

# State of the Latina 2013

*Recent Successes, Policy  
Landscape, and the Long Road  
Ahead to Reproductive Justice*



NATIONAL LATINA INSTITUTE FOR REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

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## ABOUT NATIONAL LATINA INSTITUTE FOR REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH

The National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health (NLIRH) is the only national organization working on behalf of the reproductive health and justice of the 24 million Latinas, their families, and communities in the United States through public education, community mobilization, and policy advocacy.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

As we look ahead to 2013, Latinas continue to face many challenges even as their political power and prominence continues on a meteoric rise. Latinas suffer disproportionately high rates of cervical cancer, unintended pregnancy, and poverty; face systemic barriers in accessing the health care they need, including reproductive health care like contraception and abortion; and continue to be targeted by discriminatory, inhumane immigration policies that tear families apart and leave immigrant women at the margins of society. Yet, even as these injustices persist, Latinas are more mobilized than ever, driving policy discussions in their communities and electoral outcomes at the ballot box.

The 2012 election resulted in tremendous wins for Latinas, both in how many Latinas cast ballots, and in terms of substantive legislative victories. Latinas played a key role in the “Women of Color Wave” responsible for re-electing President Obama and many other decisive outcomes across the country. Over 53% of the electorate were women,<sup>i</sup> and 1 in 10 voters were Latinos.<sup>ii</sup> While women and young people are widely credited with electing pro-women policymakers, including President Obama—the fact is that women of color and youth of color drove these trends.

“Latinas, and all women of color, are a powerful constituency, and we proved that on Election Day,” said Jessica González-Rojas, executive director of the National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health. “In Florida, we worked with Latinas on the ground to defeat an attack on abortion coverage; in swing states, we cast deciding votes; and across the country, we raised our voices. There is no doubt that we were heard.”

*Jessica Gonzalez-Rojas, Executive Director, NLIRH  
NBC Today Show online, November 7, 2012*

Latinas made up over 6% of the electorate and voted overwhelmingly for Obama, particularly in key swing states with large and growing Latino populations, such as Colorado, Nevada, and Pennsylvania. As President Obama begins his second term and the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress proceeds in its work, NLIRH is ready to continue to work with policymakers in Washington and in the states to reduce health disparities, protect and expand access to abortion services, and protect the rights and dignity of immigrant women and their families. Reproductive decision-making was a centerpiece of President Obama’s campaign, and women and Latino voters were crucial voting blocs in the President’s victory, as well as the victories of other pro-women and pro-choice candidates across the country.

Latinas proved themselves a formidable voting constituency, determined to cast their ballots despite political campaigns designed to depress turnout by voters of color and low-income voters. Throughout 2012, NLIRH worked to educate, engage, and mobilize Latinas across the country and used our *iSoy Poderosa!* campaign to ignite Latina power for health, dignity, and justice. *iSoy Poderosa!* activists from Florida to Texas, New York to Virginia, and Colorado to California, distributed voter education materials, held community forums, registered voters, and helped bring Latinas and their families to the polls on Election Day.

The National Latina Institute for Reproductive Health will continue our work to lift Latina voices for reproductive justice. In the months and years ahead, we will: advocate for inclusive and humane immigration policies that protect the health rights of women and families; work to lift unfair restrictions on public and private insurance coverage for abortion; and implement

and expand upon critical components of the landmark Affordable Care Act (ACA), which will cover an estimated 9 million Latinos<sup>iii</sup> and increase funding for community health centers – a lifeline to many Latino and other underserved neighborhoods.

## LATINAS AND REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE: CHALLENGES

Latinas face a daunting array of systemic barriers to accessing health care, ensuring basic family economic security, and protecting their civil and human rights from discriminatory attacks and policies. Today, more than 1 in 4 Latinas live in poverty, twice the rate of their white counterparts.<sup>iv</sup> Despite the gains of the Affordable Care Act, Latinos overall have the highest rates of uninsurance,<sup>v</sup> and many continue to be denied insurance due to employment or immigration status. Latinas are twice as likely to experience unintended pregnancy<sup>vi</sup> and suffer from the highest incidence rates of cervical cancer.<sup>vii</sup> Furthermore, immigrant Latinas continue to be targeted by harmful policies and damaging rhetoric that undermines their rights, demonizes Latina mothers, and even seeks to deny 14<sup>th</sup> Amendment protections to their children.

