Illinois Latino Agenda

Convened by Latino Policy Forum and Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund

Testimony to the Illinois Joint-House and Senate Redistricting Committee
Regarding the Boundaries of Illinois' Legislative Districts
Submitted by Sylvia Puente, Executive Director, Latino Policy Forum
& Co-Convener of the *Illinois Latino Agenda*
Tuesday, May 24, 2011

Good morning, my name is Sylvia Puente and I'm the executive director of the Latino Policy Forum. The Latino Policy Forum is the only organization in the Chicago-area that facilitates the involvement of Latinos at all levels of public decision-making. Its goals are to improve education outcomes, advocate for affordable housing, promote just immigration policies, and engage diverse sectors of the community, with an understanding that advancing Latinos advances a shared future.

A major component of the Forum's community engagement is its role as co-convener of the *Illinois Latino Agenda*, a 49-member coalition of Latino nonprofit organizations. As a coalition, members of the *Illinois Latino Agenda* along with several supporting organizations have recommended the creation of:

- 13 combined House and Senate majority Latino districts with a total population threshold greater than 65%,
- 4 districts with a total Latino population threshold between 50 and 64%, and
- 15 districts with a total Latino population threshold between 20 and 49%.

I am proud to say that the *Illinois Latino Agenda's* recommendations are fully reflected in the 'Unity Map' proposed by the United Congress of Community and Religious Organizations (UCCRO). Together, we have advocated for increasing Latino and Asian representation while maintaining in no unqualified terms that African-Americans should maintain the same level of representation that they currently have. While some contend that additional Latino districts must come at the expense of African-American districts, our 'Unity Map' dispels that theory.

With regard to the map developed by the legislature, the *Illinois Latino Agenda* is pleased that some of our recommendations have been incorporated into the proposal. For example, including Little Village and Chinatown into their own respective districts is a step in the right direction. Moreover, we are heartened by the creation of simple majority districts in suburban areas like Franklin Park, Waukegan and Elgin/Carpentersville.

However, the *Illinois Latino Agenda* must judge this map in its entirety and unfortunately our analysis indicates that the proposal before us shortchanges Latino residents, particularly in light of the Latino population's 33% growth over the last decade.

On the south side of Chicago, we recommended the creation of 6 Latino majority districts, 5 of which contained a total population greater than 65%. Instead, the legislature proposed 3 districts with a total Latino population greater than 80% while creating 2 districts in the mid-50s and 1 at just 32%. We believe that the legislature should adjust the district boundaries in order to balance the Latino population thresholds on the south side while maintaining its commitment to keeping Little Village and Chinatown in 1 district apiece. Furthermore, efforts should be made to unite communities of interest like Back of the Yards and Brighton Park, which continue to be fragmented among various legislative districts.

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Summary of potential Latino House & Senate, Chicago & Suburban districts
by % Latino Tot Pop

IL House Comparison of ILA Proposal (unofficial)

	Illinois Latino Agenda	House Dems (unofficial)	Difference from ILA
65%+	9	4	-5
50-64%	4	9	5
20-49%	8	6	-2
TOTAL	**21**	**19**	**-2**

IL Senate Comparison of ILA Proposal

	Illinois Latino Agenda	Senate Dems	Difference from ILA
65%+	4	2	-2
50-64%	0	3	3
20-49%	7	5	-2
TOTAL	**11**	**10**	**-1**

TOTAL Legislature Comparison of ILA Proposal

	Illinois Latino Agenda	Dems	Difference from ILA
65%+	13	6	-7
50-64%	4	12	8
20-49%	15	11	-4
TOTAL	**32**	**29**	**-3**