



Founder
Hon. Edward R. Roybal †

Board of Directors

Hon. Pauline Medrano, **Chair**
Mayor Pro-Tem, City of Dallas, TX

Hon. Hector Balderas, **Treasurer**
New Mexico State Auditor

Hon. Stephanie Garcia, **Secretary**
Board Member, Pueblo City Schools, CO

Ms. Lorraine Cortés-Vázquez
AARP

Mr. José (Pepe) Estrada
Walmart

Hon. Anitere Flores
Florida State Senator

Hon. Mike Fernandez
Cargill

Hon. Alex Padilla, **NALEO President**
California State Senator

Hon. Justin Rodriguez
Texas State Representative

Hon. Lucille Roybal-Allard
Member of Congress, CA

Ms. Susan Santana, Esq.
AT&T

Ms. Monica Talan
Univision Communications Inc.

Hon. Gaddi Vasquez
Southern California Edison

Hon. Juan C. Zapata
Commissioner, Miami-Dade County, Florida

Board of AdvisorsHon. Karen Avilla
President, Hispanic Elected Local Officials

Hon. Rey Colón
Alderman, City of Chicago, IL

Hon. Mario Diaz-Balart
Chair, Congressional Hispanic Conference

Hon. Xilonin Cruz-Gonzalez
School Board Member, Azusa Unified School District

Hon. Carmichael Dominguez
Councilor, City of Santa Fe, NM

Hon. John J. Duran
Councilmember, City of West Hollywood, CA

Hon. Julissa Ferreras
Councilmember, City of New York, NY

Hon. Adrienne Foster
First Vice President, Hispanic Elected Local Officials

Hon. Ron Garcia
Councilmember, City of Brea, CA

Hon. Sylvia R. Garcia
Chair, Houston Independent Police Oversight Board

Hon. Minnie Gonzalez
President, National Hispanic Caucus of State Legislators

Hon. Ana Sol Gutierrez
Maryland State Delegate

Hon. Ruben Hinojosa
Chair, Congressional Hispanic Caucus

Hon. Guillermo López
*Chair, National Hispanic Caucus
of School Board Members*

Hon. Paul D. López
Councilmember, City of Denver, CO

Hon. Michele Martinez
Councilmember, City of Santa Ana, CA

Hon. Catherine Miranda
*Arizona State Representative
School Board Member, Roosevelt School District*

Hon. Robert Peña
*School Board Member
Edinburg Consolidated Independent School District*

Hon. Carmen Piñeyro
Trustee, Village of Freeport, NY

Hon. Raquel Regalado
*School Board Member
Miami-Dade County Public Schools*

Hon. Robert Rivera
Councilmember, City of Arlington, TX

Hon. Justin Rodriguez
Texas State Representative

Hon. Ross Romero
Utah State Senator

Hon. Elizabeth Sanchez
*Chair-Elect, National Hispanic Caucus
of School Board Members*

Hon. John Sapien
New Mexico State Senator

Hon. Fernando Shipley
Member, Gila Regional Partnership Council, AZ

Hon. Luz Urbáez Weinberg
Commissioner, City of Aventura, FL

Hon. Mary Rose Garrido Wilcox
Chair, National Association of Hispanic County Officials

Executive Director
Arturo Vargas

† Deceased

National Office	Houston	New York	Orlando	Washington, DC
1122 W. Washington Blvd., Third Floor Los Angeles, CA 90015 Tel: (213) 747-7606 Fax: (213) 747-7664	1314 Texas Avenue, Suite 410 Houston, TX 77002 Tel: (713) 228-6400 Fax: (713) 228-0606	110 Wall Street, 16 th Floor New York, NY 10005 Tel: (212) 480-1918 Fax: (212) 480-1697	5950 Lakehurst Drive, Suite 169 Orlando, FL 32819 Tel: (321) 795-3757	600 Pennsylvania Ave., SE Suite 230 Washington, DC 20003 Tel: (202) 546-2536 Fax: (202) 546-4121

Partnership Council Members

Chairman's Council Member
State Farm®

Advance America

AT&T

Southwest Airlines

Univision Communications Inc.

Walmart

The Walt Disney Company

Testimony

By

Arturo Vargas, Executive Director

Presented by

Astrid Garcia, Director of State Election Policy and Redistricting

National Association of Latino

Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO)

Educational Fund

Before

The Los Angeles City Council

In reference to Motion 10-1649-31

Los Angeles, CA

February 5, 2013

Honorable Members of the Los Angeles City Council, thank you for the opportunity to submit this testimony which provides recommendations for improving Latino electoral participation in the City of Los Angeles.