Access to safe and affordable abortion services remains a challenge for Latinas. Latinas are more likely to need but less likely to be able to afford abortion services. Additionally, they are less likely to have access to an abortion provider. Latinas are also twice as likely to get their insurance from a public source. Current restrictions on public insurance coverage for abortion, like the Hyde Amendment, leave few options for the 1 in 4 Latinas insured by Medicaid,<sup>viii</sup> serve in the military, or otherwise rely on public insurance.

In addition to restrictions on coverage that have persisted and increased for decades, anti-choice lawmakers in state and federal governments have passed an unprecedented number of restrictions on abortion and contraception in recent years. Federal legislators attempted to ban so-called “race and selective abortions,” which was a blatant attack on the reproductive freedoms of women of color and immigrant women. Federal legislators also attempted to ban abortions after 20-weeks in the District of Columbia, limit access to abortion care for minors, and codify the Hyde Amendment.

In the past two years, some of the most alarming successes of anti-choice lawmakers have occurred at the state level. According to the Guttmacher Institute, 2012 saw 19 states enact 43 new provisions restricting access to abortion services. While this is a decrease from the record-breaking 92 abortion restrictions enacted in 2011, it is the second highest number of new abortion restrictions passed in a year.<sup>ix</sup>

## NEW AMERICAN MAJORITY: LATINAS RISING

In 2012, Latinos represented 10% of the electorate, and Latina voters alone comprised 6%<sup>x</sup>, which demonstrates the political power of the Latino community and more specifically, Latina women. With 23.7 million Latinos eligible to vote,<sup>xi</sup> this power will continue to grow. The 2012 election and independent exit polls point to the fact that Latina voters are pro-choice, support LGBTQ families, support the health reform law, and demand immigration reform that respects the health and dignity of Latino families. Despite widespread attempts to suppress Latino voter turnout and participation, Latinas demanded that their voices be heard in the political process.

### *Voting our Values: Abortion access and coverage*

In 2012, Latinas went to the polls in support of expanded reproductive rights and access to abortion care. In response to the increasing number of efforts to roll back access to contraception and abortion and other women's rights, the media deemed that the "War on Women" was sweeping across the nation. According to a poll conducted by the Rad Campaign, 63% of Latina voters agreed that lawmakers in Washington are engaging in a "War on Women", "by taking away women's rights to contraception, denying equal pay for equal work, and curbing a woman's right to choose."<sup>xii</sup>

Latinas entered the polls on Election Day with a clear understanding of the two presidential candidate's divergent positions on reproductive health and rights. Throughout his campaign, President Obama communicated a pro-choice stance and highlighted his achievements in expanding access to preventive services, including contraception, for women through the health reform law. The President's communication around contraception touched on a reality that women in the U.S. are deeply familiar with today – that access to birth control is a pocketbook issue for women and families.

Additionally, the 2012 Democratic Platform noted the party's support for a woman's right to abortion care "regardless of ability to pay."<sup>xiii</sup> Republican presidential candidate, Governor Mitt Romney, established, as the campaign developed, a stance that would make abortion criminal, except in the event of rape, incest, and in order to save the life of the mother. Governor Romney demonstrated an aversion to Planned Parenthood, noting that he would immediately remove this critical safety-net provider as President of the United States.<sup>xiv</sup> Especially for Latinas and women of color, who are disproportionately low-income, this issue hit close to home – women of color see Planned Parenthood's services as critical, and their status as a provider of basic reproductive health care at a low cost meant that attacks hurled at Planned Parenthood were personal attacks aimed at low-income women.

