



State of Connecticut
Latino and Puerto Rican
Affairs Commission

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Testimony of the Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission
Before the Connecticut General Assembly's Reapportionment Committee.
July 5, 2011
Waterbury, City Hall ~ 7:00 PM

Good evening Co-Chairs Williams, Cafero, and honorable members of the Reapportionment Committee. My name is Isaias T. Diaz, Chairman of the State of Connecticut Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission (LPRAC). I am here today to give you our feedback and recommendations with respect to your task of redrawing both the Congressional and State District lines in the State of Connecticut as mandated by Federal and state laws.

Background Information

Connecticut as you already know has 3,574,097 people, according to the federal Census Bureau's latest information released earlier this year – 479,087 are of Hispanic or Latino descent or roughly 13.4 percent of the overall population, which signifies an incredible growth of 49.6 percent since this data was released ten years earlier. The Latino population in our state is growing twelve times faster than the general population and for comparative purposes the Anglo-Saxon population in the State of Connecticut actually decreased by point three percent during the same period and the African American population increased 16.9 percent. The Latino population is also the fastest racial and ethnic share of eligible voters – There are 318,947 Latinos 18 years of age or older, which is a 55.8 percent increase since 2000 and equally important is the fact that Latino eligible voters in Connecticut are more likely to be native-born citizens than are Latino eligible voters nationwide.

According to a fact sheet released by the Pew Hispanic Center: Latino eligible voters are less likely than White eligible voters in Connecticut to own a home and have lower levels of education attainment than do black and white eligible voters. This is alarming to LPRAC because it is also widely known in political circles in our state for many years that Latino students have the largest economic and racial/ethnic academic achievement gap in the country and nothing significant has been done by Connecticut lawmakers to create the systemic changes in state statutes required to alleviate such problems. Meanwhile, the general unemployment rate in Connecticut is hovering at 9 percent but the unemployment rate averaged 17.7 percent among Latinos in Connecticut. As a matter of fact a recently

released report entitled *The Hispanic Labor Force in Recovery* prepared by the U.S. Department of Labor found that Connecticut has the third-highest unemployment rate in the nation for Latinos and it found that Latinos make only 70 cents for every dollar earned by whites. This data listed herewith – *alongside with the fact that the share of Connecticut's workforce consisting of whites (particularly those under age 45) is declining rapidly, while the share made up of other racial/ethnic groups is projected to reach 29% by 2020* – is the main reason why LPRAC alerted Connecticut lawmakers in 2009 to be aware of the social and economic costs resulting from these demographic shifts and disparities in education. LPRAC is convinced that Connecticut's economic future rest on its ability to raise the level of education of all its residents, particularly its Latino and African American populations. The redistricting process for LPRAC, therefore, is of paramount importance because the way these district lines are redrawn by the Reapportionment Committee can make it much easier or more difficult to elect representatives to the Connecticut General Assembly that are responsive to these previously mentioned community needs.

Recommendations to the Reapportionment Committee

The Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission (LPRAC) and Institute of Puerto Rican and Latino Studies (PRLS) at the University of Connecticut held a Reapportionment Summit on May 25, 2011 at the Legislative Office Building to help our agency develop recommendations to share with the Reapportionment Committee and to learn more specifically about the redistricting process via presentations and discussions from Latino recognized experts on the field. A summary of the findings of this event were prepared for LPRAC by Dr. Charles R. Venator Santiago from PRLS and we are submitting a copy of the summary of the proceedings within this testimony for the record (Please see attachment A). However, a preliminary scan of the data suggested at this summit that:

- ❖ Reducing the number of districts (reapportionment) in the state of Connecticut would harm Latinos by diluting their ability to influence the outcome of elections;
- ❖ There are higher proportions of Latino citizens (potential voters) residing in central CT, while there are higher proportions of non-citizen (non-voting) Latin American residents in the southernmost towns and cities;
- ❖ The redistricting process could create two Senate seats with a majority Latino population (50+). The available data suggests that the 1st (Hartford) and 23rd (Bridgeport) Districts could be redistricted in order to create new Senate Districts with a proportion of more than 50% of Latino residents;
- ❖ At least four existing Districts, namely the 75th (Waterbury), 128th (Bridgeport), 3rd (Hartford), and 147th (Stamford), could be

redistricted to increase the proportions of Latino residents above 50% of the population of these districts;

- ❖ **See attachment B** for additional LPRAC recommendations as submitted to the Reapportionment Committee Co-Chairs on June 14, 2011.

Conclusion

The allotment for Latino districts in the end result of the redistricting process is pivotal to effectuate government efficiency, and at the same time, address the issues affecting the state's largest growing population. To create opportunities for positive contributing members of a community to attain leadership roles can only serve to alleviate the burden from the government when addressing issues affecting said communities. It is because of the aforementioned that I strongly urge the redistricting committee to create Latino districts where appropriate.

