

NCLR COMMENDS SENATE FOR HISTORIC IMMIGRATION VOTE Organization has significant reservations as bill moves forward

Washington, DC – Janet Murguía, President and CEO of the National Council of La Raza (NCLR), the largest national Latino civil rights and advocacy organization in the U.S., praised a bipartisan group of senators who joined together to help pass an historic comprehensive immigration reform bill today. “We have deep concerns about some of the provisions in this bill, but in the end the Senate has voted today to put millions of immigrants on a path to U.S. citizenship, and to enact the DREAM Act and AgJOBS compromise. This is a major step forward in a debate that is vital to our community and to the nation,” said Murguía.

Murguía made it clear that NCLR will work to improve the legislation as it proceeds to a House/Senate conference committee. “While we support this bill moving forward, we intend to fight for changes to make it more workable, more effective, and fairer,” she said.

She outlined a variety of concerns with certain aspects of the bill, including the criminalization of immigrants, the workability of a legalization program that places immigrants in separate categories, the curtailment of due process rights, and the engagement of the National Guard and other problematic strategies at the U.S.-Mexico border. In addition, she outlined deep concerns about the addition of an “English-only” provision to the bill which, in the name of establishing a “national language,” does nothing to help immigrants learn English but may well place obstacles before key agencies like the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in communicating vital public health and safety information in other languages.

“These are not small matters,” said Murguía, “and their presence in final legislation would threaten our ability to support a final bill. We will be insisting that conferees address these concerns, and we will not be afraid to vigorously oppose the result if we believe it is unworkable,” she continued.

“While we know that House/Senate conference committee deliberations will be challenging, a conference committee’s job is to come up with a bill that works and that can pass both bodies,” Murguía said. Pointing out that the only path for such a bill is bipartisan, Murguía continued, “It would be a mistake to attempt to appease the hard-liners who have taken a firm anti-immigrant stand. The only path to a successful result is a bipartisan, comprehensive, workable bill.”

“At the end of the day, the Latino community and the rest of the country want effective immigration reform that brings order and fairness to our system. Moving this bill through the Senate is an essential step toward accomplishing this critical goal,” continued Murguía. “I am confident that our community will continue to be mobilized and focused on this important policy debate. Like many other Americans, we will demand a resolution – not just any result – but a

real solution which honors our tradition as a nation of immigrants and reforms the laws with effectiveness, fairness, and respect.”