## *Voting our Values: Health care*

The 2012 election proved to be a definitive one for the Obama Administration's signature achievement, the Affordable Care Act (ACA), and a demonstration of the voting public's support for this historic expansion of access to affordable, quality care. Latina voters went to the polls with a strong understanding of the two presidential candidates' divergent positions on the health reform law. While President Obama lauded his signature legislation, Mitt Romney vowed to repeal the ACA "on day one" of his Administration, while later signaling that some elements of the bill would remain in place.

Latinas went to the polls having already experienced some of the benefits of the historic health care law. In August 2012, the Women's Health Amendment of the ACA went into effect. This meant that all new health plans must completely cover a wide range of women's preventive health services, including contraception, cervical cancer screenings, testing for sexually transmitted infections (STI), domestic violence screening, and gestational diabetes screenings. By April 2012, 736,000 young Latinos under 26 years of age were already able to gain health insurance by staying on their parents' plans.<sup>xv</sup> Additionally, 6.1 million Latinos covered under private insurance and 3.9 million elderly and disabled Latinos on Medicare have had expanded access to preventive health care due to the no cost sharing provisions of the ACA.<sup>xvi</sup>

Latinas also played a critical role in supporting the health care law and its contraceptive coverage requirements over the past few years. Specifically, Latinas supported the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services' decision to cover contraception as preventive care; opposed harmful legislative efforts like the Blunt Amendment, which would have empowered employers to control the health care decisions of their employees by refusing the inclusion of contraception in health plans; and celebrated the news of the Supreme Court's upholding of the constitutionality of the Affordable Care Act while opposing the removal of the one tool to ensure full expansion of the Medicaid program across the states.

Unfortunately, undocumented immigrants were completely left out of the historic health reform law and will make up a large share of the uninsured population after the ACA has been fully implemented. Furthermore, states can prohibit abortion coverage in health insurance plans offered in the new insurance exchanges, which threatens the health of Latinas and all women – one out of three women will obtain an abortion in their lifetime.<sup>xvii</sup>

Despite the exclusion of a large population of Latinos from the law and the roll backs on access to abortion care, however, Latinas continue to support the law due to its many other beneficial provisions. In fact, assuming full healthcare expansion, including expansion of the Medicaid program, 18% of Latinos will gain health coverage thanks to the reforms,<sup>xviii</sup> making Latinos the group most poised to benefit from the law.

## *Voting our Values: Immigration*

Latina voters also came to the polls on Election Day motivated by concerns about the state of immigration policy in the United States. Despite Latino voters' continual frustration with the Obama Administration's enforcement policies – which have resulted in the deportation of approximately 400,000 individuals every year<sup>xix</sup> – and failure to introduce humane and inclusive immigration reform legislation, Latino voters clearly favored President Obama's stance on immigration over those expressed by Governor Romney. Throughout the campaign, Governor Romney noted that he would veto the DREAM Act, end the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, and favor "self-deportation." Additionally, Kris Kobach, Kansas Secretary of State and the architect of Arizona's SB1070, was tapped to serve as an immigration advisor to the Romney campaign. These stances did not resonate with the Latino electorate.

Several trends in immigration have shaped the Latino electorate's views. In June 2012, the Supreme Court of the United States struck down three out of the four contested provisions in Arizona's racial profiling and anti-immigrant law, SB1070, under grounds of "federal preemption," meaning that the federal government trumps the state governments in immigration policies. The one provision allowed to stand was one that immigrants and advocates agree is the most dangerous, Section 2(B), or the "papers, please" provision, which allows local law enforcement to check the immigration status of any individual they stop for law enforcement purposes. The provision was allowed to be implemented in subsequent court decisions and legal challenges to other states' anti-immigrant policies ended similarly.

Last year also saw the expanded implementation of the federal program Secure Communities, in which persons booked into local jails are run against a federal immigration database for the purposes of "identifying and removing the most serious criminal offenders,"<sup>xx</sup> and the continuation of 287(g) program, which deputizes local law enforcement to enforce immigration policies. Several states and municipalities, including Washington, D.C., have been able to pass legislation to limit the scope of Secure Communities, while California was not successful in their attempt.

