

CRITICAL MASS



Latino Voters Poised to Make the Difference in New York's State and Congressional Elections

Make the Road Action
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Executive Summary

Latino voters are poised to have a tremendous impact on the results of the 2016 congressional and state elections in New York State. The growing Latino vote share, coupled with deep discomfort with the presidential candidate Donald J. Trump, could have major implications down the ballot in contested races.

As New Yorkers prepare to head to the polls in November, they will turn out in large numbers for the presidential race. But given New York's status as a reliable Democratic stronghold in presidential elections, the votes of those in the Empire State will have the greatest impact on contested congressional and state elections. This report examines the likely impact of the Latino electorate on these outcomes. With highly competitive races expected on Long Island and in the Hudson Valley and Upstate New York, small margins will likely be decisive. In these contests, the growing Latino electorate—which has been increasingly turned off to Republicans following the support of Donald J. Trump by party leaders Ed Cox and Senate Majority Leader John Flanagan, as well as the rank-and-file—could be decisive.

Based on an analysis of voter registration data across the state, this report concludes the following:

- Latino voters are poised to have a decisive impact on the November elections in New York, accounting for 12 percent of registered voters statewide and substantial percentages in key swing districts.
- Republican candidates are repelling Latino voters through their embrace of Trump, and through their own campaigns' use of anti-immigrant imagery and messaging.
- Democrats, who have not always shown leadership on Latino and immigrant priorities, should invest in Latino engagement and advocate strongly for pro-Latino and -immigrant policies, which would make Republican candidates pay a stiff price in November.

The following sections lay out the data and analysis to support these conclusions, with a particular focus on competitive Long Island districts.

Background and Data

New York’s Latino population is large and growing. Latinos now account for 17.6 percent of the State’s population.¹ While many think of New York City, where 28.6 percent of the population is Latino, as New York’s hub of Latino life, established and growing Latino centers exist throughout the state. On Long Island, for instance, Latinos account for 14.6 percent of the population in Nassau County and 16.5 percent of the population in Suffolk County. In the lower Hudson Valley, cities like White Plains and Newburgh, where 29.6 percent and 47.9 percent, respectively, of the population are Latino, have seen large increases in the Latino population. Across the state, communities like Freeport, Hempstead, Westbury, Brentwood, Newburgh, White Plains, and Albany are home to thousands of Latinos who participate actively in local cultural, economic, and political life.

The data that follow highlight how that translates into political power. As Latino communities have grown, so too has the Latino electorate. While many Latino New Yorkers are non-citizen immigrants, many are also US citizens eligible to vote. As the Fiscal Policy Institute reported, for instance, 55 percent of Long Island’s immigrants are naturalized US citizens.² And more than 1,700 immigrants, many of them Latino, continue to naturalize in our state every week.³ Put simply, there now exists a critical mass of eligible and registered Latino voters who can have an important impact on congressional and state elections. Statewide, as the tables below show, 31 percent of registered voters are now voters of color, and 12 percent are Latino.

The tables below highlight the percentage of Latino voters in key elections for the House of Representatives and State Senate that analysts expect to be competitive this November. To conclude this introductory section, a note on data and methodology: Make the Road Action (MRA) compiled these data based on the publicly-available New York State voter file, with demographic modeling accessed through the Voter Activation Network database. MRA thanks the New York Civic Engagement Table for support in data collection.

