



State of Connecticut
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PRESS STATEMENT

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Puerto Rico's New Law on Birth Certificates Affects Local Residents

Latino Puerto Rican Affairs Commission Spearheads Public Information Campaign Instructing Connecticut Residents Born in Puerto Rico How to Comply

Bridgeport, CT – September 15, 2010 -- The Latino Puerto Rican Affairs Commission (LPRAC) launched a statewide public information campaign to inform Connecticut residents born in Puerto Rico on how to renew their birth certificates. Initially, the Government of Puerto Rico had designated July 1, 2010 as the date to begin issuing new birth certificates after invalidating all other birth certificates prior to this date. However, an amendment to the law provided an additional three-month extension, through September 30, 2010. The extension period will allow additional time to apply for and receive the new document to those who may need a birth certificate for an upcoming transaction. In the meantime, their current birth certificate will still be valid. Only people who have a specific need for their birth certificate for official purposes need request a new birth certificate right away.

“There has been some misinformation as well as apprehension by Puerto Ricans about the process. We at the **Latino Puerto Rican Affairs Commission (LPRAC)**, are responding to those concerns by providing accurate information to the Puerto Rican community of Connecticut about the process of obtaining new birth certificates for official purposes (such as obtaining a driver license, passport, social security, etc.), and create awareness that those individuals who do not have an immediate need for a new birth certificate should delay applying for one to avoid a backlog of requests,” stated Mr. Isaías T. Díaz, Esquire, LPRAC Chairman.

As part of its ongoing mission, LPRAC consistently conducts outreach activities intended to raise awareness of critical issues affecting the Puerto Rican/Latino population of Connecticut.

Mr. Werner Oyanadel, LPRAC's acting Executive Director, added: “We have partnered with ASPIRA of Connecticut, Inc., and the Connecticut Hispanic Bar Association, and obtained financial support from the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, and from State Farm in a joint effort to inform people born in Puerto Rico residing in our State about the process of how to obtain a new birth certificate,”

“Bridgeport is home to the largest Puerto Rican population in the state of Connecticut. We welcome and appreciate the Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission and ASPIRA of Connecticut for their efforts in making sure that our residents born on the island of Puerto Rico receive all the information and tools necessary to renew their birth certificates,” stated Mayor Bill Finch who was also in attendance at the press conference.

"It is important to spread the word to everyone born on the island about this critical change concerning this vital record," "I encourage all Puerto Ricans born on the island to begin the process of getting their new birth certificate as requested here today," recommended State Representative Andres Ayala, Jr. (D-128).

The Government of Puerto Rico contracted with VitalChek, Inc. to provide an expedited method for ordering the new certificates. These can be ordered online at www.vitalchek.com or by telephone through VitalChek's 24/7 bilingual call center at (866) 842-6765. An express processing fee and shipping costs apply for this service.

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Puerto Rican Birth Certificate Law...

Page 2 of 2

September 15, 2010

Applicants can also access the website: www.pr.gov to apply for a new certificate. People can also request their certificate via regular mail or in person. LPRAC will provide information on how and where to apply in person in the state of Connecticut. The cost of the new birth certificate is \$5. People over 60 years of age and veterans will be exempt from paying the fee.

More information regarding the new law is available in English and Spanish on the Puerto Rican Federal Affairs Administration website at www.prfaa.com/birthcertificates/ or by calling (212) 252-7300. The State of Connecticut has also developed an informational website at www.ct.gov/prbirth.

The change in the law was promulgated by a goal to reduce the number of forged birth certificates that were then used for fraudulent purposes to acquire credit, driver licenses, social security numbers, and even passports. The Governor of Puerto Rico, Luis Fortuño, signed Law 191 known as, "Law Prohibiting Public and Private Entities from Retaining, Storing, or Holding Certified Copies of Birth Certificates," in December 2009.

In an effort to provide timely and accurate information to attorneys and legal services organizations who remain unaware of this new law, the Connecticut Hispanic Bar Association (CHBA) is also actively supporting the initiative by serving as a referral service to connect the Commission to attorneys who can answer legal questions the Commission may have or may receive from the general public. In addition, the CHBA will provide support in the campaign's community events initiatives and publicize the new law in the statewide legal community.

Ms. Sara C. Bronin, the President of the CHBA informed that: "As part of our service to the state and our community, we are pleased to partner with LPRAC to ensure that no one is denied services or suffers other hardships because of the new law."

State Farm is providing support via its agents who are providing assistance by helping local residents fill out and mail applications.

The Hartford Foundation for Public Giving is supporting this campaign by awarding a grant to Aspira of Connecticut, Inc., to assist with the costs of the publicity campaign.

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LPRAC is a nonpartisan policy agency within the Legislative branch of government created in 1994 by an act of the Connecticut Legislature (i.e., P.A. 94-152, amended by P.A. 03-229 and reformed by P.A. 09-07). Under Public Act 09-07, the LPRAC consists of 21 appointed volunteers who are mandated to advise the General Assembly and the Governor on policies that foster progress in the Puerto Rican/Latino communities residing in Connecticut.