

The Presidential Election & Latina Advocacy, Leadership, and Voting



The State of Latinas in California

VISION

Latinas inspiring, empowering, and engaging leadership to strengthen all communities.

MISSION

Hispanas Organized for Political Equality (HOPE) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan organization committed to ensuring political and economic parity for Latinas through leadership, advocacy, and education to benefit all communities and the status of women.

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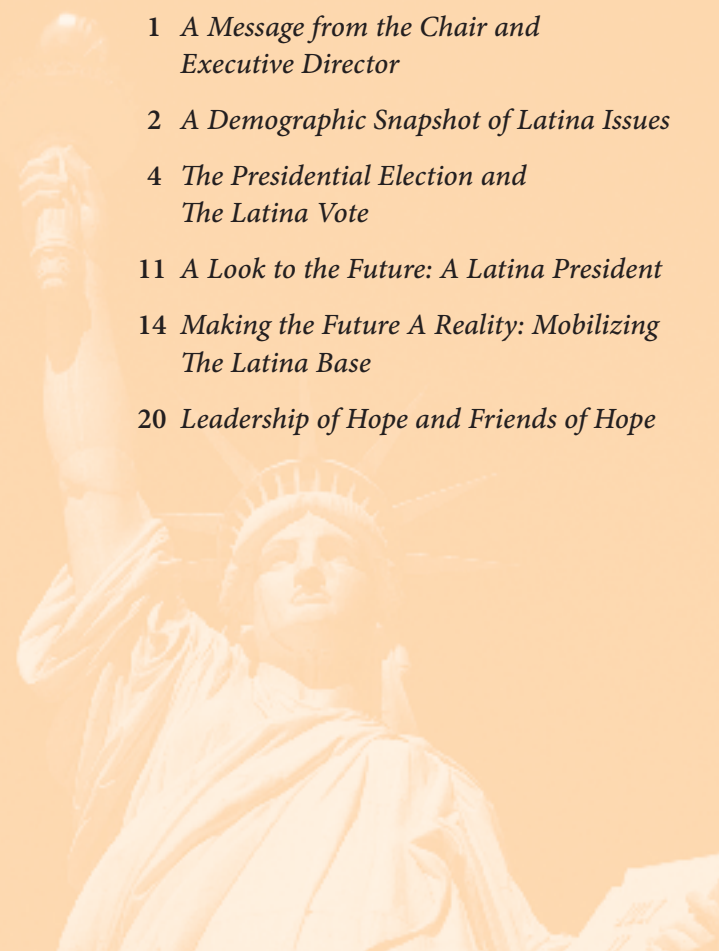
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HOPE:

Latina Leadership In A Changing Society

The Latina community will have strong ramifications on the 2008 Presidential Election. As part of the fastest growing demographic and consumer group, Latinas are setting the national agenda with their needs and contributions as women, as mothers, as sisters, and as leaders. HOPE will continue to be by their side, advocating on their behalf and creating proactive public policies and leadership development programming that ensures they are heard and changes are made for all Americans.

In assessing the affects of the 2008 presidential election on Latinas in California and nationally, HOPE decided to tailor this edition of **The State of Latinas in California** to explore the potency for new Latina leadership positions, solutions to timely issues, and the power of Latina voters to push a new agenda. This report signifies a collaborative effort by HOPE leadership and staff to capture the Latina today and imagine the Latina leader of tomorrow. With this idea, the publication will take you on a journey from assessing ‘A Demographic Snapshot of Latina Issues,’ to ‘A Look to the Future: A Latina President,’ to ‘Making the Future a Reality: Mobilizing the Latina Base,’ in an effort to envision the 2008 presidential election as a catalyst for change.

I am very excited to present to you a research tool and a probable archive for Latinas and the 2008 presidential election. You will find timely demographic data on the Latina community and commentary from selected presidential candidates, non-governmental organization leaders, and a current Latina elected official. With the Honorable Hilda L. Solis’ ideas on the potential for a Latina U.S. president, Southwest Voter Registration and Education Project’s Vice President Lydia Camarillo’s ideas on mobilizing Latinas to exercise their right to vote, and HOPE’s formula for creating a sustainable Latina political base, this edition of **The State of Latinas in California** includes powerful remarks from some of the nation’s most vocal and influential leaders.

As the election progresses, HOPE will parallel its movement, providing Latinas in California with a voice and a vehicle to mobilize, lead, and engage in the business of social change.

With HOPE toward the future,

Elmy Bermejo

CHAIR OF THE BOARD

A Look to the Future:

Advancing the Status of Latinas through Strategy & Innovation

With the emergence of cutting edge technological innovations our world is changing, rapidly. However, the top issues affecting Latinas and California remain the same. Issues over health access, economic development, and education reform have been at the forefront of policy debates for the past two decades. Here at HOPE we strive to think on the edge, to engage in continual dialogue with our constituents, and to merge innovation with practice. This edition of **The State of Latinas in California** is no exception.

For almost twenty years, HOPE has been active in advancing Latinas through education, leadership, and advocacy, impacting the lives of over 20,000 women. HOPE is committed to continuing this legacy and maintaining HOPE’s position as a powerful voice in policy decisions that affect the lives of Latinas and all Californians. In this capacity, the 2008 presidential election provides an avenue for exploration and imagination. Today, we can envision a better tomorrow, and today we can use the tools of the future by merging strategy and innovation to ensure Latinas achieve economic and political parity.

HOPE recognizes the needs of Latinas and the power of strategy and innovation. This year, we asked ourselves, ‘**How can HOPE capitalize on the globalized California economy that defines our daily lives to tackle society’s major issues and mobilize Latinas into leaders and decision-makers?**’ After training almost 300 intelligent and competent Latina leaders through the HOPE Leadership Institute, inspiring the next generation of Latina leaders through our Youth Literacy through Leadership Program, and educating hundreds of women on personal economics through our Financial Literacy programs, we realized the power of our organizational base and the potential of all Latinas in California. Now, we are in the process of merging our base of talented Latinas with emerging technology, to promote advocacy and public policy efforts that speak for all Latinas in California. To learn more about HOPE’s formula for mobilizing a Latina base and its exciting new technology-focused endeavors, please read this publication’s ‘*Making the Future A Reality: Mobilizing the Latina Base*’ section.

In this edition of **The State of Latinas in California**, HOPE has set forth to document the thoughts of peers, of national leaders, and our HOPE for the future. Please join us in celebrating the progress we have made and the potential for more strategy and innovation, via technology and beyond.