Table 1: Latino Voters and Voters of Color as Share of Registered Voters, by State Senate District⁴

Senate District	Region	Percentage of Registered Voters Who Are of Color	Percentage of Registered Voters Who Are Latino
1	Long Island	8%	5%
2	Long Island	8%	4%
3	Long Island	22%	15%
4	Long Island	21%	11%

Senate District	Region	Percentage of Registered Voters Who Are of Color	Percentage of Registered Voters Who Are Latino
5	Long Island	11%	4%
6	Long Island	28%	8%
7	Long Island	25%	8%
8	Long Island	27%	9%
9	Long Island	22%	9%
10	New York City	90%	14%
11	New York City	44%	12%
12	New York City	50%	39%
13	New York City	75%	49%
14	New York City	86%	12%
15	New York City	33%	20%
16	New York City	65%	17%
17	New York City	24%	8%
18	New York City	72%	43%
19	New York City	81%	10%
20	New York City	81%	13%
21	New York City	72%	7%
22	New York City	26%	7%
23	New York City	46%	17%
24	New York City	12%	7%
25	New York City	75%	11%
26	New York City	35%	14%
27	New York City	22%	11%

Senate District	Region	Percentage of Registered Voters Who Are of Color	Percentage of Registered Voters Who Are Latino
28	New York City	14%	4%
29	New York City	73%	44%
30	New York City	78%	24%
31	New York City	61%	49%
32	New York City	97%	54%
33	New York City	94%	62%
34	New York City	51%	35%
35	New York City	40%	19%
36	New York City / Hudson Valley	92%	22%
37	Hudson Valley	17%	11%
38	Hudson Valley	20%	7%
39	Hudson Valley	21%	13%
40	Hudson Valley	10%	6%
41	Hudson Valley	12%	5%
42	Hudson Valley	15%	9%
43	Hudson Valley	2%	1%
44	Hudson Valley	16%	3%
45	North Country / Capital District	1%	0%
46	Hudson Valley / Capital District	5%	3%
47	North Country	5%	2%
48	North Country / Central New York	2%	1%

Senate District	Region	Percentage of Registered Voters Who Are of Color	Percentage of Registered Voters Who Are Latino
49	North Country / Mohawk Valley	6%	2%
50	Central New York	4%	1%
51	Hudson Valley Southern Tier / Mohawk Valley / Central New York	2%	1%
52	Southern Tier	4%	1%
53	Central New York	16%	3%
54	Finger Lakes	2%	1%
55	Finger Lakes	12%	4%
56	Finger Lakes	21%	5%
57	Western New York	3%	2%
58	Southern Tier	3%	1%
59	Western New York	2%	1%
60	Western New York	7%	3%
61	Western New York / Finger Lakes	11%	1%
62	Western New York	5%	1%
63	Western New York	40%	4%
TOTAL		31%	12%

**Table 2: Latino Voters as Share of Registered Voters,
by Congressional District**

Congressional District	Region	Percentage of Registered Voters Who Are of Color	Percentage of Registered Voters Who Are Latino
1	Long Island	10%	6%
2	Long Island	20%	11%
3	Long Island	15%	5%
4	Long Island	27%	9%
5	New York City / Long Island	83%	12%
6	New York City	50%	17%
7	New York City	61%	38%
8	New York City	76%	12%
9	New York City	66%	6%
10	New York City	23%	9%
11	New York City	25%	11%
12	New York City	23%	10%
13	New York City	84%	46%
14	New York City	64%	40%
15	New York City	97%	59%
16	New York City	50%	16%
17	Hudson Valley	21%	10%
18	Hudson Valley	15%	8%
19	Hudson Valley / Southern Tier / Mohawk Valley	5%	3%

Congressional District	Region	Percentage of Registered Voters Who Are of Color	Percentage of Registered Voters Who Are Latino
20	Capital District	10%	3%
21	Capital District / Hudson Valley	2%	1%
22	Central New York / Southern Tier / Mohawk Valley	4%	1%
23	Southern Tier / Finger Lakes / Western New York	3%	1%
24	Finger Lakes / Central New York	8%	2%
25	Finger Lakes	17%	4%
26	Western New York	21%	3%
27	Western New York / Finger Lakes	1%	1%
TOTAL		31%	12%

The data are clear. While the largest concentration of Latino New Yorkers still remains in New York City, there is now a critical mass of Latino voters in many districts outside of New York City and across New York State. On Long Island and in Westchester and surrounding counties in particular, Latino voters now constitute roughly (and in some cases more than) one tenth of registered voters in key State Senate and Congressional districts. For a map with the location of each of these State Senate and Congressional Districts, see Appendix A.

