



NEWS RELEASE

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NALEO Responds to President Donald Trump's 2017 Joint Address to Congress

Organization calls for nation to stay true to values by acknowledging the significant contributions immigrants have made to our past, present and future

Washington, D.C. – The National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO) today released a statement from Executive Director Arturo Vargas regarding President Donald Trump's 2017 address to Congress:

“Tonight, President Donald Trump presented his vision for the direction of our country in the coming months and four years. As Americans we can all support the President's aim to build a ‘brighter future for our nation’, but we cannot achieve that goal without finding common ground on the most pressing issues facing our country today.

“Choosing to make clear that our nation will not tolerate crimes motivated by hate or evil in any form is a good first step in President Trump's efforts to bring Americans together. Putting an end to the harmful and inflammatory rhetoric that has aimed to separate instead of unite us must come next as he prepares to work with Congress to put words into action, especially as it relates to his call for comprehensive immigration reform.

“As an organization that works with immigrants and their families, we know all too well just how great the need is to modernize our antiquated and flawed immigration system. An overhaul of our immigration laws, however, will only work if we strike a balance between protecting our national security interests and treating immigrants in a humane manner that upholds our values. To do otherwise would be a disservice to not only our economy, but also our rich history as a nation of immigrants.

“America at its best has always been a melting pot that has welcomed immigrants willing to come here, work hard and contribute to our economy and democracy. It is only when we have moved far away from this moral imperative that the history books have frowned on our actions as a nation.

“President Trump has a unique opportunity to write history by successfully acting on a critical issue that has evaded both parties for far too long. In order to alter the course of our nation's immigration laws for the foreseeable future though, he and Congress will need to compromise.

“The road towards a balanced and bipartisan approach to immigration reform that simultaneously address public safety concerns while providing a pathway to citizenship for the millions of immigrants who are here contributing to our economy will not be easy, but it is one that must be taken for the good of the American people.

“Americans and our Latino elected officials are tired of partisan bickering and political theatre. We want action from the President and Congress that acknowledges the significant contributions immigrants have made to our nation’s past, present and future by tackling immigration reform once and for all.

“While we wait for action on this timely issue, we will continue to work to further the mission of our founder Congressman Edward R. Roybal by equipping our nation’s Latino elected officials with the tools and information they need to help address the fears and concerns voiced by their immigrant constituents at this time of uncertainty and by moving other issue priorities forward. Issues mentioned in the address like quality affordable child care, access to high paying jobs and a strong national infrastructure are all policies that our nation’s Latino leaders can find middle ground with the President on in order to help their constituents and all Americans.

“Going forward, we will continue our efforts to increase political participation within the Latino community by hosting citizenship workshops for those immigrants who are ready to become full participants in our democracy and pushing for a strong Civil Rights Division at the Department of Justice that will ensure the sacred right to vote afforded to U.S. citizens remains accessible to the nation’s second largest population group and all eligible Americans. In addition, we will continue to work with Congress and the Administration to provide the Census Bureau with the funding needed to produce a full and accurate count of Latinos and all Americans in Census 2020.

“Any plan for a ‘brighter future’ for America cannot happen without the success of Latinos and immigrants. It is time that we look back at our history and remember that immigrants, Latino elected officials and the Latino community as a whole are an asset, not a hindrance. The sooner we do so, the better off our country and future will be.”

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About NALEO

The National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials is the non-partisan leadership organization of the nation's more than 6,100 Latino elected and appointed officials.