Best,

Helen Iris Torres

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR/CEO

A Demographic Snapshot of Latina Issues

The timeliness of the 2008 Presidential Election coincides with the continued dominance of issues that are most important to Latinas in California and the U.S. at large.ⁱ With the exception of the recent immigration debate which has dominated national discourse, Latina based issues have become more mainstream and less controversial. Opinion polls conducted over the past decade consistently demonstrate that Latinas are focused on issues that create opportunities for their economic and social advancement.ⁱⁱ When asked about the most important issue facing the United States or the communities in which they reside, education almost always tops the list.ⁱⁱⁱ Other top issues include the delivery of social services, public safety, public transportation, and reducing discrimination. In this way, the issues that Latinas care most about have the potential to shift the U.S. policy debate. Moreover, the creation of a Latina-influenced

policy agenda would focus primarily on public education, social services, and health issues.^{iv}

The demographic transformation of Latinas in the U.S., from a once small minority community situated in the Southwest to a burgeoning political block with presence throughout the country, has informed the creation of Latina based policies and issues. Latinas are becoming more educated; they outpace their male counterparts in college graduation rates, and are gaining political office at a faster rate, 75% compared to 25% for Latino males.^v The provided data presents a snapshot of the economic status, education position, health standing, and voting pattern of Latinas in California and further underscores the propensity for a Latina driven policy agenda, as a means to address the issues that most afflict Latinas in California and nationally.

POPULATION

Figure 1: U.S. Latino Population 2000-2005^{vi}

2005 Latino Population	2000 Latino Population	% 2005 US Population	% change 2000-2005
41,926,302	34,494,801	14.5	21.5

Figure 2a: Latina Population in California 2000-2005^{vii}

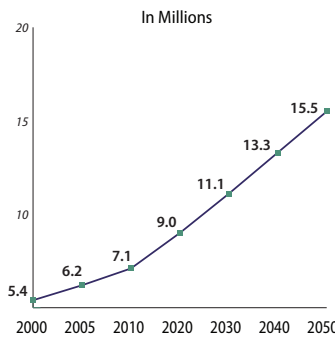
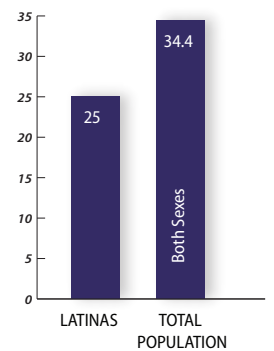


Figure 2b: Median Age of Latinas in California^{ix}



EDUCATION

Figure 3: Educational Attainment of Latinas in California^x

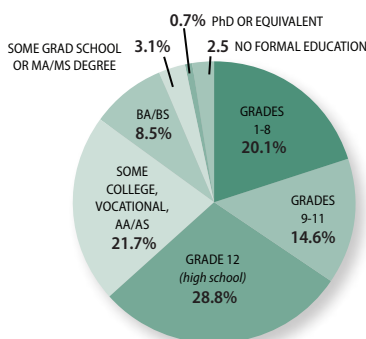


Figure 4: Median and Average Education Level of Latinas in California^{xi}

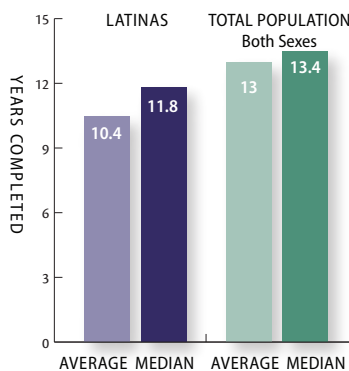
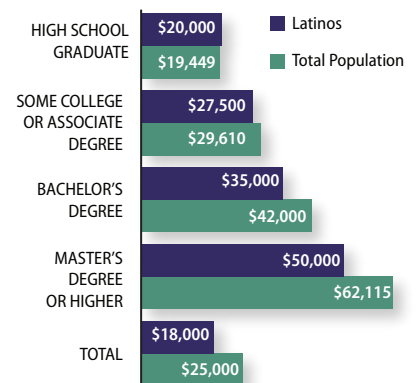


Figure 5: Personal Income as a Reflection of Educational Attainment: Latinas in California^{xii}



ECONOMIC STATUS

Figure 6: Economic Status of Latinas in California^{xiii}

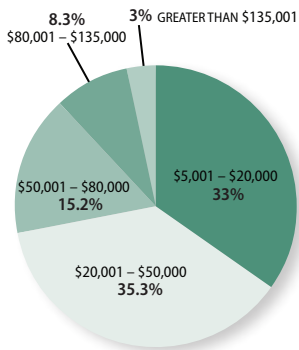


Figure 7: Poverty in California, in relation to the Federal Poverty Line (FPL)^{xiv}

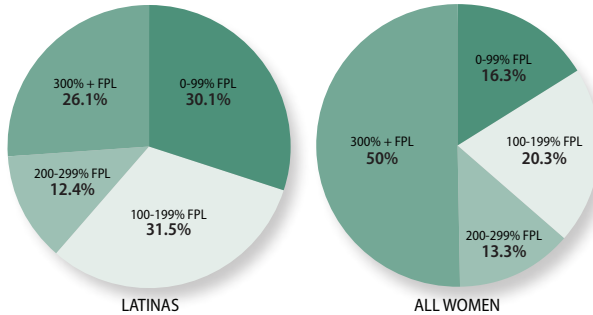


Figure 8: U.S. Latino Households in California^{xv}

Household Size	Latinos	Total Population
Total Persons	12,537,418	35,939,668
Total Households	3,276,727	12,639,136
Mean Household Size	3.8	2.8

Latinas are becoming more educated; they outpace their male counterparts in college graduation rates, and are gaining political office at a faster rate, 75% compared to 25% for Latino males.^v

HEALTH

Figure 9: Health Coverage of Latinas in California^{xvi}

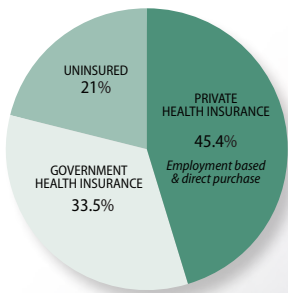
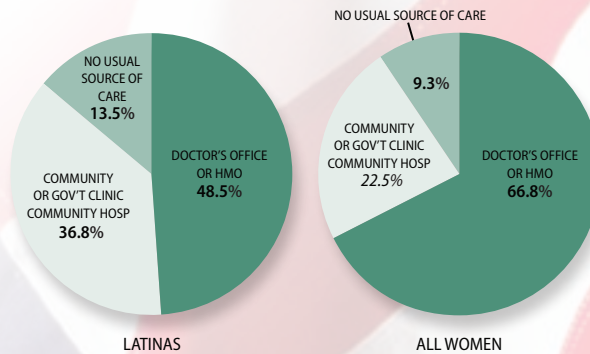


