

AFL-CIO Launches Campaign to Help Protect U.S. Hispanics against Voting Rights Abuses

Nonpartisan coalition efforts to feature voter education radio commercials with Edward James Olmos

Washington, D.C., October 22, 2008 – The AFL CIO today announced the launch of a special voting rights protection program in six states – Colorado, Florida, New Mexico, Ohio, Pennsylvania and Virginia – aimed at educating U.S. Hispanics about their voting rights and helping to prevent voting rights violations on Election Day. The effort comes as a part of the AFL-CIO’s “My Vote, My Right” program, wherein members of local union and labor groups across the country are working in coalition with civil rights organizations, faith groups, local lawyers, and other community allies to protect voting rights.

“It’s time to turn around America, and we will start by protecting our right to vote and making sure that every single vote is counted,” said AFL CIO Executive Vice President Arlene Holt Baker. “Many Hispanics will be first time voters in this election, making them especially vulnerable to voter intimidation and misinformation, which is why we are making a special effort to reach out and educate them.”

The AFL-CIO’s public education effort aimed at Hispanics is comprised of five main components:

- A Spanish-language radio advertising campaign featuring actor Edward James Olmos that details voter protection issues and how to avoid being disenfranchised
- Spanish-language “Voter Bill of Rights” fliers describing state and federal voting rights laws, which by Election Day will be distributed to more than 10,000 voters in Nevada
- Spanish-language voting rights cards, which by Election Day will be distributed to more than 10,000 voters in New Mexico
- An op-ed written by former AFL-CIO Executive Vice President Linda Chavez Thompson outlining voters’ rights
- Grassroots educational outreach to voters

The Labor Council for Latin American Advancement (LCLAA), an affiliate of the AFL-CIO and Change to Win, is also actively reaching out to Hispanics voters through their “Tu voz es mi voz” campaign (Your voice is my voice). Elements of the campaign include:

- Canvassing door to door in Grand Rapids; Lansing/East Lansing; Pontiac and Southeast Detroit, Michigan and Northern Virginia with sample ballots for Latino voters and voter education information
- Disseminating Spanish-language voter protection information in Philadelphia, Reading and Allentown, Pennsylvania
- A radio program in Philadelphia, PA with voter education information
- Stationing bi-lingual election voter protection monitors at the polls in Prince William County, Virginia where an anti-immigrant statute was passed earlier this year
- Town hall meetings along with a voter registration, voter education and voter protection drive in Central Florida.

- The sending of letters to the supervisors of elections in seven Central Florida counties requesting a plan of action to increase, maintain, support and protect the participation of Latinos.

In several states, the AFL-CIO voter protection program is also recruiting and training volunteers to serve as nonpartisan poll workers and poll monitors on Election Day, helping to address voting problems including long lines, misuse of provisional ballots, and demands for voter IDs which are not mandated by law. The volunteers will be thoroughly trained on federal, state and local election laws. On Election Day, poll monitors will be deployed outside of polling places where they will be available to answer voters' questions about their rights and help resolve any problems voters may encounter.

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The AFL-CIO is the umbrella organization for America's unions and represents 10.5 million working people nationwide.