



## National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials

...and the people who support them

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Mr. Arturo Vargas

†  
deceased

January 24, 2008

The Honorable George W. Bush  
President of the United States of America  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Bush:

On behalf of the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO), a non-partisan membership organization of the nation's more than 6,000 Latino public officials, we take this opportunity to recommend that you include in your final State of the Union Address this coming Monday, January 28, 2008, the following issues of importance to our country and the nation's 44 million Latinos:

Immigration - The time is long overdue to address and pass comprehensive immigration reform so that we have fair and effective policies that recognize the invaluable contributions of newcomers to our nation's economic and civic life and to the progress of the United States. Immigrants continue to enrich the social, economic, cultural and civic life of our country and our immigration policies must recognize these contributions, as well as the important role that immigrant workers and their families play in the future growth of our nation. In order to best ensure our nation's security, our immigration enforcement measures must be effective, fair and humane. NALEO has adopted principles on comprehensive immigration reform [[click here](#)] that provide a road map to the work that needs to be done on this important national issue, including the need for a path to U.S. citizenship for those immigrants who have played by the rules and are contributing to our society.

Naturalization - Our country should have a naturalization process that is fair and accessible to all newcomers. In last year's State of the Union address, you emphasized the value of upholding the nation's tradition that welcomes and "assimilates" new arrivals. However, lengthy processing delays after last year's surge of naturalization applications may jeopardize the opportunity for newcomers to become full participants in our nation's democracy. We call on you to direct United States Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) to implement a comprehensive plan to address the naturalization process so that eligible applicants who filed by the end of FY 2007 can be naturalized by July 4<sup>th</sup> of this year.

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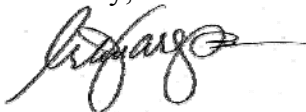
The Honorable George W. Bush  
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Voter Protection - NALEO is a leading proponent of policies that enhance Latino access to the electoral process. We advocate for stronger voter education and bilingual pollworker recruitment programs. We also work to ensure that jurisdictions comply with federal requirements to provide language assistance to limited-English proficient voters. Thus we ask that you address the strict enforcement of Section 203 of the Voting Rights Act Reauthorization and Amendments Act (VRARA), which ensures that Latinos and other language minority U.S. citizens obtain the language assistance needed for equal access voting. We also urge you to address the strict enforcement of Section 5, which prevents discriminatory election procedures by requiring certain states and counties to obtain federal approval before instituting changes in election practices. As our nation is well into this year's Presidential Primary season, leading to November's general election, Latinos are more driven than ever to participate in the American political process and make their voices heard on Election Day, thus it is important for your administration to protect the voting franchise of these and all Americans.

2010 Census – As a member of the Secretary of Commerce's 2010 Census Advisory Committee, NALEO is the leading Latino organization in the area of Census policy and outreach, therefore we urge you to use the State of the Union as an opportunity to address the need for a full and accurate count of everyone in our country by insisting upon the Congress to fully fund the Census and its activities throughout the rest of your administration and through 2010.

These, among the many issues that you will address on Monday, are critical in ensuring the full participation of Latinos in the American political process. As you enter the final months of your administration, we look forward to continue working with you and your administration in achieving these goals.

Sincerely,



Arturo Vargas  
Executive Director

Cc: The Honorable Nancy Pelosi, Speaker of the House  
The Honorable Harry Reid, Senate Majority Leader  
The Honorable Members of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus  
The Honorable Members of the Congressional Hispanic Conference