The City of Los Angeles' large and growing Latino population does not yet vote to its potential. The City has demonstrated its commitment to increasing voter participation through initiatives like the Los Angeles Votes Committee (LAVC), and has partnered with members of LAVC, including NALEO Educational Fund, for its new voter outreach and education campaign, *LA City Votes!* In addition the City Clerk produced and disseminated materials translated in multiple languages and attended partner community events to enhance and support the efforts of communities throughout Los Angeles. The LAVC has been successful in helping to coordinate voter outreach efforts among the various groups. We applaud the leadership of the Los Angeles City Council for taking the steps to strengthen our City's democracy and calling for a review of the City's voting practices. However, more can be done to increase participation of underrepresented voters in city elections and expand voting options.

NALEO Educational Fund is a non-profit, non-partisan organization that facilitates full Latino participation in the American political process, from citizenship to public service. Our constituency includes the more than 6,000 elected and appointed officials nationwide, including 1,353 from California alone. Our Board members and constituency include Republicans, Democrats and Independents. For several decades, NALEO Educational Fund has worked to achieve its mission through programs that promote civic integration of the Latino community by conducting voter education and outreach activities, offering professional development opportunities to Latino elected and appointed officials, sharing information on issues related to Latino engagement, and advocating for policies that protect Latino voters.

NALEO Educational Fund is a leader in the national and California dialogue regarding the impact of election policies and practices on Latino electoral participation. After the enactment of federal election reform legislation, the Help America Vote Act of 2002 (HAVA), we served as members of the California Secretary of State's Advisory Committee that developed and updated the state's HAVA plan. In April 2012, we testified before the United State House of Representatives Committee on the Judiciary's Subcommittee on the Constitution to express our

concerns about the unprecedented number of restrictive voting and registration measures across the nation and their detrimental effect on the Latino vote. We also engaged in advocacy on redistricting in 2011 and 2012, in order to protect fair opportunities for Latino representation in California, Florida, and Nevada. Our recommendations set forth below draw on our extensive experience and knowledge of Latino voters.

The Latino population in Los Angeles

The City of Los Angeles has the largest Latino population of any city in California. The 2011 American Community Survey 5-year estimates show that Latinos are 48% of the city's residents, and represent 31% of eligible voters in the City of Los Angeles. Though the population is large and growing there are over 600,000 Latinos who are eligible to vote but have not registered. Latino participation in city elections is historically lower than the overall participation rate.

In order to increase Latino voter participation, the NALEO Educational Fund recommends improving voter education and outreach for Latino voters, expanding voting options and engaging stakeholders knowledgeable about the Latino community to advise as new election policies and practices are considered and implemented. The strength of democracy in the City of Los Angeles – both now and in the future – depends on the full participation of its Latino population.

1. Improve Voter Education for Latino voters

Voter education is a necessary step to engage Latino voters because the Latino electorate is generally younger than the non-Latino electorate and many Latino voters lack experience with voting procedures. Currently, 64% of Los Angeles City youth under the age of 18 are Latino citizens. It is important for the City of Los Angeles and partners provide the necessary voter education materials and resources as this group becomes eligible to participate on Election Day. Additionally, new citizens will seek to engage in the electoral process as changes in immigration law allow them to adjust their status.

The NALEO Educational Fund’s experience assisting Los Angeles’ Latino voters confirms the electorate’s relative inexperience and need for basic information. Since 2007, NALEO Educational Fund has worked with Spanish-language media, community-based organizations, and elections officials to build an integrated national and local Latino voter engagement program. A key component of this effort is our national bilingual voter information and protection hotline, 1-888-VE-Y-VOTA (“Go Vote”) where voters call and get important voter information. Analysis from our incoming calls to the hotline shows that a majority of requests are for basic information. In the seven weeks prior to the October 22, 2012, voter registration deadline, 80% of Los Angeles City callers requested information on how to register to vote and how to confirm their registration.

2. Improve Voter Outreach for Latino voters

To ensure enhanced Latino participation, voter education needs to be accompanied by voter outreach. Latinos are often left out of the political dialogue since many are infrequent or low-propensity voters. Campaigns, political parties and candidates focus their communication efforts and outreach on high-propensity voters, and as such, the invitation to participate is concentrated on those citizens who are already active in the political process. Because these political actors are the primary drivers of information dissemination during election season, the result is skewed outreach that misses those voters who most need to receive the invitation to participate in an election.

