

National Hispanic Leadership Agenda

November 5, 2014

Congressional Hispanic Caucus
2262 Rayburn House Office Building
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Re: Delay of Administrative Relief and Meeting Request

Dear Members of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus:

We write on behalf of the National Hispanic Leadership Agenda (NHLA), a coalition of 39 leading national Latino nonpartisan civil rights and advocacy organizations, to express our concern over the failure of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus (CHC) to demand that President Obama enact administrative relief for undocumented families and workers before the midterm election. With the election now occurred, NHLA urges the CHC to call on the Administration to: (1) immediately suspend the deportation of those eligible for relief under S.744, the 2013 Senate bipartisan immigration bill; (2) announce a program of administrative relief immediately and implement the program as soon as possible; and (3) craft administrative relief that is broad and far-reaching. Latino families and communities cannot wait any longer. The time is now.

CHC has an unparalleled role to play in ensuring that the President act. As an important representative of the Latino community nationwide, NHLA urges the CHC to remain stalwart in demanding an end to unjust deportations. This Administration has deported a record-breaking number of individuals, most of whom are Latino; CHC needs to lead our community in a strong response. With the midterm election now concluded, there is no possible rationale for further delay in protecting communities, the economy, and families through broad and effective administrative relief. Failure to act simply encourages and cedes too much power to the anti-immigrant obstructionists who have prevented legislative action on needed reform.

I. Immediate Suspension of Deportations

NHLA strongly urges the CHC to demand the President suspend the deportation of those eligible for Registered Provisional Immigrant (RPI) status under the 2013 Senate immigration bill. The Administration's decision to delay relief is not inconsequential; at least 70,000 individuals will be torn away from their families and communities. It simply makes no sense to deport individuals who stand to benefit from administrative relief in just a few short weeks. Once deported, it would be incredibly difficult for these individuals to successfully apply for and receive relief. Furthermore, placing soon-to-be-eligible individuals in detention and removal proceedings makes little fiscal and moral sense. In accordance with its stated immigration enforcement policies, the Administration should

MEMBER ORGANIZATIONS

American G.I. Forum
ASPIRA Association
Avance Inc.
Casa de Esperanza
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 Alliance of Latin American and Caribbean Communities
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 Hispanic Caucus of State Legislators
National Hispana Leadership Institute
National Hispanic Council on Aging
National Hispanic Environmental Council
National Hispanic Foundation for the Arts
National Hispanic Medical Association
National Hispanic Media Coalition
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

cease to detain and cease to commence removal proceedings for individuals who pose no threat to communities and national security, and who stand to benefit from administrative relief.

II. Implement Administrative Relief Immediately

NHLA further urges the CHC to demand that the Administration implement administrative relief immediately. For too long, the Latino community has been forced to wait through unfulfilled promises and vague assurances of future action by both parties and across the branches of federal government. Until 2012, the Administration claimed it could not suspend the deportation of DREAM-act eligible youth. To date, the Administration has failed to move forward on affirmative relief—more than a year after passage of the Senate bill—while the Republican-controlled House of Representatives dithered. And most recently, the President pivoted away from his promise to act before the end of this summer. The President cited the unaccompanied minor “crisis” as part of the rationale behind the delay. However, as the President repeatedly reminded House Republicans, using unaccompanied minors as an excuse not to act “makes no sense,” is “not on the level,” and is “just politics, plain and simple.”

III. Broad Administrative Relief

We ask also that the CHC demand the Administration expand the scope of its forthcoming administrative relief to encompass a greater proportion of the undocumented population. **Administrative relief for merely one to four million undocumented immigrants—as reported by the media—is not an acceptable benchmark.** Providing affirmative relief to so few undocumented individuals would represent a dereliction of the Administration’s promises to heed the needs of the Latino and immigrant communities. To expand the scope of affirmative relief, the Administration should ensure that individuals with long-term residency—regardless of whether they have family ties to citizens, lawful permanent residents, or deferred action for childhood arrivals (DACA) holders—are eligible for relief. The Administration should also require substantially less than ten years of residency in order for individuals to qualify for affirmative relief. A standard that requires a decade of continuous presence is not only unworkable, but incredibly unfair to those who have lived in the country for less than ten years but still have deep ties to their communities. Furthermore, many qualifying individuals will be unable to obtain the documentary evidence necessary prove a decade of continuous presence, and this burden—combined with financial barriers—will severely reduce the number of individuals able to successfully apply for affirmative relief. The Administration must also use its executive authority—through the exercise of humanitarian parole—to allow recently deported undocumented immigrants to return to the country and to reunite with their families.

Every deportation of a mother or father, son or daughter, neighbor or worker separates families, instills fear in communities and tears the fabric of our nation. With each passing day, 1,100 immigrants are separated from their families and communities. Nowhere are the effects of deportations felt more acutely than in the Hispanic community. **In 2013, 96.7 percent, or 356,303, of all deportations were of individuals of Latino descent.** The overrepresentation of Latinos in deportations is not simply a byproduct of the large undocumented Latino population, but also a result of targeted, discriminatory practices and policies at the federal, state, and local level. Any delay in the announcement of administrative relief has significant consequences on Latino children, their families, and entire communities, increasing insecurity, instability, and devastation.

As representatives of the Latino community, CHC has the opportunity and the obligation to advance the community’s interests and to meet with stakeholders. In light of this, we ask that CHC members meet with NHLA representatives to discuss the Administration’s forthcoming administrative relief and how our two significant coalitions may better collaborate on behalf of the Latino community. NHLA, as the non-governmental sector representative of the nationwide Latino community, and CHC, as the governmental representative of the same community, should work more closely together on an issue of such singular consequence to Latinos nationwide.

Please contact NHLA through Jose Magana-Salgado, of MALDEF, at jmagana-salgado@maldef.org or 202-572-0558, or Bertha Guerrero, of the Hispanic Federation, at bguerrero@hispanicfederation.org or 202-641-7186 to coordinate this meeting request. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,



Thomas A. Saenz
MALDEF, President and General Counsel
NHLA Immigration Committee Co-Chair



Jose Calderón
Hispanic Federation, President
NHLA Immigration Committee Co-Chair