Hispanics Organized for Political Education

Texas HOPE

Legislative Agenda for the 83rd Texas Session

From the Texas HOPE Chairman, Joe Cárdenas III,

To All Members of the Texas Latino Community:

Brothers and Sisters,

The following is a legislative plan for the Latino community of Texas in the hope that by providing a unified document of those issues that are most important to our community, we may be better able to serve our community through sound leadership that is progressive and pro-active. This document is broken into four parts: 1. Plan of Action, 2. The Issues, 3. The Facts, and 4. A Call to Action. Please take the time to study these issues so that you may articulate them well, and share them with all persons who have a desire to improve the Latino community in Texas.

Plan of Action

Latinos in Texas rank the following 7 issues in order of importance as the most relevant to our community’s agenda:

1. Education
2. Immigration/Racial Profiling
3. Political Access/Re-districting
4. Health Care
5. Business/Workforce
6. State Budgetary shortfall
7. Housing

The 83rd Texas Legislature will begin on January 8, 2013; and in order to view what bills have already been proposed, click on the following link:


To check the legislative status of proposed bills in the legislature after the session begins, call the Legislative Reference Library’s Bill Status Information Office at 1-877-824-7038, or you should go to the Library’s web-site at www.lrl.state.tx.us, or go to the TX Legislature’s web-site at www.capitol.state.tx.us. If you don’t know the specific number of the bill, you can find it by providing the topic of the bill to the library staff or to the capitol staff.
We strongly urge all persons to know who their House Representative and State Senator are, as well as their contact number in Austin and their home district office number. You can find this information by going to www.capitol.state.tx.us and clicking on the home button for either the House or the Senate on the left-hand side of the page; this will take you to either web-site where at the top you can click on the button to find who represents you. It is important that you contact your House and Senate representative by e-mail, phone, and especially in writing. By using one of these three contact methods, you will maximize your effort’s impact; while petitions and form letters may be convenient, they are impersonal and so do not carry the same weight as a constituent’s personal communiqué. Please send hard copies of your e-mails and letters to coalition partners for our records as proof of your support or opposition to use when we meet with various Representatives and Senators.

All community activists are encouraged to visit their House and Senate representative at their local district office as often as possible to emphasize our issues, and to present and make known their own local issues. You must be willing to be vocal in your efforts and report back any progress or developments that your visits have attained. In the event that your representative is not responsive to you and your community, you are asked to organize a protest rally, demonstration, and/or a march.

Please include your children and our college students in these events. It is important that our community be constantly present at the capitol in the event that testimonials are needed before the House or Senate committee hearings. In the past, we have had to scramble to find members to hold the line for us. We must be vigilant of what goes on in Austin, for at any time action against our community may be taken. All members of our community and their friends and family must be prepared to march on Austin when and if it becomes apparent that the state’s political parties are going to dismantle and suppress our gains and/or abandon our community, children, and students.

Many Latinos have personal rapport and relationships with members of the Texas House and Senate on both sides of the political spectrum; Texas HOPE calls on these persons to use their influence to prevent negative anti-Hispanic bills from coming to the floor of either chamber and to promote sensible bills that will benefit all Texans today and tomorrow. We ask these members to personally assume the task of being intermediates between these representatives and the Organization.

The Issues

Education

HOPE fully supports and advocates for public education that is based on proven methodology and opposes agendas that seek to privatize or advance policies such as school vouchers that divert funds from traditional public education settings.
HOPE calls on the Texas 83rd Legislature to reinstate school-funding using district property wealth for allocation to the 2009, level of funding that also took into account the annual increased enrollment of students.

Quality Education for English Language Learners (ELLs)
Reform and improve education by supporting reforms for effective secondary educational programs that serve English Language Learners including stronger accountability standards, curricular reforms at the secondary level, and addressing qualified teacher shortages through recruitment and retention programs. These reforms will result in closing the achievement gaps and reducing the drop-outs.

Drop-Outs
1. Reform and improve education by identifying a menu of best practices that are research based to address dropouts;
2. Introduce legislation that will require institutions to include in their graduation degree plan developed courses that focus on addressing potential drop-out students and drop-outs as part of their teacher certification programs;
3. Support legislation that will require institutions that grant teacher certification and who are also identified as an HSI (Hispanic Serving Institution) to develop leadership programs for minorities in the field of education;
4. Support legislation that will create a state-wide Blue Ribbon Committee made up of those institutions of higher learning that are identified as HIS to create a Think-tank to be centered at Texas State University in San Marcos to research, monitor, and propose solutions to student drop-outs;
5. Close all loopholes in the state’s leaver code system so that districts and campuses cannot arbitrarily mask student dropout numbers;
6. Monitor the extent to which students are being taken off of the recommended high school program and placed in the Minimum track that leaves them ineligible for state financial aid (i.e., TEXAS Grant) and automatic admissions under the Top Ten Percent Policy.

