



STRENGTHENING OUR VOICES

NATIONAL HISPANIC CAUCUS OF STATE LEGISLATOR

NEWSLETTER SPRING/SUMMER 2009

MITIGATING THE HOUSING CRISIS' IMPACT ON CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

The economic well being of children is directly linked to that of their parents, and most recently this housing crisis has brought to light the quiet suffering taking place in communities across America. Over 2 million home mortgage foreclosures were initiated in 2008, and in the first quarter of 2009, almost 800,000 more were filed. By 2012, conservative estimates anticipate over 8 million foreclosures. Research has shown that children who lose their homes are more likely to move from school to school, proven to be associated with poor educational outcomes and behavioral problems. Likewise, poor health outcomes for children are also associated with financial stresses. In 2008, NHCSL partnered with the Annie E. Casey Foundation to launch a housing initiative that was received with great enthusiasm by our legislators at the NHCSL National Summit in November in Las Vegas.

At our Summit, we explored in detail the specific outcomes associated with home loss and identified ways that legislators can assist their constituents in preventing foreclosures. We also learned about resources available to assist with fair lending practices and education on the topic of foreclosures. But the 3-hour symposium left many with more questions and more ideas. We are pleased that in 2009, the Casey Foundation will continue this much needed work with a second round of funding that will explore legislative best practices that emerged as a result of our work in 2008, as well as new policy strategies in the arena of economic well being for children and families.

The most successful policy strategies will simultaneously promote opportunities for parents and opportunities for children as it will promote stability within the home. So what can policymakers do? Although federal policy governs many of the transactions involved in home foreclosures, state policy plays an important role as well. A number of states are pursuing strategies that are considered promising by experts in the field, including required mediation in foreclosures, a moratorium on foreclosures, protections against predatory mortgage lending, and counseling and financial assistance.



NHCSL Housing Symposium; Senator Juan Pichardo (RI) and San Francisco Treasurer Jose Cisneros.

Using federal and state funds, policymakers can pursue multiple financing strategies, including connecting residents to federal sources of aid, pursuing no-cost legal protections, and assessing the return on investments in preventing foreclosures. As NHCSL members continue to enact promising policies, we are all paying close attention to implementation and accountability to ensure that the desired results are achieved for children and families. For more information visit the NHCSL website and be linked into our Housing Initiative Webpage at www.nhcsl.org.

From the President



NHCSL President, Rep. Joseph E. Miró (DE)

With so many pressing social and political issues dominating our national landscape, the work of state legislators is equally significant as it is daunting during these times. The work that is taking place at State Capitols throughout the nation is unprecedented in its scope and consequences – from education to immigration to health care and employment, the outlook may seem bleak, but the opportunity is just as great. The good news is that we are all working towards one common goal: improved and sustained quality of life for our constituents and our districts.

Since the beginning of this year, the White House has proactively partnered with the NHCSL in order to include our input in the most significant policy discussions taking place around education, health care, and immigration. Members of the Administration greeted NHCSL leaders in late April during our First Annual White House Briefing, sharing with us their priorities and their plans for the remainder of this year. Since then, White House officials have met with legislative members of NHCSL and staff on several occasions and have begun working groups around our policy areas. Through these working groups, NHCSL is able to provide meaningful input and also share the national NHCSL agenda. It is these partnerships that will ensure that the Administration and the NHCSL continue to forge opportunities for our community.

With more and more special sessions across the country as a result of pressing legislative activity, as well as budget constraints, travel restrictions, and all of the needs at our state Capitols, the NHCSL will continue to grow its use of technology to reach our members and share relevant information. PolicyForResults.org is just one example of how technology will be of greater value to our members in 2009 and beyond. This site will provide invaluable resources at our fingertips as we research and prepare legislation in our districts around our core policy issues. Likewise, our NHCSL web forum will be a focal point for information dissemination as well as policy discussions.

As we prepare for a very busy summer, as well as the upcoming flu season, we will continue sharing with you timely information on everything from the Census to Supreme Court nominee Judge Sonia Sotomayor to vaccines. We anticipate that most legislative sessions will continue much later than usual this year simply because there is so much to get done. I hope to see many of you in Philadelphia!

Un abrazo,

Representative Joseph E. Miró (DE)
NHCSL President

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Rep. Ben Miranda (AZ), NHCSL Task Chair at and Immigration Rally

IMMIGRATION REFORM GAINS MOMENTUM: BRINGING PEOPLE TOGETHER

Earlier this summer, a national campaign to pass comprehensive immigration reform was launched. A week-long series of activities showed a huge national support for comprehensive immigration. A coalition of labor unions, business leaders, civil rights and religious groups, and pro-immigrant advocacy organizations announced the Reform Immigration FOR America Campaign, to focus their collective political power and also provide the American public a way to communicate their support for comprehensive immigration reform directly to lawmakers in DC.

Polls consistently show that at least 60% of the American people support comprehensive immigration reform. Likewise, it grows increasingly clear that rounding up and deporting 12,000,000+ undocumented residents is not a feasible political reality. Furthermore, the campaign is deploying new technologies such as a national text messaging system and various on-line organizing strategies to direct messages from constituents directly to Members of Congress. This, combined with a national campaign staff of organizers and policy experts, increases the chances for legislative success in 2009.

