

The background of the entire page is a photograph of several wind turbines. The scene is captured during sunset or sunrise, with a warm, orange-red glow across the sky. The turbines are dark silhouettes against the bright sky. One turbine is prominently in the foreground on the left, while others are visible in the distance to the right.

ENVIRONMENT AND ENERGY

Latinos are on ground zero of environmental degradation and are disproportionately impacted by pollution and toxic exposure. Changes in climate and extreme weather are hitting our communities first and magnifying the existing vulnerabilities that Latinos already face, such as poverty, chronic and reproductive health conditions, and inadequate infrastructure, to name a few. Latinos want action to slow environmental damage and protect nature, not just for ourselves but also for future generations.

Half of all U.S. Latinos live in the country's most polluted cities. Asthma and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease are more prevalent in Latinos living in inner cities near carbon emitting plants, truck routes, and factories. Though Latinos only account for about 16% of the labor force, they account for 43% of ground/maintenance and construction workers and up to 75% of agricultural field occupations that expose workers to health hazards, bad air quality and economic impacts of extreme weather. Pesticides affect Latinos who are agricultural workers in rural areas of the nation. Studies have shown that exposure to toxic chemicals leads to infertility, miscarriage, low birth weight, fetal malformation, and retarded fetal growth.⁷⁷ Moreover, states such as California, Nevada, Colorado, New Mexico, and Texas, where the majority of Latinos live, are experiencing more intense and frequent heat waves and drought. Estimates show that in California alone the 2015 drought caused the loss of around 21,000 farming-related jobs, jobs occupied for the most part by Latinos.

In many of these cases, Latinas are even more vulnerable because they face social, economic, and political barriers that further limit their coping capacity. As NHLA member organizations' research has shown, Latinas are the most vulnerable of all groups at the workplace, and the situation is even worse for undocumented Latinas. In fact, women of color and immigrant women comprise a majority of domestic and hospitality workers who "are regularly exposed to industrial strength cleaning supplies, medical supplies, and other agents with known or possible impacts on reproductive health."⁷⁸ Latinas also have less access to resources and the decision-making process and face limited mobility. "Worker exploitation is also pervasive in these industries—making it that much harder for women to seek protection from chemical exposures."⁷⁹ Thus, in the policymaking response to environmental challenges, it is important to include gender-sensitive strategies.

New energy policies hold the promise of simultaneously addressing environmental concerns and creating economic opportunity. The new era of Energy Independence in the United States, along with our neighbors Mexico and Canada, has fueled thousands of jobs and lowered the price of fuel at the pump. While the development of oil and gas deposits has resulted in achieving energy independence, alternative energy technology, such as solar, wind, biomass, hydrogen fuel cells, and other renewable forms of energy, are also on the rise and

stand to directly benefit Latino communities, especially in the Southwest and Western United States. Also, Mexico's Energy Reform has the potential to create a boom of joint ventures and investment opportunities for small and mid-size companies in the Southwest, leading to opportunities for economic growth, employment, and educational opportunities. Possessing skills in Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) will be necessary for Latinos to thrive in the energy sector. With less than 2% of today's STEM workforce being Latino, while comprising nearly 25% of the country's youth, there is an urgent need to develop diverse top talent in the technology and energy sector to take advantage of the opportunities for economic and social mobility that these jobs present. See the Education section for additional recommendations.

The transition to a clean economy presents a significant opportunity for the Latino community, not only to improve its health and reduce its vulnerability but also to access jobs in the green energy sector. However, to realize this opportunity we must include the resources for training and skills development. We must guarantee that the jobs that are created are long-term jobs with livable wages.

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ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE

- Oppose efforts to undermine or repeal bedrock environmental laws, including the Clean Air Act, Clean Water Act and National Environmental Policy Act.
- Support strong enforcement of existing public health and environmental laws, including the Clean Air Act; Clean Water Act; Comprehensive Environmental Response, Compensation, and Liability Act (Superfund); Federal Insecticide, Fungicide, and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA); and the Resources Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA).
- Meaningfully engage Latinos with respect to the development, implementation and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations and policies, including those meant to address disproportionate impacts on communities of color and low-income communities.
- Enforce environmental and civil rights laws, such as Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, to protect vulnerable and overburdened communities from environmental pollutants in an appropriate, swift, and transparent manner.
- Expand research on the long-term impacts of environmental pollutants to public health in low-income Latino communities.
- Implement policies that will ensure Latinos benefit from the future growth in green jobs.
- Promote programs that prepare and train Latinos for these opportunities, especially in STEM and energy sectors, where Latinos are largely underrepresented.
- Update the Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA) to more effectively end the regular inclusion of toxic chemicals in common household products.⁸⁰

Support policies, programs and regulations that invest in communities most vulnerable to effects of climate change.

CLIMATE CHANGE AND CLEAN ENERGY

Policy Recommendations

- Significantly increase efforts across the Federal Government to combat climate change, curtail greenhouse gas emissions and promote renewable power, conservation, energy efficiency, energy efficient vehicles, and clean fuels.
- Encourage greenhouse gas standards, such as methane pollution standards for the oil and gas industry.
- Support policies, programs and regulations that invest in communities most vulnerable to effects of climate change.
- Support full implementation of the Clean Power Plan (CPP) and meaningful engagement of Latinos in the development of state implementation plans.
- Support policies, programs, and regulations that increase access to solar energy for all Americans, in particular Latinos.
- Promote policies and programs that aid small businesses in adopting clean energy and energy efficiency.
- Support robust funding of the U.S. contribution to the Green Climate Fund (GCF), a fund designed to address the critical needs of developing nations, including Latin America, in order to foster resilience to climate change impacts and support low-carbon development.


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CONSERVATION

Policy Recommendations

- Support programs to recruit and train a new cadre of Latino conservation leaders and continue to promote an inclusive system of national parks and monuments with which Latinos can identify.
- Permanently reauthorize and fully fund the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF).
- Oppose all efforts to undermine or repeal the Antiquities Act, which gives the President the ability to establish new national monuments or enlarge existing monuments.
- Protect more places, such as national monuments, that tell the history of Latinos.
- Improve and create new partnerships for environmental stewardship and conservation of cultural, historic and natural resources important to Latinos.
- Enact the National Park Service Centennial Act to enable the National Park Service to better serve the American People, including Latinos.
- Oppose efforts to privatize public lands and attempts to mandate development on our public lands that could harm traditional and growing uses by Latinos.

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