Motivated Latino Voters

Moreover, available data nationwide demonstrate that Latino voters are highly motivated to vote this year. Within immigrant communities, the nation has seen a substantial increase in naturalization rates among lawful permanent residents, with **an increase of 32.1 percent nationwide, and 31.5 percent in New York, in naturalization applications during the past quarter of 2016, compared with the same period in 2015.**⁵ This is an important data point for measuring motivation for civic engagement among immigrants and Latinos.

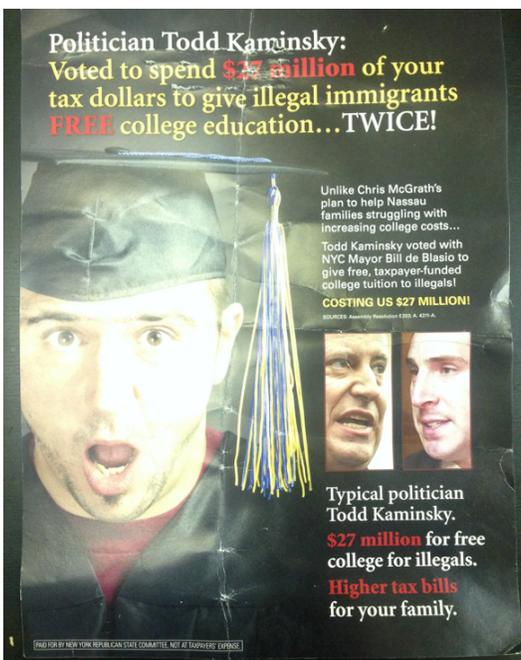
Poll data also show higher levels of political interest among registered Latino voters. Compared to the 2012 election cycle, when Latino voters were a critical difference-maker nationwide, Pew Research Center's June 2016 poll found higher levels of interest in politics among Latinos this year.⁶ In addition, evidence from Latino and immigrant organizations across New York and the country has illustrated that Latinos eligible to register are more likely to register than they have been in recent years—*The Hill*, for instance, published an article in recent months entitled "Hispanic Voter Registration Spikes."⁷

New York data suggest that New York Latinos are paying close attention to the elections and are motivated, as well. The ranks of new Latino citizens in the state continue to

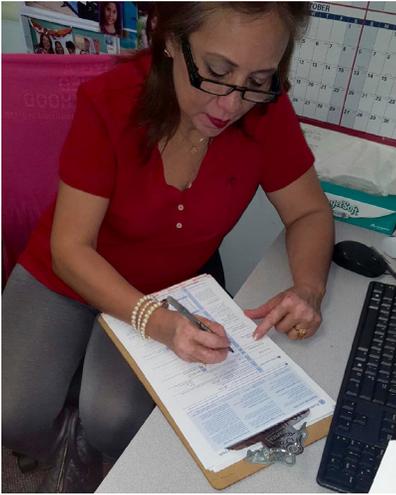
swell, and large-scale voter registration efforts have already registered thousands of new Latino voters this year. This clearly reflects immigrants' reaction to Donald Trump's xenophobic campaign. As Jose Gallego, a newly-naturalized citizen and Make the Road Action member on Long Island who just registered to vote, noted: "His campaign is based on hate. Feeling my family and community under attack, I knew that I had to do everything I could to become a citizen and to vote—not just for myself, but for millions of mothers and fathers who risk being torn away from their children."

