



August 7, 2008

United States House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representative:

On behalf of the National Hispanic Leadership Agenda (NHLA), a coalition of national Latino organizations, I urge you to co-sponsor the **Strengthening Communities through Education and Integration Act** (H.R. 6617), introduced by Reps. Honda (D-CA), Hinojosa (D-TX), and Ros-Lehtinen (R-FL).

According to the Census Bureau, more than 19% of the U.S. population speaks a language other than English at home. These 54.8 million individuals' desire to learn English is so intense that there are 1-3 year waitlists in many areas for English language courses. Over the past 15 years, English language learner (ELL) K-12 enrollment has nearly doubled and experts predict that one quarter of the total U.S. public school population will be made up of ELLs by 2025. The need for federal support of English acquisition and integration has never been greater.

Limited English proficiency limits opportunities to learn, work, and fully contribute to the nation's economy and society. As the country's ELL population continues to grow, it is critical that Congress support effective English language acquisition and integration programs while encouraging the maintenance of native languages and cultures.

The **Strengthening Communities through Education and Integration Act** is a solutions-oriented bill that will accelerate the integration of ELLs by increasing resources for English language acquisition, civics, and basic education programs; providing financial incentives to employers who offer adult education and English language acquisition programs to their employees; and empowering communities to bring together key stakeholders to develop local solutions for integrating newcomers.


Specifically, this legislation would:

- Codify English Literacy and Civics Education under the Adult and Family Literacy Act and invest the necessary resources in these courses;
- Ensure that our nation's children and schools have adequate funding and resources for vital literacy programs for English language learners;
- Create tax incentives to employers who offer adult education and ESL programs to their employees; and
- Provide vital technical assistance and support to state and local communities seeking strong and productive strategies to respond to newcomers.

As a country rich in the tradition of welcoming immigrants, we must ensure that we continue to be a nation that embraces newcomers and facilitates their integration into our society as full and equal partners.

We urge you to consider co-sponsoring this legislation. For more information, please contact Gloria Chan (gloria.chan@mail.house.gov) in Rep. Honda's office.

Sincerely,



John Trasviña
Chair

National Hispanic Leadership Agenda Member Organizations:

Alianza Dominicana
American GI Forum
ASPIRA Association, Inc.
Association for the Advancement of Mexican Americans
Cuban American National Council
Dominican American National Roundtable
Hispanic Association of Colleges & Universities
Hispanic Federation
Hispanic National Bar Association
Interamerican College of Physicians & Surgeons
Labor Council for Latin American Advancement (LCLAA)
League of United Latin American Citizens (LULAC)
MANA, A National Latina Organization
Mexican American Legal Defense & Educational Fund (MALDEF)
National Association for Bilingual Education
National Association of Hispanic Federal Executives
National Association of Hispanic Publications
National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO)
National Conference of Puerto Rican Women, Inc.
National Council of La Raza
National Hispanic Caucus of State Legislators
National Hispanic Corporate Council
National Hispanic Council on Aging
National Hispanic Environmental Council
National Hispanic Foundation for the Arts
National Hispanic Media Coalition
National Hispanic Medical Association
National Puerto Rican Coalition, Inc.
National Puerto Rican Forum
Puerto Rican Legal Defense & Education Fund
Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers
Southwest Voter Registration and Education Project
United States Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
U.S.-Mexico Chamber of Commerce
U.S. Hispanic Leadership Institute (USHLI)