



An Economic Stimulus that Works for Latinos

As President-Elect Obama and Congressional Leadership consider ways to stimulate our nation's struggling economy, it is essential that the needs of the Latino community are not overlooked. Full economic recovery will only be possible if we target policies to reach those hit hardest by job loss and those facing multiple obstacles to employment in quality jobs. In order to address the needs of the Latino community and spur economic growth, MALDEF and NCLR propose the following for inclusion in the January stimulus:

Investment in Adult Education and Integrated Job Training

Latino unemployment currently hovers around 8% and has experienced a 29% increase since passage of the first stimulus package last February. It is essential that investments are made to improve adult education opportunities and assist displaced workers develop the skills to transition into new jobs. We recommend the stimulus include the following:

- Investment of \$150 million in Title I of the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) with an additional \$50 million appropriated for the Sec. 167 Migrant and Seasonal Farm Worker Programs;
- Investment of \$250 million in WIA Title II programs that integrate basic skills, and English language proficiency, and;
- Creation of a grant program administered by the Department of Labor to award \$250 million of grants to community-based organizations to carry out integrated job training programs that combine English language acquisition with occupational skills (WIA authority).

Incentives for Employers to Integrate and Train their Workers

As of 2005, one in five adults between the ages of 18 and 65 spoke a language other than English at home and more than 17 million in this age group spoke English less than "very well." 50% of limited English proficient (LEP) adults report having nine or fewer years of education and 64% have less than a high school degree. With the growth of the LEP workforce, comes the need to ensure that the necessary tools are provided to ensure our nation has a competent workforce.

The Strengthening Communities through Education and Integration Act (H.R. 6617 & S. 3334) and Adults Achieving the American Dream Act (H.R. 2214) create incentives for employers to invest in language acquisition and GED programs for their employees. These incentives provide employers with a stake in the integration process of Latino and immigrant workers. We recommend inclusion of an employer tax incentive to educate and integrate their workforce.

Increased Academic and Employment Opportunities for Latino Youth

34% of the Latino population is under the age of 18 and close to 50% is under the age of 25. Between 2010 and 2030, first and second generation immigrants together are projected to account

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for all growth in the U.S. labor force. Because of the sheer size of this generation of Latinos, it is essential that the stimulus begin the necessary investment in educational opportunities. Though larger school reform is for another day, the economic stimulus can lay the foundation for future investment in Latino youth. We recommend the stimulus include the following:

- Creation of a grant program administered by the Department of Education to award \$50 million of grants to local education agencies for high quality expanded learning time opportunities for LEP students (Sec. 103, H.R. 6617/ S. 3334);
- Investment of \$500 million for summer 2009 jobs for youth through WIA;
- Investment of \$250 million to expand Federal Work Study opportunities for low-income college students, and;
- Increase of Pell grants by \$700 a piece and the opportunity for further assistance where a parent has recently lost their job.

Funding for Green Jobs Training Programs

The emerging green economy will provide job opportunities throughout the nation. With Latinos representing close to 15% of the U.S. workforce, it is essential that resources are targeted to enable Latino and low income workers develop the skills necessary to contribute to this new sector of our economy.

The Energy Independence and Security Act of 2007 (PL 110-140) authorized the Green Jobs Act, which provides job training and workforce investment in energy efficiency and renewable energy installations. Although authorized, the Green Jobs Act has not been appropriated any funding. Given the potential opportunities presented in the green economy, we recommend an appropriation of \$300 million, in order to ensure that the green economy is accessible to Latino and low-income workers.

Investment in Job Training for Transportation Projects

While the anticipated investment in transportation and infrastructure present potential opportunities for job creation, this job creation must be coupled with job training to address the well-documented shortage of skilled transportation workers. Latinos represent 19% of transportation workers, but are concentrated on the lowest levels of the sector. Together with the 250,000 unemployed Latino construction workers, these workers represent a solution to the transportation skills mismatch. We recommend the stimulus include the following:

- Requirement that state transportation grants set aside a percentage of funds for job training and professional development programs to be administered by state or community-based organizations;
- Requirement that transportation administrators or contractors provide the Department of Transportation a localized plan for hiring workers from the project areas before receipt of funds, and;
- Examination of the extent to which federal transportation funding creates jobs for minority, Latino, and low-income workers, quantify the impact on workers, and identify ways to enhance job opportunity for minority workers in federally supported transportation projects.

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