



NEWS RELEASE

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

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Contact: Amanda Bosquez, abosquez@naleo.org
(202) 546-2536 ext. 112, (361) 548-6989 (cell)

Paula Valle Castanon, pvalle@naleo.org
(213) 747-7606 ext. 4414, (323) 253-6431 (cell)

2014 Florida Profile of Hispanic Electorate and Candidates Released in Advance of State Primary Election

Hispanic turnout in Florida mid-term Congressional elections has nearly doubled since 1998

WASHINGTON, D.C. - The National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO) Educational Fund, the nation's leading organization that facilitates the full participation of Latinos in the American political process, today released its [2014 primary profile](#) for the Hispanic electorate and candidates in Florida.

According to 2012 Census data, Florida was home to 4,484,201 Hispanics who were nearly one-fourth (23 percent) of the state's residents. Among all states in the United States, Florida's population is comprised of the third highest share of Hispanics. Over one-seventh (15 percent) of Florida's registered voters are Hispanic. Census data showed that between 1998 and 2010, Hispanic voter turnout in mid-term Congressional elections nearly doubled, growing from 439,000 to 863,000, an increase of 97 percent.

During the last decade, there have been significant changes in the partisan affiliation of Florida's Hispanic electorate. According to Pew Hispanic Trends, as recently as 2006, more Hispanics in Florida were registered as Republicans (37 percent) than as Democrats (33 percent). By 2008, the balance tipped over to the Democrats, with the gap continuing to grow. Voter file data from October 2013 indicate that Florida's Hispanic registered voters are nearly as likely to be registered as Democrats (38 percent) as non-Hispanics (39 percent) and much less likely to be registered as Republican (27 percent) than the non-Hispanic electorate (37 percent).

"The fact that Hispanic turnout in Florida mid-term Congressional elections has nearly doubled since 1998 is a testament to the increasing political clout of the Latino community," stated NALEO Educational Fund Executive Director Arturo Vargas. "In the coming days and months, it will be critical for campaigns and candidates to actively engage Florida Hispanic voters on the issues that matter most if they want to gain the support of this increasingly influential electorate."

Florida's 2014 elections are taking place during legal challenges to the Congressional district maps drawn by the legislature. In November 2010, the state's voters enacted ballot measures which amended Florida's Constitution to prohibit the drawing of districts with the intent to favor or hinder incumbents or political parties. The proponents of the measures filed a legal challenge in September 2012 to the maps drawn by the legislature, claiming that the maps violated the

state's new Constitutional redistricting standards. In July 2014, a state circuit court judge ruled that Congressional Districts 5 and 10 were drawn to favor incumbents and provide Republicans with a partisan advantage. The judge also ruled that the districts and any of those affected by them should be re-drawn.

On August 13, 2014 the state adopted a new map intended to be responsive to the judge's ruling. The plaintiffs in the legal challenge do not believe the new map is compliant with the state's Constitution, and are urging the judge to reject it. Latino advocates are particularly concerned about the impact of the new map on Congressional District 9, which is based in Osceola County and is adjacent to Congressional District 10. In the state's initial redistricting, Congressional District 9 was drawn as a Central Florida district which provides Latinos an opportunity to significantly influence the outcome of its elections. In reconfiguring Congressional District 10 in its new map, the legislature reduced the Latino voting-age population of Congressional District 9, making it more difficult for Latino voters to have an impact in that district.

As of this writing, the judge in the litigation is expected to issue a ruling in the near future. It is unclear whether the judge will approve the new map, and if he will require that special elections be held in 2014 or 2015 under the new lines. Latino community leaders and advocates are closely monitoring developments in this legal challenge.

In addition to Florida's 27 seats in the U.S. House of Representatives, the state's 2014 primary elections will determine the nominees for statewide and statehouse races, as well as several judicial, county, and other local positions. These contests include Governor, Attorney General, Chief Financial Officer and other state executive positions, as well as 20 State Senators and all 120 State Representatives. Hispanic candidates are pursuing nominations for key positions at all levels of government, including the following positions:

Statewide Races

- Political observers view Florida's gubernatorial contest as one of the most competitive in the nation, with incumbent Rick Scott (R) likely to battle former Governor Charlie Crist (D) in the general election. Both candidates have chosen Hispanic running mates.
 - In January 2014, Scott appointed former Florida State Representative Carlos Lopez-Cantera to serve as Lieutenant Governor. Lopez-Cantera is the first Hispanic to have held that position in the state's history.
 - In July 2014, former Governor Crist announced that Annette Taddeo, a Miami business owner and Democratic Party activist, would join his ticket.
- The Florida candidates for Lt. Governor run on a ticket with the gubernatorial candidates, and the Lt. Governor contenders' success depends on the victory of their running mates.
 - If elected, Taddeo would be the first Hispanic woman to serve as Florida's Lieutenant Governor.

Congressional Races

- Incumbent U.S. Representatives Mario Diaz-Balart (R) and Ileana Ros-Lehtinen (R) are running unopposed in their respective primary and general elections.

- In Florida's 26th Congressional District, incumbent Joe Garcia (D) is also running unopposed in the primary election. His general election contest is expected to be competitive.
 - Four Hispanics are among the crowded field of primary contenders seeking to win the Republican nomination to challenge him in November: Miami-Dade School Boardmember Carlos Curbelo; former Miami-Dade County Commissioner Joe Martinez; attorney Lorenzo Palomares-Starbuck; and former U.S. Rep. David Rivera.
- In central Florida's 9th Congressional District, University of Central Florida professor Rick Ruiz (D) is challenging incumbent Alan Grayson for the Democratic nomination.
 - U.S. Marine Corps and Navy veteran Jorge Bonilla (R) is viewed as the frontrunner among the contenders for the Republican nomination in the district. Both Ruiz and Bonilla face tough contests in their races to unseat incumbent Grayson.
- In Florida's 23rd Congressional District, business consultant and radio show host Juan Garcia is competing against Republican activist Joe Kaufman for the opportunity to face incumbent Debbie Wasserman Schultz (D) in November.

In advance of the election, NALEO Educational Fund is actively working to ensure that Florida Hispanic voters have the information necessary to make their voices heard at the ballot box. These efforts include operating the NALEO Educational Fund toll-free bilingual hotline ***1-888-VE-Y-VOTA (1-888-839-8682)*** and the ***yaeshora.info*** website to provide the state's Hispanic voters with vital information on every aspect of the electoral process in 2014, from registering to vote, to voter ID requirements, to finding their polling place on Election Day.

What:

NALEO Educational Fund's 2014 Florida Hispanic Electorate and Candidates Profile

When:

Available online now

Where:

http://www.naleo.org/ElectoralProfiles/FL_ElectoralProfile_2014.pdf

Media:

To arrange an interview or request additional data, please contact Amanda Bosquez at 202-546-2536 ext. 112 and abosquez@naleo.org or Paula Valle Castanon at pvalle@naleo.org and (213) 747-7606 ext. 4414.

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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.