Despite the deeply troubling detention and deportation policies of the Obama Administration, Latinas and their families were encouraged by the Obama Administration's executive actions around deferred removal of DREAM-eligible young people and promises of prioritizing immigration reform in 2013. Latinas will be watching closely to see not only that inclusive, humane, immigration reform legislation is passed, but that it includes certain provisions that Latinas hold dear, including: an end to enforcement policies that tear families apart; a fair, equitable, and affordable path to citizenship for all; and access to health care and family economic supports for all immigrant women and families, regardless of status.

## RECORD TURNOUT FOR LATINAS DESPITE SUPPRESSION EFFORTS

Recent years have seen an alarming increase in efforts to restrict voting rights. Since 2011, 41 states introduced 180 laws to restrict voting, and laws were passed in 19 of these states.<sup>xxi</sup> Some of the most egregious voter restrictions are voter ID laws that require voters to present government-issued identification at polling stations. In the past two years, these laws have spread like wildfire across states, even though election-day impersonation – the fraud that voter ID legislation claims to protect against – is virtually nonexistent. In fact, an extensive study of election fraud cases found that of over two thousand cases of fraud in the United States since the year 2000, only ten were cases of impersonation of another voter at a voting place.<sup>xxii</sup> In a string of major victories for voting rights, however, the courts have blocked or put on hold ID laws in Texas,<sup>xxiii</sup> South Carolina,<sup>xxiv</sup> Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin.<sup>xxv</sup> Strict ID laws remain in Kansas, Indiana, Georgia, and Tennessee.

In addition to voter ID and other legislative measures designed to restrict voters' rights, such as restrictions on early voting, a variety of other voter suppression tactics were also reported: Maricopa county produced Spanish-language materials instructing voters to vote on the incorrect date;<sup>xxvi</sup> people were asked for their IDs when this was not necessary,<sup>xxvii</sup> and groups affiliated with True the Vote,<sup>xxviii</sup> a right-wing organization dedicated to enacting voter restrictions, appear to have been systematically challenging the validity of voters' registrations in areas of Florida with large amounts of voters of color, who were forced to cast provisional ballots as a result of these challenges.<sup>xxix, xxx</sup>

Voter ID and other voting rights restrictions disproportionately harm people of color, young people, new Americans, and people with disabilities—all of whom are less likely to have the particular kinds of government-issued identification required and tend to face additional barriers to exercising their right to vote. In the months before the election, estimates were that voter suppression tactics in this election could deter or prevent up to ten million Latinos from registering and voting.<sup>xxxi</sup>

Voter restrictions and harassment at the polls also affect transgender people. According to a Williams Institute report using data from the National Transgender Discrimination Survey, 40% of transgender citizens who live full-time as a gender different from the one that they were assigned at birth reported not having an updated driver's license, and 27% reported that they had no identification documents at all that listed their correct gender.<sup>xxxii</sup> Additionally, trans people of color, low-income trans folks, and disabled trans people were less likely than average to have no updated identification documents.<sup>xxxiii</sup> Though in the past the general consensus has been that trans voters were collateral damage in an effort to suppress the votes of people of color, trans folks have been targeted directly by "True the Vote."

Though many of the recent voter ID laws were blocked or at least put on hold for the 2012 elections (with some claiming that they will have little impact on the election because of

this),<sup>xxxiv</sup> these laws undoubtedly created a hostile voting climate for many Latin@s. This is demonstrated in the continued advertising of laws that no longer applied for the 2012 election.<sup>xxxv</sup> These laws and their vocal proponents created a climate of fear for voters of color and transgender voters, who face barriers to obtaining government-issued IDs that reflect their true identity. Despite the pervasiveness of these voter suppression efforts, however, Latinos were excited about the election and motivated to vote.<sup>xxxvi</sup> All over the country, voters of color actively resisted suppression tactics by encouraging each other to stay in line despite long waits and distributing relevant information about voting rights, such as the fact that citizens must be allowed to vote if they arrived in line before polls closed.