LPRAC ATTACHMENT A

Charles R. Venator-Santiago
Department of Political Science
& Institute for Puerto Rican & Latino Studies
341 Mansfield Rd., Unit 1024
Storrs, CT 06269

July 1, 2011

Werner Oyanadel
Acting Executive Director
State of Connecticut-Latino & Puerto Rican
Affairs Commission
18-20 Trinity St.
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Mr. Oyanadel,

I am writing to submit my comments and report on the Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission's summit on *Redistricting from the Latino and Puerto Rican Perspective*, which was held on May 25, 2011 at the Legislative Office Building. The following summarizes the four themes that cut across most of the presentations during this event. In addition, I have taken the liberty to add to a additional comment, which reflects my research in the area of Latino politics in the State of Connecticut.

The summit began with a substantive overview of the Federal redistricting process provided by Juan Cartagena, the President and Legal Counsel of Latino Justice-PRLDF. The panelists and audience responded to President Cartagena's presentation and provided a series of reflections, suggestions, and informed opinions about the subject.

Key Features of Redistricting

Participants identified three core features of the redistricting process, namely a local community coalition-building dimension, the need for political mobilization of members of Latino communities, and a legal dimension. The Latino Justice-PRLDF can provide important legal advice should a redistricting debate reach the courts in CT.

Available Data

There are multiple public sources of data available for persons interested in redistricting in the state of Connecticut. In Connecticut, the Connecticut State Data Center (CtSDC), located at the University of Connecticut-Storrs, has already separated the 2010 Census Data and has demographic information available for the state. In addition the Latino Justice-PRLDF has available national and state census data. A preliminary scan of the data suggests that:

Reducing the number of districts (reapportionment) in the state of Connecticut would harm Latinos by diluting their ability to influence the outcome of elections.

There are higher proportions of Latino citizens (potential voters) residing in central CT, while there are higher proportions of non-citizen (non-voting) Latin American residents in the southernmost towns and cities.

The redistricting process could create two Senate seats with a majority Latino population (50+). The available data suggests that the 1st (Hartford) and 23rd (Bridgeport) Districts could be redistricted in order to create new Senate Districts with a proportion of more than 50% of Latino residents.

At least four existing Districts, namely the 75th (Waterbury), 128th (Bridgeport), 3rd (Hartford), and 147th (Stamford), could be redistricted to increase the proportions of Latino residents above 50% of the population of these districts.

Latino Voting Behavior

Although opinions about Latino voting behavior varied, all panelists agreed that the redistricting process could enhance Latino voter participation. Available research suggests that districts with higher proportions of Latinos may encourage Latinos and Latinas to participate in the electoral process. The creation of districts with a majority (50+) of Latino residents is likely to fuel long term Latino voter participation and civic engagement.

In addition, I introduced the following comment:

Socialization and Mobilization

Latino/as tend to migrate within the state and immigrate outside of the state at higher proportions than other population groups. Anyone focusing on redistricting should be aware of the future impact of Latino/a migrations in the state and whether Latino/as who migrate are properly socialized to understand local political institutions (e.g. where to vote, etc.).

I hope that this information is helpful. If you have any questions feel free to contact me at your convenience.

Sincerely,

Charles R. Venator-Santiago
Department of Political Science
University of Connecticut

**LPRAC
ATTACHMENT A**



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Senior Legislative Secretary
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June 14, 2011

The Honorable Donald E. Williams, Jr. & Lawrence Cafero, Esq.
Reapportionment Committee Co-Chairs
Legislative Office Building
Hartford, CT 06106

Dear Senator Williams and Representative Cafero:

On behalf of the Latino and Puerto Rican Affairs Commission (LPRAC), I am contacting you regarding our concern for the lack of diversity in the membership of the Reapportionment Committee and to urge you to consider a more diverse membership if the committee does not reach a plan agreeable to the General Assembly by your deadline of September 15, 2011.

As you are aware all eight appointments to the reapportionment committee have already been set by the Connecticut General Assembly (CGA) pursuant to the guidelines of the state constitution. Unfortunately, none of its members currently reflect the racial/ethnic diversity of our State. Though diversity on the redistricting body itself is no guarantee that the final plan will represent diverse interests, the more diverse membership, the more likely it is that the final plan will fairly balance the various interests and communities in our state.

It is within this context that LPRAC recommends that the reapportionment committee in appreciation of our state's diverse demographics and geography establish an *Ad Hoc Committee* to assist you with the reapportionment process, as part of your plan-drawing responsibility and/or encourage members of the public to offer specific proposals for your consideration. Furthermore, LPRAC recommends that if there is a need to create a new Reapportionment Commission - as it occurred ten years ago - that its new membership includes leadership from the Latino community. (See Attachment A).

Thank you for carefully reviewing this correspondence and for your willingness to consider our recommendations as listed herewith. If you have any questions regarding this request, please do not hesitate to reach Werner Oyanadel, LPRAC Acting Executive Director at 860-240-0097.

Sincerely,

Isaias Diaz

Isaias T. Diaz, Esq.
Chairman of the LPRAC

LPRAC
ATTACHMENT B

ID/wo

cc: The Honorable Dannel P. Malloy, Governor of the State of Connecticut
Chairman of the Black and Puerto Rican Caucus
Attorney Juan Cartagena, Esq., President & General Counsel of Latino Justice PRLDEF