Equitable School Finance System
Invest in the economic future of Texas by supporting a return to formula-based funding that maintains a school finance system that allows schools to access equal revenue at a similar tax effort and properly funds special needs students.

Universal Access to Schools
Oppose all efforts to deny access to education and ensure access to parents and children living in Texas to educational services regardless of immigration status.

High-stakes Testing
Put a stop to the overreliance on a single test-based indicator when assessing students. Continuing to focus on student test performance does not lead to a deeper or critical
understanding of the curriculum. Rather, it obstructs students’ access to quality learning time and diverts precious dollars and resources (such as teacher and staff time) to testing companies. The misuses of testing are both unethical and unsupported by research, and also disproportionately impact poor, minority, and English learning students, as well as those student receiving special education services.

**Holistic Assessment**
Support the use of multiple measures such as classroom work, homework, extracurricular involvement, teacher evaluation, parent evaluation, and test scores as a means for holistically assessing a student’s overall academic performance. Oppose policies that solely rely of a single test score to determine grade promotion or retention decisions, deny students a high school diploma, deny access to college or financial aid, or contaminate students’ course GPAs.

**College Readiness Preparation**

1. Support students’ access and successful completion of the 4x4, college readiness curriculum;
2. Oppose efforts to track students into non-rigorous, vocational or career and technology courses;
3. Support rigorous career and technology education courses that are taught by certified teachers, that supplement (rather than supplant) students’ completion of college ready curricula, and lead to work-based certification and college credit.
4. Support supplemental programs and partnerships that provide students resources and access to institutions of higher education;
5. Require that all students have fully certified, quality teachers who have the academic and social competencies to ensure that all students reach their optimal potential.

**Affordable Tuition Rates in Higher Education**

1. Oppose any measure that restricts or prohibits minority access to needed financial aid and Texas grants that should be fully restored;
2. Support affordable access to higher education by restoring the state regulation of tuition;
3. Oppose any measure that further restricts Texas’ high school graduates access to in-state tuition.

**Top 10%**
Oppose any legislation that would reduce, eliminate or make exceptions to the top 10% rule.

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**DREAM Act**
Oppose any legislation that would challenge students’ access to higher education by modifying or eliminating House Bill 1403.

**Bullying**
Support enhanced anti-bullying legislation that will mandate that the education administration code include a directive to identify a point of contact for bullying.

**Special Education**
Support legislation mandating that the parents of special education students who are also limited English proficiency (LEP), be provided all documentation in their native language during the ARD and the development of the student’s IEP.

**State Board of Education Reform**
Reform the State Board of Education (SBOE) to ensure that the adopted and future TEKS curriculum standards are accurate, comprehensive, in compliance with legislative intent and responsive to community input. Support efforts to include top university experts in the decision making process.

**Immigration**

**Community Policing**
Promote safer cities through community policing and opposing any proposals that encourage state and local law enforcement of federal immigration statutes.

**Safer Drivers**
Promote safer drivers, access to insurance and more secure communities by rejecting rules that make acquiring Texas driver licenses more difficult for Texas residents.

**Comprehensive Immigration Reform in Texas**
Promote legislation that includes a Texas guest worker program, the continuation of the Texas Dream Act, and the security of the Texas border in a humane and dignified manner for all.

**Anti-immigration Legislation**
Oppose all anti-immigration/anti-Hispanic legislation that is hateful and discriminatory in nature that may have the potential to lead to racial profiling.

**Political Access/Redistricting**

**Voter ID**
Oppose burdensome voting procedures at the polls such as requiring additional photo voter identification after a voter presents his or her voter registration certificate or other identification.
Access to the Process
Ensure minorities are fairly represented in the drawing of political boundaries in compliance with the Voting Rights Act at all levels of the process to ensure that Latinos maximize their representation.

Existing Minority Districts
Support the preservation of current minority districts at the Congressional, state and county levels.

New Congressional Districts
Support the creation of minority-majority U.S. Congressional Districts reflective of the growth of minorities in Texas.

New Texas Districts
Support the additional creation of Texas House and Senatorial Districts commensurate with the growth of minorities in Texas.

