



UNITY on CAPITOL HILL



hispanicfederation

toolkit

Friends,

On behalf of Hispanic Federation, thank you for joining us for One Voice: Unity on Capitol Hill. We are enormously excited by your participation. At a time when communities of color and allies are being attacked on a daily, even hourly basis, your presence here affirms a deep understanding: that only by speaking with a clear and unified voice against hate and ignorance will we prevail. Through One Voice: Unity on Capitol Hill, we will increase our power and purpose, build up a coalition that will unify social movements across the nation – and triumph over racism, nativism, sexism, Islamophobia, and homophobia.

Today, September 27, 2017 marks the 250th day of this administration. Since Election Day our communities have experienced some dark days – and we are by no means out of the woods. These indeed are the times that try our – and our nation's – very soul. Yet when we come together, a burden is lifted. When we meet, a unique energy and excitement is harnessed and multiplied, which enables us to speak with one voice, and walk together as one.

Today and tomorrow, we – brothers and sisters representing communities of color across the nation – Latinos, African Americans, Asians, Muslims, Gay and Transgender, our incredible allies – will unite to listen, speak and advocate for policies that will protect, empower and uplift our diverse communities. We will eat together, train together, and advocate together. When we part ways, we will be energized and revitalized, knowing that we are not alone – that we have each other to lean on.

We hope that this experience inspires, revitalizes, and fortifies your determination to protect and empower our communities. The activities scheduled during your time with us have been developed to send a clear message to Congress: We speak with one voice, and walk together as one. We are an indelible part of America. Indeed, we are its future.

We are united. We are powerful. And we will prevail!

Abrazos,
José



IMMIGRATION

BACKGROUND

Immigrants and refugees are under siege in America. The host of anti-immigrant policy proposals that have emerged from the White House and Congress - such as the rollback of DACA, the RAISE Act, the Muslim ban, attacks on sanctuary cities, and the border wall - has threatened to tear families apart and make our nation less competitive and less safe. We strongly believe in legislation that preserves and prioritizes immigrant integration and family unity, ends the demonization of immigrants, provides a clear and just path to citizenship for our nation's undocumented immigrants, and protects the civil rights and liberties of all Americans.

Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals

- We insist on the passage of a “clean” **Dream Act** that provides a pathway to citizenship and safeguards the nearly 800,000 young immigrants who currently receive protection under the **Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA)** program.
- We reject any attempt to bargain with the lives of young immigrants in exchange for expanding deportation forces that separate families and terrorize immigrant communities. We also reject tying meaningful immigration reform to funding the wasteful, ineffective and cruel border wall.
- We demand broad, progressive and just immigration reform that provides permanent solutions, including a path to citizenship for the 11 million undocumented men, women and children living in the United States.

Temporary Protected Status (TPS)

- We support the renewal and extension of protection for vulnerable migrants who currently have **Temporary Protected Status (TPS)**. We believe that they should be allowed to seek permanent residency in the United States. Ending TPS protection for those who have fled from war, disaster, and devastation is to deny fundamental human rights and is in direct opposition to the ideals America has represented.

Refugees and Legal Immigration

- We oppose any attempts to **lower the number of refugees** admitted annually to the United States to less than 75,000. People fleeing discrimination, oppression and violence have looked to the United States as a beacon of hope in their darkest hour. We must not betray that history.
- We strenuously reject the **RAISE Act**. The legislation would cut legal immigration by 50 percent, decimate the family-based immigration system currently in place, and severely curtail immigration from Latin America, Asia and Africa. It is inconsistent with America's values and the history of migration to our nation.

Sanctuary Cities and Community-Trust Policies

- We oppose attempts by the federal government to enact punitive measures against cities and localities which institute community-policing policies to build trust between immigrants and law-enforcement, including so-called “sanctuary city” municipalities. Research shows that these policies create safer communities, keep families together, and protect local police departments.

Demilitarization of the Border Region

- We call for an immediate halt to any further, wasteful construction of the current 650-mile-long **border wall** and a reversal of the exorbitant spending on a border wall enforcement.
- We demand that the Department of Homeland Security enact policies that prohibit racial profiling in the border regions.
- We call for increased investment in border communities, including Native American communities, to improve, health care, education and infrastructure.
- We demand that the Environmental Protection Agency increase supervision and remediation of environmental hazards including those that threaten access to clean water and clean air.

