgiveness

LULAC

Young Adults and Advocacy in America

By **Delma Gorostieta**
*LULAC National Vice-President
for Young Adults*


and immigration reform, critical to young people, have seen slow progress.

Despite these challenges, I believe that young adults understand the responsibilities that come with their rights. They actively participate in movements and protests, push for change on social media, and encourage their peers to vote. Young candidates are emerging, emphasizing the importance of political engagement and the power of the youth vote.

I remember my college days, struggling with the practicalities of voting while juggling classes and lacking transportation. These experiences highlight the need for continued support and education to empower young voters. By addressing these barriers and fostering a more inclusive environment, we can ensure that the voices of young adults are heard loud and clear.

There is also a pervasive sense of disillusionment among young people. We have witnessed countless promises made to us fall flat, leaving us skeptical about the political process. This disillusionment is something we must address head-on by reigniting hope. It's essential to bring back the belief that we can unite and make a difference.

LULAC has the potential to bridge this gap, providing the leadership and support necessary to engage young adults. I aim to inspire and educate as the LULAC National Vice-President for Young Adults. My journey is one of overcoming significant adversity. I share my story to show others that they can do the same.

I want everyone to remember that I will never be too busy to assist a young person. Helping others is not just a responsibility; it's a privilege. By sharing our knowledge, offering support, and fostering a sense of community, we can create a future where young adults are empowered to make a difference. Together, we can overcome obstacles and build a brighter future for all. 



**The strongest
connection is
the one among
all of us.**



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The LULAC's Women's Commission: 20-Years of Empowering Latinas

By **Lupe Torres**
LULAC National Vice-President for Women



As we mark the 20th anniversary of the LULAC Women's Commission, my heart swells with pride and gratitude. This milestone signifies more than just two decades of work; it embodies a profound transformation in our organization's priorities.

Women have always been the backbone of the workplace and the family, the latter being the cornerstone of our community. At the core of our mission is enhancing the quality of life for every family member, a goal women uniquely contribute to through their organization, vision, and tireless efforts.

For me, empowering women through education is crucial. Moving women forward means helping them obtain degrees, securing scholarships, and providing continuous support and mentoring. LULAC has awarded millions in scholarships, transforming lives and enabling Latinas to pursue higher education.

The dedication of women in LULAC is evident. At our recent district convention, 80% of attendees were women, a trend I noticed during my tenure as state director. We're seeing more female speakers, elected officials, and businesswomen breaking the glass ceiling and serving as role models.

This unwavering commitment to not letting anyone fail is a hallmark of women's organizations: resilience

and relentless drive to overcome obstacles. Moving forward, we must continue to support and uplift each other, recognizing that every woman's success is a victory for our entire community.

My journey from humble beginnings in San Antonio, Texas, to the halls of Congress in Washington, DC, and the financial centers of New York City has been guided by a deep passion for service and community empowerment.

My professional path demonstrates the power of resilience and determination. I have navigated today's complexities while remaining true to my values. When addressing crucial issues, my resolve is unwavering, emphasizing the importance of our roots and principles. In adversity, our values guide us, strengthening our resolve. Resilience and adaptability are essential; we must remain faithful to ourselves while embracing growth.

LULAC's commitment to Latina empowerment highlights the strength of unity and collective action. Together, we can overcome any obstacle. By lifting each other, we become an unstoppable force.

My understanding of service and empowerment began in childhood, influenced by my remarkable mother. Despite her limited formal education, she was a community powerhouse—delivering babies, offering

home remedies, and running a grocery store and bakery. She embodied empowerment through service, instilling in me the values of education and giving back.

Reflecting on my early days as a commissioner and chairperson with the San Antonio Housing Authority, I recall fighting against discrimination and improving living conditions for marginalized communities.

Women have always faced immense challenges in achieving recognition and equal compensation. Balancing familial responsibilities, personal health, and career ambitions, they exhibit unparalleled resilience, fearlessness, survival instincts, and determination. This unique blend fuels their success and sets them apart.

As we celebrate the 20th anniversary of the LULAC Women's Commission, I am filled with joy, reflecting on our advancements and the incredible women who have been part of it. This milestone is a testament to our hard work and dedication. Empowering women transforms not just their lives but uplifts their families, communities, and society as a whole.

Celebrating 20 years of the LULAC Women's Commission is not just about looking back; it's about embracing the future with hope and determination. By supporting and empowering each other, expanding our reach, and innovating our approach, we can ensure that LULAC remains a vibrant, inclusive, and forward-thinking organization for years. Let's move forward together, inspired by our past and driven by our potential.


In our service with LULAC, innovation and fearlessness are our guiding stars. Rather than fixating on dwindling membership, let's craft irresistible reasons for people to join our cause. Our methods must adapt, welcoming new members with open arms and updating our constitution to mirror today's realities.

As seasoned advocates, we must engage and educate newcomers about our mission. Despite life's busyness, we must seamlessly weave LULAC into daily routines. While our voter registration drives, health fairs, and educational endeavors are commendable, they should seamlessly transition into active membership.



Consider our educational endeavors—while they enrich countless lives, we often overlook inviting beneficiaries to join our ranks. Let's bridge this gap, ensuring those we assist become integral parts of our community.

As we mark two decades of the LULAC Women's Commission, we're not just reflecting on past triumphs but also forging ahead. Our future hinges on continued inspiration, innovation, and inclusivity. Let's uphold our legacy while enriching it and cementing LULAC as a bastion of Latina empowerment and progress.

In this celebratory moment, let's pledge to amplify our presence, extending outreach to every corner of our neighborhoods. Together, we'll fashion a more resilient, welcoming LULAC that empowers Latinas today and for future generations. To all who've journeyed with us, thank you. Here's to the next 20 years and beyond, filled with boundless possibility and collective achievement. 

Nebraska LULAC Is Meeting the Challenge and Making a Difference

By **Elsa Ramon Aranda**
Nebraska LULAC State Director



When people ask me why I am in LULAC, I often say it is not that I am in the organization but that the mission of LULAC is in me. This distinction is important to me because, having been born in Laredo and living in Texas through most of my early years and throughout a professional legal career in corporate America, I often saw and was proud of the LULAC shield being engaged in some of the most landmark moments of our community and our country.

Yet, with that access comes responsibility. Here in the Midwest, where Latinos are not quite as plentiful as in the Southwest or the Western United States, opening dialogue, building trust, and getting to know one another is complex and can be frustrating, but it is worth it. Out of this painstaking work, we are beginning to see the first glimmers of hope that Nebraska LULAC is being accepted as a vital component of the state's future.

Nebraska is at a historic juncture as business leaders recognize that the future of the state's economy depends on a steady and reliable labor force. Undoubtedly, Latino immigrants comprise an important, if not the largest, demographic of the solution. Nebraska LULAC is closely engaged with business leaders from throughout the state and is actively working with them to ensure that we are at the table and have a full participatory role on behalf of our community.

What we seek is an assurance that we can measure and track, reflecting protections and the proper treatment of our men and women essential workers. Last September, we began a process to delineate the specifics of our vision for a collaboration with parity, in which LULAC and business leaders would come together and discuss the future of immigration policy and labor needs in Nebraska. What we stated was simple, direct, and straightforward:


- What specific defined role will LULAC have in the Latino immigrant labor plans Nebraska envisions, and in collaboration with which policy-making governmental authority?
- Who will commit capacity-building resources to LULAC, and from what source, to facilitate the community outreach, education, and assistance required for this initiative?
- How will the Nebraska Chambers of Commerce engage on the issue of comprehensive immigration reform reciprocal with LULAC while addressing the labor needs of Nebraska?
- When will Nebraska elected officials and business leaders address with LULAC the priorities of immigrant workers: (a) a living wage standard, (b) payment of overtime for work over 40 hours, (c) access to health care, and (d) work disability insurance?

Business and political leaders in Nebraska recognize the need to work with the Latino community, and LULAC is here to help them understand what paradigm we will accept. Their information reflects the signal that the future is bleak without Latino laborers.

Nebraska business leaders add to that a recognition of the reality of an aging population in the state. "The demographic trend with the largest impact has been the aging of the population. The baby boomers were a huge segment of the workforce for decades. Nationally, workers over the age of 55 are one of the few categories that have not returned to pre-pandemic levels of workforce participation."