Figure 10: Type of Usual Source of Care for Latinas in California^{xvii}



VOTING

Figure 11: Estimated Unregistered Potential of Latinas in California^{xviii}

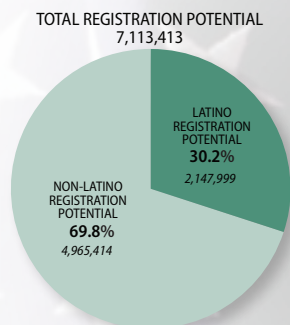


Figure 12: Latino Voting in California 2004-2006^{xix}

Election	Registered Latino Voters	Latino Share of All Registered Voters	Latino Election Turnout	% Registered Latino Voters who Voted	Latino % Total Voter Turnout
2004 Presidential Election	2,778,552	16.63%	1,820,006	65.50%	14.73%
2006 General Election	2,733,817	17.64%	1,231,573	45.05%	13.94%

The Presidential Election and The Latina Vote

Despite their historically muted political voice, Latinas do influence American politics. This is most evident in the 2008 Presidential Elections whereby Latinas are exuding their political views and voting power through a diverse range of methods. For the first time in history, a Latina, Patti Solis Doyle, is managing a presidential campaign. Moreover, Latinas in California have played primary roles in establishing their political views, as campaign staffers, elected officials, stakeholders, advocates, and vocal constituents. This new civic capacity holds promise for Latinas' potential as leaders and policymakers, shaping the state and national agenda for years to come.

The American electorate has seen the rapid mobilization of previously small electorates. As the Latino electorate has grown rapidly in the past two decades, the means to which Latinas are participating in state and national politics have increased. The most common forms of civic engagement in Latino communities continue to be: voting, organizational activity, charitable activities, and school-based activities.^{xx} For Latinas, these activities have translated into major policy victories, among them, HOPE's support of California legislation that mandated parents are notified of their high school student's A-G college requirements.

☞ We received responses from four major candidates: Senator Hillary Clinton (D), Senator Barack Obama (D), Governor Mitt Romney (R), and the Honorable Fred Thompson (R).

With the election fast approaching, looking to the past has alluded that Latinas will be a major voting block. For example, in recent presidential elections approximately 45 percent of Latino U.S. registered voters voted, the percentage increased slightly to 47 percent in 2004.^{xxi} Scholars argue that Latino voting power will increase as the population grows and meets the threshold for influence in district-based elections and municipal politics, which have historically been the districts of Latina elected officials.^{xxii} With this potential, it is evident that Latinas are fast becoming a formidable voice in shaping the political landscape.

For this presidential election cycle, HOPE pondered how Latinas would figure into this election, and more importantly into the candidate's vision of a new administration. HOPE asked all presidential candidates to submit an article showcasing how Latinas would fit into their future administration, how they inform their campaign strategy and issue agenda. We received responses from four major candidates: Senator Hillary Clinton (D), Senator Barack Obama (D), Governor Mitt Romney (R), and the Honorable Fred Thompson (R). Given the fast-paced environment of election politics in which candidates flow in and out of the race at any given moment, the following four articles serve as rare artifacts documenting the views of leaders on Latinas in this historic time of change. Please use these candidate's thoughts as a precursor to the rest of the report: imagine the potential and then realize the reality as Latinas continue to make major headway into the political landscape of California and the nation.

☞ Given the fast-paced environment of election politics in which candidates flow in and out of the race at any given moment, the following four articles serve as rare artifacts documenting the views of leaders on Latinas in this historic time of change.

SENATOR HILLARY CLINTON

My Commitment with Latinas

Authored by: Presidential Candidate, Senator Hillary Clinton (D)

It is a great honor for me to address the members of Hispanas Organized for Political Equality (HOPE) in the 2008 issue of State of Latinas.

It is estimated that between 2002 and 2012, the number of Latinas in the labor force will grow by 2.8 million, accounting for almost 30 percent of the increase in female workers. As more Latinas enter the workforce, the greater the need becomes for an advocate at the highest level to address their needs. Latinas will play an important role in helping bring about the change America needs.

I have always believed in creating opportunities for women, empowering them to make the best choices for their lives and their families — and I've done so by assigning them leadership positions. My presidential campaign manager, Patti Solis Doyle, started with me in Arkansas in 1991— ready to take on national politics. Today, I am proud to have her leading my campaign — making her the first Hispanic woman to ever run a presidential campaign.

Women are a very important part of my campaign. I'm proud to have the support of pioneers in their fields, role models and committed advocates on behalf of our communities. Latinas like Dolores Huerta, co-founder of the United Farm Workers; Congresswoman Lucille Roybal-Allard, the first Mexican-American woman to be elected to Congress; Congresswoman Nydia Velazquez, the first Latina to ever chair a full congressional committee; Congresswoman Grace Napolitano, a leading voice in the fight to address mental health issues, and Congresswoman Hilda Solis, the first woman to receive the John F. Kennedy Profile in Courage Award for her groundbreaking work on environmental justice issues in California. These phenomenal women are providing invaluable advice to my campaign and helping me get our message of change across.

These leaders have traveled across the country amplifying our message: meeting with voters, speaking at forums, and talking to the media. My campaign has also implemented a coordinated effort to reach out to print and online publications, making sure women know my history of fighting for a positive vision of change for America.

Like my husband's administration when I'm elected President, Latinas will also be an integral part of my Administration. During the 1990's, Bill appointed Maria Echaveste as Deputy Chief of Staff to the President, making her the first Latina to occupy that position. Today she is one of my campaign advisors. Aida Alvarez was the first Latina and the first person of Puerto Rican heritage to serve as a member of a Presidential Cabinet. I view their appointments as just the starting point of opening doors to Latinas at the highest levels of government. Throughout my career, I have hired the best of the best, and my staff has always reflected the wonderful diversity of our country. As President, I will make sure that every agency has a plan to increase the diversity of its staff, including the highest levels.

As President I will continue my commitment to bringing about the change America needs. We need an education system worthy of our children; one that provides them with the support they need from a very young age. I will provide access to pre-kindergarten for every four year old, so they have the opportunities to fulfill their God-given potential. I will recruit and retain outstanding teachers and address the drop-out crisis that is affecting so many Latino students. I will continue to support



the DREAM ACT, which allows undocumented students to pursue higher education and obtain legal residence. Access to higher education is key part of the American dream, and we have to make it easier for young people from all backgrounds to attend college—and to graduate.