HEALTHCARE ACCESS & AFFORDABILITY

BACKGROUND

Across the United States, communities of color face unprecedented challenges to their health. Cardiovascular diseases such as heart disease and stroke, and chronic conditions such as diabetes and asthma disproportionately impact communities of color. Many of these problems are preventable and can be managed through access to affordable healthcare. But socio-economic obstacles make it difficult for communities of color to access affordable, quality care. Congress must ensure that health insurance remains affordable and accessible to low-income and minority communities.

Protect Affordable Care Act (ACA)

- We vehemently oppose the repeal of the Affordable Care Act (ACA). We do so especially since no proposed replacement ensures that the most vulnerable populations continue to have access to basic, affordable medical care.
- We call on Congress to expand the ACA to increase coverage rates in communities of color, for low income Americans, and among **lawfully present** immigrants. Each of these groups have enjoyed greater access to health care and improved health indicators as a result of the ACA. Expansion of the ACA will allow us to increase the number of covered individuals beyond the **4 million adults and more than 600,000 Latino children** who now have health insurance thanks to this program. That means greater access to preventative care that keeps our children healthy.

Protect and Expand Medicaid

- We oppose repealing Medicaid expansion and radically changing Medicaid funding in “Trumpcare” legislation like **Graham-Cassidy** and the “Better Care Reconciliation Act” (BCRA). These plans would destroy Medicaid and leave 22-27 million people uninsured, and millions more underinsured. While we’re glad that attempts to gut Medicaid have been repeatedly defeated this year, we must remain vigilant and be ready to oppose any future efforts to undermine this essential health care coverage for our families and communities.
- We support the expansion of Medicaid and oppose any effort to turn Medicaid into an unreliable State-run block-grant program. Medicaid is essential in providing health care coverage for 74 million people, including 18 million Latinos, and **15 million African Americans**.

Protecting Access for Immigrant Families

- We oppose the elimination of the marketplaces & subsidies in most “repeal and replace” proposals. Immigrants who are ineligible for Medicaid or Children’s Health Insurance Program (CHIP), depend on marketplaces and subsidies to purchase quality, affordable health coverage.

Eliminating Protections for Preexisting Conditions

- We oppose allowing states to waive the ACA’s prohibition against charging higher premiums or denying coverage altogether based on health status or history, or requesting a waiver of the requirement that insurers provide basic health benefits including mental health substance abuse and maternity leave.
- These provisions are vital to the health of our communities. Without such provisions, access to affordable, effective, and critical health care is often unattainable.

CIVIL RIGHTS

BACKGROUND

Attorney General Jeff Sessions has taken aim at important advances in civil rights in our country. He has undone measures to deter racial profiling and unlawful stop-and-frisk procedures. He has undermined proposals to close private federal prisons, which favor profit over safety and rehabilitation. He has called for an end of federal oversight of local police departments accused of racial bias. And he has argued against bi-partisan calls for sentencing and prison reforms. This assault on civil rights and criminal justice reform is unacceptable. Congress must use its investigative and fiscal oversight powers to hold the Department of Justice accountable for protecting the civil rights of all Americans.

Consent Decrees and Maximum Sentences

- We oppose the undermining of consent decrees intended to ensure civil rights are not violated by local law enforcement agencies and personnel.
 - AG Sessions has ordered a “review” of all **consent decrees** with local police departments to determine if they adhere to certain principles established by the Trump administration, such as ensuring that the “misdeeds of bad actors” does not “harm officer morale”, among other things.
- We oppose AG Sessions’ order that all federal prosecutors pursue possible charges and sentences against criminal suspects to the maximum degree, reversing Attorney General Eric Holder-era directives to reserve the harshest charges for the worst offenders.