## NLIRH Activists Register Voters

The NLIRH DMV (Washington, D.C. – Maryland – Virginia) Latina Advocacy Network, in partnership with Voto Latino, fought the cold bitter weather in early October to register voters in Virginia!



## EXIT POLLING CONFIRMS LATINO SUPPORT FOR REPRODUCTIVE DECISION-MAKING

For years, advocates and organizers working with Latinos have seen firsthand the community's compassion and support for women's reproductive decision-making. In 2011, NLIRH, along with our colleagues at Reproductive Health Technologies Project, released the largest ever public opinion poll of Latino attitudes on abortion. The poll's findings affirmed our experiences: 8 in 10 Latinos would support a close friend or family member who needed an abortion.<sup>xxxvii</sup> This past November, exit polling re-confirmed our findings: 66% of Latino voters

support a woman's ability to make personal, private decisions about abortion without politicians interfering.<sup>xxxviii</sup> In addition, a new Wall Street Journal poll shows record levels of support for *Roe v Wade* – and researchers credit Latinos and other people of color with turning the tide in support of abortion rights.<sup>xxxix</sup> Despite the persistent and unfortunate mythmaking around Latinos' cultural, political, and religious beliefs, the data clearly shows that our community is supportive of abortion rights, getting more supportive every day, and may be the key to the future of the pro-choice movement.

## DECISIVE VICTORIES IN BALLOT MEASURES

Latinas were a critical force in progressive victories on ballot measures nationwide. Unfortunately, losses were also sustained.

### *Victories*

- 🌟 **Marriage Equality:** In 2012, marriage equality policies won for the first time ever in popular referenda. In Maryland, Washington, and Maine, voters supported marriage equality. Meanwhile, Minnesotans rejected an anti-marriage equality constitutional amendment. The youth vote (including young Latinos) played a big role in these victories.
- 🌟 **DREAM Act:** In Maryland, voters approved Question 4 allowing the Maryland DREAM Act to go into effect. The Maryland DREAM Act allows immigrant students to pay in-state tuition at community colleges. After completing an associate's degree or 60-credits, students can then attend public universities and pay in-state tuition. While legislators in 13 states have approved similar measures, the Maryland DREAM Act was the first to face a test on the ballot. After Governor Martin O'Malley signed the DREAM Act into law in 2011, opponents successfully pushed for referendum which blocked the implementation of the law. Latinas across Maryland mobilized in support of the law.
- 🌟 **Defeating Anti-Choice Candidates:** Anti-choice candidates Richard Mourdock of Indiana and Todd Akin of Missouri, who put forth misogynistic views regarding pregnancy resulting from rape during their respective campaigns, were both defeated by their challengers.<sup>xl</sup> Both men sought seats in the U.S. Senate.

### *Losses*

- 🌟 **Arizona:** Despite tremendous mobilization and turnout of Latino voters in Arizona, Maricopa County Sherriff Joe Arpaio, the self-proclaimed "toughest Sherriff in America" and proponent of racial-profiling law, SB1070, secured re-election.
- 🌟 **Anti-immigrant candidates win:** Rep. Jeff Flake (R-AZ) and Steve King (R-Iowa) unfortunately won re-election to Congress. Both candidates have used harmful,

negative rhetoric about immigrants. In 2012, King compared immigrants to dogs and Flake voted against the DREAM Act in 2010.

- 🌟 **Montana:** Voters passed a parental notification law requiring girls under the age of 16 to notify their parents or guardians or pursue a judicial bypass if they wish to terminate a pregnancy. The law will place vulnerable youth at greater risk and delay and limit access to care.
- 🌟 **Montana:** Voters approved a ballot measure to require individuals to demonstrate proof of citizenship to obtain certain in-state benefits, such as unemployment benefits, disability benefits, and scholarships.