We must also confront America's healthcare crisis. I have been working on this issue for more than 20 years, and as I travel the country today, I hear stories of mothers worried about being able to take their children to a doctor, families worried that one illness or accident will result in financial ruin. Today, 47 million Americans have no health insurance, and Latinos are more likely to be uninsured than any other racial or ethnic group. Latinas in particular are at higher risk for breast cancer. Heart disease remains the number one cause of death among Latinas, and they are disproportionately represented among new cases of HIV/AIDS.

I've proposed my American Health Choices Plan to address this crisis. It will provide quality, affordable healthcare for every American. It will allow the 17.9 million Latinos with employer-sponsored coverage to pay lower premiums for higher quality coverage. It will strengthen Medicaid for the 9.6 million Latinos who receive care through this program. And it will help eliminate racial and ethnic disparities in health care, and increase diversity and cultural and linguistic competency in the health care system.

Today, despite the progress women have made, Latinas earn only 59 cents for every dollar men earn. As a Senator, I have led the charge to strengthen equal pay laws and end pay disparities between men and women. I introduced the Paycheck Fairness Act to strengthen the penalties associated with wage discrimination, to ensure that the federal government sets a higher standard, and to increase oversight of employers. I have also worked to increase access to capital and other support for women-owned businesses. As president, I will continue working to eliminate the pay gap and supporting initiatives that will help women-owned businesses expand and thrive.

Like all women, too often Latinas feel trapped between being a good parent and being a good worker. It's about time we stopped just talking about family values and started pursuing policies that truly value families. That is why I have proposed a plan to provide paid family leave for new parents and caregivers, expanding the Family and Medical Leave Act and ensuring that every full-time worker has seven days of paid sick leave to help them deal with a health crisis faced by themselves or their children. With sound policies and sensible investments, we can give parents more choices to make the decisions that are best for them.

Yet many parents and children in America are hidden behind the shadows of a broken immigration system. In order to achieve a fair and equal society for all, we must address the immigration crisis. Our immigration system is broken, and every day hundreds of families pay the price. That is why, when I'm President, I will work to pass an immigration plan with a path to earned legalization. I'll also fight to strengthen our borders, crack down on employers who exploit undocumented workers, and find ways to help create jobs in people's home countries so they don't have to risk their lives in search of a better future.

Finally, it is long past time that we ended the war in Iraq and brought our troops home. We all know the costs of this war: our sons and daughters, friends and neighbors are fighting and losing their lives in Iraq. I'm working as hard as I can to end this war in the Senate. And if President Bush does not end it before he leaves office, when I'm President, I will.

Change is just a word unless you have the strength and experience to make it happen. As president, I will do more than just hope for change — I will work hard for it, and stand up for America's families every day.

Together, we will restore American leadership around the world; rebuild a road to the middle class; reform the government in Washington; and reclaim the future for all our children.

If there was ever a need for change in America, it is now. ★

SENATOR BARACK OBAMA

Authored by: Presidential Candidate, Senator Barack Obama (D)

I want to thank HOPE for the opportunity to contribute to this issue. I also want to applaud HOPE for the important work it is doing to promote and advance the cause of Latinas. Like HOPE, I too believe that fundamental change is both necessary and possible. I believe that if we overcome what divides us and join together as Americans, we can transform this nation. And what we need is real transformation; it will not be enough for us to change parties. We need a leader who will change the politics that has divided us for far too long. We need a leader who will tell the lobbyists and special interests that the days of undue influence are over. We need a leader who will tell people what they need to hear, not what we think they want to hear. I am running for President because I have delivered change we can believe in during my 20 year career in public service.

I know that change is not easy. I learned that lesson more than twenty years ago as a community organizer on the South Side of Chicago, while helping turn around neighborhoods that had been devastated by the closing of nearby steel plants. But I also learned that it's impossible to create change without bringing people together. So I built a coalition of leaders on issues from failing schools to illegal dumping. Together, we set up job training and after school programs. We didn't walk away from injustice then, and we won't walk away from it now. That's why as President, I will put comprehensive immigration reform back on the nation's agenda, and I'll be in the best position to build a coalition that could pass it. Throughout my career I have united Democrats and Republicans to get things done, whether it was expanding health care coverage to 150,000 Illinois residents, or reforming the justice system after innocent people were found on Death Row. We have to create an immigration system that strengthens our security while reaffirming our heritage as a nation of immigrants—a nation dedicated to giving weary travelers from around the world the chance to achieve their dreams. That's the America that answered my father's letters and his prayers and brought him here from Kenya so long ago.

But we also need to do much more. When millions of children start behind in life because of race, gender, or class, it is a betrayal of our ideals. That's not just a Latino problem or an African-American problem; that is an American problem that we have to solve. We need to close the achievement gap between Latino and other students, reduce the high school dropout rate, and enact the DREAM Act so that every child can have the chance to attend college. We also have to ensure that women have equal access to education, including in the areas of math, science, and technology. I will also strive to give women equal footing in the workplace by enforcing the Equal Pay Act, fighting against job discrimination, and increasing childcare options. And I will sign a universal health care bill into law by the end of my first term. My plan will cover every American, including the 15 million uninsured Latinos, and cut the cost of a typical family's premiums by up to \$2,500 a year. I will also ensure that we invest in research for diseases that disproportionately affect women.

We must also finally bring an end to the war in Iraq, a war I'm proud I opposed in 2002 at a time when it was not popular to do so. We shouldn't compound the original mistake of going in by waiting any longer to bring our troops home – there is no military solution to



this war. That's why I've been fighting in the U.S. Senate to end this war and have called for us to begin withdrawing our combat troops now. And when this war is over, we can begin refocusing our attention on the challenges we face in other parts of the world, including Latin America. I will move to renew relations in the hemisphere. We are neighbors and what happens in Latin America matters to the United States. We need to be close partners for opportunity and security in the years to come.

To do all of this, we need to rely on the best talent this great nation of ours has to offer. And that's why my administration will reflect the diversity of this country, and I'm proud that my campaign team is equally diverse. I am fortunate to have the support in California of Democratic State Senate Majority Leader Gloria Romero, Assemblymember Nicole Parra, Democratic Party First Vice Chair Alexandra Gallardo-Rooker, and Pomona Mayor Norma Torres, among others. I have also worked closely with Congressman Luis Gutierrez here in Illinois to ensure that immigration application fees are reasonable and fair. And Federico Peña, former Energy Secretary, serves as a National Campaign Co-Chair.

