



A PROFILE OF LATINO ELECTED OFFICIALS IN THE UNITED STATES AND THEIR PROGRESS SINCE 1996

The growth in the number of Latino elected officials in the United States is one sign of the political progress of the Latino population. This progress is due partly to the increasing ability of the Latino community to translate its population growth into increased political participation. Initiatives to mobilize Latino voters and promote their engagement in the political process have contributed greatly to the growth of the Latino electorate. However, the ability of Latino elected officials to gain and retain public office also reflects their success in the effective representation of all voters - both Latino and non-Latino.

LATINO ELECTED OFFICIALS IN 2010

At the beginning of January 2010, there were 5,739 Latinos serving in elected office nationwide.¹ As the following table indicates, while there are Latino elected officials serving at virtually all levels of government, nearly two-thirds (66%) are either municipal or school board officials.

Latino Elected Officials by Level of Office: 2010

<u>Level of Office</u>	<u>Number</u>
Federal	24
Statewide Officials (including Governor)	7
State Legislators	245
County Officials	563
Municipal Officials	1,707
Judicial/Law Enforcement Officials	874
School Board/Education Officials	2,071
Special District Officials	248
Total	5,739

¹ Generally, the data on Latino elected officials in this *Profile* reflect those who were in office as of June 2010 (for U.S. Senators and Representatives and State Senators and Representatives) or as of January 2010 (for all other elected officials).

STATE DISTRIBUTION

Latino elected officials serve in 43 of the nation's 50 states. Nearly half (43% serve in Texas). Most Latino elected officials (95%) serve in states or regions that are traditional centers of Latino population including California and the Southwest, Florida, New Jersey, New York and Illinois.

Latino Elected Officials by State: 2010

<u>State</u>	<u>Number</u>
Texas	2,459
California	1,311
New Mexico	714
Arizona	362
Florida	158
Colorado	167
Illinois	113
New Jersey	113
New York	73
Other states	269
Total	5,739

GENDER

Nearly three-quarters of Latino elected officials are male (68%), and 32% are female.

Latino Elected Officials by Gender: 2010

<u>Gender</u>	<u>Number</u>
Male	3,881
Female	1,858
Total	5,739

The level of representation of Latinas at higher offices in the United States is greater than the level for all female officeholders. For example, 16.8% of all U.S. Representatives are female; however, 26.1% of the Latinos in the House are women. According to the Center for American Women and Politics at Rutgers University, women hold 22.0% of the nation's state senate seats and 25.4% of the state lower house seats. In comparison, Latinas comprise 34.9% of the Latino state senators, and 27.9% of the Latino state lower house members.

PARTY AFFILIATION

Over three-quarters (76%) of Latino elected officials are not publicly affiliated with either major political party or serve in offices that are elected on a non-partisan basis. Only 24% of Latino elected officials serve in partisan offices or are publicly affiliated with either major political party; of these, 91.5% are Democrat and 8.5% are Republican.

Latino Elected Officials by Party Affiliation: 2010

<u>Party Affiliation</u>	<u>Number</u>
Non-partisan/Unaffiliated	4,371
Democrat	1,248
Republican	116
Independent	4
Total	5,739

A COMPARISON OF LATINO ELECTED OFFICIALS: 1996 AND 2010

The number of Latino elected officials has grown significantly over the past ten years. In 1996, there were 3,743 Latinos serving in elected office. By 2010, that number had grown by 1,996 to 5,739 – a 53% increase.

Latino Elected Officials by Level of Office: 1996 and 2010

<u>Level of Office</u>	<u>1996</u>	<u>2010</u>	<u>Change</u>
Federal	17	24	41.2%
Statewide Officials (including Governor)	6	7	16.7%
State Legislators	156	245	57.1%
County Officials	358	563	57.3%
Municipal Officials	1,295	1,707	31.8%
Judicial/Law Enforcement Officials	546	874	60.1%
Education/School Board Officials	1,240	2,071	67.0%
Special District Officials	125	248	98.4%

The growth of Latinos serving in offices that are elected statewide is of interest. In 1996, there were no Latinos serving in the United States Senate. Five of the six Latino state officials were serving in New Mexico, including three Corporation Commissioners, the Secretary of State and the State Auditor. The other state official was the Texas Attorney General. In 2010, there is now one Latino U.S. Senator, representing New Jersey. In New Mexico, the Latino state officials include the Governor, the Secretary of State and State Auditor. Other Latinos now serving in state office include the Superintendent of Public Education in Idaho, the Attorney General in

Nevada, and the Superintendent of Public Instruction in Oregon. In Texas, one of the statewide Railroad Commissioners is Latino.

