



NEWS RELEASE

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Rhode Island Primary: Voter File Data Suggests Nearly One in 10 Rhode Island Registered Voters Will Be Latino

*Latino candidates to play key roles in races including:
governor, lieutenant governor, general treasurer, and Providence mayor*

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO) Educational Fund today released a statement on the upcoming Rhode Island primary, offering analysis on the widespread role of Latinos in races across the state, including governor, lieutenant governor, general treasurer, and mayor of Rhode Island’s capital. Given the partisan leanings of Rhode Island, the victor of the Democratic primaries in these races is likely to win the general election. The state’s primary will take place on September 13.

“According to Census 2020 data, Latino population growth outpaced the overall growth of the Ocean State’s population between 2010 and 2020, equaling 115 percent of the state’s population increase,” **said NALEO Educational Fund CEO Arturo Vargas.** “Political data experts [predicted](#) that Rhode Island would lose one of its two Congressional seats after Census 2020 re-apportionment, but Latino population growth likely contributed to the state retaining both seats.

“As Election 2022 approaches, Latinos are poised to cast decisive votes in this year’s Rhode Island primaries. The presence of Latinos as competitive contenders for three of the highest statewide positions and the mayor of Providence is also a testament to the political progress Latinos have made in Rhode Island.”

Key Factors in the Rhode Island Primary:

- According to NALEO Educational Fund’s analysis of voter file data, Latinos in Rhode Island will comprise nearly one of every 10 registered voters (9.9 percent) in the primary election.
- Over one half of Latinos are registered Democrats (58 percent), accounting for around one of every seven registered Democrats (14 percent) in the state. Thus, the Latino electorate will play a key role in the Democratic primary.
- The high-profile statewide races for governor, lieutenant governor, general treasurer, and mayor of Providence will include competitive Latino candidates.
 - For governor, Secretary of State Nellie Gorbea is an extremely competitive challenger against incumbent Daniel McKee in the Democratic gubernatorial primary. Another strong contender is former CVS executive Helena Buonanno Foulkes. Former Rhode Island Secretary of State Matt Brown and community

activist Luis Daniel Muñoz will have more difficult races in their bids to win this primary.

- The Democratic primary victor will likely face healthcare executive Ashley Kalus (R) in the general election. If Gorbea wins, she would be the first Latina governor in a state other than New Mexico; she would also be the first Latino governor, regardless of gender, in Rhode Island and all of New England.
- In Rhode Island, the lieutenant governor is elected in a contest separate from the governor's race. Incumbent lieutenant governor Sabina Matos was appointed to that position in April 2021 and is the first Dominican American to hold a lieutenant governor position in the United States. In the September Democratic primary, she is pursuing the nomination to run for her first full term of office.
 - Her competitors in the primary include State Senator Cynthia Mendes and State Representative Deborah Ruggiero. The Republican primary victor in this contest is likely to be nonprofit executive Aaron Guckian, who has served as an aide to former Rhode Island Governor Donald Carcieri.
- In the race for general treasurer, former Central Falls Mayor James Diossa faces former Rhode Island Commerce Secretary Stefan Pryor in a competitive Democratic primary. The primary victor will face North Kingstown Finance Director James Lathrop, who is running unopposed in the Republican primary.
- Since 2011, two Latinos have served as the mayor of Providence — first Angel Taveras, followed by Jorge Elorza. The September primary for the Democratic nomination of the office will be competitive, with a field that includes two Latino candidates: Gonzalo Cuervo, who served as Chief of Staff to both former Mayor Taveras and Secretary of State Gorbea; and Providence City Councilmember Nirva LaFortune, who identifies as Afro-Latina. Brett Smiley, who served as Chief of Staff to former Governor Gina Raimondo and as Chief Operating Officer under former Mayor Elorza, is also a contender in the race.
 - With no Republican or Independent candidates running in the contest, the Democratic primary victor is virtually certain to be the next mayor of Providence.

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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.