



National Hispanic Leadership Agenda

June 17, 2014

RE: VOTE YES on the Nomination of Gustavo Velasquez Aguilar to serve as Assistant Secretary for Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

Dear Senators:

On behalf of the National Hispanic Leadership Agenda (NHLA), a coalition of the 37 preeminent national Latino organizations in the country, we write to urge you to vote YES in support of the final vote to confirm Mr. Gustavo Velasquez Aguilar to be Assistant Secretary for Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity (FHE) at the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD).

As we noted in our prior letters and press statements in support of Mr. Velasquez (which you can view at nationalhispanicleadership.org/headlines), it is our intent to score all votes associated with this nomination in our NHLA Congressional Scorecard on the 113th Congress. The NHLA Congressional Scorecard rates members of Congress on votes taken in the House and Senate that our membership deems important to the social, economic, and political advancement and quality of life of Hispanic Americans.

Nominated by the President in January of this year, Mr. Velasquez has our full support. He exemplifies the great talent pool the Latino community can offer the Executive branch and has the highest qualifications to serve the office and our nation. As you will discover upon examination, he has significant accomplishments in the public sector. Our support of Mr. Velasquez is rooted in his management experience in the investigation of discrimination claims and his knowledge of the field of non-discrimination laws, regulations, and enforcement, including fair housing.

Gustavo has demonstrated expertise in working with federal civil rights laws, regulations and programs, including Title VIII of the Civil Rights Act of 1968 (Fair Housing Act), Title VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964; Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973; Section 3 of the Housing and Urban Development Act of 1968; the American with Disabilities Act; the Age Discrimination Act; and relevant policies and regulations.

Having served from January, 2007 to October, 2013, as the Director of the District of Columbia Office of Human Rights (DC-OHR), he was responsible for the investigation and disposition of thousands of discrimination cases filed by individuals and organizations in the areas of employment, education, public accommodations, and housing. He was also responsible for helping establish or modify rules and guidelines to investigate and adjudicate employment and housing discrimination complaints under one of the most comprehensive non-discrimination statutes in the country – the D.C. Human Rights Act of 1977.

The skills he acquired while at DC-OHR are relevant to the position he is nominated for because DC's non-discrimination law is substantially equivalent to the Fair Housing Act. The DC-OHR has for many years been cross-filing and investigating cases with HUD under federal law. This required Mr. Velasquez to understand and apply the rules and guidelines emanating from HUD's Office of Fair Housing and Equal Opportunity (FHCO) for the proper investigation and disposition of Title VIII complaints.

In addition to his many years as a non-profit executive manager, he has valuable management experience in government for two state-level agencies: The District of Columbia Office of Latino Affairs (OLA) and the D.C. Office of Human Rights. At OLA, Gustavo was responsible for

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- Cuban American National Council
- Farmworker Justice
- Hispanic Association of Colleges & Universities
- Hispanic Federation
- Hispanic National Bar Association
- Labor Council for Latin American Advancement
- Latino Justice PLDEF
- 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
- 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

reviewing and approving annually more than \$5 million in local appropriations and federal funding for a wide range of community programs. At the Office of Human Rights, he managed a team of 30 that worked on combating discrimination in the Nation's capital. His staff included investigators, mediators, compliance specialists, attorney advisors, and administrative law judges.

We urge to vote in support of Mr. Velasquez so that he may begin the important work of ensuring access to equal housing opportunities for all persons living in America, regardless of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, disability, and familial status.

Thank you for your consideration of our views.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "H. Sanchez", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Hector E. Sanchez
Chair, National Hispanic Leadership Agenda
Executive Director, Labor Council for Latin American Advancement