

Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights

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Latino legislators celebrate success of immigrant vote

Immigrant voters respond to anti-immigrant campaigning; sway local elections

CHICAGO – Members of the Latino Caucus recognized immigrant advocates' efforts to Get-Out-The-Vote this past election and the successful participation of the immigrant community on Election Day. Latino caucus members used the opportunity to welcome incoming State Senators and Representatives, who in part were elected due to the increasing immigrant participation on November 7th. Latino Caucus members also announced the Latino agenda for the upcoming year.

In this midterm election the Latino and immigrant vote was ever more influential. Increased turnout from the Latino community specifically made up the margin of difference in many hotly contested State Senate and Representative races.

Many of these areas overlapped with the non-partisan Get-Out-The-Vote operation of the Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights (ICIRR). With the help of 18 Democracy Project Fellows, the organization mobilized over 1,552 volunteers to get out the immigrant vote and increase turnout to the polls from the Latino, Asian and Muslim communities in some areas by over 50%. The New Americans Democracy Project campaign worked in 357 precincts across Chicago and the surrounding suburbs. These volunteers knocked on over 51,000 doors and put up 72,000 door hangers reminding naturalized citizens to vote.

“The immigrant community went out by the thousands and voted on Election Day to deliver on the promise ‘Yesterday We Marched, Today We Vote!’” said Juan Salgado, ICIRR Board President. “We voted for the individuals and the parties that would support our issues and our families. Now that Election Day is over, we will make sure they will not forget who put them in office and the change we expect.”

Immigrants also voted as a response to the vicious and cynical anti-immigrant campaigning during this electoral season. Inflammatory mailers and television ads used by candidates

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proved to further motivate immigrant voters in suburban areas, where the immigrant voting bloc was influential in swaying close local races. “After all of the hatred and vitriol aimed at Latinos and other groups, anti-immigrant campaigning fell short,” said State Senator Martin Sandoval.

Across the state, participation by new citizen voters continues to play a factor in federal, state and local races. ICIRR had staff and volunteer-run campaigns in 6 different state-level swing districts, specifically, in the 22nd State Senate District (Elgin/Carpentersville), the 42nd State Senate District (Aurora/Plainfield), 42nd State Senate District (Champaign-Urbana), 43rd State Representative District (Elgin), 46th State Representative District (Addison/Wood Dale), and the 44th State Representative District (Schaumburg/Hoffman Estates).

Juan Iban Luna, a new citizen and first time voter from Aurora, also volunteered on Election Day to make sure that his community voted on November 7. Luna felt angry for the anti-immigrant attacks that candidates were displaying in the electoral campaign. “I am a Mexican immigrant who fought for this country and I, my family, and my community deserve respect especially from legislators that are going to work for us,” said Luna, a Sergeant in the army and a veteran from Iraq.

Bolstered by their success on Election Day, immigrant advocates and elected officials will work on initiatives of great importance to the immigrant community, including the ‘We Want to Learn English Initiative,’ and the citizenship program entitled the New Americans Initiative. “We have a lot of important work to do on behalf of the immigrant community. Now that the anti-immigrant campaigning has failed, let’s roll up our sleeves and make these priorities a reality,” said State Representative Eddie Acevedo and Co-Chair of the Latino Caucus.

“We welcome our newly-elected officials in the House and the Senate and the Latino Caucus looks forward to working with them on these important priorities,” said State Senator Miguel del Valle and Co-Chair of the Latino Caucus.

The Illinois Coalition for Immigrant and Refugee Rights is a state wide coalition of 130 organizations dedicated to promoting the rights of immigrants and refugees to full and equal participation in the civic, cultural, social, and political life of our diverse society.

For more information, visit ICIRR’s website www.icirr.org or call Catherine Salgado at 312.332.7360 ext. 35

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