In addition, poll data show that New York Latinos are motivated to vote against Donald J. Trump, given that he has staked his candidacy on xenophobia and racism, and that they see the Trump candidacy hurting other New York Republicans' chances. **According to Siena College's August 2016 statewide poll, an enormous 79 percent of registered Latino voters believe that Trump's appearance at the top of the Republican ticket will help Democrats' efforts to regain control of the State Senate.**⁸ In an election year in which state Republican candidates have already

followed the Trump playbook, by resorting to anti-immigrant mailers and messaging—evidenced by campaign literature for Chris McGrath in the April special election and literature and Facebook pages in distribution for the State Senate candidates on Long Island and the Hudson Valley for the November election—Latino New York voters are even more likely,



Pictured: Campaign advertisement by the New York State Republican Committee for Long Island State Senate Chris McGrath before the April 2016 special election.



Pictured: Patricia Solano, a recently naturalized citizen on Long Island and Make the Road Action member, registering to vote earlier this year.

as November approaches, to remain motivated to vote and eager to vote against those attacking their community.⁹

This motivation is palpable among Latino communities across the state. Patricia Solano, newly naturalized citizen and registered voter on Long Island who is a member of Make the Road Action, said: "The future depends on our vote. It's our civic duty, and we have to educate our community. And Donald Trump's anti-immigrant campaign is motivating me even more—I've heard too much racism, when we should all be treated as equal. And I'm not going to vote for any Long Island politicians who are standing with Mr. Trump and his anti-immigrant campaign."

who explained: "I vote for my community and my country. It's critical that we all go out and vote this year in federal and state elections. Particularly this year, when Donald Trump has been speaking inhumanely about our community and others and would never help us. I'm going to go out and vote to make sure that we are all treated with respect and dignity."

The same is true for New York City Latino voters. Take Frankie Rubio, registered Brooklyn voter and member of Make the Road Action,



Pictured: Frankie Rubio, registered voter in Brooklyn and member of Make the Road Action, is particularly motivated to vote this year.

Spotlight on Long Island: Competitive Districts Where Latino Voters Could Make the Difference

In recent years, Long Island, a region once known as the paradigmatic post-World War II, overwhelmingly white, American suburb, has become more and more diverse. Population growth among Latinos and immigrants has recently outstripped population growth among other racial and ethnic groups. Since 2000, Long Island's non-Hispanic white population has declined, and growth in the Latino community is the prime reason that Long Island has not lost political representation in Albany. Long Island features many communities with large Latino populations, including various large areas like Hempstead and Brentwood where Latino students are now a large majority of large school districts' student bodies. Over time, the Latino electorate has also grown—and there now exists a critical mass of Latino voters in many local, state, and federal districts. In a region known for close elections (the April special election in State Senate District 9 was decided by fewer than 1,000 votes, and the June primary in Congressional District 1 was decided by a matter of hundreds) due to strong party competition between Democrats and Republicans, these Latino voters are poised to be difference-makers in November. And they are motivated to vote.

As Marlenis de los Santos, a registered voter in Patchogue and member of Make the Road Action who has become more motivated to vote since Donald Trump began his anti-immigrant campaign, noted: "I'm going to vote this year to make myself heard and felt as a Latina woman standing up for my community. We are a nation that is supposed to protect us all, even if Republicans standing with Donald Trump don't want to see that reality. The tremendous injustice, disrespect, insecurity, and racism our community is facing makes me feel more motivated than ever—not just to vote, but to work to get out the vote in my community."

Table 3 below highlights the data from key State Senate and congressional districts with electorates with a substantial number of Latinos and people of color. Brief profiles of key districts where Latinos may be difference-makers follow. The data clearly show critical masses of Latino voters in key districts in this suburban region, where election results will likely determine which party controls the New York State Senate and who occupies key Congressional seats.



Pictured: Marlenis de los Santos joined dozens of Long Island Latinos in July to protest Congressman Lee Zeldin for his endorsement of Donald J. Trump and the politics of hate that have been the center of his campaign.

