

**REAPPORTIONMENT AND THE INTERESTS OF THE HISPANIC COMMUNITIES**

July 11, 2011

Speaking on behalf of the Hispanic redistricting coalition, we thank each commissioner for taking on this very difficult task.

The presence of Latino constituent communities throughout Colorado has been well publicized since February 23, 2011, when Census 2010 released data showing that the total Hispanic population in Colorado is one-fifth (21%) of the total state population (i.e., 1,038,687 Hispanic Coloradans). Large Hispanic communities exist in pockets throughout the entire state, which we believe the final Reapportionment Plan should reflect. More specifically, there are several areas where a large Latino community of interest comprises approximately 50% of the population, including:

1. west Denver;
2. the area where Denver , Adams and Arapahoe counties merge together;
3. Greeley;
4. Pueblo County; and
5. the San Luis Valley

Other areas containing large Latino communities of interest include Colorado Springs, Morgan/southeastern Weld Counties, Eagle/Lake Counties, and Garfield County. The growth of Colorado's Hispanic community contributed significantly to Colorado's overall growth, accounting for over 41% of the state's growth.

With this data and other factors in mind, the Colorado Reapportionment Commission is now preparing a preliminary plan for 35 State Senate and 65 State House seats. While the Commission has worked on its preliminary plan, many Hispanic organizations have been working together to ensure that the 2011 Reapportionment Plan incorporates the interests of the numerous Hispanic communities throughout Colorado. Those groups include the Colorado Hispanic Bar Association, the Colorado Latino Forum, the Latin American Research and Service Agency (LARASA), the Latina Initiative, Mi Familia Vota, Padres Unidos, among others.

We understand and appreciate that the Reapportionment Commission may consider many factors in creating a reapportionment plan. Most importantly, the Commission must comply with governing federal law protecting the constitutional voting rights of all people, as well as minority communities. We also recognize that there are many competing and overlapping interests among various communities. To that end we respectfully ask that the Commission resist adopting a plan that (1) reduces the number of districts of Hispanic-majority or Hispanic-influence districts, or (2) reduces the voting influence of a Hispanic community of interest, as even a 2 or 3% dilution can have a lasting and significant impact on this community.

As the process moves forward, we ask that the Hispanic communities across the state be regarded as important communities of interest, not just constituents to move around for the sole purpose of strengthening or weakening districts for partisan reasons. The large and cohesive Hispanic communities

should be respected as unique communities of interest bonded through strong social, familial, cultural and economic ties.

Through careful study of the census data with mapping software, we have made some specific observations that we pass on to the Commission for its consideration in drawing the preliminary and final plans. With respect to the House plan, we believe that there are: (1) a handful of possible Hispanic-majority districts (based on total population data) (one in the San Luis Valley District and three in the Denver metropolitan area); (2) a handful of near Hispanic-majority districts; (3) a handful of Hispanic-influence districts (30% or more Hispanic population); and (4) several other districts where the Hispanic community comprises a quarter of the population. Totally, in the House plan, there are approximately 18 or 19 districts we are watching closely. In the Senate plan, we believe that there are: (1) a couple possible Hispanic-majority districts (total population) (both in the Denver metropolitan area); (2) a Pueblo district of significant potential influence (above 40% of the population); and (3) more than a one-half dozen possible Hispanic-influence (30%) or near influence (25%) districts. This means that there are approximately 12 or 13 Senate districts we are watching closely.

We know that the Commission has worked hard to listen to public testimony and we truly appreciate this effort. But there are other voices critically important that should not be forgotten by the Commission: the voices of those too afraid to speak publicly and the voices of those so disenfranchised that they do not know their voices could make a difference. The Commission bears the difficult responsibility of considering both the public and the silent voices in drafting its reapportionment plan.

Our final request of the Commission stems from a statement made by Election Data Services, Inc. (EDS), the voting experts hired by the 1991 Reapportionment Commission. In a report dated October 14, 1991, EDS made the following statement:

[T]he results of this EDS examination did indicate that voting in Weld County, at least in the only countywide election that included a minority candidate, was polarized and that Hispanics turned out at a lower rate than whites. For these reasons, conclusions reached about the San Luis Valley can be extended to Weld County as well.

We believe that the substantial growth of population in the Weld/Morgan/Adams County area justifies a re-examination of EDS's concern of racial bloc voting in that tricounty area. Therefore, we respectfully request that the Commission retain an expert to provide updated voting data analysis.

We thank you for your efforts, commitment and time.

The Hispanic Redistricting Coalition

Colorado Hispanic Bar Association

Colorado Latino Forum

Latin American Research and Service Agency (LARASA)

Latina Initiative

Mi Familia Vota

Padres Unidos