### *Victory: Spotlight on Florida's Amendment 6*

Though Florida did not prove to be a deciding state in the 2012 presidential election, by a margin of 55% to 45%, voters soundly rejected the anti-choice, anti-family Amendment 6. This ballot measure would have further restricted insurance coverage for abortion and interfered with personal decision-making. In the weeks and months before the election, NLIRH worked to mobilize Latino voters in opposition this measure. On Election Day, Latinos sent a strong message that when politicians deny insurance coverage for abortion, they are playing a dangerous game of 'keep away' when it comes to women's health.

NLIRH recognizes that the outcome of the Amendment 6 vote is in line with Latino values. The groundbreaking poll by NLIRH and the Reproductive Health Technologies Project demonstrates that four out of five Latino voters would support a close friend or family member who had an abortion. Furthermore, a majority of Latino voters agree that the amount of money a woman has or does not have should not determine whether or not she can have an abortion if she needs one.

The defeat of Amendment 6 was due to a grassroots voter education and messaging campaign, of which Latinas and NLIRH played a strong role. Jersey Garcia, Coordinator of Mi Lola (Miami International- Latinas Organizing for Leadership and Advocacy), shared with NLIRH these thoughts about the importance of the 2012 Election and mobilization against Amendment 6:

“As a woman, a mom, an activist, a Latina, and a Floridian, I knew the importance of this election to our community and to the country. Mi Lola worked for [two and a half months] to educate Florida voters, and Latino voters in particular, about the danger of Amendment 6. We hosted events, facilitated community discussions, called hundreds of voters, sent bilingual materials to 15,000 targeted voters in Miami-Dade County, and talked about Amendment 6 in our communities. I was thrilled to see all our hard work pay off. Mi Lola celebrates this hard won battle alongside Floridian women, to dismantle

the structural barriers that prevent women in accessing the full range of health care services.”

This victory, particularly in a complex swing state like Florida, should embolden our elected officials in Washington to ensure that women can make their own decisions about abortion and stop denying Medicaid coverage for a woman who needs abortion care. NLIRH will continue to work with partners on the local, state, and federal level to dismantle the dangerous and dehumanizing Hyde Amendment and other restrictions on public and private insurance coverage of abortion services.

### *Victory: Spotlight on Colorado “Personhood” Initiative*

In 2012, Latinas demonstrated leadership in the effort to stop an anti-choice and dehumanizing ballot initiative in its tracks. In Colorado, the Colorado Organization for Latina Opportunity and Reproductive Rights (COLOR) led the pro-choice movement in preventing a “personhood” amendment from making it on the ballot. Anti-choice forces in Colorado sought to put an initiative on the ballot that would define a fetus as a “person” eligible for all rights and privileges of personhood. Granting fetuses “personhood” would criminalize abortion, ban certain forms of contraception and in-vitro fertilization, and open the door to criminal investigations of miscarriages, thereby diminishing the personhood of women. Thanks to a tremendous mobilization and education effort led by Latina pro-choice leaders, the initiative did not receive the necessary number of signatures from voters in order to be included on the November 6 Ballot.

Lorena Garcia, Executive Director of COLOR, shares these thoughts on their victory in the defeat of the Colorado Personhood Amendment:

“In 2012, Coloradans did not even give the “personhood” amendment a chance by not signing their petitions. This could have been the third attempt at dehumanizing women and eliminating basic reproductive and sexual health services. Coloradans allied against this measure by speaking out, donating to the *NO Personhood* committee and visibly showing their support at rallies. We have heard that the “personhood” proponents, or should we say the *dehumanizing proponents*, will continue to bring forth this dangerous measure and we know that for every attempt they may, we will be there: poised and ready to show them the door.”

## LEGISLATIVE OUTLOOK FOR THE 113TH CONGRESS

The 113<sup>th</sup> Congress has begun, and includes more women and people of color in its ranks. It is the most diverse Congressional cohort in history. Congress has already identified immigration reform as a top priority—and Latinas will be watching closely as lawmakers proceed.