Table 3: Long Island Latino Voters and Voters of Color as Share of Registered Voters in Key Races

State Senate District	Percentage of Registered Voters Who Are of Color	Percentage of Registered Voters Who Are Latino
6	28%	8%
7	25%	8%
9	22%	9%
Congressional District	Percentage of Registered Voters Who Are of Color	Percentage of Registered Voters Who Are Latino
1	10%	6%
3	15%	5%

State Senate District Six

This district in south-central Nassau County is extremely diverse, with 28 percent of the registered voters being people of color and 8 percent being Latino. The district includes communities like the Village of Hempstead and Uniondale, which are overwhelmingly home to residents of color. The election in this district features Republican incumbent Kemp Hannon versus Democratic challenger Ryan Cronin—a re-match of a 2012 election in which Cronin came within a few percentage points of unseating Hannon. Large vote tallies among Latinos and voters of color in the “corridor” communities in and around Hempstead are likely to be decisive in this contested race.

State Senate District Seven

This district in northwestern Nassau County has a substantial number of Latino voters and voters of color, with 25 percent of the registered voters being people of color and 8 percent being Latino. The district includes communities like Westbury and portions of Elmont, where there are large concentrations of voters of color and Latinos. This contest will be for an open seat following Senator Jack Martins’s decision to run for Congress, and it will feature Democrat Adam Haber, local school board member and previous candidate for County Executive and State Senate, and Republican Elaine Phillips, mayor of Village of Flower Hill. While Republicans hold control of this seat currently, Democrats have won it as recently as 2008, and they hold a strong registration advantage, so it is expected to be hotly contested. Voter turnout in Latino communities and communities of color could make the difference.

State Senate District Nine

This district in southwestern Nassau County has a substantial Latino electorate and electorate of color, with 22 percent of the registered voters being people of color and 8 percent of registered voters being Latino. The district includes portions of Elmont and Valley Stream, and offers a re-match of the April special election where Democrat Todd Kaminsky defeated Republican lawyer Chris McGrath. In this district, communities of color have already proven themselves to be decisive this year. In the April election, a *Newsday* column highlighted that immigrant and black communities had made the difference, with even the Nassau Republican Chairman, Joseph Mondello, agreeing that they had been overwhelmed by communities of color's votes against their candidate. In November, when presidential turnout will raise turnout in these communities much higher, Latino voters and voters of color are likely to be even more impactful.

Congressional District One

This district in eastern Suffolk County has grown significantly more diverse in recent years, with 10 percent of the electorate being people of color, and 6 percent of the electorate being Latino. It includes communities like Patchogue and Farmingville with substantial Latino populations, as well as East End communities where the Latino population has increased remarkably rapidly. This district has been one of the most hotly contested congressional districts nationwide in recent election cycles. This year, it features a contest between Republican freshman Lee Zeldin and Democrat and Southampton Town Supervisor, Anna Throne-Holst. This race is a priority for both national Republicans and Democrats this year, with a broad recognition that there will likely be a very tight margin between the candidates. Voter turnout in communities of color in the Town of Brookhaven and smaller areas further east could prove decisive.

Congressional District Three

This district in northern Nassau County (with pieces of northwest Suffolk County and the northeast tip of Queens) possesses a diverse electorate, with 15 percent of the electorate being people of color, and 5 percent of the electorate being Latino. It includes communities like Glen Cove and Huntington Station, where substantial concentrations of Latinos and voters of color reside. The seat is being closely-watched around the state and nation because it is an open seat, following the retirement of Democrat Steve Israel. The election features Republican State Senator Jack Martins running against Democratic former County Executive Tom Suozzi. With two high name recognition, and well-resourced, candidates facing off against one another, a narrow victory for either side is possible. With the ranks of Latino voters increasing, alongside increases in South and East Asian immigrant voting blocs, each candidate's effectiveness in these communities may well be determinative.

Conclusion

The data presented in this report suggest a clear conclusion: Latino voters are poised to have a decisive impact on the November elections in New York. Latino voters are 12 percent of the statewide electorate—and a critical part of the 31 percent registered vote share of voters of color. And the Latino voter rolls have increased substantially in strategic political geographies outside of New York City that will decide who controls the State Senate and contested Congressional seats. While presidential campaigns' field efforts will focus outside of New York given its deep "blue" electorate, these Senate and House seats augment the strategic political importance of the Latino vote in New York.

