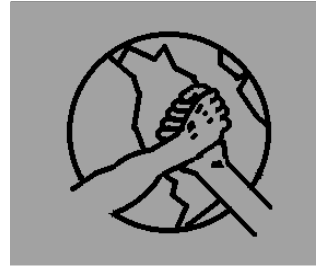


VOCES DE LA FRONTERA- WORKERS' CENTER

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PRESS STATEMENT:

Voto Latino 2006: yesterday we marched on November 7 we voted!

The Latino community demonstrated its capacity to not only turn out in great numbers to the recent marches but in their participation in the 2006 elections. Though it is not getting any play on the English language news stations, immigration politics motivated Latinos to vote and put the Democratic Party in a majority position in the Senate and House nationally.

The Republican Party itself delivered this victory to the Democratic Party through their commitment to a political platform that was seen by the Latino community as extremist, anti-immigrant, and racist. In the debate over immigration, the Democratic Party distinguished itself by having a majority in the party that supported comprehensive immigration reform that was pro-family, supported civil and worker rights, and provided a path to citizenship instead of a path to criminalization.

In the 2004 elections the Republicans got 44% of the Latino vote, and the Democrats only got 53%. In previous elections, Latinos voted for Democrats by a vote of 63%, 62%, and 65% in the 1998, 2000, and 2002 elections. This year, according to exit poll figures reported only by CNN's Spanish-language network, the Republican vote among Latinos crashed to 26%, and the Democrats got 73%, a full 20-point improvement on the 2004 figure. This potentially represents a seismic shift in ethnic electoral politics for 2008 and the beyond.

At the local level, Voces de la Frontera, noticed even before the elections a new the level of increased participation. The number one reason: immigration. The Milwaukee Election Commission reported that in the ten wards with high Latino population in which VF organized a non-partisan Get Out the Vote campaign, there was an average of 48% increased participation compared to the 2002 non-presidential elections.

According to Marilyn Figueroa, Civic Participation Coordinator for Voces de la Frontera, "this was the most historic campaign I have seen compared to other elections because of the level of unity and motivation on the part of the Latino community." There was an inspiring show of participation on the part of these naturalized citizens to stand up for the rights of other immigrant families. There was a great participation of youth who voted for the first time and helped assist others in the participating as well. According to Eleazar Lopez, "we were able to educate the community about the importance of participating in the political process so that they would have the confidence and knowledge to vote and have their voice heard by politicians, both Democrat and Republican."

The results of this election represent a more favorable opportunity for comprehensive immigration reform at the national level but it does not represent a final victory. There are powerful corporate interests that profit from denying immigrant workers their full rights and who stand to profit from the increased detention and militarization of the border. The anti-immigrant backlash is convenient in undermining labor solidarity among workers of different races.

The Latino community does not want a return to the *bracero program* that was dismantled for its labor abuses. We do not want a "guest worker" program that would only legalize the super-exploitation of immigrant labor for the employer. It will be the efforts of the Latino community itself to continue educating, organizing, and mobilizing to demand justice that will result in a comprehensive reform that reflects compassion, humanity and democratic values. The Latino community expects our political leadership that was voted into power to deliver now that they are in a position to move a comprehensive immigration reform forward.

Just as other ethnic and racial minorities have organized to claim representation and equal rights in this country, this turnout is a recognition of the vitality of the growing Latino civil rights movement that is not just capable of marching but of mobilizing for elections and is determining its future.

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