# NEWS RELEASE

**For Immediate Release**
February 24, 2026

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## NALEO and NALEO Educational Fund Response to State of the Union Address

***WASHINGTON, D.C.*** **–** The National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO) and NALEO Educational Fund released the following statement from **CEO Erica Bernal-Martinez** on the president's State of the Union address to Congress:

"Tonight's State of the Union address comes at a defining moment for our nation — one that is testing our institutions, our values, and our commitment to a democracy where every community has a voice.

"As the president addressed the country this evening, Latino lawmakers made their voices heard — both on the floor and directly with the communities they represent. We stand in solidarity with these elected leaders who, every day, are confronted with challenges created by overly aggressive immigration enforcement measures that are harming families and destabilizing communities and local economies. Their leadership reflects courage and moral clarity at a time when both are urgently needed.

"At NALEO Educational Fund, we believe in the dignity and rights of immigrants. Policies that sow fear in hardworking communities undermine trust, weaken our economy, and erode the principles of fairness and due process that define our democracy. Speaking out against harm is principled leadership.

"The same is true when it comes to protecting the broader foundations of democratic participation. We are witnessing renewed challenges to the core pillars of our democracy — including efforts that make it harder for eligible Americans to vote and barriers that restrict access to citizenship and naturalization. These attacks strike at the heart of our organization's mission. Ensuring fair access to the ballot and supporting eligible lawful permanent residents on the path to citizenship are essential to a representative democracy. When participation is narrowed, our nation is diminished.

"This year marks the 50th anniversary of NALEO's founding. In 1976, Congressman Edward R. Roybal built this organization on a simple but powerful belief: Latino communities deserve representation — not as a favor, but as a right. He understood that safeguarding participation, expanding opportunity, and defending democratic institutions would require sustained leadership across party lines. NALEO was created to endure — and to continue that work across generations.

"That is why being nonpartisan does not mean being values-neutral. It means working across political divides to strengthen civic participation and deliver meaningful results for the communities leaders serve.

"Today, that responsibility also means addressing the affordability crisis facing families throughout the country. Rising housing costs, exorbitant grocery bills, unaffordable healthcare expenses, and prohibitive childcare costs are not partisan issues — they are everyday realities that affect whether families can thrive and fully participate in civic life. We are encouraged to see elected and appointed officials step beyond traditional divides to pursue practical solutions that strengthen economic stability while upholding democratic principles.

"As our nation approaches its 250th year, democracy itself is being tested under unprecedented pressures. For five decades, NALEO and NALEO Educational Fund have worked to ensure that Latinos are not sidelined in moments like these — that our communities have fair access to the ballot, a meaningful voice in public life, and the opportunity to be full stakeholders in our democracy.

"Fifty years after Congressman Roybal founded NALEO, the work he began continues and is as urgent as ever. Tonight's address makes clear that the fight for fair access, full representation, and equal participation is ongoing, but so is our resolve."

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***About NALEO***

*The National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials is the nonpartisan leadership organization of the nation's more than 7,700 Latino elected and appointed officials.*

***About NALEO Educational Fund***

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