The implications are clear. In an election season when Donald Trump has staked his candidacy on hatred and intolerance—particularly as it relates to Latinos and immigrants—Republicans down the ballot will likely face consequences for their support of Donald Trump. This support has taken the shape of endorsement by key candidates like Congressman Lee Zeldin and state party chairman Ed Cox, and the declarations by candidates like Senator Jack Martins that they would vote for and stand behind Mr. Trump as their party's candidate. Latino voters will not take these positions lightly.

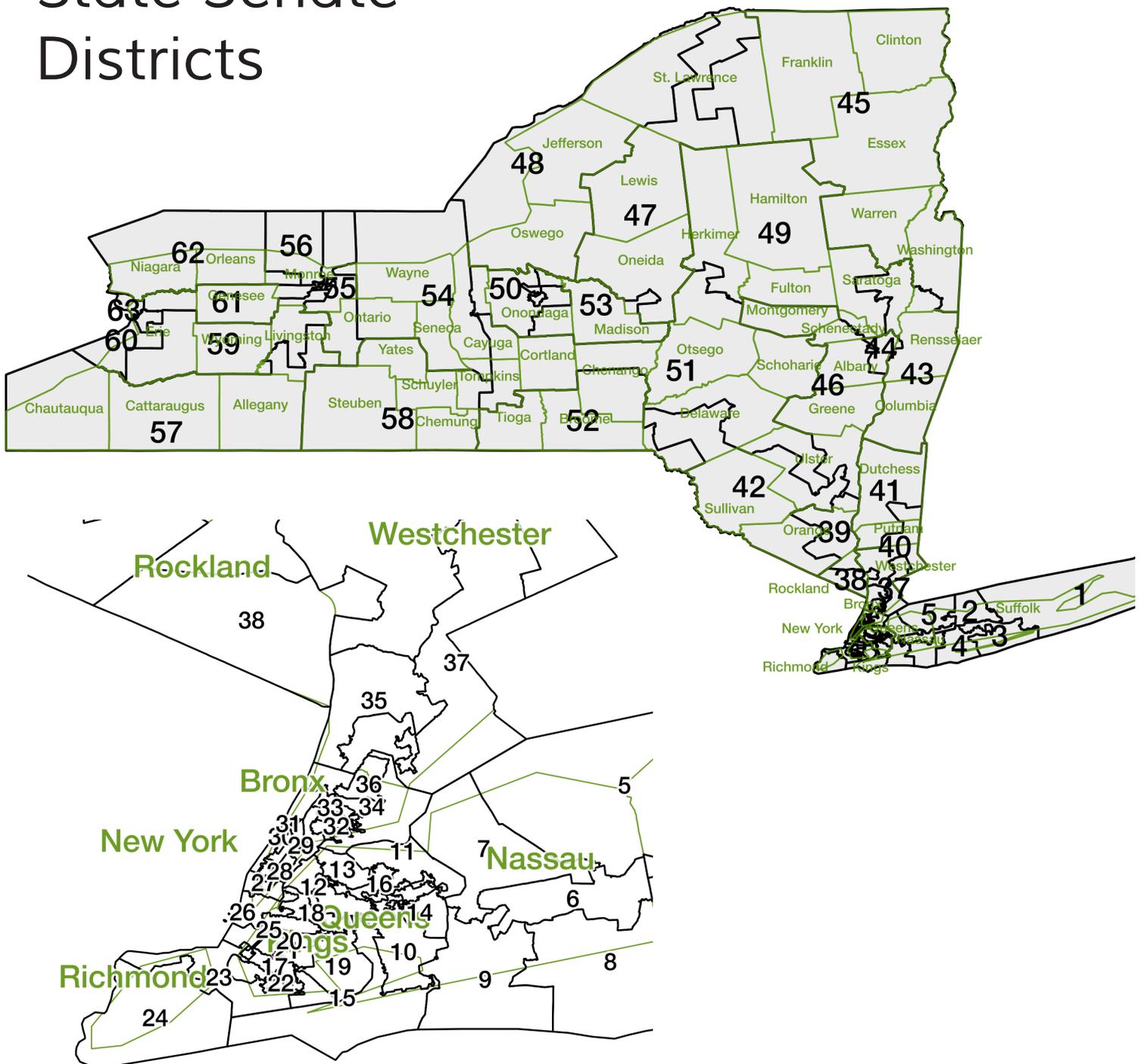
But the outcome of Latinos overwhelmingly supporting Democrats is not a given. To be sure, Democrats in New York have not always embraced Latino and immigrant priorities, including certain members voting over the past decade against the DREAM Act, which would expand access to higher education for immigrant youth, and access to drivers' licenses. Democratic candidates should seize the opportunity brought by this election cycle to prioritize engagement of Latino voters, who could help deliver them important victories in November. This should include efforts to engage deeply with Latino voters—first listening to their concerns and incorporating their core issues into their campaign platforms, and then leading strong bilingual field and communications efforts in Latino communities. To truly earn the Latino vote in New York, Democrats must be strong advocates for pro-Latino and -immigrant policies that promote respect and dignity for all.