The growth of Latinos serving in statewide offices demonstrates the increasing ability of Latinos to win elections in statewide campaigns where they must attract votes from a significant number of non-Latino voters. This is particularly true for the officials serving in states such as Idaho, New Jersey, and Oregon where less than 25% of the state’s population is Latino.

STATE GROWTH

In both 1996 and 2010, Latino elected officials tended to be concentrated in the Southwest – in both years, the top four states with the largest number of Latino elected officials were Texas, California, New Mexico, and Arizona. However, there was rapid growth in states outside the Southwest, including Illinois, New Jersey, and states which have emerging Latino populations. In 1996, Latino elected officials served in 34 states; by 2010, that number had increased to 43.

Latino Elected Officials by State: 1996 and 2010

<u>State</u>	<u>1996</u>	<u>2010</u>	<u>Change</u>
Texas	1,687	2,459	45.8%
California	693	1,311	89.2%
New Mexico	623	714	14.6%
Arizona	298	362	21.5%
Florida	72	158	119.4%
Colorado	161	167	3.7%
Illinois	41	113	175.6%
New Jersey	33	113	242.4%
New York	40	73	82.5%
Other states	95	269	183.2%

The increasing number of Latino elected officials in states outside the traditional areas of Latino population concentration is due both to the growth of the Latino population in those states, and the development of mobilization efforts and political infrastructures that helped Latinos gain office. In 1996, there were no Latino elected officials in Alaska, Georgia, Kentucky, New Hampshire, Missouri, North Dakota, Oklahoma, Tennessee or Virginia; by 2010, Georgia had six, Missouri and New Hampshire each had four, Oklahoma, Tennessee and Virginia each had three, Alaska had two, and Kentucky and North Dakota each had one. Other states with significant gains in Latino elected officials between 1996 and 2010 include Connecticut (from 13 to 29), Maryland (from 2 to 10), Massachusetts (from 8 to 25); Michigan (from 4 to 11); Nevada (from 5 to 13); Oregon (from 1 to 11); Rhode Island (from 1 to 8); and Wisconsin (from 2 to 7).

GENDER

Between 1996 and 2010, the number of Latina elected officials grew faster than the number of male Latino officials – the number of Latinas increased by 105%, compared to 37% for male Latinos. As a result, the Latina share of all Latino elected officials grew from 24% in 1996 to 32% in 2010.

Latino Elected Officials by Gender: 1996 and 2010

	1996		2010	
	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Male	2,836	75.8%	3,881	67.6%
Female	907	24.2%	1,858	32.4 %

CONCLUSION

The comparison of Latino elected officials in 1996 and 2010 reveals some trends that are likely to continue in the future – the overall growth in the number of Latino elected officials nationwide, the increase of Latino elected officials in “emerging population” states, and the continued progress of Latinas in elected office. The comparison also suggests some future challenges for the Latino community and some milestones that have yet to be attained. There is currently only one Latino in the U.S. Senate, and only one Latino Governor (New Mexico’s Bill Richardson).

However, future Latino political progress will not just occur automatically as the Latino population continues to grow. The Latino community must continue the successful empowerment strategies of the past three decades. We must promote U.S. citizenship for the nearly four million Latino legal permanent residents who are currently eligible to naturalize. We must mobilize Latino citizens to cast their ballots through effective voter registration and engagement efforts. We must ensure that the Latino community has a meaningful voice in the 2011 redistrictings, so that Congressional, state and local jurisdiction maps provide Latinos with a fair opportunity to choose their elected representatives. We must develop the political infrastructure to support future Latino leaders throughout the country. The success of these efforts is critical for our nation as a whole. Latino political progress does not just mean that more Latinos have the opportunity to share their talents and skills by serving in elected office – it also means that our nation’s democracy remains truly representative and vital.

