

National Hispanic Leadership Agenda

MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

American G.I. Forum
ASPIRA Association
Avance Inc.
Casa de Esperanza
Cuban American National Council

November 12, 2014

Dear Congressional Leaders:

On behalf of the National Hispanic Leadership Agenda (NHLA), a coalition of the nation's 39 leading Hispanic organizations, we urge you to constructively use the remaining weeks of this year to complete the work of the 113th Congress. As members return from the campaign trail, we are optimistic we can work together to promote an agenda reflective of Latino priorities.

FY2015 Appropriations

Of course passing a government funding bill will be a priority in the remaining weeks of this Congress. While last year's Bipartisan Budget Act provided limited sequester "buy-back" and determined an overall spending figure at \$1.014 trillion, Congress must now set spending priorities within that limit for the remainder of FY2015. We believe that an omnibus appropriations bill, as opposed to a short-term or long-term continuing resolution, provides the best path forward for matching spending with evolving needs, avoiding future budget crises, and providing a degree of certainty to our appropriations process.

In the Labor-HHS-Education appropriations bill in particular, NHLA urges Congress to adopt the Senate's 302(b) allocation of \$156.8 billion. While this figure is unfortunately low, it allows for greater spending in critical education, job-training and health programs than the House allocation. A compromise should be attainable since the difference between the House and Senate figures is less than one percent of each chamber's proposed allocation.

Considering that our workforce is currently comprised of 25 million Latinos, increasing to roughly 30 percent of our nation's workforce by 2050, a robust federal policy intervention to promote training in STEM and other vital fields is critical for our workers to compete in a global workforce. Presently, only half of Latino workers have greater educational attainment beyond high school, and we must do more to help these workers succeed.

In light of this year's increased numbers of refugee children arriving from Central America, NHLA urges Congress to appropriate sufficient funding to ensure that all unaccompanied children have access to counsel and other support services. Data from the Executive Office of Immigration Review underscore that a minor cannot adequately speak for herself without the assistance of counsel in an adversarial hearing. Of the 1,542 individuals who received removal orders from July 18 to October 21, 94 percent were children without counsel.

NHLA also strongly urges Congress to refrain from including any language in an omnibus or other appropriations legislation that would prevent the executive branch from implementing Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) or future

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
Latino Justice 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

programs that provide affirmative relief from deportation to currently undocumented individuals. Congress has had over a year and a half to affirmatively pass its own immigration reform legislation. It should not use the remaining days of the 113th Congress to block the President from exercising executive authority to address this issue in light of congressional inaction.

Looking beyond FY2015 and the expiration of the Bipartisan Budget Act, members of Congress should show leadership and work together to reach an agreement to remove sequestration and allow for greater investment in our youth and long-term economic growth. According to the Congressional Budget Office, the 2014 federal deficit is estimated to be \$506 billion, roughly \$170 billion less than last year, and at 2.9 percent of gross domestic product, will be below the average of federal deficits over the past 40 years.

Moreover, 79% of the burden of deficit reduction is borne by cuts to important programs, while new revenues account for only 21%. Investments that grow the economy, in areas such as education, job training, and infrastructure have been on a downward trajectory since 2010. By 2016, federal spending in non-defense domestic discretionary programs is projected to be at its lowest share of GDP since 1962. With the deficit under control, it's time to once again work toward an economic vision that puts families before politics.

Tax Extenders

As Congress determines what action to take on extending various expired tax provisions in a so-called "extenders" package, we are aware of proposals to make certain business-friendly credits permanent. Yet, working families are still struggling across America; any permanent extensions benefitting corporate America ought to be balanced. One option would be to couple these with a permanent extension of the 2009 expansions of the refundable portions of the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and Child Tax Credit (CTC).

The EITC and CTC have done more to combat poverty than other anti-poverty programs; members on both sides of the aisle have acknowledged there is ample evidence that children in households claiming these credits have higher educational attainment and career success later in life. If they are scaled back as scheduled in 2017, 1.8 people – of which one million are children – will be pushed into poverty, and another 14.6 million people already struggling under the poverty line – 6.7 million of whom are children – will be made even worse off.

Nominations

A number of important positions in the executive branch remain to be filled and NHLA urges the Senate to use the remaining weeks of this year to allow up-or-down votes on pending nominees. Letting nominations languish in the Senate deprives the American public of a fully functioning federal government. Furthermore, many of the nominees awaiting confirmation hearings and votes are Latino. These dedicated public servants are highly qualified and will inject needed diversity into our government when approved.

In particular, NHLA urges the Senate to work swiftly during the coming weeks to confirm the following well-qualified nominees:

- Maria Echaveste to be U.S. Ambassador to Mexico;
- Lourdes Castro Ramirez to be Assistant Secretary for Public and Indian Housing at the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development;
- Gilberto de Jesús to be Chief Counsel for Advocacy at the Small Business Administration; and
- David Lopez, renominated to be General Counsel of the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission.

Health: CHIP Extension

NHLA supports a clean four-year extension of the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP) to prevent any loss in health insurance coverage for the 12.7 million children covered through the program. CHIP plays an especially important role in covering health care costs for children in states that have not expanded Medicaid.

We look forward to working with you to achieve these modest goals before the end of this year for the benefit of Latinos and all Americans.

Sincerely,



Hector E. Sanchez

Chair, National Hispanic Leadership Agenda

Executive Director, Labor Council for Latin American Advancement

cc: The Honorable John Boehner, Speaker
The Honorable Kevin McCarthy, House Majority Leader
The Honorable Nancy Pelosi, House Minority Leader
The Honorable House Minority Whip Steny Hoyer
The Honorable Harold Rogers, Chairman, House Committee on Appropriations
The Honorable Nita M. Lowey, Ranking Member, House Committee on Appropriations
The Honorable Dave Camp, Chairman, House Committee on Ways and Means
The Honorable Sander Levin, Ranking Member, House Committee on Ways and Means
The Honorable Harry Reid, Senate Majority Leader
The Honorable Mitch McConnell, Senate Minority Leader
The Honorable Barbara A. Mikulski, Chairwoman, Senate Committee on Appropriations
The Honorable Richard Shelby, Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Appropriations
The Honorable Ron Wyden, Chairman, Senate Committee on Finance
The Honorable Orrin G. Hatch, Ranking Member, Senate Committee on Finance