

## Member Organizations

American GI Forum of the  
United States

ASPIRA Association, Inc.

AVANCE, Inc.

Casa de Esperanza

Cuban American National  
Council

Farmworker Justice

Hispanic Association of  
Colleges and Universities

Hispanic Federation

Hispanic National Bar  
Association

Labor Council for Latin  
American Advancement

LatinoJustice PRLDEF

League of United Latin  
American Citizens

Mexican American Legal  
Defense and Educational  
Fund

MANA, A National Latina  
Organization

National Alliance of Latin  
American and Caribbean  
Communities

National Association of  
Hispanic Federal Executives

National Association of  
Hispanic Publications

National Association of  
Latino Elected Officials

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

United States-Mexico  
Foundation

# National Hispanic Leadership Agenda

June 19, 2014

United States Senate  
Washington, DC 20510

## Re: NHLA Opposition to Vitter Amendment 3279

Dear Senator:

We write on behalf of the National Hispanic Leadership Agenda (NHLA), a coalition of 37 leading Latino nonpartisan civil rights and advocacy organizations in the country, to urge you to **vote against** Vitter Amendment 3279 to S.2437, the FY 2015 Commerce, Justice, and Science Appropriations. This amendment would withhold funding from the Census Bureau unless it includes intrusive and counterproductive questions regarding immigration status in the 2020 Census.

NHLA's mission calls for unity among Hispanics nationwide to provide the Latino community with greater visibility and a stronger voice in our nation's affairs, including the pressing need to overhaul our broken immigration system. NHLA will issue a scorecard assigning members a letter grade on their immigration record to give Hispanic voters and other interested voters a clear picture of their elected officials' positions on immigration reform. Our forthcoming scorecard will place significant weight on this vote.

The Census counts every person regardless of immigration status. The Census is extremely important in documenting the growth of communities, allocating resources for needed services, and identifying areas where policy enforcement may be needed. Immigrant communities are at higher risk for being undercounted and require special attention to ensure an accurate count. NHLA member organizations play a key role in helping immigrant communities understand the importance of being counted and of overcoming any reluctance to participate.

This Amendment is a clear attempt to reduce the number of noncitizens and undocumented immigrants who participate in the Census. This Amendment also runs contrary to the Constitution's mandate that the Census count "the whole number of persons" in the United States. The Fourteenth Amendment states that member apportionment in the House of Representatives is determined by a *full* count of persons in each state, citizen or otherwise.

Furthermore, the Amendment is unnecessary because the Census Bureau and the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) already estimate the undocumented population through the use of the "residual" method, under which DHS subtracts the lawful resident foreign-born population from the total foreign-born population.<sup>1</sup> The Census already regularly includes a question regarding citizenship, providing data used for the redistricting process.

Last, the Amendment would cause significant harm. The Government Accountability Office (GAO) has consistently reaffirmed that the inclusion of questions regarding immigration status are considered threatening survey questions, and trigger respondents to not answer these questions truthfully or refrain from participating altogether.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See, e.g., Michael Hoeffler, Nancy Rytina, and Bryan Baker, U.S. DEP'T OF HOMELAND SEC., ESTIMATES OF THE UNAUTHORIZED IMMIGRANT POPULATION RESIDING IN THE UNITED STATES: JANUARY 2011 (March 2012).

<sup>2</sup> See, e.g., U.S. GOV'T ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE, GAO- 04-73, ILLEGAL ALIEN SCHOOL CHILDREN: ISSUES IN ESTIMATING STATE-BY-STATE COSTS 35 (2004).

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In light of the above grounds, NHLA strongly urges you to **vote No** on Vitter Amendment 3279. Please contact NHLA through James A. Ferg-Cadima, at MALDEF, at [jferg-cadima@maldef.org](mailto:jferg-cadima@maldef.org) or 202-293-2828 ext. 11, or Bertha Guerrero, at Hispanic Federation, at [bguerrero@hispanicfederation.org](mailto:bguerrero@hispanicfederation.org) or 202-641-7186. 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