NALEO Educational Fund’s experience and original research shows low-propensity Latino voters can be mobilized to vote, but success requires voting information dissemination and a message that resonates with the target population. Low-propensity Latino voters demonstrate less knowledge of the voting process, including how to find their polling places or what to do if their names are not on the voting list. Recent polling by the NALEO Educational Fund suggests low-propensity Latino voters may be mobilized to political action if they hear the invitation to participate from a trusted source. Messages and motivating factors that resonated with respondents included a partisan appeal from a candidate, direct address to the Latino community, or a more personal message or symbolic connection to a candidate or an issue.

If Latinos are to participate in the electoral process, election officials and nonpartisan organizations must invest resources to engage low-propensity voters. NALEO Educational Fund's voter engagement program targeted low-propensity voters across multiple election cycles. As a result, we have deep knowledge of effective engagement techniques identified through scientific analysis and practice. The organization's Get Out the Vote (GOTV) campaign reaches tens of thousands of Latino voters nationally and provides them with information on their polling place and invites them to go out and vote on Election Day. In 2012, our GOTV operators made over half a million calls to low propensity voters nationwide, including over 100,000 calls in Los Angeles County alone.

NALEO Educational Fund's voter engagement efforts also include partnerships with the media and community based organizations. Our media partners are essential to reaching millions of potential Latino voters. Partnerships with the largest Spanish-language television networks, Univision Communications, Inc., Entravision Communications, and impreMedia led to outreach in the form of public service announcements (PSAs), print and online advertising, and innovative use of social media tools such as Facebook and Twitter to serve as vehicles for voter education. Our community partnerships allow us to reach individual voters through voter registration drives and voter forums. Presently, we are working with nonprofit partners to engage Latinos and underrepresented communities in the Los Angeles race for mayor. We are hosting a series of community forums that create a space for community members to discuss the needs of their communities and will provide the framework for a mayoral forum.

Independent analysis by political science scholars shows that efforts of NALEO Educational Fund, which combine the invitation to participate with information on how to participate, significantly increase the likelihood of voting. In order to develop effective strategies to reach and educate Latino voters, it is important that the City works closely with organizations familiar with the needs of the Latino community and disseminate the best practices these organizations develop for communicating and sharing information with potential Latino voters.

3. Expand Voting Options

Expanding voting options will create greater opportunities for participation of Latinos and underrepresented communities. Recent motions passed by the City Council to review innovative election options are a step in the right direction to increase electoral participation in the City of Los Angeles. The City should continue to move toward enactment and implementation of policies that increase access to the ballot box.

Early voting and voting centers are two initiatives that will enhance participation for Latinos and underrepresented voters if implemented successfully. Early Voting needs to include a generous period of voting in advance of Election Day at convenient locations. Voting Center locations should also be accessible and familiar to the community. The goal should be to ensure that a voter in Pacoima has the same experience as a voter in San Pedro, or a voter in Lincoln Heights. Details such as the location, hours of operation, access to public transit and parking must be considered in a manner that weighs the ethnic and racial diversity as well as the geographic diversity of Los Angeles.

4. Engage stakeholders knowledgeable about the Latino community as new election policies and practices are considered and implemented

The evaluation of new election practices requires careful planning and input from California's diverse communities to ensure that the new initiatives make voting more accessible for all of the City's voters. The City-Clerk released a report on the City of Los Angeles' experience with alternative voting methods on January 9, 2013. The report helps begin the dialogue on what new election policies and practices the City should adopt in order to increase voter participation.

If new election procedures are to be implemented in a way that increases voter participation from underrepresented communities, it will require careful consideration of how different communities access resources. The City should establish an advisory committee of stakeholders that work with and are knowledgeable about the civic engagement needs of Los Angeles' diverse populations. The advisory committee can guide the evaluation and implementation of new election practices in the City of Los Angeles.

Conclusion

Members of the Los Angeles City Council, as other jurisdictions struggle with restrictive voting laws, we are fortunate to have the opportunity to work toward a more inclusive election system. We are eager to work with the City of Los Angeles as we explore new ways to strengthen our democracy and ensure full access to the electoral process. Latinos are an integral part of Los Angeles' electorate today and will further strengthen their political voice in the future. Thus the City of Los Angeles must actively work to engage the full participation of the Latino community in the electoral process.

I thank you once again for the opportunity to share our views and recommendations for increasing the electoral participation of Latinos in the City of Los Angeles.