If Democrats follow this path, Republican candidates will pay a stiff price for their ill-advised embrace of Donald J. Trump. And their anti-immigrant campaign propaganda, used in 2014 elections and again in the 2016 special election on Long Island, will only motivate Latino and immigrant voters more regarding the importance of making their voices heard in November.

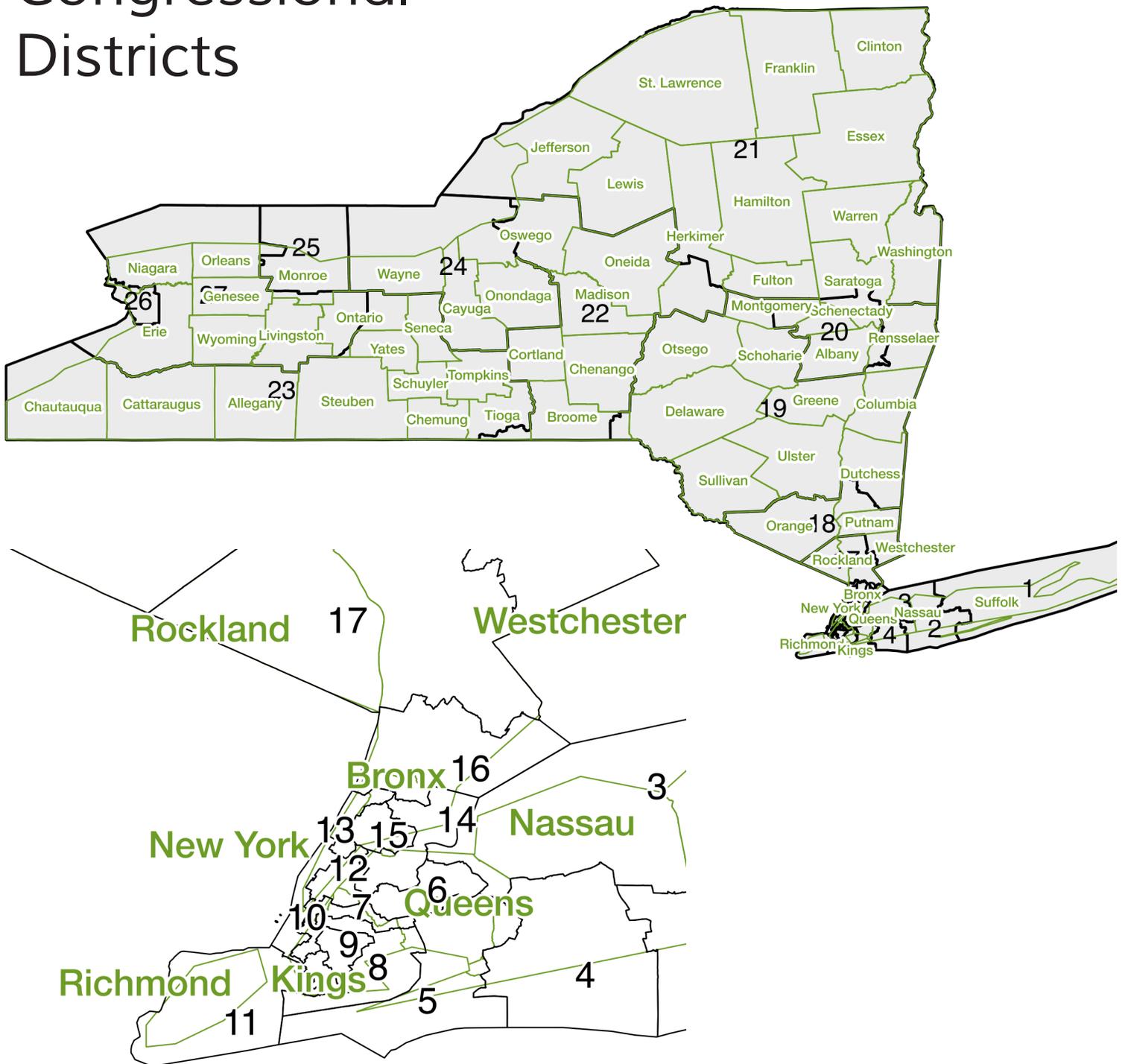
Latino voting power in New York is growing, and it is long overdue that candidates of both parties take note. They ignore the Latino electorate at their own peril.