METHODOLOGY

Compilation and verification of data about Latino elected officials: Since 1984, the NALEO Educational Fund has conducted an annual verification to ascertain the number of Latino elected officials nationwide. As part of this enumeration process, we re-verify Latino elected officials identified during the last annual verification. The NALEO Educational Fund also identifies officeholders through the state and local government directories, World Wide Websites on the Internet, newspapers' listings of national and local election results, and membership lists of national and state organizations. Additionally, we learn of Latino elected officials through our own constituency services and civic engagement programs. We also arrange for the review of our lists of Latino elected officials in certain jurisdictions, by Board members, local civic leaders, representatives of community-based organizations, and other stakeholders.

While the NALEO Educational Fund believes its compilation of information about Latino elected officials is the most comprehensive conducted in the United States, our data are subject to certain limitations. First, to some extent we rely on Spanish surnames to help identify potential Latino elected officials, and we may not initially identify an individual without a Spanish surname as potentially being Latino. However, once we identify individuals as potentially being Latino, we conduct a verification to definitively ascertain that they are Latino, regardless of their surname.

Additionally, because of the large number of local jurisdictions, and the frequency with which they hold elections, it is not possible for the NALEO Educational Fund to review the election results of every local jurisdiction in the nation. As noted above, much of verification process involves re-verifying information about Latinos currently serving in office, and compiling information about any changes in the jurisdictions in which they serve. Thus, our verification process is more effective at identifying Latino elected officials in local jurisdictions where Latinos are currently serving in office than in identifying newly-elected officials in local jurisdictions where no Latinos currently serve. We have partly addressed this limitation by compiling information from the lists maintained by the Latino or Hispanic caucuses of local election official professional associations, such as the Hispanic Elected Local Officials of the National League of Cities, or the Hispanic Caucus of the National School Board Association.

Comparability of data between 1996 and 2010: There are certain changes in electoral procedures, the classification of elected officials, and our verification process which affect the comparability of data on Latino elected officials between 1996 and 2009. First, we continue to make improvements in our verification process which enable us to enhance our identification of Latino elected officials. In particular, the review of our lists of Latino elected officials by stakeholders in certain jurisdictions has greatly improved our identification of Latino officeholders in those areas. The greater availability of jurisdiction websites with information about elected officials has also assisted us in better identification of Latino officeholders. Thus, the increase in the number of Latino elected officials in some jurisdictions between 1996 and 2010 may not only reflect the political progress of Latinos in those areas, but also our enhanced verification capabilities.

In 1996, the Corporation Commissioners of New Mexico were elected on a statewide basis at large and are included in our 1996 data as "statewide officials." In 2006, the responsibilities held by Corporation Commissioners are now held by New Mexico's Public Regulation Commissioners, and the Public Regulation Commissioners are elected in individual districts. Thus as of 2006, Public Regulation Commissioners are classified as "special district officials."

In 1996, the NALEO Educational Fund classified Texas county judges as "judicial/law enforcement officials." Starting in 2000, the NALEO Educational Fund began to classify those judges as "county officials" based on the nature of their county administrative and executive responsibilities.

In 2004, New York City replaced its community school boards with 32 community education councils, each governing a community school district. Members of the public elected representatives to the community school boards, and in 1996, those representatives were included as Latino elected officials. Members of the new community education councils are selected by either officers of the community school district's parent and parent-teacher associations; the borough president; or the community superintendent. Thus, we no longer classify community education councilmembers as elected officials. In 1996, we included 37 Latino New York City community school board members. As a result of the replacement of the school boards with educational councils, the comparison of Latino elected officials between 1996 and 2010 in New York may somewhat understate the full extent of the increase in Latino elected officials between those years.

Additionally, for the purposes of this profile, the NALEO Educational Fund has not included the number of Latino Chicago local school councilmembers (LSC's) in its data on Latino elected officials. The number of LSC's fluctuates widely from year to year, and the inclusion in the statistics in this fact sheet could distort the comparability of data between different states and between different time periods.