## *Increase in Number of Latinos, Women in Congress*

Attacks on women's rights, reproductive justice, and bodily autonomy seemingly turned the 2012 vote in favor of women, LGBTQ, and pro-choice candidates. Notably, the Senate has seen the largest number of women ever to serve in that chamber at twenty, including the Senate's first openly gay member, Tammy Baldwin (D-WI), and first Asian Pacific Islander (API) American woman Senator, Mazie Hirono (D-HI).

Representation of people of color and LGBTQ individuals also advanced. Mark Takano, who won his race to represent California's 41<sup>st</sup> Congressional District, is now the first LGBTQ person of color to serve in Congress. Krysten Sinema from Arizona's 9<sup>th</sup> Congressional District is the first openly bisexual member of Congress. Latino representation in Congress has also expanded, contributing to the growth of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus.

## *Expansion of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus, Latinas Lose Share*

In the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress, the Congressional Hispanic Caucus (CHC) has grown in numbers while largely remaining mixed-choice. Additionally, though the addition of new CHC members is news to celebrate, Latinas' share of the CHC has dropped, demonstrating a disconnect between the growing Latina electorate and their representation in Congress. With the addition of progressive members like Representative Michelle Lujan Grisham to the CHC leadership, the Caucus has an opportunity to advance a legislative agenda in favor of women's rights, reproductive justice, and LGBTQ Rights. Yet, the continued participation of anti-choice lawmakers may impede the ability of the CHC to reflect the values of a growing demographic base.

The CHC – established in 1976 as a legislative service organization to address issues impacting the Latino community in the United States, Puerto Rico, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands – lost three lawmakers in 2012: CHC Chair Rep. Charles A. Gonzalez (TX-20) and Rep. Dennis Cardoza (CA-18) due to retirement, and Rep. Silvestre Reyes (TX-16) due to his loss in the primary election. Additionally Rep. Joe Baca (CA-35) was defeated by former California State Senator Gloria Negrete McLeod.

Nine members of Congress have joined the CHC including Tony Cardenas (D), Dr. Raul Ruiz (D), and Juan Vargas (D) of California, Joe Garcia (D) of Florida, and Filemon Vela (D), Joaquin Castro (D) and Pete Gallego (D) of Texas. Two Latinas are expected to join the Caucus: Gloria Negrete McLeod (D) of California and Michelle Lujan Grisham (D) of New Mexico, who is the first Latina to represent New Mexico in the U.S. House of Representatives.

However, the mixed-choice nature of the Congressional Hispanic Caucus is not expected to shift as these lawmakers range in their views on reproductive rights. Of the newly elected

members of Congress, the strongest supporter of women's health and reproductive justice is Michelle Lujan Grisham (D), who championed women's health as Secretary of Health for New Mexico and centered her campaign on a number of women's right issues including reproductive justice, health care, and domestic violence. In Texas, newly-elected Texas Congressmen Pete Gallego (D) and Joaquin Castro (D) are pro-choice, while the positions of Filemon Vela on reproductive choice and health are not known.

While history was made when Ted Cruz (R) won his race to become the first Latino to serve Texas in the U.S. Senate, the win in Latino representation is a tremendous loss to Latinas as he has demonstrated fervent anti-choice positions.

Many pro-choice members of the CHC were successful in their bids for re-election. Senator Robert Menendez (D) of New Jersey, the only pro-choice Latino Senator, defeated State Senator John Kryillos (R) to retain his seat. California Representatives Lucille Roybal-Allard (CA-34), who serves as Health Task Force Chair, Linda Sanchez (CA-39), Grace Napolitano (CA-38), whom NLIRH recognized this past year as Champions of Latina Health, were successful in fending off challenges from both Democratic and Republican challengers due to California's new open primary system. Xavier Becerra (CA-31), whose leadership role in the Democratic Party has recently expanded to Vice-Chairman of the House Democratic Caucus, also won re-election.