So, for me, talk about hope and change isn't just rhetoric. I chose a career in public service almost twenty-five years ago because I believe we can and must hold America up to its ideals of opportunity and equality. And as President, I will fight every single day to do just that. ★

MITT ROMNEY

Strengthening America Through Stronger Families

Authored by: Presidential Candidate, Mitt Romney (R)



Throughout my life, I have relished the opportunity to lead in the business world, public sector and government. As the founder of Bain Capital, I led a company that invested in start-up enterprises and turned around troubled businesses. As chairman of the 2002 Salt Lake City Olympics, I turned around a scandal-plagued Games and eliminated a \$379 million deficit. As Governor of Massachusetts, I cut taxes for families and businesses, enabled successful students to attend college tuition-free, signed into law landmark health care reform and defended traditional family values.

Through it all, I still consider raising a loving family to be my life's greatest achievement. In 2007, my high school sweetheart Ann and I celebrated our 38th wedding anniversary. Our lives have been profoundly enriched by our five sons, five daughters-in-law and eleven grandchildren. My experiences have solidified my belief that the most important work in America today is taking place inside the four walls of the American home. In order to strengthen the American people, we must strengthen our greatest institution — the family.

As President, I will protect marriage, family and the sanctity of life. Ann and I will use the bully pulpit to teach America's children that before they have

babies, they should get married. It's time to make out-of-wedlock births out-of-fashion again so that our young women can complete their educations and realize their full potential. We must also encourage a culture that values all life, while promoting greater parental involvement in children's lives.

Another way to strengthen families is by allowing them to keep more of their hard-earned money. As President, I will make the Bush tax relief permanent, roll back tax rates for all taxpayers, abolish the death tax, make health care expenses tax deductible, oppose Social Security tax increases and make the corporate tax rate more competitive with the rest of the world. I will also allow the middle class to save tax-free by changing the tax rate on interest, capital gains and dividends to absolutely 0%. Measures like these will allow families to save more money for their children's education, to buy a home and for their retirement. Tax relief is not only beneficial to our economy, it is also fair and provides an incentive to our entrepreneurs to take risks, innovate and grow their businesses.

Strengthening the family also requires making health care more affordable for the 47 million uninsured Americans, a group that includes 13 million Hispanics. For this reason, I have articulated a vision of healthcare reform that puts conservative, market-based principles to work in order to give every American access to affordable, portable and quality health insurance. On this issue, other candidates are sure to offer a broad array of prescriptions, but I'm the only one who has actually accomplished something to resolve this problem. I did it in Massachusetts, and I can also do it for the entire nation.

To strengthen the family, we must also improve our education system. Closing the achievement gap in our schools is the civil rights issue of our time, and this means we have to ensure all our children are acquiring the skills to graduate from high school and then go on to college. As President, I will promote school choice. I believe that when parents and kids are free to choose their school, everyone benefits. I will improve upon No Child Left Behind (NCLB) by giving states additional flexibility in measuring student performance. We must also honor teaching as the profession it truly is by supporting performance-based pay and other initiatives that encourage our best teachers to teach in our highest-need schools. Our efforts must also be re-focused on fields like math and science while promoting innovative approaches such as charter schools and public-private partnerships. Together, these initiatives will help ensure that America's youth have the intellectual capital and skills they need to compete in the new global marketplace.

Another issue that is on the minds of many Americans, particularly the Hispanic community, is immigration. I believe we need to end illegal immigration so that legal immigration can remain a source of strength for America. I believe it's important to reform our immigration laws in a way that will secure our borders, implement an employment verification system and eliminate incentives for illegal immigration. In doing so, we can give the American people renewed faith in their immigration system. There should be no doubt that we want people from all parts of the world to keep coming to the United States as they have been for centuries. But we need to encourage them to come through the legal channels that exist and ensure that we're not putting those that are waiting to come legally at any disadvantage by doing so.

During this campaign, I have been blessed to meet men, women and children from many diverse backgrounds. I am proud to count several extraordinary Latina leaders in my National Hispanic Steering Committee. I am honored to have their support and, more importantly, be able to count on their advice. Together, we can confront the new generation of challenges America faces and build a more prosperous and secure future for ourselves, our children and future generations. ★

FRED THOMPSON

Authored by: Presidential Candidate, Fred Thompson (R)

The challenges we face as a nation to secure a better education for our children, to make health care more affordable, to create economic growth, and fix our entitlement programs are shared by all Americans. As president, I will work to address these issues to benefit for every American.

A well-educated citizenry is vital to our security, our economy, and our democracy and so we cannot allow our children to continue to fall behind. I will work to improve the quality of education in the United States by promoting more choice and less bureaucracy in education.

Health care coverage should meet individual's needs and put them in control. I will work to lower costs by increasing competition and consumer choice while streamlining regulations through free-market solutions that benefit individuals and reduce costs for employers.

My tax plan, extending the 2001 and 2003 tax cuts and creating a voluntary alternative, simplified tax code, will not only keep more money in the pockets of ordinary Americans, but will help grow the economy, providing more job opportunities, better pay, and increased benefits for all Americans. I also want to abolish the death tax, benefiting especially small business owners and farmers.

I will decrease government regulation of business, particularly of small businesses, the owners of which are increasingly female and minorities, where the demands of regulation are more onerous.

I also have a plan that will save Social Security while preserving the current level of benefits, adjusted for inflation, and assuring annual cost-of-living adjustment. My plan will also allow all workers the opportunity to invest in a 401(k)-type plan, which the government will match, allowing all workers to save and invest more for their retirement.

We also need to fix our broken immigration system. I believe we need to improve border security and enforce our existing laws. We do not need new laws. We also need to improve the legal immigration process, to simplify and expedite it for both immigrants and business.

America is a nation of people from all backgrounds around the world. I believe that the understanding that comes from a diversity of viewpoints and experiences is important in solving the challenges our country faces. Qualified people of any and all backgrounds who share my philosophy and my commitment to serve our nation and its people will be sought out and welcomed into a Thompson Administration. ★



A Look To The Future: A Latina President

The Promise:

Clearly, Latinas have been gaining access to elective office, but the surge in Latina office-holding has barely kept pace with demographic growth. This is partly due to the inability for immigrants or new births, the primary components of Latino growth, to immediately vote.^{xxxiii} Consequently, scholars argue Latinos are as underrepresented as they were at the beginning of the modern era of Latino politics.^{xxxiv} The vast majority of Latino officeholders are elected for local offices, such as school board members and city council members, which can be seen as a catalyst for election to higher-ranking positions and an avenue for the future growth of Latino elected officials. For Latinos, this mismatch between the composition of their communities and their elected officials, especially those at the state and national levels, has serious implications for governance and policy.