Voting Rights

- We oppose the creation of the Presidential Advisory Commission on Election Integrity to **study** completely unsubstantiated claims of widespread voter fraud. We believe that “findings” from such a commission could be used to manufacture a justification for laws, voting rules, and practices that make it even harder for many Americans, especially communities of color, to vote.
- We demand that Congress take steps to ensure that the Voting Rights Act is enforced and strengthened. We call on Congress to approve a new formula for determining which jurisdictions should be subject to the federal oversight provisions of Section Five of the Voting Rights Act and that any attempts to undermine voting rights are fought vigorously.

Criminalization of Immigrants and Racial Profiling

- We oppose the increased policing and criminalization of immigrants which has led to record-breaking arrests of immigrants, especially immigrants with no criminal **records**, including the deportation of undocumented childhood arrivals or Dreamers.
- We are gravely concerned about increased **reports** of US citizens of Hispanic descent being randomly stopped and questioned about their citizenship status. We call for an immediate end to these policies of racial profiling
- We call on Congress to end the use of private immigration detention facilities. Private immigration detention facilities are often driven by quotas for filling detention beds, leading to the unlawful targeting of immigrants.

US Census

- We support an immediate increase in funding (above the Trump Administration’s request), for the Census Bureau to ensure a sound enumeration during the 2020 Census. Due to inadequate funding levels, changes have been announced in testing, operations, and outreach in hard-to-reach communities.
- Unless swift action is taken by Congress and the White House to provide the Census Bureau with the critical funding it needs today, the entire nation will suffer as Latinos, immigrants, children and other hard-to-count groups are the most likely to be left uncounted and invisible.

ENERGY AND THE ENVIRONMENT

BACKGROUND

The **environment** is intrinsically linked to the physical and mental health, safety, and well-being of individuals and communities. Low income communities and communities of color are more likely to live in environmentally hazardous zones, experience higher exposure rates of **air pollution** than their white, non-Hispanic counterparts, are more likely to live near **toxic-waste facilities**, have limited access to **clean water**, and as a result, more likely to be live with the impacts of environmental degradation and climate change.

Environmental Regulations

- We oppose the rollback of environmental policies and key regulations meant to protect and improve the living conditions of the low-income communities and communities of color. Undoing these environmental protections is a direct assault to the health and well-being of millions of children and adults.
- We oppose moves to undermine key protections like the Clean Water Rule, the Clean Air Act, and NEPA (National Environmental Policy Act), which requires input from impacted communities prior to development.

Environmental Justice

- We call on Congress to strengthen restrictions on the use of pesticides in rural and farmworker communities and to increase awareness of the impact of these dangerous chemicals on adults and children.
- We demand adequate funding for superfund sites that are more likely to be located near low-income communities.
- We call on the Trump Administration to direct the EPA to create protocols and procedures to thoroughly clean-up toxic spills after large natural disasters. We also demand that the EPA design specific response strategies for low income communities that tend to be in closer proximity to environmentally hazardous sites and thus more at risk from spills, fires, and hazardous gas leaks.

Budget Cuts

- We strongly oppose President Trump's proposed budget cuts to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) which would shrink the agency's spending by 31 percent, and eliminate a quarter of the agency's 15,000 jobs.
- The proposed cuts are unpopular and face bipartisan opposition in the House and the Senate, but even proposals calling for lesser cuts would inflict great harm.
- Slashing critical funding to the EPA and reducing jobs at the agency weakens the federal government's ability to protect public health and promote clean air, water, and energy for the nation.
- Proposed cuts to the EPA's, Department of Interior's, and other agencies' budget and staff in proposed budget and appropriations bills are a threat to the health and well-being of our communities and the environment and would set them at the lowest funding level in decades.
- These cuts will mean dirtier air and dirtier water in my community.

EDUCATION

BACKGROUND

By 2023, **Latinos will comprise 30%** of all students enrolled in US schools. By **2026**, over 56% of all US students will come from ethnic minority groups. In the 2013-14 school year, there were over **640,000 immigrant children** enrolled nationwide in US schools. All children in the United States - regardless of their race, color, national, origin, citizenship, immigration status, or status of their parents or guardians - are constitutionally guaranteed the right to a public, elementary and secondary education (*Plyler v. Doe, 1982*).