Appendix 1: State Senate and Congressional Maps

State Senate Districts



Congressional Districts



References

- ¹ Data on population are drawn from U.S. Census Bureau data. Accessed via the Census Bureau’s American Factfinder on August 25, 2016.
- ² Fiscal Policy Institute. “New Americans on Long Island: A Vital Fifth.” June 2, 2015. Available online here: <http://fiscalpolicy.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/06/Immigrants-2015-full-report1.pdf>.
- ³ Data come from Make the Road Action calculation of United States Customs and Immigration Services (USCIS) quarterly naturalization application and approval rates (April 2015 – March 2016), available online here: <https://www.uscis.gov/tools/reports-studies/immigration-forms-data/data-set-form-n-400-application-naturalization>.
- ⁴ Make the Road Action compiled the data presented in Tables 1, 2, and 3 from the publicly-available New York State voter file, with demographic estimates accessed through the Voter Activation Network database. MRA thanks the New York Civic Engagement Table for support in data collection. The regional assignment (column two) comes from Make the Road Action’s best summary of region based upon the New York State Department of Economic Development’s map of regional divisions.
- ⁵ Data compiled by the National Partnership for New Americans from United States Customs and Immigration Services (USCIS). Analysis available here: <http://partnershipfornewamericans.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/NPNA-Fact-Sheet-Naturalization-Data-Sept-2016-Final.pdf>.
- ⁶ Pew Research Center. “Hispanic Voters and the 2016 Election.” July 7, 2016. Available here: <http://www.people-press.org/2016/07/07/6-hispanic-voters-and-the-2016-election/>.
- ⁷ Available here: <http://thehill.com/latino/277824-hispanics-in-swing-states-create-daunting-electoral-map-for-gop>.
- ⁸ Siena College poll cross-tabulations available here: https://www.siena.edu/assets/files/news/SNY0816_Crosstabs081716_357.pdf.
- ⁹ The Republican anti-immigrant messaging—vilifying “illegals” (an offensive term for undocumented immigrants)—was also used in 2014. The Associated Press published a useful summary here: <https://es-us.noticias.yahoo.com/anuncios-republicanos-agitan-debate-migratorio-175743929.html>.