Nebraska LULAC has opened an office in Omaha and is optimistic about future opportunities. Incumbent upon us is to organize and mobilize our communities through educational outreach that achieves multiple critical objectives. Nebraska LULAC is focused on the future, so our programs will go into the schools, community centers, places of faith, and social services so that we reach the multi-generational population and ensure that our brand is associated with a trusted organization that is here to meet people where they live and help them from wherever they need to start.

The work is exciting but can also be frustrating, and the challenges come daily. Within our community, part of this growing pain process is learning to work together more closely rather than seeing each other as competitors in silos. To that end, Nebraska LULAC envisions the opportunity to hold community forums, business summits, and educational workshops to help bridge all corners of our community. It will take time, resources, and patience. Still, I am optimistic that we will achieve our goals, which will help to dispel the negativity and misinformation that is out there in the social media space and that some political candidates push to cater to the most accessible low-hanging votes as the fruit of hate speech.

Nebraska, the Midwest, and our country must move beyond these divisive words and thoughts so that future generations can more fully realize the promise of America for all. That is the dream of Nebraska LULAC, which I know we can discover together. 

California LULAC: 75 Years of History and Future

in the Most Populous Latino State

By **Jacob Sandoval**
California LULAC State Director



Reflecting on the incredible journey of California LULAC (League of United Latin American Citizens) over the past 75 years, I am filled with pride and optimism for our future. Our organization has been a beacon of hope and a driving force for change, advocating for the rights and well-being of Latinos across the state.

The formula for LULAC's growth and the impressive expansion of support in California lies in our unwavering commitment to structure and member support. We ensure that our organization is well-structured to address the diverse needs of our communities, and we back our members in their endeavors to make impactful changes.

The mutual respect and shared vision that binds us are central to our success. Our shared values and commitment to what truly matters enable us to work together seamlessly, fostering an environment where collaboration thrives. Whether fighting against environmental injustices or advocating for equitable education, our strength lies in our ability to unite as one powerful force.

There are several pressing issues in California that LULAC is tackling head-on. One of the significant challenges is the proximity of many Latino communities to small airports, which have been found to emit harmful pollution. We've rallied around legislative efforts like 1193, aiming to transition away from these polluting practices. Another critical issue is the rise of anti-Latino and anti-LGBTQ sentiments within some school districts.

At LULAC, we recognize that meaningful change requires the right policies and people driving those policies. By fostering an environment where ideas are freely exchanged, and egos are checked at the door, we ensure that our decisions are well-informed and our actions impactful. Our ultimate goal is to make lasting, positive changes that protect and uplift our communities, especially those historically marginalized and overlooked.

At California LULAC, celebrating our seven-and-a-half decades of history and looking ahead in America's most populous Latino state fills us with pride and excitement. Reflecting on our journey, I am inspired by the vibrant community we have cultivated and the strong bonds we continue to build. One of our key strategies for drawing back members has been to listen to and value their opinions truly.

During our recent LULAC State Convention, I witnessed firsthand the enthusiasm and dedication of our younger generation. Half of our committee members were under 30, some even in their early 20s. By giving them responsibilities and valuing their contributions, we've seen them rise to the occasion, bringing fresh perspectives and innovative ideas to the table.

One of the highlights I'm most proud of is the involvement of high schoolers and young adults in leadership positions. This year, they played a significant role in or-


ganizing our programs showcasing their potential and capability. The lineup of speakers at the convention was intergenerational, reflecting the diversity within LULAC.

Looking to the future, our focus in California will be on engaging college students and helping them transition into active, impactful roles within our organization. When I was in college, there was often a gap between activism and finding a path forward into adulthood. We aim to bridge that gap by providing support and training for young adults to run for office.

Our efforts extend beyond just the Latino community. In Southern California, we collaborate with the NAACP on issues affecting school districts. In Northern California, we work with the Asian community on anti-hate bills. These partnerships are vital as many issues impact all our communities.

California LULAC's 75-year history is a testament to our resilience and commitment. As we move forward, our focus on empowerment, representation, and collaboration will ensure that we continue positively impacting the lives of Latinos and all Californians. The future is bright, and we are ready to embrace it confidently and determinedly. The journey of California LULAC has been one of resilience, unity, and relentless pursuit of justice and equality. We have faced countless challenges and celebrated numerous victories, each a testament to our strength and dedication.

Engaging in sincere, face-to-face conversations has always been a cornerstone of our approach. When we sit down and talk, we break down barriers. We stop seeing each other as "the other" and start recognizing our shared humanity and common goals. These conversations are where real connections are made, and the seeds of collaboration are planted.

Let us remember our victories, no matter how small, and let them fuel our determination to keep moving forward. The torch is in our hands now, and I am confident we will leave our society better than we found it. With unity, respect, and unwavering commitment, the future looks bright for California LULAC and all those who continue striving for justice and equality in America's most populous Latino state. 

Generational Perspectives:

LULAC's Influence on Identity, Advocacy, and Future Paths

By **Brittney Curiel** and **Carlos Gonzalez**, current students at the University of California, Berkeley, are newly appointed LULAC members and Policy and Legislation Fellows.

During our first week as Policy and Legislation fellows at the League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC), we were tasked with creating a project centered around LULAC's historical accomplishments. Given our limited familiarity with LULAC's extensive history, we embarked on a reflective conversation delving into our own personal backgrounds and experiences, along with how it shaped our identity as future leaders of this generation. We particularly focused on how LULAC plays a relevant role in the formation of our political identities, whether we realized it at the time or not. After researching, we realized that LULAC's past had paved the way for the generation now, including both of our personal experiences as young children.

Brittney's Story:

For most, the Fourth of July represents the birth of democracy with a celebration of fireworks and hotdogs. For me, it represents the day the recession left my family in financial ruin.

On this day in 2008, my Mexican immigrant parents lost their home in San Antonio, Texas to foreclosure. My father lost his job at the Toyota factory due to layoffs. My mother dedicated herself to caring for her four children full time, after being unable to find an entry-level job in the food service industry after working for over a decade. The recession took away my family's economic stability, and left us with no choice but to move back to our original home of Los Angeles, California to live with family. Even as a seven-year-old child, I felt the irony of the America-themed decorations hanging outside their home while my parents placed boxes in the back of our truck. We went from living in a comfortable four bedroom house, to six of them being squeezed into one bedroom.

After losing our home to the recession, my family found itself helpless and desperate for some sort of political and economic salvation. The day Barack Obama was elected as President of the United States served as a turning point for most Latino families, including my own. I still remember the joyful cheers and laughs that filled my tia's tiny living room as they all celebrated in a warm embrace. This served as a beacon of hope that better economic times were coming. Obama, despite not being

Latino himself, campaigned on American reinvestment with the hopes of specifically targeting marginalized and working class communities.

Obama's presidency and my family's struggles with the 2008 recession symbolized the start of my political identity. Although I was only a seven year old child with difficulties conceptualizing why my Mexican family felt the impact harder than those around us, I was starting to see the bridge of social and economic inequality that was so prevalent in our country. Although I didn't realize it at the time, LULAC played a massive role in forming this identity and providing Latinos like me with the political space to form these opinions.

For example, in 2008, LULAC held the Presidential Candidates Challenge at their National Convention. At this event, LULAC invited presidential candidates Senator Barack Obama, Senator John McCain, and Senator Hillary Clinton to speak and promote their campaign. LULAC helped register over 50,000 voters for the general election at this event.

For the first time in history, Latino voters came out in record numbers for the 2008 election and over 60% voted in favor of Barack Obama. With the Latino vote, Obama won in a landslide election. LULAC played a large role in this achievement, as they provided the Latino community with direct access to these necessary political resources. For Latino families, like mine, this opened the door for economic change, as well as social

Carlos' Story:

I knew I was queer from around the time that I understood differences. Only later did I realize that my brownness was another form of difference that would shape my future. In school, I would be name-called, targeted, and bullied. As a result, I felt a sense of disbelonging, mental health declining, and would even be at risk of violence. To me the message was clear: Stay in the closet and out of our sight. Unfortunately, school isn't just the place I was discriminated against, I also felt this exclusion at home. It was very difficult for me to carry those stereotypical male dominant characteristics, but also adjust to the social characteristics of euro-centric individuals.