Although the number of Latino officials in the country totals less than 1 percent, Latinas have made valuable strides in closing the gaps between community and representation.^{xxxv} *Between 1996 and 2007 Latina elected officials grew faster than the number of male Latino officials between 1996 and 2007, 74 percent compared to 25 percent for Latino males.*^{xxxvi} Moreover, the Latina share of all Latino elected officials grew from 24 percent in 1996 to 31 percent in 2007.^{xxxvii} Currently there are seventy-one Latina state legislators in the U.S., which includes twenty senators and fifty-one representatives serving twenty-two states.^{xxxviii}

The Challenge:

Within the past few years the progress in California has been exceptionally timely, as Latinos became the majority minority in the state Latinas' political prominence followed with the election of prominent women to state and national office. More than one in five of all Latina elected officials nationwide are from California.^{xxxix} At present there are seven Latinas in the United States House of Representatives, five of whom are from California and nine Latinas in the California State Legislature.^{xxx} All Latinas in the U.S. Congress represent districts at least 40 percent Latino, as do most Latinas in the state legislature. *Despite this advancement and the continued population growth, the elected officials representing California's seventeen majority Latino congressional districts have yet to reflect their growing constituent demographic.*^{xxxi} Changes must be made, as California includes a growing Latina population of almost 6.5 million, all of whom have a serious stake in the governance of their communities, as decisions from above ultimately affect their daily lives.^{xxxii}

With the tremendous gains in the past decade, Latina leadership has elevated itself to historic highs. However, there is still a lot of progress to be made, as Latinas and Latinos in the U.S. are not sufficiently reflected in appointed or elected positions within the executive, judicial, or congressional branches of government. These concerns prompted HOPE to wonder: when will elected officials finally reflect the demographic composition of their constituents and ultimately, when will there be a Latina President?

Figure 13: Number of Latinas in Elected Office^{xxxiii}

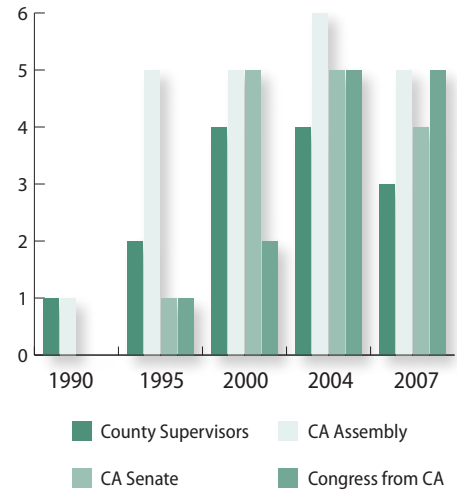


Figure 14: Latina Congressional Representatives^{xxxiv}

All Are US Congresswomen

- CA Grace Flores Napolitano
- CA Lucille Roybal-Allard
- CA Hilda Solis
- CA Linda Sánchez
- CA Loretta Sánchez
- FL Illeana Ros-Lehtinen
- NY Nydia Velazquez

➤ To answer these questions, HOPE has asked Congresswoman Hilda L. Solis, the first Latina to be elected to the California Senate, to reflect on Latina leadership, elected office, and the propensity for a Latina President.

THE HONORABLE HILDA L. SOLIS

A Look to the Future: A Latina President

Authored by: Congresswoman Hilda L. Solis

The nation's Latino population is growing at a much faster rate than the population as a whole. It is estimated that in 2010, Latinos will comprise 15 percent of the overall U.S. population, and nearly-one quarter of the total U.S. population in 2050. Politically, the Latino community is becoming an important force in this nation. Despite these growing numbers, many challenges still face Latinas in our community. For example, out of 89 women in Congress only seven are Latinas, with no Latinas serving in the U.S. Senate! There is still much to be done as far as Latina representation in local, state, and federal elected office.

The 110th Congress made history by making Nancy Pelosi the first woman Speaker of the U.S. House of Representatives. It is crucial that we bring our community and its array of successes to the forefront and pave the way for future generations of Latinas. As Latinas, we have the ability

and the obligation to take on this fight, to make changes, to be the voice for those without voices. I am hopeful that in the future this country will elect a Latina President. To achieve this, we must embrace education, advance leadership development, and fight for the improved health and welfare of our families. I am hopeful that in the future this country will elect a Latina President. To achieve this, we must embrace education, advance leadership development, and fight for the improved health and welfare of our families.

As a former Trustee of Rio Hondo Community College, I believe we must ensure that Latinas succeed as we live in an increasingly competitive world. Education is an important tool to succeed in life and financing that education is one of the many obstacles that Latina college students face. I am a product of federal programs such as the Pell grant and the work-study program. If it were not for those programs, I may not have been able to afford a college education. I also support increased funding for GEAR UP, a program that encourages middle school students to become college-ready.

I am proud that Congress is moving in the right direction by making college more affordable. I have supported legislation that would make college more affordable and accessible to students by cutting the interest rate on subsidized student loans and increasing the Pell Grant student financial aid program. In September 2007, Congress sent President Bush the biggest increase in college financial aid since the GI Bill of 1944 and I am proud that the Democratic majority made this a priority.

I am also a cosponsor of the American DREAM Act, which would help allow students, regardless of their immigration status, to afford to go to college and pursue their dreams. These legislative initiatives will help Latinas nationwide attain a better education.



☞ ***“I am hopeful that in the future this country will elect a Latina President. To achieve this, we must embrace education, advance leadership development, and fight for the improved health and welfare of our families.”***

Leadership development is another important component in civic and political participation. We need Latinas to take advantage of leadership opportunities in high school and college. Organizations such as the Hispanas Organized for Political Equality (HOPE) allow Latinas to hone their leadership and networking skills. More importantly, these organizations give Latinas insight to the inner workings of the political process.

As Latinas, we must learn from role models such as Dolores Huerta and Gloria Molina and seek inspiration from their stories. Dolores Huerta championed the causes of working people and strived for them to be treated fairly. Her life and work make her a role model for all generations of Latinas. In addition, Los Angeles County Supervisor Gloria Molina became the first Latina elected to the California State Assembly, which actually inspired me to run for office. Finally, we must reach out for strength from our familias and community. As a Latina, I am always reminded of who I am and where I came from. Being a Latina has formed my values and my family has been a strong unit of support.

