



## LATINO LEADERSHIP ALLIANCE OF NEW JERSEY

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June 16, 2009

The Honorable Barack Obama  
President of the United States  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue N.W.  
Washington D.C. 20500

Dear President Obama:

Please accept the warm welcome of the Latino Leadership Alliance of New Jersey (LLANJ) on the occasion of your visit to New Jersey. LLANJ was founded in 1999 and since has grown to include hundreds of members and dozens of statewide, regional and local organizations. In recent years, LLANJ began establishing chapters in counties across New Jersey to provide it with a local presence. The principal goals of LLANJ are to mobilize and empower the Latino community across New Jersey to obtain political, economic and social equality. In New Jersey Latinos comprise an estimated 15.9% of residents, and more than 588,000 registered voters.

We are encouraged by the attention your administration is giving to our state at this time. Of course we recognize the political winds are being closely watched here, as they are in Virginia. LLANJ endorsed Governor Corzine when he first ran for Governor, and 78% of Latino New Jersey voters overwhelmingly supported your candidacy for President. We have understood that the paramount concerns of our community - comprehensive immigration, education and health care reform - are shared by your administration, and our Governor, as top priorities.

On this note, it was deeply disappointing to learn last week that your administration approved the 287(g) applications of the Township of Morristown and the Monmouth County Sheriffs Department. As you know, these applications had been on hold from the prior administration which did not take action to approve them. While the primary purpose of Congress' enactment of 287(g) was to make certain that undocumented immigrants who commit serious crimes are identified and removed from the country, the Council on Foreign Relations documented just this week that in practice the purpose has deteriorated to sweeping undocumented immigrants up for traffic violations using racial profiling of Hispanics for vehicle stops.

Further, here in New Jersey, which is home to an estimated 500,000 undocumented immigrants, the Corzine administration has implemented a state Attorney General's directive to all law enforcement agencies of the state which governs how law enforcement officers deal the immigration status of persons detained or arrested. Police chiefs throughout the country and many in New Jersey recognize that 287(g) creates cross purposes for officers whose primary mission is to prevent crimes, assist victims and arrest those who commit crimes regardless of their immigration status. Furthermore, in the case of the Monmouth County Sheriff's

Department, it has been documented that only 1% of the jail population is foreign born, accordingly the undocumented constitute less than 1% of that population. The first hand experience and observations of our Monmouth County Chapter is that the Monmouth County Sheriff's advocacy for 287(g) status had nothing to do with the lack of a tool for dealing with undocumented immigrants who commit serious crimes, and far more to do with the Sheriff's political aspirations which have paid off to the extent that some in the New Jersey GOP are now promoting her as their Lieutenant Governor choice.

Mr. President, LLANJ is specifically urging you to direct reconsideration of the granting of 287(g) status to the Township of Morristown and the Monmouth County Sheriff's Department, and to place on hold all pending 287(g) applications nationwide. We have asked Governor Corzine to join us in this request. We must also say that we were offended by Senator Chuck Schumer's debut remarks as the new Congressional leader on immigration reform legislation; his introductory proclamation set a repressive tone, declaring 'illegal' as the only proper reference for the estimated 12 million residents of the United States who are without documentation. Understanding that today's struggle for comprehensive immigration reform is a civil rights issue, we are hopeful that your Administration will reject Senator Schumer's hyperbole. LLANJ co-sponsored the "Familias United" campaign lead by Congressmen Guitierrez and Sires, and Senator Menendez, that toured the country when it came to New Jersey earlier this year in April. LLANJ believes that your Administration is sensitive to how American families, who are intrinsic parts of our communities, have been torn apart and separated as the result of arbitrary and inhumane enforcement actions that are operating in the vacuum created by our government's failure to pass and implement humane comprehensive immigration reform.

In closing we hope that you enjoy your visit to New Jersey and that you are able to use your time here to reflect on the urgency for comprehensive immigration reform. We trust you will conclude that humane comprehensive reform is long overdue, and that real political capital is worth spending to lead the nation on a new course that will benefit all.

Very truly yours,



Martín Pérez, Esq.  
President

cc. Hon. Jon S. Corzine  
Hon. Senator Robert Menendez  
Hon. Senator Frank Lautenberg  
Hon. Congressman Albio Sires  
Board of Delegates, LLANJ