Amidst the challenges of discrimination and exclusion I faced both at school and within my own home, the significance of organizations like LULAC in fighting for equality became increasingly apparent. Since the 1920s, LULAC has been at the forefront of advocating for the rights of Latinos in the United States. LULAC played a pivotal role in the Fair Employment Practices Commission (FEPC), a wartime federal agency established to combat racial discrimination and address race-based wage disparities in defense industries. The efforts of LULAC laid the groundwork for the establishment of the federal Equal Employment Opportunity Commission in 1964, further advancing the fight against discrimination in many spaces.

For me, I found that the strong activism and resistance from the past and present community leaders opened the door to endless ongoing fighting. In the United States, people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer (LGBTQ+), and Brown are almost always discriminated against. Negative attitudes toward LGBTQ+ and Brown students in environments put them at an increased risk for violence, as compared to heterosexual and non-Brown students.

The unfair treatment both socially and personally did not stop me. My history and perseverance rather inspired me to take action. LULAC became that ongoing step for me to make social change. It was because of LULAC's strong civil rights activism that I now have the opportunity to not only freely express my identities, but also to embrace them.


Shaping Tomorrow

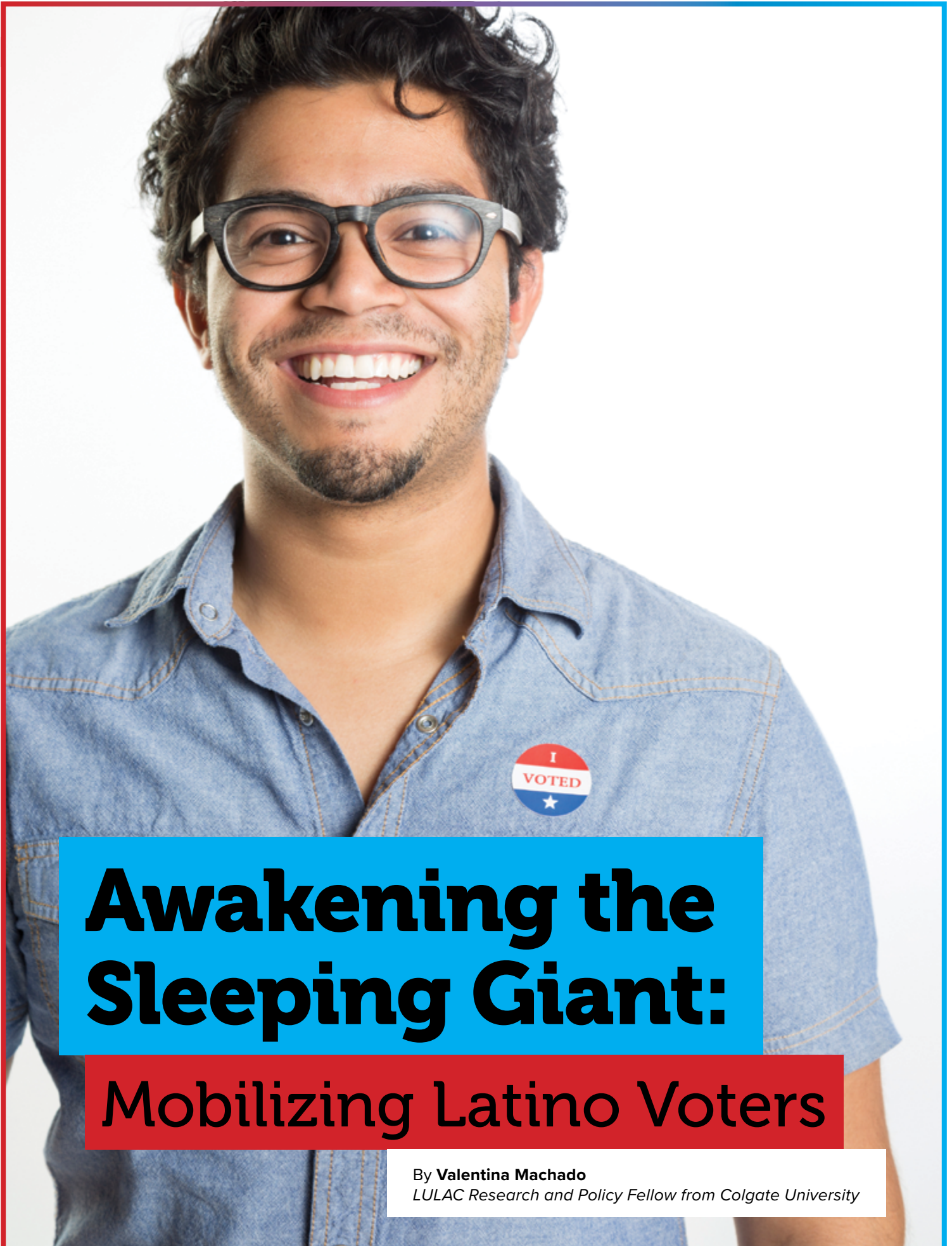
Although LULAC was established 95 years ago, it still serves as a relevant organization that continues to serve the Latino community through activism and political work. Their history is not just embedded in black and white photographs from the early 20th century. Instead, their work continues to break barriers, empower the contemporary Latino community, and their various ever changing political schemes. It's essential to recognize that the fight for justice and equality does not end with us, it continues for future generations.



While we didn't realize it at the time, LULAC worked tirelessly to advocate for economic justice and political representation during the 2008 election, and also advocate for the LGBTQ+ community, during the same time period. Their efforts granted us the opportunity to form and evolve our beliefs while also engaging ourselves in political and social spaces, especially since they are relevant to us. This is because, historically, issues that have been relevant to us have never been discussed by us. Now as fellows, LULAC gave us the leadership opportunities to further advocate for our communities and come up with solutions that have the voice of our community.

Change is not something to fear or avoid; it's necessary for progression. As we reflect on LULAC's legacy spanning 95 years, we realize that their work is not confined to the past but continues to shape the present and future. Our commitment to advocating for justice and equality has paved the way for us to engage in meaningful discourse and action. By recognizing the importance of LULAC's ongoing activism and political work, we acknowledge that the fight for justice and equality extends beyond our generation. It's a reminder that our efforts today will lay the groundwork for shaping tomorrow.

We could have taken another task of explaining the timeline of LULAC. But LULAC has great historians already. Instead, we wanted to tell you why LULAC continues to be relevant. We are LULAC and LULAC is us. 



Awakening the Sleeping Giant:

Mobilizing Latino Voters

By **Valentina Machado**
LULAC Research and Policy Fellow from Colgate University

The Latino population has long been seen as a “sleeping giant,” a significant political force yet to fully awaken. With the 2024 presidential election just a few months away, the question remains: will this sleeping giant finally rise, or will it continue to slumber?


As the daughter of immigrant parents from Bolivia, this election holds special meaning for me. It marks the first time I am eligible to vote. For years, I’ve watched from the sidelines: from Barack Obama’s introduction of DACA and subsequent deportation of over 2.5 million immigrants, to Donald Trump’s harmful rhetoric against the Latino community, bolstering ICE and Border Patrol, and attempts to dismantle DACA. This election, I’m eager to use my vote to support candidates who will uplift our Latino community. Yet, I must also confront the systemic barriers preventing many Latinos from voting.

According to the Pew Research Center, Latinos comprise a significant portion of eligible voters in the United States. However, Latino voter turnout remains the lowest among all racial and ethnic groups. Despite a 13% increase in turnout from 2014 to 2018, about half of eligible Latinos did not vote in recent general elections. While 2020 saw higher turnout rates, significant disadvantages persist.

Systemic barriers like the lack of language translation and stringent voter ID laws deter Latinos from registering to vote. Socioeconomic factors, limited awareness, and physical obstacles like inadequate public transportation or conflicting work and voting hours further stifle our representation. As a historically marginalized community, many Latinos feel alienated from politics. Without civic engagement education or outreach, we are less likely to vote due to a lack of awareness and feelings of powerlessness. Although new legislation like California’s AB 884 aims to increase equitable access, other states have heightened restrictions post-Supreme Court ruling to remove preclearance. For instance, thousands of mail ballot applications were denied in Texas’s March 2022 primary due to new limitations, a significant impact given nonwhite voters are 30% more likely to vote by mail.