Voting Rights Act
Oppose any legislation that has the potential or effect of changing the voting rights act in a way that delineates from its intended purpose.

Texas Open Records Act
Oppose any curtailment to the Texas open records act that has provided for transparent government at all levels of politics in Texas, including businesses that have contracts with the state of Texas.

Health Care

Affordable Health Care
Ensure that all Texans, especially children and persons on fixed incomes have access to affordable health care and prescription drugs from competitive insurance providers.

Preventive Health Care
Support legislation that promotes wellness focusing on programs that compliment individual and community-based preventive initiatives, especially in the areas of diabetes and Alzheimer.

Pre-existing Conditions
Oppose any legislation or policies that deny or curtail benefits due in part or in whole to pre-existing medical conditions.
Women’s Health Care
Oppose any legislation or policies that deny or curtail benefits specific to women’s issues including procedures that are an encumbrance and invasive in nature to women. Support legislation that promotes feminine specific procedures and treatment.

Business/Work Force

Workforce
Support legislation that enhances training, retraining, and career programs for displaced and/or underemployed professional and nonprofessional workers.

Competitiveness
Supports initiatives that will enable Texas to remain competitive and encourage the establishment and growth of Hispanic enterprises.

HUB (Historically Underutilized Business)
Support legislation and policies that further enhances the establishment and maintenance of HUB goals in state procurement, and accountability measures for achieving it

Support legislation that encourages Texas business credit, economic development programs, and small business assistance programs through access to capital, and job creation.

Texas State Budgetary Shortfall

State Educational Programs
Oppose any legislation that would cut, de-fund, or eliminate any state educational programs that are effective and necessary to the success of any student sub-groups that are part of the accountability system.

Tax Loop-Holes
Support and strongly encourage legislation that will raise state revenues through the elimination of tax loopholes and corporate headquarters designation tax loopholes.

Housing

Affordable Housing/Low Income Housing Tax Credits
Oppose new rules adopted by the board of directors of the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs that totally disenfranchise the Latino communities of the state. We must work to change these rules in order to have equitable opportunities to build affordable housing in Latino communities across the state of Texas. Historical non-profits have been left out of the application process for tax credits due to the current rules adopted by the board of directors of the Texas Department of Housing and Community Affairs because they dictate where affordable housing units must be built.
The Facts

It is important that you remind your representatives that our community contributed 65% of all the growth in Texas, which is approximately 3 million persons. They also need to be reminded that 50% of the Texas Hispanic population is under the age of 18, and will be the majority of future voters.

The 7 largest counties in Texas by population account for 50% of the total population in Texas. These same 7 counties in Texas account for 2/3rds of the Hispanic population are as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>7 largest counties by pop.:</th>
<th>7 largest Hispanic counties by population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Harris- 4,096,052</td>
<td>1. Harris- 1,819,708</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Dallas- 2,435,919</td>
<td>2. Dallas- 1,021,443</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Tarrant- 1,825,548</td>
<td>3. Bexar- 965,727</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Bexar- 1,636,642</td>
<td>4. Hidalgo- 725,433</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Travis- 992,773</td>
<td>5. El Paso- 651,192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL: 12,553,196</td>
<td>TOTAL: 6,110,205</td>
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</tbody>
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Texas State totals for Presidential election 2012: 3,308,124- 41.38% / 4,569,843-57.16%

Two/ thirds of the Hispanic population in Texas lives in the 7 largest counties
The total population of Texas is 25,373,947 of which 9,847,852 are Hispanic or 37.9% of the total population in Texas.

Know that Hispanics do vote when they have made a personal connection with the issue or election. Remind persons who say that Hispanics don’t vote that the same was being said when Julian Castro was running for mayor of San Antonio in a field of six other candidates. Everyone said that there would be a run-off because Hispanics don’t vote.

Castro won decisively with 54% of the vote! In Harris County, when Adrian Garcia of Houston announced that he was running for Harris county sheriff, many said he didn’t have a chance, despite the large Hispanic community. Not only did he win, but he also received the most votes of any candidate in Harris County, the third most populous county in the nation!

The facts all indicate that the inevitable truth is that the future of Texas is squarely in the hands of Hispanics. Texas is in transition politically and demographically, but whether that will be an advantage or not is exactly what is at stake this legislative session. We cannot expect, nor do we want anything to be given to us that we have not earned or struggled for over the decades. All of you will agree that our community deserves and is
long overdue this accord! But this is only an opportunity, and like all opportunities, it must be taken or else it will pass! We owe this opportunity to all those who came and struggled before us, many of whom are not with us to share in this moment. Let us be resolved not to let this opportunity pass us by for the sake of Texas and our future generations.

