



## NEWS RELEASE

National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO) Educational Fund

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### **NALEO Educational Fund Comments on California Efforts to Make Voting More Accessible to Latinos and All Voters**

*California is home to the nation's largest Latino eligible voter population*

**Washington, D.C.** – The National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO) Educational Fund today announced its support for the goals of two key pieces of legislation that were signed into law by Governor Jerry Brown.

The bills, which provide for the implementation of electronic voter registration (New Motor Voter Law - AB 1461) and the establishment of a Language Accessibility Advisory Committee (AB 1443), will make the electoral process more accessible for Latinos and all voters. Another crucial piece of legislation that would have ensured sufficient protections were in place for Latinos and other minority voters, the expansion of the California Voting Rights Act (AB 182), was vetoed by Gov. Brown this weekend.

According to U.S. Census data, Latinos are the state's largest population group, comprising approximately 15 million of the nearly 39 million residents in California. With nearly 6.5 million Latinos eligible to vote in the state, California is also home to the nation's largest eligible Latino electorate, making the future vitality of California's democracy dependent on the effective participation and fair representation of the Latino community.

"The golden state has the opportunity to become the gold standard for voting rights policy in this country," stated Arturo Vargas, NALEO Educational Fund executive director. "By making strides to make the right to vote more accessible to the nation's largest statewide Latino eligible voter population and all voters, California is embracing the democratic values that make our nation great."

Vargas went on to say, "While these bills mark significant progress in the state's efforts to make it easier for eligible Californians to cast ballots, Gov. Brown missed a critical opportunity to ensure adequate protections are in place to ensure that the voting strength of underrepresented communities is not diluted by failing to sign the expansion of the California Voting Rights Act (AB 182) into law."

The expansion of the California Voting Rights Act (CVRA), which was championed by Assemblymember Luis Alejo (D-Watsonville), as well as Assemblymembers Rob Bonta (D-Alameda), Roger Hernandez (D-West Covina), Ian Calderon (D-Whittier), and Senator Ben

Hueso (D-San Diego), would have strengthened California's democracy by promoting fairness and accountability in the electoral process at the local level. AB 182 would have accomplished this by protecting the rights of citizens to elect the candidates of their choice in certain district election systems. The legislation's protections would apply in localities where district lines divide underrepresented neighborhoods in a manner that minimizes their voting strength. This legislation would have also provided clear guidance for judges and courts on how to design appropriate remedies for CVRA violations.

Supported by Assemblywoman Lorena Gonzalez (D-San Diego) and Secretary of State (SOS) Alex Padilla, the newly signed New Motor Voter Law (AB 1461) will streamline the process of voter registration for eligible citizens of the state when they go to the Department of Motor Vehicles' (DMV) office to obtain or renew a driver's license and produce the required documentation. This bill is an important piece of legislation that will help move our state's dialogue forward on modernizing California's voter registration process. To ensure implementation of this bill is successful, NALEO Educational Fund will be working with the offices of the DMV and SOS on a set of recommendations that will be released in a report later this month. The report recommendations will be focused on strategies to provide the public with a more accessible opportunity to register and to improve the accuracy of the state's voter rolls.

Signed into law by Gov. Brown late last month was another key piece of legislation for the Latino community. The law provides for the establishment of a Language Accessibility Advisory Committee (LAAC) within the Office of the Secretary of State. AB 1443, which was championed by Assemblymember Ed Chau (D-Arcadia) and Secretary of State Alex Padilla (D), will ensure the Secretary of State is able to solicit advice from state and local elections officials on best practices to address the language needs of all of California's voters. Both federal and state law impose requirements on California and its local jurisdictions to provide language assistance to citizens who are not yet fully proficient in English, to ensure that all of the state's electorate can cast an informed ballot.

This assistance is particularly critical for the Latino community, where 1.3 million voting-age U.S. citizens – or about one of every five Latinos eligible to vote – are still in the process of acquiring the language skills needed to navigate California's voting system and complex election information and ballot materials.

Vargas concluded by saying, "Despite the inconsistencies in the Governor's legislative record on voting rights, it is clear that California is still paving the way in the effort to make our democracy more accessible to Latinos and all voters. Every state in the nation should follow the example being set by California, implementing laws that make it easier, not harder for eligible voters to make their voices heard at the ballot box in Election 2016 and beyond."

*To view NALEO Educational Fund's letters of support for AB 182 and AB 1443, click [here](#) and [here](#).*

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**About NALEO Educational Fund**

*NALEO Educational Fund is the nation's leading non-profit organization that facilitates the full participation of Latinos in the American political process, from citizenship to public service.*