As we approach the 2024 Elections, Latino voter turnout is more crucial than ever. In swing states like Arizona and

Florida, historic Latino hubs, anti-immigrant measures such as state senate bill 1718 have worked to fracture and disincentivize community mobilization. Other battleground states might seem less reliant on the Latino vote, but with Latinos recently becoming the largest minority group in Wisconsin and the fastest-growing population in North Carolina, it’s clear each state must improve voting infrastructure to ensure equal representation. Whether they will is still uncertain.

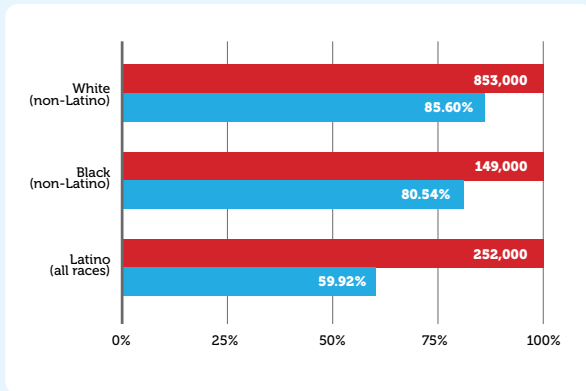
Latinos are the second-largest population in the United States, growing rapidly, but voting barriers persist. It’s up to us to awaken our communities and fight for the access we deserve. This giant needs to wake up. 



