

National Hispanic Leadership Agenda

March 30, 2016

The Honorable Andrew M. Cuomo
Governor of New York State
State Capitol Building
Albany, NY 12224

The Honorable John J. Flanagan
Temporary President of the State Senate
State Capitol Building Room 330
Albany, NY 12247

The Honorable Carl E. Heastie
Speaker of the State Assembly
State Capitol Building LOB 932
Albany, NY 12248

Dear Governor Cuomo, Temporary President Flanagan, and Speaker Heastie:

The National Hispanic Leadership Agenda (NHLAA) strongly supports increasing the minimum wage to \$15 per hour. Recently, the NHLA adopted its Public Policy Agenda in which it calls for raising the minimum federal minimum wage to \$15.00 per hour by 2020, which would benefit at least seven million Latino workers, and our coalition supports raising state minimum wages to that level as a step toward that goal.

The NHLA is a premier coalition of the nation's 40 prominent Latino organizations. Collectively, the NHLA leads the advocacy behind the pressing civil rights and policy issues impacting the 58 million Latinos living in the United States. The NHLA strives to increase Latino visibility and leverages its efforts to build a stronger Latino influence in our country's affairs.

As the largest and fastest-growing minority group, Latinos comprise an increasingly important segment of the U.S. workforce. However, Latinos are overrepresented in low-wage occupations and have lower levels of household wealth than other racial and ethnic groups. Because Latinos are overrepresented in low-wage jobs, the effect of wage stagnation on their sense of economic well-being is particularly profound, with 67% of Latinos reporting in a recent poll that they are not earning enough to meet their basic expenses. Losses of household wealth and poverty wages have contributed to the situation today where about one in four Latinos live in poverty. In fact, 42% of all Latinos earn poverty-level wages despite having the highest rate of labor force participation among all racial and ethnic groups. Low wages have real consequences, especially for women, immigrant families, and people of color, who are disproportionately affected by low pay.

Hard-working families should be able to earn a living that supports their needs. Raising the minimum wage is among the policy changes needed to achieve this objective. The federal minimum wage and most state minimum wage requirements have fallen drastically in real economic terms and should be increased substantially. Several states have recognized the need to raise the minimum wage substantially and we encourage New York State to join this group.

The NHLA is concerned about reports of a potential discriminatory exclusion of agricultural workers from the full benefits of an increase in the minimum wage. Our coalition has a special

MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

Alianza Americas
American G.I. Forum
ASPIRA Association
Avance Inc.
Casa de Esperanza: National Latin@ Network
Congressional Hispanic Caucus Institute
Cuban American National Council
Farmworker Justice
Hispanic Association of Colleges & Universities
Hispanic Federation
Hispanic National Bar Association
Inter-University Program for Latino Research
Labor Council for Latin American Advancement
Latino Justice PRLDEF
League of United Latin American Citizens
MANA, A National Latina Organization
Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund
National Association of Hispanic Federal Executives
National Association of Hispanic Publications
NALEO Educational Fund
National Association of Latino Independent Producers
National Conference of Puerto Rican Women, Inc.
National Council of La Raza
National Hispana Leadership Institute
National Hispanic Caucus of State Legislators
National Hispanic Council on Aging
National Hispanic Environmental Council
National Hispanic Foundation for the Arts
National Hispanic Media Coalition
National Hispanic Medical Association
National Institute for Latino Policy
National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health
National Puerto Rican Coalition
Presente.org
SER Jobs for Progress National
Southwest Voter Registration Education Project
United States Hispanic Chamber of Commerce
United States Hispanic Leadership Institute
United States-Mexico Chamber of Commerce
U.S.- Mexico Foundation

interest in ensuring that agricultural workers' wages and working conditions – which are among the poorest in the state - improve and are not subjected to discriminatory policies. The large majority of farmworkers is Latino.

Like all other workers, the hardworking farm laborers in New York who pick apples, milk cows and grow and harvest the state's vegetables deserve a fair wage for their work. They are the backbone of the state's agricultural economy and perform difficult, back-breaking work. Farmworkers should be treated with dignity, respect, and equality under the law. The people who labor on farms, as a group, experience very low wages and rarely receive fringe benefits. The minimum wage is an important protection to reduce poverty among farmworker families. In fact, many agricultural employers recognize the need to improve wages and benefits to attract and retain productive workers on their farms. In addition, consumers, who often prefer to purchase locally-grown and –raised food, also want to know that it has been grown and raised responsibly. There are other policy proposals that should be adopted to grant farmworkers labor protections similar to those applicable to other New York businesses. At this moment, raising the minimum wage for the state's farmworkers should be a priority.

Please support a \$15 per hour minimum wage for ALL New York workers.

Sincerely,



Hector E. Sanchez
Chair, National Hispanic Leadership Agenda (NHLA)
Executive Director, Labor Council for Latin American Advancement (LCLAA)



Bruce Goldstein
President, Farmworker Justice
Co-Chairs, NHLA Economic Empowerment and Labor Committee



Eric Rodriguez,
Vice-President, National Council of La Raza (NCLR)
Co-Chairs, NHLA Economic Empowerment and Labor Committee

cc: Members of the New York State Legislature