While the potential for CHC leadership on women's issues and reproductive health is unclear, the CHC has already demonstrated its power as a voice for inclusive, humane immigration reform in the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress. With Latino voters soundly rejecting the anti-immigrant policies and rhetoric of conservative candidates, it is clear that the Obama Administration and all members of Congress have a strong mandate from their constituents to pursue immigration reform that will create real solutions for immigrant women, mixed-status families, businesses, and communities—and address the pressing need for access to health care and family economic security.

### *Outlook: Protecting Critical Services in the Federal Budget*

A challenge remains before Congress to advance a fair budget that advances opportunity for all living in the United States and to prevent the harmful sequester cuts that would hurt women and families. Cuts to Medicaid and other safety net programs including the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) will disproportionately impact Latino families by undermining Latinos' ability to care for themselves and their families. Additionally, Congress must abandon the misguided efforts to restrict immigrant inclusion in federal programs and benefits. The Child Tax Credit, which provides relief for low-income, hard-working tax-paying immigrant families, must not be undermined.

Congress should ensure that the provisions of the health reform law are sufficiently funded and properly implemented, particularly with respect to provisions that affect low-income communities. Congress must abandon all efforts to attempt to repeal the health reform law and focus on full implementation, and continue to support funding for critical safety net programs like Community Health Centers and Title X Family Planning Centers, which are some of the only sources of care available to all immigrants in the aftermath of the health reform law.

Finally, Congress must take into account the costly and wasteful spending of certain immigration enforcement programs.

### *Outlook: Supporting Women's Health & Reproductive Decision-making*

So far in 2013, the 113<sup>th</sup> Congress and state legislatures have already indicated that the parade of anti-choice anti-woman legislation will continue, despite overwhelming rejection by women and voters of color. Congress must abandon efforts to ban abortion services and restrict both federal and private coverage of abortion care in favor of efforts to expand access to quality and affordable health care for all Latinas and immigrant women. Latina voters also want to see the full implementation of the Affordable Care Act. One exit poll demonstrates that 61% of Latino voters nationally support the health reform law.<sup>xli</sup>

### *Outlook: Moving Forward on Inclusive, Humane Immigration Reform*

The Latino electorate was highly motivated by concerns regarding immigration policy when they went to the polls on Election Day. During Obama's second term, Latinos will look to the Obama Administration for leadership in promoting compassionate immigration reform, particularly in reforming enforcement practices, promoting citizenship, and advancing integration. Latinos will also look to the Obama Administration to push back against Congressional efforts to exclude immigrants from federal programs and from immigrant integration into American society. One clear and immediate opportunity for the Administration to live up to its promises on immigration policy is to restore access to health care coverage for immigrant youth granted Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA).

## CONCLUSION

Latinos have confirmed their status in this country as a formidable political force, and proved their political power through high voter turnout and voting their values. Latinos showed the country that their vote matters, and that they are a community that is critical, analytical, and observant in evaluating policies and issues. Legislators must know that Latinos are not up for grabs. Latinos do not want candidates who just learn how to speak Spanish, but rather those who learn how to speak to their needs. Latinas need leaders that will address their unique and complex array of reproductive health needs, which are exacerbated by poverty, gender, racial,

and ethnic discrimination and xenophobia. By way of history, Latinas have encountered three major obstacles to their reproductive health and freedom:

- ☀ Lack of access to quality reproductive health and prevention services contributing to major health disparities and poorer health outcomes;
- ☀ Punitive and discriminatory state and national reproductive health policies that have disproportionately impacted their health, especially for low-income and undocumented women of color;
- ☀ Political disenfranchisement within the broader reproductive rights movement and from Latino leaders.

The right to access reproductive health services is a fundamental human right that should be guaranteed to all members of our community, and is necessary for our individual and collective well-being, autonomy, and self-determination. The efforts to advance reproductive rights of Latinas are firmly present in the discourse of women's health. Latinas, as a growing demographic and power base, will not remain silent in advocating for their rights and reproductive justice.

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