A Call to Action

Brothers and Sisters, it is extremely important that you as a leader in the community gather and inform as many voting persons as possible on those issues that will be having a lasting impact today and tomorrow on our community and by extension on Texas as a whole. As many of you may already know, 65% of the growth in Texas the last ten years was due to the growth in our community, slightly more than 3 million persons. While we may have the advantage of numbers, we must exercise political muscle at the voting box; we must offer ourselves up as candidates; we must be present at the Capitol in Austin. If we do not do these things, then our numbers will not mean anything. Only we can choose to take advantage of this opportunity.

You must take action! You must go vote! You must take others to vote! You must be vocal! You must participate! You must lead! I know that many of you already do these things, but now is a crucial time and we must inspire others to act. This is our moment; this is our time! We must not; we cannot fail! Latino organizations exist to promote and benefit all our community, especially those who do not have a vote—our children, our youth. What we do or do not do will have a lasting impact on the legacy that we. Texas must not become a California, a Florida, or an Arizona! But only you can prevent this; you can make the difference and keep this from happening in Texas.

This is a call to ACTION, not words! Texas HOPE knows well that this upcoming legislative session in Austin is going to be a test and challenge to the Latino community of Texas. There are many persons in Texas who fear our community because of our numbers, language, and culture. They know that the future of Texas rests with our community, that we will inherit the Texas of tomorrow. These persons will do everything in their power to prevent this as we saw in the last legislative session with the numerous anti-Hispanic bills that were proposed. Texas HOPE calls on all organizations and their members to stop anti-Hispanic legislation. We want our organizations to urge all others to do whatever they can to help as, but as individual community activists, we ask that you vote for those persons who will support us today and in the future. We need all of you to get our issues out there and inform persons of the need to prevent this type of hateful legislation.

We need our community to get involved locally by becoming precinct chairs for their party. Furthermore, we ask that you make plans to attend two advocacy days in Austin. The first will take place on January 8th, 2013, the opening day of the new legislative
session; the second will take place in March, to coincide with Cesar Chavez’s birthday which is a state holiday.

This upcoming legislative session will have Arizona like legislation introduced in Texas. In Texas, we must not be caught off-guard like the communities of Arizona and other states. In Texas, we must be proactive and take action now as well as voice our stance against this legislation early in the session. Let me remind all of you that in Arizona, 60% of Hispanics were in favor of SB 1070, because they thought that it was only an immigration bill that would not affect them or have an effect on their children. But they were wrong! They soon were first-hand witnesses to racial profiling and their children were denied any exposure to the historical contributions of Hispanics or any other ethnic group. You must remember that most non-Hispanics see all of us as recent arrivals. It is when we fool ourselves into believing that immigration is not our issue that those against our community prevail. I am sad to inform you that in Texas, in a 2011 poll, 30% of Hispanics said that they support Arizona-like legislation! The difference between Texas and the other states is that Texas has a very large and strong Latino community presence that is active!

Texas Latino organizations and the coalitions we make will make the difference, just as we did in the last legislative session where we defeated all anti-Latino legislation. However, in this upcoming legislative session we will have to once again fight against the voter ID bill, against English only, against skyrocketing tuition that even the Governor sees as a problem for which he has called for a freeze, against high-stakes testing, against an unacceptable dropout rate, and bad education legislation in the form of vouchers being spearheaded by the new commissioner of education Michael Williams and Senate public education committee chair Dan Patrick. We must also continue to fight for the Texas Dream Act, for the preservation of the Top 10%, for the effective implementation of bilingual education programs, for stronger anti-bullying language, and for the inclusion of the contributions made to Texas History by Hispanics. We must pressure our politicians to find a sensible solution to school finance so that public schools in Texas can attain the highest quality of education for our children. We must demand that our teachers get better pay and that they are better trained to meet the needs of our children, and we must demand affordable higher education to meet the economic and labor needs of tomorrow’s Texas.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Texas HOPE wishes to recognize its collaborative relationship with Texas LULAC, MALDEF, and Texas Center for Education Policy (TCEP), Texas NAACP, Equality Texas, ACLU of Texas, IDRA, and the Greater Dallas Hispanic Chamber of Commerce (GDHCC). Texas HOPE adopted in part MALDEF’s agenda, as well as utilizing the business expertise of the GDHCC and that of the ACLU in its legislative agenda.