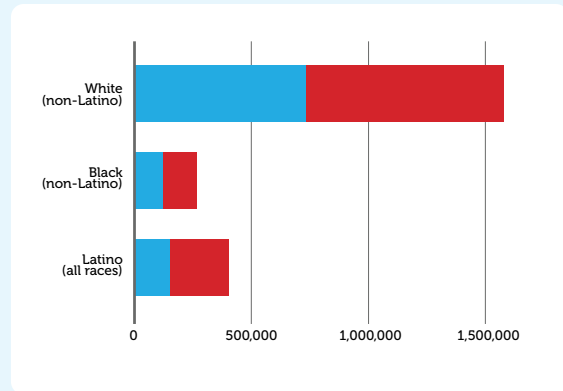
Nevada

● Actual Voters ● Registered Voters

Voter Participation Percentage by Race



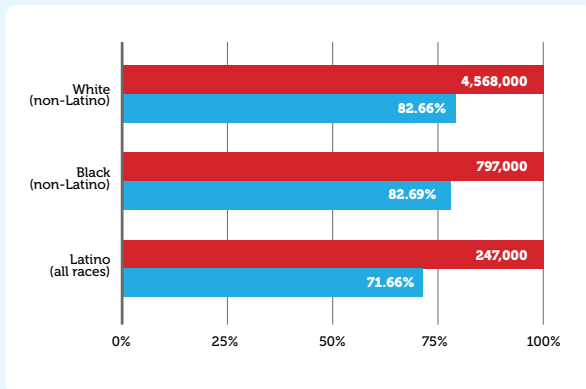
Voter Turnout vs. Registered Voters



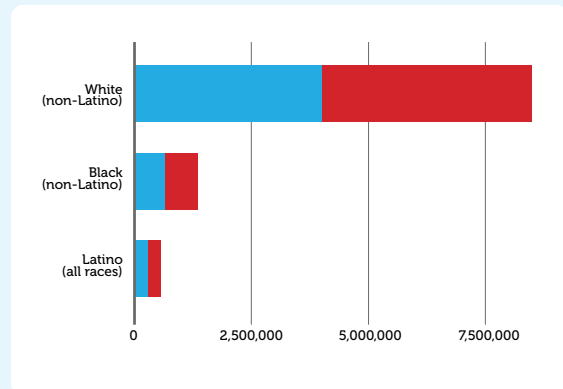
Michigan

● Actual Voters ● Registered Voters

Voter Participation Percentage by Race

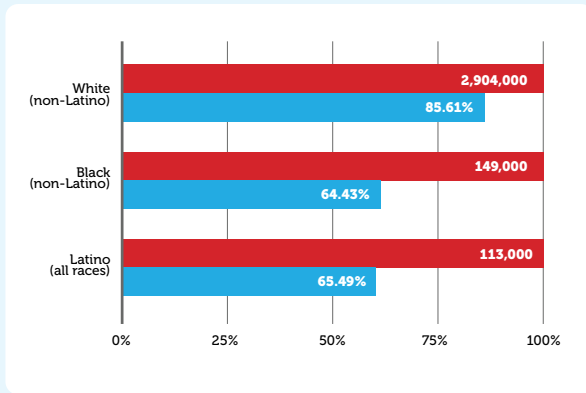


Voter Turnout vs. Registered Voters

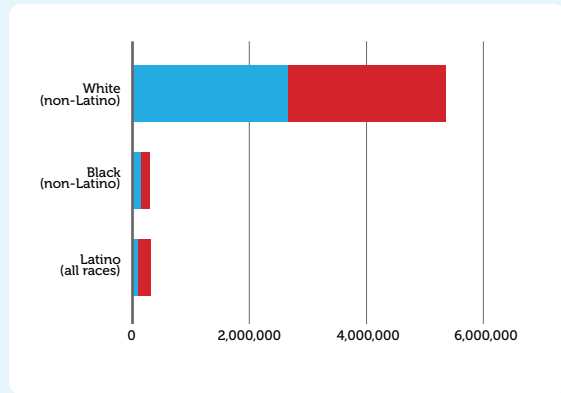


Wisconsin

Voter Participation Percentage by Race



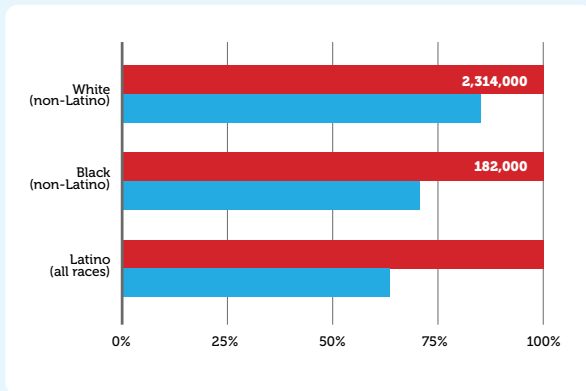
Voter Turnout vs. Registered Voters



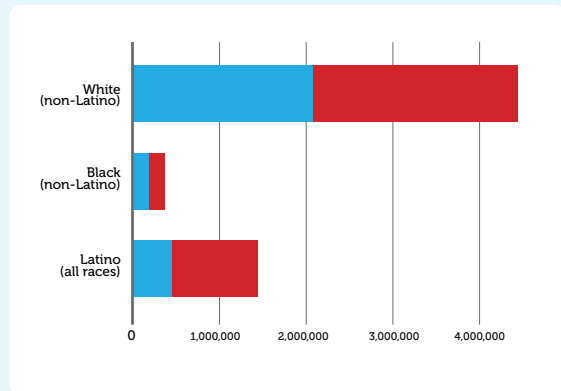
Arizona

● Actual Voters ● Registered Voters

Voter Participation Percentage by Race



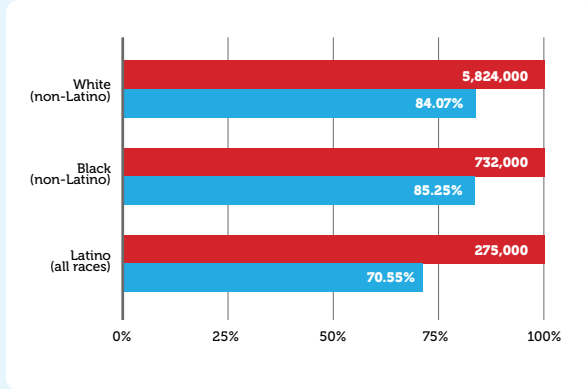
Voter Turnout vs. Registered Voters



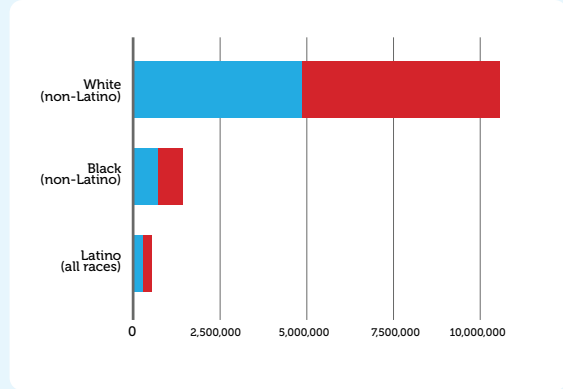
Pennsylvania

● Actual Voters ● Registered Voters

Voter Participation Percentage by Race



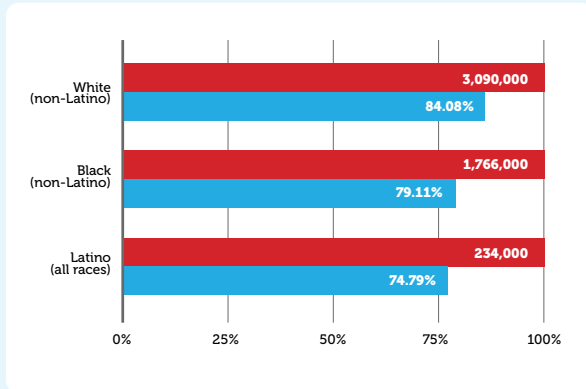
Voter Turnout vs. Registered Voters



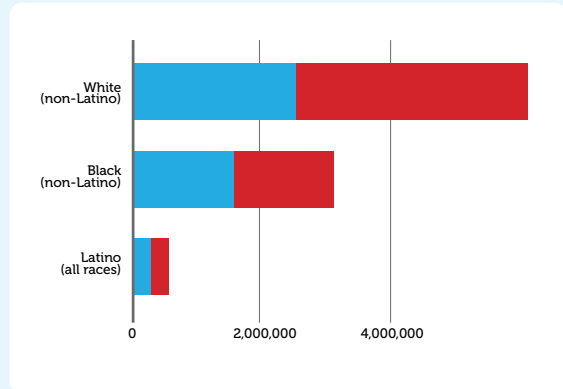
Georgia

● Actual Voters ● Registered Voters

Voter Participation Percentage by Race



Voter Turnout vs. Registered Voters



Visualizations by Carisma De Anda and Ava Vazquez from the University of California, Berkeley, alongside Miriam Hernandez from Wellesley College, all serve as LULAC Policy and Legislation Fellows.



Language Matters

By **Alba Lucero Villa**

Chief Development Officer at LULAC. Alba received her law degree from NYU Law, a Masters in Journalism and Public Affairs from American University School of Communication, and a B.A. from Brown University

Common sense tell us that humans can neither be illegal nor fractioned off to less than a whole. Yet history shows us common sense does not always prevail in political rhetoric, leading to discriminatory legal frameworks. While advances have been made since I was grad student in journalism graduate student two decades ago—pushing publications to eradicate the use of “illegal immigrant” or “alien” – the use of dehumanizing metaphors in media and law persists. Using words like “flood” or “surge” and “impermissible occupation” unfairly depicts migrants as “natural disasters” that are unwelcome, dangerous, destructive, and uncontrollable.

Similarly, the progress made around immigrant rights since I completed law school more than a decade ago is now gravely at risk. A legal history seminar on *Dred Scott* solidified my ambition to become a civil rights lawyer, and it is in this spirit that I am appalled that 167 years after *Scott v. Sanford*, tiered personhood would be again back on the table.

The *Dred Scott* decision, considered by legal scholars to be the Supreme Court’s most misguided ruling, echoed the same sentiments of dehumanization embedded in the Three-Fifths clause in Article 1, Section 2, Clause 3 of the U.S. Constitution as established in 1787, which counted enslaved people as three-fifths

of a person for purposes of representation and taxation. Both were later repudiated by the 13th and 14th amendments to the Constitution, which abolished slavery and declared all persons born in the United States to be U.S. citizens.

With threats to birthright citizenship increasingly tethered to anti-immigrant tropes, it is not surprising that scholars and activists are calling immigration the civil rights issue of our time. The slew of anti-immigrant local ordinances introduced in 18 states over the last year and a half share striking similarities with the Dred Scott case. Both instances illuminate the profound social and political impacts of legal decisions on marginalized communities. The preference for states' rights over federal regulation in Dred Scott allowed individual states to continue practices that sustained slavery and discrimination. Similarly, anti-immigrant local ordinances highlight states' attempts to exert control over immigration policy—a domain typically under federal jurisdiction.


This struggle between state and federal powers often results in discriminatory practices against specific racial and ethnic groups, perpetuating harmful stereotypes and creating an atmosphere of fear and suspicion among immigrant communities. History reminds us how it was the arrival of tens of thousands of Chinese laborers in the 1870s that prompted an intervention of by the federal government to use its power to regulate immigration. The 1875 Supreme Court decision *Chy Lung v. Freeman* held that immigration was a federal matter under the Constitution's Commerce Power and the 1889 Chinese Exclusion Act case, *Chae Chan Ping v. U.S.*, upheld the federal government's power to regulate immigration and enforce the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. Since then, the principle that the plenary power doctrine grants the federal government broad authority over immigration matters has gone uncontested—until now.

Just as opponents of the influx of Chinese immigrant laborers in the second of half of the 19th Century distorted the anti-slavery argument, many opponents of the influx of immigrants from Latin America and Africa seek to push litigation and legislation that ultimately seeks create an underclass. Using language like “illegal immigration” and “impermissible occupation” can be weaponized in political rhetoric to stoke fear and division. This rhetoric can lead to the scapegoating of immigrant communities and

justify discriminatory policies and practices and contribute to social and economic marginalization. Immigrants, particularly those from marginalized racial and ethnic backgrounds, already often face heightened scrutiny and suspicion in their daily lives. This manifests in discriminatory hiring practices, racial profiling, and reduced access to essential services such as healthcare and education.

Dehumanizing language can have serious repercussions on the mental health and well-being of not only immigrants but entire communities. This is especially problematic for children and young adults who are trying to form their identities in a society that labels them as “illegal” or criminalizes their mere presence, for an act that was no fault of their own making. The impact of such language extends beyond individual harm; it affects the way society perceives and treats individuals, often leading to social exclusion and discrimination.

In addition to changing our language, it is essential to foster a more informed and compassionate public discourse around immigration. This involves shifting the narrative to stories about the complexities of immigration law, the reasons why people migrate, and the contributions that immigrants make to society. It also means challenging the narratives that seek to demonize and scapegoat immigrants for broader social and economic issues.

Dred Scott and the current legal challenges surrounding anti-immigrant legislation are reminders of the critical role that language and legal frameworks play in either upholding or challenging systemic injustice. They highlight the necessity of informed public discourse around issues of race, citizenship, and immigration. Ultimately, the lessons from the Dred Scott case should inspire us to pursue justice and equality for all members of society. By adopting more respectful and accurate language, we can contribute to a more humane and informed discussion about immigration. This shift in language is not merely a matter of political correctness; it is a step toward recognizing the dignity and humanity of all individuals, fostering sense of belonging, and recognizing the human right to work. 

In the Crosshairs:

Latino Immigrants and the Surge of Anti-Immigrant Legislation from 2020 to 2024

By **Julian Cuellar**

LULAC Research and Policy Fellow from University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA)

Over the past few years, there's been a noticeable surge in state and municipal-level bills taking aim at immigrants, with a disproportionate impact on Latino communities. From 2020 to 2024, these legislative maneuvers have intensified, painting a picture of a deeply divided political landscape that has only added to the struggles faced by Latino immigrants.

During the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, anti-immigrant sentiments surged, shaping legislative agendas across states. Exploiting fears of economic competition and public health concerns, politicians pushed for legislation targeting immigrants, under the guise of public safety and resource preservation. Data from the National Conference of State Legislatures reveals a flurry of bills introduced at various levels, including sanctuary city bans and stricter enforcement measures, disproportionately impacting Latinos, who form a significant portion of immigrant communities.

Fast forward to 2021, and the scene was dominated by a surge in anti-sanctuary city legislation. States like Texas and Florida led the charge, passing laws that effectively barred local governments from adopting sanctuary policies, all in the name of better cooperation with federal immigration authorities. Yet again, it was Latino communities feeling the brunt, left more vulnerable to enforcement actions and the heart-wrenching specter of family separations.


