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**New Report Finds Urgent Need for Fix to Combat Modern Day
Voting Discrimination Against Latino Voters Nationwide**

*The joint NALEO/MALDEF/NHLA report found egregious and far-reaching voting
discrimination at every stage of the voting process;*

*More than 7.8 million Latino voters are expected to head to the polls this November, making it
critical for Congress to act swiftly to modernize the Voting Rights Act (VRA)*

Washington, DC – Less than five months before Election Day, the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO), Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF) and National Hispanic Leadership Agenda (NHLA), released the findings of a new policy paper assessing voting rights violations nationwide. The event, which brought together Latino leaders and elected officials, took place this morning on the steps of the U.S. Supreme Court.

Following the press conference, Latino elected officials from across the country will meet with members of congress and staff to discuss voting rights violations in their area and the importance of a legislative fix to modernize the Voting Rights Act (VRA).

“Our democracy thrives when all its citizens are able to participate fully in the nation’s political system,” said Arturo Vargas, NALEO Executive Director. “We need to be promoting policies that make voting and registering to vote more accessible, and not less accessible, to the nation’s second largest population group and all qualified U.S. citizens.”

The report entitled “Latinos and the VRA: A Modern Fix to Modern Day Discrimination” focuses on voting rights violations nationwide and the need for Congress to act swiftly to pass the bipartisan Voting Rights Amendment Act (VRAA, HR 3899) legislation to restore protections for Latino voters and the strength of the VRA following the blow dealt by the Supreme Court in its 2013 decision in *Shelby County v. Holder*. Nearly seven million Latinos eligible to vote residing in jurisdictions that were previously subject to preclearance pre-*Shelby County* have lost proactive protections under the VRA.

The new analysis from the report found that attempts to restrict Latino voters’ access have increased following the *Shelby County* decision last year. Examples of these attempts include:

Florida

- *Voter purge.* In 2012, the Florida Secretary of State began a process to remove alleged noncitizens from the voter rolls statewide. The state's use of inaccurate data negatively affected naturalized citizens, a large majority of whom are of Latino, Asian, or Afro-Caribbean descent. Preclearance challenges initially blocked the purge, but after *Shelby County* these cases were dismissed and Florida resumed the effort.

Colorado

- *Voter purge.* In 2012, the Colorado Secretary of State tried to conduct a voter purge with flaws similar to Florida's, and state legislators introduced HB 1050, which would have helped achieve this effort. The legislature defeated HB 1050, but after *Shelby County* the threat of renewed efforts to purge qualified voters remains.

Texas

- *Redistricting.* When Texas began redistricting in 2011, it had gained four additional seats in Congress. About 65 percent of its population growth had come from Latinos – yet the redrawn maps failed to create even one new district in which Latino voters would have had an opportunity to elect the candidate of their choice. A federal court found discriminatory intent and threw out the maps.
- *Voter ID.* Immediately after *Shelby County*, Texas announced that it would implement a voter ID law that a reviewing court and DOJ had concluded would discriminate against Latinos and African Americans.

According to a report released earlier this year by the NALEO Educational Fund, the VRAA would help fill the void left in the wake of *Shelby County* by restoring protections to more than 4.5 million - or nearly two-thirds (65 percent) - of Latinos that reside in jurisdictions that were previously subject to preclearance.

Experts have found there is widespread support among Americans for protecting the right to vote and modernizing the VRA. A NALEO survey of more than 1000 individuals in 10 states (Ariz., Fla., Ga., Miss., N.C., Ohio, Pa., S.C., Texas, and Va.) found that 83 percent of likely voters agree that having a fully functioning VRA is critical to making sure every American's voting rights are protected. A majority of likely voters polled, including 63 percent of Republicans, also rejected the notion that there is no longer a need for a law protecting the rights of voters in this country. Full poll results can be found [here](#).

As the Latino population becomes a larger segment of the electorate, it is increasingly important for Latinos to be able to make their voices heard at the ballot box without confronting discriminatory barriers or obstacles. This November, NALEO Educational Fund projects that 7.8 million Latinos will cast ballots in Election 2014, accounting for nearly 8 percent of the nation's voters.

Vargas went on to say, "In the lead up to the election, NALEO Educational Fund will be hard at work ensuring that Latino voters have the information and access necessary to cast ballots on November 4th. The bilingual operators of our toll-free voter information hotline, 888-VE-Y-VOTA, will continue to serve as a resource to any voter with questions or concerns about any aspect of the electoral process, 12 hours per day, 7 days per week."

For the full report, visit <http://latinosunited.org/votingrights/latinovraareport.pdf>.

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About NALEO Educational Fund

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