

NHLA National Hispanic Leadership Agenda

March 11, 2015

U.S. Senate
Washington, DC 20515

Re: NHLA Opposition to Vitter Amendment to Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act of 2015, S. 178

Dear Senator:

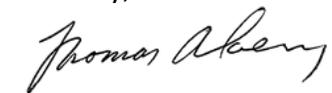
We write on behalf of the National Hispanic Leadership Agenda (NHLA), a coalition of 39 leading national Latino nonpartisan civil rights and advocacy organizations, to **strongly urge you to vote against the amendment introduced by Sen. David Vitter as Amendment 274 and then as Amendment 284, to S. 178, the “Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act of 2015. NHLA will closely monitor votes on the Vitter Amendment, and similar measures, and will include them in future NHLA scorecards evaluating Senators’ support for the Latino community.**

The Vitter Amendment represents a troubling effort to limit or alter the right of citizenship of certain persons born within the United States. It would limit citizenship by birth to only those individuals who are children of: U.S. citizens or nationals, lawful permanent residents, or immigrants in active-duty military service. This proposal seeks to undermine the well-established precedent by altering the legal interpretation and application of the Citizenship Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution. It would deny citizenship to infants born in the United States to undocumented parents, as well as lawfully present individuals, such as certain survivors of domestic violence, or individuals with student or employment visas.

Such legislation would result in an underclass of Latinos that would be subject to disparate and adverse treatment based on their ethnicity, national origin, and race. It would throw into question the citizenship of infants born across the country by aiming to create a large population of stateless persons—of children born and raised in the U.S. but who will not have the rights or obligations of citizenship. In addition, it may lead numerous states and localities to implement costly administrative procedures in issuing birth certificates. The implications of unsettling over a century of precedent regarding the Citizenship Clause are so severe that in 2011, the American Bar Association (ABA) adopted a resolution opposing any legislation such as this. In doing so, the ABA recognized that these legislative efforts represents a threat to the civil rights of Latinas and Latinos in the U.S. and the ability of the Latino community to fully participate in this country’s legal system.

NHLA strongly opposes the Vitter amendment and any similar legislation. This amendment attempts to create a permanent underclass of Latinos. Rather than focusing on efforts to undermine the civil rights of Latinos, the Senate should be working to address the important anti-trafficking measures included in S. 178’s original text. Please contact NHLA through Andrea Senteno, of MALDEF, at asenteno@maldef.org or 202-572-0467, with any questions regarding this letter. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Thomas A. Saenz
MALDEF, President and General Counsel
NHLA Immigration Committee Co-Chair



Jose Calderón
Hispanic Federation, President
NHLA Immigration Committee Co-Chair

MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

American G.I. Forum
ASPIRA Association
Avance Inc.
Casa de Esperanza
Cuban American National Council
Farmworker Justice
Hispanic Association of Colleges & Universities
Hispanic Federation
Hispanic National Bar Association
Inter-University Program for Latino Research
Labor Council for Latin American Advancement
LatinoJustice PRLDEF
League of United Latin American Citizens
MANA, A National Latina Organization
Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund
National Alliance of Latin American and Caribbean Communities
National Association of Hispanic Federal Executives
National Association of Hispanic Publications
NALEO Educational Fund
National Association of Latino Independent Producers
National Conference of Puerto Rican Women, Inc.
National Council of La Raza
National Hispanic Caucus of State Legislators
National Hispana Leadership Institute
National Hispanic Council on Aging
National Hispanic Environmental Council
National Hispanic Foundation for the Arts
National Hispanic Medical Association
National Hispanic Media Coalition
National Institute for Latino Policy
National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health
National Puerto Rican Coalition
Presente.org
SER Jobs for Progress – National
Southwest Voter Registration Education Project
United States Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
United States Hispanic Leadership Institute
United States-Mexico Chamber of Commerce

U.S.- Mexico Foundation