Equitable Access

- We demand that Congress ensure that the federal government not make any policy changes that would undermine current federal law, and constitutional guarantees that all children in the United States - regardless of their race, color, national, origin, citizenship, immigration status, or status of their parents or guardians - have the right to a public, elementary and secondary education.
- We expect Congress to vocally oppose any measures passed, adopted, or debated or official or unofficial policies that violate the spirit—if not the letter—of the Supreme Court's decision in *Plyler*.

Equitable Outcomes

- We expect Congress to ensure adequate funding for programs designed to achieve equitable outcomes for Latinos, English Language Learners (ELLs), and students from other communities who do not receive education equity as a result of race, status, language ability or income.
- This includes full funding for access to early childhood education, resources to ensure quality teaching and learning in public schools, and increased college access and preparation in high school.

Civil Rights

- Congress must perform its oversight function and demand claims of discrimination or systemic abuses based on race, gender, sexual orientation, immigration status, religion, language or ethnicity are adequately investigated by the Department of Justice's Office of Civil Rights.

Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

- We expect Congress to hold the Department of Education accountable for implementation of ESSA including ensuring:
 - States are being held accountable for the performance and outcomes of all students
 - State assessments for English learners are culturally and linguistically competent and are aligned to state college and career-ready standards,
 - States demonstrate that low-income students and students of color have equal access to opportunities, teachers, and educational resources.

HUMANITARIAN CRISIS IN PUERTO RICO

BACKGROUND

Hurricane Maria unleashed massive flooding and unprecedented destruction throughout the U.S. territories of Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. Puerto Rico's situation is especially dire: Its 3.4 million American citizens are without fresh water, electricity, phone service and access to fuel. The elderly and disabled are especially vulnerable. Some have been found near death, while others have not been heard from, with their loved ones fearing the worst. Public health experts are alarmed about unsanitary conditions resulting from stagnant water, overflowing sewage and decomposing animals. The electrical power grid won't be fully restored for several months.

This humanitarian crisis comes on top of the island's \$73 billion debt, draconian budget cuts that brutally slashed essential services, a massive exodus of families to U.S. cities, and inequitable health care funding. Congress must act rapidly to ensure that emergency aid and recovery resources are scaled up to the levels needed to save lives, recover and rebuild a U.S. island that is alone and isolated.

Emergency Aid and Recovery

- Given these life and death circumstances, we demand that Congress act swiftly to pass an emergency relief and recovery package for Puerto Rico, as it did for states affected by prior hurricanes. However, we urge Congress to consider the unique and special circumstances which make Puerto Rico's situation even more precarious than the states affected by Hurricanes Harvey and Irma: its status as a territory, its geographical isolation, its economic fragility. The road to rebuilding Puerto Rico —already debilitated by predatory hedge funds, inequities in federal healthcare, and an exodus of its population that could repeat itself — is estimated at this point to be at least 10 years.

Urgent regulatory waivers needed

- **Jones Act Waiver**
We demand that the Federal Government issue a one-year comprehensive waiver of the Jones Act. Since 1920, the Jones Act has forced Puerto Rico to use U.S.-flag ships — the most expensive shipping fleet in the world — to transport goods between U.S. ports. A waiver would make it much more affordable to buy the emergency supplies and building materials needed to rebuild the island.
- **Cost-sharing Waiver**
We demand that the Department of Homeland Security, which oversees FEMA, waive cost-sharing requirements for FEMA, thus enabling desperately-needed local resources to be totally directed to those in need.

Next Steps

- **Healthcare Reform**
Congress should bolster Puerto Rico's health care safety net by passing legislation that will eliminate the annual Medicaid/Mi Salud funding cap on Puerto Rico in favor of funding based on FMAP per-capita income. Congress should include all U.S. territories in this legislation. Congress should also improve the formula for the Medicare Disproportionate Share Hospital Program, reduce by 50% the fee on insurers in the territories, and establish a floor for Medicare payments.
- **Tax Policy Reform**
Following the loss of Section 936 tax incentives, the Federal Government should institute tax policies that foster economically-diverse and living-wage job creation. Congress must also support local government implementation of a Child Tax Credit and an Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) that rewards work and supplements earnings to low-income workers in Puerto Rico.