☞ *“As Latinas, we need to keep fighting to increase the number of Latina leaders in public service.”*

We must also fight to improve the health and welfare of our families. Latinos have the highest uninsured rates of any racial or ethnic group within the United States. Across our nation, one in five Latino children are without insurance; these children are five times less likely to have visited a doctor or dentist in the past two years compared to insured children. Their health is directly linked to their performance in school, and thus their ability to succeed. So we must fight to increase access to quality, affordable health care. That is why I am working with my colleagues to expand health insurance for children and reduce health disparities.

My background always brings me pride and I have a deep passion for helping our community. As a woman of many firsts, being involved in the political process and holding elected office has not been easy. Women, especially Latinas, often face multiple barriers in our professional life, such as discrimination and racism, and have to overcome many stereotypes. As the first Latina member of the House Energy and Commerce Committee, the first Latina co-chair of the Bipartisan Women’s Caucus, and the first woman to receive the Kennedy Profile in Courage Award, the highest award for an elected official, I am excited about our ability to make the world a better place for the Latino community.

In November 2006, Speaker Pelosi shattered the glass ceiling and became a trailblazer for women in politics. As Latinas, we need to keep fighting to increase the number of Latina leaders in public service. The fight is not yet over, and we, as Latinas, continue to face challenges and must work even harder to increase our political participation. I am optimistic that in the future a Latina will be able to break the concrete ceiling and be elected as President of the United States. In the meantime, it is important that you recognize the power and influence you have to make a positive change in our community. The foundation we lay today is critical for the future of the Latino community and the future of our nation.

Making The Future A Reality: Mobilizing The Latina Base

This section pulls together ideas from *Voto Latino*, the Southwest Voter Registration and Education Project, & HOPE

With the continued presence of traditional Latino issues: economic development, education, health, and immigration dominating the country's political landscape, Latinas have a primary stake in the policy debate. Yet, the number of registered and likely Latina voters does not parallel their population in California or nationally. *For instance, the U.S. Census Bureau predicts that 56 percent of Latinos in California of citizen voting age are registered to vote, as compared to 72 percent of non-Latinos in California.*^{xxxv} Moreover, a majority of Latino likely voters

are under age 45; whereas seven in ten white likely voters are age 45 and older.^{xxxvi} With this unregistered potential and strength in the under-45 demographic, HOPE ponders what it takes to mobilize the Latina base to achieve an improved sense of well-being, an increase number of Latina elected officials at all levels, and a winning policy agenda. In this capacity, this section pulls together ideas from *Voto Latino*, the Southwest Voter Registration and Education Project, and HOPE to illuminate the steps necessary to ensure economic and political parity for Latinas.

HOPE's Best Practices for an Effective & Sustainable Latina Base:

Four key areas to create a sustainable & effective Latina base.

Areas 1 & 2: Voter Registration & Voter Mobilization

1. **Voter registration** is the foundation for creating an effective Latina base, and is becoming increasingly needed as this demographic grows and remains younger in age than the general population.

- ◆ Approximately *2.6 million Latinos are currently registered to vote in California*, which amounts to one in six of all registered Californians.^{xxxvii} However, *2.1 million Latinos in the state are eligible to vote but unregistered*, amounting to 30% of the 2007 estimated unregistered potential in California.^{xxxviii}

2. **Voter mobilization** is essential to advancing a Latina policy agenda and influencing the decision-making process. It is critical to ensure Latina registered voters turn out during election time, have culturally competent and accessible voter materials, are engaged in the political process, and understand their decision-making capabilities.

- ◆ *Latinos make up almost 31 percent of California's adult population* but only 14 percent of the California voters most likely to turn out in elections.^{xxxix}

Areas 3 & 4: Leadership Development and Sustainable Political Networks

3. **Keys to Successful Leadership Development:** Utilizing the HOPE Leadership Institute (HLI) as a model, HOPE's best practices for leadership development include:

- ◆ Development of communication skills to promote self-confidence and self-efficacy

- ◆ Engagement with the local, state, and national political process
- ◆ Commitment to increasing individual and group competencies to underscore the importance of cross-sector coalition work in the policy making process
- ◆ Technical assistance and training to assure organizational, leadership, and professional competency
- ◆ **79 percent** of HLI alumnae reported their ability to prepare and strategize for legislative meetings strongly increased or increased and **86 percent** of HLI alumnae reported their ability to understand the political process at all levels strongly increased or increased.^{xi}

4. Keys to Effective and Sustainable Political Networks:

Creating and investing in political networks is critical to elevating a Latina policy agenda and increasing the number of Latina elected officials. The key types of support must include: ongoing information/resource sharing, empowering peers to engage in community work, and providing or receiving campaign fundraising assistance.

- ◆ *90 percent of HLI alumnae reported that they supported a fellow HLI colleague's run for public office. Furthermore, over one third of HLI alumnae cited their successful election to public office as attributable to HLI.*^{xi}

MARIA TERESA PETERSEN

The Latino Youth Vote Opportunity

Authored by: Maria Teresa Petersen, Founding Executive Director of Voto Latino

The future of Latino participation in American politics can be best summed up in one word: Youth. The influx of immigrants from South America is dwindling fast, and 1 in 5 new babies born in the United States are Latino. A study conducted by the Pew Hispanic Center showed that already of the 18 million American Latinos who are eligible to vote, 50% are under 40 and a full 35% are under 30. This points to a new demographic reality: the Latino community in the United States is a community largely made up of young people and that trend is growing.

What is the political implication of this demographic reality? Half as many Latino youth turn out to vote as their white and African-American cohort, but Latino youth are the fastest growing segment of the American population. So the opportunity cannot be overstated – it is enormous. If American Latinos get registered and vote, this newly-minted generation of Americans will determine our community’s priorities and shape the United States’ political landscape for generations to come.

To take advantage of this opportunity, we need to address a fundamental issue in our community: why aren’t we voting? The problem is not just among our youth, it’s across our community. Consider this: 4 out of 5 white Americans are registered voters; the figure among Latinos is only 2 in 5.

Addressing this gap is a commitment that dozens of actors, musicians, business leaders, and student activists have made through a non-profit organization founded during the 2004 presidential elections – Voto Latino. Our perspective is that it will require a community-wide effort to mobilize the Latino community to vote. As a result, we are focused specifically on inspiring young Latinos to register and vote, thus supporting existing grassroots voter registration organizations to achieve their goals.