Then came 2022, a year that saw an alarming escalation in voter suppression tactics aimed squarely at immigrant and minority communities. States such as Georgia and Arizona took the lead, implementing stringent voter ID laws and purging voter rolls, actions that disproportionately disenfranchised Latino voters. These tactics only served to widen existing disparities in political representation, robbing Latino communities of their voice in the democratic process.

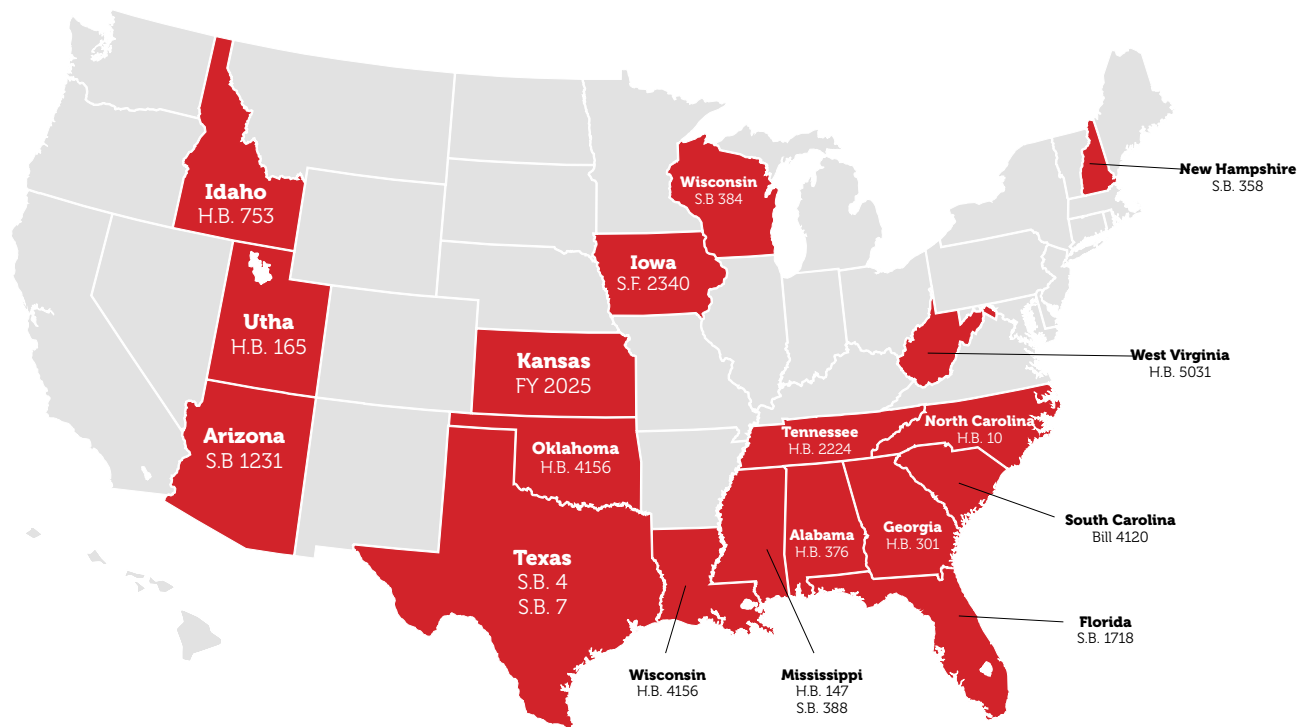
By 2023, Latino immigrants faced heightened challenges as states rolled out stringent immigration enforcement measures. Legislation touching on everything from employment to housing and essential services flooded the political landscape, raising concerns about racial bias and unequal treatment. In Texas, SB4 aimed to compel local law enforcement to effectively take



on federal immigration enforcement roles, while Oklahoma's House Bill 4156 introduced a new category of criminal offense, "impermissible occupation," targeting those suspected of residing in the country without authorization. In Iowa, restrictive measures aimed at immigrants included efforts to deny public benefits and limit access to driver's licenses. Amid reports of growing fear and uncertainty in immigrant communities, accessing vital support services became increasingly difficult.

As we navigate through 2024, the struggle confronting Latino immigrants remains as daunting as ever, emphasizing the urgent need for sustained advocacy and meaningful policy reform. Despite the tireless efforts of organizations like LULAC to mobilize communities and challenge discriminatory laws, systemic barriers persist, demanding continued engagement and resilience in the face of ongoing challenges.

From 2020 to 2024, the onslaught of state and municipal-level bills targeting immigrants has taken a heavy toll on Latino communities, exacerbating existing disparities and eroding their fundamental rights and well-being. As our nation grapples with the complexities of immigration, addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach—one that includes legislative reform, community empowerment, and relentless advocacy for equitable policies. It's only through collective action that we can hope to build a more inclusive and just society for all. 



Alabama

H.B. 376 introduced in 2024, would allow for state and local law enforcement agencies to impose federal unmigration laws. This bill would allow individuals to be arrested by a state or local law enforcement officer based on suspected documentation status.

Arizona

Governor Hobbs rejected S.B. 1231, a bill proposed in 2024 that works to grant power to local law enforcement to deport undocumented individuals.

Florida

In 2023, Governor DeSantis signed into law S.B. 1718, which criminalizes the transportation of undocumented individuals across state lines, defining “undocumented” as individuals who entered the United States unlawfully and have not been federally inspected.

Georgia

H.B. 301, introduced in 2023, allows Georgians to sue their local government for violating the state’s (anti) sanctuary policies which can result in the revocation of certain state and federal funds, waiver of sovereign immunity, and removal of local officials and employees.

Idaho

H.B. 753, proposed in 2024, criminalizes illegal entry and authorizes police to check an individual’s immigration status.

Iowa

S.F. 2340 was signed into law in 2024 and allows police to arrest people based on their federal immigration status and authorize Iowa judges to order someone to be deported or jailed before they have an opportunity to seek humanitarian protection that they are entitled to.

Kansas

Kansas’ 2025 budget includes a provision that forces any sanctuary-serving city for undocumented immigrants to repay all state funds received and cut all future funding.

Louisiana

Introduced in 2024, S.B. 388 criminalized unlawful entry or reentry into Louisiana by an undocumented alien.

Mississippi

H.B. 147 and S.B. 2284, introduced in 2024 and 2021 respectively, sought to criminally punish the transportation, entry, or presence of undocumented immigrants into the state. Although both failed, this may have led to increased scrutiny, racial profiling, and fear among Latino communities

New Hampshire

S.B. 358, introduced in 2024, invalidates out-of-state drivers licenses issued to undocumented immigrants, criminalizing drivers within New Hampshire.

North Carolina

H.B. 10, introduced in 2023, would require local sheriffs to cooperate with ICE if they detain an undocumented immigrant.

Oklahoma

In 2024, Oklahoma’s H.B. 4156 introduced the offense of impermissible occupation, allowing reporting of suspected illegal presence. Law enforcement gains authority to apprehend and detain individuals based on reporting statements until legal residency is verified.

South Carolina

General Bill 4120, introduced in 2023, requires law enforcement agencies to report the immigration status of individuals to federal officials.

Tennessee

H.B. 2224 passed in 2018 requires law enforcement agencies to share information with federal authorities regarding the immigration status of individuals, disclose the presence of unlawful present aliens, and assist in identifying, apprehending, detaining, or removing them.

Texas

S.B. 4 was passed in 2023, however, it is currently not in effect. This bill authorizes untrained police officers to detain individuals suspected of being undocumented citizens and allows Texas judges to order individual deportations under specific circumstances.

Utah

H.B. 165, passed in 2024, seeks to restrict federal law enforcement agents from releasing aliens from custody in Utah without first providing detailed notifications to a county sheriff and the Utah Attorney General.

West Virginia

West Virginia’s H.B. 5031, introduced in 2024, expands the definition of “human smuggling” to include aiding undocumented individuals, with penalties of up to \$200,000 and 15 years in prison.”

Wisconsin

S.B. 384 was proposed in 2023 and would have required law enforcement officers to determine the legal status of any detainees and cooperate with federal authorities to the fullest extent. This bill did not pass.



