

National Hispanic Leadership Agenda

December 17, 2020

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden
President-elect of the United States
VIA EMAIL

Dear President-elect Biden,

The National Hispanic Leadership Agenda (NHLA) has voted to strongly endorse and recommend that you nominate Dr. Maribel Alvarez, Jim Griffith Chair in Public Folklore, The Southwest Center; Associate Research Professor, School of Anthropology; and Associate Dean for Community Engagement, College of Social & Behavioral Sciences, at the University of Arizona, as the next Chair of the National Endowment for the Humanities.

NHLA is composed of over 40 of the leading national Hispanic civil rights and public policy organizations. Collectively, NHLA leads advocacy on the pressing civil rights and policy issues affecting the U.S.'s 60 million Latinos. NHLA strives to increase Latino visibility and leverages its efforts to build a stronger Latino influence in our country's affairs.

We previously asked you to ensure that Hispanics and Latinos comprise at least 20% of your appointed positions, in number and importance. As a senior position in arts and humanities, your nomination of Dr. Maribel Alvarez as the first Latina to lead the National Endowment for the Humanities would help recognize the history and immense contributions of millions of Latinos, as no Latinos have served in that position since the agency was established in 1965.

Dr. Alvarez has the abilities, understanding, and expertise to lead with honesty and dedication, in addition to her distinguished career as a scholar, folklorist, non-profit leader, and public intellectual. Dr. Alvarez is uniquely tuned to all the ways in which the study and application of humanities are related to the ideals of social justice and equality that we stand for in our country. She is a thoughtful academic who, while also being an important bridge to realistic institution-building, brings analytical complexity to the study of American culture. As a self-identified lesbian, she will additionally add value to the urgent objective of prioritizing LGBTQ+ representation and achievements in the history of our country.

Dr. Alvarez is committed to a life of service that elevates the stories and experiences conveyed by the diverse cultural traditions of the people of our country. She describes her work as a collection of stories, foods, songs and labor expended in making a living, based on uplifting the experiences and ideals of ordinary people involved in the arts of daily life. For her desire to get things done, she won the 2018 national prize from the American Folklore Society, awarded to those whose academic work bridges the interests of the communities one studies.

MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

Alianza Americas
American G.I. Forum
ASPIRA Association
AVANCE Inc.
Casa de Esperanza: National Latin@ Network
Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute
Farmworker Justice
Green Latinos
Hispanic Association of Colleges & Universities
Hispanic Federation
Hispanic National Bar Association
Hispanics in Philanthropy
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
Mi Familia Vota
NALEO Education Fund
National Association of Hispanic Federal Executives
National Association of Latino Arts and Culture
National Association of Latino Independent Producers
National Conference of Puerto Rican Women, Inc.
National Day Laborer Organizing Network
National Hispanic Caucus of State Legislators
National Hispanic Council on Aging
National Hispanic Foundation for the Arts
National Hispanic Media Coalition
National Hispanic Medical Association
National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health
National Latinx Psychological Association
Presente.org
SER Jobs for Progress National
Southwest Voter Registration Education Project
U.S.- Mexico Foundation
UnidosUS
United States Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
United States Hispanic Leadership Institute
United States-Mexico Chamber of Commerce
Voto Latino

Dr. Alvarez served as a Trustee at the American Folklife Center of the Library of Congress for six years. She has advised numerous philanthropic foundations in planning and analyzing projects that have explored the multitude of humanistic priorities; our nation's shifting demographics, racial justice, narrative capacity and the role of large public events in building social trust.

Dr. Alvarez has expressed her dedication to honoring American intellectual and scientific productivity and is ready to spend the next four years in the highest call that one can dream of as an American: nurturing and reinforcing the core democratic institutions that strengthen our dreams of equality, integrity and compassion.

We look forward to continuing to collaborate with you to achieve the goal of a government that looks like America.

Please have your staff contact the NHLA Chair, Thomas Saenz, MALDEF, at tsaenz@maldef.org, or Co-Chairs of the NHLA Media Committee, Brenda Castillo, National Hispanic Media Coalition, at bcastillo@nhmc.org, and Felix Sánchez, National Hispanic Foundation for the Arts, at FSanchez@hispanicarts.org, if you have any questions about NHLA's position regarding this appointment. Please also let us know the contact information of the persons you designate as the official points of contact on this and related matters. Thank you.

Sincerely,



Brenda Castillo
Co-Chair, NHLA Media Committee
President & CEO, National Hispanic Media Coalition (NHMC)



Felix Sánchez
Co-Chair, NHLA Media Committee
Chairman & Co-Founder, National Hispanic Foundation for the Arts (NHFA)