Inspiration is critical, because young Latinos are not the same as their parents’ generation. Thirty years ago, our community was largely first-generation, predominantly Spanish-speaking immigrants who were new to this country. Canvassing to the constituency in their native Spanish language made sense, as it continues to make sense for some segments of our community. But the constituency of thirty years ago does not represent the majority of our community today.

The first wave of young American Latino eligible voters is upon us. And they are English dominant. Over 50,000 young Latinos turn 18 every month and 93% of them are eligible to enter the voting booth. According to a recent poll conducted by the Pew Hispanic Center, over 79% of all American Latino eligible voters consumed electoral news in English. While there is no data for young Latinos specifically, it is reasonable to assume that the figure would be much closer to 100%.

This data suggests that voter engagement activities targeting young Latinos are critical, and these activities must speak to these young people in a language – literally and figuratively – that they can understand.

Voto Latino is working to inspire these young people by utilizing popular youth media (MTV, YouTube, MySpace, SiTV, LATV, and more) and celebrities they know and respect



☞ *“Consider this: 4 out of 5 white Americans are registered voters; the figure among Latinos is only 2 in 5.”*

☞ *“Over 50,000 young Latinos turn 18 every month and 93% of them are eligible to enter the voting booth.”*

(Cameron Diaz, Rosario Dawson, Wilmer Valderama, and Pit Bull are just a few examples). These community-oriented actors and musicians use their talents to promote youth voter engagement through creative public service announcements, concerts, and events. Our underlying message is that we are American and we have a responsibility to our community and our parents to represent them at the polls.

Inspiration is one of the core issues in empowering young Latinos to vote. The other is innovation. Latino youth don't watch the same television channels as their parents, and they also use new technology that presents a tremendous opportunity to reach them in new and innovative ways.

As a result, Voto Latino launched one of the first text-messaging voter registration campaigns in American history, wherein young Latinos could register to vote by sending a text message from their mobile phone. On election day 2006, those participating received Get-Out-The-Vote text message reminder. Guess what? A simple reminder increased Latino participation to the polls by 9%. Today, using online voter registration, Google ads, and viral marketing on websites like Facebook, Voto Latino is reaching out to young Latinos in powerful ways never considered just a few years ago.

The future of our community's role in American democracy will rely heavily on inspiring young Latinos to vote using innovative approaches and technologies. Voto Latino is one such effort, but we can only be successful if the Latino community at large recognizes the importance and the scale of the opportunity in Latino youth engagement. If together we can bring this generation of Latinos to the voting booth, together we will change the future of our country. The 2008 election is the perfect opportunity to enfranchise our young people. They came out in record numbers during the 2008 marches, let's inspire them so that the next time they march, it's to the polls.

➤ *Half as many Latino youth turn out to vote as their white and African-American cohort, but Latino youth are the fastest growing segment of the American population.*

LYDIA CAMARILLO

Southwest Voter Registration Education Project Partners with Latina Style Magazine to Register 100,000 New Latina Voters

Authored by: Lydia Camarillo, Vice President of Southwest Voter Registration and Education Project



With the recent attention being given to Latinos and the pivotal role they will play in the upcoming presidential elections, a new initiative spearheaded by the nation's oldest and most influential voter registration/education organization has been launched to register 100,000 new Latina voters. The woman behind this ambitious undertaking is Lydia Camarillo, the Vice President of Southwest Voter Registration Education Project, who feels Latinas are key to the 2008 election cycle, "With 33 years of voter registration experience under our belt, we're focusing on Latinas because we feel they will play a central role in determining the outcome of the primary and general elections."

While Latinos are the fastest growing ethnic subgroup electorate in the United States with 7.5 million votes cast in 2004 (9.3 million registered), researchers estimate that there are nearly 6.7 million eligible Latino voters

not registered today. Population trends suggest that at least 50% of these eligible voters are women. Given these figures, SVREP has partnered with Latina Style Magazine to register these women through the Latina Vote campaign utilizing the slogan, Cuando vota una Latina – vota una familia. "The slogan says it all," says Camarillo, "It captures the essence of our thinking – when a Latina votes, so does her entire extended family."

The Latina Vote campaign is simple and it capitalizes on the traditional Comadre network. It works as follows: One Latina registers 10 of her friends and/or family members to vote and makes the commitment to remind her network to vote on election-day. It's that straight-forward. Latinas can also get her comadres to register by logging on to www.svrep.org. Given the nurturing role Latinas play in their families, SVREP hopes this campaign will inspire new family traditions centered around voting.

SVREP's Latina Vote campaign is directing its efforts in four specific areas:

- *Latina-owned businesses – SVREP will target Latina owned businesses to each register 10 employees, friends, family members, and comadres. SVREP will provide the needed information and support material.*
- *Nonprofit Organizations led by Latinas – SVREP will target 500 Latina presidents/executive directors/leaders of nonprofits to register 10 employees and other eligible voters to register on-line via www.svrep.org.*
- *Latina Membership Organizations – SVREP will partner with said organizations to engage their membership in the Latina Vote campaign and register 10 friends, family members and comadres to vote via www.svrep.org.*



⇒ *"... with 7.5 million votes cast in 2004 (9.3 million registered), researchers estimate that there are nearly 6.7 million eligible Latino voters not registered today"*

- *SVREP Latina Projects* – In the SVREP tradition, it will conduct voter registration and GOTV projects - with one difference - these projects will be managed and run exclusively by Latinas. SVREP Latina projects will target places where Latinas congregate such as supermarkets, hair salons, and sporting events where their children play soccer, basketball and football.

Latina Style Magazine has partnered with SVREP to insure that the word gets out about this unprecedented mobilization effort. In addition to publishing articles about the Latina Vote campaign, this endeavor will be accompanied by an earned and paid media component that forms partnerships with major media and Latino owned media organizations. It's expected that the Latina Vote campaign will catalyze Latina participation to record levels.

Join [Southwest Voter Registration and Latina Style Magazine](#) and become a part of the Latina Vote campaign by calling (210) 922-0225 or log on to www.svrep.org. You can make a difference. Remember, as the SVREP motto says: Tu Voto Es Tu Voz – Your Vote Is Your Voice!

☞ *The Latina Vote campaign is simple and it capitalizes on the traditional Comadre network.*

It works as follows: One Latina registers 10 of her friends and/or family members to vote and makes the commitment to remind her network to vote on election-day.

Endnotes

- i *Wherever possible, HOPE tries to use Latina statistics; in cases where data on Latinas is non-existent, HOPE will present data on Latinos (female and male).*
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