The Hidden Housing Cost of Climate Change

By **Ava Vazquez**

University of California, Berkeley

and **Joaquin Macias**

University of Notre Dame, LULAC Policy and Legislation Fellows



For many Latinos, homeownership symbolizes the hard work and sacrifice that embody the American Dream, offering stability and opportunities for future generations. However, the current housing market presents increasing challenges for Latinos in both maintaining and purchasing homes. One critical, yet often overlooked factor, is climate change.

Natural disasters such as wildfires, hurricanes, and floods have driven insurance premiums to unprecedented levels. In states like California, Florida, Texas, Arizona, and Colorado, insurance companies are exiting high-risk areas because of the prohibitive costs associated with disaster-related damages. For instance, Florida saw at least six insurers go insolvent last year due to the heightened risk exposure in this hurricane-prone region. This exodus leaves homeowners in these vulnerable areas scrambling to find affordable coverage—or any coverage at all.

For those with mortgages, the loss of insurance often translates to foreclosure, as lenders typically require homeowners to maintain coverage. As climate change continues to escalate, the risk of losing homes due to unaffordable insurance rates becomes even more acute, complicating the dream of homeownership for current and future generations alike.

Historically, Latinos have been disadvantaged in homeownership. The Latino homeownership rate in the United States is 51.1%, compared to the national average of 65.2%, and 72.3% for white Americans. Latinos often reside along the coast and U.S. borders, the areas most vulnerable to climate events. FEMA's National Risk Index highlights that Latino homeowners in California, Florida, Texas, Arizona, and New York are at the highest risk. The homeownership rates in these states are 46%, 55%, 59%, 59%, and 29%, respectively. From 2015 to 2023, the average cost of home insurance increased over 50% in Florida, over 40% in Texas, and more than 20% in both California and Arizona. These rising premiums mean many Latino homeowners are underinsured, forcing them to cover repair costs out of pocket, or risk losing their homes altogether.


Potential Latino homeowners face significant hurdles due to costly or unavailable insurance plans, and Latino renters may also be affected as landlords struggle with insurance costs. This financial strain could send shockwaves throughout the Latino community, already historically disadvantaged, and impact the broader U.S. economy. While New York's insurance premium increases have been below the national average, the state's high Latino population could face future challenges as natural

disasters become more frequent. Economists often overlook the complexity of this issue, focusing on loans and mortgage rates. Yet, without insurance, mortgages are unattainable, disproportionately affecting Latinos and threatening the American Dream for millions, potentially limiting homeownership to those few who can pay in cash.

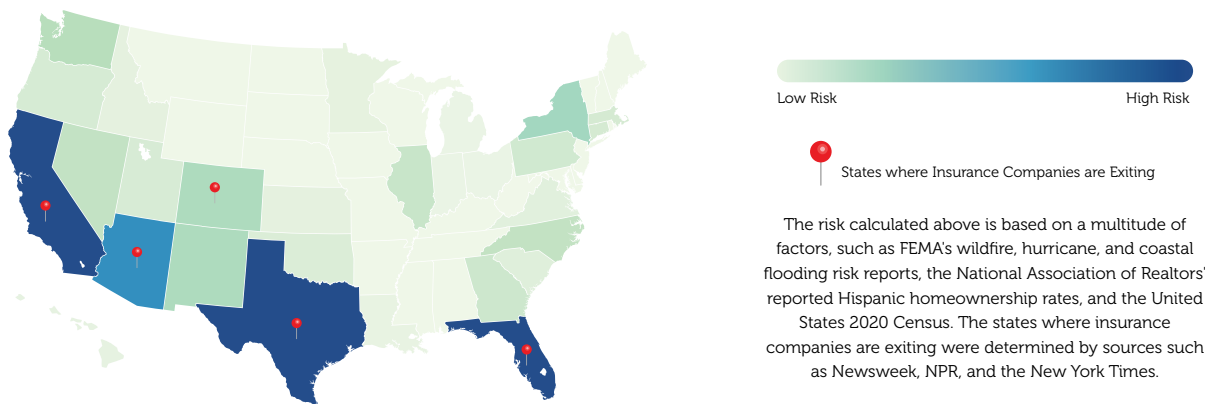
Recognizing the urgent need for action, LULAC has been at the forefront of addressing climate change impacts on Latino communities. Through a strategic partnership with ecoAmerica, LULAC’s youth Climate Change Ambassadors are on the front lines, raising awareness and mobilizing efforts to combat these daunting challenges. These ambassadors are essential in educating the Latino community about the risks of climate change and advocating for policy changes to protect homeowners. Their vital

work ensures that the American Dream remains attainable, safeguarding both current and future generations from the escalating impact of natural disasters.

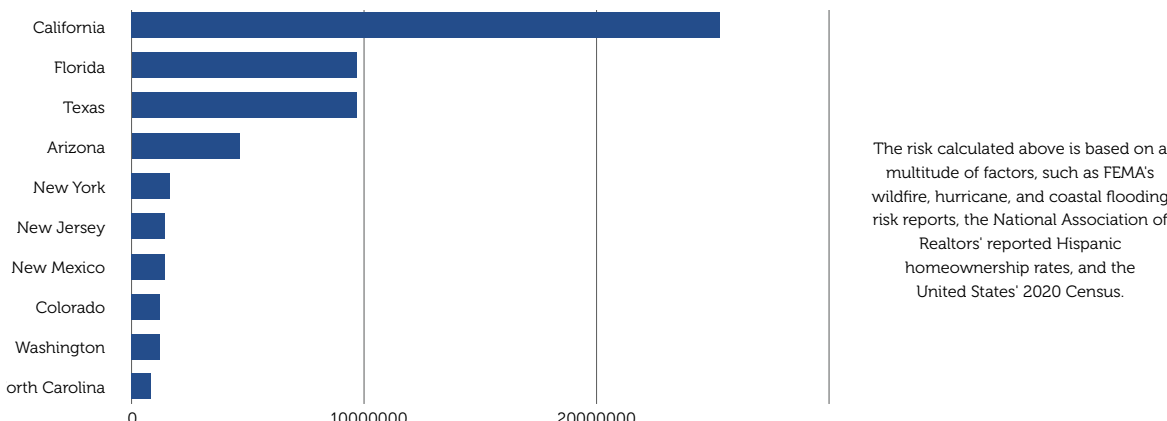
As climate change continues to drive up insurance costs and force companies out of high-risk areas, Latino homeowners face a growing threat to their stability and future prospects. Addressing these challenges requires immediate and comprehensive solutions to ensure that the American Dream remains attainable for all, safeguarding both current and future generations from the escalating impact of natural disasters.

Visualizations by Carisma De Anda, University of California, Berkeley, Cesar Espino, Texas Wesleyan University, and Alexa DeLeon, College of Saint Benedict & Saint John’s University—all distinguished LULAC Policy and Legislation Fellows. 

Absolute Calculated Natural Disaster Risk for Latino Homeowners



Top 10 States Where Latino Homeowners Are at Risk of Losing Their Homes Due to Climate Change



Reproductive Rights Are Under Attack

We Must Protect Our Medical Privacy At All Costs

By **Melanie Fontes Rainer**

Director, Office for Civil Rights, U.S. Health and Human Services

Latinas in America face—and have historically faced—daunting challenges to protect their reproductive rights and autonomy. Even before the fall of *Roe v. Wade*, Latinas were disproportionately impacted by restrictions on reproductive healthcare. Those effects have only worsened since the Supreme Court's ruling—as more states ban or severely restrict care. More than 6.5 million Latinas now live in the 26 states that have banned or are likely to ban abortion. Specifically, 46% of Latinas of child-bearing age in the U.S. live in states with restrictions on abortion.

As a Latina, I understand the history and importance of safeguarding every woman's access to health care, which importantly includes our reproductive health and the ability to make decisions about our health, bodies, and families. That is why I have prioritized meeting with individuals, advocates, and providers across the country to better understand the realities and impact of a post-Dobbs landscape. Time and again, health care providers have shared their fears and concerns about their own safety and ability to do their jobs and take care of their patients. They worry that medical records are increasingly being sought out by law enforcement to track and criminalize their patients or themselves. In this new reality, they worry about their ability to safely talk with their patients and providers about what's best

for their health—and what might happen to them if they access or provide care.