In Georgia, State Representative Pedro “Pete” Marin actively participated in this week of awareness. Rep. Marin described immigration policy today as “one based on fear, ignorance and hate. The lack of compassion and the total disregard for basic human rights is deplorable and cannot be tolerated anymore in Georgia. We blame immigrants for everything, yet everyday exploit their labor for our own personal gain... Now is the time to say BASTA! The soul of our state is in jeopardy of being irreparably broken. Our policies are destroying families, uprooting communities and destabilizing economies. This is not the way civil society should treat individuals whose only crime is trying to find an honorable way to feed, clothe, and house those they love. Fortunately, change is in the air.”

"Our work is focused on putting forth the economic value of immigrants to this country and the detriment to future growth without comprehensive reform. The Obama administration recognizes the commitment made to reform and the importance that it has to the Latino community," said Representative Ben Miranda.

This launch marks the beginning of a historic campaign to achieve immigration reform which is intended to make sure the American Dream is alive for all children and families. Nationally, more than 200 organizations have signed onto the campaign and more than 700 participants participated during the week-long event. For more information on the Reform Immigration FOR America Campaign, please visit www.reformimmigrationforamerica.org or www.reformamigratoriaproamerica.org.

PolicyforResults.org: Tech Meets Policy

The Annie E. Casey Foundation is well respected for being one of the most data-driven philanthropies in America, gathering and promoting the use of data as a critical tool for change. The NHCSL has been a proud partner of the Annie E. Casey Foundation for the past several years, and our collaborative efforts have been based on this very same results driven focus. Most recently at the NHCSL Spring Meeting, another one of the Foundation’s grantees (The Center for the Study of Social Policy), provided our legislators with a comprehensive orientation on how this site will serve to provide significant resources for all policy makers throughout the nation. This IT one-stop policy solution will prove to be a very useful and innovative resource for NHCSL legislators with a vision of improving the lives of children and families, measurable results that will make a difference.

PolicyforResults.org brings together on one site timely and relevant data, statistics, research, and policy strategies in the areas the impact children and families – education, health, and economic success to name a few. Specifically, this website provides the practical tools for achieving policy success. Policy makers, or members of their staff, must ensure that their decisions are effective. This innovative website can help to this end by providing you the policy maker:

- A Step-by-Step Guide in making effective policy decisions
- State specific data that clearly demonstrates how your state’s children and families are doing
- Specific examples on how other policymakers are making a difference in children’s lives Strategies that work from policy, to financing, to oversight.





Legislative panel at Promoting Healthy Lifestyles conference

NHCSL'S HEALTH CARE INITIATIVE MAKING STRIDES

In addition to the work that has begun with the White House to ensure input from our members on the Administration's Health Care Reform agenda, NHCSL continues to work aggressively on specific health care issues. Most recently, NHCSL co-hosted a Health Disparities Conference with NBCSL; funding for this conference was provided by Novartis. An emphasis was placed on vaccines and their roles in public health safety. As H1N1 elevates to a pandemic designation, this conference is timelier now more than ever.

Over the course of 2 days, NHCSL members heard from vaccine policy experts from throughout the nation to address the importance of vaccines in adolescents and the elderly. While there are significant private and public systems in place to ensure childhood vaccinations, the same does not hold true for adolescents and the elderly in the Hispanic and African American communities. NHCSL legislators discussed the ways that they can work in their individual states to begin addressing these inadequacies. As such, working to message directly to this population has become critical.



NHCSL & NBCSL members

While health care costs are an impediment to many seeking medical services, many of these vaccines are made available to the public at limited or no cost. This is an awareness issue that needs to reach our constituents. Working with local health departments, medical institutions, and strategic partners such as Novartis, awareness and education can be addressed by NHCSL legislators. Many deaths can be avoided with preventive measures that are available and affordable.

With the more overarching discussion of health care reform at the front burner for Congress, NHCSL continues to advocate for legislation that will ensure greater access and equity for our community. We are watching closely at what emerges from Congress. The Joint Committee on Taxation has estimated that implementing a tax on employer-provided benefits could generate \$418.5 billion over ten years, partially offsetting the estimated \$1.2 trillion cost of health care reform. The Congressional Budget Office (CBO) has yet to release cost estimates on other provisions of the plans, a challenging task due to the varying provisions among the major proposals being discussed. Finally, few states have addressed government provided or assisted health care options which could serve as models as Congress moves forward with reform. We will continue to update members on the progress of health care reform in Congress, to determine their impact on individual states. ☺



Rep. Calvin Smyre (GA) – NBCSL President, Rayna Dubose-Meningitis Survivor, Sen. Bernadette Sanchez (NM) – NHCSL President-Elect



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The NHCSL is the premier national association of Hispanic state legislators working to design and implement policies and procedures that will improve the quality of life for Hispanics throughout the country. NHCSL was founded in 1989 as a nonpartisan, nonprofit 501(c)3 with the mission to be the most effective voice for the more than 300 Hispanic legislators. For more information visit www.nhcsl.org.



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