This fear, lack of trust, and real and perceived threats lead to a chilling effect on providers and patients—who may potentially skip care because they are too scared. Our new rule, the HIPAA Privacy Rule to Support Reproductive Health Care Privacy, will provide a tool to protect their medical privacy. The rule restricts the use of protected health information for seeking, obtaining, providing, or facilitating lawful reproductive health care. Safeguarding this information helps maintain and strengthen patient-provider trust, which improves health outcomes and patient privacy protections. Latinas and other women can now be assured that no matter where they live in this country, their state does not own them or their medical data.

Earlier this year, I wrote about my own reproductive health care experience for *The Hill*. For me, this work is deeply personal. Latinas and all women deserve to feel confident discussing their reproductive health care choices with their health care providers—free from the threat of criminal, civil, or administrative investigation or liability. This new rule takes a giant step toward building that confidence. [LN](#)



My Journey en La EPA

Meet two Hispanic Employment Program Mangers at EPA, who are excited to play a critical role in promoting Diversity, Equity, Inclusion, and Accessibility (DEIA). Learn about their journey at EPA and how they play a role in celebrating and reflecting on the contributions that Hispanics have made and continue to make every day.

Sandra's Story

After attending a career fair in Washington, DC, I walked up to an EPA booth, introduced myself and despite being a business major among a STEM-focused pool of applicants, I submitted my resume and indicated that that the Agency would have a need for someone with my skillset. After joining the Agency, I connected with the Hispanic community at EPA and eventually became EPA's Hispanic Employment Program (HEP) Council Chair in December 2013.

I love being able to contribute to our agency's mission by representing and supporting the Hispanic community. Being a bi-lingual Latina of Colombian and Puerto Rican descent, first generation, and first college bound, it helps me to recognize and support the successes and challenges of many underserved populations. Essentially helping me shape my career by staying true to myself, giving back to my community, uplifting the next generation, having a seat at the table as a leader to bring about the change needed.

I am grateful for my time at EPA, as I have had the opportunity to move around the agency to work for different programs and on various projects. Allowing me to establish and expand my network with colleagues across the agency and in the federal government. Continuously growing and further developing my career through professional development opportunities. My goal is to establish a legacy and be remembered by my colleagues and the people that I serve for the work that I do and for the support I give my Latino community.



About the Author

Sandra Rivera is a diversity leader with 23+ years of experience in developing and managing various organizational programs from the development and implementation of business solutions to program strategies and a champion of enhancing diversity and inclusion efforts. Sandra has been with EPA since January 2005, where she has held a variety of positions in different program offices.

Currently, she is the Communications Branch Manager for the Office of Mission Support's Office of Engagement & Program Management. Sandra leads the team responsible for developing and implementing the OMS communications to external and internal stakeholders. Sandra also oversees the Hispanic special emphasis program supporting Hispanic outreach and diversity initiatives. She is a dual mixed Latina of Colombian and Puerto Rican descent, who was raised in MA and now lives in MD with her husband and daughter. Sandra has an MBA degree from Trinity Washington University, a BS in International Business Management from the University of New Haven, and many professional certifications.

My Journey en La EPA

Eliana's Story

I was born and raised in Bogota, Colombia. After moving to the U.S. and overcoming a multitude of challenges as a first-generation Latina, I found a network within my community through Hispanic student organizations. Fast forward a few years, and I began my career at the U.S. EPA through the Pathways Recent Graduates program in 2016. After learning more about EPA's Hispanic Employment program from a mentor, I joined the program as a Special Emphasis Program Manager (SEPM).

For me, being a Hispanic EPA employee means being a part of the next generation of change agents – following the footsteps of the minority leaders who have made such a difference at our Agency. It is living proof that my parents' sacrifices in pursuit of a better life were worth it and helped me get to where I am today: working to protect human health and the environment each day. This has shaped my career and has motivated me to seguir adelante (keep moving forward) no matter what challenges I may face throughout my career.


Spanish was my first language and being bilingual has opened many doors for me throughout my career. In 2021, I provided support to EPA Region 2's Caribbean Environmental Protection Division. During this time, I led collaborative initiatives with local and federal agencies in Puerto Rico focused on hazard mitigation and adaptation strategies, disaster recovery projects, and training and capacity building efforts. All of this was possible given my ability to speak and write both languages fluently, I felt like I was able to make transformational changes in disaster recovery work in the Caribbean. At the end of the day, to me, being Hispanic is the ability to think and speak in Spanglish, recognizing my multicultural mindset can benefit others. This experience showed me just that!



About the Author

Eliana has been with EPA since 2016 and is currently a Program Analyst for the Program Evaluation and Coordination Branch Office of Site Remediation Enforcement, Office of Enforcement and Compliance Assurance. Eliana works to develop and provide specialized training to Superfund Enforcement staff across the Agency. In addition to her Superfund-specific roles, Eliana is a member of the Workforce Council and serves as a Hispanic Employment Program Manager (HEPM) for OECA.

Eliana has led various efforts to advance diversity and inclusion in her HEPM role and her fondest memory is submitting the winning poster that was used across the nation to observe the 2021 Hispanic Heritage Month theme of Esperanza (hope). During her time at EPA, she has also worked within the EPA Headquarters Emergency Operations Center and has provided support to the EPA Region 2 Caribbean Environmental Protection Division on strategic initiatives to assist with disaster recovery efforts

in Puerto Rico. Eliana is a native of Bogota, Colombia, and a graduate of Towson University (BA) and the George Washington University Milken Institute School of Public Health (MA). Outside of work, Eliana enjoys acai bowls on a hot day, outdoor recreational activities and spending quality time with her family and friends. 



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Don't let the U.S. Department of Transportation take away affordable flights to Mexico

DOT's decision to end the Delta-Aeromexico partnership would bring unintended consequences to U.S. Latino families and businesses

Traveling between the U.S. and Mexico has become more affordable in the last several years because of a strategic partnership between Delta Air Lines and Aeroméxico. This partnership, known as a Joint Cooperation Agreement (JCA), has enabled the two airlines to provide convenient and direct routes between some of the U.S.'s largest cities to multiple destinations in Mexico. But earlier this year, the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) announced a tentative decision to end this partnership.

Since 2016, the JCA between Delta Air Lines and Aeroméxico has served 45 million passengers. Healthy market competition has helped make airfare affordable and travel more convenient. Should the DOT move forward, more than two dozen flights between the U.S. and Mexico could face cancellation, which could drive up prices and make travel cost prohibitive. These flights not only provide direct access to Mexico, they also serve as key connectors to other cities in Central and South America.

Both the U.S. and Mexico have reaped strong economic benefits from the airlines' partnership. It has created and supported thousands of jobs that hardworking Hispanic families depend on. Mexico is now the United States' top trading partner, with revenue exceeding \$860 billion in 2023 alone. Additionally, many of America's leading and most recognized companies, spanning industries from consumer products to software, have operations in Mexico, including The Coca-Cola Company, Exxon-Mobile, General Motors, Microsoft and Walmart. This requires easy transborder access and frequent business travel, which the airlines' JCA helps to support.

Travel from Mexico is also a large economic driver in the U.S. In 2022, spending by Mexican travelers in the U.S. 2022 totaled \$19.2 billion. For many communities, tourism is a key factor in their economic health. Limiting the number of flights from Mexico could make air travel more expensive for tourists, leading to less spending and revenue and ultimately putting jobs on the line, like the hospitality jobs that are so critical to our Hispanic communities.

Unsurprisingly, the DOT's plan is unpopular among U.S. voters and even more unpopular among Mexican American voters. Sixty-five percent of U.S. voters are against canceling the Delta-Aeroméxico partnership, while 70 percent of Mexican American voters oppose. In addition, more than 80 percent of Mexican American voters say the loss of flying options between the U.S. and Mexico would be harmful.

The DOT's decision is in response to an unrelated issue regarding the U.S.-Mexico air services agreement. While Delta and Aeroméxico understand and appreciate the goal of ensuring the Mexican government honors and upholds this policy, this kind of action is punitive.

Across the country, diverse voices – from federal and state elected officials to prominent business leaders – have expressed their concerns about the DOT's potential action, particularly the impact on the Hispanic community. The Department should heed these warnings and swiftly act to keep this strategic partnership in place.



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